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Special Issue Graduate Journal of Social Science:

**Interrogating Language Difference and Translation in Social Science Research:
Towards a Critical and Interdisciplinary Approach**

Language difference and translation are an integral part of social science research. Interrupt your reading of this editorial for a couple of seconds and embark on a cursory mental examination of academic practices, processes and products in the social sciences. It soon becomes clear that forms of language difference and translation are everywhere. Imagine an academic spending an afternoon in a library, reading books by canonical authors, translated from their original language. An ethnographer collecting and producing data in her native language(s) and translating that empirical material into another language¹, in order for the study to be assessed and/or published. A researcher learning a foreign language in preparation for, and during, fieldwork, or trying to hire interpreters for a set of interviews. A group of conference delegates from different countries, discussing a keynote address during the coffee-break. A migrant doctoral student learning the academic writing conventions of the foreign language in which he is writing a thesis, as well as struggling to understand some of the colloquial expressions used by his native-speaking colleagues in the PhD room. Broaden your notion of language difference and translation to include other forms of conversion of meaning from one linguistic register to another, and several more moments of academic practice come to mind. Explaining your research in non-academic language to close friends over dinner or

¹ Often English, as the contemporary *lingua franca* – ie, the vehicular language spoken by people who do not share a native language (Mauranen 2003) - in (profoundly asymmetrical) academic flows of circulation of concepts, theories, texts and people between different institutional, regional and national locations (see, for example, Connell 2007, Griffin and Braidotti 2002).

to policy-makers at a meeting. Attempting to find the appropriate words with which to describe in an interview transcript the nuances of an interviewee's body language. Trying to re-frame your research in a different disciplinary language, in order to communicate with colleagues working in other disciplines.

Instances of language difference and translation are very present in experiences of social science practice, but almost always conspicuously absent in the books and articles that social scientists read and compose. The authors and participants featured in a text have often spoken, written and thought in more than one language, but that linguistic diversity, as well as the challenges, insights and questions it produces, are rarely represented and problematised in the published narrative about the research process and its relationships. When describing studies conducted across languages, social scientists tend to be “eerily quiet” about the experiences of learning or translating languages (Agar 1996, 150), often “forgetting (or even denying) the mediation of the researcher as translator, ... [and] act[ing] ‘as if’ our informants spoke the same language as our readers” (Poblete 2009, 632). When language difference and translation is acknowledged, it is usually in descriptive and brief terms – a footnote explains that it was the author who translated a set of quotes, or a short sentence describes how interpreters were used in interviews. Translation and interpretation itself is implicitly presented as a fundamentally technical operation that is relatively straightforward (although not always easy and direct), and its multiple implications in terms of the process of academic knowledge production or of researcher-research participant relationships are not recognised or addressed (Maclean 2007, forthcoming; Temple 2005, and foreword in this issue).

In 2007, while grappling with a range of translation dilemmas as part of our doctoral research in gender studies, we became interested in reflecting critically on the theoretical, analytical, epistemological, political, and ethical implications of issues of language difference and translation in our own work, and also in social science research more broadly. We felt that there was no sustained engagement with this issue at the institutional level, reflecting the absence of discussions of issues of language difference and translation in the literature. We were keen to discuss these issues with other graduate students, but there were very few available spaces – such as conferences or courses – where we could engage in those debates with our peers. This led us to apply for funding from C-SAP (the Higher Education

Academy's Subject Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics²) to enable the creation of such a space. C-SAP generously supported our initiative and we were able to launch a year-long programme of discussion sessions for PhD students at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The number of people who expressed an interest in taking part in the programme demonstrated that there were many other students (and staff) who, like us, were struggling with the practicalities of translation in social science research, but who felt that there is much more to translation than its practicalities; many students and staff who, like us, were asking themselves which words would more faithfully translate other words, but who felt that this was just one of the many questions one could ask about translation, and not even the most exciting or productive question of all.

During the academic year 2007/08, ten doctoral students from six different departments at LSE met monthly to discuss the existing academic literature on translation, share dilemmas and strategies of dealing with language difference in their projects, and, above all, make the impacts and implications of translation visible and questionable. We explored the politics of language difference, framing translation as a set of processes, practices and relationships which are shaped by, and which shape, dynamics of power and hegemony, both in the fieldwork context itself and in the subsequent analysis (and re-signification) of data, as well as in structures of academic life. We interrogated the epistemological and ethical dimensions of research and representation across languages, focusing for example on researchers' accountability and authority vis-à-vis research participants and academic communities. Our collective examination of these issues offered such a rich and useful space for thinking through the research process and relationships, and left so many questions unanswered (despite the fact that we spent many hours working together), that we decided to take these discussions forward and open them to others. And that is how this special issue of the *Graduate Journal of Social Science* was born.

The special issue draws on existing debates across social science disciplines which have attempted to disrupt the dominant framing of issues of language difference and translation as methodological footnotes, and have demonstrated that an ongoing, reflexive and nuanced

² For more information, see www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk

engagement with these issues can provide crucial analytical insight, both about our objects of study, and the practices of knowledge production and dissemination that we are involved in. In the foreword to this issue, Bogusia Temple provides an overview of this literature, written (partly autobiographically) from her unique and insightful perspective as a leading expert in these debates. The special issue aims to contribute to this exciting and growing body of work by bringing together ten texts (articles, research notes and book/article reviews) which are very different (in terms of theoretical approach, methodological framework or object of study) but all share a commitment to interrogating language difference and translation in social science research from a critical and interdisciplinary perspective. These texts are critical because they all refuse to cast language difference and translation issues as a ‘hiccup’ to overcome, or as a ‘problem’ to be ‘solved’, and prefer to engage with them as a valuable starting point for the production of knowledge about theories and concepts, as well as about the social practices and relations that we study. This special issue’s perspective is also interdisciplinary because it brings together, and goes beyond, authors’ disciplinary positions, in order to address a broad range of manifestations and implications of language difference and translation in social research.

The interrogation of language difference and translation presented here is guided by three key concerns, which are dealt with, and taken forward, by all the authors included in this special issue in ways that make distinctive, innovative and important contributions to existing debates. As editors, we wanted to produce a special issue which would a) draw attention not just to what is *lost*, but also what can be *found* in translation; b) question the scope of the concept of translation in order to enable a focus on processes of translation that tend not to be visible or theorised as such; and c) engage with language difference and translation as an ethical and political issue with a significant impact on research relationships before, during and after fieldwork.

Language difference and translation are often framed in social science literature in terms of loss, disappearance and lack. It is frequently claimed that nuance gets lost in interpretation; translation cannot capture the richness, context, depth of words or expressions; meaning and symbolism is amputated when converted to another linguistic code. Those of us who have had to translate as part of our research have probably experienced the frustration of not quite

being able to find the words in another language that will allow us to capture everything that we read in the original text and that we worry might be lost in the target language. However, the editors and contributors to this special issue wanted to disrupt this familiar framing of the act of translation by showing that a lot of insight can be *found*, and a lot of knowledge can be produced, through explicit and critical reflection on the challenges and incommensurabilities of language difference. The potential of a framing of these issues as productive and generative (rather than just amputating) of knowledge is compellingly demonstrated in the pieces by Alison Stern Perez and Yishai Tobin, Annabel Tremlett and Liza Tripp.

In their article on “The Difficulties of Translation from Israeli Hebrew to American English”, Alison Stern Perez and Yishai Tobin openly discuss the challenges of working in different languages. Focusing on interviews with Israeli bus drivers who experienced terror attacks, Stern Perez and Tobin highlight the importance of a reflexive engagement with several linguistic features of the interviews. Their close analysis of interview extracts reveals socio-psychological implications of the use of pronouns in Hebrew which would get lost in a *verbatim* translation into English. The authors also examine a range of communicative strategies, such as the use of English words in Hebrew interviews, to demonstrate how an analysis of language difference can provide an enhanced understanding of power relations in the research process. Through these case studies, they attempt to make visible what can be gained and found from a fine-grained engagement with interview transcripts and their careful translation into English. The article shows that there are crucial analytical insights that do not easily translate into English and which “force” the researcher to use a range of devices to make those discursive nuances visible in a language that does not have space for them.

Annabel Tremlett’s “Claims of ‘knowing’ in ethnography: realising anti-essentialism through a critical reflection on language acquisition in fieldwork” begins with a critical examination of the ‘fieldwork mystique’ that has shrouded the issue of language learning for ethnographers. It attempts to counter the tendency to overlook this issue by describing and analysing the author’s own process of learning Hungarian before and during fieldwork, and by exploring how language acquisition is related to broader questions about the production of ethnographic authority. Tremlett’s argument is that reflection on the experiences of learning a foreign language can both illuminate the social and cultural context in/about which research

claims are made, and generate insight about the role of anti-essentialist theorisation in empirical research. Her dexterous and engaging analysis of extracts from her fieldwork journal and monthly reports to her supervisors helps to construct an extremely vivid and compelling account of the challenges of language acquisition, and of the usefulness of those challenges as tools with which to produce knowledge and to question the knowledge that one produces.

Liza Tripp's review of Michael Cronin's most recent book *Translation Goes to the Movies* (2009) provides an overview of Cronin's analysis of representations of translation in film (from 1930s *Westerns* to contemporary Hollywood and alternative cinema), and discusses how the changing role of translation and translators on the big screen may be seen to reflect contemporary trends of globalisation. The piece begins with a quote from Cronin's opening mission statement: "[t]his book is about the visibility of translators. More properly it is about how translation becomes visible when we know how to look. And one of the places where we have often neglected to look is a medium primarily concerned with visibility, cinematography" (2009, x). Through her eye-opening review of Cronin's book, Tripp contributes to this process of making visible a range of instances of translation that often go unnoticed, shows us where to look for (and find) acts of translation on and off screen, and vividly illustrates how an attention to processes of translation can produce relevant and new insight about the films we watch and the (more or less real) worlds they represent.

Another concern of this special issue was to interrogate and re-mould the scope of the concepts of language difference and translation, in order to examine their limits, apply them to less familiar objects and ask new questions about them. The aim was to take the concept of translation beyond its usual confinement to the linguistic and explore its value as an analytical tool in research. This is the challenge taken up and forward, with particularly striking results, in the texts by Angeliki Alvanoudi, Simon Hutta and Nora Koller.

Angeliki Alvanoudi's "Travelling between languages and disciplines: linguistic and interdisciplinary translation practices in Women's/Gender Studies" broadens common perceptions of translation by conceptualising it as a process of travelling between languages *and* disciplines. Exploring issues of translation within the interdisciplinary field of

women's/gender studies, Alvanoudi provides a range of fascinating examples and case studies that illustrate the need for a reflexive engagement with language difference. In her discussion of translation as moving between different languages, Alvanoudi traces how social contexts are reflected (and reproduced) in language use, and argues that this social context of words needs to be acknowledged when we translate. Moving away from translation as a process of travelling between two (or several) languages, Alvanoudi demonstrates how academic concepts, and more specifically the notion of 'performativity', have been developed and used in various disciplines, in a process which she argues can also be interrogated as a form of translation. By broadening our understanding of translation practices, and foregrounding issues of politics and power, Alvanoudi's article makes a strong case for a wider understanding of what constitutes translation in women's/gender studies, and beyond.

In "Translation in excess: engaging semiotics and the untranslatable", Simon Hutta sets out to explore the potential of translation as a methodological resource in social research. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'semiotic translation', Hutta seeks to expand the concept of translation beyond its limited association with nation-bound languages, without evacuating the specificities of its conceptual power. In this framework, translation is concerned with movements between, and the transformation of, expressive scenarios, or formations of signs which may be vocal, textual, pictorial, bodily, atmospheric, but are certainly not limited to the linguistic. He uses the example of the multiple, overlapping regimes of expression through which the 'gay kiss' is semiotically framed in his fieldwork with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) research participants in Brazil, to illustrate the analytical potential of both an attentiveness to such 'translation moves' between heterogeneous fieldwork sites and discourses, and an engagement with the affective dynamics which are at once the precondition for semiotic translation, and simultaneously exceed its possibilities and represent its 'untranslatable excess'. Hutta begins his excursion into the potentialities of translation by metaphorically foregrounding the ways in which it may be entangled in projects of violent appropriation. He is interested, by contrast, in capturing the powers of translation for an alternative kind of project, in the possibilities it suggests for ethical and responsible/response-able ways of engaging with otherness and difference in research encounters.

Nora Koller's book review of Sherry Simon's *Translating Montreal* (2006) shares this commitment to thinking outside the (language) box and conceptualising translation as a process that is more than just, or not necessarily, linguistic. Sherry Simon's work attempts to build bridges between geography and language/translation studies, through an examination of the relationship between Montreal's geographical division and its linguistic boundaries. In her discussion of Simon's book, Koller examines what it might mean to engage with space as a source text of translation, charting the rich analytical terrains opened by such an engagement. Her nuanced reflection on the implications of a spatial framing of language and translation builds its own stimulating bridges, when Koller draws on Simon's (and Sara Ahmed's) work to offer a broader reflection on the effects of one's (spatial, linguistic, analytical) orientation towards the world.

Last but not least, we wanted to place fieldwork settings, and researcher/research participant interactions, centre stage in our discussion of translation, in an attempt to engage reflexively with the complex ways in which issues of language difference are implicated in the negotiation of power relationships and inequalities in social science research, at the micro and macro levels. These political and ethical dimensions of language difference and translation are insightfully explored in the contributions by Lisa Ficklin and Briony Jones, Suzette Martin-Johnson, and Yevgeniya Traps.

Lisa Ficklin and Briony Jones' "Deciphering 'Voice' from 'Words': Interpreting Translation Practices in the Field" elegantly captures the multiple and intersecting epistemological, political and ethical dimensions of working with interpreters in qualitative empirical data collection. This article draws on the extensive critical and feminist methodological literatures which posit all knowledge as situated, perspectival and immanent to relations of power, and therefore highlight the importance of reflexivity in the research process. Based on their experiences of conducting fieldwork with interpreters in politically sensitive contexts in Nicaragua and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ficklin and Jones argue emphatically that the figure of the interpreter must not be eclipsed from this reflexive matrix. They illustrate how the interpreters they worked with enabled and offered up for analysis certain 'voices', narratives and meanings, while filtering out, marginalising and silencing others, with formative epistemological, political and ethical implications for the research. The contingencies of this

process depended in unpredictable ways on the interpreters' own positionalities within the complex web of research relationships, including not only identifications along lines of gender, class and ethnicity, for instance, but such imperceptible factors as political affiliation, level of education, personal history and experience and perceptions of what counts as relevant research data or what constitutes a genuine grievance. Accordingly, Ficklin and Jones propose, it is incumbent upon the researcher to acknowledge, constantly negotiate, interrogate, and make visible the impact of the interpreter on the research – a process which can enrich the analysis, such that researchers reduce interpretation to a neutral, technical practice at their own peril.

“Translating a troubled return” by Suzette Martin-Johnson offers a set of thought-provoking research notes drawn from the author’s comparative study with deportees in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. The author focuses on instances of planned and unplanned language difference encountered in data collection and analysis, and examines how these are shaped by broader relations of power - especially class inequalities, social divisions based on race and ethnicity, and intra-/international forms of political, cultural and linguistic hegemony. Her multi-faceted discussion of the political context and connotations of words provides a powerful reminder of the need to engage with language not just as a means of communication, but also as a key agent in the regulation of individuals’ and communities’ access to rights and resources. The incisive questions that Martin-Johnson raises about the forms of language difference which emerged in her project provide an inspiring illustration of how one might engage with translation in ethically and politically sensitive ways.

The epistemological and ethical implications of representation across languages are also placed at the centre of the agenda in Yevgeniya Traps’ “Representing the Translator: Making Sense of Translation in Cross-Language Qualitative Research”. Her piece is a captivating review of four articles published between 2004 and 2009 by Bogusia Temple, a leading voice in debates on language difference and translation in social science research, and the author of the foreword to this special issue. Traps’ piece invites us to consider “the complexities wrought by moving among languages, by the exigencies of translation” from the perspective of the politics of representation which such movements constitute, and are constituted by. Her

short text is an elegant and persuasive overview of the important ethical questions one needs to task when attempting to represent others in languages that they have not used.

As a whole, this special issue is a vivid example of how turning the analytical gaze onto those aspects of the research process which are often taken for granted, can yield extremely powerful results. Whether you read the special issue from start to finish, dip into different pieces according to your own research interests, or engage closely with one or two articles, we hope that these texts address your existing concerns about language difference and translation. Above all, we hope that they produce many new questions about what is lost, and what can be found, in translation.

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Foreword

Translation: the construction and representation of people's lives

This special issue aims to encourage debate about language difference and translation within research. Much of my research has involved working with people who do not speak English or who feel more comfortable using another language. This is an area that I have been writing on for a number of years - for example, Temple (2002) and more recently Temple (2008) - and I welcome the opportunity this special issue provides for a critical interdisciplinary engagement with the challenges involved in conducting research that crosses linguistic boundaries.

My interest in translation and interpretation in research is relatively recent and has resulted from a growing awareness that much of the cross language research that I come across in my field of expertise - health and social care - moves across languages as if the actual languages used are irrelevant, or a matter for methodological footnotes only. Within my own research in the 1980s and 1990s, I had been writing about being prepared to be reflexive about many aspects of the research process, including the researcher's position, but had put to one side something I had learnt growing up speaking both Polish and English: the language I speak affects how I present myself and how I am perceived by others. In research involving people who speak languages other than English, translation is often simply presented as a technical exercise in finding the 'correct' translation, rather than a process of constructing a version of lives lived in other languages and represented from the translator's particular position in the social world.

In this short piece I present some of my reasons for becoming interested in translation. I argue that all researchers who work with translators, or *are* translators in and of their own research data, should actively investigate *how* translation has been carried out. I also argue that such a questioning of translation practices should not be solely the concern of

sociolinguists or researchers who are focusing on the narrow topic of language use, but of social scientists more broadly.

As part of concerns about extending reflexivity within research to questions of translation, a large body of cross disciplinary literature points to the role of language in the formation of cultural meanings and identities, and of translation as an active process within this (see for example, Eco 2003; Cronin 2006; Poirier 2006; Baker 2005). For example, the writings of Eva Hoffman (1998), who migrated as a child from Poland to Canada and then to America, present a vivid account of how learning a new language and writing in it involves *writing yourself*, rather than merely describing who you are using other words. She notes: “I know that *I have been written in a variety of languages*” (1998: 275, my italics). In a similar vein, Gayatri Spivak (1992: 177-178) argues for the importance of viewing translation as a way of getting around “the confines of one’s ‘identity’ ...[Language] is only a vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries.” These writers view language as actively constitutive of self and ‘other’. This suggests that reflection on and about the process of translation should be an important aspect of conducting social research in a reflexive way. This special issue provides a forum for highlighting and discussing such reflections and shows the impact they can have on research methodologies and outcomes.

The question of whether people who speak and write different languages construct and express their social worlds in the same way has exercised many researchers, some of whom I mention here (Eco 2003; Pavlenko 2005). Wherever researchers lie on the spectrum of views expressed, and the position of translation within this, many researchers would agree that we cannot assume that the languages people speak have no influence on how they express themselves, how they are perceived or ‘read’ by others, or that there is some neutral place from which to judge whether a translation is ‘correct’ or not. There is recognition across disciplines that the researcher’s social location influences research; this insight applies equally to translation and scholars have produced accounts of translation as active reconstructions of written texts rather than literal transfers of meaning across languages (Derrida 1987; Eco 2003; Temple 2006, 2008). Umberto Eco (2003) has written about translation as negotiation: a process of deciding how best to try and present people’s lives across languages. This may, he has shown, involve decisions to substantially change what has

been written for effect, to present substantial amounts of information for the reader or to change the structure of texts. I have argued above that these choices have implications for how people are represented in texts.

This means that when researchers are translators or use others' translations, these translations should be subject to scrutiny. This implies a need to discuss the influence of all researchers on their research, including community researchers who are often employed to interpret and translate as if their own use of language is irrelevant (Temple and Koterba, forthcoming). It matters whom you choose to interpret and translate. The researcher's social location and translation history should be a concern in research and in investigating how researchers choose to carry out translation (see Temple and Young 2004 for a discussion of the different ways of working with translators). Arguing for the importance of such an engagement with issues of positionality should not be taken to mean that languages can be tied in any deterministic relationship to perspectives, cultures or representations of emotions, self-expression or 'self' generally. The researcher's/translator's task is to enable the possibilities around language difference to emerge, without implying that we are essentially and necessarily different because of the languages we speak. The role of the researcher/translator is also to reflexively interrogate practices of translation in the research process and the specificity of the positions from which they are conducted. For example, in my own research I discuss the influence of the fact that I learnt Polish in England, sometimes define myself as a second generation Polish woman and translate as a feminist. The papers presented in this special issue demonstrate the need for, and insights derived from, such reflexivity. As Mona Baker (2005) has argued, there is no in-between cultures from which we can choose translators.

I am sometimes told that translation issues have been 'solved' in research by employing bilingual researchers. Do bilingual researchers all use their languages in the same way? My experience in research, and in using Polish researchers, suggests that bilingual researchers' experiences of languages vary, and that this impacts on how they translate (see below and Temple 2006). Employing bilingual researchers to carry out research and to translate interviews therefore does not 'solve' the issues of representation of others in languages they did not use. There is no one way to experience being bilingual or multilingual; and these

experiences affect our translations. Aneta Pavlenko's (2005) work is interesting here in that she is concerned with what happens when we move across languages – something cross language researchers should be interested in, as the language that ends up in reports is often not that which was used by participants. Discussing what it means to be bilingual, Pavlenko suggests that people may present themselves differently in different languages and may be 'heard' differently. The language we use/choose involves issues of representation of self and other. Pavlenko shows how people learn languages in different ways and experience them differently. In much the same way as Hoffman, Pavlenko is concerned with *translation of lives* across languages and the possibilities for re-invention of self in translation.

Moreover, an increasingly multilingual and English speaking world does not 'anchor a new global culture' (Poirier 2006) in which we are all the same regardless of what languages we speak or how we use English. For example, it has been argued that in a transnational age migrants and the children of migrants can keep their source language and culture "in view". They may become *more* rather than less aware of their roots and feel "that there are two languages, two cultures (each with its own internal complexity), which come to determine or influence the dialogical self" (Cronin 2006: 62).

How we translate and move between languages in social research is therefore an ethical and political project (Spivak 1992; Venuti 1998). The work of Jan Blommaert (2001: 415) is useful in relation to the ethics and politics of translation in that he is concerned with how '(re)structuring talk into institutionally sanctioned text' results in power asymmetries. Blommaert describes the consequences of the different ways in which people present themselves, how they are received across languages, the significance of turning speech into written text and the consequences of using one language as a baseline for all (that is, deciding what is an 'authentic' presentation according to the expectations of people who speak another language, usually English). It strikes me that the assumption that speakers of all languages present themselves in the same way is what makes many researchers farm out the translation/interpretation issues within their research without evaluating what the process involves. Contributors to this special issue attempt to disrupt this dominant tendency of the literature by examining some of the ethical aspects of translation in a variety of cultural settings, for example in relation to experiences in Bosnia and Nicaragua (Fickin and Jones),

with Israeli bus drivers (Perez) and with deportees in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica (Martin-Johnson).

My concern with how researchers represent others has led me across a range of disciplines, including as discussed above much valuable work on being bilingual. My reading across disciplinary boundaries has opened up, and challenged, my thinking about the significance of moving across languages within research. There is much to be gained in collaboration between social scientists and scholars from the arts and humanities. In particular, I have suggested elsewhere that sociologists and linguistics/translation and interpretation scholars could usefully collaborate. Sociologists have produced some valuable work on memory, discourse and emotion, for example, all of which are relevant to theorising translation, since the latter involves using memories of words and experiences of social worlds to produce texts. Recent developments in psycho-social approaches to research could also provide useful avenues for exploring aspects of language use that we may be less aware of. Multidisciplinary collaboration could help investigate the effects of using one language baseline to judge all language speakers, as noted above. Indeed, Alvanoudi's article in this special issue suggests the need to widen the definition of translation to include the movement of ideas across disciplines, whilst Hutta and Tremlett (also in this issue) suggest that the act of translation can itself serve as an analytical tool.

As its title - *Lost (and Found) in Translation* – shows, this special issue's interdisciplinary focus on translation is both critical *and* constructive. It enables readers to begin, or continue, to engage with some of these very thorny epistemological, methodological and ethical issues in interesting ways. It points to the value of reflecting on the methods we use, and on the ethical and political responsibility we bear, when we traverse language differences to write about people's lives.

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Travelling between languages and disciplines: linguistic and interdisciplinary translation practices in Women's/Gender Studies

Abstract

In this paper I address issues related to translation from a disciplinary (linguistic) and an interdisciplinary perspective. I theorize translation as a process of travelling between a) languages and b) disciplines. In my discussion of translation as a travelling between languages, I address questions about language as a medium of constituting social reality and shaping experience. Here, I examine how words are related to different conceptualizations across different languages and argue that this linguistic and social context of concepts must be made visible and problematized in processes of translation. To illustrate the need for a reflexive engagement with this issue, I explore two case studies: the different conceptualizations related to various translations of 'gender; and the sexism embedded in, and reproduced through the use of grammatical gender in Greek. In addition, I claim that the metaphor of translation can be productively used to problematize the travelling of concepts between disciplines. I demonstrate this through a focus on processes of reception, integration and expansion of meanings between linguistics and feminist philosophy and I examine the ways in which the concept of performativity has undergone a process of conceptual translation. Finally, I raise issues of politics and power associated with translation practices.

Women's/Gender Studies scholars as (conceptual) translators

As a co-teacher in an MA course on 'Practising Interdisciplinarity in European Gender Studies',¹ I had the opportunity to participate in a process of ongoing translation that took place within a heterogeneous community of Gender Studies teachers and students. The course aimed at increasing knowledge of interdisciplinary work in Gender Studies on a European level, taking into consideration the regional, ethnic and national differences within Europe (Grenz & Pereira 2009: 41-42). The participants in this course were 10 teachers and 18 students from different European institutional locations who had to negotiate their disciplinary and linguistic differences in order to engage in an open dialogue with each other

¹ Members of the Interdisciplinarity subgroup (part of the *Travelling Concepts* working group, Athena 3) planned and co-taught an experimental intensive course on 'Practising Interdisciplinarity in European Gender Studies' at Radboud University, Nijmegen (23 June-4 July 2008). (See Grenz & Pereira, 2009).

and practice interdisciplinarity. During this course, participants were involved in two sorts of translation processes: translations from one language into another(s) and translations from one discipline into another(s).² Drawing on this experience, I propose here a broader view of translation which includes both processes of producing equivalent meanings between different language systems³ and processes of reception, integration and expansion of meanings and concepts that take place in interdisciplinary spaces when different disciplinary systems and codes come into contact. That is, I theorize translation also as a conceptual interdisciplinary process, which I define as ‘conceptual translation’.⁴

In this paper, I conceptualize translation as a double process of travelling between languages and disciplines, and I approach this dual aspect by drawing on a) my disciplinary location, which is linguistics (in particular sociolinguistics, pragmatics, linguistic anthropology and cognitive linguistics) and b) on the interdisciplinary dialogues between language and gender research, on the one hand, and feminist philosophy, on the other. In the following sections, I will examine the relation between meanings, concepts, language, thought and culture, and argue that words are linked with specific concepts which vary across cultures and which are not always easy to transfer in translation processes. I illustrate this with two case studies - the different uses of the terms ‘gender/sex’ across European languages and the sexism reproduced through the use of grammatical gender in Greek. I will then apply this notion of translation to an analysis of interdisciplinary movements of concepts, focusing specifically on how the notion of performativity has been subjected to processes of conceptual translation in the context of interdisciplinary dialogues between linguistics and feminist philosophy. To conclude, I will raise issues of power and politics related to translation processes.

² The participants in the course were affiliated in philosophy, political sciences, cultural studies, linguistics and Women’s/Gender Studies, to mention only but a few.

³ Bassnett-Maguire defines translation as “the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and the structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted” (1991: 2 in Andermahr et al. 2000: 277).

⁴ Braidotti (2002: 302) uses the term trans-disciplinary ‘conceptual translators’ to describe the process of creating a European interdisciplinary curriculum in Women’s/Gender Studies.

Travelling between languages: the power of words

Ideas travel between national and cultural borders because of language, that is, because people possess a flexible symbolic system for the communication of abstract meanings. Discussions relating to translation usually involve discussions on *words*. Why do non-native speakers of English often feel that part of the meanings they intend to communicate get lost in their ‘Greek’, ‘Spanish’ or ‘Swedish’ English? Why do we experience certain kinds of restrictions imposed by our native languages? Why do words matter so much?

Words are defined by Saussure ([1916] 1979) as linguistic signs (symbols), i.e. arbitrary associations of concepts (signified) and acoustic images (signifier). For example, the word *cat* is associated with the concept of a mammal with four legs, a tail, which meows, and the acoustic image [kat]. According to cognitive linguistics, concepts are mental representations which are related to conventional semantic contents (meanings) (Evans & Green 2006: 6-9). Quoting Fauconnier (1994: xxii-xxiii), linguistic meanings are just the ‘peak of a conceptual iceberg’ which provides speakers’ conceptual system with minimum instructions for accessing more complex ideas and concepts (Evans & Green 2006: 8-9). Words function as ‘access-points’ to a wide repertoire of stored cultural knowledge which is organized into structures that have been theorized as frames (Fillmore 1975 in Evans & Green 2006: 222), domains (Langacker 1987 in Evans & Green 2006: 230) or idealized cognitive [metonymic] models (Lakoff 1987). All of them constitute knowledge structures (conceptual schematizations of experience) that serve as the basis for the interpretation of linguistic meanings and link language with cognition and culture (Kövesces 2006: 64).

Language is deeply embedded in social practices. Words do not simply refer to the objects of the external world. Speakers use words in order to evaluate things, express particular attitudes towards the world or *do things*, to quote Austin (1962). Being contextualized in the social world, words are not neutral; they carry social, ideological meanings which naturalize and

reproduce the social order (Bourdieu 1977, Eckert-McConnell-Ginet 2003)⁵. Because linguistic meanings prompt the construction of concepts, different linguistic meanings tend to produce different thoughts and conceptualizations, i.e. different ways of experiencing reality. According to the linguistic relativity hypothesis⁶ (Gumperz & Levinson 1996: 23-24), linguistic categories influence certain aspects of speakers' non-linguistic categorization, memory, perception or thinking.

How does this linguistic perspective on words and meanings contribute to our understanding of translation practices and processes in Women's/Gender Studies? If words carry socially and culturally defined meanings which orient speakers towards different perceptions of the world, then these meanings must be considered and made visible in translation processes. I discuss this problem through two case studies: a) the different conceptualizations related to the translations of gender in Scandinavian languages and the Bulgarian language, and b) the reproduction of sexism through the use of grammatical gender in the Greek language.

Case study one: the English 'gender' travelling in other languages

In this section I focus on how gender has been translated across different European languages. Braidotti (2002) has discussed some of the problems and conceptual challenges that emerge from the dominant Anglo-American model of theorization of the sex-gender distinction, and has argued for the need to find adequate modes of translation in different European languages without reducing cultural and linguistic diversity. She asks: Does the English word 'gender' have equivalents in other European languages? Do we actually possess a common language to talk about the same things in European Women's/Gender Studies? Here I re-address these questions from a linguistic perspective. What kinds of conceptual,

⁵ Here I refer to a wide range of linguistic work which has been influenced by phenomenology, social constructivism and poststructuralism, for instance Austin's work on performatives (1962) or Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, Schegloff 2006).

⁶ The idea of linguistic relativity is originally attributed to Humboldt, Boas, Sapir and Whorf. According to the linguistic relativity hypothesis, a) different languages use different semantic representation systems, b) semantic representations determine aspects of conceptual representations, so c) users of different languages use different conceptual representations (Gumperz & Levinson 1996: 2, 7).

cultural and social differences do different uses of the terms ‘gender/sex’ across different languages highlight? Do these language-specific differences get lost in translation?

According to Widerberg (1998: 134), the English word ‘gender’ was used primarily in grammatical and literary contexts and was adopted by American feminists in the 1970s to define sex in a social sense. While the word *sex* in English is associated with the concept of the biological and the natural, the word *gender* is associated with the concept of the social and the constructed; that is, speaking from a linguistic perspective, ‘gender’ activates a conceptual frame which highlights social constructions in opposition to biological differences. In this sense, I argue that the English word *gender* includes a ‘mini-theory’ about gender. These ‘mini-theories’ vary across different languages. In the Scandinavian languages, the division between the social and the biological is not encoded by equivalent gender terms. According to Jegerstedt (2000), the words *kjønn* (Norwegian), *køn* (Danish), and *kön* (Swedish) cover the meaning of both ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. These words are associated with frames which include both social constructions and biological differences. Speakers distinguish between sex and gender by using markers such as ‘biological’ (*biologisk kjønn*) and ‘social’ (*sosialt kjønn*). Because these terms do not force any distinctions between the biological and the social, they are considered to be more useful by feminists than other possible equivalents of the English term ‘gender’ e.g. the Latin word *genus*. Widerberg discusses the tensions that arise in relation to these language differences and the difficulties of translating research from Scandinavian countries into English:

(...) specific understandings of gender within most cultures cannot be properly translated; they get made into something else, into the understandings of gender that are implicit in the English language (...) the dominant language of gender, and its gender of language (...) differences in understandings of gender are made invisible, we all sing the same song, the American tune, so familiar to us all. (1998: 134)

Nikolchina (2006: 125) discusses the various ways in which gender has been translated from English into Bulgarian. These ways ‘meta’-reflect issues which have been central in the feminist debates in the Bulgarian context, such as the nature/culture division, essentialism, sexual difference and strategies against inequality and discrimination. *Rod*, the Bulgarian

word for grammatical gender, is considered to be a problematic translation of the English *gender* because it carries meanings of blood kinship, filiation, etc., as well as ‘asexual’ meanings which imply a type of organic relationship and maternal continuity rather than difference and division (Nikolchina 2006: 125-126). The frame activated by the use of the word *rod* integrates the ideological position that gender issues can be resolved through relatedness and togetherness, rather than conflict, and thus it hides or denies the drama of sexual differences (Nikolchina 2006: 126). On the other hand, the translation of gender by the Bulgarian word for sex *pol* foregrounds issues of sexual differences, because it emphasizes division (sexual difference) and individual (be it man’s or woman’s) incompleteness (Nikolchina 2006: 126-127). According to Nikolchina, *pol* used to refer to the sexual organs or the sexual act; the broad use of the English word ‘sex’ in the Bulgarian language “expropriated the essentialist aspects of *pol*, its deployments as ‘nature’ and exposed its etymological closeness to the Bulgarian word for ‘half’ and ‘divide’” (Nikolchina 2006: 126). The different uses of ‘gender/sex’ in these languages and their translation into English show that translation is not a linear and uncontested process. Words do not have equivalent meanings across different languages; words with the same referents may carry different social and ideological connotations which orient speakers to different conceptualizations of the world. For example, the Swedish *kön* signifies both the biological and the social. However, this meaning is lost when Swedish speakers translate their work into English which marks the division between the biological and the social via the ‘sex/gender’ distinction. In this case translation operates as a restrictive process for speakers. These case studies also raise another interesting question about what constitutes a ‘proper’ translation. For example, the translation of ‘gender’ in Bulgarian echoes ideological tensions in relation to key feminist issues, such as essentialism or sexual difference.

Case study two: grammatical gender as a medium of constructing asymmetric representations of women and men

The terms ‘sex/gender’ are part of the system of gender deixis (McConnell-Ginet 1988: 80) in language, that is, a set of grammatical and lexical means which index gender (Ochs 1992), construct gender identities and social relations (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003), and sustain

gender ideologies. These social labeling practices shape and give content to gender identities (McConnell-Ginet 2003: 71). In Greek, grammatical gender (masculine, feminine or neuter) constitutes the most overt, direct and exclusive index of gender (Ochs 1992).⁷ Grammatical gender is a morphological category which marks biological difference in the case of animate reference (grammatically feminine nouns denote female referents while grammatically masculine nouns denote male referents, i.e. there is a close correspondence between the grammatical gender of the noun and the sex of the noun's referent), which produces asymmetric representations of women and men. For example, in Greek grammatically feminine personal nouns tend to be female-specific (*οι φοιτήτριες* [oi fititries] the students. FEM is used for female referents only), while grammatically masculine nouns have a wider lexical and referential potential (*οι φοιτητές* [oi fitites] the students/MASC is used for both male and female referents) (Pavlidou 2003). Hellinger (2001: 108) has commented on the generic use of the masculine as a practice integrating an underlying ideology which defines 'male as the norm' and 'female as the other/deviant from the norm'. A male bias in the way gender is represented by the Greek language has also been confirmed by Pavlidou, Alvanoudi & Karafoti (2004). This study found that the masculine gender is primarily used for person reference in Greek.

These aspects of gender representation are rarely taken into account in discussions around translation processes. How does the system of gender deixis in a language, in particular the system of grammatical gender, affect speakers' gendered stances towards the world and their experience of the world? For instance, Boroditsky, Schmidt & Phillips (2003) have shown that grammatical gender in Spanish and German affects speakers' perception of the inanimate world, because the objects denoted by masculine nouns tend to be perceived by speakers as male, while the objects denoted by feminine nouns tend to be perceived by speakers as female. In my doctoral research on the social and cognitive dimension of grammatical gender (Alvanoudi 2009a, 2009b), I examine how the system of grammatical gender affects speakers' 'thinking for speaking' (Slobin 1996) and speakers' perception of the world through the lens of a) structural and b) discursive relativity (Gumperz & Levinson 1996). Regarding the first aspect, I examine whether the grammatical gender of inanimate nouns

⁷ For a thorough analysis of the different systems of gender deixis across different languages see Bussmann & Hellinger (2001, 2002, 2003). For an analysis of the system of grammatical gender in Greek see Pavlidou (2003).

affects speakers' perception of referents as female or male. Regarding the second aspect, I examine whether the use of grammatical gender categories constitute linguistic practices, i.e. habitual ways of orientation to the world and experiencing of the world (*habitus*), which produce gendered stances and affect the way speakers think about reality. I conceptualize grammatical gender as an index of gender which indexes gender directly in the case of animate reference and indirectly in the case of inanimate reference. I also conceptualize how grammatical gender integrates stereotypical beliefs about gender and performs gender categories and the dominant gender order. Indexes denote social meanings (Ochs 1992), co-exist with their referents and constitute or perform them (Silverstein 1976 in Duranti 1997: 19). Let me provide an example of what I consider to be a typical instance of grammatical gender operating as a direct (performative) index of gender. Hall and O'Donovan (1996) have shown how in India the hijras, a transgender category whose members are born male but do not identify as male or female, use feminine and masculine gender markers in Hindi in order to express particular social meanings and resist and subvert the oppressive gender dichotomy. For instance, they use the masculine gender in order to construct, that is perform, relations of power while they use the feminine gender in order to construct, that is perform, relations of solidarity. They refer to themselves in the past tense in the masculine and in the present tense in the feminine in order to signal that they identify neither as men nor women and perform a 'third gender'.

Why is the social and cognitive dimension of grammatical gender important in discussions about translation? I believe that examining the ways in which gender is grammaticized across different languages and the ways in which these language patterns affect speakers' ways of experiencing the world contributes to our understanding of the constitutive power of language in terms of constructing and maintaining the dominant gender order as well as in terms of experiencing it. When I speak Greek, my thoughts may reflect language specific conceptualisations of gender and therefore differ from my thoughts when I speak English. In addition, when I speak Greek I may express certain social meanings through the local system of gender deixis which may get lost in translation into another language (English), which uses a different system of gender deixis. In Greek, the generic masculine is used in a vast number of cases in daily interactions. For instance, in the phrase 'Who is it?' (Ποιος [poios] who.MASC είναι [ine] is it?) the pronoun 'who' is masculine and thus it is marked as male,

and in the phrase ‘Jon and Maria are happy’ (είναι [ine] are χαρούμενοι [xarumeni] happy.MASC+PLU) the adjective ‘happy’ is masculine and thus it is marked as male. The generic use of the masculine gender necessarily marks male sex and produces asymmetrical representations of gender. The animate world is represented as male and language forces women to ‘symbolic exile’, speaking in Irigaray’s (1985a) terms. Women do not ‘see’ themselves in language. Women’s experience of being muted and under-represented by language cannot be understood when these sentences get translated into English in which the words ‘who’ and ‘happy’ are gender-neutral.

Given that certain aspects of speakers’ experience with their native languages may get lost in translation, there is a risk of losing sight of the specific ways in which sexism is constructed and reproduced through language. Still, thinking about translation critically may allow us, who are involved in translation processes, to reflect on the different contextual histories of words across different languages and thus understand better the ‘voices’ of the subjects that we seek to translate.

Travelling between disciplines: interdisciplinarity as conceptual translation

So far, I have examined translation as a process operating between different languages. Now, I turn to my second point regarding translation as a process operating between different disciplines. If we conceive disciplines as different semantic/conceptual systems analogical to languages, we can theorize interdisciplinary dialogues between disciplines as processes of translating concepts from one conceptual system into another. According to Lykke, interdisciplinarity is a process of transgressing “borders between disciplinary canons and approaches in a theoretical and methodological bricolage that allows for new synergies to emerge” (2004: 97). These new synergies are possible only because people who speak different disciplinary languages manage to understand each other and communicate on the basis of a common code. This communication presupposes a process of conceptual translation, that is, the exchange of meanings and concepts between disciplines and their subsequent integration and transformation in different disciplinary contexts. Interdisciplinarity has often been characterized as a buzzword (Pavlidou 2006c, Liinason

2009). Here I propose the notion of conceptual translation as a working definition for the interdisciplinary movement in and out of disciplines and the hybrid spaces (Latour 2000) that emerge in-between disciplines. I give an example of what I consider to be a typical case of conceptual translation between linguistics and feminist philosophy – the concept of performativity.

The concept of performativity has travelled from linguistics to feminist philosophy and from feminist philosophy back to linguistics; thus it has been subjected to two kinds of conceptual translations, a feminist philosophical one and a feminist linguistic one. Performativity is central to linguistic pragmatics and to Austin's speech act theory (1962), which theorized language as a medium of doing things and performing actions.⁸ The concept of performativity has different trajectories in different disciplines (Pavlidou, 2006a: 5), and this can be demonstrated by exploring the relations between Austin's and Butler's theories of performativity.

Butler's theory of the performativity of gender ([1990] 1999, 1997) is deeply influenced by Austin's speech act theory as well as Derrida's (1972 in Butler 1997: 13) critical reformulation of the performative. Butler (1999) theorizes gender as an act, a 'doing' rather than a 'being', "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1999: 43-44). In this sense, gender is *performative*, because it constitutes the very identity it is purported to be. Drawing on the Nietzschean position that there is no 'being' behind the doing and that the doing itself is everything, she argues that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 1999: 33). Gender identities are performed through language. Butler (1999) argues that there is no 'I' outside language; intelligible subjects are the effects rather than the causes of discourses and gendered bodies are inseparable from the acts that constitute them (Salih 2002: 65). It is in this framework that the doctor's utterance 'it's a girl' operates as a performative which initiates a process of

⁸ According to Austin (1962), speakers perform three types of acts when they speak: a) locutionary - the act of saying something, b) illocutionary - the act accomplished by the speaker in saying something due to the conventional force of the locutionary act, and c) perlocutionary - the act produced by the locutionary act.

‘girling’ and interpellates the subject into being within the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1997). Based on Derrida’s position that linguistic signs can be reiterated in ways that do not conform to their speakers’ or writers’ original intentions (Salih 2002: 91), Butler moves from performativity to citationality and theorizes words as potential *loci* of resignification, agency, and subversion, as a medium of changing prior contexts and inaugurating new ones.

Butler’s theory of performativity has been influential for language and gender research. An originally linguistic concept returns to linguistics with a renewed feminist philosophical content. The name is the same but its referent has slightly changed. Butler’s theory of performativity, together with symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, social anthropology, interactive linguistics, ethnography of communication and conversation analysis (Pavlidou 2006a: 30), signifies the ‘performance turn’ or ‘discourse turn’ in language and gender research (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 4-5), or what Mills (2004, 2008) calls ‘Third Wave feminist linguistics’, in contrast to ‘Second Wave feminist linguistics’. The performance turn changed the focus of the agenda in language and gender research because it shifted attention from the study of language as a medium of representation to language as a medium of construction of gender (Livia and Hall 1997: 11). In the former case, gender is theorized as a stable homogeneous category which is reflected in language, while in the latter case gender is theorized as a heterogeneous category which is constructed and negotiated through language (Pavlidou 2006b: 23-36). After the performance turn, language and gender research started to focus on the kinds of linguistic resources that speakers deploy to present themselves as certain kinds of women or men (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 5), on the ways in which gender is accomplished (performed) through linguistic practices in every day interaction within particular communities of practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1998, 2003) and on the ways in which gender becomes relevant in interaction through indexicality (McElhinny 2003: 35, Ochs 1992) (i.e. how do linguistic forms index gender identity directly or indirectly?).⁹ A good example of how performativity is understood and analyzed in language and gender research is Hall & O’ Donovan’s work on the ways in which the hijras construct their gender identity through language (see the

⁹ For example, the use of tag questions (e.g. It’s a nice day, *isn’t it?*) is associated with tentativeness which is associated with feminine behavior according to cultural and ideological expectations about femininity (McElhinny 2003: 35).

previous section). The hijras deploy specific linguistic practices (i.e. they use the masculine or the feminine gender) in order to *perform* masculine or feminine identities.

Performativity re-enters language and gender research through the lens of Butler's work, shifting attention to gender as a 'doing' which is performed through language. At the same time, the concept of performativity gets creatively integrated and expanded through the systematic linguistic analysis of the performative/constitutive role of language. Butler argues that gender is performed through language but language and gender research scholars are the ones to show in detail how this is done, through their careful examination of the ways in which linguistic practices construct gender.

I view the conceptual translation of performativity as a set of 'transgressive steps' which blur disciplinary boundaries and open up hybrid spaces where interdisciplinarity can be materialized. These hybrid spaces combine elements of knowledge from both feminist philosophy and linguistics, re-signifying the content of performativity and creating the possibility for the concept to develop in new ways or 'perform itself' in unforeseen ways – speaking in Butler's terms – which are not legitimate within the static and restrictive mono-disciplinary contexts.

Processes of conceptual translation are processes of interdisciplinary dialogue about concepts which travel between disciplines and get transformed through their travelling. Pavlidou (2006a) argues that interdisciplinarity requires the development of shared knowledge and of common background assumptions and presuppositions, which involve an understanding of the practices that lie behind a discipline or concept and an acknowledgement of the rooting of the meaning of a word in a specific context.

When a term/concept «travels» from one field to another (or from one culture to another) the old context is left behind, and another one usually becomes operative; and in this new context a different bundle of significations may accompany the/some nuclear meaning that was supposed to be carried over. An interdisciplinary approach would probably have to assess both contexts in order to gain full understanding of what is going on. (Pavlidou 2006a: 5)

In my opinion, conceptual translation is about contextualizing concepts and understanding the practices that lie behind them.

Whose language? Whose meanings?

Translation as travelling between languages and disciplines inevitably raises questions of power and representation. Whose linguistic, cultural and disciplinary differences are represented through translation processes? How are we, feminist European Women's/Gender Studies scholars, to be held accountable for our translation practices? To quote Spivak:

My first obligation in understanding solidarity is to learn her mother-tongue. If you are interested in talking about the other or and/in making a claim to be the other, it is crucial to learn other languages. There are countless languages in which women all over the world have grown up being female or feminist and yet the languages we keep on learning by rote are the powerful European ones, sometimes the powerful Asian ones, least often the chief African ones. (1992: 190)

Language matters and language differences do matter. I have shown in the previous sections that language is not a neutral medium which refers to the external world; it is rather linked with the speakers' worldview, constituting a tool of action which shapes speakers' experience. If we re-read Spivak's call for learning other languages from such a linguistic perspective, we can better understand why the act of learning other languages becomes an act of solidarity. Learning 'her language' means desiring or attempting to learn 'her world' and hear 'her voice'. In this sense, translation practices involve our collective practices of learning how to speak with each other and hear each other when we speak English with our different linguistic/cultural/disciplinary 'accents'.

Practices of translation between languages and disciplines foreground issues of diversity. It is our different linguistic, cultural and disciplinary voices that seek to be represented through translation. There are two homogenizing forces in present day academia which work against

difference and which we, Women's/Gender Studies scholars, need to overcome: the English language hegemony, and disciplinarity. The first one can be negotiated but it can never be fully resolved. Becoming multilingual is an act of solidarity in Spivak's terms. Still, no matter how many languages we learn there will always be some part of the linguistic, social and cultural context of the text that will get lost in translation. Our awareness of this restriction can limit the amount of context that risks getting lost and a reflexive engagement with these restrictions can lead us to find important insights about how words are used across different languages and how the various social and cultural contexts shape their meanings.

The second problem is disciplinarity. Conceptual translation is not a 'friendly' practice for present day academia, because it addresses issues of interdisciplinarity and it thus challenges the dominant cognitive disciplinary *habitus* within academia. According to Liinason, "the possibilities for developing interdisciplinary (...) collaborations are largely the result of the researchers' willingness to challenge their own intellectual habits" (2009: 59). This willingness is not easily found in the disciplinary contexts of current European academia, especially in times of intense pressures to increase productivity and publish in (usually disciplinary) highly reputed international journals. Even in contexts such as Women's/Gender Studies, where interdisciplinarity is said to be an aim, conceptual translation needs to overcome the disciplinary hierarchies that already exist within interdisciplinary research. To quote Hark (2007: 30), "what is left out when inter- or transdisciplinarity becomes the norm? How can we guarantee that all disciplinary perspectives are heard in contexts that organise knowledge along hierarchically ordered disciplinary lines? What kind of disciplinary hierarchies already exist in the field of Women's Studies?" If there are disciplinary hierarchies in the interdisciplinary work we are doing in Women's/Gender Studies, does that mean that certain disciplinary voices will be heard through processes of conceptual translation while others will not? How can we avoid exclusionary practices?

A preliminary response to this question would be that this paper already constitutes a challenge to disciplinary hierarchies. Linguistics is not a key research area within Women's/Gender Studies. Yet, here I am, a feminist linguist working on language and gender, already being involved in processes of conceptual translation, writing about translation practices in Women's/Gender Studies from a linguistic perspective, asking my

non-linguist readers to hear my ‘disciplinary perspective’ and get engaged in a (interdisciplinary?) dialogue with me.

Translators as nomadic subjects

In this paper, I proposed that translation constitutes a double process of travelling between languages and disciplines. I showed that translation foregrounds our different linguistic, cultural and disciplinary locations either as restrictions (lost in translation) or as potential (found in translation) for emerging links between different linguistic communities working on the same concepts (e.g. Women’s/Gender Studies) or between different disciplinary and post-disciplinary communities (e.g. language and gender research and Women’s/Gender Studies as a post-disciplinary discipline, according to Lykke 2004). In the latter case, translation foregrounds difference as an affirmative positive category which generates potential for creative and subversive forms of becoming: translators as nomadic subjects (Braidotti 1994) in transit between different (disciplinary) languages, crossing linguistic and disciplinary borders, making connections and coalitions with different linguistic and disciplinary locations in an inclusive manner, forming a transgressive identity or what Braidotti has described as “a collective becoming polyglot” (1994: 36). According to Braidotti,

Feminists need to become fluid in a variety of styles and disciplinary angles and in many different dialects, jargons, languages, relinquishing the image of sisterhood in the sense of global similarity of all women *qua* second sex in favor of the recognition of the complexity of the semiotic and material conditions in which women operate. (1994: 36)

Translation as travelling between languages and disciplines addresses precisely this multiplicity of voices as well as the complex ways in which semiotic resources (languages) affect the materialities of women’s lives. As such, a critical engagement with language difference and translation deals by necessity with issues of difference, power and representation.

To conclude, I believe that the conceptualization of translation as a process operating between languages and disciplines (conceptual translation) can contribute to our better understanding of the complexities, the difficulties as well as the potential that arise from speaking different languages and practicing different disciplines.

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Translation in excess: engaging semiotics and the untranslatable

For to some degree all great texts contain their virtual translation between the lines...
Walter Benjamin

Introduction: “what” and “how” to translate

In this paper I want to explore the potential of translation as a methodological resource for social research. Broadly speaking, this potential derives from the fact that the notion of translation places the focus on relations between heterogeneous sites. This has become increasingly important in research designs functioning in line with what George Marcus (1995) has called ‘multi-sited ethnographies.’ Such research designs are concerned not so much with single-site locations structured by a larger social order, but rather with multiple sites positioned simultaneously as “local” and “global” and belonging to a range of institutional, political, and everyday fields of practice. ‘[T]he practice of translation,’ Marcus notes, ‘connects the several sites that the research explores along unexpected and even dissonant fractures of social location’ (1995, 100). While my discussion of translation is based on such an understanding of multi-sited-ness, I aim to make an intervention concerning the two interrelated issues of “what” translation is actually meant to engage and “how” this can happen.

The question of “what” translation is concerned with has grown increasingly vague over the past decades due to an excessive use of the term. Traditionally, translation has referred to “languages” in the sense of systems of signs that are tied to distinctive nation-based units (“German,” “Turkish,” etc.). This understanding has been opened up for instance by anthropologists and actor-network theorists who have also looked at objects and practices as being subject to “translation.” Translation has been used here as a broad and rather unspecific

metaphor. Such a broad understanding has had the advantage of moving beyond the focus on nation-bound “languages” that has been problematised as will be further elaborated below. However, in becoming merely metaphoric, the notion of translation has simultaneously lost some of its specific analytic capacity. I will elaborate what this capacity consists of by drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s (1980/2004) notion of “semiotic translation,” which moves beyond the alternatives between understandings that link translation to nation-bound languages, on the one hand, or those that use translation in an unspecific and metaphoric way, on the other. Translation, from this perspective, is concerned with “expressions.” It is furthermore concerned with affective dynamics that simultaneously enable and exceed the semiotic framing and transformation of expressions. Translation may enable such affective dynamics, which function as a kind of expressive “excess,” to be apprehended in new ways.

The issue of “what” translation engages cannot be separated from the question of “how” it takes place, since there are different ways in which the affective dynamics enabling (and emerging from) translation can unfold. Translation, it will be argued, demands first of all a capacity to respond to the singularity of an expressive world, a way of becoming “responsible” with respect to its semiotics and “excessive” affective dynamics. Furthermore, the kinds of projects in which particular “translation moves” take place also play a vital role. While translations often become powerful means of appropriating and subjugating otherness, they may also give rise to “becomings with” as characterised by Donna Haraway (2008). A truly responsible practice of translation, it will be argued, needs to engage the uncertain ground where heterogeneous expressions are able to acquire agency in the joint “worldings” (Haraway) they are entangled in. This announces a “translation in excess,” a translation that mobilises expressive excesses for responsible becomings with.

This paper thus addresses “translation in excess” in a double sense. On the one hand, it aims to overcome some of the conceptual weaknesses that have ensued from the excessive usage of translation, and, on the other, it argues for the need to responsibly engage with expressive excesses. I will start with a rather unlikely place in Walter Benjamin for a discussion of translation. His text “Butterfly hunt” from *Berlin Childhood around 1900* provides an evocative example for interrogating the connections between the “what” and the “how” of

translation. I will then go into a conceptual discussion of translation and use some vignettes from my fieldwork with lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people in Brazil to indicate ways in which the notion of semiotic translation can be deployed. My research addresses relations between everyday experiences, governmental, activist and media discourses and practices, in particular around issues of security and what German-speakers call “*Geborgenheit*,” meaning something like security and sheltered-ness, however in an immediately positive sense rather than indicating the aversion of dangers (see Hutta 2009). The aim is to relate the heterogeneous sites under consideration by amplifying and enacting translation movements between them. In order to exemplify this work of translation, I will discuss different ways in which the gay kiss becomes semiotically framed.

Dancing with butterflies

In his *Berlin Childhood around 1900* Benjamin (1938/2006) poetically invokes intense moments and places of the world in which he grew up, mobilising his memory as a critical resource of situated knowledge. In the section “Butterfly hunt,” the child of Benjamin’s remembrance gets lured ‘away from well-kept garden paths into a wilderness, where [he] stood powerless before the conspiracy of wind and scents, foliage and sun, which were bound to govern the flight [*Flug*] of the butterflies’ (50).¹ As the child surrenders to a ‘conspiracy’ of forces, he playfully enters the intense world of the fluttering creatures. This self-surrendering and playful engagement is coupled, however, with a desire to subjugate and capture the butterflies. If the child wishes to ‘dissolve’ into the conspiring forces of light and air, it is in order to ‘approach the prey unnoticed and be able to subdue [*überwältigen*] it’ (51). This scenario resembles a recurrent dynamic in traditional fieldwork, where the researcher leaves the (seemingly) well-kept space of the academic institution temporarily and enters a field of forces for which her or his body is not quite a match. On the one hand, the boy’s playful entering of the world of butterflies shares a lot of the curiosity about the

¹ The English translations of Benjamin’s texts have been modified at several instances in order to approximate the original German wording. Benjamin’s translators time and again fall into the trap against which Benjamin himself warns when he quotes Rudolf Pannwitz: ‘[Our translations] have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign work’ (1923/2004, 82). For examples see notes 2 and 13. I will come back to the issue of letting the own language be affected by the foreign one in the last section of this paper.

emergent novelty resulting from encounters with difference which Haraway (2008) considers vital to response-able “becoming with.” Haraway proposes this notion of “becoming with” in order to address ethical ways of responding to one another, taking into account one’s own necessary entanglement with, and constitution through, multiple other beings. “Becoming with” for Haraway also means “becoming worldly,” participating in a joint “worlding” where different beings respond to each other in ethical ways – rather than enactments where the powerful subdue subalterns. On the other hand, however, the extent to which the boy is willing to surrender and become with the butterflies is radically limited. His wish to become invisible in order to ‘subdue’ his ‘prey’ brings to mind the troubled ethnographic attempt to “go native,” which tends to render the ethnographer’s distinctive project and position of power transparent, unwittingly turning surrendering into violent appropriation (for critical discussions of ethnographic authority see Clifford 2003; Marcus 2001).

This tension between becoming with the butterflies and their violent appropriation has implications regarding the question of “how” to translate. The boy returns from the hunt not only with a butterfly in his net, but also with a new knowledge of its ‘language,’ which creates a potential for translation:

On that laborious way back, the spirit of the moribund creature entered into the hunter. The foreign language in which the butterfly and the flowers had communicated [*sich verständigt hatten*] before his eyes – he now had won some precepts from it. His lust to kill had diminished; his confidence [*Zuversicht*] was grown all the greater. (Benjamin 1938/2006, 52)

As a consequence of his wish to dissolve into the very forces of light, scents and air that conspire before his eyes, ‘bound to govern the flight of the butterflies,’ the boy achieves an embodied learning of the butterfly-flower language. ‘And this wish of mine,’ the narrator notes, ‘got fulfilled to such an extent that every quiver or palpitation of the wings I was gapingly smitten by grazed me with its puff or ripple’ (51). During the hunt the boy develops a sensitivity to the very forces that make up the world of butterflies, beginning to become-butterfly himself:

Between us, now, the old law of the hunt took hold: the more I nestled in all fibers up against the animal [*je mehr ich selbst in allen Fibern mich dem Tier anschmiegte*] – the more butterfly-like I became in the inner world – the more this butterfly itself, in its doings, took on the color of human volition [*EntschlieÙung*]; and in the end, it was as if its capture was the price at which alone I could obtain a hold again of my human existence [*meines Menscheindaseins*]. (Ibid.)²

While the boy bodily enters the world of the butterflies, he simultaneously clings on to the project of the hunt, which promises to avert the entire loss of his ‘human existence.’ He thus interpellates the butterfly into his project, so much so that it seems to respond to his actions with ‘the color of human volition.’ The boy’s becoming-butterfly is bound up with the butterfly’s becoming-human.

The “Butterfly hunt,” then, brings out the powerful, and dangerous, projects translation may be entangled in and support, which raises the question about more response-able/responsible forms of translation. At the same time, however, the text indicates an important dynamic that opens up a potential for responsible translation – even if this potential gets articulated in a project of appropriation and domination. The boy’s moment of surrendering to a foreign conspiracy, his opening up towards new modes of expression and his embodied discovery of new capacities of being affected allows him to gain some intimate knowledge of the ‘foreign language’ of flowers and butterfly. Such an intimate knowledge forms a precondition for responsible translation, as Gayatri Spivak (1992/2004) has argued. “Surrendering to the text in this way means, most of the time, being literal,” she notes (378). The boy’s engagement with the butterflies, his “nestling in all fibres up against the animal” brings out the embodied dimensions of “being literal.” He follows the little bodies and movements in all their details as the translator follows the words of a text. Yet, at the same time, the boy’s learning of the butterfly-flower language coincides with an imposition of the human language of the hunt onto the butterflies. Becoming-butterfly goes only as far as is necessary for subduing, and killing, the prey.

² The translator Howard Eiland renders ‘*im Innern*’ – literally ‘in the inner’, which I translate as ‘in the inner world’ – as ‘in my heart and soul,’ which evokes an image Benjamin does not seem to intend.

If an intimate engagement with the other is a precondition for responsible translation, it is thus by no means a sufficient one. What is important is rather within what kind of project such an engagement happens – a question which the anthropological attempts to ‘go native’ often elide. This leads us to a search for figurations beyond the hunter. Spivak proposes a form of solidarity that arises from inhabiting the uncertain ground where another language gains an agency of its own – and is not merely subdued or given voice to within one’s own frame of representation. Donna Haraway’s (2008) discussion of inter-species encounters resonates with Spivak’s argument. Haraway points out the ‘situated histories, situated naturecultures, in which all the actors become who they are *in the dance of relating*, not from scratch, not *ex-nihilo*, but full of the patterns of their sometimes-joined, sometimes-separate heritages both before and lateral to *this* encounter’ (2008, 25; emphases in the original). Haraway’s characterisation of ‘material-semiotic dancing’ (26) indicates a way of imagining processes of “becoming with” that exceed the regime of hunting, marked by the oscillation between going native and violent appropriation. Bringing to bear the both joined and separate heritages of researchers and of the various others encountered before, during and after research, means situating translations within the singular worldings made possible by these encounters. We could only speculate how the boy of *Berlin Childhood* may have learned the language of the butterflies if he had danced with them instead of hunting them, if he had entered a joint worlding instead of the heroic masculinist plot where animals are killed in order to render them amenable to knowledge and where nature is staged as man’s feast (Haraway 1997). At any rate, what seems to bear the biggest potential for entering a joint worlding and enabling responsible translation in the “Butterfly hunt” is the boy’s moment of playfulness and curious surrendering, the unwitting dance happening before the capture of the butterfly.

Benjamin’s text also poses the “what” question in interesting ways, although no translation proper takes place. The embodied learning of part of the ‘foreign language in which the butterfly and the flowers had communicated’ forms however a precondition to translation. Let us consider Benjamin’s use of the term ‘language’ in this formulation. Language is radically extended here beyond a traditional understanding of nation-bound human languages, a notion that will be further problematised below. However, Benjamin’s use becomes by no means imprecise or metaphoric. It relates specifically to the “communication”

of butterfly and flowers, to their ‘communicable nature’ [*mitteilbares Wesen*], as Benjamin (1916/1979) calls it. The ‘foreign language’ of butterfly and flowers denotes the particular expressive scenario they stage before the boy’s eyes – the ‘spell that the flowers seemed to cast on the pair of wings,’ the way in which ‘the delicate body would glide off sideways with a gentle buffeting of the air,’ the peculiar ‘hesitations, vacillations, and delays’ of vanessas or sphinx moths (Benjamin 1938/2006, 51) – all being governed by the peculiar ‘conspiracy of wind, scents, foliage and sun.’ All this does not constitute a “language” in the traditional sense but rather an expressive scenario, which is however consistent enough to form a kind of butterfly-flower ‘language.’ The process of learning and intimate engagement that forms a precondition for response-able translation thus concerns not nation-bound languages but what we may call regimes of expressions.

In the following section, I want to introduce Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/2004) understanding of “semiotics” and semiotic translation, which resonates with the way in which Benjamin poses the “what” question. This enables a further elaboration of the actual dynamics of “how” translation takes place, the particular potential which an attentiveness to responsible translation opens up.

Semiotic translation

In the classical understanding, translation occurs between “languages,” understood as homogeneous and nation-bound structures of signs organising words and meanings in relation to each other.³ Beyond linguistic endeavours, the notion of translation has also had an appeal within strands of social research not primarily concerned with “language.” The anthropological notion of the “translation of cultures” or “cultural translation” is interesting in this respect. While this notion gained popularity with the shift towards a more textual and discursive understanding of cultures from the 1950s and 60s (at least in English-speaking anthropology), it was simultaneously meant to engage with meanings, concepts and beliefs implicitly embedded in cultural practices (Asad 1986). “Translation” has thus come to be

³ For a classical account of such an understanding of “language” see Ferdinand de Saussure (1916/1986). For a critique of the classical notion of translation – which I will come back to below – see Sakai (2006).

concerned with a range of cultural practices beyond oral and written discourses. Actor-network theory (ANT), and what has been called the “sociology of translation,” has moved even further away from “language.” ANT, which was first formulated in the 1980s by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, John Law and others within sociology and science and technology studies, has been concerned with the processes of emergence and transformation ensuing from connections between heterogeneous actors or “mediators” pertaining to a range of (human and non-human) fields. The notion of “translation,” Latour (2005, 106-9) explains, is meant to designate precisely the establishment of a relation or connection between heterogeneous mediators (see also Brown 2002). George Marcus, in his account of multi-sited ethnography mentioned above, draws on this ANT notion of translation.

A detachment of “translation” from a necessary association with “language” in the classical sense seems reasonable to the extent that such an association is limiting for social research. The unspecific and metaphoric use that has ensued from this detachment, however, has stripped ‘translation’ of its specific conceptual power in relation to other concepts like “transposition,” “transduction” or “displacement.” The emergence of objects through the connection of different actors – as posited by ANT and picked up by George Marcus – might possibly be better addressed along the lines of Rosi Braidotti’s (2006) notion of “transpositions.”⁴ The specificity of the notion of translation derives by contrast in fact from its association with “language,” a notion which can however be specified and moved beyond its traditional “linguistic” and nation-bound fix through a concept of “semiotics.” A notion of semiotic translation may move beyond the alternatives between a narrow linguistic and an unspecific metaphoric use of translation, offering a productive tool for social research. Let me briefly outline the notion of “semiotics” I have in mind here before elaborating further on the implications of such an understanding with respect to translation.

Semiotics has from its inception had a broader agenda than linguistics. It is concerned with the study of “signs” pertaining, as Umberto Eco notes, to ‘a series of human (and maybe animal) behaviours, be they vocal, visual, termic, gestural, or other’ (1984, 7). The focus on

⁴ Braidotti suggests using the term “transposition” in relation to a range of issue from the transferral of genetic information to the cross-referencing between disciplines or discursive levels and the connection between theory and practice (2006, 5-7).

signs in semiotics has opened up a field of inquiry that goes beyond traditional understandings of linguistic structures, human language as well as beyond the question of “representation.” Of particular relevance in the present context are the conceptual innovations of the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev, which got picked up by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004). In his *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* Hjelmslev (1943/1953) re-conceptualises Ferdinand de Saussure’s notion of signs – understood as relations of signifier and signified that together form the smallest entities within a linguistic system – in terms of a function between two correlative planes: content and expression. With this conception, Hjelmslev moves away from the traditional understanding that views content as a material reality (addressed by the signified) that is opposed to a non-material linguistic form (signifier) (Chandler 2007, 56-7). Instead, both expression and content are material, both have form and substance. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) have developed this conception further, positing “contents” as complex formations of power, technology and practice that stand in reciprocal presupposition with “expressions,” conceived as equally complex formations of signs. They follow Hjelmslev in calling a formation of signs also a “semiotic,” which thus needs to be distinguished from “semiotics” as the study of signs and sign regimes. Engaging with semiotics, then, entails much more than considering words, representations and signifiers – it entails considering the specific ways in which formations of power and practice and formations of signs get articulated together.

This conception of semiotics opens up an intriguing mode of analysis. Diverse matters get formed into specific “substances” and attributed to correlating planes of expression and content. Instead of starting from nation-bound structures of signs (or, for instance, from a set of abstract grammatical rules that would instantiate in terms of different lexica as in Noam Chomsky’s 1965 conception), a semiotic analysis proposes to engage with the contingent ways in which various kinds of (vocal, textual, pictorial, bodily, atmospheric etc.) expression are organised. The questions posed by such a kind of semiotic analysis are hence: Which elements operate as “expressions” in relation to which kinds of “contents”? And according to which regularities do these expressions operate? Furthermore, in organising expressions and contents in particular ways, different semiotics necessarily have different effects with respect to subjects and objects. Semiotics are thus fundamentally performative, they constitute

“speech acts” (Austin 1962) that are inextricably bound up with particular kinds of practices and technologies (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2004, 83-7).

Deleuze and Guattari give a vivid example of a semiotic with what they call the “paranoid despotic regime of signs.” This semiotic performs a staging of the subject as threatened from all sides. Everything that happens, all expressions, become signs conspiring against oneself:

Your wife looked at you with a funny expression. And this morning the mailman handed you a letter from the IRS and crossed his fingers. Then you stepped in a pile of dog shit. You saw two sticks on the sidewalk positioned like the hands of a watch. It doesn't matter what it means, it's still signifying. (1980/2004, 124)

Simultaneously, the subject is elevated in omnipotent control above all threats: ‘they are attacking me and making me suffer, but I can guess what they’re up to, I’m one step ahead of them, I’ve always known, I have power even in my impotence: “I’ll get them.”’ (125) While the signs cross-referring to one another effectuate a strange impotence and uncertainty, they are all arranged around a despotic centre: ‘mighty is the signifier that constitutes the chain’ (ibid.). The wife’s look, the mailman’s crossing his fingers, the stepping into dog shit – all these expressions lose their concrete contents and become deterritorialised signs that cross-refer to one another in a signifying chain that is organised around the central despotic signifier. The paranoid does not even need to speak for enacting this semiotic, it is enough for the signs of his world to operate in this particular way.

Apart from such “signifying” semiotics, however, Deleuze and Guattari also mention pre- and countersignifying semiotics, which do not function by means of such cross-referral of signs. Presignifying semiotics, for instance, are characterised by a “polyvocality” of expressions that ‘preserves expressive forms particular to content; thus forms of corporeality, gesturality, rhythm, dance, and rite coexist heterogeneously with the vocal form’ (130). Signs in a presignifying semiotic do not abstract (or deterritorialise) to the same extent as in a signifying one but are instead directly extracted from a variety of heterogeneous expressions, pertaining to bodies, movements etc. An infinite range of further semiotics can be analysed in

relation to their specific effects and the different practices and technologies they are bound up with.⁵

This mode of analysis becomes especially interesting, however, when confrontations or transformations between different semiotics are considered. By appropriating an expression originating elsewhere, a semiotic transforms this expression, and thus also the way it relates to, and co-constitutes, contents. This is the semiotic understanding of translation (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2004, 150-4). Deleuze and Guattari provide a vivid example of semiotic translation:

The songs of black Americans, including, especially, the words, [...] show how the slaves “translated” the English signifier and made presignifying or even countersignifying use of the language, blending it with their own African languages just as they blended old African work songs with their new forced labor [...]. (1980/2004, 152)

Translation happens here in the transformation from one semiotic into another, signalling a shift on the corresponding planes of content. Despite Deleuze and Guattari’s seemingly abstract conception of semiotics within which translation is situated here, it is thus highly specific: it cannot refer to any kind of matter moving from one context to another, but has instead to do with matters operating as expressions in relation to contents and, more specifically, with shifts from one semiotic regime to another. The strength of the concept of translation derives precisely from the fact that it addresses the particular field of complexity opened up by an engagement with heterogeneous semiotic formalisations of expressions.

Any translation, as well as any semiotic enactment as such, has particular preconditions in order to become possible. Let me elaborate a bit further on this issue, since it is crucial with respect to the question of responsibility. Benjamin’s “Butterfly hunt” has provided an example of the intense spatiality situating and enabling the boy’s playful, and simultaneously

⁵ Johanna Motzkau (2009) has analysed, for instance, the effects that a “semiotic of accusation” performs as critical psychological texts are read within mainstream psychology. Motzkau’s analysis shows in particular how semiotic effects may unfold against the explicit intentions of the ones producing the texts: while the explicit strategy of the theorists she engages with is “deconstruction,” the semiotic effect of their expressions tends to be one of “accusation.”

violent, enactment. The boy gets lured into a “wilderness” where he faces a bewitching “conspiracy” of wind, scents, foliage and sun that situates the paradoxical process of becoming-butterfly/becoming-human. An affective dynamic unfolds here in the sense of a complex interplay of forces. There is a set of conspiring natural forces that bodily act upon the dancing/hunting boy. At the same time, there is also the boy’s desire to subjugate the little animal and recover his own human-ness. Both this desire and the conspiring intensities conjoin and give rise to a becoming-butterfly that simultaneously targets the butterfly’s becoming-human. The more the boy surrenders to the intensive world of the butterflies, the closer he gets to attain the goal of subduing his prey and the greater his desire to subdue it grows. This affective dynamic, this bundle of relations of forces, situates and enables the learning of the butterfly-flower language which forms a precondition of its translation.⁶

Taking into account the affective preconditions of translation also calls attention to the dynamics unfolding in the process of translation itself, since this process entails some kind of shift in the concrete articulation of relations of forces. In the last section of this paper I will indicate Walter Benjamin’s argument regarding an effect of “untranslatability” ensuing from translation, which addresses this dynamic. First, however, let me provide an example from my research with gay and trans people in Brazil in order to open a discussion of semiotic translation and the question of responsibility.

Gay kisses in translation

A kiss is hardly ever just a kiss, that much we know. The kiss, in Western and Christian cultures, seals marriage, it signals the “first love,” it features in conventions like greeting, and it forms the culminating and harmonising point of many romantic plots. Simultaneously, kisses that challenge the classed and raced heteronormative order have given rise to anxieties,

⁶ Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) address what I have termed “relations of forces” by borrowing Foucault’s term of the “diagram.” Deleuze (1986/2006) adds a subtlety by arguing that for Foucault a diagram designates ‘the fixed form of a set of relations between forces’ (Deleuze 1986/2006, 89). This fixed set of relations between forces, however, ‘never exhausts force, which can enter into other relations and compositions’ (ibid.). Instead, it needs to be seen in relation to dynamics of “resistance” that exceed and precede it (1986/2006, 89). When I talk about “relations of forces” and “affective dynamics” I mean both “diagrams of power” (such as the subjugation of nature in the butterfly hunt) and dynamics of “resistance” (such as the dance-like moment of curiosity and play).

violence and efforts to control or discipline them. The repeated damaging, after its opening in 2008, of Berlin's "Memorial to Homosexuals persecuted under Nazism," which shows a short film of two kissing men, is only one recent example of the disruptions a homosexual kiss may provoke by troubling the semiotic regimes of heteronormativity.⁷ In the Brazilian context, Nelson Rodriguez' famous play *O Beijo no Asfalto* ("The Kiss on Asphalt"), published in 1960, has dramatised the eerie capacity that a kiss between two men may acquire to wreck not only an individual person's life but to incite a concerted hysteria running through interconnected fields of media, police, workplace, family, community life and public city spaces. The kiss, in other words, is a form of expression intensely featuring in semiotic regimes pertaining to a range of assemblages including romance, morality and self-revelation – sustaining as well as destabilising them.

For gay people, then, enacting a same-sex kiss is often charged and problematic – in public as well as in family contexts. I want to discuss two examples from my research in order to consider different ways of semiotically framing the kiss as well as translation moves. The first example is taken from an interview with Jonas,⁸ aged 29, who does voluntary work at an LGBT organisation in the Baixada Fluminense region in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The passage below follows from my question of whether Jonas ever experienced physical aggression due to being gay, which he answered in the negative. The name of the city where Jonas lives and works has been replaced with "[D.]"

Simon: But with your boyfriend, for example, do you kiss in the street? Do you=

Jonas: I kiss my boyfriend in the street, I walk hand in hand, but I know my limits, for example I know where I can go if anything happens, you see? ((**Simon:** Yes.)) So, like, yes, fear does exist in [D.], of kissing one another, of walking hand in hand. Because here, only women can walk hand in hand, here in [D.] Because if men walk hand in hand they are fags. So when a guy does this with his partner, he really needs to know

⁷ The fact that heterosexual kisses may also be considered problematic is illustrated by the attempt to ban kissing at a British train station in 2009, as reported by AFP (see <http://news.ninemsn.com.au/world/754016/no-kissing-please-were-british>; accessed on 14 Aug. 09). While a spokesman for operators Virgin Rail mentions the blocking of traffic as a reason for this ban, he also makes an argument in favour of exchanging affection in the much more private space of one's car.

⁸ All names of research participants have been changed for the sake of anonymity.

what he's doing and recognise himself as gay and know where he can scream for help [*aonde ele vai gritar*] when someone hassles him. ((**Simon:** Yes.)) But I do walk, I walk hand in hand with my boyfriend in [D.]. They can say whatever they want... We exchange a quick kiss [*dá beijinho roubado*] on the street. [*Both laughing*] I think, like, there's no reason to hide from society what I feel, you see? If I'm loved, I have to... but in a civilised [*educado*] manner, of course, without offending society.

After giving an affirmative answer to my question, Jonas points out the risk and fear involved in showing male homosexual affection in public by kissing or holding hands. In order to do it, one has to be prepared to respond to the risks involved in being stigmatised as “fag.” Apart from knowing where to go, one needs to recognise oneself as gay, he says, which means being able to defend one's position and actions. Two kinds of danger are implied here, the stigmatisation demanding self-affirmation as gay and a (potentially physical) aggression that demands finding help. Kissing and holding hands are thus situated in a scenario of danger, fear and defence. This scenario shifts after Jonas affirms that he still walks hand in hand, no matter what other people say (now bracketing the issue of physical aggression). His statement, ‘We exchange a quick kiss on the street,’ provokes our laughter as it evokes a vivid sense of how a fleeting assertion of affection (and possibly gay identity) can be pleurably inserted into heteronormative public space. The need to claim one's rights is evoked here: ‘I think, like, there's no reason to hide from society what I feel.’ This semiotic twist from a scenario of danger and defence into one of assertion and pleasure gives then way, however, to a moral concern about not ‘offending society.’ The concern about being stigmatised for one's difference thus gets turned around into a concern about causing offence because of one's difference.

Within a couple of sentences, the affirmative statement of kissing the boyfriend and holding hands in the street gets translated into semiotics of fear and defence, assertion and pleasure, and morality and concern. Interestingly, the semiotic of morality and concern ends up outweighing the other ones, which becomes clear in the continuation of Jonas' narrative. He complains about some of today's gay men – who are, as he puts it, ‘the gays from the 21st century’ – by saying they don't respect the values of people from older generations. He then remarks: ‘Because they think they have to kiss in front of their grandmother, or in the middle

of the road.’ Kissing in the middle of the road is now seen first of all as an expression of disrespect, rather than as something to be asserted against stigmatisation. Jonas goes on: ‘Kissing in the middle of the road is more like an educational thing. There are hetero couples who don’t kiss in front of their children.’ The concern about old people now gets extended to children, positing kissing as an issue of moral concern and hetero couples not kissing in front of their children as a model. The questions of danger as well as of pleasure and assertion of one’s rights disappear in this translation into a semiotic of moral concern. This does not mean that Jonas is exclusively concerned with morals. In fact, he also affirms kissing his boyfriend in the street. A moral sensitivity, furthermore, does not necessarily need to be seen as a wholesale adoption of social norms, but may also have to do with questions of mutual ‘respect,’ as Jonas suggests. In considering these translation moves, it is vital to attend to the specific relevance and complexity of each semiotic. (This relates to the question of responsibility, which I will come back to.) Nonetheless, the question ensues of what relations of forces are at play here that evoke the translation into a semiotic of moral concern, where other issues tend to disappear. Instead of trying to answer this question, however, I would like to juxtapose Jonas’ narrative with another conversation, where different relations of forces are at play.

It is a warm Saturday afternoon in another part of Baixada Fluminense, a small town, or *bairro*, in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu. As Nando, Josué and I come to the house of Sasha, a nurse and gay/trans activist in his 40s, he invites us to have coffee on his veranda and, after an initial conversation, agrees that I switch on my mp3 recorder. Nando and Josué are gay men living in the centre of Nova Iguaçu, where I organised a queer workshop through which I met them. Josué used to live in Sasha’s *bairro* and suggested that we make the visit. Enjoying the calm atmosphere, seeing the smiling faces of the three men and listening to their stories, I sense a kind of *geborgenheit*, or what in Portuguese is called “*aconchego*,” that resonates with the way in which they depict and enact life in the *bairro*. The noun “*aconchego*” derives from the verb “*aconchegar*,” which means “put/turn close to (someone/sth.); embrace; wrap/cover (oneself/someone/sth.) in; make more comfortable” (Houaiss). Accordingly, “*aconchego*” is a state of comfortable embraced- or nested-ness.

During the conversation, the three explicitly point out that the *bairro* for them is a place of *aconchego*, a place where they feel “*aconchegado*” as gay and trans people. One of the things that especially Josué and Sasha, who know the area best, point out as they depict the place’s *aconchego* are festivities and carnival events that foster pleasurable and transgressive enactments. Josué, who is in his late 20s, states: ‘What a blast [*Que bomba*], this carnival of... At this carnival, I saw a colleague of mine who I hadn’t seen for a long time, and I kissed him on the mouth in front of everybody!’ Kissing ‘in front of everybody’ is framed here not as a fleeting assertion, but as an act staged much more intensively as part of the ‘blast’ of carnival. A similar way of evoking pleasure is engaged at several moments of the conversation, for instance as Sasha talks about another festival that used to take place in the area: ‘Oh, that used to be fantastic, the fags [*bichas*] went wild – they would make out with the guys a lot [*namoravam pencas os bofes*]⁹ – they came here from all kinds of places from the state of Rio, it was *o fervo*.’ *O fervo* – deriving from the verb “*ferver*,” “to boil” and meaning here something like “crazy,” “hot,” “wild” – is a term Sasha repeatedly uses in these depictions. It evokes a carnivalesque and festive atmosphere where camp expressions and erotic relations can joyfully, and publicly, be enacted. The semiotic staged here thus dramatises transgressive movements and events related to encounters between queer and straight bodies – *bichas* “going wild” and making out with *bofes*, gays kissing ‘in front of everybody.’ It thereby also evokes amazement: ‘Oh, that used to be fantastic’ ... ‘it was *o fervo*’ ... ‘*Que bomba*.’ The semiotic of *fervo* thus invites the subject to indulge in the amazement evoked by the series of pleasurable transgressions.

Josué’s narrative staging of the kiss ‘in front of everybody’ evokes such a semiotic of *fervo*. This way of semiotically framing the kiss is supported by the dynamic of our conversation where several events get narrated in a similar way. The moments of carnival and festivity addressed here form part of the context for Josué’s and Sasha’s much stronger emphasis on acts of transgression as compared to Jonas’ rather tentative affirmation discussed above. Josué does not seem, however, to consider his story as specific to exceptional moments of

⁹ *Namorar* has a range of connotations, from “to flirt” or “covet” to “to go out with,” “make out with,” etc. *Bicha* and *bofe* are somewhat complementary notions referring to effeminate and masculine men, respectively, as well as to (sexual) passivity and activity (cf. Parker 1999: 28-46).

carnival.¹⁰ This is indicated by the fact that he is talking here about the *aconchego* of this *bairro* in more general terms, using the story of the gay kiss and the *fervo* of carnival as an intensified example. The resonance between *o fervo* and the positive affectivity of *aconchego* thus plays a vital role for the way in which the kiss is semiotically framed. The enjoyable atmosphere, and *aconchego*, of our conversation contributes further to this kind of resonance. The *aconchego* pervading the *bairro*, the carnival and our conversation, then, forms at least part of the relations of forces enabling this particular semiotic move. Moreover, the statement regarding the kiss is itself both evocative and constitutive of this *aconchego*, indicating a kind of expressive excess subsisting in the statement. The kiss *evokes aconchego* in providing an example of why gay people can feel *aconchegado* in this *bairro*. It is *constitutive* of it in contributing to the positive atmosphere emanating from the veranda during our conversation: In narrating this event, Josué *performs aconchego*, affectively opening up to us and sharing stories he may for instance not tell in spaces experienced as exclusionary of gays. The statement regarding the kiss, we may thus say, is excessive with respect to the particular semiotic in which it is framed: It is not exhausted by the effects of the semiotic of *fervo*, where the focus is on the moment of transgression ('in front of everybody') and indulging in the amazement ensuing from it ('*Que bomba...*'). This excess, however, also forms part of the very dynamics enabling this semiotic framing. It "subsists" so to speak within the semiotic, functioning as a precondition and unfolding further effects in the moment of articulation.¹¹

I have used these two vignettes in order to exemplify – if only in a very schematic way – how a particular expression, a male same-sex kiss in public, can become actualised within and translated across a number of different semiotics. Every actualisation and translation entails a different framing of this expression, such that it evokes certain effects rather than others. Actualisations and translations are moreover – as the second example has illustrated – enabled by affective dynamics, which subsist within semiotic expressions as their excess.

¹⁰ I am pointing this out since some accounts of the 'carnavalesque' (e.g. Eagleton 1981; Langman and Ryan 2009; Matta 1984/1997) have emphasised the merely temporary inversion of the dominant order during such festivities. See also James Green (1999, 203) for a critique of these accounts with respect to gay and trans people in Brazil.

¹¹ Deleuze (1969/2004) addresses this excess subsisting in semiotics in terms of a difference between the "expression," i.e. the concrete words or phrases articulated, and the "expressed," i.e. the affective dynamics occurring in the moment of expressing. For a fuller explication see Motzkau (2007, 352-8).

Although these dynamics are impersonal or “a-subjective” to the extent that they are not in the control of any particular subject, various subjects, such as researchers and participants, are implicated within them, which relates to the issue of responsibility.

Engaging the untranslatable

Issues of responsibility have been raised with respect to both the classical understanding of translation concerned with nation-bound languages and the notion of cultural translation. Both notions have been critiqued for contributing to the framing of the “languages” or “cultures” across which translation happens as homogeneous and essentially distinctive. Translation has, according to these critiques, served as a tool for establishing a regime of domination where the “West” dominates the “Rest” by appropriating foreign languages and cultures into the own one (Appiah 1993; Asad 1986; Sakai 2006; Spivak 1992/2004). Asad points in particular to inequalities of power between the language of Western academia and ‘Third World’ languages as engaged by anthropologists.¹² The issue of responsibility thus circulates in particular around the question of how to carry out translation without letting the familiar, and often more powerful, meaning structures of the own language dominate the foreign ones. Asad follows Benjamin (1923/1969, who follows Rudolf Pannwitz) in calling for a need to let the language of translation ‘be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue’ (Pannwitz quoted by Benjamin 1923/1969, 80 in Asad 1986, 157). Benjamin captures this challenge of translation in an image:

Fragments of a vessel, in order to be articulated together, must follow – although not equate – one another in the smallest detail. In the same way a translation, instead of making itself similar to the meaning [*Sinn*] of the original, must lovingly and in detail, in its own language, mould itself to its [the original’s] manner of meaning, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as the broken parts of a greater language, just as fragments are the broken parts of a vessel. (1923/2004, 80-1)

¹² Asad explains: ‘The reason for this is, first, that in their political-economic relations with Third World countries, Western nations have the greater ability to manipulate the latter. And, second, Western languages produce and deploy *desired* knowledge more readily than Third World languages do.’ (1986, 158)

Spivak follows this line of argument when she, as mentioned earlier, calls attention to the need of ‘surrendering to the text’ (1992/2004, 378). In my discussion of the “Butterfly hunt” I have already indicated the relevance of this argument in relation to the understanding of translation proposed here. However, I want to suggest that in the context of semiotic translation the issue of responsibility is more complex than in the classical and anthropological understanding. In these understandings, translation is concerned with the evocation within the own language of the meanings formulated in a foreign language and culture (what Benjamin 1923/2004 calls ‘*das Gemeinte*’). With the movement from one semiotic to another, by contrast, the intended meaning of the translational statement itself changes – as in the example of the kiss that comes to evoke danger, pleasure or moral concern. The aim of translation is thus not necessarily to evoke the same meaning. Accordingly, “surrendering” or “becoming powerfully affected” concerns not only the ability of one language to mould itself word by word to another one. Instead, it has to do with the capacity to enter into a process of joint worlding, where heterogeneous expressions, and their excesses, are able to acquire agency.

This poses, firstly, the challenge of becoming attentive to the particular enactments that each semiotic is expressive of. This is a challenge since semiotics differ in their relative prominence or “power,” similarly to the language differences pointed out by Asad. The semiotic of morality evoked by Jonas’ narrative, for instance, may be problematic in its normalising effects, but also indicate dynamics that are highly pertinent to gay people (and to others). To a certain extent it may furthermore be expressive of an enactment of respect, even though this issue is not as clearly pronounced. Secondly, such joint worlding entails becoming attentive to and engaging with what I have called the excessive expressivity subsisting within semiotics. An affect of *aconchego* may subsist within a semiotic of *fervo*, as in the case of Josué’s statement on the kiss. My own affective implication within the intensities of *aconchego* unfolding during the conversation with Josué, Sasha and Nando opened up possibilities for attending to and engaging with this excessive expressivity. It indicated how it can become possible for gay and trans people to create positive affective relations in public spaces. It moreover made me bodily experience, and join in, some of the intensities enabling this particular semiotic enactment. The challenge for social research, then, is to promote entanglements of researchers and participants that give rise to responsible

worldings. In the case of the example provided – although there is no space to elaborate further on this issue here – I had as researcher together with Josué and Nando the possibility to carry the experience of *aconchego* from the *bairro* in Nova Iguaçu back into the group workshop and to further enact, explore, and interrogate, its productive potential.

Let me end by coming back to Walter Benjamin's insight that 'to some degree all great texts contain their virtual translation between the lines [...]' (1923/2004, 83).¹³ The 'virtual translation' of an expressive assemblage – and what 'great texts' means would need further discussion – is constituted by the excessive intensities subsisting within its concrete semiotic formalisation, which can give rise to new worldings. For Benjamin, translation itself has a particular capacity to bring about such new worldings, as it enables an undoing of the concrete semiotics involved in translation. When a semiotic gets "powerfully affected" by another one, moulds itself according to the foreign 'manner of meaning,' as Benjamin puts it, this evokes an effect of estrangement or alienation with respect to both semiotics involved. Since this effect of alienation ensues from the particular movement of translation, it is not a stable meaning that could simply be transferred and "translated" again. Rather, the translation expresses something which 'does not lend itself again to translation' (Benjamin 1923/2004, 78). Instead of simply producing new semiotics, then, translation evokes an effect of untranslatability, indicating an excess that may articulate into new kinds of worlding. Bringing out this potential is for Benjamin the 'task of the translator.' While this resonates strongly with my argument regarding the specific potential of response-able/responsible translation, to what extent the effect of estrangement identified by Benjamin with respect to languages is also relevant to semiotic translation could also be explored – further research is clearly needed. In social research, at any rate, translations between different semiotics may not only be effectuated by researchers. Accordingly, the researcher's task is not only to enact responsible translation but also to witness how translation moves get carried out in the various discourses and articulations at stake and to responsibly insert her or himself into these enactments of translation. This may entail amplification, interrogation and critique – and

¹³ Note that Harry Zohn translates '*virtuell*' as 'potential,' thereby rendering Benjamin's conception less clear. On the difference between "virtual" and "potential" see Boundas (1996). While notions of the "possible" or "potential" commonly refer to non-real states that need to be "realised" and which can be represented as such, the virtual is itself real although precisely not representable, it does not possess any particular form. Its reality consists rather in the capacity or efficiency of producing a formed "actuality."

often more than one thing at once. It also entails, however, attentiveness to the affective dynamics that enable translation and that unfold as its untranslatable excess.

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Claims of ‘knowing’ in ethnography: realising anti-essentialism through a critical reflection on language acquisition in fieldwork

Abstract

The experience of researching in a second language is central to the types of ‘claims’ that can be made in ethnographic fieldwork, yet the process of language acquisition is barely explored in anthropological texts. This article contributes to addressing the gap through presenting a personal reflection on language learning during the research process. Learning Hungarian was central to the fieldwork experience referred to in this article, which included 15 months in a primary school in central Hungary researching discourses surrounding Roma (Gypsy) minorities. The article focuses on a personal account of learning Hungarian, acknowledging the importance of reflecting on language acquisition in order to illuminate the context in which research claims are made. This awareness of language learning in the field led to further insight into the problematic dimensions of claims-making in fieldwork and the role of anti-essentialist theorisation in empirical research. The focus is on how the personal experience of being a second language learner in research led to a greater understanding of the importance of accountability in ethnography, and how an anti-essentialist approach can help this process.

Introduction

Anthropologists are in general agreement that the world depicted in their works is fragmented and fluctuating. However, there is criticism that anthropologists may not go far enough to elaborate on the way claims of knowing (even about this fragmented world) can be justified,

little effort has been made so far to understand the process by which anthropologists (individually and collectively) become convinced of ‘being right’, or to be in the know (Hastrup 2004, 458).

In this article, the process of learning a second language is highlighted as central to the claims of 'being in the know' that can be made by ethnographic fieldwork.

Language learning is a fundamental part of doing ethnography in a foreign country, yet the time given to discussing how an ethnographer goes about learning a language or the linguistic competence actually required to carry out research has been, in the words of Agar, 'eerily quiet', "I get the image of nervous ethnographers who are far from fluent trying not to bring up the subject" (1996, 150). Tonkin has also commented that in the face of questions about fluency, 'anthropologists have often taken refuge in silence' (1984, 178). Competence in a language has often been assumed rather than openly discussed, creating ambiguity around the question of how researchers have learnt foreign languages and of problems they may have encountered. What is actually meant by 'arduous language learning, some direct involvement and conversation' remains unexplored (Clifford 1983, 119). This article not only works to address a gap in the literature through a personal account of the process of learning Hungarian in fieldwork, but also shows how the process of language learning affected the theoretical and methodological considerations of the research project.

The fieldwork referred to in the article was undertaken as part of a PhD project entitled 'Representations of Roma: Public discourses and local practices'¹. The thesis borne out of this project examines the interface between public and local representations of Roma people. The 'public discourses' section looks at how academia and EU institutions approach 'Roma' in their literature, whilst the 'local practices' form the bulk of the study, and involved 15 months of ethnographic research in a primary school in the Southern Great Plain region of Hungary. In-depth interviews were recorded with teachers and Roma and non-Roma children, along with a photography project where all the children received a disposable camera to take pictures of their everyday lives. This data was analysed looking at when, where and how 'Roma' became relevant

¹ The PhD was undertaken in the Education and Professional Studies Department at King's College London from 2003-2007 (obtained Feb 1st 2008), with supervision from Professor Ben Rampton and Dr. Roxy Harris. The PhD was fully funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

in the course of everyday lives, and how this relates to the way Roma are written about in the public discourses.

At the start of the project, anti-essentialist theorisations were used as a means to move away from strong, homogenising notions of Roma minorities. In the beginning these ideas had not been explicitly linked to language learning. However, through continual reflection on language acquisition in the research field, anti-essentialist theorisations became more obviously appropriate to the practice of fieldwork, subsequently re-informing the research methodology and the presentation of data. This article first looks at how the process of language reflection in fieldwork emphasised and extended the anti-essentialist approach to the research. It then looks at how this thought process affected choice of data collection and presentation. The article argues that reflecting on language can have a profound impact on the overall approach to research, highlighting the importance of the interface between the theoretical and the empirical.

Being ‘less-than-fluent’ in the language of the field

Learning Hungarian was central to the fieldwork experience of this project, and highlighted the types of ‘claims’ that I, the researcher, could confidently make of my time spent doing research in Hungary. All the data collection was carried out in Hungarian - I did not use any interpreters as I had been learning Hungarian for four years prior to the study, including two years when I actually lived in Hungary. However, this still did not make me a fluent speaker, and this section will open up some possibilities for understanding how I carried out a study in Hungary while being ‘less-than-fluent’, including an account of learning Hungarian which aims to explore my language competence in the unfolding process of research². These reflections on language learning also led to a further understanding of the importance of anti-essentialist ideas.

² Reflecting on language use has been deployed as a method with multi-language users in order to gauge their language competence in everyday life, and promote self-awareness and confidence (Harris & Savitzky 1988, Harris 2006).

In an article on learning language as a part of research, Borchgrevink finds it a topic that has been shrouded in what he terms ‘fieldwork mystique’ (2003, 115). This ‘mystique’ for Borchgrevink was quickly dispelled after a difficult nine months doing fieldwork in a Nicaraguan peasant village. Even with a ‘fair command’ of Spanish prior to starting his research, he was far from achieving the initial aim of his fieldwork:

I had to admit – at least to myself – that I was a long way from understanding my informants’ innermost thoughts and feelings, and that problems with language and communication were among the factors which had prevented me from reaching such an understanding (Borchgrevink 2003, 96).

Borchgrevink points out that the lack of discussion of language learning may reflect the fact that anthropologists have generally shown ‘relatively little concern with methodological issues’ (2003, 104). And whilst admitting that ‘language is only one form of communication’, he nevertheless emphasises the importance of being more explicit in the claims for ‘what it means to know or speak a language’ (2003, 96) and to raise the question, ‘Just what is ‘language competence’?’ (2003, 113)³.

Borchgrevink uses Maxwell Owusu’s (1978) criticism of Western anthropologists’ ‘lack of use, misuse or abuse of native languages’ in fieldwork in African countries to advise anthropologists to show ‘diligence’ and ‘humility’,

³ A great influence on contemporary Romani studies has been the anthropologist Michael Stewart, who has written about Roma in Hungary. Whilst not doubting Stewart’s proficiency in both Hungarian and Romany (I had heard him speak very fluent Hungarian on the courses he ran in Budapest), he barely mentions how he learnt these languages, and how his different stages of competency may have affected his fieldwork. I could find only three references to language learning in his 1997 work *Time of the Gypsies*,

- ‘Katalin Kovalcsik of the Zenetudományi Intézet taught me Romany’ (1997 xvi)
- ‘Some two months after I arrived in Harangos, I was traveling with some Gypsies to a nearby town, and they asked me how I would greet the Gypsies we were going to visit. Pleased with my accurate responses, although my general knowledge of Romany was still barely passable, my passengers complimented me warmly: ‘You can speak Romany now!’’ (44)
- ‘I asked a young Rom who had given me some help with Romany for advice on how best to integrate into Harangos Gypsy life’ (207).

the anthropologist who is not fluent in the language must be particularly diligent in double-checking information and critically testing interpretations. There is a need to show humility and avoid what Owusu terms the ‘unethical intellectual arrogance, cocksureness, or nonchalance characteristic of Western social scientists studying societies and cultures’ (Borchgrevink 2003, 107).

In awareness of these issues, I will give a brief outline of my own assessment of my language competence in Hungarian, followed by the steps that I took during the course of my fieldwork to be ‘diligent’ about my position as a second language learner.

As already mentioned, before carrying out my academic fieldwork from 2004-5, I had lived and worked in Hungary from 2000-2002⁴. In 2000 I arrived with the knowledge of just a few words and phrases in Hungarian I had managed to learn from a cassette and book set (Pontifex, 1996). My learning of Hungarian was not immediate upon arrival, as my boss at the NGO (non-governmental organisation) where I was placed was keen to improve his English. However, I became more motivated to learn Hungarian through: wanting to socialise with other people; becoming good friends with my neighbours and their children; and helping out in a local school and a Saturday club for predominantly Roma children. I started informal language lessons with a friend and primary school teacher who lived opposite me, and I attended three intensive language courses at Debrecen University in Eastern Hungary (two during my first stay in Hungary, in 2001 and 2002, and a third one in my first few months of fieldwork, January 2005⁵).

In my second year in Hungary (still ‘pre-PhD’), I ran an intercultural education project at the Teacher’s Training College, and although the course was in English, the student group and I

⁴ I began in 2000 as a volunteer in the European Commission-funded ‘European Voluntary Service’ (EVS).

⁵ The intensive courses I attended ran for two weeks and were held in the winter 2001 and spring 2002, and then a third one in winter 2005 at the ‘Debrecen Summer School’. The courses use the *Hungarolingua* teaching materials (Hlavacska, Hoffman, Laczkó and Maticsák 1991), see <www.nyariegyetem.hu>, accessed 12 Jan 2009.

carried out workshops in Hungarian primary schools in the area⁶. With this experience, along with my work with children, I realised how hard it was to organise children in Hungarian and I often felt very frustrated: for example in trying to get children to play games through shouting commands and directing their action⁷. At the same time, it was a great learning experience as the children were relentless in their enthusiasm to talk to me and teach me, and were harsh critics of my grammar mistakes. I was both grateful and surprised that often, when I tried to explain a game, one or two children would end up helping me. They would step in as my ‘interpreter’ for an activity, trying to fathom out what my instructions were, then repeat them clearly to the group.

I experienced a sharp improvement in learning Hungarian in the summer of 2002 when along with two German friends (also volunteers with the same programme but from a different organisation), I helped organise a photo and history exhibition about Roma life in the city (called ‘Mi szépek vagyunk’, ‘We are beautiful’). For the exhibition, we interviewed eleven adults from the Roma community about their lives. I felt both disheartened about how the interviews seemed to reveal my utter lack of language skills, whilst at the same time elated that I had carried out these interviews at all, some of which went on for over an hour, were very informative, and really enjoyable.

From the start of my fieldwork in September 2004, I was in the school environment all day at least three days a week. This was incredibly enriching for language learning as there were so many different ways of speaking that I was picking up⁸ (e.g. scolding; children’s slang and joking

⁶ I obtained a grant through the EVS programme called ‘Future Capital’ that was available to all EVS volunteers after their placement, see < <http://www.britishcouncil.org/connectyouth.htm>>, accessed 12 Jan 2009.

⁷ This involved using subjunctive (or imperative) formulations, which even now I still find really difficult to construct spontaneously unless they are everyday expressions, for example ‘gyertek ide!’ (‘come here!’ [plural ‘you’]) or ‘álljatok meg!’ (‘stand still!’ [plural ‘you’]).

⁸ Another factor that helped my language learning and awareness was watching television. From the start of my fieldwork, I noticed that children talked about watching a lot of television, and they often spoke of specific programmes, so I tried to watch the same programmes, sometimes with families I visited or in my flat. I felt that by watching television, I was learning both language and a certain ‘popular’ culture along with more serious ‘news’ and ‘documentary’ culture. Participating in a practice that everyone else was also doing gave me definite topics for conversation. For example, in one of my monthly reports to my supervisors, I wrote about the sudden popularity of the show *Megasztár* (where members of the public compete to be a pop star, similar to UK’s *Pop Idol*): ‘it gives me an instant shared topic of conversation with teachers and pupils alike’ (Monthly Report to supervisors, November

or teasing; science/literary language; teachers' hushed talking to each other so children couldn't hear, etc). Not only was I immersed in the vibrant and diverse setting of a school, but I also became immersed in critically reflecting on my language use through using participant observation as a research method and writing fieldnotes. The critical reflection of my Hungarian language competence in my fieldnotes and the monthly reports I sent to my supervisors (which distilled the fieldnotes into readable sections) were, I believe, central to the direction of my subsequent data collection, analysis and presentation.

For example, despite a steep learning curve in Hungarian during my fieldwork, I was aware that I could understand some interactions much better than others, as an excerpt from my monthly report to my supervisors in November 2004 shows:

I mostly understand the lessons in terms of what the teacher is saying and what the teacher wants the children to do. Where I have real difficulties in understanding, is when a situation suddenly flares up and the teacher gets cross and tells off a child. Quite often I've found that even though I've been watching the class, I can't quite understand why teachers get so cross only at certain times. As far as I've seen, there is not a really consistent way that teachers tell off the children, as sometimes they are loud and chattering and don't queue properly, and no one says anything. Then suddenly one day it becomes a problem and they are made to stand outside until they can queue 'properly', or march up and down the corridor until they do this without noise.

After such incidents of telling-off, I also often do not understand everything a teacher says to me when she is re-telling the incident. The teachers often speak in low fast tones so that children cannot hear, and because of this I feel I can't stop them to explain words I don't understand as I do in ordinary conversation (Monthly Report to supervisors, November 2004).

2004). Later on, the tensions between the teacher's loathing of the new TV reality show *Győzike*, based on the life of a flamboyant Roma pop star and his family (similar in format to the MTV show *The Osbournes*), compared to the children's complete love of it, brought to the surface both inter-generational differences as well as some interesting representations of 'Roma' (see Imre and Tremlett, under review).

This experience influenced my views on ethnography and the limits to the ‘claims’ that I might be able to make in my fieldwork based on my language (and understanding) proficiency. Obviously, I would not be able to write about all aspects of interaction if I could not really understand certain moments such as these scoldings or whispered teacher talk, both of which seemed to form significant moments in day-to-day life. For example, I knew that I would not be comfortable just ‘writing’ about representations based solely on incidents from memory or fieldnotes, in case I had not grasped the entire situation.

Nevertheless, my understanding, speaking and communication in Hungarian improved over time. I did not find it difficult to talk to children or teachers on a one-to-one informal level, during break times or on the bus or walking home. My fieldnotes were full of little exchanges I had with children and teachers. Whereas the above passage was written in November 2004, I can see that from February 2005 I started to feel a bit more confident in my Hungarian, as I noted an incident when somebody actually copied the Hungarian I used. On one cold winter’s day, boys were throwing ‘ice balls’ around the playground:

There were mostly boys outside and they were digging up the ice from the playground, it was coming up in big thick sheets and they were trying to get the biggest sheets and throw them at each other or just carried them around to show them off. When the smaller bits were thrown they were really hard like stone. I said to Mrs Edit⁹ „ez veszélyes, mert annyira kemény, mint a kő!” [„it’s dangerous, because it’s as hard as stone!”] and then I heard Mrs Edit repeat it loudly „kemény mint a kő!” [„it’s as hard as stone!”] and I was quite surprised that for once someone can take something from my Hungarian language that is worth repeating (Fieldnote diary Feb 8th 2005) [mistakes also in original script].

This growing sense of confidence was matched by a feeling that I was beginning to be able to ask the right questions when I did not understand something. In comparison to my November 2004 report (see above), the March 2005 report showed that I was becoming much more confident in understanding:

⁹ In accordance with ethical guidelines, all names of places and people have been changed in this article.

Whereas in my November Report 2004 I was concerned with areas of language that I didn't understand (e.g. telling off/specific questions), now I feel different, like I don't need to be so concerned with not understanding, as I have got more confident to ask questions/repeat back when I don't understand (not just to do with language, but also familiarity with people and the school). I feel that I understand the rhythm of how to speak, and so I can pose questions/repeat back much more quickly, so conversations are not so fragmented or disrupted as before. I am also much more aware that other people also ask a lot of questions/repeat back to ensure a conversation is understood, so it's not just me in a paranoid 'new language' dilemma, but questions/repeats back are actually very common, and it's these I had to learn, more than the correct way of saying something (Monthly Report to supervisors, March 2005).

This meant that I could 'get away' with not understanding, because I could always ask the person to repeat a section of what they had said, or ask another question that would give more information. By the time I carried out my interviews with children from mid-March 2005, and with teachers from mid-April 2005, I felt reasonably confident that, although not 'fluent', I was capable enough to ask questions and hold a conversation. The feeling of capability was grounded in the knowledge that a rapport had already been established with my interviewees and therefore they knew what 'kind' of Hungarian I spoke, and I knew them well enough not to be shy of saying if I did not understand.

In order to avoid what Owusu called the 'unethical intellectual arrogance' of western scholars in their claims on language learning (in Borchgrevink 2003, 107), and in the knowledge that there are vast areas of the Hungarian language I have not accessed in-depth (poetry, literature, deep political debates, etc), I continue to call myself a learner of Hungarian who is 'less-than-fluent' (probably a label for life)¹⁰. On arriving back from my fieldwork, I continued with Hungarian lessons at the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies (University College London), as

¹⁰ In official terms my linguistic competence looks like this: I obtained the ECL (European Consortium of Languages) intermediate level of Hungarian in oral and written in November 2005 ('Level B2'), and the Hungarian state accredited advanced level of Hungarian in oral and written ('Level C1') in November 2008.

well as attending a semester of an MA course in Hungarian reading and translation. Both of these were run by Peter Sherwood¹¹, whose teaching methods were in tune with my needs as he has extensive experience in teaching British students Hungarian. His teaching style helped me to improve my skills of reading and translating, which became all the more important in dealing with recorded data and transcripts post-fieldwork¹².

Despite my improving competency in Hungarian, being ‘less-than-fluent’ was still a status that I had to handle during my fieldwork, and one that I felt was necessary to deal with in the presentation of my fieldwork. I could not claim to ‘know everything’ about the lives of the people and children I researched. Whilst anthropologist Michael Stewart (well known in Romani studies for his work on the Vlach Rom community in Hungary) wrote, ‘when I talk of the Rom and the Rom ways of doing things it is to them alone I refer’ (Stewart 1997, 10), I could not even begin to imagine writing ‘when I talk of the pupils and teachers at the primary school it is to them alone I refer’. From my experience, the problem in this sentence is ‘them alone’. I could not imagine how I could ever presume that I could know everything about one school or even one group of children in one school. I had always been aware that generalisations of ‘the Roma’ or any such derivative was something I wanted to investigate and avoid in my own research. But it was the sheer volume and variety of daily interactions that surrounded me, along with awareness of my (changing) personal language competence that in the end gave me an insight into the true problematic nature of claiming knowledge in fieldwork. Reflecting on language competence and use became my particular in-road that made the writings around ‘anti-essentialism’ very pertinent to everyday fieldwork practices, writing and analysis.

Problematizing knowledge claims

¹¹ Peter Sherwood was a contributing editor to the Hungarian-English dictionary that I have used to help with translations (Magay, Országh and Sherwood 2001).

¹² However, in my thesis I took full responsibility for all transcriptions and translations of Hungarian in the thesis, and any mistakes were of course entirely my own.

The very real experience of being ‘less-than-fluent’ can be set against a wider context of problematising knowledge claims. As I have shown, my ethnographic language experience became connected to theoretical formulations of anti-essentialism not usually linked to empirical investigations (Harris 2006, 18). In my case, being ‘less-than-fluent’ led to a greater awareness of the difficulties in writing about a minority such as the Roma which I now discuss in more detail.

The Roma are frequently depicted as a marginalised, extremely discriminated minority mired in deep poverty. They are also often used in heavily symbolic ways: as an exemplar of a free, different, fascinating Bohemian other; or as a parasitic, hapless, unruly, unseemly other. How, then, to write about such a minority? Previous academics have seen their work as enabling a positive view of the minority, a way to help ‘dispel the prejudice that sustained the fear of the Gypsy’ (Stewart 1997, 18, see also Acton 1998: 1; Gay y Blasco 1997, 518-519; Matras 2002, 4; Okely 1992, 14; Stewart 1997, 17; Sutherland 1992, 276; Tong 1998, ix). But as any grounding in anti-essentialist theoretical formulations on ethnicity would tell us, showing a ‘positive’ picture can also be heavily problematic and does not necessarily free us from homogenising portrayals:

This [a certain anti-racist approach] has led to a position where politically opposed groups are united by their view of race exclusively in terms of culture and identity rather than politics and history. Culture and identity are part of the story of racial sensibility but they do not exhaust that story (Gilroy 2002, 251) [my addition].

Rather than positioning ethnicity in terms of a single culture and identity, certain authors from British Cultural Studies (BCS), see the concept of ethnicity as open to multiple meanings. Plurality (or ‘hybridity’) of identities becomes not just a possibility, but rather recognition of how identity is lived day to day. BCS scholars have taken up this challenge and have introduced terms to describe this plurality, for example ‘unfinished identities’ (Gilroy 1993, 1); ‘multi-acculturality’ (Mercer 1994, 60); ‘cultural hybridity’ (Morley 1996, 331). These scholars show that the plurality of identity (i.e. drawing on many influences) is not unusual, and actually could be envisaged as a kind of norm.

Linking these ideas back to my empirical research, the frustrations and revelations generated through close, continual (reflexive) awareness of language and interactions in the field highlighted how knowledge claims are always problematic. In my fieldwork, I struggled with the idea of writing ‘an’ ethnography about ‘a’ people, as my January 2005 report shows:

In my Upgrade Chapters¹³ I indicated that I did not want to position myself as an ‘ethnographer’ going to collect data and writing up ‘an ethnography’. The more time I am here the more I agree with this. I cannot pretend that I know anyone or anything inside out like presenting data as ‘an ethnography’ might presume. Although I am in school quite a lot, and the school is not very big, I still cannot keep track of the multitude of things that go on in there. Let alone what goes on with the children in the streets or at home (Monthly Report to supervisors, January 2005).

As mentioned before, even if I had narrowed my claims to only writing about the teachers and children of the primary school (instead of slipping into talk about ‘the Roma people’ or ‘the Hungarian people’) I was still aware that my knowledge would be insufficient to make big claims about knowing everything about life in the school. I saw a link to anti-essentialist theorisations which are committed to challenging the notion that people have an unchangeable ‘essence’. I argue that the fieldwork itself does not have a particular core or ‘essence’ that can obviously be laid out for the reader with a claim that ‘this is how it was’. The more experience I had of learning Hungarian, the more keenly aware I was of the diversity of interactions and discourses amongst families, the public, different geographical locations and different institutions. I became even more determined not to risk portraying a homogenous image of Roma people or Hungary. Building an awareness of the importance of language into my research project reaffirmed the usefulness of anti-essentialism in empirical research, and enabled a critical interrogation of the types of claims I could make. The article now moves on to looking at the practical decisions I

¹³ ‘Upgrade Chapters’ refer to a part of the British PhD process when a student moves from MPhil to PhD status, generally between 12-18 months after starting (for full-time students). Students present some initial chapters to an internal panel, in which they have to demonstrate that they are well placed to complete their thesis within the required time limit.

made in my fieldwork methods and presentation in order to take into account an awareness of the complexities involved in being ‘less-than-fluent’.

Anti-essentialist ethnography: being explicit and accountable

As Borchgrevink was quoted earlier as saying, it is important for ethnographers in a second language to be ‘particularly diligent in double-checking information and critically testing interpretations’ (2003, 107). This section now looks at the methods of data collection I used (or ‘ethnographic tools’, Bloome and Green 1996), and how they became integrated into the anti-essentialist stance of the project. As already stated, before my research began, I was aware of the problems of assuming one fixed ‘ethnic people’. I therefore chose to research in a school with both Roma and non-Roma pupils, allowing a comparative approach. Then, after becoming even more aware of the limitations of claims of knowing through my fieldwork, I looked towards how to present the data I had produced. Rather than write a narrative about my fieldwork, I decided to focus on recorded data.

Recording data through electronic means and visual images formed an important part of my fieldwork as it enabled me to overcome some anxieties I felt in being a second language learner. By recording interviews, my analyses could focus on discourse that could be re-played to check exact phrasing and the tone used:

The ability to stop the flow of discourse or the flow of body movement, go back to a particular spot and replay it allows us to concentrate on what is sometimes a very small detail at the time, including a particular sound or a person’s small gesture (Duranti 1997, 116).

Focusing on recorded data proved a different style of presentation than most other research in Romani studies, which generally favours a narrative approach where the ethnographer ‘tells the tale’ of how he/she encountered and made sense of certain Roma communities. Writing such a

narrative could have led me to slip into writing about the area/people as self-contained and undifferentiated, which even the most anti-homogenising approaches in Romani studies still tend to do (Tremlett, 2009).

Recorded data also allows some accountability for my fieldwork, a way to ‘tie down’ ethnography, enhancing the usual anecdotal evidence or quotations from fieldnotes that ethnography often relies on,

‘tying ethnography down’, pushing ethnography towards the analysis of clearly delimitable processes, increasing the amount of reported data that is open to falsification (Rampton 2006, 394-395) [Author’s italics].

However, decisions about what data to ‘tie down’ had to reflect the fact that I was ‘less-than-fluent’ in Hungarian. After five months of participant observation, I recorded one-to-one interviews with six teachers and 39 children from the 4th and 6th grade (ages 10-11, and 13-14). These interviews were carried out in an ethnographic style, and I felt as though they represented a culmination of knowledge about, and a relationship with, teachers and children. Data chapters in my PhD thesis focused on these interviews, describing the conditions under which they were recorded and attempted to contextualise them according to what I had understood from everyday observations along with wider discourses on education, class and identity. Exposing the data in this way was aimed at showing the reader the type of data that was produced under certain conditions, foregrounding the voices of the participants rather than allowing the researcher’s voice to dominate.

Although I felt capable of carrying out interviews, I was nevertheless still concerned that my language limitations might not be able to sensitively deal with children’s self-representations. I was aware of the literature on the ethics of doing research with children and how easy it could be to manipulate their voices. I was particularly concerned that my lack of nuanced language skills might make my interviews with children clumsy or insensitive. I therefore wished to give children some autonomy over their representations, as noted by Thomas and O’Kane:

Part of the task is to redress the power imbalance between child participant and adult researcher, in order to enable children to participate on their own terms. (1998, 337)

One method I used for the 4th grade children was a method termed ‘photo elicitation’, which involved the handing out of disposable cameras to 19 children, 13 non-Roma and 6 Roma¹⁴, of similar low socio-economic backgrounds from the same school and local area. I asked these children to take photographs of their everyday lives, which were then used to elicit conversations with them. The photography project used in the data collection was aimed at giving children some freedom to represent their lives in ‘their own terms’ as well as allowing for some data not wholly dependent on my linguistic fluency¹⁵.

However, despite the photography project producing data alternative to language-based data, this did not make it unproblematic. I was particularly aware of the potential of Roma families being reticent at being photographed, as academics report that Roma keep a strict boundary from non-Roma. For example, Stewart said that when at home, the Vlach Rom wanted to live away from the ‘prying eyes’ of non-Gypsy (*gažo*) people, creating ‘a social space composed according to their own ethic of relatedness’ (1997, 28-29). Dean also reported that in her project with traveller children in the UK, some mothers took the cameras away from the children to monitor the subjects being photographed and jealous siblings demanded they ‘have a go’ with the camera (2007, 18). In fact, these possible limitations were for the majority unfounded in the specific context of my project. A total of 451 photographs were produced by the 19 children. In most photo projects, the children took pictures of a variety of people and areas of the home. Rather than banning or limiting pictures of themselves, parents, siblings and relatives seemed to often be

¹⁴ Using the categories ‘Roma’ and ‘non-Roma’ to group the children themselves is problematic and could be seen as pre-empting or fixing their own sense of identities. However, in my research I used them as broad, existing analytic categories in order to investigate the strong assumption of ‘difference’ in literature on Roma. It was locally known who came from a ‘Roma’ family, and indeed, at the time of research in 2004 this was still being recorded in school records (an illegal act according to the Data Protection Act of Hungary 1993). The imposition of these terms should not lead the reader to assume they relate to an essentialised ‘Roma’ or ‘non-Roma’ identity, and in fact, the whole point of the research was to investigate and problematise these assumptions.

¹⁵ Prior to the photography project, I had obtained signed letters of consent from each parent to allow their child to be a part of the project which would include photographing and being interviewed. All 19 consent forms were returned with signatures.

posing for the camera, the majority in their homes which could be clearly seen in the backgrounds¹⁶.

The volume of photographs generated by the photography project (451) meant that a statistical analysis of the numbers of photographs taken in different categories was a possibility. I categorised the photographs according to broad themes they seemed to fall into. This can be seen as moving towards a ‘supplemental’ analysis as the photos were graded according to their content and not according to a research question (Rose 2007, 239). However, after categorising them¹⁷ I did impose my research question on the results - a ‘subordinated’ approach as the photos become evidence to answer a research question (Rose 2007, 239). In my project the question was: is there something recognisably ‘Roma’ about the homes in the pictures, considering that the ‘Gypsy-way’ and ‘Gypsy taste’ are said to be a strong characteristics of Roma people (see Stewart 1997, 31)? How does evidence of the academic writings on ‘Gypsy taste’ compare to the ethnic and gender groupings of the children? These questions were answered through comparing the numbers in each category taken by Roma and non-Roma children, and comparing this to other possible groupings of children such as gender and number of siblings.

This focus on the visual led me to differing angles on the interface between public and local representations of ‘Roma’ that complemented the language-based interview data. The photography project did produce some surprising results. Considering the prevalence of the idea

¹⁶ There were only a few reported tensions: Sára (a non-Roma girl) reported that her mother had not wanted her to take any pictures inside her house, so she had gone to her grandma’s house next door, and indeed there were no pictures of her parents in her album. However, her twin brother Antal (also in the same class) *had* taken pictures in the home, although only of his father as he said his mother was not keen to be photographed. Ferenc (a Roma boy) told me that his mother had also not been keen to be photographed, although she let him take pictures of the house, and in fact there was one picture of her posing in the kitchen.

¹⁷ There were photos that did not fit into the versions of ‘Roma’ written about in academic literature, which gave me plenty of other material to think about. For example, the television appeared in many photos of family homes, and frequently it was switched on. From interviewing children, I found out that a lot of their ideas of morals and behaviour were shaped by TV shows, and these photographs went some way to help me appreciate that. In fact, television, which is hardly mentioned in Romani studies literature, was widely watched and enjoyed by all the children. This has led me to write a paper looking at the interface between ethnicity, nationalism and popular culture in collaboration with Aniko Imre, which goes a long way to demolish some prominent generalisations both of ‘post-socialist’ Hungary itself and introduce ideas of position of Roma minorities as both entertainers as well as consumers in a national and global market (see Imre and Tremlett, under review).

of 'Roma as different' in the literature on Roma minorities, we might have expected some core differences between the types of photographs taken by Roma and non-Roma children. However, in the ensuing statistical analysis of the types of content of photographs taken by different ethnic and gender groups, the results showed no statistical significance between Roma and non-Roma children in each photographic category of this project. Furthermore, where one statistical significance was apparent was in fact between gender groups, which occurred in one category, 'family at home'¹⁸. This category was the most important both in terms of the over-representation of 'family at home' in comparison to any other category (41% of the photographs - 184 out of 451 - featured 'family at home'), along with the fact that literature on Roma minorities often cites 'home' as the central heart of Roma identity and reproduction of the 'Gypsy way' (see Gay y Blasco 1999, Okely 1983, Stewart 1997). On a dimension where we might, at least according to the existing literature, assume Roma identity to be at its strongest, it was in fact gender difference that appeared more salient.

In a similar vein, the qualitative analysis brought up questions about the fixation of 'Roma as different' in Romani studies and other public discourses. The signs of 'Gypsy taste' often described in the academic literature were not solely characteristic of Roma children's homes; rather, they could be seen in homes across the ethnic groupings, and actually were not found in all Roma family homes. In fact, the one 'classic' example of a 'typical Gypsy taste' home was from a non-Roma child. The results of the project unsettle the notion that Roma and non-Roma identities are always so contrasting as fixed opposites, and indeed led me to consider whether other differences (e.g. gender/class status) may be at times more salient than ethnicity for looking at the way these children represented their daily lives.

Holding up the photographs as the first step of analysis in the presentation of my data and then moving on to the recorded interviews sensitised me to listening to the children's talk and to further investigate what 'difference' might mean. Through comparing extracts from Roma and non-Roma children's interviews, I showed how it would take a big leap to say that a 'Gypsy way'

¹⁸ The results showed that girls were more likely than boys to take photographs in the category 'family at home'.

(as written in the literature) was typical of the way Roma children described their lives, as it would be false to say that elements of the ‘Gypsy way’ were absent from non-Roma children’s interviews. Not only had anti-essentialism made me aware of language as central to fieldwork, causing me to look for ways to supplement and complement audio recordings with visual methodologies, but anti-essentialism had also led to questioning the idea that a study about Roma identity and representations necessarily had to end up being solely about Roma. This line of thinking also allowed the recognition that widely considered Roma identity traits could also be applicable to non-Roma.

Of course the use of photographic images produced by participants does not ‘correct’ researcher bias or linguistic lack of fluency (Packard 2008, Rose 2007). Nevertheless, the use of photographs alongside interviews made for an interesting mix of produced and recorded data. Aiming at being more accountable to the reader by being upfront about the richness and diversity of language-in-the-field, whilst broadening the possibilities of produced data to include the visual, led to further awareness of anti-essentialist thinking. The process of research in a second language encouraged me to become more critical and reflexive, to elucidate further and justify the choices made methodologically as well as analytically.

Conclusion

This article has shown how a critical engagement with issues of language in ethnographic fieldwork can heighten the researcher’s ability to explore the characteristics and limitations of claims made from fieldwork. In the case of this particular research, recognising the position of being ‘less-than-fluent’ in the primary language of the participants led to a certain fastidious attachment to problematising and investigating knowledge claims. Not only did this lead to a deep consideration of approaches to research, including what participants to include, but also led me to further illuminate and justify the choices of analysis and presentation of data from the field. Recorded data, although not infallible (and of course with its own representational issues in the

processes of production, translation and analysis), at least could be put on view, re-played, re-checked and displayed more confidently word-by-word (albeit translated from the Hungarian¹⁹), or image-by-image, to the reader. The photography project not only offered an alternative to purely interactional data, but also opened up possibilities of trying out varying data analyses that enriched the presentation of data and the conclusions that could be drawn.

Furthermore, reflexivity on being ‘less-than-fluent’ highlighted the importance of engaging with theory to inform and debate the status of empirical research. This article has shown how attention to language and interactions in fieldwork can lead to a further appreciation of theory such as anti-essentialism, and vice versa. In my research this particularly resulted in my awareness of being unable to profess to having carried out a holistic ethnography, and neither did I claim to offer the reader a complete view of people’s lives. Even though I had known some of my research participants for more than four years prior to the start of my fieldwork, I still would not presume to know everything about them. Making the path(s) of my language learning more visible, holding that up as a means to show to the reader the difficulties and triumphs of understanding interactions and thus the goings-on in everyday life is perhaps a way towards dispelling some of the ‘fieldwork mystique’ that has so far shrouded much ethnographic literature.

Finally, considering that the subject of my research was to compare and contrast how Roma people are represented in public discourses and local practices, I want to end by summarising what the process taught me about researching ethnic minorities. From the outset of my research I wished to be particularly careful of not reproducing age-old stereotypes - what Willems has called the ‘search of the true Gypsy’:

Gypsies appear to appeal to the imagination simply as social outcasts and scapegoats, or, in a flattering but no more illuminating light, as romantic outsiders. The world is patently intrigued by them, yet at the same time regards them with anxiety as ‘undesirable aliens’ (1997, vii)

¹⁹ The politics of translation are dealt with more fully in the thesis itself, and the original transcripts in Hungarian are included in the appendix of the thesis.

In recognition of the symbolism attached to Roma people, I did not want to slip into producing an appealing positive portrayal of a Roma community, nor indeed an image of a hapless, poverty stricken, deficient minority. As an ethnographer, I argue that we should be careful in carrying out more well thought out, close, empirical research that foregrounds the everyday lives of ordinary people without being seduced by current political orientations, whilst still recognising the importance of these orientations and the need to speak and react to them. And that is more complicated than I ever thought possible. In this article, I have shown a way in through an attention to language. This can lead to a questioning and refining of data collection and presentation, increasing the accountability of claims made in the research process.

To reiterate a very important consideration, I did not want to fall into the trap of finding ethnicity because I was looking for it, as Moerman commented about anthropologists:

Anthropologists at work observe the world under the aspect of ethnicity. We are far more obsessive about it than our natives are. (1993, 87)

Having ‘Roma’ as a research object, yet not wishing to objectify participants as ‘Roma’ (or not), was the crux of my concerns as a new researcher embarking on her first major research project. An anti-essentialist, language-sensitive approach allowed me to avoid the trap of being ‘obsessed’ by ethnicity. Recognising my status as ‘less-than-fluent’ in the primary language of research, led to a sensitising framework which illuminated my choices in the fieldwork process and opened up new possibilities for thinking about accountability in ethnographic research.

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**Difficulties of translation from Israeli Hebrew to American English:
 An analysis of pronouns and power relations in interviews
 with bus drivers who experienced terror attacks**

Abstract

This paper investigates both what can be ‘lost’ in language and in its translation to English, and what can be ‘found’ through a deep qualitative, semiotic analysis of the discursive patterns reflected in a number of interviews conducted in Hebrew with native Israeli interviewees by a semi-fluent American immigrant interviewer. Israeli Hebrew has a very complex pronoun system inflected for number, person, and gender. Masculine forms are considered to be unmarked and are used both generically and gender specifically, while feminine forms are marked and are only gender specific. The interviewees’ uses of pronouns when talking with the female interviewer has several socio-psychological implications which can be ‘lost’ in verbatim English translation. In this paper, we will discuss the ways in which they can be ‘found’ through a more careful and language-attentive translation. This paper will explore the difficulties in—but nonetheless the necessity of—translation of diverse pronoun systems and other semantic terms that exist in the original language but not in the translated one. Finally, we will investigate a number of specific communicative strategies used by the interviewee; namely, 1) English words; 2) repetition; 3) the phrases, “you know,” and “let’s say”; 4) both the masculine and feminine forms of the second-person pronoun (“you”); and 5) the questions, “Do you understand?” and “Did you understand?”. We have found that, when closely examined, the non-random distribution of these uses of language, both in form and content, allows us to ‘find’ myriad analytical insights about power dynamics and interview co-construction that would have been ‘lost’ without careful translation. This paper also discusses the necessity for a great deal of reflexivity in cross-language research such as this, and the need for the ‘outsider’ researcher to keep a constant and watchful eye on his or her strengths and limitations when involved in a process of attempting to understand the ‘insider’ perspective, and then to translate it into another language—both linguistically and academically.

Introduction

This paper presents a deep qualitative, semiotic analysis of discursive patterns and phenomena in interviews conducted in Hebrew by a semi-fluent American immigrant with native Israeli interviewees. We will explore both what can be ‘lost’ and what can be ‘found’ in a context such as this, within an analysis of the language of origin and its translation to English. The original

research was based on baseline and 3-year follow-up in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with eight Israeli bus drivers who experienced terror attacks on their buses, exploring their phenomenological experiences and investigating what characterizes discourse on coping, resilience, and heroism in this context. The qualitative analysis conducted was interdisciplinary in nature, combining narrative and discourse analysis techniques with sign-oriented linguistic techniques. The connection between grammatical forms and their individual and societal psychosocial implications was investigated, and hypotheses emerged regarding the linguistic meanings and extra-linguistic messages of the lexical, grammatical, and structural choices made by the interviewees in telling their narratives.

This paper was inspired primarily by our frustrations with regard to the translation of portions of our Israeli Hebrew interviews into American English texts, and our observations that the conventional translation techniques we were attempting to use simply were not ‘getting the job done.’ Although we generally attempted to avoid translating whenever possible—rather, conducting our analyses on the original texts and in the original language—we found that grappling with some of these issues became unavoidable when faced with the writing and publication process. The doctoral dissertation on this research is being written in English for an audience that will include both Israelis and Americans, and we simply have no choice but to translate at least the sections of text that we wish to present and explore in the final work itself. As such, throughout the translation process, we came to recognize three central difficulties that emerged repeatedly—posed, namely, by the disparity in the pronoun systems and unique semantic terms in Israeli Hebrew and American English, as well as an attempt to understand the unique power dynamics that occurred in a cross-cultural and cross-lingual context such as this one. We will suggest that, when closely translated and examined, the non-random distribution of use of language, both in form and content, allows us to ‘find’ a number of analytical insights with regard to the narrative, the interviewee himself, and the interview dynamics. Ultimately, we have found that, despite (or perhaps because of) the inherently problematic nature of both linguistic and cultural translation, it is possible to uncover rich information about expression and narrative choices, as well as the wide variety of issues inherent in interview dynamics and the construction of shared meaning. We hope that discussing our experiences with these difficulties and how we dealt with them, as well as what we both ‘lost’ and ‘found’ throughout the process, might be useful to other researchers/translators.

The interviewer: A reflexive perspective

One of the most essential components of qualitative research is the awareness of one's own reflexive perspective as a researcher, and the relationship between this consciousness and the experiences and perspectives of those individuals participating in the research. Indeed, as Charmaz (1990, 1169) asserts, "the researcher actively shapes the research process. The researcher creates an explication, organization, and presentation *of* the data rather than discovering order *within* the data. The discovery process consists of discovering the ideas the *researcher* has about the data after interacting with it." To this end, I will now discuss my positioning and reflexive perspective as a researcher/analyst in this context, as this is the lens through which both the process and results of this research will be viewed.

First and foremost, it is necessary to note that I (the first author and interviewer) was born and grew up in Seattle, Washington, in the United States, and that I immigrated to Israel in October of 2003, at the age of 26. As opposed to most North American immigrants to Israel, I had had very little prior background—either through formal education or personal experience—in the Hebrew language and Israeli history or culture. Both because I immigrated alone and because I am determined to learn about and understand Israeli society as best I can, I have invested much time and energy in exposing myself to 'native' cultural experiences, to speaking Hebrew as much as possible, and to limiting the time I spend with English-speaking friends.

Nonetheless, and try as I might to 'fit in,' I often come across to my Israeli friends as the quintessential American. I look American; I dress in American clothes; I speak Hebrew with a moderate but fully discernible American accent—it is clear to all who meet me, within a matter of minutes, that I am not a native Israeli. Indeed, I can be considered very much an outsider regarding both the participant population and the society under study in this research. Beyond conducting a thorough literature review on Israeli society and consulting with my native Israeli friends to get their (own socially influenced) perspectives, understanding the intricacies of the social phenomena that I am attempting to study will always be a challenge for me, but will also provide fruitful insights.

Indeed, there are both advantages and disadvantages to my background and positioning with regard to this research. As all interviews are the product of the relationship between the interviewer, interviewee, and interview context (Mishler 1991), it is clear that the interviews I have conducted were influenced by my outsider status. I felt that the interviewees were willing to be more open to me and my questions for the very reason that I am an outsider, and they also tended to take more time to come ‘down to my level’ to ‘educate’ me and aid my absorption into Israeli culture and society, explaining certain issues and phenomena that may be taken for granted by a native Israeli interviewer. In particular, I noticed that some of the interviewees were very concerned with making sure that I understood what they were trying to express to me, and they often went so far as to attempt to translate certain words for me (without my asking them to do so) or using what little English they had to encourage or clarify my understanding.

Similarly, while I am relatively fluent in Hebrew and constantly learning and analyzing its usage in daily discourse, it is not my mother tongue—and this also presents both advantages and disadvantages within the context of this research. I constantly attempted to conduct my translations as “mathematically” as possible—that is, to follow a one-to-one relationship between the languages, paying more attention to translating each word equivalently and less attention to metaphor, nuance, and implied and non-literal meanings. I felt this was warranted in order to not miss any specific words or literal meanings, but of course this presented a trade-off between what was ‘lost’ through the use of this method and what was ‘found.’ It has been stated that the challenges involved in the creation of a “perfect translation” are “insurmountable,” as translations must simultaneously take into account issues of vocabulary, idioms, grammar, and conceptual levels of understanding (Ramirez-Esparza & Pennebaker 2006, 6). Because the research area of translation in discourse analysis is relatively under-theorized, however, it is difficult to judge just how much of an impact (either positive or negative) these issues may have had on the present work (Riessman, personal communication). I have spent a considerable amount of time consulting with native Israelis with regard to language use and equivalent translations, and this has been an ongoing effort within the current research.

Translation of the differences between the pronoun systems and specific semantic terms in Israeli Hebrew and American English: A sign-oriented semiotic approach

This research utilized as its analytical framework the semiotic or sign-oriented linguistic approach—inspired by de Saussure (1983 [1916]) and expanded upon by Tobin (1990, 1994/1995)—with a particular focus on the pronoun system (e.g., I, you, he, she), which must be understood, first and foremost, in terms of its invariant meanings, or Saussure’s *signifiés*: *encoder* (first-person)¹, *decoder* (second-person)², and *other than encoder/decoder* (third-person). Perhaps the most central element of Modern Hebrew is gender and the constant linguistic choices that must be made in accordance. As Tobin (2001, 192) notes, “Gender is inherent, integral, and ubiquitous” in Hebrew, as all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, and inflected prepositions either have an inherent grammatical gender or must be conjugated to agree with their collocated grammatical counterpart. This centrality of gender presents an ever-present requirement for speakers to choose the appropriate form to use throughout their discourse. In addition to nouns and adjectives having gender and number morphology, all verbs are conjugated

¹ Viewed from a sign-oriented linguistic perspective, the first-person singular pronoun (*‘ani* in Hebrew; ‘I’ in English) signifies the *speaker/writer* (generally, ‘encoder’), referring to the ‘one who speaks/writes here and now,’ and can be considered as the most proximate and personal pronoun, as it is ego-centered. It is also the most specific or ‘known’ pronoun, as its use leaves little ambiguity as to the identity or nature of the speaker. It is one of the few forms in Hebrew that is unmarked for (that is, neutral to) gender. This form is used to describe and express personalized events, actions, or states, and cannot represent a relation to anything or anyone but the encoder.

² The second-person masculine singular (MS) pronoun (*‘atah* in Hebrew; ‘you’ in English) signifies the *audience/listener/reader* (generally, ‘decoder’), and may be viewed as one of the most general and neutral pronouns. It has two functions in Modern Hebrew: 1) the traditional usage to address specific male decoders; and 2) a more generic/general/impersonal usage corresponding roughly to the non-gendered, non-numbered ‘you’ in English. In the latter case, it functions as the unmarked form, customarily used in non-gendered discourse or relation to a non-specific subject (similar to, in English: “When *one* does this type of work...” or “When *you* wake up in the morning...”). However, in Hebrew the MS ‘you’ pronoun is also used in discourse that does not, or does not necessarily, call for the unmarked form. Indeed, it has been reported that two women will often use the MS ‘you’ with each other, even in such obviously gendered cases as, “When you (MS) are pregnant...” Based on this type of usage, one might therefore hypothesize that the use of the second-person MS ‘you’ serves to create a depersonalized or universalized sense of meaning, as the unmarked pronoun allows or creates a relation to ‘one’ or ‘everyman.’

The second-person feminine singular (FS) pronoun (*‘at* in Hebrew; ‘you’ in English) also signifies the decoder, and also has two functions: 1) in addressing specific female decoders; and 2) a generic and/or general manner of usage between two females or in all-female groups and specific or generic gendered (female) situations and contexts (i.e., one might hear “When you (FS) are pregnant...” only in this context). Because it is marked for gender and number, this form is customarily utilized only in person- or gender-specific discursive situations, and therefore the choice to use the FS ‘you’ (rather than the standard neutral, unmarked MS form) may create a sense of greater proximity and less neutrality toward the female individual being addressed. In this sense, a male who uses the FS ‘you’ in speaking to a female about his own experiences may be showing a particular communicative strategy that may have certain implications with regard to his attitude toward what he is describing and/or toward the particular decoder.

for person, gender, and number as well.

The central difference between the pronoun systems in Israeli Hebrew and American English thus lies in level of markedness for gender and number. While the first-person pronominal forms ('I' and 'we') in Hebrew are gender-neutral, the second- and third-person forms are not. The masculine pronouns are the unmarked forms, as they can be used to refer to both male and female objects generically and are generally neutral in form, while feminine forms require additional obligatory endings or suffixes. Essentially, this means that the unmarked masculine pronominal forms can be used in all contexts (all-male, mixed, and even all-female groups), while the marked feminine pronominal forms are customarily used only in all-female groups or in relation to a specific female decoder (and even then, the feminine forms can and frequently are replaced by the unmarked masculine forms for use in expressing generic and/or general messages).

While the first-person singular pronoun appears to have the same function and usage in both languages, in Hebrew it is always collocated with a gendered form. Thus, while the pronoun itself appears unmarked for gender, the verb closely following it will always reveal the gender of the speaker in question. In addition, while in English the second-person 'you' is unmarked for both number and gender (i.e., there is no difference between the masculine singular, feminine singular, masculine plural, and feminine plural forms), in Hebrew, there are four distinct forms for the second-person 'you,' each marked for both gender and number. These distinct differences between the pronoun systems in Israeli Hebrew and American English present a number of challenges for a researcher attempting to translate texts from one language to the other. Indeed, even more than the actual literal translation, it is important to illuminate and clarify the centrality of gender markedness in Hebrew and its attendant consequences on the use of the language.

Analytically speaking, therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to the structure and nature of these gendered usages and choices in spontaneous discourse—particularly if patterns emerge as unusual or unconventional, or predominantly consistent or inconsistent. A fundamental assumption here is that these choices are not made arbitrarily, and the meanings of and relationships between the marked and unmarked pronouns as well as choice of tense may be considered to function as analytical 'flags,' thus spurring and facilitating a deeper analysis of the

social discourse surrounding an individual or event. A view of these choices as communicative strategies utilized by the speakers may provide a background for the understanding of the individual and the larger social implications surrounding their lived-worlds.

The following two excerpts³ allow us to demonstrate these linguistic phenomena in Dani's⁴ discourse, particularly in his uses of the second-person singular pronouns of both genders. The first is part of a narrative Dani was telling about going back after the shooting terror attack to pick up his bag, which had been taken by the bus company for safekeeping when Dani had been taken to the hospital.

You (FS) see the bus, after I went to the [bus company] branch, because my bag was still there, everything, [they (MP)] took my bag. Two weeks later, I, for no particular reason, am getting [my things] organized, I see tons of glass shards inside the bag. Tons of glass. (4) In the end, and *you (FS) see the bus*, God help us, it is full of holes, I am telling no, God, I, really, I ow-, owe God my life. *Understand (FS)?* (3) A huge miracle, *let's (FS) say that*. A big miracle happened here, in my case, that I wasn't hurt. There are some who *you (FS) know*, were killed, PLEASE, III. (3:116-120)ⁱ

There is something about this text section that seems to reflect a need to connect with the (female) interviewer, both discursively and emotionally. We can see this in a number of facets

³ In all text excerpts throughout this paper, all italics are mine, and have been added to the texts to emphasize particular linguistic phenomena. All other indications in the texts follow conventional transcribing rules: underlined text signifies that the interviewee was speaking in a louder voice relative to the rest of his interview; **boldface** signifies relatively emphatic speech; {words within curly brackets} signify speech that is relatively softer or quieter; and words that include multiple letters signify that the interviewee elongated the indicated syllables or parts of these words in some manner. Additionally, (numbers within parentheses) signify the amount of seconds that a particular pause in speech lasted; (notes within parentheses) are extra-linguistic or contextual clues; and [notes within square brackets] are additions of words or explanations for the reader with regard to potentially unclear phrases in the interviewee's discourse. Similarly, with regard to pronoun and verb gender and number, "(MS)" signifies "male singular"; "(MP)" signifies "male plural"; and "(FS)" signifies "feminine singular". WORDS ORIGINALLY SPOKEN IN ENGLISH are capitalized.

⁴ A native-born Israeli, "Dani" was 29 years old and single at the time of the interview. He did not excel in his studies, and did not finish high school. He served in the border patrol in the Jerusalem area during his compulsory army service, and had been working as a bus driver in Jerusalem for six years at the time of the interview. He had experienced three different terror events over the course of his employment: once when a terrorist opened fire with an automatic weapon on his bus while it was standing at the bus stop, wounding a number of his passengers; once when he witnessed a bus in front of him explode from a bombing; and once when a single bullet was fired at his bus as he was driving. He was working as a bus driver at the time of the interview, and he proudly reported that he had never taken more than a two-day break after any of the incidents he experienced.

within the form of his discourse here—and particularly in the fact that in five separate places, Dani utilizes the feminine form of the verb of his choice.

First, he employs the phrase, “you (FS) see the bus,” twice in the exact same formulations. Dani is willing to make an ‘I’ statement to describe seeing glass shards inside his bag, in addition to declaring that *he*, and no one else, owes God his life. But with regard to his experience of seeing his bus after the attack that occurred, Dani twice chooses the feminine form of the pronoun. This pattern may be viewed as a communicative strategy to draw in the female decoder (myself) to the account of the experienced events, as if Dani is attempting to make this a shared experience, or at least to allow us to create a shared understanding of the experience through the interview.

In addition, Dani again asks if I understand what he is saying, as well as using the colloquial (but personalized for me) “you (FS) know” phrase. He also chooses to bring in the female gendered “let’s (FS) say” in another possible bid to both pull me into the narrative and co-create a shared understanding of the described events. First, he states that he owes God his life, immediately after which he attempts to confirm that I understand—or agree with, or empathize with, or validate—what he is saying and how he feels. Directly after that, he offers his explanation of what he has experienced (that is, the result of his process of meaning-making after the event): that it was “a huge miracle” that his life was spared. This suggestion is presented by Dani as a shared explanation, by use of the phrase, “let’s (FS) say.” He could have prefaced or followed his stated belief with “I think,” “I feel,” “I believe,” or any number of ego-centric phrases that would have placed the focus solely on himself. Instead, he chose, throughout this section of talk, to use language that served to forge a sense of togetherness between the interviewer and the interviewee—a sense of co-creation of meaning, and of shared understanding (literally, ‘let’s say this together’). This gendered linguistic strategy is uniquely accomplishable only in the Hebrew language, and this observation is something that would be ‘lost’ in a translation to English that would not make prominent the gendered nature of Hebrew.

In the second excerpt, we see Dani’s apparent need to make sure that he is being understood. We also—perhaps not coincidentally—see discursive behavior that is the exact opposite of the previous section of text.

A: Hmm, okay. Annd how, how did you feel, what were you thinking in the moment that you got onto a bus the first time afterwards?

D: **The truth**, (1) in, on that line specifically, when I switched over from that, a little, *you (FS) know, you (MS) are looking, you (MS) are on edge, on edge. You (FS) know what that is?*

A: Uhh, yes.

D: *On edge is like, YOUR, YOUR HEART BEATS, you (MS) are looking, you (MS) are expecting something, a different line like doesn't interest me, what, what, but when you (MS) pass by from there, then you (MS) know, you (MS) are reminded, you (MS) say 'Wow, God, what a miracle I had here.' You (MS) look you (MS) say 'My Lord, right here it happened to me. Right here where I stopped, exactly that,' I try to, to get into it.*

A: Hmm.

D: *You (FS) understand? To get into th-, mem-, memory. (3:164-173)ⁱⁱ*

Here, rather than using the feminine verb forms to connect and co-create meaning with me, he uses the masculine verb forms repeatedly, and the discourse comes across as detached, impersonal, and universalized. He switches to the feminine form only for his direct questioning of me as to whether I understand. This communicative strategy serves to depersonalize and universalize Dani's experience of being "on edge," creating a sense that the Israeli 'everyman' is experiencing and feeling these things. It seems that Dani's motivation here is to collectivize these difficult feelings and experiences, and the use of the masculine 'you' is a well-documented strategy for accomplishing this. It is unclear to me, however, whether the universal, collective, generic 'you (MS)' includes or excludes me. While the feminine 'you' would be a mechanism to draw just the two of us—interviewer and interviewee—into a shared creation of meaning, the masculine 'you' brings the meaning out to the wider world—which may, in Dani's mind, mean the wider world of all Israelis (which would include me), or perhaps only the wider world of Israeli males, or perhaps only Israeli male bus drivers. Nonetheless, it is clear here—and

particularly in the notable disparity between this section and the previous section—that Dani was not solely interested in bringing me into the experience of what it means for him to be “on edge.” In the excerpt below, Dani describes his experience of witnessing a bombing on the bus directly in front of him:

A second. Exactly a second, like a second of thought, to cross the intersection, I could have crossed, but God says to me ‘No, stay (MS). What is the big deal? So two more minutes.’ 9:05 at night. (1) That’s the third terror attack. Like, that *I really saw in LIVE, in LIVE I saw it, in LIVE*, are you (FS) familiar with, line 21 takes a left toward [street name], line 4 also takes a left, line 4 crossed the intersection, stands/stood⁵ at the stop, just barely passed the stop, exploded, went up, and I am still standing here and seeing the whole scene, maybe 30 meters away from me, and hearing **everything**. God told me ‘Get out of there, what do you (MS) need? Again to, to be reminded of blood, what blood?’, what do I need these things? (3:241-247)ⁱⁱⁱ

From this section alone, it sounds as if Dani was standing on a sidewalk, alone, watching these events unfold. In reality, however, he was on duty at this time, at the wheel of a bus full of passengers who all witnessed the same event. There is a collective nature to this experience to which Dani’s discourse here does not attest, and the picture he paints is a wholly solitary one, with no mention of those who shared the picture with him. It seems here that Dani has a particular interest in presenting this story in this manner, and his use of English only further emphasizes how important and dramatic this experience was for him—he reiterates three times in a row that he saw the bus explode in front of him “in live.”

It is notable here that Dani makes little use of either the masculine or feminine forms of “you,” in stark contrast to the previous two excerpts. Indeed, this section is overwhelmingly narrated from within ‘I’ statements—what he himself saw, heard, and experienced. He is interested neither in collectivizing and universalizing this experience, nor in bringing me into it as a ‘co-understander.’ Here, his use of English is aimed at creating a picture of a singularly influential experience, and his singular claim to it. The other communicative strategies that have emerged from previous excerpts are not at work here, as his motivations for telling the story in this

⁵ Because of the structure of the Hebrew tense system, it is not possible to ascertain here whether Dani was using the past or present tense form of this verb.

manner have taken precedence over an apparent need to be understood or to connect with his interviewer.

We can see from the above two texts the richness of the insights revealed if one takes care not just to translate the words, but also to make visible the structure and uniquenesses of the original language. If every *'atah'* ("you (MS)") and *'at'* ("you (FS)") had been translated into the English simply as "you," much of the richness of the text—as well as the analytical information garnered about the speaker and how he views and interacts with the interviewer—would have been entirely lost in the transfer.

Another notable difference between Israeli Hebrew and American English—one that can hold true in the translation from nearly any language to another—lies in the field of specific semantic terms. Throughout the analysis of these interviews, we repeatedly came across words and phrases in Hebrew that simply did not translate clearly into English, and we constantly grappled with the choices necessarily involved in pushing, pulling, and prodding the original texts into consistent, coherent, and comparable texts in English. Because the interviewees utilized a variety of semi-equivalent alternatives, we presumed that unique meaning lies in these choices, and thus, we have attempted to translate these sections of text as literally (albeit clumsily) as possible, in hopes of conveying clearly these differences.

Yossi's⁶ discourse most profoundly demonstrated these semantic phenomena and the attendant translation difficulties. From the beginning of his baseline interview, Yossi frequently appeared to be personalizing his bus and the events he had experienced through the use of first-person possessive pronouns, referring to certain objects as his own or even as himself. Interestingly, Dani made a similar statement in his narrative of the terror attack he experienced, when he said, "...my people were wounded."^{iv} This phrase proved particularly difficult to translate into English, but it will have to suffice to note that the construction of this phrase in Hebrew is highly personalized, protective, and perhaps even military in nature—something that an army

⁶ A native-born Israeli, "Yossi" was 55 years old and married with three children. He completed twelve years of schooling and had served in the armored corps during his compulsory army service. He had worked as a bus driver in Jerusalem for 35 years without a single break, until a bombing took place on his bus approximately nineteen months prior to the interview. The terror attack was extensive, with many casualties and injuries, and Yossi experienced a partial loss of hearing as a result. He was not working at the time of the interview, and appeared to be still suffering from fairly serious post-traumatic symptoms.

commander might say in reference to his unit, or a school teacher about his or her students. This provides another example of the complexities of translation of specific semantic terms—especially, as seen in this instance, the translation of military terms from a language used within a highly militarized society such as Israel, to a language used within a society without an integrated civilian army, such as America.

As part of our comparative analysis of Yossi’s discourse in his baseline and follow-up interviews, we created the following table, which focuses particularly on his discourse with regard to personalization and ownership.

Interview 1 (Baseline)	Interview 2 (Follow-up)
“Now <i>I was wounded</i> in the Yom Kippur War, (4) I received a direct hit, and <i>I had [li] two casualties</i> (MP).” ^v	“In the Yom Kippur War I got a direct hit, from an artillery shell, <i>I had [li] two guys who were killed</i> {and I}, <i>I was lightly wounded</i> ...” ^{vi}
“ <i>My door</i> was warped, gashed. Everything was gashed. I grasped the door, by force , opened a little...” ^{vii}	“I grasped <i>th’door</i> and by force opened it and it was {warped, and I managed to open it}.” ^{viii} “I opened <i>th’door</i> , I got really God-given strength (1) that I opened <i>th’doors</i> ...” ^{ix}
“Two girls got <i>onto me [li]</i> [my bus], (2) and I remember it well, that t- got (FS) <i>onto me [li]</i> , two girls and an older man got on.” ^x	“Two girls, and an old man (1), <i>got on at me [etzli]</i> [my bus]. (1)” ^{xi}
	“Annd there were people who <i>got on to me [elai]</i> to the bus, a story from what happened to me...” ^{xii}
	“A bit after the some one or two stops, [they] <i>got on with me</i> and I got up, and continued to drive.” ^{xiii} “Now. Uhh, the old man who <i>got on at me [etzli]</i> , (2) the girl who sat behind who I know got up and let him sit down...” ^{xiv}

As we can see, these semantic terms create unique difficulties in translation here, making many of the above sentences clearly clumsy. However, the analysis of Yossi’s use of this type of discourse made it crucial to distinguish between the related terms—particularly given the observation that his discourse in the follow-up interview was decidedly less personalized than in the baseline interview. Had we not paid special attention to translating these terms as comparably as possible, we would never have noticed Yossi’s transition from consistent use of the ‘*li*’ expression (the most personalized) in the first interview to a more pronounced use of the ‘*etzli*’ and ‘*elai*’ expressions, in addition to the expression for “with me” (all of which may be

considered less personalized than 'li'). This, when viewed alongside Yossi's clear choice to depersonalize other statements (such as "the door" instead of "my door," and "I had two guys who were killed" instead of "I had two casualties"), presents a compelling picture of an individual who, three years later, seems to view these experiences quite differently than he did at the time of the first interview. Indeed, we can hypothesize from this semantic analysis that Yossi may have more fully processed and accepted these experiences (as part of life, or as something that did not affect only him) by the time of the second interview.

'Translation' of the power dynamics negotiations between an Israeli interviewee and an American interviewer

In addition to the importance in translation of paying attention to and making apparent the structural and other unique differences inherent in the original language, we have 'found' that there may emerge other, equally important issues that require careful understanding and 'translation.' Throughout my interview with Dani, I felt that 'something interesting' was going on with regard to the dynamics between us. Perhaps it was because he was very close to my age, as opposed to the rest of the interviewees, who were all at least 20 years older than me. Perhaps it was because the interview was conducted in his bedroom, as he lives with his parents. Or perhaps it was because he was the only one of the interviewees who inquired as to my background and why I came to Israel. Regardless, our dynamics proved worthy of further analysis, to which we will turn now here. In order to delve deeper into what may have been 'lost' as well as 'found' in the interview with Dani, we will present here perhaps the most central narrative of the interview—that of the terror attack he experienced most directly and personally:

I am driving, line 22, it was winter, February, rain. (1) Approach the bus stop, take on the passengers, take, *you (FS) know*, [bus] passes, *money, MONEY*. Suddenly I see someone come to a standstill in front of the bus. (1) I do to himmm like 'Go past.' (2) Because I want to put on the blinker and leave the bus stop. *And then he winks, winks his eye at me, does like this*, I do to him like 'What?', [he]⁷ takes out the zipper, coat, takes out a rifle and 'Brrrrrrr' ((makes a sound of automatic weapon firing in succession)). And I, am I

⁷ When the specific pronominal form is not indicated with its collocated verb, the pronoun equivalent (or possible equivalents, where certainty is not possible) will be noted in [square brackets] preceding the verb.

dreaming? *I DREAM?* {What? What?} Straight away, like [they (MP)] taught me in the army, I bent down underneath the steering wheel, I am small. The bullets passed me over my head, *he fired in a burst, in automatic, not single shots, ONE ONE, in a burst.* I went down underneath, with the steering wheel, and I started to drive. I wanted to run him over, but he got away. Now I look, I see him pump full of bullets thhhe people who were at the bus stop. (2) What did I do, I got out of there, I went to the right towards [the hospital], there was a hospital nearby, I went off the route, my people were wounded, tons of blood on the bus. I said ‘I have to get the bus out, otherwise he is tearing us apart,’ *understand (FS)?* And so, the real story is, I wanted to go back, like, that’s it, I saved the bus, now I want to go back to that place, like, *how do they say?* To see whaat is the condition of the terrorist, to see if they killed him, didn’t kill him, what he is doing, maybe it is possible to bring him under control. *You (FS) understand?* There is no fear in me, I am not afraid. I didn’t go into shock, no nothing. You can ask [the psychologist]. They came, something like 30 reporters, [she] says to me ‘Are you able to talk?’, I told her ‘Yes.’ And two days later I went back to work. (1) There is no fear in me, there is no fear in my lexicon, I don’t have it. (2) (3:66-80)^{xv}

Perhaps the most interesting phenomenon here is Dani’s use of English throughout this brief section of talk, and his choice of which words and/or concepts to translate for me—“money,” “I dream,” and “one one.” He follows the same pattern for “money” and “I dream,” first saying it in Hebrew and then reiterating it with the English translation. With regard to the third use of English in this text section, Dani uses multiple means in both the form and content of his discourse to assist my understanding of the concept of an automatic weapon and the attacker’s use of it. His first attempt lies in his use of a sound effect (“Brrrrrrr”), followed by five separate attempts, one after the other, to clarify this for me (“he fired in a burst, in automatic, not single shots, ONE ONE, in a burst”), with the second to last attempt being in English (in addition to his use of the Hebrew-icized word for “automatic,” which actually is derived directly from English and sounds almost exactly the same).

While there is always the possibility that Dani used this communicative strategy because he thought or felt that I did not understand him, I nonetheless find it hard to believe that he was uncertain if I would understand the Hebrew word for “money,” in particular. I was, after all, conducting an interview with him in Hebrew, and he was aware that I had lived in the country for

a reasonable amount of time. Similarly, while it is also possible that Dani's use of English words came as a reaction to some unconscious message I may have sent that may have reflected a lack of understanding (such as a confused facial expression or uncertain body language), I again find it hard to believe that I had furrowed my brow when he used the Hebrew words for "money," and "am I dreaming," which I did indeed have in my vocabulary at the time.

Nonetheless, it seems apparent from this text section that Dani may be expressing a need to make sure that he is being understood. This emerges in places even where he does not use English words, such as when he physically demonstrates to me what winking is ("And then he winks, winks his eye at me, does like this"), and in his frequent direct questioning of me as to whether I understand or understood him. I would suggest here that there was something else going on in this section of discourse, and in the interview at large. It is well-known that communicative strategies such as repetition and emphasis serve as markers that something important is being expressed. Dani uses these strategies, and it seems likely that his use of English words is another manner of marking significance in his discourse.

Indeed, it is possible that Dani's use of English words comes as a reaction to the power dynamics at work between us. In this sense, it may have been essentially irrelevant to Dani whether I actually know the Hebrew words for "money" or "dream"—what appears to have been important is that he *does* know the English word for it, and therefore, he uses it in order to show his intelligence and worldliness. Of course, there is still a selection mechanism at work here, with regard to why he chose to use these communicative strategies at these particular times in these particular contexts. I would postulate that his use of English, as well as his repeated questioning of whether I understand or understood him, are also attempts on his part to 'level the playing field' with regard to the power dynamics between us. It cannot be overlooked that, while Dani and I are close to the same age, we share neither the same gender nor nationality. Additionally, Dani is a bus driver and I introduced myself as a Master's student in social psychology (which most Israelis seem to consider indistinguishable from clinical psychology, and therefore, in his eyes I am 'a therapist'). Thus, it is conceivable that there was a significant power imbalance between us—which, I would assert, he sought to correct and redistribute at every possible opportunity.

Discussion: Connections between the ‘lost’, the ‘found’, and the context

We will now turn to a more structured discussion of the analysis that has been conducted and the examples illustrated here, along with an attempt to connect these findings to the larger social psychological context and discourse surrounding Dani, myself, and the cooperative interview dynamic. Through our in-depth analysis of the above and other excerpts of Dani’s interview, we have found a number of communicative strategies and patterns. One of the basic tenets of sign-oriented linguistic theory states that one must treat discursive phenomena not simply as “the way in which people talk,” but rather, as a marker of the inner world and motivations of the encoder/speaker. Indeed, as Tobin (1990, 1994/1995) suggests, we must look at an individual’s talk with a focus on the non-random distribution of the discursive phenomena at work, and remember that choices—whether conscious or unconscious—are always being made which drive this non-random distribution.

With this in mind, we have arrived at the following summary of Dani’s discursive choices and communicative strategies, as well as a number of possible explanations therein:

Discursive phenomena	Possible explanations
Use of English	<p>Demonstration to me that he can speak English – possible sign of his desire for approval, admiration, and inclusion in the ‘English-speaking world’</p> <p>Reflection of his sense of inferiority – possible sign that he is trying to correct or redistribute the power imbalance between us</p> <p>Reflection of his sense of superiority – possible sign that he is trying to make me aware of my inferior Hebrew or help me understand up to his level</p> <p>Attempt to explain more clearly to me – either because he thinks I don’t understand or because he wants to make sure that I do</p> <p>Demonstration of added emphasis, which may be a sign of a subject, concept, story, or issue that holds particular importance to the encoder/speaker</p>

Use of repetition	<p>Well-documented discursive sign of a subject, concept, story, or issue that holds particular importance to the encoder/speaker</p> <p>Attempt to explain more clearly to me – either because he thinks I don't understand or because he wants to make sure that I do</p>
Use of “you (FS) know” and “let's (FS) say”	<p>Attempt to create a discursive coalition between us – toward a shared creation of meaning and understanding</p> <p>Attempt to bring me into the story and/or experience</p>
Use of “you (FS)”	<p>Demonstration of a need to connect and create a shared experience, both discursively and emotionally</p>
Use of “you (MS)”	<p>Attempt to depersonalize, universalize, and collectivize to a larger context world – but unclear how inclusive this world is in his eyes (Israelis, or Israeli males, or Israeli male bus drivers, etc.)</p> <p>Possible attempt to exclude me from the context or experience</p>
Use of “Do/Did you (FS) understand/understood?”	<p>Demonstration of a need to make certain that he is being understood</p> <p>Demonstration of added emphasis, which may be a sign of a subject, concept, story, or issue that holds particular importance to the encoder/speaker</p> <p>Demonstration of his uncertainty that I can ever really understand – perhaps as a result of one or more of the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) my gender; 2) my education level; 3) my less-than-fluent Hebrew; 4) my status as an immigrant and non-native Israeli; 5) my not having served in the army; 6) my not having experienced a terror attack

Any number of these possible hypotheses could be at work at any given time, influencing Dani's discursive choices in various ways, and it is impossible to know with certainty which of these

explanations have motivated the communicative strategies used here. Again, it is possible that Dani simply enjoys using the English words that he knows, and that while it didn't necessarily assist our communication and shared understanding, it made him feel that it did. And yet, a deep analysis of these excerpts shows that there was nonetheless a pattern—rather than a series of random discursive whims with no 'rhyme or reason'—underlying Dani's choices at certain points in his talk and not at others.

Conclusion

This study brought together an American-born, relatively new immigrant and hence primarily English-speaking 'outsider' researcher with native Israeli, Hebrew-speaking 'insider' participants. This unique pairing yielded a number of advantages and disadvantages, and an even greater number of questions that have been grappled with throughout the research; such as, "How can a researcher who is not an inborn member of the culture or native speaker of the language profess to understand what her participants are speaking about?"; "How much is 'missed' because of these 'deficiencies,' and how much is 'gained' or viewed anew through 'outsider' eyes?"; "How can a 'foreign' researcher successfully analyze (and then translate for her audiences) not only the words and phrases used by her interviewees, but also the sentiments, unspoken understandings, and dynamics throughout the interview?";

As we have seen through the examples presented here, cross-language and cross-cultural interviews can present a number of challenges. In particular, the translation of the pronoun systems and specific semantic terms, along with the understanding of the cross-cultural and cross-language negotiation of power dynamics from an Israeli Hebrew interview context to American English texts must be done carefully and with a watchful eye to the uniquenesses and cultural contexts of both languages.

When attention was paid to a language-sensitive translation of the pronoun system in Israeli Hebrew, for instance, we 'found' that the interviewees' non-randomly distributed use of the second-person singular masculine and feminine pronouns ("you" (MS) and "you" (FS)) sends and reflects an insightful message about the narrative as well as the narrator. Indeed, it was

hypothesized here that the use of the masculine “you” serves to depersonalize, universalize, and collectivize the statement being made, while the feminine “you” serves to connect and create a shared experience between the speaker and listener. Because the English language does not have these gendered pronoun versions, this particularly interesting finding would not have been ‘found’ if the interviews had not been conducted in the interviewees’ mother tongue, or if attention had not been paid to the shifts in pronoun use in the English translation (through the use of the MS and FS code). Additionally, when an attempt was made to translate the texts in such a way as to preserve evidence of the power dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee, we ‘found’ a number of different strategies used by the interviewees for getting their point across and managing the interview relationship.

Of course, by the same token, not conducting the interviews in the interviewer’s mother tongue led to the ‘loss’ of some level of understanding of the nuances and perhaps even outright concepts that may be involved in the ‘insider’ experience. This may indeed have had an effect on the interview dynamic and the interviewees’ sense that they were being understood. The translation of interview excerpts for this paper also poses clear pitfalls and problems, especially when executed by a non-native speaker of the language. And yet, we have seen here the emergence of a rich array of discursive patterns and strategies, suggesting that it may nonetheless be possible to wade our way through translated interviews and texts, and come out the other side with meaningful and significant results. This can only be accomplished, however, alongside a watchful eye and reflexive perspective on the problematic nature of this endeavor, as well as a commitment to creative strategies that allow the structure and unique characteristics of languages to come alive and be visible in the translations we carry out.

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i

"את רואה את האוטובוס, אחרי זה הלכתי לסניף, כי התיק שלי נשאר שמה, הכל, לקחו לי תתיק. אחרי שבועיים, אני, סתם, עושה סדר, אני רואה מלא זכוכיות בתוך התיק. מלא זכוכיות. (4) בסוף, ואת רואה את האוטובוס, אלוהים ישמור, כולו חורים, אני אומר לא, אלוהים, אני, באמת, אני חי, חייב לאלוהים תחיים שלי. הבנת? (3) נס גדול, בואי נגיד ככה. נס גדול היה פה, במקרה שלי, שלא נפגעת. יש כאלה שאת יודעת, נהרגו, please, אניי."

ii

א: אהם, אוקיי. ו:איך, איך הרגשת, מה חשבת ברגע שאתה עלית לאוטובוס בפעם אחרי זה?
 ד: **האמת**, (1) ב-, בקו הזה הספציפי, כשעברתי מהזה, קצת, את יודעת, אתה מסתכל, אתה דרוך, דרוך. את יודעת מה זה?
 א: אהה, כן.
 ד: דרוך זה כאילו, your, your heart beats, אתה מסתכל, אתה מצפה למשהו, קו אחר כאילו לא מעניין אותי, מה, מה, אבל כשאתה עובר משם, אז אתה יודע, אתה נזכר, אתה אומר "וואי, אלוהים, איזה נס היה לי פה". אתה מסתכל אתה אומר "יאאללה, בדיוק פה זה קרה לי. בדיוק פה שעצרת, בדיוק זה", אני מנסה ל-, להחזיר את זה.
 א: אהם.
 ד: את מבינה? להחזיר ת', זכ-, זכרון.

iii

"שנייה. בדיוק שנייה, כאילו שנייה של מחשבה, לעבור ת'צומת, יכלתי לעבור, אבל אלוהים אומר לי "לא, תישאר. מה קרה? אז עוד שתי דקות". תשע וחמישה בלילה. (1) זה הפיגוע השלישי. כאילו, שממש ראיתי ב-live, ב-live ראיתי את זה, ב-live, את מכירה, עשרים ואחת לוקח שמאלה לכיוון [שם של רחוב], קו ארבע גם לוקח שמאלה, קו ארבע עבר ת'צומת, נעמד בתחנה, עבר את התחנה טיפה, התפוצץ, התרומם, ואני עוד עומד פה ורואה את כל המחזה, אולי שלושים מטר ממני, ושומע הכל. אלוהים אמר לי 'תברח, מה אתה צריך? עוד פעם ל-, להיזכר בדם, מה דם?', מה אני צריך ת'דברים האלה?"

iv "סטיתי מהמסלול, נפצעו לי אנשים, מלא דם באוטובוס."

- v "עכשיו אני נפגעת במלחמת יום הכיפור, (4) קיבלתי פגיעה ישירה, והיו לי שתי הרוגים."
- vi "במלחמת יום הכיפורים חטפתי פגיעה ישירה, של פגז, היו לי שני חֲבָה שנהרגו {ואני}, נפצעתי קל..."
- vii "הדלת שלי הייתה מעוותת, קרועה. הכל היה קרוע. תפסתי את הדלת, בכח, פתחתי קצת..."
- viii "תפסתי ת'דלת ובכוח פתחתי אותה והיא הייתה {מעוותת, והצלחתי לפתוח אותה}."
- ix "פתחתי ת'דלת, קיבלתי כוח ממש עליון (1) שפתחתי ת'דלתות..."
- x "עלו לי שני בחורות, (2) ואני זוכר את זה יפה, שעלתה לי ש-, עלו שני בחורות ואדם מבוגר."
- xi "עלו אצלי, (1) שני בחורות, וקשיש (1)". Interestingly, here Yossi makes the exact same grammatical 'error' as he did three years ago. Again, the grammatically correct form of this sentence would have had "שתי" rather than "שני". Here again, all grammatical 'errors' have been re-checked with the original interview and text, and their appearance here signifies that they were made by the interviewee as part of his original speech, and not byproducts of either the transcription or analysis processes.
- xii "ו:היו אנשים שעלו אלי לאוטובוס, סיפור מתוך מה שקרה לי..."
- xiii "קצת אחרי ה- איזה תחנה או שניים, עלו איתי וקמתי, והמשכתי לנסוע."
- xiv "עכשיו. אהה, הקשיש שעלה אצלי, (2) הבחורה שישבה מאחורה שאני מכיר אותה קמה ונתנה לו לשבת..."
- xv
 "אני נוסע, קו עשרים ושתיים, היה חורף, פברואר, גשם. (1) מתקרב לתחנה, קולט ת'נוסעים, קולט, את יודעת, כרטיסיות, כסף, money. פתאום אני רואה מישו נעמד מול האוטובוס. (1) אני עושה לו 'תעבור'. (2) כי אני רוצה לתת וינקר ולצאת מהתחנה. ואז הוא קורץ, קורץ לי בעין, עושה לי ככה, אני עושה לו 'מה?', מוציא ריץ-ריץ, מעיל, מוציא רובה וברררר. ואני, אני חולם? I dream? {מה? מה?} ישר, כמו שכאילו לימדו אותי בצבא, התכופתי מתחת להגה, אני קטן. הכדורים עברו לי מעל הראש, הוא ירה בצרור, באוטומט, לא בבודד, one one, בצרור. ירדתי למטה, עם ההגה, והתחלתי לנהוג. רציתי לדרוס אותו, אבל הוא ברח. עכשיו אני מסתכל, אני רואה אותו תופר ת':אנשים שהיו בתחנה. (2) מה עשיתי, ברחתי, נכנסתי ימינה לכיוון [שם של בית חולים], היה שם בית חולים ליד, סטיית מהמסלול, נפצעו לי אנשים, מלא דם באוטובוס. אמרתי 'אני חייב להוציא ת'אוטובוס, אחרת הוא קורע אותנו לגזרים', הבנת? ואז, לסיפור, רציתי לחזור, כאילו, זהו, הצלתי ת'אוטובוס, עכשיו אני רוצה לחזור למקום הזה, כאילו, איך אומרים? לראות מהה מצב של המבחל, לראות אם הרגו אותו, לא הרגו אותו, מה הוא עושה, אולי אפשר להשתלט עליו. את מבינה? אין אצלי פחד, אני לא מ'פחד. לא נכנסתי להלם, לא כלום. את יכולה לשאול את [שם של הפסיכולוגית]. באו, אולי שלושים עיתונאים, אומרת לי 'אתה מסוגל לדבר?', אמרתי לה 'כן'. ואחרי יומיים חזרתי לעבודה. (1) אין אצלי פחד, אין אצלי בלקסיקון פחד, אין לי. (2)"

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Deciphering ‘Voice’ from ‘Words’: Interpreting Translation Practices in the Field

Abstract

The presence of an interpreter influences the dynamic between the researcher and the participants. This influence penetrates the multiple layers of the research process: speaking, listening, interpreting and contextual understanding. This paper seeks to move beyond a formulaic approach to research methods and to unpack how researchers respond to the interpreted interview, understood here as an encounter fully embedded in the practices and experiences of the field outside the linguistic act of translation. It draws its insights directly from recent qualitative fieldwork undertaken in Nicaragua and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In both countries, interpreters were used in a context of heightened politicisation and in fieldwork that crossed political, economic and cultural divides. Empirical and theoretical insights are obtained from this work, demonstrating that the positionality of the interpreter and the responses to this by the researcher require consideration. Indeed, it suggests that the interview encounter cannot be understood or properly analysed without reference to the presence of the interpreter and his/her mediation of ‘words’ into ‘voice’.

Introduction

There has been much research in recent years documenting the emerging importance of positionality within the research process (Haraway 1991, Smith and Katz 1993, Dossa 1997, Rose 1997, Mullings 1999, Gupta 2002, Kobayashi 2003). This research has been inherently critical in nature and has focused on how different constructions of self, including gender, race, ethnicity and socio-economic status, form multiple interpretations of positionality. However, these debates move beyond this to analyse how these multiple interpretations of positionality are realised in research encounters and how this can shape the knowledge which is produced through the research process. Positionality is defined as the “perspective shaped

by his/her unique mix of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality and other identifiers” (Mullings, 1999: 337), but is extended in this paper to include less visible indicators of position such as political affiliations, a sense of place in power hierarchies and status as an insider or outsider. Haraway (1991) in particular has been influential in conceptualising positionality and illustrating how one’s position illustrates the power structures which produce a certain kind of knowledge. This research has focused on the importance for a researcher to recognise the role that his/her positionality plays in the knowledge which his/her research produces (McDowell 1992) and also the type of power relations differing positionalities shape (Rose 1997). McDowell (1992) argues for the importance of recognising the subjective understandings of the relationships between the researcher and the researched, and by extension therefore the subjectivities of the knowledge produced in research encounters. The discourse surrounding the role of positionality in the research process is therefore situated in a particular epistemological approach; ultimately that one’s position within the social world influences the way in which one perceives social reality. This is usually discussed in relation to the social realities of the researcher vis-à-vis the participants. However, it is imperative to extend an understanding of epistemological position, the type of knowledge it produces and the power relations it shapes, to all involved in the research process including field assistants and, crucially, interpreters.

The use of interpreters is not simply a technical tool. If “we cannot know our world outside of our ability to name it”, it follows that there are epistemological consequences of mediating that understanding through someone else (Staheli and Lawson 1995: 323). Temple stresses that interpreters are active in the process of constructing research and that “an analytic engagement with how they come to know what to do, is an important component in understanding the nature and status of the findings. When the translator and the researcher are different people the process of knowledge construction involves another layer” (1997: 614). If perceptions of social reality and constructions of meaning are referenced by an interpreter’s own understanding of concepts and issues as filtered through their own experiences, then important considerations are raised about the role of an interpreter that go beyond the act of linguistic interpretation. When these epistemological issues are recognised as crucial to the type of knowledge produced, the relationships between researchers, interpreters and the people they seek to represent gain vital significance. Therefore, interpreters cannot be viewed

as neutral either in the construction of meaning or within the power relations established in the research process (Temple and Young 2004). In this instance, it is imperative to examine the identities of the interpreter, both in their own reflexive definitions and through constitutive social relations. In such an analysis, it is vital to move beyond restrictive binaries of male/female, old/young, rich/poor, foreign/local, insider/outsider and so forth, on the basis of which identities are presented, in order to acknowledge their various combinations and complexities.

In accepting a more nuanced understanding of identity and positionality, it is possible to problematise how multiple and dynamic relational identities are expressed and realised in research encounters for the researcher, the participants and the interpreter. Interpreting is not just a technical task of a linguistic nature; it takes place in an interview context in which the interpreter is an active presence. The interpreter utilises linguistic ability to attempt to capture meaning, opinion and feelings. Therefore, it follows that the relationship between the researcher and the interpreter is a complex negotiation of meaning embedded in personal and professional positionalities. These multiple, interweaving and intersecting ways in which the various positionalities and identities are revealed, negotiated and managed in research encounters are crucial to the conduct of ethical research (Hopkins 2007). It is important that a relationship exists between the researcher and interpreter that can facilitate discussion and understanding around issues of positionality and representation. Without this, it is not possible to maintain a common ethical understanding between the researcher and the interpreter. However, the nature of this relationship will necessarily change through the research process and thus it is crucial to keep re-assessing the relationship within wider structures of power relations and the shifting research contexts.

This paper illuminates the importance of considering the positionality of interpreters in the research process. It does this by positing a distinction between 'words' and 'voice'. This is because the words which are spoken and translated in an interview do not necessarily fully represent the meanings attached to them by all of the actors present. We therefore differentiate voice from words to better understand the contradictions, multiplicities and agencies associated with the narratives of our participants; narratives which are communicated with more than just words, but also with emotion, body language and silence,

for example. The concept of voice illuminates why some narratives are privileged over others and captures the contestation behind why this is so. Indeed, the translation process, mediated by different positionalities, determines which voices are heard and thus which voices are subsequently analysed. These dynamics will be addressed through an engagement with the following questions.

Firstly, what impact does an interpreter's positionality have on his/her understanding of both the participant and the researcher and thus the 'voices' which are articulated in the interview? Secondly, how do we as researchers accommodate and respond to the presence of an interpreter and his/her positionality through the interview process? Thirdly, how are questions of ethics negotiated with an interpreter who represents the voices of both the participant and the researcher? These questions will be analysed in relation to our experiences of using interpreters in recent fieldwork. Whilst we draw from similar experiences, we undertook fieldwork in very different places which shaped our abilities to respond to the presence of an interpreter. This research was carried out in Nicaragua during September 2007–June 2008 (Ficklin) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) during May–August 2007 and March–May 2008 (Jones). We both used interpreters in contexts of heightened politicisation where participants displayed polarised and sensitive identities and political affiliations. As such, we both observed and experienced similar research realities in which the identity and the positionality of the interpreter not only influenced the negotiation of meaning, but also provided an overtly recognisable political identity which the participants could feel affiliation with, or detachment from. The following brief descriptions of the two field sites, and of our positionalities as researchers, serve to provide a background to the relevance of the aspects of interpreter positionality which will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

The Field Sites

Nicaragua

Following the end of the civil war in 1990, the Nicaraguan populous rejected the authoritarian Marxist regime of the Sandinista party and embraced a supposed new age of economic development and improved relations with United States of America (U.S.)

institutions under neoliberal governance structures. This was largely initiated through International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans and accompanying conditions of trade liberalisation and structural adjustment programmes (Lane 2000). As elsewhere in Latin America, the aim of structural adjustment was to stabilise the economy by increasing agricultural exports and raising foreign exchange to enable countries to keep up with debt service payments, and by cutting public spending and promoting privatisation and export-led growth (Reed 1992). In the ensuing two decades, Nicaragua has developed into an increasing unequal society in terms of economic development, social opportunities and political representation. In 2006, in the wake of growing discontent with the increasing inequalities of the distribution of benefits and costs appropriated to the neoliberal regime, the Sandinista party was once again elected. The sixteen years after the Sandinistas were ousted did little to unite the extremely polarised and often emotional reactions they incited in the general population. Consequently, there is an emerging negotiation of identity within Nicaragua. The civil war was pivotal in determining local political positionalities and polarised general public opinion and political identities; however these sentiments are now resurfacing with the re-elected Sandinista regime but in a new context of neoliberal governance.

Lisa Ficklin in Nicaragua

I am a white British woman, in my twenties, conducting research for my PhD which examines the political ecology of environmental crisis. As such, my positionality vis-à-vis my participants is one of a young, highly educated and privileged European, although I was often initially thought of as an American due to colonial histories. Less visible aspects of my positionality include my liberal political orientation and my motivations for conducting this research, both of which relate to the political and socio-economic context of Nicaragua. This research is motivated, in addition to other professional aspirations, by a sense of injustice. Having studied international development and lived and worked in developing countries, I have a fascination with issues of social and environmental justice, both of which pertain to contemporary and historical Nicaragua. This interest in injustice is personal as well as professional, both elements of which are captured in my positionality generally, and specifically in relation to my Nicaraguan participants.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

As part of the disintegration of the Former Yugoslavia, BiH experienced war from 1992–1995. High levels of inter-communal violence left approximately 200,000 dead (Fagan 2005: 233) and 2.3 million displaced, as either refugees or internally displaced persons, out of a population of just under 4.4 million (Vandiver 2001: 168). The country now has a political settlement based on division of territory and political power among the three main ethnic groups: Bosniaks who are Muslims; Bosnian-Serbs who are Orthodox Christian; and Bosnian-Croats who are Catholic. This settlement is presided over by an international supervision arrangement where a non-Bosnian High Representative has the power to pass laws and remove democratically elected politicians. Despite the hybrid identities of the majority of Bosnians both prior to and after the war (Vetlesen 2005: 156–157), ethnic group affiliation is highly politicised and has been made more so through the experience of violence and the public discourse surrounding the war and post-war settlement. Like Nicaragua, the fieldwork discussed in this paper relating to BiH was carried out in a transition context where identities are politicised and living standards low for most people.

Briony Jones in Bosnia-Herzegovina

I too am a white British woman in my twenties conducting doctoral research. Concerned with the relationship between people in my field site, as citizens and ‘reconciled ethnicities’, my research has been motivated by a normative concern with peace and justice and with how people live together in different types of communities after violence, displacement and ethnic cleansing. This focus incorporates relational identities such as ‘victim’, ‘perpetrator’, ‘Bosniak’ or ‘local’. My positionality in this politically sensitive context was as an outsider from a country associated with both lack of action during the 1992–5 war and post-1995 high levels of intervention and control. I was often seen to speak for, and from, the international community and my position of relative privilege meant some participants did not feel I was able to understand their experiences and situations. Participants and residents of the town in which I was living were also alert to any political opinions that I expressed and how they reflected my views of war guilt or victimhood. I had to be ever aware of being seen to be neutral whilst at the same time my education and political persuasion meant that I felt personally and professionally strongly about events and opinions my participants expressed.

The Importance of Positionality: Articulating Voice in the Interview

Temple has identified the problematic way in which much translation work assumes an homogeneity amongst the local population, whereby local researchers or indeed translators are treated as if they are able to access meanings for other members of the community. In this way, there is often an assumption of a direct relationship between languages, values, meanings and identities (Temple 2008: 357–358). Thus, researchers who use local interpreters often do not take into account, or make clear, the relevance of the interpreter's position in the local context for the process of interpretation of meaning. In fact, interpreters are an additional presence in the interview and are socially, culturally and historically conditioned beings. They bring into the interview their own assumptions, prejudices, and experiences, which may affect the way in which they translate, interpret and represent the voices of both the researcher and the participants. In addition, just as constructions of self or real-life identities are multiple and in flux, so too are field-identities and researcher positionalities (Srivastava 2006). From such a perspective, it is simplistic to assume that the creation or mediation of field identity is a one-time occurrence during fieldwork. Thus, Srivastava (2006) argues that field identities are multiple and continually mediated constructs in response to the anticipated or experienced perceptions of how participants receive, accept, or reject the researcher's positionalities vis-à-vis their own over the course of the research period or during single field events.

In the BiH case, the interpreter was a young, well-educated male who had studied and now teaches English. He was also a Bosniak, and well-connected in the town where the fieldwork was taking place. In this way, he was able to shape the interview encounter by being confident in commenting on the analysis, and also helping to provide contacts and access to certain participants. He was also in a position of mediating between the author, as a foreigner associated for many with the international supervision of BiH, and the participants, from a variety of gender, age, occupation, and ethnic groups. These negotiations were complex and informed by his positionality.

In post-war BiH there are now three languages of Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian, where previously these had been referred to as one language of Serbo-Croat. In the interviews the interpreter had to be sensitive to the subtle differences between these languages in ways which I (Jones) could not understand as a non-fluent speaker of the local languages. Sporadically, participants would correct the interpreter's use of certain vocabulary or how it was translated for me; for example, whether he used 'Serbian' or 'Orthodox' to describe Bosnian-Serbs. For some participants, these identities were synonymous, whereas for others national identity was separate from religious practice. On one occasion, a participant corrected the interpreter when he used 'Serbian' to describe Bosnian-Serbs and the participants wanted him also to use the adjective 'Orthodox'. For the interpreter, religion and nationality were separate issues and this informed his treatment of identity in this context. His position as a Bosniak was not only of linguistic significance, but it affected what participants felt comfortable saying and the way in which they would express opinions. After one interview, my interpreter told me that he thought a non-Bosniak participant had been euphemistic when wanting to discuss certain topics related to ethnicity and war guilt because of the ethnicity of the interpreter. In these ways, the interpreter's politicised identity as Bosniak/Muslim affected which words were spoken and how they were interpreted. In addition, the association of identity labels in this context with linguistic and cultural practices made the spoken words of labels significant as they resonated with projects of ethnic dominance and contestations over political power-sharing between the three main ethnic groups. Corrections over which words the interpreter chose for identity labelling, and implications of unspoken words, hint at ethnic or cultural 'voices' which participants wanted to express or felt were not being expressed through words.

As an educated and successful member of the local society, the interpreter was sometimes dismissive of participants who complained about their living situations and lack of employment. This illustrates the importance of not homogenising 'the local' and assuming that a 'local' interpreter is somehow more knowledgeable and/or neutral. In some cases, the participants spoke quickly and the translator had to summarise in order to keep up. His own opinions about the validity of what they were saying meant he sometimes made choices about reducing detail when the subjects were 'irrelevant', such as when a participant spoke for 'too long' about his/her problems with unemployment. This reduction of the words spoken

marginalised the voices of those who had been oppressed and their experiences of inequality, in favour of the voice of the interpreter expressed through the presence of truncated narratives. Although some participants felt able to correct the interpreter, others may have been less confident either in terms of expressing themselves, or in their understanding of English. The interview situation may also be intimidating and participants may feel less able to correct the interpreter who holds the power to mediate between them and the researcher. The interpreter also responded to me in ways which were telling regarding the dynamic between us. He often assumed a lack of context knowledge on my behalf and in the interviews would add information or explain aspects which I may have chosen to leave out in order to prompt different kinds of responses.

As a well-known and liked person in the local community, the presence of this particular interpreter often prompted responses during interviews which were directed at him: for example, family friends describing events he would know. I was told by people who knew him that they had consented to do the interview as a favour to him. In this sense, he was an active presence in the interviews, and the dialogue would sometimes stray into a three-way conversation. In more familiar situations with participants he knew, he would also revert to a less formal introduction and explain the research background and purpose without deferring to me as was the case in other situations. This affected the atmosphere of the interview as well as which subjects were raised, especially given the qualitative methodology in which interview questions were not strictly structured. He also, as a man, seemed to be more protective of me, as a woman. In one interview, the interpreter stopped translating because he felt the flirtatious tone of the conversation that the participant had initiated was inappropriate. Instead of allowing me to hear what was being said and respond to it, he chose to limit the interpretation to prevent embarrassment for any party. Due to gender norms in BiH, male participants would often pass comment on my assumed (non) marital status and appearance. The presence of a male, educated, Bosniak interpreter thus had an influence on the words spoken and unspoken in the interview. These spoken words would, for example, reveal or hide voices of oppression, national identity and cultural practice, for example. Therefore, understanding how the interpreter influences the relationship between voice and words is to understand the data itself.

In the Nicaragua case, the interpreter was a Nicaraguan male in his thirties. Due to the recent political history of Nicaragua, his identity vis-à-vis the research participants was both important to ascertain yet practically impossible to define. At seven years old, his family fled the civil war in Nicaragua and illegally entered the United States on foot. Once there, his family received refugee status and he remained there for eighteen years negotiating relationships in mainstream U.S. culture and in Mexican communities in San Diego. He returned to Nicaragua, without his family, following a deportation order in 2004, and has been working as an interpreter since 2007. This history challenged traditional insider/outsider binaries. Despite being Nicaraguan, he had spent most of his life in the United States, a source of admiration for some participants and resentment for others who had endured the war in Nicaragua. He had socialised predominantly with Mexicans and consequently his accent and language formation in Spanish were quite different from the participants', something which was usually commented upon. However, there were also obvious indicators of his 'insider' status. He had a regional name, spoke openly of his childhood memories and greeted fellow Nicaraguans in a colloquial manner. His field identities were multiple and constantly mediated throughout the fieldwork process depending on how he perceived himself, and was perceived by others, as an insider or an outsider. These negotiations of identity, and thus positionality, of the translator in relation to the participants were illustrated in multiple ways, select examples of which will now be described.

As mentioned previously, due to recent history, political identity in Nicaragua is highly polarised, divisive and conflicting. This was especially so in the village of Quebradita Yakalwas which was a prominent battleground during the 1980s. The participants shared their experiences of harassment and the demands placed upon them to provide food, shelter and recruits to combatants. These encounters were often violent, producing sensitive and acute memories which shaped political alliances. As the Sandinista party has been re-elected, many of these memories and alliances have re-surfaced with practical consequences if exposed. The position of the interpreter in this context was significantly blurred. As someone who had received refugee status and support in the U.S., it was often assumed that, in addition to having been privileged to have escaped such incidents, he was pro-U.S. foreign policy towards Nicaragua and therefore against the re-emergence of the Sandinista regime. However, as assumptions about my (Ficklin's) nationality were proved incorrect - usually I

was assumed to be American - assumptions about his identity were also questioned. This significantly affected what participants felt comfortable saying in his presence as he provided a locally recognisable political identity, which, although largely invisible, concerned and intimidated some participants. As such, his physical presence alone affected the voices which were articulated, depending on whether or not a participant could identify with him in some way. I often got the impression that participants would have responded differently, at least more openly, without the threat of exposing themselves to a 'local', the political status of whom was undisclosed. This was confirmed when after interviews I would speak in Spanish to the participants. I had explained to them that I was able to speak some Spanish but felt more comfortable with an interpreter. In the subsequent discussions they would recount stories of the war during which their own positionalities would be revealed, sometimes in contradiction to what they had disclosed in the interview moment. At these times, the participant and I would be alone without the presence of the interpreter, an encounter which was different in its nature, and in the way voice was articulated, due to his absence. My ability to speak and understand Spanish proved to be very insightful in understanding the interpreter's positionality vis-à-vis the participants. This will be analysed in more detail in the following section.

As in the BiH case, the interpreter here was also sometimes dismissive towards the participants. I perceived this to be a result of distance, fostered by his absence during the war as well as his education in the United States. The participants were, as mentioned previously, predominantly 'campesinos', subsistence farmers or migratory workers. In contrast, the interpreter was educated, urban and wealthy. Dismissal of the participants or frustration at their answers would be displayed through various physical gestures such as sighing or rolling his eyes, and in the tone of his voice. Sometimes it would be more explicit and the interpreter would say that the participants would not understand a question or what he thought was expected by a question before he had actually asked it. Frequently, the participants would speak very quickly and without pausing, in which case the interpreter would have to summarise their meanings in his own language and interpretations, filtered through his own understanding of their meaning. This was also the case in BiH, where the interpreter would

choose to cut certain elements of the interview he deemed to be less relevant to the questions being asked.

Accommodating Positionality: Researcher, Participants and the Person In-between

In the discussion above, the two cases of BiH and Nicaragua illuminated some of the significant ways in which the positionality of an interpreter affects his/her understanding of the researcher and participant, as well as how it might impact on the ‘voices’ being articulated. However, the researcher is also not a neutral influence, and in turn responds to the presence of the interpreter and the issues illustrated above. Researchers engage with the positionality of an interpreter at various stages of the research process: through selecting the interpreter, adaptation in the moment of interview and through reflection in the writing up process.

In Nicaragua a key issue was that of language, particularly given my (Ficklin’s) own ability to speak Spanish which gave me a further insight into the content and process of the interview. This meant that in the interview itself, I was able to understand the vast majority of what was being said by both the interpreter and the participants. This provided an opportunity for me to respond to the interpreter ‘in action’ and gave privileged insight into how the interpreter captured meaning and voice between the researcher and participants. During fieldwork, a frequent concern of mine was the way in which the framing and language of questions in English was ‘lost’ in its translation into Spanish. Aside from linguistic issues of available vocabulary in each language, this was also a result of the ways in which the interpreter mediated the use of language according to his own framework of understanding social and cultural realities, that is to say, positionalities. In one interview, there was a discussion of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the interpreter asked for clarification of what this was from me. I explained what it was in terms of the complexities of multinational policies being negotiated in Central America, but the interpreter translated it to the participant as an issue of U.S. control over trade in the region. This change in meaning had enormous implications to how a participant would respond to CAFTA as a

concept and a reality and would significantly influence the types of trade relationships and policy initiatives they would choose to support or oppose.

In this case, I responded by discussing with the interpreter the importance of the language chosen by both researcher and participant and how best to be sensitive towards this given the political context. However, whilst the interpreter said he understood these issues and would address them in future interviews, I continued to be frustrated due to what I perceived to be ‘inaccurate’ interpretation. I felt that my questions as a researcher were being re-formulated because of the personal views and position of the interpreter, and due to the heightened politicisation in Nicaragua this resulted in certain voices of the participants being privileged and others marginalised. In some instances, I asked the interpreter to rephrase a question although this could only be done if there was an appropriate pause in the interview and if it was possible without causing embarrassment for the interpreter in front of the participants. I realised that correcting the interpreter in the interview moment could cause embarrassment and awkwardness, as well as displaying certain power hierarchies. In these instances, I couldn’t respond in the interview moment and could only therefore reflect on such implications in the analysis stages of research.

In the case of BiH, a key issue was that of ethnicity. Given the discussion above about the politicised and sensitive nature of ethnic identities in this context, I (Jones) was required to in some way respond to the Bosniak identity of the interpreter, or at least take it into account. On one occasion, I arranged an interview with someone I knew to be a nationalist non-Bosniak participant at a time which was inconvenient to the interpreter. In this way, it was possible to employ as a one-off an interpreter of a different ethnicity. On another occasion, I told the interpreter that I believed the participants to hold nationalist views. The interpreter then offered to translate the questions so the interview could be undertaken without him, and at a later date to translate the responses based on a recording. In the case of BiH, I and the interpreter had managed to develop a positive professional relationship. This meant we were able to spend time outside of the interview discussing both the process of interpretation (for example, why certain words or phrases were chosen), and the relevance of the local context (for example, whether participants reacted to the interpreter as a Bosniak). In doing so, it was possible for the interpreter to deal openly with some questions of positionality and the

attendant issues. It was through such a process that the interpreter was able to offer to translate pre-prepared questions and to absent himself from the interview encounter.

These were day-to-day but also sensitive issues of fieldwork which, whilst different in nature, both required innovative responses *in situ*. Interestingly, in both cases, we found that the best way to respond to such questions of interpreter positionality was through communication and, where possible, sought opportunities to discuss questions of language and interpretation with the interpreter. In the case of BiH, I (Jones) undertook repeat interviews of key participants, and asked as many questions as possible of the interpreter and any gatekeeper about the interview so as to add depth to the context in which the interview could be understood. In the case of Nicaragua, I (Ficklin) was able to play a more active role in terms of understanding ‘problems’ with interpretation and discussing them with the interpreter as I spoke the local language at a higher level. Despite similar responses from us, the outcomes were different, and it was not always possible in either case to ensure that the outcome of the response was as intended. With this in mind, it was therefore important to continue responding to such issues in the process of writing up. Analysis of interview transcripts needs to acknowledge that with the use of an interpreter, whose positionality affects the process and content of interviews, the words of the participants have not been re-created through quotes. Rather, the transcripts and the later quotes which appear in academic output are a representation of interpretation. As a researcher, it is therefore vital to understand that the basis of analysis is not always steady ground, and where possible to triangulate with other data obtained through repeat interviews, participant observation and document analysis. In this way, the impact of the interpreter on the research process can not only be made visible, but can also enrich the analysis process.

Positioning Representation: Interpretation and the Negotiation of Ethics in Research Practice

Given the discussion above, one must accept that the presence of the interpreter is an active and relevant presence, and that the interpreter him/herself has a positionality which affects

the process and content of the interview. Accordingly, the relationship between the researcher and interpreter is vital and, when respectful and amenable, the implications of positionality can be explored and observed through dialogue. Therefore, it is no longer adequate to only consider the dynamic between the researcher and participant. It is necessary to take into account the presence of the interpreter and its effects, namely in terms of the voices which are articulated through the interview process. In problematising the role of an interpreter in the research process, it is essential to explore its ethical implications for the negotiation both between the interpreter and the participants and between the interpreter and the researcher. This will be addressed here by focusing on negotiations around the ethnicity of the interpreter and the participants in BiH, and of gender relations between the interpreter and the researcher in Nicaragua.

In the case of BiH where, as previously mentioned, ethnic group affiliation is highly politicised, I (Jones) felt that it would be unethical to cause discomfort to either interpreter or participant by creating an interview situation in which the content was distressing to one or other party, and/or where one or other of the parties felt unable to express what they wanted to. The interpreter was a local Bosniak male which meant that some participants may have felt uncomfortable discussing sensitive ethnic issues in his presence, or conversely may challenge the comfort of the interpreter himself. As discussed above, it was because of this that I decided on rare occasions to use a different interpreter, and on other occasions to speak openly about my concerns with the interpreter. This created opportunities for the interpreter to express any discomfort and indicate if he felt that his ethnicity in relation to the participant had affected what the participant was prepared to say. However, the choice of whether or not to use this interpreter for some interviews challenged the responsibility that I felt as an employer. Given the generally high unemployment and low living standards in BiH, as a foreign researcher I was able to provide a valuable extra wage for the interpreter. This meant that I felt less able to cancel interviews or decrease the working time if the interpreter had been expecting it and even relying on it. Because of this, ethical concerns of comfort in the interview and providing employment were potentially competing, and I had to make decisions on a case-by-case basis.

In the Nicaragua case, the interview process illustrated the differences in cultural interpretations of ethical behaviour as understood by me (Ficklin) and my interpreter. Societal gender norms are such that a white European professional woman employing an older Nicaraguan man was always noted and often commented upon by the participants. More polite enquiries questioned our marital status; it was usually assumed we were married to each other, and participants asked whether we had met each other's families. More direct enquiries addressed whether I had marital problems resulting from leaving behind my husband to do this research with a Nicaraguan man, taunts at the masculinity of the interpreter and questions about the level of my influence due to their interpretations of my power status in employing an older man. This is particularly relevant when exploring certain ethical issues which arose during the fieldwork process. There were two instances during separate interviews which resulted in an overt confrontation between me and my interpreter. The first instance was after an interview with a male campesino and his brothers. The participant congratulated the interpreter on "having the foresight to work with a pretty white girl" (Interview with a resident of Quebradita Yakalwas, 21st April 2008). Within my understanding of gender-relations in Nicaraguan culture, I was prepared for the interpreter to not explicitly correct the participant on our employer-employee relationship but was shocked when instead he joined in and encouraged a conversation between the men which objectified me sexually. This provided a significant ethical dilemma. Within my own ethical framework, I found this unacceptable but was aware of the cultural acceptance of talking about women in this way. After the interview, I raised this with the interpreter. He was very apologetic. Having lived in the U.S., he understood the ethical framing of the incident and claimed that it was something he had done automatically and not a calculated act to engage with the participants in a particular way. We discussed our ethical expectations at length, with a particular focus on his position being one of representation, both of my voice and identity, but also of my code of ethics.

A couple of days later, we were interviewing at a different household. The heads of this household were a teenage married couple, although only the wife and her sister were present. Once again, following the interview everyone was talking informally when the interpreter made inappropriate sexual comments to both women. During this instance, I actively intervened, apologised to the women and requested that the interpreter wait outside the house.

The immediate response to this was bemusement. When I offered the women an opportunity to formally complain they told me that there was nothing to complain about, that this is how men are, what they were used to dealing with daily. This was inherently a conflict of positionalities. Our positional understandings of a cultural reality created competing ethical frameworks. Upon much reflection, I decided that I could not work with this particular interpreter. I felt that our relationship was no longer functional as attempts to explain the ethical importance of interview encounters were not comprehended. This was not a judgment of cultural differences but a conflict of ethical representation and illustrates the significance of trust and a good professional relationship between the researcher and the interpreter which was largely achieved in the case of BiH and unfortunately not in the case of Nicaragua.

We both faced dilemmas in some form regarding ethics. In the case of BiH, responsibility as an employer meant other ethical considerations such as whether or not to use a different interpreter were rendered much more complex. In the case of Nicaragua, I (Ficklin) found myself negotiating the dynamic between my own ethical framework and that of those in the fieldwork setting. A good relationship allows space for researchers to establish a dialogue with the interpreter about the ethical framing of the research and to address any ethical issues which may arise. This can be achieved through discussion both before and after an interview, especially in the case of an interview requiring sensitivity. It can also be achieved during an interview when it is felt that the interpreter is not capturing what is being said or if the researcher feels that the questions are not being represented accurately. Interactions with an interpreter during an interview require tact and sensitivity so as not to undermine the interpreter or confuse the participants. This was a particularly sensitive issue in the case of BiH, as the interpreter was likely to know the participants in either a personal or professional sphere and thus an act of undermining may have been especially embarrassing for him. Various ethical issues arose in the research in BiH and Nicaragua for which the relationship with the interpreter was crucially significant in the determination of the outcome.

Discussion

In both cases, we were conducting fieldwork in places outside of our own cultural context with the assistance of interpreters. This created a dual dynamic of the positionality of the researcher and, in addition, of the interpreter in the local spaces in which fieldwork was being undertaken. These dynamics affected the interview moment by shaping its content, the process of interpretation and the ensuing analysis. From the exploration offered here of some key issues raised by the positionality of the interpreter, response of the researcher, and ethical considerations, it is possible for us to outline insights which can contribute towards good practice in using interpreters in fieldwork.

The research we were undertaking was essentially qualitative, which meant that sensitivity towards positionalities was crucial. This went beyond the choice of less structured interviewing techniques to understanding how positionality was present in all its forms in the interview. It was found that the act of interpretation was mediated by the positionality of the interpreter in relation to the participant, in terms of factors such as ethnicity, gender and education. Thus, the frameworks of understanding held by the interpreter, informed as they are by his/her background and personal convictions, affected how meaning was interpreted and what aspects of words became 'voice'. Moreover, our responses to these issues were a negotiation between our own positionality, professional and personal integrity, and ethical responsibilities towards ourselves, the participants and the interpreter. With this in mind, certain insights emerge from the empirical discussions. These insights are not an exhaustive list of the ways in which researchers need to think about and understand the ramifications of using an interpreter when conducting fieldwork. They relate specifically to qualitative research experiences where longer and more unstructured interviews are a primary method. In such interview encounters, positionalities are explored, and the participants often speak at length about the events and opinions which are most relevant to them in relation to the central questions of the researcher. Accordingly, there is more room for the interpreter to mediate words into voice, and to actively mobilise his/her own frameworks of understanding. However, these insights can also be useful more broadly to any researchers seeking to undertake fieldwork with interpreters.

If one accepts that the positionality of the interpreter is key in the ways discussed above, there is potential to develop a sense of ‘good practice’ when using interpreters. At the least, it is possible to outline certain questions which need to be addressed. A concern with positionality is also a concern with context, rendering an adequate understanding of the fieldwork site crucial. It is not enough to prepare research questions and methods; researchers also need to spend time prior to, and in, the field seeking to develop a nuanced understanding of the heterogeneity there. It is through the problematisation of the lack of homogeneity of ‘the local’, that an appreciation of the positionality of an interpreter and the dynamic which is present in the interview encounter between interpreter and participant can be achieved. This dynamic may centre on certain social divisions such as gender, ethnicity and education that play out in the local context in particular ways. In turn, the researcher can then develop a vital understanding of whose and what ‘voices’ the interpreter articulates and represents at different times. These voices are multiple and possibly conflicting, emerging from a local space which is heterogenous and may be politically divided.

Drawing on this, researchers need to spend time meeting a variety of potential interpreters, and when making decisions over who to work with, must consider more than their language skills. It might be the case, as in BiH, that the identity of the interpreter leads to the silencing of certain voices when participants feel uncomfortable. Or, as in the case of Nicaragua, the interpreter may manifest certain behaviours which do not fit with the researcher’s own ethical framework. Researchers need to understand that the behaviour of the interpreter also deserves ethical consideration, as his/her presence in the interview has ramifications for the experience of the interview encounter for all present. Communication needs to be fostered to ensure that the interpreter understands the boundaries of a given research project and its acceptable modes of behaviour. The only way to deal with such sensitive issues is to make sure that a professional working relationship is established with time allotted for discussions prior to, and after, interviews, and a method of payment which is suitable to, and understood by, both parties. The experiences in BiH and Nicaragua point to communication as key.

Finally, the researcher must acknowledge the presence of the interpreter and the effect this has on the interview encounter and the interpretive processes in and after the fieldwork. Given that the actions of the interpreter affect the articulation and/or silencing of ‘voice’,

triangulation becomes more important as the researcher seeks to illuminate the interview encounter from as many angles as possible. When writing up, the issues associated with using an interpreter which we have discussed here need to be made explicit so that the interview encounter can be explored in a more nuanced way as a mediated representation of certain 'voices', rather than an exact replication of the words which were spoken. In this way, the words spoken can be seen as only one part of the communication of positionalities and it is voice which suggests meaning and experience beyond which words are chosen for expression. It is not enough to stop at words: researchers must ask questions about what was spoken, what was unspoken and how this makes 'voices' visible or invisible.

Returning to the central concern with positionality as raised in the introduction and woven throughout the discussion of the empirical cases, this paper has highlighted that expanding a concern with positionality to the interpreter allows the researcher to critically reflect on the interview encounter and the production of data. It raises the question of power in terms of the acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of the fieldwork context. Interpreters and participants are often both 'local' and yet they do not necessarily attach the same meaning to events and opinions. It is possible that one or other of them may hold opinions which are privileged in that given context and influence the interpretation of meaning in the interview. The 'loss' of voices through which words are chosen or left unspoken cannot be entirely recovered, but through processes of triangulation and open communication with the interpreter it is possible for the researcher to explore the reasons why certain words were used and how they reflect some voices and not others. This illuminates the fieldwork context further as appreciating how local actors relate to each other can be seen as data in itself. Inequalities and divisions, as well as collaborations and co-operations, will be produced in the negotiation of positions and voices in the interview encounter.

What this paper has shown is that the positionality of the interpreter and the responses to this by the researcher are worthy of consideration. Indeed, it suggests that the interview encounter cannot be understood or properly analysed without reference to the presence and position of the interpreters. If this is thoroughly engaged with, through considerations such as the ones proposed here, the fieldwork material and corresponding analysis will be richer and indeed

able to say more about the research – interpreter – researched relationship, the production of data and the specific context in which fieldwork is conducted.

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Translating a troubled return: Comparative fieldwork on deportees in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica

Abstract

These research notes will focus on ideas surrounding planned and unplanned language differences encountered in data collection and analysis. Reference will be made to research conducted in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic between 2004 and 2008 on deportation, using in-depth interviews, mini-focus groups, content analysis, and secondary data, with a view to examining some of the issues surrounding collection and analysis of data across language barriers. Beyond Spanish and English, the additional element of Caribbean creoles will also be discussed. Were such barriers merely linguistic, traversing them would be less challenging. However, combined with, inter alia, inevitable culture differences as well as vast disparities in the education levels of the researcher and the researched, complexities arise. These complexities will also be addressed.

Introduction

Translators are obliged to make difficult choices when jumping through cultural and linguistic hoops encountered in the research process. For this reason, translation and controversy often walk hand in hand. Based on my postgraduate work comparing receiving country deportation policy in the Dominican Republic and my native Jamaica between 2004 and 2008, these research notes look at negotiating language differences and the power issues they raise during the research process.

I employed Patton's (1990, 71) phenomenological perspective, which he sees as the use of methods that capture people's experience of the world without necessarily sharing or

participating in their experience. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with (predominantly male) deportees¹ and government workers in the security sector. NGO representatives provided a more gender balanced group of interviewees. Analysis of documents accompanied by a newspaper content analysis constituted an additional space where independently written materials could be used to better examine local policies towards deportees following the 1996 enactment of the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in the US.

I encountered various language forms in the research process, including *inter alia*: Spanish and English spoken by persons with formal education beyond the secondary school level; Dominican street Spanish or dialect; urban and rural forms of Jamaican Creole (patois/“patwa”); and language forms acquired by Jamaicans and Dominicans in the US, particularly during their incarceration.

These notes will begin with comments on the literature on fieldwork translation and a brief discussion of ‘research imperialism.’ Examples of specific cultural and/or linguistic issues that arose during the research are also provided.

The fieldwork translation process

Much of the practical fieldwork translation literature thus far has focused on large cross-country research projects that contrast with the small-scale research described in these notes. Jacobsen and Landau (2003, 192) flag the risk of biased responses from using translators or local research assistants, as well as potential inaccuracies stemming from a researcher’s lack of fluency in a local language. Bloch (2007, 239-240) discusses the need to test appropriateness of different

¹ 96.5 percent of those deported to Jamaica (Headley 2005, ix), and 94 percent of those deported to the Dominican Republic for criminal convictions served in the US are male (Data obtained from Dominican deportee NGO *Bienvenido Seas* in 2006).

concepts across languages and for back translation using interviewers from corresponding linguistic groups.

I conducted all interviews myself but sought assistance from a native speaker in revising the English to Spanish translations of the research instruments used – three short questionnaires with simple open-ended questions. This exercise was made easier by the similarities between the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, which have both been on the receiving end of US criminal deportation policies.

My small research project called for translation of tape-recording transcriptions. Sight translation of documents was also necessary on the spot to ensure that documents received were understood, as was interpretation of sorts if the language used was not a written language. In the Dominican Republic, I listened in Spanish, recording my interviews when so permitted, and took notes in English unless equivalent words failed to materialize.

Language and power implications

In the Dominican Republic, I felt that South-South cooperation ideals initially protected me from Halloran's 'research imperialism' (1998, 45)² and was often greeted as a sister. However, the existence of developing country elites is increasingly highlighted as scholars break away from aspects of dependency theory that 'tended to marginalize or neglect internal class considerations' (Martin, 1991, 207). I was thus aware of my susceptibility to many of the pitfalls historically attributed to Western researchers because of my middle class freedoms, including access to a US visa and foreign currency.

² Hanitzsch summarises this as a type of research that legitimated and reinforced established global inequalities while strengthening Third World dependence on the West. (2008, 114)

Added to this, was my awareness that my tenuous insider standing might be revoked should my eventual findings not meet with insider approval. This brought to mind considerations about working with vulnerable populations and ethical issues confronted by researchers who access interviewees' personal information (Palys and Lowman, 2002). A specific ethical issue in relation to translation was the need to ensure that information provided to me in languages other than English was transmitted as accurately as possible in English. This is always challenging, and indeed some of the translation barriers encountered are discussed in the next section.

Language hegemony also came to the fore. Use of the English language, particularly by an educated anglophone interviewer, had power implications in marginal communities. Purcell-Gates notes that,

the hegemony of English is widespread, primarily reflecting the dual roles of economics, in this world of 'free trade' and globalization, and of military might. The power of the United States is behind the current domination of English worldwide. However, traces of prior English language hegemony [reflect] the historical colonizing activity of England. (2007, 23)

The Dominican Republic was once occupied by the US with which it still has an asymmetric relationship based on evident economic, military and size differentials. I was regularly reminded of this. On one disturbing occasion in June 2006, a resident rushed into the lounge at a *Hogar Crea* rehabilitation house in Santo Domingo. Having heard that an English-speaking lady was interviewing deportees, he somehow interpreted this to mean that I could help to rescue him and others from the nightmare of deportation. This incident illustrates a commonly held assumption that English speakers are in a privileged position.

Other linguistic and cultural challenges

I anticipated differences in culture and language to present challenges as I journeyed from my native Jamaica to the Dominican Republic. Not unexpectedly, some recurrent translation and

interpretation challenges arose. Here, I will focus on four examples relating to translations of race; the free flow between Jamaican Creole and standard English; US-Dominican prison slang; and nascent attempts to forge a consensus on a term designating persons sent back ‘home.’

‘Blackness’

‘Blackness’ in the racially diverse Caribbean can be a problematic term, particularly when crossing from the English-speaking Caribbean to the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Translation and interpretation of the word ‘black’ when referring to race issues can become perilous.

Any reference to significant African roots or heritage in connection with the Dominican people has traditionally been far from the mainstream³. Wigginton’s (2005) examination of Dominican public school textbooks found a perception that blackness represented a lower social status and could be prevented through generational whitening (*blancamiento*), as well as the presentation of blackness using hyperbolized stereotypes. Equally important, two UN human rights experts visiting the Dominican Republic in October 2007 reported, ‘a profound and entrenched problem of racism and discrimination against ... blacks within Dominican society’ (UN News Centre, 2007). This distancing from blackness has survived the migration journey in many locations. Itzigsohn et al (2005) found that Dominican immigrants in the US tended to respond that they were ‘*hispano/a*’ or ‘*indio/a*’, while indicating that they were perceived by the US mainstream as ‘black’.

Many Dominicans who would be considered black in neighbouring Jamaica find it insulting to be referred to as black, which some associate either with objects or Haitians.⁴ Eison-Simmon’s comments on being an insider (2001, 97) with women of colour ‘cultural consultants’ in the

³ This is not to say that there is no critical debate among Jamaicans about issues such as skin bleaching (Charles, 2003). However, an established black elite and the long tenure of a dark-skinned Prime Minister, PJ Patterson (heralded in some quarters as ‘black man time’), renders the issue almost as much one of class as one of race in Jamaica. While some dark-skinned Jamaicans might be aiming for a prosperous “brown” ideal, there is a visible black middle class – the same cannot be said of the Dominican Republic.

⁴ Often the main target of anti-black racism in the Dominican Republic.

Dominican Republic owing to their shared racial and gender characteristics are interesting in this regard. Her story of being referred to as '*india clara*' resonated with me. During visits, I have always been affectionately referred to as '*india*' and '*morena*' – never '*negra*' (black). My early—and subsequently discontinued—attempts to refer to myself as '*negra*' in a straight interpretation of how I see myself in Jamaica were more often than not rejected in the Dominican Republic.

Aversion to things black is also clearly reflected in the use of '*el blower*' in hair salons in impoverished *barrios* and exclusive neighbourhoods. This near-miraculous styling using a very hot blow dryer with a hairbrush (a process which I have enjoyed as a woman but also automatically deconstructed as a black Jamaican researcher) ensures that hair is straight but bouncy and as Caucasian as possible. Through the lenses of a post-'consciousness' Jamaican this may be interpreted as self-denial, and Jamaica's established black intelligentsia may feel duty-bound to 'rescue' fellow persons of colour away from '*el blower*' and guide them into black consciousness.

If no attempt is made to frame this and other culturally specific phenomena from a position of immersion and understanding, a researcher/translator may be unable to analyze and faithfully present local situations. Finding appropriate language in translating words that reflect the culture of a Dominican 'other' may become even more elusive. My translation challenge also lay in the absence of a full range of equivalent terms in Jamaica. In the end, I found that this problem could be partially solved through the use of extensive footnotes or explanations for non-Dominicans. For example, my '*morena*' or '*india*' refers to a medium-brown complexion—with all the leeway and subjectivity that implies.

Intermingling of local dialect(s) and English

Language barrier issues were also encountered in Jamaica. Here, one deportee relates how he had to disguise his American accent at an interview in Kingston.

*OK I went to *** to get a *** job, and it was two deportees, me and this other guy, so the guy was like, the lady, who was giving us the test, said to the guy, ahm 'I hear you have an accent' an di guy 'Yes!' an then she said 'where you from' an he was like 'I'm from New York' an stuff like that so she said ahm 'so what are you a deportee' and she said, he said 'yes' and she said 'what were you deported for?' and he said something like drugs and whatever, and, and she seh 'oh, I'm sorry, we doesn't accept deportees' So, so you know what I'm saying **so den mi change-mi not even badda start talk like ...mi change mi start gi ar de raw, raw ragamuffin caw mi ah seh wah – yu nah tek deportee – mi a nuh deportee again cause me waan di job, an me affi get i.**⁵ And they took me, you know.⁶*

The translation challenge from this transcript came from the interchange between English and Jamaican Creole used to describe his successful linguistic and cultural camouflaging. In the end, the quote was left intact; from a bilingual perspective, any attempt to translate it seemed futile because the choice of language here is not guided only by concerns about how best to communicate something, but more importantly about how to perform and present oneself in a certain way. This performative dimension of choices about language use would be made invisible if the whole quote was presented in English. However, this was another example where footnotes and explanations were useful for non-native audiences.

Prison talk

Prison slang in the Dominican Republic was encountered most strikingly with recently arrived deportees. One deportee arriving for processing at the Villa Juana police station in Santo Domingo in October 2008 retorted sharply to a remark by saying 'Yo sé camina(r) en la máxima.' Interestingly, interpretation or translation into Jamaican Creole would perhaps be

⁵ The interviewee describes how he began to speak in a pure, urban street variant of Jamaican patois to a job interviewer to ensure that she would not detect a foreign accent. He badly needed the job and did this because he realized she would not knowingly hire a deported person.

⁶ Mini focus group at a Kingston drug rehabilitation facility in 2007.

more accurate than into English. One Jamaican Creole translation could be, ‘*Mi know di runnings inna maximum security*’ or another, ‘*Mi know ow it gwaan inna maximum security.*’ A standard English translation could be, ‘I know how to survive in maximum security prison.’

This standard English translation provides meaning but removes critical class and other elements from the statement by turning it into a language that has a long history of being written and used by elites, whereas Jamaican Creole was the spoken language of an oppressed majority long before attempts to write it and advocate for its classification as a language.⁷ I found myself automatically translating any Spanish quotes into standard English, but strongly suspect that as time goes by academics in Jamaica may increasingly translate expressions from other languages into Jamaican Creole for local audiences.

From deportees to repatriados

Terminology also came into question with the use of the very word ‘deportee’ in Jamaica. The problem is not the word itself but the stigma of criminality and rejection attached to it in the media and popular culture in both the sending and receiving country. A similar phenomenon was observed in the Dominican Republic, where NGOs and returnees preferred the term ‘*repatriado*’ to ‘*deportado*’.

However, I have been unable to accept the English-language term ‘returnee’ as definitive because it can refer to any number of returning residents with widely varying experiences. Involuntary returned resident is accurate but unwieldy, and IRV is not yet a well-known acronym that can be used widely. A slightly better alternative may be ‘deported person.’ Like ‘enslaved man’ as opposed to ‘slave’, it restores some of the humanity stripped away during a humiliating process.

⁷ Although a standardized format for writing patois has been available for decades, I confess that like many other Jamaicans before me I have strayed from it. This could be attributed to a combination of exuberance and indiscipline when immersed in this highly auditory language, where vocabulary evolves constantly because of the innovative nature of Jamaican street culture.

Progress in the Spanish language has been better. Deportees in the Dominican Republic have at least managed to smooth off the rough edges by accurately using '*repatriado*' in referring to someone who has been repatriated, although the term has not been widely embraced by the society.

A Dominican NGO leader confided to me that he opens awareness-building workshops with a defiant '*soy deportado, ¿y qué?*' ('I'm a deportee, but so what?'). He has, however, been promoting the term '*repatriado*' to reduce the stigma against deported persons.

Conclusion

In these brief research notes, I have outlined some of my experiences and challenges as a researcher-translator in two linguistically distinct countries, one in which I am an insider (Jamaica) and another in which I have evolved into a neighbourly insider-outsider (Dominican Republic). Class considerations and linguistic hegemony have also been discussed, along with challenges in communicating meaning across cultures without detracting from the richness of the culture of origin and the cultural context of the terms used.

Given arguments about cross-cultural insensitivity and imperialism, particularly – but not only – in large cross-country studies, these challenges and implications of translation, and the questions of power and representation they raise, must be addressed with great care by researchers from any (linguistic, cultural, disciplinary and methodological) background.

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Representing the Translator: Making Sense of Translation in Cross-Language Qualitative Research

A Review of Bogusia Temple's Recent Investigations in Research and Translation

That language is not a transparent medium, that words do not clearly and directly correspond to the things and concepts they are meant to identify, is today a rather commonsense, commonplace notion, one widely accepted across the humanities and social sciences. Those disciplines transformed by the insights of poststructuralist theory—that is, the vast majority of the social sciences—have long since absorbed the ideas of thinkers like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, recognizing that language constructs and shapes rather than delineates. Still, recognition of theory does not always translate to the implementation of practice; as researchers aim to better understand people and their behaviour, issues of representation have only lately begun to emerge as significant within such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, cultural studies, and sociolinguistics. But though questions concerning the “politics of representation” have yet to be addressed fully, we must further our understanding of language by considering the complexities wrought by moving among languages, by the exigencies of translation. As qualitative research increasingly looks beyond communities of English-speakers, investigators must contend with the ontological, epistemological, and ethical implications of representation across languages.

“The difficulties for the translator are due to the fact that...[the] word does not have the same evocative impact every time, in every culture or country,” Umberto Eco notes in *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (Eco 2003, 107). But how does the translator go about resolving such difficulties? And how does the researcher whose work demands the use of translation account for the problems of transformed representations? Bogusia Temple, Professor of Health and Social

Care Research at the University of Central Lancashire, begins to address some of these issues in a series of articles—some co-written with other researchers—concerned with the ethics and the politics of translation in cross language research. In what follows, I will examine four articles published by Temple (two of them co-authored) in the five-year period from 2004 to 2009, so as to trace and analyse her recent engagements with issues of translation in qualitative research.

Temple, by her own account in “Qualitative research and translation dilemmas” (Temple and Young 2004), grew up bilingual, speaking Polish until she entered school but today seeing it as a language secondary to English in her life. She has led a range of research projects in which data in multiple languages has been collected, including studies in which the language of the participants has not been the language of the researcher, and for over fifteen years has been involved in narrative research with Polish people living in England, a project that has further complicated her understanding of the significance of translation in relation to representation. In “The Same but Different—Researching Language and Culture in the Lives of Polish People in England” (Temple and Koterba 2009), published online in *FQS Forum: Qualitative Social Research* and the most recent article to address her work with Polish migrants, Temple and her translator Katerzyna Koterba demonstrate that multi-lingual people may present themselves differently in different languages. They observe too that “all languages are internally differentiated and who translates influences the findings” (Temple and Koterba 2009). Thus, Temple and Koterba conclude, issues of translation, pertaining to both research participants and research directors, must be acknowledged as a significant part of any project involving the translation of collected data.

But perhaps to best, to fully, appreciate the significance of this conclusion, we must first take a step back into Temple’s own thinking process, her development as a scholar of research and representation across languages. In “Nice and Tidy: Translation and Representation” (2005) an article appearing in the online journal *Sociological Research Online*, Temple discusses some of the different ways various researchers have looked at issues of cross-language representation. She identifies three main methods: some researchers leave any mention of the issue out of their

accounts, some acknowledge the potential complication but suggest there is no way to resolve the issue and some attempt to work out a solution. Noting that at the time of the article's writing "the issue of how [people whose first language is not English] are represented [in the rapidly growing volume of writing on such groups] remain[s] unexamined" (Temple 2005), Temple cites the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Lawrence Venuti, academics who have shown that language is far from neutral and that translation does not simply copy but actively creates. As Spivak, perhaps the most prominent commentator on the "politics of translation," notes in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993), unexamined translation has the tendency to turn all speech into a kind of "translatese," making no distinctions between languages, eliding power relations and falsely suggesting that such relations do not exist and do not matter.

Taking Spivak's work into account, Temple makes a persuasive case that, when the complications of translation are discounted, relegated to no more than footnote status, two significant aspects of representation are ignored (2005). First, "there is the question of whose perspective on concepts is being used. The researcher, even though they may speak the relevant language, cannot represent a whole community"; second, "this kind of research neglects the importance of the written text," failing to account for how the acts of transcribing and translating alter the content and context of the communication, the terms on which it is presented and received. In other cases, the importance of language is acknowledged, accompanied by the researcher's surrender to the seeming impossibility of resolving the issue of translation. Without active engagement with the issue, however, researchers who make the choice to proceed in this way risk "colonizing" or domesticating the text, producing a narrative in which difference, though admittedly important, is hidden and smoothed over. But foregrounding the matter is also not without potential pitfalls. Researchers who try to signify difference, to refuse domestication, by deliberately keeping quoted testimony "untidy," as advocated by Lawrence Venuti in *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (1998), risk confirming stereotypes about non-native speakers of English as ignorant, incoherent, and suspiciously alien, thus subverting their own attempt to emphasize identity and individuality.

Ultimately, Temple is not looking, in “Nice and Tidy,” to answer the question of methodology, not looking to settle the issue of translation in research once and for all. Rather, her contribution lies in raising the question, in illustrating the implications of cross-language research for ethics and epistemology. These implications are at the center of Temple and Alys Young’s article “Qualitative research and translation dilemmas” (2004), which adds another dimension in addressing the “hierarchies of language power, situated language epistemologies of researchers, and issues around naming and speaking for people seen as ‘other’” (Temple and Young 2004, 162) by considering translation between signed languages (such as British Sign Language and American Sign Language). In tackling the addition of translated “modalities,” the movement from a visual/gestural language to one that is sound/print-based, Temple and Young are able to expose more explicitly the vestiges of power relations, of language oppression and of language (in)visibility. In rendering a visual sign into a printed icon, translation from sign language threatens to obscure the significance of expression and gesticulation, of individual meaning-making. Because those in Deaf society may have experienced what many perceive as an undervaluation of their language, their participation in qualitative research is especially fraught with potential conflict. Temple and Young note that “hearing” translators may help confirm the notion “that hearing society ‘does’ things to Deaf society...and [that] hearing culture...negotiates and filters the meaning of Deaf people’s lives” (169). The translator is not merely an observer then but an active maker of meaning and frequently its final arbiter. Though this may be more readily evident in those cases involving signed language, the role of the translator is intricate and problematic in all circumstances. “There is no neutral position from which to translate and the power relationships within research need to be acknowledged,” Temple and Young conclude (164).

Some possibilities for acknowledgement are offered by Temple in the recent article “Narrative analysis of written texts: reflexivity in cross language research” (2008). Advocating reflexivity, Temple insists on the use of auto/biography for all those who participate in the research, whether the subjects, the translators, the researchers. The goal, finally, is to contemplate and incorporate complexity, to avoid the artificial and misleading smoothing out of differences. It is not the

“best” nor the final translation that is made possible in exposing the stories, and consequently the perspectives, the positions, the biases, of those who carry out the research; rather, what is achieved is the opening up of a debate that is, Temple reminds us, “epistemologically, methodologically, and ethically necessary” (Temple 2008, 361).

It is this, the auto/biographical, method that Temple uses in “The Same but Different,” her explication of her long-term research on narratives of language and identity amongst Polish people in Greater Manchester, England. The method allows her to examine her own position as a researcher who speaks Polish and to recognize that she is separated and differentiated—by generation, by migration cycle, by class and social position—in her usage of Polish from many of the research participants. In constructing a “linguistic ethnography” for herself and for her translator, Katarzyna Koterba, as well as “translation histories” documenting the decisions made about word choice in the course of translation, Temple hopes to create not so much a perfect translation as one that is transparent. And here, then, is perhaps the real significance of translation: if what may be lost is accuracy, the immediacy of words spoken by a single, reliable self, what is gained is a far better understanding of how such a self is continuously constructed and what makes it possible for that self to speak as it does. In tackling the difficulties and complications of translation, we are confronted with the difficulties and complications of language itself, that opaque medium through which the self and the world around it are constructed.

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Michael Cronin. 2009. *Translation Goes to the Movies*. Routledge. ISBN13: 978-0-415-42285-7.

Translation goes to the Movies (Routledge 2009), Michael Cronin's excellent new book, opens with the following mission statement: "This book is about the visibility of translators. More properly it is about how translation becomes visible when we know how to look. And one of the places where we have often neglected to look is a medium primarily concerned with visibility, cinematography" (x). Such an oft-translated medium as film certainly deserves our attention, not just as scholars interested in translation, but as inhabitants of a globalized, multilingual world. Cronin, the Director of the Centre for Translation and Textual Studies at Dublin City University, is well-equipped to instruct us in such matters. He has authored several cutting-edge works on translation including Translation and Globalisation (2003) and Translation and Identity (2006).

His latest book takes a scholarly look at translation in the context of film, expanding the scope of translation well beyond the practical exchange of words, and showing his readers why translation matters. This is evidenced by the essential role that translation has played and continues to play in a sector as mainstream as Hollywood film. While Cronin argues that translation has always been an element of film, he points out how translation and translators have recently become increasingly visible onscreen characters who are in and of themselves worthy of filmmakers' interest. For Cronin, the changing role of translation and translators on the big screen reflects contemporary trends of globalization. While some of the links that he draws between acts of translation and film are at times a bit hasty, Cronin's work is nonetheless quite thorough, and forces us to consider the weighty effects of an activity which has too often been dismissed as a merely practical exercise.

The book's structure is lively and comprehensive, first introducing translation and film and explaining their connection, and then delving into a specific aspect of this film/translation nexus in each of the following chapters. Cronin begins with a comprehensive history of film, fittingly viewed through the lens of translation. As the author shows, directors as early as Griffith (whose films ranged from 1908-1930) believed that the moving picture was "a universal language, a way of undoing the mishap of Babel" (1). Yet even the earliest forms of film were combined with more literal attempts at translation. The majority of silent films were accompanied by evocative music or a live lecturer who would create dialogue on the spot to accompany the film.

Cronin's historical discussion firmly anchors the role of the viewer in the movie-going (and thus translation) process. The viewer confronts the film with his/her own language, culture and set of beliefs. While this has always been true (viewers interact with the films they see), it has recently become an increasingly charged issue due to film digitization, which allows today's films to "remain on the move and . . . continue to exert their influence..." (25). This means that every film will have varying audiences, as they can be viewed in varying places and times. A film that premieres in Japan may become available over the Internet and be viewed by audiences in Africa. Similarly, an American film made in 1910 might now be easily available on DVD, and modern American audiences will have a very different experience of it. Thus globalization and technology, as the mechanisms that increase the access to film and the cultures and languages they portray, have become important influences on translation and film alike. For Cronin, both film and translation are forms of mediation, and his subsequent analyses consistently examine the role of translation and translators within this context.

Chapter 2 examines the classic *Western*, viewed as a linguistic hotbed for its location in "the place where all borders meet, the frontier" (28). Cronin takes the opportunity to examine issues of power and control as they relate to language, particularly with regards to colonization. In *Stagecoach*, directed by John Ford in 1939, special attention is paid to the Native American character Yakima (who, despite her origins, speaks Spanish). She is married to an American, yet

is still the subject of much suspicion. When Yakima disappears, she is blamed for stealing things, and many fear she will return with dangerous Apaches.

As Cronin astutely observes: “[t]he relationship between language mediation and gender has had many ramifications from the colonial period to the present. Control of the speaking subject in many instances implies control of the body. The control is rendered problematic, however, by the difficulty in controlling/monitoring the translation flow” (34). Yakima’s foreignness, as a woman and a Spanish-speaker, is cause for fear: an inability to understand her translates into a lack of control. It is thus impossible for even the colonizing Americans to overpower her, for they lack the words to do so.

While this language-based translation analysis is certainly thorough, Cronin is careful to remind his readers that translation does not only involve different languages. He cites another *Stagecoach* character, Doc Boone, who in manipulating various linguistic registers acts as intralingual translator for the various kinds of English-speakers who would not otherwise be able to communicate effectively. Holding the “interstitial place of the translator...[he] is able to create an, albeit fragile, community of understanding between the different members of the stagecoach party” (37). Doc’s effective translations enable communication and thus allow the plot to move forward.

While translation can ensure that the plot does not break down due to a lack of communication, translation itself can be exploited for comedic purposes, and to uproarious effect. Cronin relates this use of translation to history as well as comedy, citing in particular how the vast migration from Old to New World was portrayed through film. As Cronin notes: “One way of exploring the tensions implicit in language encounter was through parody or satire, laughter both a guide and a caution to the hybrid polity coming into being” (54). Film, perhaps because it too is a medium of translation, has historically been extremely attuned to differences of language and culture, and has craftily used such differences for comedic purposes.

In his discussion of *A Night at the Opera* (directed by Sam Wood, 1935), a tale which involves illegally bringing an Italian opera singer to New York to perform, Cronin discusses the various ways in which language differences are portrayed onscreen. These include metonymical use of exaggerated accents or cultural signs such as food. Thus the “interpreter” speaks nothing but an Italian-cadenced gibberish, and only a few characters are required to speak with any accent at all, even though they are “Italian”. Similarly, it is indeed the *act* of interpreting (or lack thereof) that is more important than the words interpreted.

This performative aspect of translation (and its various degrees of success) is further analyzed with regards to Sacha Baron Cohen’s *Borat* (2006, directed by Larry Charles), a film in which translation serves as the central comic mechanism. The film employs a sustained “... translation effect, namely, the sense of a text which is clearly translated by virtue of the fact that [it] is clearly beholden to the syntax or lexicon of the source language” (72). Borat’s over-translated speech signals his foreignness and naïveté, giving him license to violate all kinds of taboos. As someone who is “obviously and publicly laboring under the burden of translation” (74), Borat may use any register, including the obscene, as he travels across the “US and A”. In transgressing taboos, his character provides a comedic social commentary on the people and authorities he encounters and causes viewers (in between their fits of laughter) to question these same rules and institutions.

Translation as a means of social commentary in a globalized world is Cronin’s ultimate object of study, yet it is really only in his penultimate, and arguably best, chapter, entitled “The long journey home: *Lost in Translation to Babel*” that he extensively and exhaustively deals with this subject. He begins by citing one of the first scenes of *Lost in Translation* (2003, directed by Sofia Coppola). After finishing an advertising shoot for a Japanese brand of whiskey, the main character Bob Harris calls his wife in Los Angeles. After she coolly remarks ‘I’m glad you’re having fun’ Harris replies ‘It’s not fun. It’s just very, very different.’ (81).

The films discussed in this chapter highlight the fact that no one is immune to language difference (and especially not to its potential accompanying loneliness). The characters' sometimes startling and sudden dependency on translation allow us to "consider what happens when translation becomes a way of examining the contemporary consequences of living in a globalized world" (81). Dependence on translation and the consequences of mistranslation are certainly highlighted here, as when Harris' interpreter truncates a lengthy series of directions to a mere "Yes, turn to camera" (83). Yet for Cronin, rather than this being merely a case of bad translation, it is a reflection of an inability to effectively translate local idioms into a foreign language. As Cronin notes "...the irresistible rise of the brand image can suggest a centripetal version of globalization as a gallery of images, freed from the nets of language by the universal currency of the gaze. *Lost in Translation* suggests otherwise by reminding spectators of the intractable, local realities of translation on a multilingual planet" (85). Mistranslation is funny, yet viewers feel Harris' loneliness and alienation all too well, a casualty of not just insufficient translation, but of differing cultures.

Cronin's analyses of *The Interpreter* (directed by Sydney Pollack, 2005) and *Babel* (directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006) are similarly strong, especially in their demonstration of how translation is related to issues of risk and control. Thus in *Babel*, when the doctor tells *ad hoc* village interpreter Anwar that Susan will die if she stays in the village, Anwar tells her husband she will be fine (104). While Anwar's lie is ethically inexcusable, Cronin points out that he has been placed in a risky and unfortunate position. He is the only one in the village who can speak both languages, and thus have any possibility of acting as translator; yet, language ability is not enough, as ultimately he fails to fulfill his translation mission faithfully for emotional reasons - he cannot transmit such a harsh message. This scene reemphasizes the idea that translation, while it involves using words, cannot be reduced solely to linguistic utterances.

Cronin's final chapter discusses translation in science fiction films, including the *Star Wars* trilogy (1977, 1980, 1983 directed by George Lucas, Irvin Kershner and Richard Marquand respectively). While the analyses of the films are thoughtful and comprehensive, most insightful

is Cronin's discussion of subtitles. Subtitles very literally highlight the act of translation by giving "substantive reality to the existence of difference" (115). Cronin draws a distinction between dubbing, which tries to hide language difference, and subtitling, which brings such difference to the fore, creating an opportunity for the viewer to simultaneously experience difference and achieve understanding.

This is at the heart of the book's message and is thus an excellent conclusion to Cronin's treatment of translation and film. Indeed, translation as mediation within film reflects the tendentially global and multilingual nature of current times and can lead viewers to become more diverse in their understanding of differences. As Cronin himself notes: "Translation is that moment of containment where the other becomes capable of being understood and equally importantly, becomes susceptible to influence". This book, in demonstrating the power that translation wields, firmly establishes the theme as one for which study is not only worthy, but essential.

Translation's new more visible presence within film seems to point to viewers' increasing, literal awareness of translators and translation. While film has always involved a translation of sorts, interest onscreen has begun to shift to the characters who perform this mediative service. This increased visibility of translation is indeed exciting, as it perhaps also reflects an increased awareness of the global and cultural differences that translators mediate.

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Speaking as a Spatial Subject

Review of Simon, Sherry. *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. 242p.

Tur Malka, Mons Regium, Mont Réal or Mont Reale – known as Mont or Mount Royal today, the mountain towering over the city of Montreal has had many names. The city that the mountain lends a name to is also borne out of many languages. Montreal, a First Nation territory that was taken first by the French, then by the British, has been a battleground of linguistic survival. Officially bilingual from 1760, the city was polarized around *la question linguistique*: the anxieties concerning “linguistic hierarchy, English unilingualism, and an ability on the part of Anglophones to ignore the predominantly Francophone society around them” (Levine 1991, 216). With English as the language of upward mobility, Montreal was seen as an English city until the 1960s when the French majority began to assert its cultural, linguistic and economic prerogatives. French is the host language of Montreal today. However, as Sherry Simon writes, the “sounds of today hover over the murmurs of the past” (2006, 11): the city has retained the traces of linguistic discomfort and too much closeness – the histories of forced and failed encounters between languages.

It is against this background that Simon draws Montreal's cultural map. While language is the determining factor in Simon's understanding of culture, and her readings of local literary translations form the core of the book, admirably her focus is not on textuality alone. As *Translating Montreal's* title suggests, Simon's project is to extend language relations to spatial relations; setting out to interpret what the city means, she uses the social medium of language to understand space. In order to do this, Simon first examines the implications of the binary structure that defined the city from its division into two separate districts in 1792, to the emergence of French linguistic nationalism. The Montreal of the past is constructed in the book as a city of borders where the language one speaks readily designates one's place in life. Language might build worlds, but here it is also the means of closure: it places and keeps

one firmly either in Francophone east or Anglophone west. Montreal's geographical division reinforces the linguistic one, and vice versa. In the city, language and space are invested, it seems, in supporting the ideal of self-sameness: on both sides of the dividing line that is Montreal's Saint Lawrence Boulevard, the imperative for the language communities is to be one with themselves while keeping only to themselves.

Boundaries, however, are prone to leakings. Drawing on *Le mur de Berlin P.Q.*, the Montreal writer Jean Forest's linguistic autobiography from 1983, Simon writes: "the problem is not that there is a figurative Berlin Wall [in the Province of Quebec] separating east from west, but that the wall does not do its job properly" (45). Boundaries are usually associated with power, while power's deconcentration takes shape in leaks. *Translating Montreal* helps us realize that the violation of how different subjects inhabit space is not performed by the lines of division alone. In infiltrating one's place with the other, leaks expose one's vulnerability in the other's unexpected and uncontained presence. In Montreal's "unequal bilingualism", word borrowings from English to French constituted such a leak.

The city's Upper Lachine Road or Chemin Upper Lachine is a case in point. Legend has it that in the 17th century, the French explorer Robert de La Salle ambitiously named a western suburb of Montreal after China ('La Chine'), a country he eventually failed to reach via the Saint Lawrence River. The meaning and the role of the English word 'upper' has also changed: originally a modifier, it lost its indicational value as there is no lower part of the road that it could refer to. 'Upper' became a cypher, and a proper name itself. The name Upper Lachine is thus an example of untranslatability, given that "translation must make cultural sense, and here the operation of transfer is impossible" (44). An assemblage of English and French imaginary geographies that nevertheless concretizes a place in French Montreal, Upper Lachine cannot but leave the same mark on both linguistic landscapes.

As the above indicates, sometimes there is not *enough* difference between languages to allow translation. This means that translatability is more of a goal than a given. Especially in Montreal, as Simon shows, translation is not a fact. Translatability requires proximity, but proximity does not automatically constitute an inhabitable relation; it does not bring one closer to the other. Following the Indian social theorist Ashish Nandy, Simon argues that in a

divided city, proximity sours: the other is constructed and retained merely as a negative identity for the self. A mutually affirming encounter cannot happen unless a multicultural consciousness is adopted. What is needed, however, is not only an ideal of pluralism but an extension of the self to the other, that is: the conversion of proximity from a spatial fact to the experience of the other as an essential, unalienable part of the self.

Allowing movement between languages, translation is seen as a means of bringing about such a consciousness of others. In the “divided”, “dual”, “double” city, it is also pointedly a spatial consciousness. Simon’s archetypal translator is a going subject: like the journalist Malcolm Reid, author of the cultural study *The Shouting Signpainters* (1972), s/he crosses lines and languages to let the encounter happen. Reid left the west for the Francophone east to translate *joual*, the language of the streets and also the language of the literature of French Montreal’s emerging left nationalism. Englishing the *déclassé* French idiom in his cultural study, Reid also translated ideas, making Quebec radicalism available for a new public.

Translating Montreal covers a diverse range of literary works. Given that the period Simon examines extends from the 1950s to the present, most of the discussed texts are contemporary. Because Montreal provides the singular organizing frame for the book, literature is discussed primarily in relation to the city. The book is divided into 6 chapters that focus on how texts create new connections when transferred from French to English (Chapter 1); Yiddish to English (Chapter 2); and Yiddish to French (Chapter 3). Simon’s argument throughout is that translation’s function is to administer the passage of one culture into the other. Furthermore, translation as a social practice has the potential to transform translated languages from being merely the object of transfer, to being more capacious, agentive, translating ones. As an effect of translation, languages expand and become contact zones, in turn recreating the city as a place of belonging. As the Montreal essayist and poet Pierre Nepveu says in Chapter 3, Jewish culture “lives in me, it is part of my cultural universe” (118). Simon points out that Nepveu can only read Yiddish in translation. The survival of a language, then, does not only depend on one’s ability to speak it; rather, a language can be shared if the culture it projects is recognized as being constitutive of the self.

In Chapter 4, the Anglo-Montrealer novelist Gail Scott expresses a similar view, but talks about a structure of belonging that is different to Nepveu's. She says: "French language and culture in a sense also *belong* to me; it is [sic] part of my cultural background, make-up" (126-127, italics in original). Many of Scott's characters are bilingual and she frequently employs code-switching in her writing. However, language-crossing results in mixed expressions whereby the regulatory function of translation is compromised. As in the case of pseudotranslations - texts masquerading as translations - the *idea* of translation is used and abused. Here, translation is deployed not to provide access, but to confuse "the relations between subject and object, between the original and the translated text" (160). Producing perverted, disrespectful texts, these "muddy" translational practices also reflect on the city's Francization; on how the changes in Montreal's language relations cannot be interpreted as a total, mechanistic, unambiguous reversal of power. Self-reflexive and surprising, they suggest a special kind of contact whereby translation eventually finds its objects in proximity: not in foreign worlds, but in the mundane, yet turbulent space of the everyday.

It needs to be noted here that, for Simon, Montreal's Jewish diaspora structurally reinforces, rather than challenges, the binary spatio-linguistic framework established by the book. Jewishness is seen as a marker of difference *within*: one expresses one's Jewishness either in English or French. It is left to Chapter 4 to let the binary fold into something unexpected; here, space is constructed as claimed and reclaimed, suspended, elusive. In a puzzling way, Chapter 5 returns us to the problem of the divided city. The chapter discusses "immigrant" writing. In Simon's words, allophones, immigrants whose mother tongue is neither English nor French, "enter the city's conversations as a third partner, in an always-triangular configuration" (11). The image of the triangle, the references to the "age of immigration" and the threat of a linguistic Babel seem redundant both in terms of a growing metropolis, and, more importantly, in the terms already set by the book. Paradoxically reaffirming the notion of the two halves, the image of the triangle identifies Anglo-French relations as the privileged site of linguistic trouble. This implies that one not only needs to adopt either of the two 'home-grown' languages; it is also imperative that they find an identity in either of these two cultures so that they can 'be' in Montreal. Presenting immigration as a relatively new phenomenon, Simon also contradicts the message of her Chapter 6 that is devoted to the

many histories of the Mo(u)nt Royal. Seen from the mountain, says Simon, it seems clear that “Montréal in fact would be, *ab ovo*, a translation” (193, italics in original).

Perhaps the book would have benefited from a theoretical chapter to avoid the above contradictions. On the whole, however, *Translating Montreal* is an interesting read that successfully creates an intersection between space and translation studies. Using space as a source text of translation might not seem an obvious choice. However, as Simon reminds us, translation in Latin “is understood as a form of turning (*vertere*), and in medieval French *turner* was one of the verbs used for translation” (119, italics in original). Turning is an action that necessitates an awareness of space: when we turn towards something, “*it is from here that the world unfolds*” (Ahmed 2006, 28, italics in original). Such turnings, as both Simon and Ahmed remind us, are not innocent: what we perceive when we turn reveals how we are oriented toward the world. In Montreal, one orients oneself by using the river and the mountain as cardinal points. This unconventional compass making Montreal the only city where the sun rises in the south, the understanding of turnings remains crucial.

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