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## The Same but Different—Researching Language and Culture in the Lives of Polish People in England

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**Key words:**

translation;  
narrative;  
representation;  
culture; language;  
cross-cultural  
research

**Abstract:** This article is concerned with issues of representation within cross language research. We examine research that suggests people may present themselves differently in different languages. Moreover, it has been argued that translators/researchers produce accounts of people's lives rather than just describe them within their translations. These representational moves by both research participants and researchers across languages have consequences for research findings. We illustrate our arguments in relation to research with Polish speakers in Greater Manchester, England and argue for issues of interpretation and translation within narrative research to move out of methodological notes to become central concerns within research processes. We argue particularly against the treatment of language as an undifferentiated medium and the view that anyone who can speak a language can unproblematically represent all speakers of that language. All languages are internally differentiated and who translates influences the findings.

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### 1. Introduction

This article is based on research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on narratives of language and identity amongst Polish people in Greater Manchester, England. The Polish language was seen by participants as not only a medium of communication but also as an important aspect of their identity and culture. In this article we discuss how participants spoke about the role of Polish in their lives and illustrate how changing the language used is about more than just proficiency. Moreover, the researchers in the project were also changing languages, translating culture across languages and representing people in a language many of them had not used. The research was concerned with how narrative researchers addressed issues of cross language representation within their research (TEMPLE, 2008a, 2008b). [1]

Our narrative approach follows that of Catherine RIESSMAN and Lee QUINNEY (2005, p.394) who define it as a form of discourse that "interrogates language—how and why events are storied, not simply the content to which language refers". We used this approach to examine the position of both participants and researchers/translators within the research process. The issues are relevant to all researchers who adopt a reflexive approach to their research (see TEMPLE 2008a and 2008b for a discussion of the concept of narrative used in this research). The method we used builds on auto/biographical (STANLEY, 1990) approaches within narrative analysis by focusing on the perspectives of both research participants and researchers and their influence on how meanings and lives are translated across languages. We are not suggesting this is the only way of looking at issues of representation across languages. For example, the approach has similarities to BLOMMAERT's (2001, 2005) use of ethnography and sociolinguistics to explore language use in accounts of asylum (see below). However, our focus is more on the influence of the lives of translators/researchers. Whichever approach is taken, there is a need for a systematic way to begin to engage in debate about similarities and differences across languages. [2]

In this short paper we can only focus on some of the issues that researchers who investigate across languages and cultures have to address. In our research we came across examples of varieties of Polish being used to decide which generation and migration period participants belonged to and to make judgements about the kind of Polish person they were. Polish was used in different ways and Polish speakers were—at the same time—defined as the same but different from each other. In other words, language was used to differentiate according to migration cycle as well as class, and in effect to decide who was "Polish" and in what ways. The auto/biographical approach that we used can help a) to illuminate such cultural differentiation and b) to locate the translator within such nuanced use of belonging and difference. [3]

## 2. Translating Lives in Language Use

Researchers have shown that cross language communication and translation between languages involves more than the transfer of meaning from one context to another. As Aneta PAVLENKO (2006) argues, and Eva HOFFMAN (1998, 2003) illustrates so well in her account of a migrant learning to speak another language, changing languages involves translating lives rather than simply words. Changing the language we use involves re-assessing who we are and how we interact with other people. Writing by migrants has shown how changing language can be a traumatic and life changing event and involves "translation of self" rather than just words:

"... languages may create different, and sometimes incommensurable, worlds for their speakers who feel that their selves change with the shift in language (...). For these bilinguals, and in particular for immigrants and expatriates, the two languages may be linked to different linguistic repertoires, cultural scripts, frames of expectation, autobiographic memories, and levels of proficiency and emotionality. They may also

be associated with conflicting allegiances, distinct imagined audiences, incompatible subject positions, and mutually exclusive arguments" (PAVLENKO, 2006, p.27). [4]

This suggests that people may relate to and use languages differently. There are implications for researchers in the possibility of different "repertoires" and narrative structures as PAVLENKO suggests in terms of how people present themselves to researchers, how they are "received" and how researchers represent people who use different languages. Mary BESEMERES (2006, p.34) examines the ways in which emotional experience is "inflected differently in different languages". One of the languages she examines is Polish. She compares the terms "anxious" and "boję się" as used by HOFFMAN (1998) who migrated from Poland. BESEMERES argues that "when someone uses a particular emotion word to describe a feeling, the word chosen helps to shape that feeling, affecting how the person perceives and interprets it, and hence how he or she experiences it" (BESEMERES, 2006, p.41). The word "anxious", for example, BESEMERES argues, "in modern English is part of a story influenced by popular psychology" in which it is good to be in control, whereas "boję się" is associated with "a cultural outlook in which feelings are perceived as natural" (p.41). BESEMERES also points to the different status in Polish and English of diminutives and to the effects of silences in interviews which can also be culturally influenced. Of particular interest here is research that suggests that narratives in different languages may have different structures (McCABE & BLISS, 2003; PAVLENKO, 2005). PAVLENKO (2005, p.121), for example, suggests that there may be cross linguistic differences in narratives across languages, including in their structure, amount of evaluation offered and directness of emotion description. [5]

The perspective of the researcher is important in that it influences how the word chosen is understood. We argue below that words have particular connotations for people that arise from the context in which they are used and these may vary between researchers. For example, a second generation Polish speaker may not have the same understandings of words as someone born in Poland. However, these issues of representation are often not acknowledged in research. Issues of translation are often relegated to a footnote or brushed aside with the comment that translation was carried out by a community researcher with the implication that this solved translation issues, neglecting research participants' use of language as well as their own and/or the community researchers. [6]

In the same way that learning how to represent yourself in another language involves more than instrumental questions around proficiency, researchers who work with different languages do more than replace words from one language with those of another (RICOEUR, 2006; SIMON, 1996; ECO, 2003). Sherry SIMON (1996) has discussed translation in a way many practicing translators would recognise. She points out that the choice of word and concept are not solved by just turning to the dictionary but involve translators making choices about how to represent people. Translators use their own experiences of using words in different languages to decide how to try to stay "faithful" to the original in the same way that all researchers who work across languages do. [7]

As discussed in relation to research participants, both translators and interpreters also use language as more than a means of communication. It is also the medium in which they describe and construct who people are and how they differ from other people. For example, Gayatri SPIVAK (1992, 1993) urges the translator to think not only in terms of logical connections between words, but also to look at texts as "rhetorical devices". She argues that:

"One of the ways to get around the confines of one's 'identity' as one produces expository prose is to work at someone else's title, as one works with a language that belongs to many others. This, after all, is one of the seductions of translating. It is a simple miming of the responsibility to the trace of the other in the self. ... Language is not everything. It is only a vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries. The ways in which rhetoric or figuration disrupt logic themselves point at the possibility of random contingency, beside language, around language" (SPIVAK, 1992, pp.177-178). [8]

Mona BAKER provides a fascinating critique of the position of translators as "honest and detached brokers who operate largely in the "spaces between" cultures" (BAKER, 2005, p.11). This is the way community researchers are sometimes portrayed, if not directly then indirectly by a neglect of their use of language and position in the research. BAKER suggests that that current use of the spatial metaphor of "the in-between":

"... either locates translators, by default within static and discrete 'cultural' groupings based on national, religious or gender affiliation, for instance, or in an idealised no-man's land lying between two such discrete groupings. Thus the idea of intercultural is used to create a neutral space for translators to act as honest brokers who are not embedded in either culture, who can transcend any cultural or political affiliation, at least while they are engaged in the highly romanticised task of translating" (BAKER, 2005, p.11). [9]

BAKER argues against a highly romanticised view of translation and describes an approach that helps us to understand that there are no "spaces in between" and that a politically attuned account of translation or translators would not place them either outside or in between cultures. It would "locate them at the heart of interaction, in the narratives that shape their own lives as well as the lives of those for whom and between whom they translate and interpret" (BAKER, 2005, p.12). [10]

PAVLENKO's (2005) analysis of the influences of multilingual people's language use on interactions and perceptions of self and others suggests that factors such as linguistic competence, perceived language prestige and authority, context of language acquisition and age of acquisition of languages affect how people use language. She argues persuasively that:

"... speakers who have different socialisation experiences in the first and second languages may perceive these languages as differentially embodied. Languages learned in the process of intense childhood socialization seem connected to the body

through an intricate web of personal memories, images, sensory associations, and affective reactions, while languages learned later in life, in the classroom, or through limited socialisation (for instance, the workplace) do not have the same sensual associations; they do not stir or evoke" (PAVLENKO, 2005, p.187). [11]

However, her review of the literature cautions against any simplistic assumption that this is always the case. Researchers who have taken these issues of representation across languages on board in their research have done so in different ways. There is no single correct way to address them. BLOMMAERT's research has already been refereed to. His work and that of others such as Gayatri SPIVAK (1992, 1993), Lawrence VENUTI (1998) and Andrea BÜHRMANN et al. (2007) share common concerns with our narrative approach in recognising that as translation is about representation, is a political act and that it is ethically, methodologically and epistemologically preferable to identify and attempt to look at issues around the representation of people who may use languages in different ways than to ignore such concerns and use the researchers' own unchallenged assumptions. [12]

In our research we used the concept of "intellectual auto/biography" as developed by Liz STANLEY to open up the translation process. STANLEY defines intellectual auto/biography as "... an analytic (not just descriptive) concern with the specifics of how we come to understand what we do, by locating acts of understanding in an explication of the grounded contexts these are located in and arise from" (STANLEY, 1990, p.62). [13]

We illustrate some of the issues we encountered and how we addressed them using our ESRC research project as an example. However, the ideas and methods developed are not uniquely applicable to this project and have been usefully applied in other projects involving a wide range of languages (see for example ALEXANDER et al., 2004). We briefly describe this research before looking at the issues it raised in terms of language use and describing how we dealt with them. [14]

### **3. Research Project and Sampling of Participants**

The research project included interviews with 30 people describing themselves as Polish living in Greater Manchester, England. Participants were asked about their lives in England, their contacts with English speakers and what they thought settling into and contributing to English society involved. A narrative approach was taken and the analysis involved looking at both what people said and how they said it (see Section 2). Participants were given the choice whether to have the interview in Polish or English. Each interview was transcribed if in English and directly translated from the taped interview if in Polish by the researchers. The researchers were therefore the translators. A "linguistic ethnography" formed a central part of the research (see below). The researchers wanted to make their own influences on the research process part of the analysis, particularly in relation to their use of language. [15]

Participants came from a variety of backgrounds and were chosen by using purposive sampling (MASON, 1996). This is a well recognised qualitative technique which aims not to copy quantitative criteria of statistical representation but to make sampling relevant to theoretical investigation in qualitative research. The aim of our sampling technique was to include participants from a variety of backgrounds in terms of age, migration period, religious beliefs and involvement with Polish networks as well as place of birth and sex. [16]

Four of the participants had come to England as refugees after the Second World War, one had come to marry in the 1960s, two were students, 14 had come to find work either before or since Poland joined the EU and nine had been born in England, one of whom was third generation. 16 were male and 14 female and participants were of varying ages. Many of the recent migrants were highly mobile and had lived in a number of areas in England. They all lived within Greater Manchester at the time of interview. All but two participants from the second and third generation described themselves as professionals. It was more problematic to classify people who came over from Poland. Eleven out of 16 new arrivals were university graduates, all but four were now working in manual jobs. None of the three participants who were manual workers in Poland worked in the same trade in England. All names have been changed to ensure anonymity. [17]

#### **4. Participant Views on Language Use**

Participants recognised that the language they spoke formed an important part of who they were and how they related to other people. Pawel, for example, who had been born in the UK to Polish parents, stated that the Polish language was "a part of who we are because we were brought up learning Polish" (interview in English, transcribed by KK). Participants also recognised that when they changed the language they spoke they related to people differently and expressed themselves differently. For example, Marta, 23, lived with her sister and worked as an accountant. She had been in England for about 4 years and stated: "I can express myself in both languages (...). You have to be careful about the intonation, about the way you say that, your mimic. I think that you can't actually express in English the full meaning of your emotions" (translation by KK). [18]

Language here is linked to PAVLENKO's (2006) idea of emotional repertoires in different language and our research supports PAVLENKO's assertion that people's feelings about their languages, identities and futures play an important part in their linguistic choices (PAVLENKO, 2005, p.201). This was particularly clear in the participants' views on integration where their sense of "Polish" differing from "English" values affected their decision about how to interact with English speakers and the kinds of social networks they used (TEMPLE, 2008c). The Polish language was linked to a preferred identity and lifestyle. However, participants also recognised that the way they spoke Polish was not uniform and this could be used to differentiate between people and to make assumptions about their values and beliefs. Edmund, for example, who was born in England, pointed out that how people spoke Polish was being used to make judgements

about them: "They can analyse who's being polite, what background they come from" (transcribed by KK). [19]

It was not only Polish people who had been part of the longer established Polish community in Greater Manchester who made judgments about language and ways in which people were Polish. Young Polish migrants who were more recent arrivals were "sniggering and correcting his [friend's] Polish" (transcribed by KK). GARAPICH (2007, p.13) cites language as one way of maintaining hierarchy with references to the "dirty, rude and barbaric language of newcomers". Our research also found derogatory ascriptions of the kind of Polish used by the old Polonia in narratives of what constituted the "correct" Polish language. Older people used Polish that was out of date and uneducated and second generation Polish was grammatically incorrect and similarly dated. [20]

BOURDIEU (1992) argues persuasively that even within a language:

"... there exists, in the area of pronunciation, diction and even grammar, a whole set of differences significantly associated with social differences which, though negligible in the eyes of the linguist, are pertinent from the sociologist's standpoint because they belong to a system of linguistic oppositions which is a *re-translation* of a system of social differences. A structural sociology of language ... must take as its object *the relationship between the structured systems of sociologically pertinent linguistic differences and the equally structured systems of social differences*" (BOURDIEU, 1992, p.54). [21]

The kind of Polish spoken in our research, in terms of lexicon for example, varied. Words used by older people were perceived as dated and the slang used by younger migrants was seen as inappropriate. Assumptions were also made about the values people held according to their Polish: newer migrants were likely to be more like English people in their value systems and the longer established community saw themselves as keepers of traditional and by implication "real" Polish values. These ascriptions of different value systems and judgements about who had valid reasons for being in England had implications for our research in that the interviewer was a recent migrant. Participants were aware of this and Maryla and Edmund, who were both born in England, commented in a joint interview:

Edmund: ... It's ... all dreams coming to an end, I think, generally. And lots of these Polish people are here temporary as well.

Maryla: It's probably of the high numbers that came over that it's been such a drastic change. If it's been a trickle like it was in the 70s ... Or a slightly bigger trickle than the 70s then it might merge it better. But it's like an avalanche it just swamps everything. And that might be the end of the era because of that avalanche.

Edmund: Ye, it is. And our children are one of those who are the last.

Maryla: We've been fortunate but they want be in their adult life. Ye, and it must be a lost.

Interviewer: It's sad to hear about this situation.



Edmund: This is the truth. You asked us to speak frankly.

Interviewer: Of course, I did.

Edmund: You might not like what you hear listening.

Interviewer: It doesn't matter if I like it or not if it's the truth. You don't need to tell me only nice if things like these happen (transcribed by KK). [22]

## 5. Situating the Researchers in their Translations

The ways in which we worked as translators and the effects of these kinds of positioning within language and community formed a key part of our narrative analysis. For the purpose of reflection on translation within the research process the perspective of the Research Assistant (who conducted the interviews) and that of the Principal Investigator (who led the research project) were compared systematically. Interviews in Polish were translated from tape to text in one move by listening to the interviews and translating directly into English. The decision not to completely transcribe interviews in Polish was a resource issue. Each translated/transcribed interview was examined by both researchers, compared to the tape and issues of perspective and translation choices were reviewed and marked on the text. The Research Assistant (RA) who was a Polish new migrant herself, was interviewed by the PI about the issues and her influences on the research interviews, transcriptions and translations. When asked if she felt that the fact of being a new migrant had an influence on her interviews she replied:

"In some cases yes because erm ... I tried to find different respondents ... some of the participants are from second and third generation and erm...those people ... that's what they told me. They felt very very Polish until 2004 actually and when more and more Polish people came over they said oh we don't feel that Polish any more and they think that erm ... new migrants like I and thousands and millions of Polish people who came over ... they ... they actually are not proper members of the Polish community and ermm ... of course some Polish people ... I am talking about new migrants ... they are people who are looking for trouble here and therefore the people from second and third generation don't like them. That's why when I ask some people of older generation ... not really old people but but born in the UK they treat me with distance a little bit or didn't really want to talk to me. Because ermm ... I am one of the new migrants" (Interview in English, transcribed by BT). [23]

Some of the participants felt that they preferred joint rather than individual interviews and the RA felt that this was in part due to the discomfort they felt about speaking about their views of new migrants:

"... those people [who agreed to a joint interview] they had bad experience with newcomers so when I asked them for the interview the woman agreed but the man wasn't really sure if he would like to talk to me or not and he said right so we can talk as a couple. Maybe they were quite worried about what they say ... what they should say or ..." (Interview in English, transcribed by BT). [24]

In a similar way, the Principal Investigator's (PI) background influenced how she approached the translations. Her parents had come to England after the Second World War and she did not recognise some of the slang used by recent migrants in the transcripts and some of the humour had to be explained, especially if it was political satire. Recent economic and political debates in Poland formed the backdrop of the interviews and these were unknown to the PI. PAVLENKO's (2005) analysis of the influence of the socialisation experiences (see above) of language use is important here. The PI in our research chose to use another Polish person to carry out the interviews rather than to do them herself. This was for two reasons: First, her use of Polish is mostly limited to social contacts with older migrants and second generation Polish people. She was concerned about the flow of conversation, particularly with recent migrants, and chose to employ an RA with an academic background from Poland who was a recent migrant. Secondly, previous work by the PI had focused on the use of language in interviews carried out by a second generation speaker and this was an opportunity to examine the effects of someone with different socialization experiences carrying out the research. This does not mean that there are no advantages in working with researchers who have different language experiences as communicating across such differences may provide valuable insights into research processes across languages. In fact, the dialogue between the PI and the RA formed the beginnings of such communication. [25]

In our research, the translation for each interview was discussed in terms of content but also for choice of words and concepts used. For example, in one interview the word for God used was "Panem Bogiem", literally "Mr. God". Should this gendered aspect of language be identified in the translation by foreignising as VENUTI (1995) suggests (see below)? Is this any different from English narratives that assume God is male but do not have it literally spelt out in the language? Other decisions included the best way to convey the tone of the interview, for example, the use of "Pani" can be translated as "madam" or "you" and the choice of which to use affects the way the interview is perceived by the reader. Decisions about how much of this detail to leave in had to be made as well as how much to "tidy up" interviews to conform to English grammar structure. These concerns had to be weighted against the possibility of presenting equally negative identities of barely literate foreigners (TEMPLE, 2005). The various versions of the translations and a trail of decisions made about word choice have been kept in our research. Decisions about the extent that we should foreignising the text were made in the context of what we thought were significant structural or conceptual differences between language. These decisions are invariably subjective (see below) but none the less essential in enabling other translators and researchers to understand our use of language and our perspective on meaning within the interviews. In effect we produced translation histories for the research and a "linguistic ethnography" (UK LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY FORUM, 2004). This involved an examination of the historical context of migration, the social organisation of Polish communities in England and of the ways in which the Polish language was used as an evaluative and censoring mechanism within communities. Discourses about appropriate language use were examined. Alternative forms of social networks developed by newer migrants

formed alternative narratives of being Polish and "doing Polishness". This is similar to BLOMMAERT's (2001) use of ethnography to examine asylum narratives and illustrates the value of relating language use to context. [26]

We are not suggesting that there is any simple way to attribute beliefs and language use to social characteristics to influence on the research process. That is, the RA's use of language cannot be unproblematically linked to her views or ways of translating any more than the PIs can (PAVLENKO, 2005). There is an extensive literature within the social sciences that expounds the problem of simplistic ascriptions of insider status to researchers from similar cultural backgrounds to participants (TWINE, 2000). For example, Deianira GANGA and Sam SCOTT (2006) in their research with Italians in Nottingham and British in Paris show how interviewing within a community may increase awareness of the social divisions that exist between researchers and participants. Researchers sometimes assume that such divisions are reduced when community researchers are employed. Issues of, for example, class, age and generation may influence the dynamics of the interview. France TWINE (2000) points about the difficulties of attributing insider and outsider positions and tying perspectives to them are relevant here, as are Ruth SCHICK's (2002) comments on her experiences working with Maori communities in New Zealand:

"The committee held in effect that Maori identity corresponded at once to a Maori body, knowledge about Maori, the ability to express Maori needs, and a distinctively Maori worldview. An individual Maori leader was to stand in for the dynamics and complexity internal to the group, to bear the burden of community consultation with Maori, and to represent the interests of all Maori" (SCHICK, 2002, p.638). [27]

SCHICK points out that when a researcher is seen to have expertise only in relation to specific parts of the research, such as being Maori, this reifies social categories and defines in advance what can be said and by whom. This is the assumption behind much cross language research where language issues are not addressed or are addressed solely in terms of language competence without an exploration of difference and positionality. All these researchers argue against the simple assumption that social characteristics can be mapped onto beliefs and matched in research to ensure validity. However, they also show the particularity of our knowledge claims and the need to investigate their basis . [28]

## **6. Language, Text and Power**

In a fascinating article on narrative inequality BLOMMAERT (2001) analyses the narratives of African asylum seekers and investigates the re-structuring of spoken accounts into "institutionally sanctioned text" which he argues "involves a dynamics of entextualisation that is based on power asymmetries. This process also involves the problematic of the availability and accessibility of linguistic-communicative resources" (BLOMMAERT, 2001, p.415). He argues that rules of evidence rely on textual formats of language and communication that are highly culture and society specific and "reflect local ideologies of language, literacy and communication" (2001, p.436). He describes the confrontation of narrative

conventions as "often a battle of unequal arms". For example, communicative style, he argues, is always a source of character assessment and attribution. These are more than technical problems that can be solved by improving training for interpreters but are "a fundamental problem in inequality in access to the discursive resources that shape who can talk when, in what ways and with what effects" (BLOMMAERT, 2001, p.444). This resonates with BOURDIEU's work (1992) quoted above and with VENUTI's concern with the drive to fluency in accounts which in effect introduces English as the baseline. Moreover, it points to the need to focus not only on single texts but on narratives and discourses across texts (BAKER, 2005) and on language itself as an "object of inequality and hegemony" (BLOMMAERT, quoted in BAKER, 2005, p.5). BLOMMAERT's writing (2001, 2005) focuses attention on the relationship between language and social inequality and on the effects of globalisation on language use. Not all languages have equal status in the world. [29]

Researchers in the field of translation and interpretation studies have also pointed to the unequal status of languages within translation and to the existence of an assumed English language baseline in translations into English, if only by default when there is no discussion of differences between words and concepts and the way they are used. Lawrence VENUTI (1995, 1998), for example refers to this process as domestication of texts in other languages to English, arguing that texts should be foreign-ised, for example, to indicate issues that were of concern or choices made during the translation process. In a similar way, SPIVAK (1992) writes about the process of "translatese" when all translations, regardless of the language of the writer, end up as if they had been written in the English language. Translators, ECO (2003) argues, negotiate the extent to which they foreignise or domesticate a text according to audience and purpose. He points out that functional equivalence between source and target language can be achieved in a variety of ways, including radical re-writing. As argued above, this process of negotiation of meaning involves the translator choosing words to produce rhetorical effects rather than simply moving meaning across languages. In our research we made decisions about how much to change the grammar and sentence construction of interviews to conform to English language use. The extent of "tidying up" varied, the PI being less concerned about correct English grammar than the RA. This was due to the PIs interest in the writings of philosophers such as SPIVAK (see above). However, she was also aware of the need to present participants in a positive light and not to fuel arguments about the need for migrants to learn English before they came to England, which were current in the British press at the time. Talking about integration in English society, a recent migrant, commented:

"Every time I buy something here [uses *kolejny* which means successive and gives picture on mounting pressure], every penny that I invest here is like a nail in my coffin [invests him further in England] ... And I make some nails there too [i.e. invests himself in Poland] ... And then there will come a moment, a time when I say that is enough, stop [stop said in English]. Where do we have more bonds, for example, where are there more of our things" (translated by BT and KK). [30]

This **was** a particularly difficult piece to translate. The interview was carried out by KK and the initial translation done by BT. However, it proved difficult to translate this section of interview and preserve its "flavour" without explanations and without some re-arrangement of sentences. [31]

## 7. Discussion

We are not arguing that there are straightforward ties between languages and meanings. Indeed we are arguing the opposite. Our research demonstrates that there are differences between the ways people express themselves in Polish and English and that both languages are themselves used in different ways. Participants used Polish in different ways and the way they spoke could be used to signal difference as well as similarity. This makes it difficult to claim that community representatives "solve" issues of language within cross language research as they are themselves situated within linguistic communities which are differentiated. Using analytic concepts such as that of intellectual auto/biography enables researchers to examine issues of cross language communication in ways that situate acts of translation and communication within the contexts of the lives of all researchers and participants. As many philosophers have shown there is no final translation. Alternative words and concepts can always be chosen to re-write accounts. These will be situated within the context of their own production processes and the translation memories and histories of translators. [32]

Crucially for cross language narratives BLOMMAERT states:

"Assumptions of sharedness (...) seem to determine much of what goes on in the critical analysis of discourse in western societies, whereas the highly layered and hierarchical systems of literacy and communicative skills that dominate our societies seem to dictate a more attentive stance towards phenomena such as accents, differential competence, difficulties in writing and so on ... Resources are contexts (...). As soon as we enter worlds in which talk and written text are seen as replicas of one another (and in which someone else's notes of what I said can be offered to me as 'my' story), we enter a world of differential power relations, which need to be scrutinized in great detail" (BLOMMAERT, 2001, pp.445-446). [33]

This quote and the research cited in this article shows that these issues of representation across languages are not ones that sociolinguists alone should be interested in given that, as many researchers have pointed out, more than half the world's population is bi or multilingual. They are concerns that should be at the heart of research concerned with how researchers practice their art. [34]

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