Transcribing multilingual voices: moments of choice and doubt

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Transcription of spoken data: insights, challenges, dilemmas
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Outline of the talk

1. Project: *a qualitative study of forced migrants' language learning and integration experiences*

2. Politics of transcribing and translating transcripts

3. Processes, examples and reflections

Researching refugees' language learning and integration trajectories in Luxembourg

- 2-year linguistic ethnographic research

  Copland & Creese 2015; Rampton 2007; Snell et al. 2015

  close analysis of **situated language use**
  Rampton et al. 2004

  commitment to probe the interrelationship between **language and social life** in depth
  Tusting & Maybin, 2007

- 5 refugees from Syria and Iraq with diverse language, educational and professional profiles

- Longitudinal / diverse contexts of language learning and socialisation

Publications:
Kalocsányiová (2017). Towards a repertoire-building approach: multilingualism in language classes for refugees in Luxembourg, *Language & Intercultural Communication* 17(4): 474-493

Kalocsányiová (2020). At the borders of languages: the role of ideologies in the integration of forced migrants in multilingual Luxembourg, *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 46(9): 1903-1920

Researching multilingually

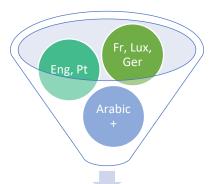In my city in my country I was studying *chimie*(que)

The person at the security (0.2) aujourd'hui, aujourd'hui, how are you?

الا اذا كان في حاله طبيه حرجة.بحاجه لطبيب

Meine Schwester ist (--) fünfzig Jahre alt

من فضلكpor favorبالبرتغالي يعني

M: [...] hier soir regardé ehm:: le match Barcelona avec Paris Saint German (0.2) la Barça a gagné ((laugh)) France loo:se(r)

Eng, Pt

Fr, Lux, Ger

Arabic +

multiple languages, forms of expression and levels of fluency

Challenging aspects of language use in research often not discussed

Politics of transcribing and translating transcripts

- Decisions about *what level of detail* to choose, how to *represent* voice, *in which language(s)* and *for whom*

- In multilingual research, the decisions inherent in the written representation of spoken data multiply

Bucholtz 2000; Green et al. 1997; Jaffe 2006; Ochs 1979; Roberts 1997; Vakser 2017

Transcribing (multilingual) data:

Interpretive, selective and situated practice

When/how to capture all languages in a multilingual dataset?

How to ensure readability?

Do we label languages as distinct codes?

Do we record pronunciation particulars?

How to represent translingual practices in translation (if at all)?

Transcribing multilingual classroom discourse

Extract 1.

bonjour

the record voice i translated

i give u the result

first he say word in portuguese it mean in french
s'il vous plait
in english please
in arabic (من فضلك)

second sil vous plait répète
in english please you can repeat
but he say that different way in arabic
(عمول معروف بتعيدا)

third one

sil vous plait ce que répète
in english repeat
in arabic répète meaning اعاده ترجع تعيدا

that all 😊 ···

welcome always have nice day

Extract 2.

R [Pouvez-vous ::]

يعني من فضلك por favor بالبرتغالي يعني
in Portuguese por favor *which means please*

M s'il vous plait

R إنّك تعود إنّك ترجع تعيدها مرّة ثانية إعمل معروف أنّك تعيدها repetir
repetir *means you need to say it again, say it again make
me a favour and say it another time*

R مرّة ثانية
another time

[…]

parler (--) pouvez-vous من فضلك ترجع تعيدها مرة ثانية
could you please repeat it again

P repetir

R انك ترجع تعيدها مرة ثانية
you should repeat it again
من فضلك انك ترجع تعيدها مرة ثانية
repeat it again please

Transcribing (multilingual) data: processes

- Collaborative transcription

- Timestamped field notes / descriptive summaries

- Rough-draft transcripts

- Layering, translation and expert comments

- Transparency and access

How to represent fluid language use / translanguaging?

Extract 4.

M (research participant); T (French teacher)

M   […] Paris Saint Germain gagné quatre zero /*zirō/

T   quatre nul

M   autour game l'autour jeu

T   le match de retour?

M   le match de retour Barcelona a gagné six /siz/ un haha comment cinema (/*sinəmə/)

       ((chuckles)) (0.2) oui (-) action /ækʃən/ (--) action /aksjɔ̃/

Extract 5.

M (research participant); T (French teacher)

M   […] Paris Saint Germain gagné quatre **zero**

T   quatre nul

M   autour **game** l'autour jeu

T   le match de retour?

M   le match de retour Barcelona a gagné six un haha comment **cinema**

       ((chuckles)) (0.2) oui (-) **action** (--) action

Transcription choices often altered to accommodate:

o   disciplinary practices,
o   editorial requests, and
o   assumed audiences.

Dilemmas and representational choices

How can research participants, and especially refugees, convey their identities through the filter of transcription / translation?

How can their voices be heard in the way they wish them to be heard?

How do different transcription choices (e.g., adoption of standard spelling even when a person is using a nonstandard /learner variety) affect our readers' views of the text and of the people represented within it?

Verbatim transcription as the sole desirable element in research methodologies?

A   […] they told you > go learn French and < be:: ehm FIND work find work
     (0.2) yeh (0.1) I- I ca:lled the: one girl ehm: one woman from Luxembourg
R   e[hm]
A   [to] rent a ROOM (0.2) and she told me > you're SYRian? I told her YESs <
     she told me I never give Syrian again!
Ma   ((chuckles))
A   ((smiling voice quality)) she told me ehm:::
     you– you can work and find contrat ((*contract; French-like pronunciation))
     but you don't want to work and you don't want to– to make a contract
Ma   [((nods and chuckles))]
A   [you] just want to SAT ((*sit))
     and take rmg ((revenu minimum garanti ~ guaranteed minimum income))=
Ma   ((chuckles))
A   a:nd they– (0.1) I told her > yes yes < I've tried ehm: okay and when
     I speak– spoke with her (0.2) French good she:: after she say I am sorry > it's
     okay not's your problem < (0.2) ((swallows)) maybe you want to work but
     a lot of people don't w– want to work […]

Information about the participant's communicative repertoire and structural features of his talk

During our second meeting (September 17, 2016), Ahmad told an anecdote which exemplifies the initial confusion he experienced. In his imagination, Luxembourg was a German-speaking country: "I didn't know anything, I just thought it was like Germany." A couple of hours after his arrival, he and his travel companions overheard a conversation in (what they believed was) French at the refugee center. Driven by curiosity, Ahmad asked around among the other residents at the center, who gave him his first bits of information about Luxembourg's language environment. Once he corroborated that "French was everywhere", he asked in bewilderment, "What comes next?"

Covert transcripts

Re-construction of participants' voices through stories

Translation into an academic output

Literature: Kvale 1996; Jaffe 2006; Bot & Wadensjö 2004; Phipps 2013

Halcomb & Davidson 2006; Jeppesen & Hansen 2011; Loubere 2017; Kalocsányiová & Shatnawi, 2020; 2022

Kalocsányiová, E. & M. Shatnawi (2022), Transcribing (multilingual) voices: from fieldwork to publication. In: P. Holmes, J. Reynolds, S. Ganassin (eds.), The Politics of Researching Multilingually. Multilingual Matters.

feedback
ideas
comments
thoughts
suggestions

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Thank you

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