Researching multilingually: New theoretical and methodological directions

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Abstract

This paper reports findings from an AHRC-funded project into the use of more than one language in research projects. Using 35 seminar presentations and 25 researcher profiles, we investigated how researchers from differing disciplines became aware of the possibilities, complexities, and emerging practices of researching where more than one language is used: for example, in initial research design, literature reviews, consent procedures, data generation and analysis, and reporting. Our analysis also revealed some of the challenges that researchers face regarding institutional policies, language choices, interpretation and translation practices, and the language politics of representation and dissemination. Based on this analysis, we argue that researchers need to account for the research spaces and the relationships these spaces engender, and recognise developing researcher awareness when researching multilingually.

Key words

Researching multilingually, researcher competence, research methodology, researcher education

Researching multilingually: New theoretical and methodological directions

Many research endeavours, and those involved in them, invite the use of more than one language in the research process and its dissemination. In this paper we discuss the multilingual methodological dimensions of such studies, using the term "researching multilingually". Studies that focus on multilingualism, for example, in the field of linguistic ethnography (Martin-Jones & Gardner, 2012) and researching in multilingual teams in educational contexts (Creese & Blackledge, 2012), have contributed to understandings of multilingual research practice. Yet, a detailed and systematic analysis of the possibilities and complexities of researching where more than one language is, could, or should be involved, has, to date, not been documented.

While researching multilingually begins in our home disciplines of applied linguistics, education, and intercultural communication, it quickly extends into other disciplines. Further, researchers, and increasingly, doctoral students, are engaged in research that can be described as multilingual, but they may not recognise it as such. For example, they collect data in a language or languages different from that of the funding body, or in the case of doctoral students, that of the institution to which they belong; they may then translate the data for the report, or thesis, not always aware of challenges of translation or the need for transparency. Yet, the complexities and possibilities of researching multilingually are not extensively covered in research training nor widely discussed in the research methods literature.

To shed light on this under-discussed area of researcher praxis, we draw on some preliminary findings from our AHRC-funded network project "Researching Multilingually" to suggest an exploratory theoretical and methodological framework for researching multilingually that includes spatial and relational dimensions, and developing researcher awareness. We begin by reviewing literature in the field; we then describe the methodology and findings which led to our conceptualisation of researching multilingually praxis; finally, we discuss the implications of the research and directions for further exploration.

Insights from the literature

In addition to the above-mentioned work in linguistic ethnography and multilingual research teams, we note evidence of researching multilingually praxis in three main areas: internationalisation, translation and interpretation, and researcher reflexivity.

Internationalisation of education has created a growing interest, for example, among doctoral researchers and their supervisors (Rizvi, 2011; Magyar & Robinson-Pant, 2011; Robinson-Pant, 2009). Drawing on their research with international doctoral researchers in the United Kingdom, Magyar and Robinson-Pant (2011) argue that reading and writing across languages can pose challenges for researchers. Many of the participants in their research reported a sense of disempowerment by standardised procedures and established practices for "academic writing" within predominantly mono-lingual academic contexts. Further, supervisors may discard unfamiliar writing styles or approaches for formulating arguments "as rambling" (Robinson-Pant, 2009) and directly or indirectly discourage researchers from consulting literature in languages other than English. This, in turn, may shape researchers' perception of what constitutes "good" literature (Magyar & Robinson-Pant, 2011) and inform future decisions as to language choice for research dissemination. Such classification of academic work is linked to the geopolitics of academic writing and publishing (Canagarajah, 2002) and to the conflicts that many researchers undertaking research multilingually experience when deciding whether to write for an international audience or for one's local community (Duszak & Lewkowicz, 2008).

A second area of research concerns practices of translation and interpretation. Not all researchers undertaking research where more than one language is present are necessarily multilingual themselves. There is growing literature in support of identifying interpreters as active members of the research process (Temple & Edwards, 2002), and extending their role from data collection to analysis for purposes of safeguarding validity (Tsai et al., 2004). Similarly, insights are emerging on power negotiation, acknowledging differing perspectives, histories, and contexts among interviewers, interpreters, and translators, for example, in choice of language (Chen, 2011); and on the powerful role of the translation process itself. For example, in the case of British Sign Language, Temple & Young (2004) argue that translations can contribute to the reinforcement or subversion of deeply-rooted cross-cultural ties.

Such power is determined not only by the translation itself, but by how it has been carried out.

Recounting the challenges of working with data in both English and Urdu, Halai (2007) explains that workload doubles in the case of full translations, subtle meanings and nuances may be lost, and lack of appropriate multilingual data analysis software limits research progress. Likewise, Pavlenko (2005) argues that representation of findings may be affected by the researcher's limited knowledge of the participants' language or the lingua franca. Drawing on her research on emotions in the study of multilingualism, she highlights the challenge of documenting terms in the language of the researcher while at the same time ensuring that the chosen constructs accurately correspond to the particular emotions expressed, which raises questions about research trustworthiness.

Yet when the multilingual researcher fulfils a double role, as both translator and interpreter, this also brings opportunities. Shklarov (2007) observes that these researchers are able to mediate between different linguistic worlds, identify areas of methodological concern, and develop higher levels of ethical sensitivity with regard to the complexities associated with research of this nature. However, Shklarov confirms that such situated ethical understandings may not conform to established institutional practices which can, in turn, complicate the research process. In this context, Magyar & Robinson-Pant (2011) point out that "surprisingly little attention was paid to the effects of imposing 'standard' ethics procedures and academic writing conventions on research that is to be conducted and read in a different cultural context" (p. 674). The extent to which these practices are scrutinised and/or made overt is even more questionable. These contentious conditions suggest the need for overt and systematic processes and practices in multilingual (and monolingual) researcher training for ensuring good practice.

A third domain emphasises reflexivity as essential to the research process (e.g., Giampapa & Lamoureux, 2011; Magyar & Robinson-Pant, 2011; Temple & Edwards, 2002). As researchers make informed decisions about their research, they are invited to critically reflect on the process and deeply analyse their conceptual and methodological stances. At the same time, there is a need for transformation of established institutional practices—often mediated by supervisors—to facilitate research of a multilingual nature (Magyar & Robinson-Pant, 2011).

Further, in an exploratory workshop at Durham University in July 2010 involving fifteen researchers from several disciplines, we observed the following themes: which languages to prioritise in interviewing and reporting; the non-translatability of some concepts and their expression in a given language; researcher identity in the interview process; and ethical issues concerning power relationships when using languages other than that in which the research is principally conducted and reported. Participants acknowledged that standard research methods textbooks, courses/modules, and training programmes tended to downplay or ignore the methodological and ethical issues connected with the languages used for gathering, generating, analysing, and reporting data. For example, they are absent in the ESRC's document "Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines" (2009). Moreover, although this document states the need to develop new research capacity in "Language Based Area Studies", none of the topics within this framework addresses issues concerned with researching multilingually.

This brief survey highlights the issues that our project sought to address, for example: recognising the possibilities of multiple language use (by both researchers and researched) in researched communities; investigating strategies for empowering participants by privileging participants' voices—and languages—thereby permitting more complex knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under investigation; and uncovering developing researcher awareness of multilingual situations and processes. Several questions also emerge: questions of power (between researcher and researched in negotiating language choices); questions of inclusion (which participants and which researchers get included in which research processes); questions of meaning-making (particularly concerning the role of mediators and translators as they construct meaning through and across languages); and questions of institutional constraints (where policies, practices, and preferences determine how researchers—and in some instances, which researchers—report and represent the researched).

Thus, in this paper we seek to answer the following research questions:

R.Q. 1: What methodological complexities and possibilities exist when researching multilingually?

R.Q.2: How do researchers develop awareness of these complexities and possibilities?

R.Q. 3.How can these methodological processes be conceptualised?

Methodology

We drew on the following data sources from our project: the narrative profiles (more than 25 profiles to date) of researchers working multilingually; 35 audio-recorded Powerpoint presentations (selected from 52 abstracts, each 1,000 words) presented at our three two-day project seminars in our respective universities (Durham University, the University of the West of England, and the University of Manchester); and our own notes and observations of these experiences.

The sample. Acknowledging that researching in multilingual environments and with multilingual participants is not restricted to applied, socio- or psycholinguists, we sought to be inclusive in promoting and publicising the seminars in three ways: (i) through our various international researcher networks (e.g., BAAL, IALIC, Cultnet); (ii) by inviting faculty/school directors of research in our respective universities (e.g., business, health, social sciences, arts, education) to disseminate our flyers to their research faculty members; and (iii) through our outreach and community groups (e.g., migrant research groups in the North-East, and community education networks in the West of England). We sought examples of researchers who were researching in multilingual contexts, who were using one or more languages, and who were from multiple fields. For example, our participants came from fields relating to languages in a broad sense (modern foreign languages, applied linguistics, linguistics), intercultural communication, social anthropology, Jewish studies, marketing, education, philosophy, counselling, deaf studies, and community research. This opportunity sample, perhaps responded to by those who had an interest in the emergent possibilities and challenges of researching multilingually, is not representative of all researching multilingually practice, and thus, the outcomes we present here need deeper investigation.

The first data source, researcher narrative profiles, we elicited using two prompts: "Describe your experience of researching multilingually" and "Describe your growing awareness of this process." Researchers wrote narratives and submitted them to us for posting on the project website (http://researchingmultilingually.com/). The second data source derived from the project seminars. We selected the abstracts following criteria derived from the aims of the project, which prioritised studies that foregrounded and problematised issues of engaging with research in multilingual environments and with multilingual participants. Again, this sample of seminars, limited in its subject matter and disciplinarity, and by the selection criteria available to us, means that findings need to be treated with caution. Both data sources are available on our website.

Data and analysis. We perceived the resulting narrative profiles as the writers' outward-facing performances of reflection on action (Boud & Walker, 1998; Schön, 1983, 1987), that is, as performances of their retrospective reflections on their experiences of undertaking multilingual research. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, and guided by the research questions, the third and fourth authors coded the presentations by "reading" and "re-reading" the data, collating codes across all of the data into potential themes, and reviewing these themes across the whole data set to identify the most salient themes and the examples within them. During and at the end of the coding process they shared their emergent codes and coding practices to ensure reliability in the coding. Their understanding of the data was helped by their engagement in all stages of the project development—from the development of the proposal, to the call for abstracts, participation in seminars, and posting of narrative profiles. Although most of the researchers gave their permission to have their profiles and/or presentations placed on our website, we requested their consent, via email, to use their stories and examples presented in this paper.

Next, we present those themes which are particularly compelling and vivid, as well as instances and features of the researching multilingually experience and developing researcher awareness (Braun & Clarke, 2008).These themes enable us to address our research questions and to establish an emerging theoretical framework.

Complexities of researching multilingually

Our first research question focuses on the complexities and possibilities of researching multilingually. The researcher accounts were rich with insights into the complexities of conducting research across languages, a process which Pipyrou describes as “methodologically challenging and epistemologically productive”.

Institutional policies and practices. The researchers in our network discuss the complexities of engaging with ethical guidelines and official documentation (from higher education establishments, governmental and/or non-governmental organisations) for gaining access to research sites in different languages (Campbell-Thomson). For example, when operating in multilingual contexts researchers may be subject to varying sets of ethical guidelines, and thus, must make choices about which guidelines to follow. Similarly, researchers may face the challenge of having to demonstrate evidence of gaining access to educational sites or distributing informed consent forms, which may have been produced in different languages.

The opportunities and challenges of drawing on literature in languages other than English are also mentioned (e.g., Hung, Wang, Zhou). These researchers observe that although using multiple linguistic sources enriches investigation, they were unsure whether to use such literature, how to get access to it (electronically or otherwise), and how multilingual resources can be incorporated into the research process. Similarly, Hansen-Pauly has the general ethical concern of which language to report in to ensure all of the languages of participants are represented.

The monolingual constraints imposed by English-medium universities, particularly in the United Kingdom, also raised issues (Attia and Fay, Lewis et al., and Robinson-Pant). For example, Robinson-Pant discusses the tendency of higher education institutions to impose academic norms on research students which fail to recognise their knowledge and skills as developed within other contexts, cultures, and languages, that is, their “funds of knowledge”. Practices also differed across these universities, and across disciplines. For example, researchers comment on facing constraints in presenting data in languages other than English in assessment of doctoral theses (Lewis et al., Attia and Fay), and whether these data should take a prominent place in the main text or be relegated to footnotes or appendices. Some institutions had policies that imposed word limits, thus threatening inclusion of multilingual data in languages other than English.

Language choice. Robinson-Pant expresses concern about the effect of language choice on researcher identity and cultural values. She explains that a number of Saudi doctoral researchers considered it ‘Western’ and ‘self-centred’ to write in the first person, as their supervisors require them to. They also felt disempowered because they could no longer use Arabic academic possibilities—texts of multiple layers and the incorporation of metaphoric expressions—which are valued in an Arabic context, but are not deemed acceptable in an English-medium academic context.

Further, Robinson-Pant also notes that doctoral researchers sometimes use a range of languages with their informants to gather data, and yet, processes of working among these languages—in data generation, analysis and writing up—is not always made transparent. For example, Naz, used multiple languages in her doctoral field work: translating reference letters from English to Urdu in relation to gaining parental consent and negotiating access; speaking in regional dialects and accents with her informants to build rapport; translating her questionnaire from English to Urdu for her public-school participants; and translating interview data from Urdu, Punjabi, and Saraiki into English as her doctoral thesis is presented in this language.

A further issue in language choice involves the importance of building trust. Pipyrou, an anthropologist undertaking fieldwork to explore the interactions of speakers of Grecanico in southern Italy, had to establish trust to gain acceptance into the community, but also had to learn Grecanico in order to overcome exclusion by the group who used their language with in-group members only. However, where there was no choice of language and only the language of the researcher was available, as in Holmes' research on Chinese international students' intercultural experiences, she too had to work at relationship and trust building in order to negotiate linguistic boundaries.

Multilingual interviews and multilingual data analysis. Handling multilingual interviews specifically (Christodoulidi) and engaging in multilingual data analysis in general (Androulakis, Feng) also merit further attention. The commitment to providing carefully crafted data sets is apparent in many of the researchers' choices of multilingual research processes. These researchers are aware of the additional work required in multilingual contexts at many stages of the research process. Beaven, working in real and virtual research fields, reveals her wish to provide "polished" translations of her data for her readers/examiners as she wants to share insights she has gained in the translation process from Italian into English. Zhou conveys a similar sense of responsibility towards her participants and readers of her research as she sought to make transparent her processes of working with data in Mandarin when presented for readers in English.

Multilingual data analysis is also challenged by software limitations. For example, Attia reports her wish to code and analyse her data in the language in which it was generated—Arabic. However, the software she used prevented the importing of data in Arabic script. This complexity became an opportunity: Attia discusses these difficulties with the software company and how they adjusted the programme so that she, and future multilingual researchers, would no longer be constrained by the Roman script when coding and analysing data.

Interpretation and translation. The role of the multilingual researcher (Androulakis, see also paper in this issue), and the complexities of choosing research assistants and validaters (Risager), and working with translators/ interpreters (Woodin) are addressed in the profiles. Translation is repeatedly mentioned as an essential element of researching multilingually. Much effort is put into getting meanings across (Davcheva), a process that can be challenging (Campbell-Thomson, Hansen-Pauly, Williams), especially when involving the translation of instruments (e.g., questionnaires) and proverbs (Naz), or when attempting to understand participants' emotions and beliefs (Ganassin). The effect of consulting participants during the translation process to establish trustworthiness (Hung) is also addressed.

The politics of language. Language hierarchy (Daryai- Hansen) and the increasing power of English as a lingua franca (Mendez Garcia), especially in the research dissemination (Gomez), are central to processes of researching multilingually. They are closely connected to the geopolitics of academic publishing (Robinson-Pant), that is, which language researchers choose for research dissemination (Mendez Garcia), and the impact of such choice on the linguistically diverse local communities (Robinson-Pant).

Researcher flexibility. Reflecting on some of the above complexities, profile writers identify the need for flexibility in research practice (Campbell-Thomson, Ganassin). This flexibility includes the importance of multilingual supervision teams (Rejwede); managing collaboration among researchers undertaking research multilingually (Hansen-Pauly, Ganassin, Gomez, Moralez); and the need to find "methodologies to carry meanings across linguistic, discoursal and cultural boundaries" (Holliday).

Possibilities

An additional aspect of the data addressed the possibilities afforded by the presence of multiple languages.

Researching multilingually as "natural." As the researcher network comprises professionals from several contexts characterised by multilingualism, we could note that, generally, researchers who grew-up in multilingual settings are not necessarily aware of the possibilities of conducting research in more than one language until they embarked on a large-scale research project. These researchers tend to view multilingual inquiry as simply the norm or a "natural" aspect of the research process, and as such, do not always recognise it as an affordance. Drawing on her research experience in Luxembourg, Hansen-Pauly writes that "Researching multilingually has always been a natural procedure". For Bashiruddin in Pakistan (see Bashiruddin, this issue), multilingual research experience was initially "informal" and "unconscious." And Rajwade (from India) reports that, given her diverse linguistic background, using different languages was "very natural": the opposite—operating monolingually—she found difficult to conceptualise when she first arrived in France to complete her doctoral research. And Daryei-Hansen (from Denmark), who was preparing her PhD thesis in Germany, reports no fear of breaking institutional rules, unlike her UK-based counterparts. This is because the institutional model inscribing her research privileged reporting in several languages and eschewed word limits.

Gaining rich insights. Nusrat affirms what is gained when researching multilingually, noting that her research participants produced reflections of differing types in think-aloud protocols, depending on the language they used. She concludes that in multilingual contexts, if researchers are working monolingually, then the data would only tell a "half truth." Thus, the demands of researching multilingually are rewarded in the richness of insights generated.

Neutralising power imbalances. Ganassin and Phipps both challenge an assumption within applied research, namely that shared languages between research participants and researchers are preferred (see papers by each author in this issue). They both explore how the negotiation of a shared language -other than the native language of either the researcher or the participant - could provide an opportunity for neutralising the inbuilt power imbalance within research relationships. Ganassin reports benefits of not belonging to the same linguistic and cultural community of her female immigrant research participants in the UK, while also not being an insider to UK society herself. Phipps reflects on the benefits she felt in terms of developing trust and rapport when engaging with refugee research participants with whom she negotiated shared second or third languages in which to interact. In both cases, these researchers look for ways in which power imbalances could be reduced through language negotiation and researcher (re)-positioning. As a result, their studies enabled deep engagement with and inclusivity of research participants, and thus, richer data generation.

To conclude, these emergent complexities and opportunities begin to create a theoretical and methodological understanding of choices, processes, and practices that, hitherto, researchers have had to grapple with themselves in the unfolding of the research. We now draw on the insights provided by our researchers' profiles and presentations to initiate a model of researching multilingually.

Developing researcher awareness

Here we address R.Q. 2 by examining how researchers expressed a developing awareness of the complexities and possibilities of using more than one language in their research. For many, this awareness arose when undertaking doctoral research. For example, reflecting on her PhD experience in Canada, Bashiruddin confirms that, on returning to Pakistan for data collection, she struggled with large amounts of narrative data in two languages (Urdu and English), and the task of switching between the two during processes of analysis and writing. Similarly, for Hansen-Pauly recalling her doctoral years, "this is when I became aware of some of the issues linked to researching multilingually". Conteh's profile also explores the sociopolitical issues associated with conducting using more than one language. And Zhou recounts: "I realized how hard I had been trying to develop my academic self monolingually in another language while ignoring the value of my mother tongue and its enriching implications for me as a researcher". There is specific reference in Zhao's profile to the role of her supervisor in helping her to purposefully explore different issues of which she was unaware, such as the value of drawing on different language resources. As a consequence, what she once took for granted was gradually problematised. This experience highlights the role of supervisors in shaping researcher awareness vis-à-vis the processes of researching multilingually.

Similarly, supervisor accounts show that their own awareness can also emerge through professional engagement with doctoral researchers. For example, Lewis' "horizons have frequently been enlarged" and he himself has been "pleasantly stretched." Likewise, Robinson-Pant's interest in the area of researching multilingually has developed through supervision and her investigation of academic literacy practices with international doctoral students. This has offered her broader insights into the dilemmas of writing in English, especially as they relate to issues of identity and culture. Androulakis describes how doctoral supervision raised several questions regarding "interpretation of inter-language and intercultural communication" and the "role of the bilingual researcher." However, supervisor awareness of the complexities and possibilities of researching multilingually does not necessarily mean that supervisors are always able to translate such awareness into action. As Feng explains in his profile, due to his "heavy workload and tight schedules," he was unable to act upon questions related to researching multilingually, despite his awareness of their importance to the quality of the investigation.

An emergent theoretical framework for researching multilingually

While researchers working in some specialisms (e.g., multilingualism, translation studies) are likely to be aware of some of the intricacies of researching multilingually and have resources (specialist literature and practice) to support them in their work, our concern is to provide researchers who do not have multilingualism per se as their research focus with theoretical and methodological tools for researching multilingually. Working inductively with the profiles and presentations we identify an emergent theoretical framework (R.Q. 3) which includes two conceptual dimensions: spatiality and relationality. We also observe an overarching principle of developing researcher awareness.

Following Davcheva and Fay's project presentation, we note the importance of **four multilingual spaces**: a) the researched context/phenomena (e.g., the teaching of Mathematics through English in Pakistan), b) the research context (e.g., the PhD location), c) the researcher resources (e.g., which languages researchers, and researched, have useful levels of competency in), and d) the representational possibilities (i.e., dissemination in English only and/or (an)other language(s)). Researchers need to be aware of these spaces and how multilingualism functions within them.

A second aspect includes **relationality**: who is involved, what function or purpose relationships have, how relationships are negotiated and managed; and which languages are in play in these researcher-researched relationships. Researchers rarely work alone, instead sharing multiple relationships (e.g., with supervisors, participants, translators, interpreters, transcribers, editors, funders). How these relationships are managed interpersonally and linguistically, and what languages are privileged within and across these relationships, all influence research processes and outcomes. Researchers exercise linguistic agency as they negotiate trust, ethics, power, and face over questions of who may enter the discourse, who speaks for whom, and how, when and where (Krog, 2011). As Scollon, Scollon and Jones (2012) note, language choice is also a matter of participants' face negotiation, since what language they use indicates their relative statuses, and their assumptions about these differences.

In addition to the importance of researchers conceptualising the spatial and relational dimensions when researching multilingually, we also note a three-step process in **developing researcher awareness**. The first is **researcher realisation**—that multilingual research practice is indeed possible and permissible. Yet this realisation may not be apparent as all researchers, especially inexperienced ones (e.g., doctoral candidates), negotiate the geopolitics of academic writing and publishing, and practices (e.g., supervisory) that are so often shaped by conventional wisdom or current fashion, as Stelma's presentation made clear (see Stelma, Fay & Zhou, this issue).

Once an initial awareness of possibility has been raised, researchers, in the absence of a fully-articulated guide, must begin to **navigate and map** the particularities and possibilities of their study for themselves.

Third, having taken stock of the possibilities in this manner, researchers should then be in a good position to **make informed choices** about (i) research design—planning, designing, implementing, monitoring and fine-tuning (e.g., responding to unexpected contingencies in) their research and its multilingual dimensions; and (ii) representation—the production of research texts (e.g., theses, articles) which are also shaped by purposeful decisions regarding multilingual possibilities.

This whole process—from a triggering realisation, leading to increasing researcher awareness and informed researcher thinking and practice—can (following Stelma et al, in this volume) be understood in terms of researcher intentionality. This term has roots in ecological thinking but, for our present purposes, can be understood as researchers acting 'purposefully', i.e., being able to articulate the rationale for their researching multilingually choices, rather than simply stating what they did. Reflection and reflexivity play important parts in the development of such researcher intentionality. Our analysis of the project data suggests that development of individual researcher awareness and intentionality, vis-à-vis the complexities and possibilities of researching multilingually, is an important starting point for this, not yet fully understood, aspect of research practice.

Conclusions and implications

The findings from this study document the praxis of researching multilingually—how researchers conceptualise, understand, and make choices about generating, analysing, interpreting and reporting data when more than one language is involved—and the complex negotiated relationships between researcher and researched as they engage with one another in multilingual sites. The findings challenge the status quo regarding institutional practices and the limitations imposed by interpreters and translators as touched on in current literature. They also permit us to propose a framework that attempts to theorise researching multilingually praxis. Limited by our initial exploration into this under-explored methodological territory, the framework requires further scrutiny through systematic investigation of researcher intentionality and (unintentional) practice.

The outcomes of this study have three key implications which concern multi-disciplinarity, policy, and pedagogy. The methodology we drew on to collect our data addressed a rich and varied researcher audience. However, insights are needed from other disciplines as researchers, and doctoral researchers and their supervisors, begin to make transparent their choices and practices. Other domains include health, education, and migrant and refugee/asylum seeker communities, where disempowered people are being researched and represented by researchers with minimal guidelines for researching multilingually, by minimally-skilled interpreters/translators, who themselves become endangered in the research process, and by medical and legal professionals who privilege normative multilingual processes. Current "researching multilingually" practice—for example, where people are in danger through displacement resulting from ecological crises, hunger, and war—suggest a critical initiation.

The research has implications for policy, most notably in universities, and particularly where English is the dominant language and where policy reflects this. Questions concerning languages in theses, publications, and examinations point to the need for the decolonisation of the linguistic imperialism of English. Policy also needs to privilege multiple languages in the writing up of research so that researchers, researched, and the communities with which the research is concerned can all access the research.

Pedagogically, our study highlights the need for researcher training programmes—case studies, research methodology papers/books, pedagogic materials—in higher education and among community researcher/practitioners to describe and provide insights into the complexities and possibilities of researching multilingually.

Together, the findings and outcomes of our study initiate a research agenda for exposing multilingual research praxis, and further theoretical and methodological refinement.

Acknowledgements

This paper is based on research funded by AHRC (AH/J005037/1). We thank the AHRC for the grant that made this work possible. We also thank the seminar presenters who contributed their insights into and experiences of researching multilingually in our three seminars. And we thank all the reviewers for their insightful comments which have enabled us to improve the quality and clarity of the paper.

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