

Reconciling Multiple Researcher Positionalities and Languages in International Research

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ABSTRACT Through the development of a set of ideas combining Merton's conceptions of the 'Insider and Outsider' with Lacan's notions of identity construction, the article examines: (1) the role of multiple researcher identities and positionalities, and (2) working in more than one language during data collection and analysis. The article aims to fill a surprising gap in existing literature on such issues in international educational research. Through a reflexive exercise on the fieldwork and data analysis process in one study, the article puts forward the concept of '*currencies*' as a way to mediate researcher positionality and achieve temporary shared positionalities with research participants. It also highlights the need to mediate different languages during data analysis and presentation, introducing the concept of '*analytic languages*' as a potentially useful construct in doing so.

A comprehensive review of literature on international and comparative education revealed a surprising lack of concerted discussion on issues of research methodology (Rust et al, 1999). The central aim of this article is to highlight two increasingly pertinent matters in international educational research that have gone relatively amiss: (1) multiple researcher identities and positionalities and (2) working in more than one language during data collection and analysis. The view here is that a more valid engagement with and presentation of the research process necessitates critical reflection and mediation of these two issues for 'rigour [through] the conscious and deliberate linking of the social process of engagement in the field with the technical processes of data collection and the decision that that linking involves' (Ball, 1993, p. 63).

Polanyi aptly noted (1959), 'in an ideal and free society, each person would have perfect and free access to the truth ... But this is not practicable: each person can know indirectly very little of the truth and *must trust others for the rest*' (p. 68; emphasis added). Like Bridges (1999), I too believe that we, in the practice of educational research, are in the quest for some 'truth' (however tentative and in accordance with whichever epistemological paradigm we subscribe). I am aware of the potentially contested nature of such a claim given the different epistemological paradigms that educational researchers employ (particularly postmodern). However, I have grown convinced by Bridges' (1999) analysis that even postmodernist researchers, or those that reject a notion of 'absolute truth', subscribe to certain 'procedural principles' 'which operate in the service for establishing the warrant for and hence (as near as we shall ever get to) the truth of our proffered beliefs' (p. 614). As a discussion on substantive considerations of epistemology and ontology in educational research are outside the scope of this article, I refer you to Bridges (1999), Eisner (1993), Phillips (1993), and Pring (2000a, b) for a more complete examination of such issues.

The essential point for the discussion here is the implication of Polanyi's assertion on one's dependence on others for accessing 'truth'. A metaphor can thus be developed to examine issues of data collection and analysis in international educational research. We can conceive of the field as the site of that exchange between the researcher and the participants which is necessary to arrive at some conception of the 'truth' through the data gathered. The increasingly globalised research

arena highlights the multiplicity of researcher and participant identities and how they intersect, problematising the interaction between researcher and participant that is vital to that exchange.

Approached another way, one can conceive of the field site as the market for transaction, the researcher as the buyer of pertinent information (data), and the participant as the seller. In such a view, we can introduce the notion of 'currencies' as *that which is a medium of exchange to achieve temporary shared positionalities* between researcher and participant to mediate relations of power and, ultimately, ease the exchange. However, the exchange does not end upon exiting the field. The process of analysis is also integral to arriving at the desired 'truth', and increasingly, in the context of international educational research, is complicated by exchange between and across different languages.

The article is a reflexive account of how issues of identity and language were reconciled in the data collection and analysis processes in a study in rural and urban Uttar Pradesh, India. It will set out the concept of 'currencies' and 'analytic languages' that were developed in this study to demonstrate the linking (as Ball suggests) of the technical processes of data collection and analysis and the social processes of field engagement. Following an overview of the research strategy, it develops a set of ideas combining Merton's conceptions of the 'Insider and Outsider' with Lacan's notions of identity construction to provide a framework for the reflexive exercise. This is then applied to the notion of currency for data collection in the field. In the following section, the ideas are applied to a reflexive account of issues around language and translation in the analysis processes in this study. Finally, the article reflects on the dialectical process involved in the complex analytic negotiations that were made during data collection and analysis.

Overview of the Fieldwork and Data Analysis Processes

This article reflects on the fieldwork and data analysis process in a study in rural and urban Lucknow District, Uttar Pradesh on 'low-fee private' schooling for disadvantaged groups (Srivastava, 2005). Data collection spanned the course of one school year from July 2002 to April 2003. The study employed mostly ethnographic techniques. Methods involved semi-structured interviews with 60 disadvantaged parents (or other family members where appropriate); multiple semi-structured and informal interviews with 10 school owner/principals; and semi-structured and informal interviews with middle- and high-level municipal, district, state, and central-level government officers. All interviews except some with state- and central-level government officers were conducted in Hindi. Data were also gathered through non-participant observation at case study schools and government offices, where the language of interaction was also Hindi. Finally, document analysis of acts, rules, government orders, and unofficial grey documents [1] was also conducted.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim in their original language. At no point were the interviews in Hindi translated for analysis. The process was more complicated for documents. Most of the applicable acts and rules were published in English in the official *Education Manual* (Jain, 2001); however, many government orders and grey documents were available in Hindi only. Some of these had to be translated into English for analysis through the use of a translator. This will be discussed further in the article.

As a Canadian of parents from the Indian diaspora of the 1960s, and attached to what was considered an elite British university, conducting research in India with participants who ranged from senior ranking government officials to socio-economically disadvantaged parents constantly highlighted tensions of identity and positionality vis-à-vis the different participant groups. As my researcher positionalities were constantly in flux, they were mediated by living in hybridised field identities that were inexorably linked to my constructions of self or 'real-life' identities outside the field. These were not dichotomous; rather, they drew on each other to facilitate exchange, alter power differentials, and access data. Hybridity further manifested itself during the analytic phase when I 'slipped in between' (Rossman & Rallis, 1998) two analytic languages: the '*language of the data*' (Hindi) and the '*language I use to think in*' (English). The data analysis process problematised the role of language and translation in accessing, interpreting, and presenting data. Fundamentally, the data collection and analysis processes problematised the 'insider-outsider' dichotomy and necessitated a re-examination of these constructs through a more applicable framework.

Revisiting the 'Insider and Outsider' and Considering Positionalities through Merton and Lacan

Debates on the role and identity of the researcher influenced by traditional sociological and anthropological ethnography have focused on the 'insider/outsider' or self/other dimensions (Zinn, 1979; Peshkin, 1984; McLaren, 1991; Joshi, 2002; Paerregaard, 2002). Much of that discussion on researcher identity is centred on Merton's (1972) classic characterisation, in which he adopts 'a structural conception of Insiders and Outsiders. In this conception, Insiders are the members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of specified social statuses; Outsiders are the nonmembers' (p. 21). Such bipolar notions have been rightly criticised, for example, by feminist scholars and critical theorists as being simplistic and insufficient in understanding the complex notions of interrelated identity that fieldworkers engage in. For example, Joseph (1993) asserts that 'notions of self intersect with those of the people studied in multiple ways, affecting the formulation of knowledges' (p. 9). In fact, Merton (1972) also highlighted a sense of shared identities in his conceptualisation when speaking against 'extreme Insiderism', or the contention that 'you have to be one to understand one' (p. 15). He stressed that:

This neglects the crucial fact of social structure that individuals have not a single status but a status set: a complement of variously interrelated statuses which interact to affect both their behaviour and perspectives. ... The array of status sets in a population means that aggregates of individuals share some statuses and not others; or, to put this in context, that they typically confront one another simultaneously as Insiders and Outsiders. (Merton, 1972, p. 22)

More recent methodological literature influenced by feminist and critical perspectives has discussed the potential impact of constructions of gender, race, sexuality and ethnicity in the field, and the multiplicity of researcher positionalities (Narayan, 1993; Dossa, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Mullings, 1999; Gupta, 2002; Henry, 2003). Within this discussion, I use 'positionality' to signify the 'perspective shaped by his/her [the researcher's] unique mix of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality and other identifiers' (Mullings, 1999, p. 337). The critical point for our discussion is that the multiplicity of identities (some shared, and others not) opens up a space for researchers to facilitate exchange by creating shared positionalities with participants through the use of currencies, which will be elaborated further below.

Merton's structuralist position can be extended by applying Lacan's post-structuralist analysis. Lacan's basic premise is that as human subjects we are in a state of 'lack'. This lack drives our desire to build conceptions of our identities to fill that void (Storey, 1993; Brown & England, 2004). Storey (1993) explains that in Lacan's theory the individual seeks to craft a sense of self 'to challenge the experience of fragmentation' (p. 89) and lack. Lacan's 'mirror phase' is the critical first stage of development in this regard:

Looking in the mirror (real or imagined), we begin to construct a sense of self. The mirror phase is the moment ... when we first recognize ourselves in a mirror. On the basis of this recognition, or more properly, *misrecognition* (not the self, but an image of the self) [*méconnaissances* in the words of Lacan] we ... see ourselves as more complete, more unified than our physical development actually exhibits. (Storey, 1993, p. 89; original emphasis)

Thus, we begin to construct a notion of identity based on a series of images with which misrecognitions or identifications of the self are made. This can yield important insights when applied to international fieldwork, where researchers' positionalities are not only in flux, but are often starkly highlighted in contrast to participants' in obviously visible and multiple ways. Thus, applying Lacanian perspectives to the social processes of engagement in the field can provide an interesting analytic.

The sense of lack can be conceptualised as the researcher's feeling of not being an insider, which is augmented as interactions with multiple and different types of participant groups increase. For example, in this study, the sense of lack was heightened each time I interacted with participants as diverse as poor rural farmers, socio-economically disadvantaged housewives, middle-class school owners, and high-ranking government officials. Not only was the sense of lack heightened, my constructions of self (the real-life identities I had outside the field) intersected at different points and

in different ways in relation to individuals from each participant group. Thus, the mediation of resulting positionalities to facilitate exchange can be seen as an attempt to minimise this lack. Since I was particularly cognisant of the need to alter power differentials (especially in relation to disadvantaged parents and senior officials) I was acutely aware of the need to mediate my positionality to mediate the gulf in our positionalities. In some sense, for me, the field was the site for a type of mirror stage where this mediation was played out for the exchange:

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality. (Lacan, 1992, p. 74)

The subtext for each field exchange constituted a drama in which I was mediating my positionality to achieve a shared space for exchange (discussed further below). This was an attempt to achieve totality, or the greatest degree of insider status possible, and was temporary and specific to each exchange through the use of currencies. For example, I adapted my outward appearance, mannerisms, and use of language in anticipation of the response that I thought I would receive from different participants. These became some of the fragments that I could combine to approach insider status – in effect, the ‘lure of spatial identification’ with participants was an attempt to overcome the different lacks I experienced of fundamentally being an outsider. This was necessary for initial access to sites as well as during individual field events. As such, the mediation of my positionality was a constant process of recrafting in the field.

Much of this mediation and engagement during fieldwork and analysis relied on the deliberated and selective use of language. This follows from a Lacanian perspective, as for him, language plays a crucial role in the formation of our subjectivities. Storey explains (1993): ‘Our sense of self and our sense of otherness are both composed from the language we speak and the cultural repertoire we encounter in our everyday existence’ (p. 90). Thus, the choice and use of a specific language is not merely a technical consideration but one deeply embedded in the social processes of engagement in the field, and affects researchers’ positionalities with participants.

For me, in this study, the selective use of language (Hindi and English) during fieldwork was used as a currency to achieve shared positionalities with the different participants. This presented a certain analytical challenge during the process of data analysis – how to adequately capture the essence of participants’ views, the majority of which were in Hindi, in English. This was further complicated as the ‘language of the data’ and the ‘language I use to think in’ are not one and the same. Thus, I was constantly reminded of my ‘otherness’ and the need to mediate my positionality even upon exiting the field, through the explicit use of the two analytic languages. The bulk of the article focuses on how the constructs of ‘currencies’ and ‘analytic languages’ were employed in the study.

The Challenge: mediating positionalities through the use of ‘currencies’

The analysis also emerges partly from a Derridian viewpoint, in its rejection of simple binaries upon which identities are often presented, and its perspective of a complex combination of different attributes at specific sociocultural positions and points in time (e.g. see Martino, 1995; Chan, 2006 for some applications). In my personal example, the most obvious (but not necessarily exhaustive) real-life identity binaries [2] which may have impacted my field identities and resulting positionalities could be listed as the following: female/male, Eastern/Western, unmarried/married, old/young, brown/white, Indian/Canadian, Hindi-speaking/English-speaking, poor/rich, low caste/high caste, uneducated/educated. In such a distilled form these are rendered, of course, nothing more than caricatures of complex, complementary, and conflicting ‘socially ascribed and attained’ (Merton, 1972) characteristics. They ignore the variations and combinations among them, *the shades of grey*, and the socio-historical positioning within which the dichotomies themselves and ensuing relations of power are constructed. In essence, the binaries *ignore hybridity and multiplicity and assume that such characteristics and resulting positionalities are fixed across time and space*.

In a similar vein, Narayan (1993) asserts that ‘The loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux’ (p. 671). Similar to her, in this discussion,

'I invoke these threads of a culturally tangled identity to demonstrate that a persona may have many strands of identification available, strands that may be tugged into the open or snuffed out of sight' (Narayan, 1993, p. 673). As constructions of self or real-life identities are multiple and in flux, so too are field-identities and researcher positionalities. From such a perspective, it is simplistic to assume that the creation or mediation of field identity is a one-time occurrence during fieldwork – the implication of the Lacanian lens above is that it changes multiple times in relation to different participant groups and even during single field events. As real-life identities are constantly defined and redefined in relation to others' identities (social positioning in time and space), so too will field identities have to change, adapt, and be mediated.

Thus, it can be argued 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 a research study or during single field events. My positionalities were constantly in flux according to the different levels of inquiry in the study. For example, my social positioning vis-à-vis rural illiterate mothers was quite different to that regarding senior elite government officials. Thus, my positionalities changed because of the research design itself and a combination of personal attributes.

The challenge for fieldwork was to achieve positionalities, that in Mertonian terms, would accentuate shared statuses and mediate those relatively fixed attributes that caused a gulf between my positionality as a researcher vis-à-vis the participants, in an attempt to achieve a more desirable balance of power during data collection. Not only did this mean reducing power differentials where I was most likely ascribed higher status than participants, but increasing it regarding elite participants. The most obvious aspects of my relatively fixed attributes were: female, 'brown', caste (inferred by surname), age, educated (inferred by virtue of conducting research activities). This is not to imply that they were unproblematic, but rather that they were relatively immutable compared with other attributes that were more 'grey': Eastern/Western, Indian/Canadian, unmarried/married, Hindi-speaking/English-speaking. The grey attributes became the stock of reserve I could use to mediate my positionality through *currencies*.

Currencies themselves are socially constructed, and thus, will carry context-specific meanings. Tangibly in this study, they were specific social identifiers (e.g. language, cultural background, and other outward 'props' such as dress and vehicle type); essentially those tools that would allow me to accentuate the malleable aspects of my real-life identity to appropriate shared positionalities to some degree with participants.

Different currencies were used at various points in the data collection process and for different purposes. For example, to initially gain access to schools, I dressed in Western clothes and arrived in a rental car with driver to increase my legitimacy as a researcher from abroad and so that the study would be received with seriousness, as I was often mistaken for a 'young girl'. Thus, without the use of these currencies I thought that within the sociocultural fabric my relatively young age (I was 27 at the time), the fact that I looked unmarried (because I do not adorn myself with the traditional Hindu symbols of marriage), and my gender may jeopardise that initial 'first impression' with school owners, who were typically middle-aged men. Nonetheless, I spoke in Hindi even in the early stages of access and conducted all interviews in Hindi as well. This was not only because most owners did not feel wholly comfortable expressing themselves in English, but more so, in an effort to reduce the cultural gap given my background and my affiliation with an 'elite' British university.

During interviews with parents, I wore Indian clothes in an effort to reduce some of the power differential, and spoke exclusively in Hindi. I also tried to pick up some of the rural dialect in this effort. In the rural case, I also observed some aspects of local protocol when interviewing elder men and women, though this would not be usually expected given my relative caste and perceived class status. In fact, my fluency in Hindi and these attempts at mediation led to some interesting cases of misrecognition by some participants. For example, the following was recorded about one of my relatively early exchanges with one school owner whom I interviewed and where I also conducted interviews with parents:

The fact that I conducted the interview in Hindi as well as [the fact that I] have only ever spoken to him in Hindi, he never even took me to be a foreigner. Actually today when he was talking to me, he asked again where I was from, and when I said Canada, he was under

the impression that I said Calcutta for a really long time. I think my [visible] 'insider' ... status has helped immeasurably. Even though at first to gain access I dressed in western clothes, I dressed for the interview in a *chudidaar* [Indian pants suit] in order to mentally help the interviewee identify with me and so that there is less of a [perceived] cultural gap. (Field notes, 25-09-02)

There was often confusion about certain aspects of my identity. Certain participants did not fully understand or accept my 'Canadian-ness' and others rejected my 'Indian-ness' other than as cultural appropriation. This seems to fall in line with the experiences of other diasporic or mixed-background researchers (Narayan, 1993; Dossa, 1997; Mullings, 1999; Henry, 2003), and also highlights the power that participants have in accepting or rejecting aspects of mediated researcher positionalities.

Sometimes my 'visible insider status' did not help in gaining access, particularly regarding the gatekeepers for high-ranking officials. For example, despite the fact that I had a set appointment with one senior official, I was asked to wait in the main reception area of the building for about an hour by the clerks. Finally, after insisting that they call up so that I could speak directly with the official's personal assistant, the clerks allowed me access:

They [the clerks] asked what my name was and where I came from. I told them that I came from [the University of Oxford], England, at which, from the expression on their faces I could tell they were surprised. They asked me if I had an identification card so I showed them my [Oxford] ID. They called up and asked if I was to be let in ... They then began talking among themselves and said, 'Oh, you can't tell ... she speaks Hindi and all'. (Field notes, 26-02-03)

In this instance, visible insider status with gatekeepers proved to be undesirable, perhaps for many of the reasons that applied to gaining access to schools. As I was already using English with senior government officials in an effort to claim some power, I began doing so with high-level gatekeepers, whether in person or on the phone. Furthermore, as a doctoral student, the power differential vis-à-vis senior state officials was greatly skewed in their favour. Fortunately, one senior central-level officer offered to write a letter on my behalf requesting state officers to participate in the study. I was given a copy which was also faxed to them and helped gain initial access. In this regard, props, such as a vehicle, were also used as currency. For example, in India official government cars are generally large white saloons (Ambassadors) with short curtains in the side and rear windows. Since I rented a car to get around all necessary field sites in a day, I began renting a similar vehicle to gain access from gatekeepers (quite literally) after a curtained car was sent to me accidentally one day:

The issue of access was an interesting one in terms of physical access to the building. As I had such a problem getting the [official visitor's] pass last time, I was discussing it with my driver. He said, 'Don't worry about it, Madam. I'll take you where you want to go.' He circled the Secretariat once with the car and when we approached Gate 7, he said, 'This is the one gate through which I can take you in.' And with that, he drove the car straight into the gates and the armed guards at the door ushered it in without even looking to see who entered. One of the main reasons was because the car ... was an Ambassador with curtains at the windows – looks just like the politicians' and official cars. (Field notes, 16-11-02)

The use of such visible props, and selectively using the different currencies mentioned above, made it possible to establish 'visible control' regarding certain gatekeepers and reduce the power differential in my positionality vis-à-vis elite participants as suggested here: 'I have found it important for the interviewer to establish some visible control of the situation at the very beginning, even if the elite subject is momentarily set off balance' (Ostrander, quoted in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 142).

Not only did my positionality change regarding different participants, it was also in flux within single field events. For example, after one urban mother commented on 'our' social position as 'Indian women' prior to an interview regarding her daughter's schooling, she immediately ascribed a higher social position to me in socio-economic terms during the interview when talking about her job [3]:

I go to people's houses in the housing colony to wash clothes. I go to the homes of like ... like people of your status [Chuckles] (Ganga Devi, Urban Mother)

For me, these instances illustrated Merton's characterisation of what the interviewee perceived as simultaneously sharing some statuses and not others. From a Lacanian perspective, it seemed that there was some misrecognition of this interviewee's positionality in relation to mine as 'Indian women'; at the same time there was a rejection of some of those implications as I occupied a distinctly different social class group. Therefore, the challenge was to be aware that my positionalities were constantly in flux, even within single field events, and to be alert to the uses of currency (where possible) to mediate this dynamism for the exchange.

The impetus behind reducing or increasing power differentials in my positionalities was not only to access data, but specifically in cases where I was ascribed or perceived to have a higher differential, to minimise it in order to ease exchange. At no time was my cultural background as a Canadian of parents from the Indian diaspora or my academic affiliation with an 'elite' British university concealed to create a persona. Rather, through the use of currencies, my constructions of self or real-life identities were extensively drawn upon to refine my positionalities in an attempt to find, what Mullings (1999) suggests, 'a shared positional space [that] should not be viewed as simply a process of "racial and gender matching" [but incorporating] the dynamism of individual identities' (p. 341).

As previously stated, the sense of lack or otherness that I felt throughout the data collection process also extended to the formal analysis process that was mostly done upon exiting the field. This was intimately tied to the role that language played in accessing and interpreting the data, which is the focus of the following section.

Using Analytic Languages: the dynamics of positionality in language and translation

Temple & Young (2004) note that: 'the issue of translation is often not identified, let alone discussed, in research with people who do not speak English' (p. 162). The focus here is not just on translation, but on the role of language in the study. Furthermore, the context need not be so stark as English and non-English speaking researchers. It seems that while there is an emerging focus on diasporic or mixed-background researchers, there is very little dialogue on how such researchers (often multilingual) employ language and understand and mediate its role in analysis. It is particularly important if data are accessed in one language and presented in another, and perhaps more interestingly, if the 'language of the data' and the 'language one thinks in' are not the same. This seems to be a real gap in the literature, as from a Lacanian lens, language is the most integral symbol of identity and constructions of self.

The inexorable role that language played in accessing data was not just a technical choice but one heavily imbued within my social processes of interaction and constructions of self in the field. Thus, it follows that its role and implications would be felt beyond the fieldwork period to the formal data analysis process. Specifically, the three stages at which decisions about language and translation were consciously taken were during: data collection, interpretation/analysis, and presentation.

The use of language as currency during data collection, particularly for interviews and to access research sites, was presented in the previous section. The aspect of language that assumed importance during the process of analysis was mediation of the two analytic languages, distinguished as, the 'language I use to think in' and the 'language of the data', for a more valid interpretation of the data. The language of much of the data (more than 90% of formal and informal interviews, most observation events, and some documents) was Hindi. The language I use to think in, particularly academically/analytically, is English. This made the analytic process more complex than for someone whose thinks in the same language (or uses it to the same extent) as the language of the data (whether or not this is English).

Furthermore, the divide between the two analytic language types was not as stark as stated above, and many times, there was a blurring of the line between them, when I would 'slip between the two languages' [4] (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 161) during analysis. After spending an extended period of time in the field and then engaging with certain concepts that emerged from the data in Hindi, the language of the data sometimes became the language I used to think in about those

concepts, which ultimately made it a more complex task to translate excerpts for presentation in English.

The process of data collection sometimes involved simultaneous translation of words, concepts, and sometimes entire events. For example, if I was observing a parent–principal interaction at a school, then the corresponding quotes of the relevant actors were often recorded in English through a process of automatic simultaneous translation, i.e. the ‘language I use to think in’ became the ‘language of the data’. Certain words or phrases, which in that split-second I could not simultaneously translate (a point I will come back to), were recorded in Roman Hindi [5] (i.e. the script was recorded in Roman characters as opposed to traditional *Devangiri* Hindi script). I resorted to Roman Hindi because of a technical handicap. While I can read and write in Hindi, my level of writing and reading fluency (most importantly in this context, speed) is not as high as my spoken and comprehension levels. This slip between the two languages was more automatic (and quicker) than recording the entire event in Roman Hindi.

The issue of analytic relevance is that some preliminary analysis was occurring at a tacit level during the specific data collection event itself. Words or phrases that were not simultaneously translated and instead recorded in Roman Hindi were often the result of two intertwined issues in that split-second: (1) a realisation that those specific sets of words or phrases were particularly important or relevant and should therefore be ‘preserved’ and recorded in their ‘original’ form, and (2) a decision that the full essence of what was being said could not be captured in English, which may undesirably nuance the formal analysis if not recorded in Roman Hindi. In these instances, the ‘language of the data’ became the ‘language I use to think in’ because on some tacit level I felt that translating those brief quotes in English would inadequately represent the actors’ experiences (Overing, 1987).

Slipping between languages further occurred during formal analysis when data from interview transcripts were unitised. The vast majority of interviews were conducted in Hindi and their transcripts were recorded in Roman Hindi. Therefore, I was essentially working with Hindi text. Temple (1997) notes that: ‘Translation/interpretation is inseparable from the application of a theoretical perspective. Both provide accounts which assume a position that has been constructed using a different language’ (p. 607). Thus, the decision not to translate transcripts before formal analysis was a deliberate one. This was to minimise the application of an external theoretical *linguistic* perspective (that of English) on to a set of data and keep them in their ‘authentic’ form, before the application of other external theoretical perspectives (i.e. methodological, conceptual, and empirical) that would undoubtedly be applied during the analytic process.

While the raw data were in Hindi, much of the initial unitising and category naming was done in English, the ‘language I use to think in’. Nonetheless, certain codes or category names were generated ‘in vivo’ in Hindi ‘from the words of the respondents themselves’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 105). As patterns across the data emerged further along the analysis, they were largely written about in English analytic memos. However, there were instances when I slipped into using certain words or phrases in Hindi much for the same reasons as above during the recording of observation events.

Roles in Data Analysis: researcher/translator

The different ways language was used impacted on my role as researcher/translator (Vulliamy, 1990; Temple & Young, 2004) during analysis. Until now, the translator role was mostly embedded, other than in instances of automatic translation that resulted from an immersed and automatic cultural, linguistic, and contextual field understanding. The most overt expression of the translator role emerged during initial formal presentations of the analysis. These formal presentations (i.e. written descriptions of data in report, paper, or chapter form) were done in English. The private presentation (rough drafts for my eyes only) consisted of extensive discussion about the data in English (the language I think in) around original interview quotes in Roman Hindi (the language of the data). In the shared presentation for critique by colleagues, original quotes were translated into English, but the Roman Hindi quotes remained directly above them. This was to provide me (and any other reader familiar with Hindi) with a continual check on the translations. In final presentations in my doctoral thesis, these appeared as numbered translated quotes, the originals of

which were presented in appendices. However, in published accounts, only translated English quotes appear in the interest of space. Thus, my role as translator became more and more pronounced as degrees of formal presentation increased.

It was at the point of producing shared presentations that I realised to what extent the original 'language of the data' also became the 'language I use to think in' during analysis. I often received feedback that translated quotes were not always fully comprehensible to a reader unfamiliar with Hindi. Despite my fluency in Hindi, I wanted to be sure that I was adequately representing participants' views. My anxiety stemmed from what Overing (1987) described as concerns about imposing 'an "alien" framework of thought which is based upon an "alien" set of universal principles about the world' (p. 76). This led me, in the first instance, to adopt a literal translating style: '(i.e. translating word-by-word) which could perhaps be seen as doing more justice to what participants have said' (Birbili, 2000).

However, like Birbili's (2000) observation, this seemed to reduce readability and obscured the understanding of readers unfamiliar with Hindi, making it difficult to discern 'what's going on'. Many times, it was only through feedback from monolingual [6] English speakers that I, a native English speaker as well, saw parts in translated texts that were unclear despite many previous revisions of those translated passages. For me, this highlighted the extent to which the language of the data actually became the language in which I began to think about them at a tacit level through the incorporation of cultural, linguistic, and field understandings.

After receiving feedback, I adopted a translation style of 'conceptual equivalence' (Temple, 1997; Birbili, 2000; Temple & Young, 2004) in those instances when the two languages 'did not offer direct lexical equivalence' (Birbili, 2000). In most instances, I felt I was equipped to do this, because as Birbili (2000) notes, 'the process of gaining comparability of meanings is greatly facilitated by the researcher (or the translator) having not only a proficient understanding of a language but also ... an "intimate" knowledge of the culture'. I would add that a deep tacit knowledge of the data and the field context in which they were framed are also crucial to increasing the validity of translation of data through a strategy of conceptual equivalence. Revisions of translated passages were given to monolingual and bilingual speakers with knowledge of the research area and topic for further feedback before final presentation.

Finally, my role as researcher/translator took on yet another form when it came to analysing official documents that were in Hindi. On the whole, official legal translations of acts, rules, and government orders were available in English. These were used for the formal analysis, but were also checked alongside Hindi versions to note any discrepancies (none were found). However, there were a few official state documents that were produced only in Hindi since it is the official language of Uttar Pradesh. These documents, though few in number, posed a special challenge for analysis.

As previously mentioned, my spoken level and comprehension of Hindi is fluent. However, the speed with which I read is rather slow. The challenge was not only one of speed, but conceptual understanding of specific official administrative, bureaucratic, and legal terminology, which I term *officialese*, and that I (like most people who work outside of the Indian Administrative Service, allied services, or legal professions) was unfamiliar with. After a few initial attempts at analysing these documents, it quickly became clear that a third-party translator would be required. The choice of translator was not made lightly. As Temple (1997) stresses:

The use of translators and interpreters is not merely a technical matter that has little bearing on the outcome. It is of epistemological consequence as *it influences what is 'found'*.

Translators are active in the process of constructing accounts and an examination of their intellectual autobiographies, that is 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. (p. 614; emphasis added)

Having first tried two translators, native Hindi speakers but unfamiliar with *officialese*, the importance of finding a translator with the appropriate 'intellectual biography' (Temple, 1997, p. 608) became clear. Since the analytic task was to identify the formal regulatory framework that governed low-fee private schools through these documents, it was of utmost importance that the translation provided was what was actually documented in the law or official rules, and not an

interpretation of what may be written due to uncertainty caused by a lack of officialese fluency. The problem was solved when a former Indian government employee volunteered to act as translator.

The translator provided a literal oral translation of the relevant documents as I simultaneously recorded them in English. Specific words and terms in officialese were often explained using a combination of Hindi and English (slipping into both languages, closer to Rossman & Rallis's conception in interviews) to capture their essence. Additionally, given that the translator had personal experience in Indian educational governance, a debriefing session on interpretation of the rules and orders was conducted at the end of the translation session, which I recorded in note form. I then referred back to the original documents in Hindi, read, and took additional notes on them to check for any discrepancies in translation and in my new understanding of the documents.

Consistent with a Lacanian perspective, the stage of document analysis when I was aided by a third-party translator is when I experienced the greatest sense of lack of insider status during the process of analysis. While slipping in between the two analytic languages allowed me to mediate some of this positionality vis-à-vis the data, the use of a third-party translator reminded me of my otherness. Nonetheless, my intimate knowledge of the field and all of its exchanges, analysis of the other data, as well as aspects of my cultural and linguistic biography helped to greatly reconcile this.

Reconciling the Technical and the Social

My field experience is in agreement with Coffey's (1999) view that the traditional dichotomy between field representations and real-life identity or constructions of self is an insufficient paradigm from which to view the complex social relations that researchers must manage, and through which, data are accessed. Thus, field guides offering advice on how to 'manage field representation' through dress and creating the 'right' first impressions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 83; Delamont, 2002, p. 101) or creating a 'persona' (Peshkin, 1984) seem inadequate in their treatment, not only of the multiple aspects of identity that must be managed, but also the selectivity that participants exert in accepting or rejecting certain aspects of those projected images of constructions of self and researcher positionalities. These are issues of increasing importance in the new global research arena, with larger numbers of researchers of diasporic or mixed backgrounds conducting research in all parts of the 'global village'.

The significance of the discussion lies in incorporating a combined Mertonian and Lacanian approach to the analysis of researcher positionalities, and ultimately, the implications that the mediation may have for analysis. By presenting some of the tension and dilemmas that resulted in this study from sharing some statuses and not others, we are reminded that neither constructions of self nor researcher positionalities are fixed. They draw on each other and interact dynamically with the positionalities and constructions of self of participants – they are multiple, exist in symbiosis, and are not fixed in time or space. The use of currencies, which themselves are socially constructed, may go some way in mediating researcher positionalities to ease exchange, though ultimately participants can accept or reject aspects of those mediated constructs.

As some of the examples from my fieldwork showed, the use of currencies is not unproblematic. Too much insider status may be just as problematic to easing exchange as too much outsider status. Thus, it seems that a crucial point for social engagement in the field to access data is an attempt at mediating positionalities with a view to balancing power relations (as much as possible) for the exchange. Therefore, while the use of currencies may not be unproblematic, it can nonetheless be very useful in alerting the researcher to instances where (and the manner in which) one's positionalities may be mediated, as well as to some of the potential implications of this mediation.

This also has implications for data analysis, particularly when mediation relies heavily on the use of language. For example, the tension between the two analytic languages of the 'language I use to think in' and the 'language of the data' in this study problematises the role of language and translation in accessing, interpreting, and presenting data. The notion of automatically slipping in between the two analytic languages is fundamental to a reconceptualisation of the role of language in the analytic process.

It may be argued that the relative lack of discussion about language and translation in discourse on international educational research methodology seems to suffer either from ignorance and inexperience or an epistemological position that sees researchers as objective instruments of research, where: 'Who controls the analysis is irrelevant if objectivity is achieved in the research process. The researcher can represent others by dint of this objectivity once translation problems are "solved"' (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 163). However, given the relative openness of educational research to a phenomenological epistemological stance not captured above, I would like to believe that the lack of discussion on both issues is an error of omission. This is not to imply a lesser degree of seriousness, but to point to the critical need to address them in order to help move our thinking about educational research methodology in international contexts forward. In so doing, we can present it in all its real-life messiness and capture a certain level of authenticity which is otherwise snuffed out of such discourse.

Notes

- [1] Examples of grey documents were internal memos, unofficial notes of memorandum, unpublished reports, etc.
- [2] I realise, of course, that given my rejection of binaries, there seems to be an illogical distinction between 'real-life' and 'field identity'. This is in want of a more coherent way of expression within the limits of language. I do believe that 'field-identity' is also part of my 'real-life' identity and vice versa. Both draw on and from each other to exist.
- [3] This is translated from the original in Hindi. All names are pseudonyms.
- [4] Rossman & Rallis use the concept of 'slipping in between languages' when conducting interviews where both the interviewer and the interviewee are 'fully and fluently bilingual' in the language of the research (usually English) and the language of the local setting. I am using the term slightly differently to distinguish my own use of the two analytic languages, the 'language I use to think in' and the 'language of the data'. As such, the concepts may be used by researchers conducting research in any other language; the two analytic languages need not be expressed as English and Hindi.
- [5] The principle behind Roman Hindi is a phonetic representation of Hindi words in Roman script. It is used even in India, for example, in advertising campaigns. Certain academic reports (e.g. PROBE Team, 1999), written in English for an English-speaking audience, use Roman Hindi to present parents' interview quotes.
- [6] Monolingual in this context is used to refer to those who only spoke English and not Hindi, regardless of their knowledge of another language.

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