

Centre for Narrative Research in the Social Sciences
&
NOVELLA ESRC Research Node,
Institute of Education and University of East London

To THink is To eXperiment
Narratives in/of Translation

Wednesday, 25th April, 2012, Docklands Campus
West Building, 2nd Floor

Abstracts:

Translation or transition: cultural boundaries and the making of the self through language

Dr Mastoureh Fathi, University of East London

This talk draws on narratives Iranian women migrants living in the UK whom I interviewed for my doctoral research. My paper explores transitions across two languages Farsi and English in these narratives but also discusses the minutiae of what it means to transform data from one language to another.

Drawing on difficulties of translation as an act of transition between cultures, I argue that translation acts as a space for creative thinking and having 'a dialogue with the self'. Although the act of translation is never free from ethical sensitivities and power relations, I will discuss the possibilities of being an in-between researcher.

A Trialogue on Translating Narratives Cross-Culturally

Emma Brännlund, Tanja Kovacic, Aura Lounasmaa, National University of Ireland, Galway

In this paper we present three perspectives dealing with translations and narratives in cross-cultural research. Three bilingual researchers working within two or more languages will discuss narratives as/in/of translations. This *trialogue* explores the questions: what happens to narratives when they are translated multiple times? How is meaning transmitted cross-culturally as translation takes place?

We address these questions through case studies of Kashmir, Morocco and Slovenia. First, we explore what happens to Kashmiri women's self-presentations of (in)security when language is colonised by state-centric definitions. Then, we reflect on how multiple voices of Moroccan participants can be presented by a researcher despite transcription and translation across three or more languages. Finally, we consider some challenges of translation when a researcher is looking for culturally relevant understanding of resilience in Slovenia.

To conclude, this paper takes a critical and feminist epistemological standpoint. Hence we propose some potential solutions, such as production of plots and stories that can help us understand how meaning is transferred and transformed between multiples languages and cultures. The merging of the three voices proposes narratives as translations, which are also always in the process of being translated.

Transitions and Translations. The story of doing higher education field research in 3 languages in two countries

Réka Plugor, University of Leicester

I started my field research by doing semi-structured interviews with students about their motivations for going to university, the experiences they engage in, their perceptions about higher education and the labour market and their future plans. After the first interviews I realized that students are actually telling me stories about their various experiences, so I started reading more about narrative inquiry and narrative analysis. In my research I conduct interviews in three languages: Hungarian (my mother language), Romanian and English, so from day 1 I am faced with decisions and dilemmas about how to conduct the interviews, how to translate words and meanings, how to present the documents, how to do the validation, how to do the coding and the analysis. In this brief presentation, I will share my experiences and my dilemmas.

Colourful Footprints along the Career Journey: Voices of Indigenous and Immigrant youth on the transition between school and career.

Lianne Britten, William Borgen, Mark Wiggins, Macquarie University

The main purpose of this study is to listen to voices of indigenous and immigrant youth to understand the critical experiences of the transition between adolescence and adulthood in terms of career development. This project investigates the factors that help and hinder non-mainstream youth to navigate that transition. Such research is needed to provide a deeper understanding of career, transitions and success from the point of view of indigenous people/ immigrants. Outcomes from this research include creating new collaborative definitions of career, new programs, career curricula, new collaborative directions for health and education programming and policy development, and counselling techniques for these specific populations.

The visual narrative in the performance of life/live

Barbara Elektra Droth, University of Sussex

My research project, led by video practices and interviews, critically explores the relationships between auto/biography, performance and the mediatization of live art. Through collaboration with three performance artists I examine the multiple selves expressed by the artists through multiple media, such as their websites, video clips, audio interviews and the live performances themselves. The translation in my work happens on several levels: first by recording the live event I translate from one media into another, from a fluid multiple audience point of view of a present experience to a fixed digital documentation of the past moment. Secondly by using visual materials to write I translate the image into words, the experience into analysis. Through translations of 'live' into video formats, and video clips into written analysis, I argue, auto/biographical genre is interrogated and explores performative and fictional dimensions of life history, and examines assumed binaries such as private/public, documentary/fiction, Self/other. Ethical issues the project raises through its methodology principally concern the (re)presentation and (re)telling of another person's life story and the researcher's role in the process of constructing visual representations. The research problematizes the digital medium as a means of documenting another's live work of art and addresses notions around the performance of life in documentary and ethnographic film. These questions converge with debates on the digital image's reformation of ideas on aura, authorship and authenticity, especially in relation to the role of the live artist and the performativity of life as art, and art as live performance.

Reflections on a narrative interview: A kidnapping in translation

Natalie Honein, University of Bristol

This paper is a critical, narrative commentary of a series of interviews in which I uncover a specific aspect of my family's oral history, namely my grandmother's experience with her son's kidnapping and permanent disappearance during the Lebanese civil war in 1976. An active participant in an interview engages in reflection, acknowledges one's place in the conversation, and reflects on the negotiated nature of the interview (Fontana, 2003, 58). From a post-modern perspective, I assess the extent to which I became an active participant in the conversations. Within this framework, I reflect on a number of questions. How did language and culture come in the way of our conversations? What power did I hold in translating her words and presenting them to the reader? How does one translate non-verbal messages? How does one translate silences? How does one translate questions and how do they affect the interview process? Along with a written text, I present a short, videotaped recording of the interviews conducted in Arabic and translated to English.

Journalistic professionalism in translation

Marija Lobanova, University of East London

In the mid 1960s James W. Carty Jr. wrote a paper Problems of Teaching Journalism in Spanish (1965) in which he described his observations of communication difficulties in teaching journalism by visiting US scholars in Latin America. Carty noted that "shades of meaning, contrast of cultural contexts, and journalistic perspectives present difficulties [...and that] existing communication problems [are] centered around different journalistic practices and emphases, and the translation of words and concepts" beginning with the word journalism itself (1965:302). Fifty years later, meanings and the use of (translated) words or concepts organising and defining journalism remains a subject to cultural differences and interpretations. In my paper I would like to address the problem of double translation: first, how professionalism as a new term defining journalism gets translated into culturally meaningful notion, and second how to translate this cultural meanings back into English with minimal loss of cultural flavour.

Phetolelo: The politics of language

Puleng Segalo, City University of New York

It has been argued by a number of scholars that translation is more than just understanding words in one language and rendering them in another. It involves complex understandings of how words are situated within and among social relations in a particular material context. Because often times in our work we use English, the meaning sometimes gets lost when translated from another language. It is therefore crucial to acknowledge the complexities involved in translating peoples' stories from one language to another. Language is one of the main tools used to understand social phenomena and psychological inquiries. However, we need to acknowledge the limitations and complexities of the spoken, particularly when multiple languages are involved. In this paper I share some of the language challenges I come across in my research and a look at alternative ways in which people can share their experiences.