Language Sustainability in a Changing World

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Edited by

Marinela Burada, Oana Tatu
and Raluca Sinu

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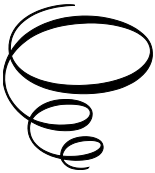

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CHAPTER I:

MEANING AND COMMUNICATION WITHIN AND ACROSS CULTURES

INTRODUCTION

MARINELA BURADA

The first two papers in this chapter are concerned with language and the projection of identity in intercultural settings: while the former relates to the reconstruction of self in and through spoken dialogue, the latter considers two methods of recognizing gender identity in written discourse, and gender-determined language behaviour in oral interactions. The main focus in the last two papers is on the negotiation of meaning across cultures, specifically, on matters concerning equivalence and translation in the field of contrastive paremiology and, respectively, audiovisual translation.

Same-Sex Intercultural Relationships: Translating Polyphonic Identity in Global Britain (Alain J.E. Wolf) focuses on a particular aspect of same-gender intercultural communication: the (re)construction of one's dialogic identity via the language and culture of another. The discussion begins with a critical review of the current research on international couplehood, tackling a series of relevant notions such as intersectionality, polyphony, translated identity, linguistic hospitality, which the author then applies to the more specific context of same-sex intercultural dialogue. The empirical data informing this study derive from semi-structured interviews administered to three pairs of all-male respondents, each pair consisting of an English native and an alloglot partner. These data shed light on the ways in which the linguistic disparity between the participants leads to the identity of one to be "translated" (and, we might add, to some extent domesticated) by means of the dominant language. This is, the author suggests, a strategy that the native English speakers subconsciously resort to in order to cope with the "foreignness" in the discourse of their non-English partners, mitigating it for the benefit of other English-speaking interlocutors.

In a different but not unrelated vein, **Methods in Gender Studies** (Natalia Burenina and Elena Babenkova) tackles the matter of identity from the vantage point of Gender Studies. Premised on the view that social variables give rise to gendered language, the overarching goal of the research reported here is to identify the verbal clues which allow for gender distinction in the linguistic output of native English speakers. To

this end, two methods were used in two different research situations. The first involved a questionnaire administered to two hundred British and Russian respondents required to determine, on the basis of a pre-established set of linguistic criteria, the gender of two EL texts composed by a male and a female author, respectively. The second experiment consisted in an unstructured interview with forty-six male and female English speakers, which lend support to previous insights into gender-determined language behaviour in oral interactions.

Rooted in the linguistic sphere of contrastive paremiology, the article entitled **A Contrastive Analysis of Romanian and English Proverbs with Zoonyms** (Oana Tatu) dwells on comparing and contrasting a number of Romanian animalistic paremia and their English semantic counterparts relying on formal and semantic criteria. Therefore, proverbs are investigated from phonetic, lexical, and syntactic perspectives, as well as from a semantic viewpoint. The author also highlights the illocutionary force of the proverbs perceived as a perpetual feature that crosses cultural and linguistic barriers. As the analysis follows the behaviour of animal proverbs and zoonyms at different language levels, the author observes the occurrence of alliteration, assonance, repetition, synonymic and antonymic parallelism, of certain syntactic patterns, and so on, and concludes on the presence of a common cultural thread reflected in a common linguistic behaviour.

The article **The History of the USA in World War II Reflected in Subtitles of *Band of Brothers*** (Attila Imre) stems from the author's confessed interest in translation practice, and aims to take a closer look at some of the challenges that audio-visual translators are confronted with. The analysis relies on a corpus of 957 entries excerpted from the Romanian and Hungarian subtitles of the American series *Band of Brothers* (2001). These samples are streamlined into several categories, such as events and facts; groups of people; famous people; entries connected to WWII events; historical errors, etc., and assessed in terms of linguistic and extralinguistic accuracy. Overall, while commending the output of the two subtitlers, the author also highlights a number of translation errors occurring mainly as a result of cultural misunderstanding, in the case of culturally bound terms, or even because of temporal discrepancies, which are never to be taken lightly in translation practice.

SAME-SEX INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS: TRANSLATING POLYPHONIC IDENTITY IN GLOBAL BRITAIN

ALAIN J.E. WOLF

Abstract: Same-sex intercultural couples are involved in communicative practices which can lead to relationships flourishing, or breaking down. Previous research focuses on the cultural aspects of such relationships without much attention paid to translated discourse. Focusing on an analysis of semi-structured interviews, this article will make a contribution to research by addressing aspects of the participants' dialogic identity and the ways in which the utterances of the researched become subjected to cultural representations, leading to 'mis-translation'. Lastly, the notion of 'linguistic hospitality' will be addressed, providing the basis for the claim that same-sex intercultural dialogue can be perceived as a form of translated discourse with implications for all forms of intersectional relationships in the context of global post-Brexit Britain.

Keywords: same-sex intercultural relationships; dialogic; polyphony; identity; linguistic hospitality

1 Introduction

Over twenty years ago, Wood and Duck (1995, 13) observed that the field concerned with the personal relationships in which individuals engage 'has reduced aspects of relational life to a narrow and unrepresentative sample, i.e. heterosexual, white, middle-class, marital, monogamous relationships'. A recent answer to this narrowness of focus has been to consider the many perspectives from which same-sex relationships can be explored (see Adams and Holman Jones, 2008; Drummond, 2003; Grindstaff, 2003; Jakobsen, 1998; Morris, 2007; Yep, 2013). A list of intersections occupied by individuals is provided in the above literature and Yep (2013, 120) concludes that, as intercultural communication researchers, we should address the important notion of 'intersectionality' defined as the many categories of identity queer men

and women fall into (Yep 2013, 123). There is an important caveat, however, namely that intersectionality should not be treated 'roster-like fashion' (Yep 2013, 123), and an individual's characteristics merely listed as categories. This is because such a practice 'tends to produce disembodied knowledge of others' (Yep 2013, 123). An understanding of intersectionality as 'thick intersectionality' is required by which Yep means that 'we should attend to the lived experiences and biographies of the persons occupying a particular intersection, including how they inhabit and make sense of their own bodies' (Yep 2013, 123).[1]

This emphasis on how individuals reconcile their intersections is laudable, but the contemporary literature on queer relationships seems to have had that very tendency to list the individual's characteristics of race and gender without engaging with the nuanced embodied knowledge of the queer Other in an intercultural context (see, as illustrations of this tendency, Chan and Erby's (2018) review of queer intercultural couples in the counselling profession and Waldman and Rubalcava's (2005) description of a Sino-French relationship in culturalist/essentialist terms). When it comes to existing research on intercultural couplehood, then, the focus often seems to be on comparing and defining static national cultures 'interacting, clashing, hyphenating' (Dervin and Gao 2012, 6). As Dervin and Gao (2012, 7) observe, such studies overlook the fact that identities are discursively 'co-constructed, co-enacted and co-expressed by people'.

This paper provides both a critique of research on intercultural couplehood and a fresh look at relationships between same-sex partners. In order to do so, I will explore the three key concepts of intersectionality, polyphony and translated identity in the context of same-sex intercultural dialogue.

I shall attempt to answer two fundamental questions. In the first instance, I shall ask: 'to what extent do the concepts of polyphonic and intersectional identity characterise same-sex intercultural dialogue? A second related question will look at issues related to the process of translating the Other in the context of polyphonic identity, i.e. how do we translate and represent the Other faithfully when English is used as a lingua franca?

2 About the study: Focusing on the particular to glimpse the universal

In order to illustrate the ways in which same-sex partners reconcile the different intersections they occupy, I have analysed the dialogues of six University educated participants in the 20-40 age range by means of in-

depth semi-structured interviews. My approach to collecting these data draws on Holliday's (2010) understanding of research as 'decentred' which, he argues, (Holliday 2010, 11, citing Bhabha 1994), allows vernacular realities 'to emerge on their own terms'. This has enabled me to explore my participants' rich tapestry of identities in the context of divergent interpretations (Haugh, 2008), focusing on their lived individual experiences and attempting to 'mak[e] visible the unexpected for the purpose of revealing deeper complexities that counter established discourses' (Holliday 2010, 11).

I conducted a one and half hour semi-structured interview with a Thai-English couple who had lived together for four years. A similar interview was conducted with a Hungarian-English couple who had had a relationship for a year. The third English-Dutch couple who had lived together for under a year was interviewed on Skype for an hour. The couples were identified by means of snowball sampling (Frey et al. 2000) through university networks.

3 Intersectional and polyphonic identity

The notion of intersectionality, albeit a fairly recent concept in the field of queer studies and intercultural identity, has been studied in a great number of ways. I noted in the introduction that we should move away from an understanding of intersectionality as a mechanical listing of an individual's characteristics. In the field of intercultural communication, many researchers (Holliday 2010; Piller 2011; Dervin and Gao 2012) have sought to interpret interculturality as a negotiated and discursive negotiation of self images 'rather than using these as explanatory static elements' (Dervin and Gao 2012, 8). If we are ever to produce nuanced descriptions of thick intersectionality, it becomes crucially important that we do not start off our analysis with pre-determined categories, including those of culture and race. In Queer Theory doing so runs the risk, as Aiello et al. (2013, 101) note, of erasing 'diverse ways of being queer' in a diversity of queer contexts. A more holistic way of looking at intersectionality is one which asks questions about how individuals occupying a wide range of intersections manage to reconcile their 'repertoire of identities' (Joseph 2018), entering into dialogue with the Other. The notion of a repertoire is central here as it points to how individuals voice their allegiance through their use of language and how others translate these linguistic indices. As Joseph (2018, 17) observes, no group can be perceived as 'culturally homogeneous' and individuals' repertoires of identity are combinations of various ways of being, for example, a Christian, or a Muslim, belonging to

different denominations. So the sense of an intersectional identity is ontological, taking us back to an imagined or real past.

The second key concept I would like to introduce is that of polyphonic identity. A worthwhile point of departure here is Ducrot's (1984) idea, inspired by Bakhtin (1981), that any interaction between speakers is a staging of several voices. When speakers engage in dialogue with others, they present us with their attitudes and beliefs polyphonically. It is in this sense that any speaker's monologue includes echoes of others' contributions, and is, in effect, a polyphonic orchestrating of voices (see Wolf, 2005 for further details on the approach). It was Bakhtin (1981) in his theorising about utterance understanding who first conceived of 'dialogism' as a polyphonic relation between the discourse initiated by the 'I' and the discourse of others. All living discourse, he argued (Bakhtin, 1981, 92), even the most seemingly monologic, may in fact 'contain within it two utterances, two manners of speaking, two styles, two ''languages'', two semantic and axiological horizons' (Bakhtin, 1981, 118). In other words, the speaker's self is linguistically co-constructed and dialogically dependent on the discourse of others.

4 Examples of intersectional and polyphonic identities

The co-construction and echoing of the Other manifested itself most clearly in one of the interviews I conducted with the English-Thai couple. After I explained what the interview was about, Arran, the Thai partner, said:

> Arran: But some of the questions you ask maybe I am not quite understand. May get a bit quiet that means, can you repeat the questions? (David/Arran interview 1, 2016)

Although I as the interviewer had perfectly understood Arran's utterance, David[2], the English partner, immediately felt the need to clarify it:

> David: Just say 'I don't understand', don't get the gist of the meaning. (David/Arran interview 1, 2006)

By filtering his thoughts through the putative fears and expectations of his partner, David seemed to stage a discussion that may have taken place between them, before the interview took place. Further his rephrasing of 'I am not quite understand' by 'I don't get the gist of the meaning' had the effect of David's identity being presented as that of

Arran's linguistic guarantor. In this orchestration of Arran's concerns within David's own speech, we also get a sense of David's identity being polyphonically constructed. This may be interpreted as Arran being problematised from the very beginning of the interview as the hierarchically inferior English language learner in need of assistance. As the two reminisced about their first meeting, David tended to report the situation, ascribing attitudes and beliefs to Arran. Consider the following exchange:

> Arran: When looking for love you don't go to bar
> David: He means he wasn't looking for a relationship with a European since he'd had a bad experience. He said' I don't believe you, I think you're a butterfly, I think you're a butterfly
> Arran: But
> David: You thought I was a chancer. Developing trust was a bit tricky. (David/Arran interview 1, 2016)

Again here, there is a controlled polyphonic presentation of Arran's staged 'words'. Given his level of proficiency in English, it is unlikely that he himself used words figuratively like 'butterfly' and 'chancer' but these words are nonetheless ascribed to him. It is in this sense that David's 'monologues' are systematically oriented to his partner Other. David's identity then is linguistically co-constructed and his monologues, as we shall see below, are effectively unfaithful translations of Arran's original utterances.

The second couple I interviewed, a Hungarian male, Janos, and his English partner, Christopher, referred to the first time they met as full of linguistic surprises:

> Janos: One of the funny stories I remember was, you said that was the first point you picked up on, we went for a coffee and I was fumbling around in my wallet and I was like it was full of 1 and 2 ps and then I was like oh look at all of those coppers and you'd be like shocked because you hadn't expected me to know the word 'copper'.
> Chris: I think it's just a kind of very English word, kind of thing, and that you'd picked up on it oh in your accent as well, oh I've only got coppers' (Janos/Chris interview 2, 2016)

As the example above shows, the non-native partner is perceived as having 'mentioned' the colloquial word 'copper' rather than having authentically 'used' it, i.e. there is, for the native speaker, an appreciable difference between a word that is used by native speakers and a word that is mentioned in a foreign accent. What Chris brings to our attention here is

the polyphonic character of Janos's utterance which echoes the individuals he has heard use that word, i.e. 'you've picked up on it' so that the non-native speaker uses the word polyphonically. Language proficiency plays a central role in intercultural relationships, and participants, like David and Chris, effectively translate their partners' utterances for the benefit of other native speakers. I would now like to explore this theme further in the context of how the cultural Other is translated in intercultural relationships.

5 Translating the Other: abandonment of the first language and engagement with the second

As we have just seen, intercultural relationships can be read through the lens of translation. I would now like to offer a brief clarification of the terminology used in the field of 'Translation Studies' so that what follows may be more easily understood.

First of all, the text that one translates is commonly referred to as the 'source text' (ST) and the translated text is referred to as the 'target text' (TT). If we take as an example, Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' translated into French, we have the text originally written in English (Source text (ST) = Ode to a Nightingale, Source Language (SL) = English), we have the target text (TT) 'L'ode à un rossignol' in the target language (TL) = French. We also have a target audience, i.e. the French readership of the English poem which may or may not know the poem in the original version.

Now, there is an age-old tension, well-known to all students of translation theory: translators can try to be literal and faithful to the source text, or in our case the source person (see Arran), but they may end up producing a foreign-sounding, possibly unintelligible translation for the target audience. Alternatively, translators can alter what the source text or person said so as to make it more accessible or palatable for the target audience. As we have just seen, this is precisely what David tended to do. The consequence was, naturally, that an ethnocentric translation of Arran's words was produced which erased traces of Arran's foreignness. Some, like Venuti (1998), a translation scholar, have referred to such kinds of translational activity as fundamentally unethical.

The question I want to address here is how my participants' identities were translated in the context of same-sex intercultural relationships. There is a choice: either partners like David satisfy their own ethnocentric needs, producing translations of the foreign Others which erase their foreignness, or they subject themselves to what Berman calls 'l'épreuve de l'étranger' (the test of the foreign (my translation)), producing hybrid translations which consider the foreign Others in all their foreignness.

Submitting oneself to the foreign can manifest itself as a form of abandonment. In this respect, Berman (1984, 57) refers to an interview between André Gide and Walter Benjamin in which the former claims that in order to acquire a foreign language he had to distance himself from his mother tongue: 'Dans l'apprentissage des langues, ce qui compte le plus n'est pas ce qu'on apprend, le décisif est d'abandonner la sienne' (What counts most of all in learning a foreign language is not what one learns, but the deciding factor is the extent to which one is prepared to relinquish one's own, my translation). This abandonment of the first language as a necessary condition of engaging with foreignness is, Berman (1984, 58) observes, represented as a loss of the individual's 'identité propre' (a loss of one's own identity). And the question Berman poses is central not only to the field of translation studies but to that of intercultural relationships, i.e. if the relationship we entertain with 'foreignness' not only engages, but also potentially threatens our full sense of identity what must that relationship be like?

The interviews I conducted frequently illustrate this engagement with the foreign on the part of both the English speakers and their partners as an overpowering desire for the foreign that can never be quite accounted for. The desire for other cultures is represented as an emotional, a passionate attraction. David, for example, admitted that he had been attracted to Asian men for a long time ever since his stay in Indonesia:

> David: Ever since I was in Indonesia, Mowgli, the jungle book, even now it makes me feel passion. Don't know why. I went to Indonesia in 1992. Fell in love, absolutely heart-broken. I felt pure love. (David/Arran Interview 1, 2016)

But it did not take long before this engagement with the foreign and abandonment of one's own culture was described as a threat to one's own identity:

> David: But it's not without its cultural problems and misunderstandings. And I've got several gay friends who are English, Peter, Gary, Mark and Alan and when I'm speaking to them, I think, we get it, I should be with

> you because the mind set is the same and yet I'm attracted to him (pointing to his partner Arran). I'm attracted to him but my mind is in tune with you (pointing to the interviewer). That for me is quite stifling sometimes. (David/Arran Interview 1, 2016)

This heartfelt account of a psychological lack of engagement with the foreign Other was perceived in other sections of the interview as an inability to 'truly' communicate via the common language used in the relationship, i.e. English as a lingua franca. David contrasted the interactions within the couple with those Arran had with his mother and friends in Thai:

> David: I want that. I see you with your mother, jabbering away, vocalising your feelings and I don't get that but I find that so sorrowful, so sad.
> Arran: Because I think the language, the humour, it's difficult
> David: Learning English, all these nuances that we (interviewer and David) understand inherently the couple of little bits of twisting and turning. (David/Arran interview 1, 2016)

And so the non-native speaker was held partly responsible for not being proficient enough. Indeed, however advanced the English of the non-native partner may be, there was a sense that 'truly' communicating was a matter of understanding implied meaning, i.e. utterances that were not necessarily said, things that were inferred, nuances, humorous and ironical asides which take either an exceptional language learner or years of mastery to understand.

Partners responded differently to the situation. Chris said he could feel the warmth of his partner's parents even though he could not understand them. But long periods of not understanding can lead to boredom and frustration, and misunderstanding the intentions of one's partner's family members or friends can be the cause of problems which I will not go into details here as this is beyond the scope of this article.[3] Suffice to say that the level of competence required in order to achieve what David calls the 'freeness of language', i.e. recovering meaning that arises out of what speakers have implied rather than what they have merely said needs to be high and is sometimes unattainable by partners even after many years of residence in the host country.

Having said that, the language learning issues can seem to be one-sided with the responsibility for mastering English placed squarely on the shoulders of the non-native speakers living in the host country. When I asked David, Chris and Andrew if they could learn Thai, Hungarian or

Dutch so that their partners would occasionally feel on home-ground, so to speak, their responses were, respectively:

> David: it's so difficult. I haven't got the time. I'm so busy. It would be lovely if we were to live in Thailand for a couple of years and I learnt Thai as well, but (addressing his partner) you would want me to speak Thai like you speak English. But to get to that level takes ages. (David/Arran, interview 1, 2016)

> Chris: I have tried to learn Hungarian, but it's such a difficult language and as I do music and theatre, I just don't have time. (Chris/Janos interview 2, 2016)

> Andrew: The Dutch people I interact with speak English so well that it would be pointless learning Dutch. (Andrew/Nadav interview 3, 2018)

There is no sense here of wanting to abandon one's native language and learning the Other's language as a necessary condition of submitting to the foreign. The difficulty of language learning and lack of time are excuses routinely offered by speakers of English because the need to engage with foreignness through another's language may rarely be encountered in the English speaking world. No matter how much they deplore not truly getting through to their partner, they never come to the conclusion that the level of commitment to that partner may be measured in terms of abandoning their first language, learning their partner's language and having their own sense of identity threatened by that deep conversion into another linguistic horizon. English is so dominant that the non-native partners who all lived in an English-speaking context often colluded with their English partners:

> Janos: It would be nice, but I can't expect him to. It's just too high expectations. If he turned round to me and said: I don't have the intention, that's it. It's just too high, no hard feelings. (Chris/Janos interview 2, 2016)

The language learning opportunities in these relationships seem to remain in stasis with the English-speaking partners making brave, albeit ineffectual, attempts at learning the foreign language. Despite the non-native speakers' good-natured avowals, one can see how this may become a contentious issue especially if the non-native English speaking partner is charged with not having 'the freeness of the language'.

6 Concluding remarks

This article on same-sex intercultural relationships has sought to present the contributions of three couples focussing on the kind of dialogue in which they interacted. One of the conditions for successful dialogue to take place was that the participants who found themselves in a dominant situation because of their use of language learnt how to view the relationship from a decentred perspective, ceasing to perceive the Other as a definable entity. The polyphonic translations of the foreign Other were not ill-intentioned but thoughtless ascriptions were believed to create tensions between partners. This is something which this article has only just begun to touch on (see Janos' use of language). We also saw how important it was for the partners to be faithfully translated. We encountered the need to abandon one's first culture in order to subject oneself to the trial of foreignness. But one's sense of identity can be seriously threatened by such abandonment and English speakers were particularly aware of what it means to have the 'freeness of language'.

But one should not conclude on a pessimistic note. Ricoeur (2004, 19-20), in his monograph on translation, writes about community and language in these hopeful terms: 'En dépit de l'agoniste qui dramatise la tâche du traducteur, celui-ci peut trouver son bonheur dans ce que j'appellerai l'hospitalité langagière. Son régime est donc bien celui d'une correspondance sans adéquation. Hospitalité langagière où le plaisir d'habiter la langue de l'autre est compensée par le plaisir de recevoir chez soi (No matter how polemical writings may dramatise the task of the translator, he can still find happiness in what I'd like to call linguistic hospitality. Indeed, correspondence without equivalence is the translator's staple diet. Linguistic hospitality occurs whenever the pleasure of dwelling in somebody else's language is compensated for by the pleasure of putting him up in one's own home, my translation).

This kind of reciprocity we have only partly encountered in intercultural relationships mainly because the native speakers of English had not quite experienced the pleasure of dwelling in somebody else's house of language. Yet, this cosmopolitan and global calling is one which Britain is destined to embrace, albeit not without reservations. We need to remember David's account of a psychological, cognitive and linguistic lack of engagement with the foreign Other which points to a tension between the familiar reassuring local and the attractive but cognitively distant global. This tension can be held in equilibrium but disruption of the balance is never far away. Let me finish with a last paragraph of auto-ethnography (Adams and Holman 2008) to illustrate what I mean.

I live in a North Norfolk village which has retained much of its history, the Jacobean Hall and its medieval Church, a central part of community life. The village is a reflection of intersectionality: my partner and I represent the Global. We have a same-sex intercultural relationship; we were born in Essex and Provence, respectively. Despite the various intersections we occupy, we were welcomed by the Local with open arms. We take part in its various activities and because of my former training as a vicar in the Church of England, I have been asked to lead services on several occasions. The village then is a harmonious resolution of the tensions between the Global and the Local. Our polyphonic, intersectional identities have been faithfully translated so that we have produced a hybrid life-text by which newness has come into the world (Bhabha 2010).

But newness comes into the world slowly and organically. The notion of cosmopolitanism and the ability to assert one's membership of a global community beyond borders is one which I embrace with passion in my own life as a linguist practising linguistic hospitality. When cosmopolitanism, however, is interpreted as showing disregard for local communities, such as, for example, the non-payment of local taxation, or the EU's universal imposition of freedom of movement, the concept takes on an ethical dimension. The etymology of the word 'hospitality' itself is interestingly derived from the Latin *hostis*, 'enemy' (Skeat 1981). And hospitality, if abused, can turn to hostility. The biblical and ecological injunction in a post-Brexit, global context is that we should act as the stewards of our environment, looking after the local and the global in a way that leads to harmony, not discord.

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Endnotes

[1] This naturally brings to mind Appiah's (2000) understanding of translation as 'thick', that is, a translation the project of which is a 'genuinely informed respect for others'.

[2] All participants have been anonymised in accordance with the University's Ethics policy in order to protect their identity and these are fictitious names.

[3] See Robinson-Pant and Wolf's (2017) book 'Researching across Languages and Cultures' for more details about the understanding of divergent inferences and speakers' intentions.

METHODS IN GENDER STUDIES

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Abstract: The main objective of the paper is to describe the way different methods can be implemented when analysing gender connected phenomena in language and communication. In order to demonstrate the role of recipient in constructing gender identity of the text, a survey questionnaire was designed. Additionally, a method of interviewing people was used to find gender differences in the speech behaviour of native English speakers. The results of the experiment allow the authors to conclude that these kinds of research tools are objectively useful in collecting and analysing data which provide valuable factual information on personal interpretations of the gender factor in spoken and written language behaviour. Apart from this, it became quite evident that the interpretation of the results derived from both questionnaires and interviews should take into account psychological and cultural aspects of the issue.

Keywords: gender, survey questionnaire, interview, text perception, recipient, stereotype, speech behaviour.

0 Introduction

Gender studies as a multidisciplinary field of science possess a vast arsenal of methods used in the social sciences and the humanities, including interviewing, participant observation, focus group surveys, survey questionnaire, textual and content analysis. Such a variety of techniques has been caused by a proliferation of gender oriented researches in different fields of science, in general, and in linguistics, in particular. Gender has become an essential component of the anthropological approach to language material, in accordance with extralinguistic factors like social and cultural background, time/period parameters. In this respect, literary texts and poetic texts, inter alia, are of a crucial interest as they present a sufficient bulk of characteristics through which the gender factor can be traced.

From the very early stage of its development, Gender Linguistics showed great interest in studying the specificity of speech behaviour determined by the social status of the speaker. The methodology of structured interview developed by William Labov and first applied by him in New York City in 1964 (Labov 1966) appeared to be one of the most effective means of collecting sociolinguistic data. The results of Labov's interview revealed a certain correlation between a number of vernacular pronunciation forms and a social status of the speaker. What is more, women's speech behaviour appeared to be more correct in terms of normative phonetics, compared with men's, this tendency being observed in all social groups.

Peter Trudgill used Labov's methodology when studying the differences in speech patterns determined by social and gender status of respondents in Norwich in 1972 (Trudgill 1974). The results of Trudgill's survey confirmed the hypothesis of a more correct women's speech behaviour, normative grammar being the sociolinguistic variable in that research. A great number of surveys that followed were based on interviews of various types, proving them to be a very efficient tool for gathering data on gender differences in speech communication.

1 Gender differences in text perception

1.1 An overview of research papers focused on the problem of text perception

Gender paradigm constructed by means of language in a particular text is liable to spread far beyond the text boundaries, thus turning into some generalised gender marked image in the recipient's mind and rendering the main idea of the utterance which is expressed implicitly. There is little doubt that the recipient's perception of the text makes a huge contribution to constructing its gender paradigm.

For confirmation of this idea one can turn to the vast data of research papers which focused on the problem of text perception. It has been stated as obvious that perception of any text primarily involves its recognition. A reader will go through several stages: cognize means of uncommon verbalization, correlate them with their background knowledge and thus construct a new context (Simashko 1996, 22). The relevance of background knowledge in the process of regarding the semantic content of the text is also the focus of Cappelen and Lepore's (1998) paper.

According to Brudny, the process of perceiving and interpreting the text is quite a complicated mechanism, which is based upon interaction of

two major parts. One part exists directly in the text – its semantics and structure. The other part occurs in the recipient's mind and memory (Brudny 1975, 112-113). Every language bears features of cultural realia of the society it circulates in serving its culture properly.

Relative to the literary text, Vysotskaya (1983) believes that, in order to comprehend this kind of text, a recipient is supposed to acquire the following reader's skills: the ability to recreate in their imagination life pictures depicted by the author, sensitiveness to the feelings of the characters and to the emotional side of the text in general, the capacity to recognise author's intentions, the ability to conceive the logical-semantic representation of the text, and to produce personal evaluation of all text components. (Vysotskaya 1983, 233).

The phenomenon of perceiving the text as a complicated and multicomponent process is approached in the work "Text and Communication" by Kamenskaya (1990). She confirms that comprehending the text does not only consist in getting and processing the text information but also involves some preliminary stages. On this account she indicates the following main levels of the whole process: motivation, intention, recipient communicative activity and understanding the text (Kamenskaya 1990).

Accordingly, while analysing the process of perceiving the text, and the literary text in particular, we can assume the following. First, it is inappropriate to neglect language differences of the texts of different gender authors as this factor directly influences the way a reader interprets it. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the recipient's gender is not less important while understanding, evaluating the text and forming preferences concerning it. A recipient is not able to get rid of their social background, upbringing, sex. So it is a mistaken approach to talk about neutral reading: the recipient's gender influences the process of text comprehension and evaluation. In the words of Rytkonen (2000, 6-10), reading the text is a cultural activity as well as creating it. And as Cherneyko (1996, 45) remarks, life experience of a reader contributes greatly to the whole process of assessing the text.

And finally, the process under consideration is also determined by social notions or, according to Todorov (1975, 54), "common opinion", or what in the current paper we will interpret in terms of stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. There are several concepts on gender stereotypes introduced in gender studies. Among the most original works in this field is Unger's (1979) theory, which postulates that gender and its components (gender stereotypes, gender norms, gender roles and gender identity) can vary on a continuum going from extreme masculinity to extreme femininity.

The reference to the researches mentioned above can be indeed a very strong argument for carrying out an experiment to find evidence of the recipient's contribution to constructing the gender paradigm of the literary text, in general, and the poetic text in particular.

1.2 Details of the survey questionnaire aimed at determining the author's gender by the readers

We now turn to a more detailed examination of the experiment conducted. It was carried out in the form of a survey questionnaire with the main objective to determine the way in which the text author's gender can be recognised by readers.

The group of subjects comprised 200 people. The age scale for male respondents was from 17 to 50, for female respondents – from 17 to 66. Other social parameters of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The participants in the experiment

Nationality	University students		University teachers	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
British	23	5	-	1
Russian	140	14	12	5

The respondents were given two poetic texts in English that were unknown to them. If the given texts turned out to be familiar to them they did not take part in the experiment. The first text is Edgar Allan Poe's poem *To F*[1] (Poe 1845/1999). The second text was written by Emily Dickinson (1890/2000)[2].

The respondents' task was to guess which text was created by a man and which one by a woman. They were also supposed to give an explanation of their decision, based on the following criteria: word choice, style, grammar structures, plus a criterion of their own choice. This last one was introduced in the questionnaire to let respondents reveal their personal opinions and ideas in their own words. They were also supposed to give their comments on the given criteria (word choice, style, grammar structures). This kind of approach seems quite reasonable in the light of critical arguments expressed by some researchers regarding a survey questionnaire as a method of collecting data. They claim that a survey questionnaire of a closed standardized type makes a respondent only follow the researcher's words instead of feeling free to use their own (Voronina 2001, 97). There is every reason to accept this point of view. A closed type

questionnaire may put rigid limits to the range of ideas, arguments, points of view a respondent might wish to express. Consequently, a researcher may fail to discover a verified fact, some new approach, and may fail to see beyond the scope of their own expectations and forecasts of the experiment. So we found it important to provide respondents with an opportunity not only to choose the options given in the questionnaire, but give them a free choice to decide what they think is important in identifying gender markers in the texts. With this purpose in mind, they were also asked to express their own preferences regarding the given poetic texts. If we mark the poetic text written by the male author as Text 1 and the one by the female author as Text 2, the results of the experiment will appear as follows.

Table 2. Data of those who guessed the authors correctly

Parameters	Male	Female	Preferred Text 1		Preferred Text 2	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
Native speakers	4	11	3	3	-	7
University teachers, non-native speakers	3	6	-	3	3	3
Students, non-native speakers	7	96	1	18	5	72
Total number	14	113	4	24	8	82

Table 3. Criteria for the correct choice (M = Male, F = Female)

Parameters	Word choice		Style		Grammar structures		The respondents' own criterion	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Native speakers	2	10	1	5	1	2	2	4
University teachers, non-native speakers	3	5	3	4	1	3	1	2
Students, non-native speakers	3	69	2	72	-	18	2	17
Total number	8	84	6	81	2	23	3	23

Table 4. Data of those who failed to guess the authors correctly

Parameters	Male	Female	Preferred Text 1		Preferred Text 2	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
Native speakers	2	12	1	5	1	6
University teachers, non-native speakers	2	6	-	3	-	2
Students, non-native speakers	7	44	3	13	3	30
Total number	11	62	4	21	4	38

Table 5. Criteria for the wrong choice (M = Male, F = Female)

Parameters	Word choice		Style		Grammar structures		The respondents' own criterion	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Native speakers	1	9	1	3	1	-	2	4
University teachers, non-native speakers	1	4	-	4	-	1	1	1
Students, non-native speakers	3	26	5	30	1	-	4	11
Total number	5	39	6	37	2	1	6	16

If we analyse data from Tables 4 and 5, it is essential to emphasize that these respondents' final choice was determined by their own vision of female and male manner of writing. They were so much entrenched in it that they could not take into consideration any facts that would contradict their opinions. Nevertheless, these respondents' reasons are worth taking into account because they provide insights into the way the social and personal stereotypes of femininity and masculinity influence perceiving gender marked factors of the poetic text.

It should also be noted that respondents in Tables 4 and 5 found the following criteria as the ground for their choice: emotional value of the

texts, mood, semantics of the texts, authors' positions/points of view, intuition, idea of the texts, expressiveness, flowing syllables, authors' feelings, musicality, rhythm.

Returning to the objectives of the experiment, we can aver that it was fulfilled: according to Table 2, more than half of respondents (127 out of 200) guessed the gender of the authors correctly. As data from Table 2 demonstrates, 8 men out of 14 and 82 women out of 113 gave their preferences to the female author's text while 4 men and 24 women preferred the male author's text to the female author's.

Data from Table 4 shows that 4 men and 21 women decided they liked the male author's text, which actually was female authored, and 4 men and 38 women liked the female authored text, interpreted by the respondents as a male authored one. The following fact can be of a special interest: when giving their explanations on the choices made, some female respondents from the native speakers' group gave the following comments: "They (men) always moan about losing their women", "Love poems lamenting the loss of someone tend to be written by men". This kind of opinions can be explained by a tendency to correlate a concept of femininity with some qualities that traditionally were considered as male ones (for example, lack of tenderness and sentimentality, toughness, determination). Under the influence of the feminist movement, gender marked stereotypes were reevaluated and a process of changing gender roles was activated through social practices. The above mentioned comments were produced by British women aged from 18 to 23; they may be put down to the fact that feminist ideas were initiated and became widely spread and enjoyed great popularity in the Western part of the world much earlier than in Russia. So young British women treat the world around them according to a new system of values and concepts, where gender barriers are destroyed and stereotypes have been reconsidered.

The male respondents who guessed the authors' gender correctly justified their decision by offering the opinion that male poetry is more metaphoric and full of symbols, it is more abstract and abrupt. To their mind, female authored poetic texts are more spiritual, clearer, easier to understand and more smoothly flowing.

Female respondents from Table 2 believed that male poetry was closer to the real world, being characterised by a somewhat abrupt style, containing more verbs, and expressing passion and stormy feelings. Female poetry was seen as less complex, clear, laconic, sublime, tender, containing tragic notes, suffering, desperation, having more nouns; female poets speak about their feelings and emotions in a clear and precise ways.

In order to have a complete set of characteristics of the texts discussed we should not neglect the interpretations given by those who failed to guess the authors gender correctly. In their opinion, the male author's text (which was actually a female's) is more laconic, precise, philosophical (in the male respondents' opinion); female respondents noted that the male poets (in fact, female poets) were rather sentimental.

Having compared the interpretations given to both texts by respondents we can observe that they coincide in their features and, thus, we come to the conclusion that the texts are really marked by the mentioned characteristics.

The fact that 70% of respondents determined the authors' gender correctly gives us sufficient ground to conclude that, on the whole, a recipient is quite receptive to gender features of the text. It still leaves no doubt that individual personal features of respondents (like their cultural and social background), as well as the author's ones can justify the fact that 30% of respondents failed to come to a correct decision while identifying the texts. As for the majority of preferences given to the female text, it might be a result of its easier perception (Babenkova 2003).

2 Gender differences in speech behaviour

2.1 Review of literature on differences in men's and women's speech

The surveys aimed at studying specific features of speech communication determined by gender became extremely popular and productive against the background of feminists' activity in the Humanities, which became a separate branch of Linguistics, Gender Studies or Gender Linguistics. It should be noted that the researchers' interest in exploring peculiarities of men's and women's speech behaviour within various social strata, age groups, ethnic and culture communities has been growing so far, involving more and more scientists, enriching this scientific prospect with new facts and data (Burenina 2005).

The well-known book "Language and Woman's Place" by Lakoff (1975) is considered to be the first work mentioned in connection with the anthology of Western Gender Linguistics, in which the author defined the stereotype of a woman's behaviour. Lakoff's idea that specific features of woman's speech behaviour are explained by her dependent status in the society (Lakoff 1975) had existed for many years