

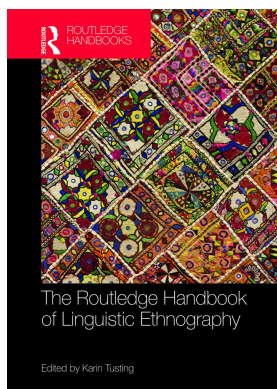
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Reflexivity

Adriana Patiño-Santos

Introduction and definitions

This chapter addresses reflexivity as a central aspect of research in the situated study of language, a stance taken by linguistic ethnography (LE) and shared with other perspectives on communication, such as linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 1997) and critical sociolinguistics (Heller, 1996[2006], Martín Rojo, 2010). Broadly speaking, “ethnography aims to describe the sometimes chaotic, contradictory, polymorph character of human behaviour in concrete settings” (Blommaert, 2007, p. 682). Since researchers are likely to follow threads, tie them together, categorise and identify patterns, and bring their own particular perspective against a background of previous research in the area to the table, such indeterminacy finds some order when researchers acknowledge joint responsibility for the knowledge production process in which they participate when doing ethnography. Since the term ‘reflexivity’ can refer to epistemological positioning in research as well as decisions taken regarding research practices (in fact Foley (2002, p. 473) defines it as “a slippery term”), when I speak of ‘methodological reflexivity’ in the research context I take it to encompass reflexive practices stemming from a variety of perspectives, whether they be epistemological considerations or the researcher’s questioning of his or her own socio-political, cultural, ideological or other forms of personal subjectivity. The need to recognise the essential role that the researcher’s subjectivity plays throughout the process of language research, and the ways in which it imbues the research produced, is part of the poststructuralist stance in the social sciences that was initiated in the 1960s.

As Rampton et al. (2015, p. 16) state:

Ethnography recognises the ineradicable role that the researcher’s personal subjectivity plays throughout the research process. It looks to systematic field strategies and to accountable analytic procedures to constrain self-indulgent idiosyncrasy, and expects researchers to face up to the partiality of their interpretations (Hymes, [1978] 1996, p.13). But the researcher’s own cultural and interpretive capacities are crucial in making sense of the complex intricacies of situated everyday activity among the people being studied, and tuning into these takes time and close involvement.

The acknowledgement of the presence of the researcher's subjectivity takes various forms, as we shall see in this chapter, and researcher and methodological reflexivities need to be exercised throughout the research process in order to clarify the epistemological, methodological and analytical decisions taken. In addition, a constant monitoring of, and (when needed) adjustment to the research process is necessary. For this reason, just as we cannot take for granted the contexts that we investigate (Rampton, 2010), neither can the context of the research itself nor the complexities of the construction of the field be taken for granted, or indeed removed from the results that we present (see Papen, this volume). From that point of view, research is not a neutral act, but the product of the social relations and practical conditions under which we conduct our fieldwork. Those practical conditions include personal relevancies (motivations, cultural frames of meaning), practical contingencies, sometimes difficult to anticipate, and ways of dealing with them (challenges met with in the field, establishing relationships with participants, etc.), as well as the form in which we decide to represent the results or create the final product (Heller, 2009).

Methodological reflexivity is vital to the research process, since there are no prescribed recipes for using particular methods and tools for data collection and analysis. As noted by Copland and Creese (2015, p. 29),

Linguistic ethnography does not prescribe a set of data collection and analysis tools. Researchers working from a linguistic ethnographic perspective have a range of research interests and investigate these interests in different and various ways. Nonetheless, data are collected and analysed and particular ways of doing data collection and analysis are particularly salient, given the joint focus on linguistics and ethnography.

This obliges us to make explicit the principles that we will follow and to offer a rationale for the methodological choices we make (when presenting the analytical tools and procedures, methods for gathering and analysing data, etc.) and the ways in which we choose to represent the results (for example, using a narrative or a 'realistic' style).

Methodological reflexivity has been addressed by linguistic ethnographers and practitioners of related disciplines in various forms, as I will discuss in the following sections. Sections 4 and 5 will be the central part of this chapter, since they present some of the current research areas and contributions to reflexivity in LE, as well as illustrate some practical issues.

Historical perspectives

As Hymes (1996, p. 4) reminded us, since the earliest works that could be considered ethnographic – such as those of Malinowski, Boas and Sapir – ethnographers “had an interest in documenting and interpreting a wide range of a way of life” in a comprehensive way. Those interests are not detached from the ethnographer's own idiosyncrasies, as highlighted in the quote from Rampton et al. (2015) quoted earlier. Reflexivity, in this sense, implies giving a systematic account of the kind of questions we ask and the approaches to collecting the data, the analysis of which will allow us to answer our initial questions, questions that might be modified by the contingencies of the fieldwork and analytical process.

Important reflections on methodological reflexivity in sociolinguistics, coming from sociology and anthropology, were explored by Sarangi and Candlin in a chapter published in 2001, reflections which I certainly believe apply to LE. The authors discussed reflexivity by drawing our attention to Goffman's *motivational relevancies* and Bourdieu's *points of view* regarding microsocial investigation. *Motivational relevancies* is a term Goffman borrows from Schutz

(1962) in order “to make the point that social scientists study social phenomena in line with their own preferred motivations” (2001, p. 368), and *point of view* is used by Bourdieu (1992) to emphasise that “the point or source of any ‘view’ is inseparable from what is viewed” (2001, p. 365). Sarangi and Candlin point out the importance of acknowledging our motivational relevancies at various levels. For example, when defining ‘context’ (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992), we need to consider *where* to look, *what* to look at and *how*. Importantly, Cicourel’s (1982, p. 15) question on ‘ecological validity’ becomes central to the *how*: “Do our instruments capture the daily life conditions, opinions, values, attitudes, and knowledge base of those we study as expressed in their natural habitat?” Thus, when conducting interviews or surveys, such questions encourage us to consider those aspects of comprehension that we assume to be shared with our co-participants and to scrutinise the way we word questions in order to avoid embedding our own views or assumptions into them, and to revise the types of questions we ask so as not to constrain the participants’ answers, amongst many other pitfalls. (See De Fina, this volume, on interviews from an ethnographic perspective.)

From the beginning, LE has been in continual dialogue with the social sciences in general regarding theory and method, in various academic publications (e.g. special issues such as those edited by Tusting and Maybin (2007) and Flynn et al. (2010), and handbook and encyclopaedia chapters like Creese (2008), Rampton (2010), and Maybin and Tusting (2011), amongst many others), but also through doctoral and postdoctoral pedagogical arenas. One of these is the two- to five-day training programme for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, run since 2007, “Ethnography, Language & Communication (ELC)”, a summer course in which participants have had the opportunity to examine and evaluate the efficiency of the analytical tools developed initially by linguistic anthropology, as well as synergies between LE and their own fields, through data sessions and workshops (see Rampton et al., 2015). A second instance has been through two sets of working papers: *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies* (hosted by King’s College) and the *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, which have become important platforms from which linguistic ethnographers have reflected upon theory and methodological contingencies. The open-access nature of these working papers has given early researchers and people interested in linguistics and ethnography the opportunity to engage in ongoing debates in the field, including methodological research. Thus, for example, in Number 138 of the Tilburg Papers *Dialogues with Ethnography*, Blommaert (2015) brings together a selection of papers in which he presents his interpretation of Hymes’s, Bourdieu’s and Bakhtin’s theories, amongst others. Each paper introduces important aspects of reflexivity, including Bakhtin’s *intertextuality*, which allows us to recognise the dialogical and polyphonic natures of ethnography (see Blackledge & Creese, this volume).

Critical issues and debates

Both methodological and personal reflexivities have been addressed in LE by various authors in looking at researchers’ identities and the roles they play in the field. Meanwhile, the concepts of ‘voice’, ‘heteroglossia’ and ‘metacommentary’ have been discussed when giving an account of the various methodological procedures that lead us to bring together information from diverse data sources (institutional documents, field notes, diaries, artefacts, etc.) and construct a coherent narrative or argument. This will be discussed further below.

The relationship between the researcher and those who are researched, and the way in which knowledge is produced – including the forms in which data are represented – need to be addressed overtly in the final product of our research. Some people use metaphors such as the *research journey* (Heller, 2006[2012]; Martín-Rojo, 2010; Pérez-Milans, 2011; Relaño-Pastor,

2011; Copland & Creese, 2015, amongst many others), the *puzzle* (Patiño-Santos, 2011) and so on, to describe the experience of conducting and writing up an ethnography. The dialogical and polyphonic character of ethnography obliges us to search for the ‘fairest’ way to represent the various voices that we have captured, including our own, as well as the situations that we have documented. As Heller (2009, p. 251) notes, such a heteroglossic practice requires that the story/argument presented in our results be:

an account based on systematic enquiry, conducted according to selection principles which I have to describe and justify [...] in this respect, ethnographies are not about what is sometimes referred to as ‘giving voice’ to participants. It is about providing an illuminating account for which the researcher is solely responsible.

So, far from “giving voice”, we reconstruct and represent the voices of the participants, including our own. Acting as a participant implies making a set of decisions and facing dilemmas that need to be negotiated and solved (or not!) as we gain access to various spaces in the field and begin to establish relationships with different participants. That role puts us in a position where power relations need to be negotiated in order to establish egalitarian or collaborative relationships with the social actors of our sites. (See Copland, this volume, and Budach, this volume.) In that sense, the conditions under which we construct our relationships in the field need to be addressed. Who says what to whom? How, and for what reasons?

From this point of view, methodological reflexivity is not a matter of providing a section within a thesis or article in which we describe ‘the role of the researcher’. It is something that needs to be exercised throughout the process of designing (in negotiation with the participants/people/sites) and carrying out our fieldwork, gathering and analysing our data. This implies questioning the idealised research process (Copland & Creese, 2015), in which fieldwork is conducted without significant challenges. Recognising challenges does not necessarily cause the ethnography to become messy, or leave us attempting to organise chaos. Instead, a thorough methodological and research reflexivity informs our decisions and guides the process of finding meaning in what we observe, perceive or experience in the field with our co-participants.

A constant methodological awareness might, however, leave us with the challenge of striking a balance between the representation of the others’ voices and that of our own. As noted by Pérez-Milans (2017, p. 2):

In an attempt to create the foreground for a mediator role for themselves as applied linguists, these researchers contribute to bridging the distance. [...] However, this researcher-centered angle to reflexivity also raises concerns that we researchers may end up foregrounding ourselves, at the expense of attention to other relevant social processes that matter most to our participants/audiences, beyond the research process itself (Heller, 2011).

The researcher’s voice must not dominate the floor. She/he must establish a conversation wherein all the social actors’ expectations, anxieties and points of view/voices are represented.

Current contributions and research areas

The principle of ‘relationality’ (Tsitsipis, 2007) has led us to recognise that the ways in which we construct specific relations with participants shape the meaning co-produced in the field.

Identity construction and negotiation, positioning, voice, metacommentary and intertextuality, as well as roles played by the researchers in the field, have been the conceptual lenses that linguistic ethnographers have used to give an account of the ways in which we have co-constructed meaning with the participants in our research. The same tenet extends to the research design – to what Lamoureux (2011), in drawing attention to all the continually evaluated and adjusted research stages, defines as the “Pre-, In and Post-fieldwork”. This includes our choices of the methods used to gather and analyse data, as well as the stance we take towards the data we collect. Various authors (Hornberger, 2006; Creese, 2015) draw attention to the fact that the degree of agency and the nature of decision-making throughout the research process are sometimes erased from the final results. Linguistic ethnographers have exercised reflexivity in all these areas either as individual researchers or when working in a team.

Examples of reflexive accounts are found in various published works, including journals and recent books on the topic. One of the first collections in which (socio)linguistic ethnographers participated and that looked at researchers’ self-awareness in the field was the volume *Voices from the Field: Identity, Language, and Power in Multilingual Research Settings*, edited by Giampapa and Lamoureux (2011). There, the four participating authors, including myself, reflect upon the politics of identity and positioning in the field. We looked at the negotiation and transformation of our identities throughout the various research steps as we gained access to new areas/dimensions of our fieldwork. Thus for example, Pérez-Milans (2011, 2013), immersed in the research of language education in three schools in China, discusses the ways in which he negotiated his representation as ‘Westerner’ in the various moments of the research, and the advantages and dilemmas that such representation entailed for his participation in the everyday schools’ activities to which he gained access. Relaño-Pastor, in turn, focusses on the multiple positionings that she, as a researcher of Spanish background, negotiated with a group of Mexican immigrant women participating in the after-school programme ‘La Clase Mágica’ in Southern California. Her interactions with these women led her to understand interview, and more precisely narrative, as a site for transformation when listening to and interpreting their border-crossing stories. She challenged language ideologies concerning ‘correct Spanish’. More recently, two volumes published in 2015, one edited by Copland and Creese, and a second one by Snell, Shaw and Copland have illustrated how linguistic ethnographers work. While the former volume presents four case studies, suggesting forms of addressing practicalities (i.e. regarding transcription, translation, ethics, etc.) when doing LE, the latter, containing 12 articles, looks at the synergies and possible combinations between LE and other fields (journalism, etc.). Two important tenets from these two books are central for methodological reflexivity. The first is that ethnography should not be seen as something “messy and chaotic”. Rather, the ethnographic research process demands continual and thorough methodological reflexivity in order to make sure that the data collected inform the questions that we aim to answer. The second concerns the interdisciplinary agenda of LE. LE, defined by Rampton (2007) as an umbrella term, finds resonances with, and can be combined with other approaches. It can also borrow analytical concepts and methods from other areas. As mentioned earlier, with regard to methodological and analytical tools, LE aligns itself chiefly with linguistic anthropology.

Team ethnography received special attention from Creese, Blackledge and colleagues participating in two research projects on complementary schools (Creese et al., 2008). Various journal articles and book chapters give accounts of the complexities of researching in a team. As they note: “When we engage in such an endeavor in teams of

researchers, the process of meaning-making is both complex and rich with potential.” In 2012, Creese and Blackledge (2012, p. 306) summarised their contributions to this area as follows:

We have previously written accounts of the roles and relationships of teams of ethnographers as they work in collaboration to investigate linguistic practices and identities in multilingual community education settings. Creese and colleagues (2008) analyzed the use of field notes in team ethnography in complementary schools, while Creese and colleagues (2009) focused their attention on multilingual researcher identities. Creese (2008, 2010, 2011) and Blackledge (2011) have written accounts of linguistic ethnography in action. Blackledge and Creese (2010) gave a developed account of working in a multilingual team of researchers, demystifying the research process and making it accessible and understandable to those who teach, study, and research in multilingual educational contexts.

We can complete the list by adding more recent works on methodological reflexivity. Thus, Creese and Blackledge (2012) offered an analytical approach to observing the multiple and competing voices in team research when discussing members’ field notes. Creese and colleagues (2015) expanded the reflection upon notes into the area of participant observation by drawing on the concept of metacommentary as outlined by Rymes (2014) as well as in the use of vignettes (2015). Finally, they addressed ethical issues (2016). A complete case study on team research and the reflexivity practice demanded throughout the process of reconstructing and representing participants’ voices is found in Creese (2015).

All this attention to researchers’ self-monitoring has made it clear that “reflexivity is a crucial dimension of team ethnography, and the collective work of critical reflexivity should enable scientific reason to control itself ever more closely, in and through conflictual cooperation (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 122)” (Creese & Blackledge, 2012, p. 308). From my point of view, one of the most powerful contributions made by Creese and her colleagues has been to draw our attention to the challenges we face as researchers, working either individually or in teams, when reconstructing and representing the polyphony, and the many tensions between the different points of view of the multiple and sometimes competing voices. This work becomes even more difficult

when a team of researchers makes meaning from the voices of others the histories, biographies, and ideologies of the individual researchers come into contact and come into view as they clash, disagree, argue, negotiate, barter, compromise, and even come to agreement.

(Creese & Blackledge, 2012, p. 317)

Creese and the other team members have brought in Bakhtin’s, Vološinov’s, Agha’s, and Bauman and Scherzer’s ideas on the intrinsicities of the multiple perspectives gathered in fieldwork and on the representation of voices in ethnographic work, as well as how we, as reporters of others’ voices, are exercising power relations, not just by including and excluding them, but also in the stance we take towards those voices. They convincingly draw on central concepts, such as intertextuality, heteroglossia, ventriloquation, point of view and voice, to reflect both upon the relationships between researchers and those researched, and on those between team members.

Implications for practice: the backstage of our research

Producing an ethnographic account entails a set of processes stemming from the researcher's personal choices, decisions and reflection, as I have presented throughout this chapter. In this section, as an example of reflexivity in ethnographic research, I will present the methodological questions that allowed me to make sense of a complex process of resistance to the institutional use of the Catalan language in a six-month collaborative investigation into multilingual practices in a secondary school, *Els Quatre Gats* (EQG), from January to July 2008 (Unamuno & Patiño, 2017). I want to show the challenges involved in synthesising the many complexities apparent in the fieldwork into “research findings” (Creese & Blackledge, 2012). As we will see, these complexities ranged from structural ones (e.g. teachers' unstable work situations, the fact that students dropped out once they were 16), to issues surrounding our positioning in the field and the methodological decisions that we had to adjust over the course of the research (e.g. the language used to address the students, the position of the camera when video-recording classroom interaction, how to represent the oral data gathered, amongst many others) (Figure 16.1).

Summary of research

Research project: Multilingual competences of secondary school students: continuities and discontinuities between educational and non-educational practices. (SEJ2007-62147-EDUC-Spanish Ministry of Education and Science.)

Background: A multilingual school located in a working class area, on the outskirts of Barcelona. Catalan is the official language of the school, but Spanish is the dominant language for social relations. Other repertoires spoken at the school are Spanish from Latin America (Ecuadorian and, to a lesser extent, Colombian and Peruvian), Arabic (Moroccan variety), Berber and Punjabi. The school has the reputation of catering to non-academically orientated students. Teachers faced various dilemmas over whether to impose Catalan or allowing the students to use Spanish in all the areas of the school, as well as dilemmas regarding their own positions at the school. Most of them were non permanent.

Team aim: Collaborative research aimed at observing the continuities and discontinuities between language practices at school and those in the family home (Unamuno and Patiño-Santos 2017). Eight documentaries on the multilingual practices of the students inside and outside the school were produced by them and the research team.

Data collection: six-month data collection. Participant observation, group interview with the language teaching department of the school, classroom interaction and videos co-designed and co-produced by the students and the research team. Following the ethical principles of qualitative research, the participants (teachers, managerial staff, students and parents) gave their consent to participate in the research, and the names of the school and the participants have been anonymised.

My personal interest: Parallel to the research team's aims, children of Latin American behaviour became my focus of attention. Latin Americans, far from being integrated, refuse to speak the language of social access in Catalonia. Refusing to speak Catalan is seen as a sign of being a non-academically orientated student within the Catalan education system and entails consequences going beyond the classroom.

Figure 16.1 Summary of research

The school culture at EQG: the opposing voices of dogmatism and boredom

First method: participant observation

During the six-month data collection, I could observe how the dynamics of the class regarding language behaviour remained unchanged: the teacher and I spoke in Catalan, but most of the students, mainly those of Latin American backgrounds replied in Spanish. These students questioned why I, a researcher of Latin American background myself, did not speak Spanish with them. In one of the first sessions, one of the students complained to me: “Miss, speak normal. You are like us.” My concern over the fact that their lack of Catalan would deny social opportunities to these students led me to attempt to provide some sort of model for them.

Some points for the reflexive researcher to consider:

- What previous personal experience of the wider social situation forming a backdrop to this particular ethnography do I have?
- In what ways might such previous personal experience colour my understanding of the other participants’ positionings at this particular site, of the interactions I observe between them, and my own interactions with them?
- What are the possible consequences of the conscious decision I made as a Latin American researcher to interact with Latin American students in Catalan, rather than our own shared first language?
- Does this apparent alignment with the teaching staff and the language policy of the school create a barrier to the establishment of relations of sufficient trust with the students and thereby impact the chances of their speaking openly with me?

As a closing activity of the collaborative work, Belen, the teacher and three members of our research team explained to the other language teachers what we had done. However, in the course of the interaction, there was space for the teachers to discuss and reflect upon their views of their students’ behaviour and language uses in the school. As a methodological decision, we transcribed the oral data (interviews and classroom interaction) using transcription conventions adapted from Schegloff (2007), presented below. The inclusion of the voices of the participants when reporting our ethnography is a way to acknowledge the polyphonic nature of LE.

Second method: group interview

Participants: Teachers: Belen, Roser, Pep, Montse (names are pseudonymised for ethical reasons) and three researchers: Virginia, Óscar and Adriana (Figure 16.2).

In this extract, Belen defines the collaborative activity as “a discovery” and a learning experience, as a response to my question in the previous turn. She makes sense of her “discovery” by offering a rationale constructed through a small story (Georgakopoulou, 2007) where she defines her usual practice as “sometimes you’re dogmatic:” in contrast to being more flexible. Dogmatic is defined as carrying out the usual activities: following the instructions in the textbook and focussing on grammar content. Belen’s definition of dogmatism was central for my reconstruction of the practices that I observed in EQGs, as discussed further below.

The teachers’ dilemmas regarding their own practices in this school, and the material conditions under which they carried them out – all of which I witnessed during the

<p>ADR <i>si pero si vols explicar una mica el treball de classe... que jo he portat una mica les fitxes:</i></p> <p>BEL <i>ah val (.) a veure sobretot el que a mi em va encantar:: (...) si una descoberta, un tast (.) no . de diferents:: a mi també m'ha servit per aprendre molt [la intervenció didàctica:: perquè jo no m'havia plantejat mai una classe tan diversa (.) no . i treien tant de partit a tot el que saben els nanos (.) no . (.) normalment és com més:: tires més a ser dogmàtic (.) no . i: per que a vegades de dogmàtic i :: deixes anar pel llibre:: (.) toquen els verbs (.) toca això (.) toca allò (.) toca: i a vegades no :: (.) no ets mes flexible:: (.) no ets tan obert</i></p>	<p>ADR <i>yes but if you'd like to explain a bit the work in the classroommm..I've been in charge of the handouts:</i></p> <p>BEL: <i>oh OK (.) well the thing I enjoyed the most:: (...)</i> <i>yes a discovery [the didactic intervention] (.) a taste(.) right .of various:: to me it has been very useful (.) (.) I've learned a lot:: because I've never thought about such a mixed class (.) you know ↑they start out with such wide-ranging knowledge (.) you know . (.) normally it's like more more:: (.) you tend to be dogmatic (.) right . and: because sometimes you're dogmatic:: (.) you follow what the textbook says:: (.) time for verbs (.) we have to do this (.) to do that (.) we have to: and sometimes you're not:: (.) you're not more flexible :: (.) you're not very open</i></p>
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Figure 16.2 Group interview extract

fieldwork – also emerged in the discussion. Three of the five Catalan teachers at the school were in a situation of temporary employment, and two of them had not been trained in language education. Neither Roser, the head of the Catalan department who had a degree in Maths, nor Belen or Montse had permanent contracts in the school. In fact, Montse was a substitute teacher at the time of our meeting (she was covering for somebody on maternity leave) and Belen was assigned to another school in the area the following year.

Some points for the reflexive researcher to consider:

- What kind of information will I be able to collect by organising group interviews?
- Would individual interviews allow me to gather the same information?
- What kind of questions would allow me to make the interview a space for the participants' own reflexivity about their own practices rather than a place where they feel they are being assessed?

Constructing dogmatism and boredom in the practices of the classroom

Third method: classroom interaction and field notes

After finishing the fieldwork and taking a look at the interactional data collected, I started to realise how 'dogmatism', as defined by Belen above, was enacted in the interactional data of the classroom. From more than 30 hours recorded in various classes, the data coming from the Catalan class in Year 3C turned out to be the most suitable to show how 'dogmatism' and the ways in which the students responded to it were performed in the classroom interactions. This class is an extreme example of students challenging teachers' authority.

Figure 16.3 presents the distribution of the participants in this class: the Catalan teacher, 12 students (eight of Latin American backgrounds and four Catalans, two of 'gitano' backgrounds). Our focus will be on four males: Jason from the Dominican Republic, Dani and Javi from Ecuador, and Ramon, Catalan.



Figure 16.3 The class

The topic has been established following a textbook. It is the conjugation of irregular verbs in a tense chosen by the teacher. The first activity involves the teacher selecting a student and giving him/her a verb to be conjugated in a particular tense (see Figure 16.4). She writes the results on the board. The students challenge the teacher's authority by questioning the activity. Each group of participants draws on certain artefacts: the teacher employs a traditional book of verbs and their conjugations, well-known in Catalonia (Xuriguera, 2006), the textbook and the board; the students use the camera to contest the order of the class.

The interaction illustrates the dynamics of the activity and some of the main analytical tools that allowed me to give an account of the tension created by the dogmatism-resistance dynamics of the classroom:

- 1 Turn allocation: The usually dominant Initiation, Response, Evaluation sequence characteristic of classroom discourse (IRE sequence) (Cazden, 1988) is broken by four male participants. Thus, for example, in T2, the teacher selects a student (Sandra) and assigns her a verb and a tense to conjugate “romandre” (an old form of “stay”) in the relevant tense. The teacher evaluates the answer in T8 by writing it on the board. The sequence is disturbed by Dani's self-selection in T5 and Jason's games with the camera, as illustrated in Figure 16.5.
- 2 Participation framework: Over the course of the activity, four male students start to perform a set of disruptive actions for the camera: Jason, Dani, Ramon and Javi. Jason (as observed in Figure 16.5) takes on the role of the clown, Dani, Ramon and Javi enact the role of “critics”, questioning the activity and the teacher's authority, as we can see in T 33. There, Dani points out the unchallenging nature of the activity: “the thing is(.) anyone seeing this recording will think we're stupid (.) doing verbs (.) to sing (.) I SING (.) you SING,” while his classmates laugh.

<p>→ 1. JAS: aquí estoy mejor (se mueve y mira a la cámara y a Dani) (risas)</p> <p>→ 2. PRO: <i>romandre</i> (.) va (.) <i>vinga</i> (.) a: (.) <i>l'imperfect de romandre</i> (.) Sandra↑ (.) [ru'mandrə]</p> <p>3. SAN: (.)°</p> <p>→ 4. PRO: <i>l'infinitiu</i></p> <p>5. DAN: <i>no ho sé</i> (.) ton ton (risas y voces paralelas)</p> <p>6. PRO: (()) <i>l'imperfect de romandre</i></p> <p>7. SAN: (.)°</p> <p>8. PRO: <i>romania</i> [ru'manía] (se gira y comienza a escribir en la pizarra) (Jason se cambia de silla. Gira la cabeza, mira a la cámara, risas aisladas) (...)</p> <p>15. JAV: [Rumanía y eso qué es.]° (.) qué es eso (.) que viene de Rumania o qué.</p> <p>16. PRO: (()) <i>vosaltres</i>.</p> <p>17. SAN: <i>romanieu</i></p> <p>18. PRO: (.) [<i>l'atra?</i>] <i>acent en la vocal:</i> la i (Jason mira a sus colegas y hace silencio con el dedo, mira a la cámara. Ramon se levanta, se dirige a la puerta y comienza a peinarse. Conversación paralela entre Dani, Ramón y Jason.</p> <p>19. DAN: Ramón (.) tienes el culo manchado (señala la parte posterior del pantalón)</p> <p>20. NIC: (a la izquierda pregunta) (<i>romandre</i> es un verbo.)°</p> <p>21. PRO: (a Nicole) <i>romadre</i> es un verbo:: (Ramon se dirige a su silla y se levanta Jason) (...)</p> <p>24. PRO: <u>Jason</u></p> <p>25. JAS: [se levanta y habla a la cámara] esta clase es un caos! (risas)</p> <p>26. PRO: Jason (.) <i>vale seu</i> (()) (risas) (conversación inaudible entre la profesora y Jason en donde deciden que Jason conjugará el verbo <i>canviar</i> (...)</p> <p>→ 33. DAN: qué pasa(.) que el que vea esta grabación va a pensar que somos tontos (.) poniendo verbos (.) cantar (.) <u>YO CANTO</u>(.) tú CANTAS (risas) (la profesora mira a Dani, risas. La profesora mira a Jason indicándole que debe empezar a conjugar “canviar”)</p>	<p>→ 1. JAS: I'm better here (he moves and looks at the camera and at Dani) (laughs)</p> <p>→ 2. PRO: <i>stay</i> (the Catalan for stay sounds like Romania in Spanish) (.) OK (.) come on (.) a: (.) past imperfect of to stay (.) Sandra↑ (.)</p> <p>3. SAN: (.)°</p> <p>→ 4. PRO: <i>the infinitive</i></p> <p>5. DAN: <i>I don't know</i> (.) ton ton (laughs and parallel conversations)</p> <p>6. PRO: (()) <i>the past perfect of to stay</i></p> <p>7. SAN: (.)°</p> <p>8. PRO: <i>was staying</i> (she turns and starts writing on the board) (Jason moves to the chair on his left. He turns his head, looks at the camera, isolated laughs) (...)</p> <p>15. JAV: [was staying (.) what's that.]° (.) what's that (.) that comes from Romania (.) or what.</p> <p>16. PRO: (()) <i>you</i>.</p> <p>17. SAN: <i>you were staying</i></p> <p>18. PRO: (.) [the other?] <i>stress on the vowel xxx i</i> (Jason looks at his friends and indicates silence with his finger, he looks at the camera) Ramón stands up, goes to the door and starts combing his hair. Parallel conversation between Dani, Ramón and Jason.</p> <p>19. DAN: Ramón (.) you've got a mark on your bottom (he points to the back of his trousers)</p> <p>20. NIC: (on the left, asks) (<i>to stay</i> is a verb.)°</p> <p>21. PRO: (to Nicole) <i>to stay</i> es un verbo:: (Ramón goes back to his chair and Jason stands up) (...)</p> <p>24. PRO: <u>Jason</u></p> <p>25. JAS: (stands up and talks to the camera) this class is chaotic! (laughs)</p> <p>26. PRO: Jason (.) OK sit down (()) (laughs) (inaudible conversation between the teacher and Jason in which they decide that Jason will conjugate the verb <i>to change</i>. (...)</p> <p>→ 33. DAN: the thing is(.) anyone seeing this recording will think we're stupid (.) doing verbs (.) to sing (.) <u>I SING</u> (.) you SING (laughs) (the teacher looks at Dani, laughs. The teacher looks at Jason indicating that he should start to conjugate “canviar” (to change)</p>
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Figure 16.4 Classroom interaction extract

- 3 Artefacts used by the participants: The teacher draws on the reference book of verbs and her knowledge to defend her didactic authority. The students use the camera and the presence of the researcher to perform various identities and signal boredom.
- 4 Representation of the data: I decided to present the original data gathered in Catalan with a translation into English. I transcribed the interaction using some of Jefferson's transcription signs (Figure 16.6), combining some comments from my fieldwork diary because I believed that this would allow me to transmit the atmosphere of the classrooms at EQG.



Figure 16.5 Jason talking to the camera to the astonishment of his classmates and the teacher

<u>Transcription conventions</u> (adapted from Schegloff, 2007)			
[]	overlapping speech	=	latching utterances
(.)	micropause	Underlining	contrastive stress or emphasis
:	lengthening of the sound of preceding letter	CAPS	indicates volume of speech
-	word cut-off	()°	markedly softer speech
.	falling or final intonation	SPA:	extract in Spanish
?	rising or question intonation	CAT:	extract in Catalan

Figure 16.6 Transcription conventions

In this interaction, various aspects are relevant for the study of resistance to the teachers' demands, such as turn allocation.

A general overview allows us to observe the ways actors participate in this class, including their language uses: the teacher only speaks in Catalan and the students' preferred language is Spanish, even though they sometimes use Catalan in a parodic way in order to carry out different actions (mockery in the case of Javi in T15, clowning when Jason talks to the camera, etc.). None of the activities encourages the students to speak in Catalan. In the first activity, the only Catalan elicited is the conjugation of isolated verbs, taken from a list, in a particular tense.

Some points for the reflexive researcher to consider:

- To what extent might the presence of the researcher and/or the camera or recording equipment constrain or exaggerate the behaviour of the participants (both the teacher and the students)?
- How can my choices when positioning the recording equipment in the space – in terms of how apparent it is, its proximity to certain participants (rather than others), the camera angle, etc. – act as a filter on the data recorded by providing a particular perspective in the final recording?
- Regarding representation: How will my later transcription of the interactive data affect the way it is subsequently interpreted?

Epilogue

Attention to all these pieces of data allowed me to understand the ways in which these participants constructed the category ‘dogmatic teaching’ and the responses from the students, mostly of Latin American backgrounds. Literature on resistance shows how students of migrant backgrounds engage in social activities rather than academic ones when they do not believe that what they are learning is beneficial to them (Erickson, 1987). Two months later, the teacher was sent to another school and Jason left school when he turned 16. It was only by continually reflecting on my own positioning in the site and the methods and tools that we were using to collect the data that we could manage to identify and analyse the structural and interactional complexities that shaped the relationships in this school. Thus, for example, realising that language choice (between Spanish and Catalan), and the roles that I decided to play in various moments (as an assistant teacher, as a researcher) had consequences for the relationships that I established with the various groups of social actors involved (students and teachers), and hence for the data that I/we collected. Methodological reflexivity was also important in deciding on the methods that we used to gather the data. Thus, we realised that asking questions within a formal interview might be received by the teachers as an assessment of their work. For that reason, integrating into their own daily activities, such as routine teachers’ meetings and inviting them to reflect upon their own practices created a friendly space for critical self-reflection within a group discussion. Reflexivity also helped us recognise unexpected behaviour at the sites we visited, and how to cope with this. The fact that the students of Year 3C, for example, used the camera and our presence in the backstage of the class to resist the order of the Catalan lesson challenged our expectations of the students’ behaviour in relation to our presence. Although the other students in the school often felt embarrassed by being observed and recorded, mainly at the beginning of activities, this could not be assumed to be a general pattern of behaviour. We had to look at ways of dealing with the so-called ‘difficult students’, mainly by collaborating with the teachers in the implementation of creative activities. This allowed us to observe the class as members of the didactic team and avoid the danger of the teachers feeling judged, as they might have done in the case of a more ‘passive’ observation. Finally, it should also be noted that this reflexivity was exercised both individually and as a team, which proved to be beneficial in gaining a joint understanding of what was going on in the data (Codó and Patiño-Santos, 2014).

Future directions

There is a general consensus that research in applied linguistics, and particularly in LE, is about “real world” problems (Rampton et al., 2015). This chimes in with the shift in social sciences research in the UK, concerned with interdisciplinary knowledge production. This shift, known as Mode 2 research (Nowotny et al., 2001), has to do with the fact that “the research and higher education funding councils have increased the emphasis on interdisciplinary work that takes real-world problems as a starting point, that involves collaboration with stakeholders, and that reckons explicitly with impacts beyond the academy” (Rampton et al., 2015). An example of this is the ongoing project *Translation and Translanguaging*, a linguistic ethnographic research project on multilingual practices in public and private settings in four sites: Birmingham, Cardiff, Leeds and London. The research is being conducted in collaboration with universities in each ward, in the domains of *business and entrepreneurship, sport, libraries and museums, and legal advice*. (<http://www.birmingham>.

ac.uk/generic/tlang/index.aspx). I consider that interdisciplinarity in this sense calls for methodological reflexivity when collaborating with stakeholders and communities outside academia as well as when considering ways of presenting results, both to academics and to general audiences.

Further reading

- Blommaert, J. (2018). *Dialogues with ethnography. Notes on classics, and how I read them*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. (Blommaert engages in an epistemological reflective exercise by presenting and discussing the authors that have influenced his views on ethnography. Ideas from Bourdieu, Fabian, Cicourel and Hymes, amongst many others, are traced to show the path of this influence explicitly. Bakhtin's ideas are brought to the field to open avenues on the implication on dialogism and heteroglossia in ethnography.)
- Copland, F., Creese, A., Rock, F., & Shaw, S.E. (2015). *Linguistic ethnography: Collecting, analysing and presenting data*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi: Sage. (This practical book focusses on four case studies in which the authors present their research practices by looking at their choices throughout the research process they followed. The book shows how dealing with complexities and decision-making are aspects of doing linguistic ethnography.)
- Snell, J., Shaw, S., & Copland, F. (Eds.) (2015). *Linguistic ethnography: Interdisciplinary explorations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. (This volume offers, for both established linguistic ethnographers and early career researchers, case studies that illustrate methodological reflexivity when conducting interdisciplinary research, either individually, in teams or collaboratively.)

Related topics

Heteroglossia; Ethics; Participant observation and field notes; Language diversity in classroom settings.

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