Interpreting Cognitive Justice: A Framework for Interpreters as Co-researchers in Postcolonial Multilingual Research

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11 Interpreting Cognitive Justice: A Framework for Interpreters as Co-researchers in Postcolonial Multilingual Research

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The nature of knowledge is a vexed question that has long plagued academics and philosophers alike. It is a question that also cuts to the heart of cross-cultural studies and forces researchers to examine their own belief in light of their participants'. Robert Chambers (1979) posed the question 'Whose knowledge counts?' as the title of his seminal work on rural development. The dominance of the English language in cultural studies and academia more broadly, in conjunction with the imperialist histories of Western research and anthropology, has meant that it is often those in positions of power who are able to decide whose knowledge is counted and how that knowledge is expressed. Historically, the roles of interpreters and translators in multilingual research have been silenced by these power relations and colonial research traditions (Tanu & Dales, 2016). While there is a growing body of literature that recognises the essential role that translators and interpreters play, there is little theoretical work that explores this in a multilingual postcolonial and anthropological research context. Interpreters and translators bring invaluable perspectives and knowledge to multilingual research, so there is a distinct need for theory development that recognises this contribution.

In this chapter, I employ Viswanathan's (2009) cognitive justice as a framework for multilingual research and explore the role of interpreters within this framework. Cognitive justice suggests that different knowledge systems can coexist and work together. In the context of multilingual

research, this requires researchers to foreground their own linguistic resources and explore how local co-researchers might contribute to the understanding and expression of alternative knowledges. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how considering interpreters as co-researchers and employing methods that facilitate this role contributes to a cognitive justice framework for researching multilingually in a postcolonial context.

Drawing on research conducted in South India as a case study, I first define and discuss cognitive justice in relation to postcolonial research before exploring the context of the study in relation to the politics of language of the research sites. India represents a complex linguistic environment and therefore offers an ideal site to explore alternative ways of framing multilingual research. The research itself focused on two community radio stations in Tamil Nadu, a southern state with a complex linguistic history, where language is closely linked to identity. The sites themselves were unique multilingual environments, with one station broadcasting to several local tribal groups, each speaking their own language or dialect.

Part of a doctoral research project focused on listening practices of community radio broadcasters in India, this case study focuses on how a cognitive justice framework facilitates working with interpreters as 'co-researchers' (Temple & Edwards, 2002) so that their knowledge and languages are valued. This was, however, not an initial consideration of the research design. Perhaps like many novice researchers, my focus was on what I considered to be the prescriptive, premeditated process of executing the research design to answer the research questions. Despite the extensive critiques of simplistic change models in other parts of my work, I had internally framed my own language abilities – or lack thereof, as far as conversational Tamil was concerned – as a problem and decided that engaging an interpreter was a simple solution. Language was a barrier to be overcome rather than a rich source of cultural knowledge and a complex arena of power structures and politics. The politics of the multilingual aspects of the research were simply not considered in the initial research design or scoping. The importance of applying a multilingual lens only really became clear to me once the data collection was underway. Learning to navigate the complexities and politics of language was a collaborative, reflective, iterative and, in many cases, a retrospective process. A cognitive justice framework was initially intended to frame thinking around ethical research in a postcolonial context but, through these reflective processes, I realised that cognitive justice also has relevance and potential for framing multilingual research and the choices a researcher makes vis-à-vis their own linguistic resources in this process. The remainder of this chapter details those reflective processes and explores the ways in which a cognitive framework contributes to positioning interpreters as co-researchers in multilingual research.

Cognitive Justice, Postcolonial Research and Researcher Positionality

This section discusses the theoretical position of this research by first defining a cognitive justice framework. I then briefly situate cognitive justice within postcolonial anthropological research before highlighting the importance of making the positionality of the researcher visible in order to develop an argument for the importance of recognising the knowledge of interpreters in multilingual research.

First, the concept of cognitive justice emerged from Indian scholar Visvanathan (2006, 2009), who introduced cognitive justice as a way of critiquing the hegemony of modern western science, considered 'the best' and the most dominant form of knowledge, while alternative knowledge sources are either dismissed as folklore, ethnoknowledge, or superstition (Visvanathan, 2006, 2009). Santos refers to this destruction, marginalisation and oppression of non-Western, non-scientific knowledges as 'epistemicide' (2006). Visvanathan (2009, para. 7) offers cognitive justice as a practical way of recognising the value of alternative or traditional knowledges:

> Cognitive justice recognises the right of different forms of knowledge to co-exist but adds that this plurality needs to go beyond tolerance or liberalism to an active recognition of the need for diversity. It demands recognition of knowledges, not only as methods but as ways of life.

Cognitive justice offers a framework for understanding and actively recognising local knowledge, grounded in its own language and cultural, political and historical environment. Cognitive justice suggests that western and alternative knowledges can co-exist as equal contributors to understanding and provide equal platforms from which to launch inquiry. This is particularly important in a postcolonial setting and reinforces the notion that viewing western ways of knowledge through a critical lens does not mean that western and indigenous worldviews are incompatible, or in conflict with one another (Evans *et al.,* 2014).

Cognitive justice also has significant potential in a multilingual research environment that involves the use of interpreters. Recognising that the knowledge of interpreters can co-exist alongside that of the researcher contributes to a more equitable research environment that facilitates the co-creation of new knowledge among co-researchers.

A further key advantage of a cognitive justice framework is that it also provides space for acknowledging the importance of context. Postcolonial environments represent a particularly complex web of power relations and historical underpinnings that must be taken into account. In terms of researching multilingually, postcolonial scholar Bhabha (1994) offers the concept of hybridity, or the third space, as a way of understanding the role of language in such environments. Hybridity refers to the process where

colonisers attempt to translate the identity of the colonised into their framework but in doing so create something new entirely (Bhabha, 1994). This third space represents a new hybrid identity which interweaves elements of both the coloniser and the colonised. While not without critique, particularly in the field of translation studies (see Maitland, 2016), this notion of hybridity has appeal for postcolonial multilingual research as it presents a space for knowledge borne from different linguistic backgrounds to come together. Multilingual research embodies this third space where multiple languages, cultures and knowledges intersect with interpreters acting as a vital link between these intersecting knowledges and cultures. The challenge remains to balance the power structures associated with articulating claims to this knowledge, particularly where English is seen as the dominant academic language and Western academia as a dominant source of knowledge (Dutta, 2014; Tanu & Dales, 2016). Thus, Bhabha's concept of hybridity also demonstrates the fragility of translating culture in postcolonial environments. Therein lies the importance of a cognitive justice framework, in that it actively creates space for recognising multiple knowledges and the language in which they are most comfortably expressed and shared.

Having defined a cognitive justice framework and its role within postcolonial research, it is important to also discuss the positionality of the researcher. This chapter draws on doctoral research that I conducted in India. I am a privileged, white woman from Australia. My positionality and those of my research participants are, needless to say, very different. Like India, the country I live in has been irretrievably affected by colonisation; however, unlike India, Australia could hardly be described as postcolonial. My research interest in community radio and social change had led me to India and my preliminary work with local researchers further refined my search for research sites to the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. This was an unexpected turn, particularly as I had spent a year learning Hindi, the predominant language of the north. My research was multilingual, yet I only spoke Tamil at a beginner level. I undertook formal language learning in the months prior to fieldwork and engaged in informal language learning throughout, including daily conversational practice and vocabulary revision, but my proficiency did not reach conversational levels. This 'outsider' status was further complicated by the inherent power associated with the role of 'researcher'. This is further complicated by the ethical issues associated with conducting multilingual research such as the power relations involved in negotiating language choices, how research participants are recruited and how meaning-making takes place (Holmes *et al.*, 2013). These issues are under increasing scrutiny, having historically been seldom discussed by western researchers conducting multilingual research far from home (Tanu & Dales, 2016). Indeed, through the use of sterile, academic language and the distant, scientific third-person, researchers and their positionality are erased, and

their accounts are presented as an unquestionable 'view from nowhere' (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009). Knowledge, even knowledge generated by 'objective' research, is saturated in history and social life (Harding, 1992). Making the positionality of the researcher visible recognises these influences and the effect they may have on the research process which, in turn, creates space for reflection and reflexive practice. As such, in this chapter, I aim to foreground, without privileging, my own positionality as a researcher. Making my own positionality visible creates spaces for reflection and critique of my own initial views and practices. It is through this critique that the importance of engaging with a cognitive justice framework becomes clear.

Foregrounding the positionality of the researcher cannot help but highlight my limitations, both in terms of local cultural knowledge and perspectives, but also in the more pragmatic sense of language. Being open about these limitations reinforces the importance of the interpreter to the research, not only for navigating multilingual hybrid spaces, but also for bridging cultural gaps. The cultural knowledge of interpreters, in addition to their linguistic knowledge, is essential to conducting multilingual research. Cognitive justice offers a framework that recognises that the knowledge of interpreters can co-exist with that of the researchers as equal contributors, or co-researchers, to new knowledge co-creation. Cognitive justice also allows space for critiquing postcolonial power structures and acknowledging the politics of language in research. This chapter now turns to how this theory can be operationalised in postcolonial, multilingual research.

The politics of language in the field site

India represents a particularly rich site for investigating how researchers handle language in their research processes, particularly given the politics of languages. While Hindi and English are the official languages of India, the most recent census recognised 122 distinct languages and 270 'mother tongues', each with more than 10,000 speakers (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011). Tamil Nadu, the research site of my study, represents a distinct linguistic and political environment as compared to other states in India and has a history of resistance against the Hindi-speaking dominance of the North. A Dravidian language, Tamil is spoken by some 80 million people, mainly in South India, and has a literary tradition spanning more than 3000 years (Kamdar, 2018; Vāsanti, 2006). There have long been tensions between the Hindi-speaking North and the Tamil-speaking South. A historical example of the sensitivity of this issue comes from the scoping of the Official Language Act in 1963 that proposed Hindi as the sole official language of India. This sparked anti-Hindi agitations and protests in Tamil Nadu (Annamalai, 2010). These protests led to the amended

Official Language Act of 1967 which included English as an official language and enhanced the status of regional languages across the country (Annamalai, 2010). The dominance of Hindi remains a point of contention in the South; as such, there is great pride and determination in preserving the local languages.

This research took place at two sites in Tamil Nadu, in different towns, roughly 300 kilometres apart. Yet, even these relatively close sites were linguistically diverse. One of the sites had a particularly localised multilingual element due to the presence of various tribal languages and dialects. Such a complex linguistic environment is challenging to navigate even for native Tamil speakers, with 26 indigenous dialects and 2 distinct languages in use throughout the region. Even at the local level of this field site, there were difficulties associated with the use of Tamil, rather than local dialects, as the language of organisations and officials. Furthermore, there are issues around the literacy constraints on those whose native language is purely oral rather than written. Such a complex, multilingual research environment further emphasised the importance of a cognitive justice framework in that it provides space for local knowledge to be discussed and expressed in local languages.

Case Study: Interpreters as Co-Researchers within a Cognitive Justice Framework

This section reflects on the initial research design of the project which highlights a limited engagement with cognitive justice and a lack of consideration of the complexities of both multilingual research and the role of the interpreter. Given my own limited linguistic resources in terms of conversational Tamil and the broad lack of English among research participants (just one of the 39 participants spoke conversational English), working with an interpreter was an assumption built into the research design with no critical reflection as to the implications of this approach. Nevertheless, this research design formed the basis of the doctoral research and was the launch point for the reflexive processes that highlighted the value of a cognitive justice framework.

Initial research design

The methodology of my doctoral research was informed by a broadly constructivist worldview alongside cognitive justice as an interpretive framework. Given these frameworks, I employed ethnography as both a methodology and a theoretical approach because it recognises multiple, socially and experientially constructed forms of knowledge and reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Further, employing ethnography demonstrates a commitment to understanding participants' 'lived lives and practices … through their own unique complexity' (Slater, 2013: 11). Ethnography encourages immersive

interactions and engagement in order to help the researcher learn to interpret the world from the perspective of research participants, recognising their unique knowledge systems and realities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). However, understanding the unique contextual complexity means that knowledge systems, and the language used to express and share them, are of critical importance. Ethnography as a methodology has the potential to provide rich, multi-faceted data and an understanding of context, both of which are essential to exploring the research foci and the operationalisation of cognitive justice. Ethnography is, at its core, interpretive: bringing together multiple perspectives to build new knowledge. Marcus (1997) argues that a defining feature of ethnography is the notion of 'complicity' between researchers and participants. Building rapport has been a key tenet of traditional ethnography and anthropology, but complicity, rather than rapport, further aligns with a cognitive justice framework. Complicity implies a relationship built on mutual curiosity and the search for alternative knowledge, co-constructed between researchers and research participants (Couldry, 2003). When viewed through a multilingual research lens, complicity implies collaborating linguistically to find a shared space where knowledge can be shared on equal terms. A cognitive justice approach to multilingual ethnography moves beyond the simplistic aim of recreating a holistic picture of multiple fieldwork settings; instead, it draws on complicity to establish relationships with participants that are built on mutual respect and curiosity in order to develop understandings of different knowledges. In practice, this means moving beyond the traditional roles of researcher, interpreter and participants and instead viewing co-research and co-creation of knowledge as collaborative research goals.

In addition to informing the methodology, a cognitive justice framework also influenced the selection of the methods. The foremost method of data collection was observation. Initially, the observation centred on the stations themselves to gain a general understanding of the everyday workings of the stations. This also allowed time to build relationships with the research participants – community radio station staff and listeners – and the interpreter and start to develop a sense of complicity. The second phase of observation saw the research move outside of the stations to incorporate the work that takes place outside traditional sites of media production through what Kusenbach (2003) refers to as 'go-alongs'. A cross between participant observation and an interview, this method involved accompanying participants, alongside the interpreter, on their everyday outings in order to understand their experiences of their physical and social environments (Kusenbach, 2003). It was anticipated that these initial observation periods would be useful for both myself and the interpreter in terms of building relationships with the research participants, but also in contextualising the role of community radio in the communities.

The second method of data collection was interviews with community radio broadcasters and listeners. Interviews were semi-structured and in-depth with open-ended questions aimed at collecting descriptive qualitative data. The interviews were intentionally conducted after a period of participant observation and go-alongs in order to test the observations of the researcher. The interviews were not only a source of research data but also an opportunity to engage in the co-construction of knowledge. My emerging understandings, supported by the interpreter, were presented to interview participants, again through the interpreter, in order to clarify and seek further explanations and thus ensure the knowledge being co-created was accurate and representative. The first interviews took the form of focus group discussions with community radio audience members. Following the completion of these, the interpreter and I conducted one group interview with the staff at each of the radio stations, followed by one-on-one, in-depth interviews with the key informants at each of the stations. While the aim of focus group discussions with listeners was to facilitate general conversations around the research topics, the more formal interview format with station staff sought the answers to specific questions.

The final method employed in this research was that of listener story-telling. Drawing on the work of King (2015), listener storytelling invited listeners to share personal narratives regarding their relationship and interactions with the radio stations. This was designed to take place with minimal intervention from the researcher and interpreter and allowed a space for participants to share their knowledge outside of the constraints of the interview formats. Crook (2009) notes that participants already have the tools to tell their own stories in their own way; it is the role of the facilitator to simply enable this process. Storytelling democratises the data collection process and promotes listening on the part of the researcher in order to provide the participants with an authentic voice in the research. The interviews and stories were recorded and later translated, transcribed and analysed.

Delayed reflexivity in practice

There is little in the research design of this project that offers significant insight into multilingual research. Indeed, as I confessed earlier, it was not a consideration of the initial research design at all. The solution to navigating the intensities of ethnography – immersive engagements, building rapport or complicity and establishing an understanding of participants' lived experiences in all their complexity – was to engage an interpreter. It is abundantly clear that inattention to language and the political nature of language in the research context negates the claims of ethnography, as well as methods such as storytelling, to truly engage with the lives of others. Unfortunately, it was not until the research was

underway that I came to realise this oversight. The section that follows offers an alternative reading; an attempt to move beyond simplistic implementation of qualitative methodologies to illustrate the role that cognitive justice can play in recognising the importance of the interpreter, not only for her linguistic resources but also her knowledge and perspectives. In doing so, this section aims to highlight how a cognitive justice framework allows for analysing the importance of interpreters as co-researchers.

The role of the interpreter

Given the complex linguistic environment in which this research took place, a cognitive justice framework helped me understand the role of the interpreter in contributing to the co-construction and co-production of the research. While engaging translators and interpreters are by no means the only or the best way of conducting multilingual research, it was deemed the most practical for this research. According to a cognitive justice framework and its respect for the co-existence of multiple knowledges (Viswanathan, 2009), it is not only the knowledge of the research participants that must be recognised but also that of the interpreter. Researchers have historically had the tendency not to problematise interpretation and translation; 'many investigators present transcripts of translated interviews, but the politics of translation are rarely acknowledged' (Riessman, 2008: 42). This is rapidly changing as translation is increasingly considered an analytic category rather than static data (Gal, 2015). Tanu and Dales (2016) suggest that silencing the role of translators and interpreters stems from the colonial origins of ethnographic writing and the pronounced divide between 'native' and 'non-native' researchers (2016: 355). As such, a cognitive justice approach attempts to address this power imbalance by recognising the knowledge of interpreters and acknowledging that multilingual research may depend on translators and interpreters 'not just for words, but to a certain extent for perspective' (Temple, 1997: 608).

Interpreters were needed in my research as my proficiency in the local languages (primarily Tamil but also several tribal languages) was limited. I was able to follow discussion topics and engage in rudimentary conversations but not at a sufficient level to conduct complex research. While some participants had varying levels of English, it was preferable to conduct interviews in the language in which they were most comfortable to create space for their knowledge to be expressed in the way it has been conceptualised. This has an additional advantage of subverting the norms and expectations of English as a colonial, academic language (Riessman, 2008), and shifting the balance of power away from the researcher to the participants. Taking this approach, however, required a frank assessment of my linguistic skills. Acknowledging that the researcher is 'less than fluent' in the local language is key to an open discussion on language and translation issues (Gibb & Danero Iglesias, 2016). While fluency in the

local language would have been ideal, the time available meant that it was more realistic to work with an interpreter/translator and supplement this with informal language learning (Gibb & Danero Iglesias, 2016). As such, a research assistant was engaged to interpret and assist in facilitating the logistics of the research. For cultural reasons, employing a female interpreter was preferred. Edwards (1998) suggests that, where possible, interpreters and research interviewees should be of the same sex, culture, religion and age (1998: 200). While this is not appropriate or possible in all circumstances, consultations with researchers from a local institution suggested that a female interpreter from the general area of the research sites would be most appropriate. A female interpreter was preferred for several reasons. First, given the lengthy engagements and travel requirements of the research, it would not be seen as appropriate within the cultural context for an unmarried male and female to be spending so much time together. Two women travelling together was much more appropriate and also yielded access to situations that a male interpreter would not have had. A female interpreter from the local area was also able to help navigate issues such as what can be said and to whom, a delicate balance in multilingual research, particularly in environments where this kind of cultural knowledge can only be produced and accessed through lived experiences (Krog, 2011). With these criteria in mind, I reached out to my networks and received a recommendation for a local interpreter.

Intellectual biographies

While initially the interpreter was considered essential in terms of logistics, I soon came to realise the significant value that she was contributing to the research as a co-researcher, with her own unique knowledge systems and intellectual biography. Through a lens of cognitive justice, the interpreter was essential, not only for overcoming language barriers but also for navigating local cultural norms and contributing her own unique knowledge and perspectives. As such, I sought a way of recognising and making visible the role and perspective of the interpreter. Temple (1997: 608) argues that the concept of 'intellectual biographies' provides a useful frame for understanding the point of view of the interpreter:

> Researchers' intellectual autobiographies influence what they know, and what they know and experience influences what they write, which in turn influences their intellectual autobiographies. Extending this concept to include the 'intellectual biographies' of others involved in research (for example, translators, interpreters, interviewers and transcribers) is a useful way for the researcher to engage with the perspectives of those who may be involved in a significant part of the research process.

This approach aligns with a cognitive justice interpretive framework, which recognises alternative knowledges and perspectives. Based on this,

as a researcher, I sought to understand the intellectual biography of the interpreter.

Developing an intellectual biography of the interpreter emerged organically over time. While Edwards (1998) suggests an induction process, which may have helped to formally capture the interpreter's intellectual biography from the beginning, I realised the true value of the interpreter far too late to engage in that process. Fortunately, however, this intellectual biography emerged on its own, through the organic process of getting to know one another and working together. The interpreter was a master's student at a university in the major town closest to one of the field sites; thus, her background was culturally similar. She was a native Tamil speaker who also spoke English fluently, having attended an English school. Due to the nature of the research, we spent a lot of time together, both working and living alongside one another for an extended period of time. The interpreter introduced me to her friends and family and showed me around her hometown when we had some time off. Through this, I was able to develop a clear idea of her intellectual biography, and she of mine, through a mutual process of relationship-building.

Developing an understanding of the interpreter's intellectual biography was immensely useful in negotiating how we were going to work together. A further use of Edwards' induction process is to ensure that 'the interpreter is neither too active nor too passive' (1998: 200). As such, extensive discussions took place around the focus of research inquiry as well as the preferred approach to interpreting. The structure of the research methods also allowed for somewhat of an acclimatisation period with the interpreter. With the initial stage at each site simply involving observation at the stations, the interpreter was able to build rapport with the key participants, who were the stations managers at each of the stations, and also work reflexively with the researcher in an ongoing cycle of reflection and adaptation to develop appropriate interpretation approaches. Following Andrews' (2013) approach to negotiating roles and responsibilities with the interpreter as co-researchers, we discussed interviewing techniques and the approach to interpretation with which she was most comfortable. During initial phases of observation, we experimented with the simultaneous whispering mode of interpretation (Hale, 2007: 10) – with her relaying her translations line by line – but found it to be disruptive and off-putting to other participants in the conversation. As the research progressed, we experimented together and found that the approach that worked best for us was to work with the natural ebbs and flows of the conversation. With my very basic language skills, I was able to generally follow the conversation and interject if anything seemed of overt relevance; otherwise, the interpreter would relay information during natural pauses and breaks in the conversations. This eventuated as a combination of what Hale terms 'long consecutive' interpreting, where the interpreter directly translates long segments of speech (2007: 10), and 'a mediated approach', which was

more of a summary rather than a literal translation (Hales, 2007: 42). This approach achieved more 'direct interaction' between the interpreter and participants rather than a 'disrupted interaction' between myself and the participants with interpreting in the background (Andrews, 2013). This helped to build more of a natural rapport between all parties, though it required a relationship of significant trust between the researcher and interpreter, which we established over time by travelling and living together. This mixed approach worked particularly well for methods such as focus groups and storytelling, which rely on natural communicative flows to generate data, but we adapted somewhat and reverted to long consecutive interpreting during the group interviews and the one-on-one interviews with radio station staff. By the time the interviewing phase commenced, we had built a strong working relationship and were very clear on expectations and approaches to interpretation.

This process of negotiating intellectual biographies and approaches to interpretation also involved navigating a diverse linguistic environment outside of the languages of the researcher and interpreter. One of the research sites was a radio station that broadcasted in a number of tribal languages alongside Tamil and employed staff members who were all multilingual in at least two different languages. Such a diverse linguistic environment calls for what Ganassin and Holmes (2013) call 'flexible multilingualism'. There were several examples of this. First, though the majority of interviews were conducted in Tamil, there was a staff member from a neighbouring state who was not as confident with the language and often preferred to speak English. Both the interpreter and I spoke English with this participant in both formal interviews and casual conversation. A further example emerged from discussions with members of upper management, namely, those who worked for the parent bodies of the community radio stations. While they were not research participants *per se*, those limited engagements were conducted in English: they spoke to me in English rather than go through the interpreter. There is much that can be drawn from this: the power relations associated with the subject-position of researcher versus that of the interpreter, my positionality as a white foreigner, even the simpler explanation of myself as the older one of our research team. This clearly demonstrates the complex politics of multilingual research and potentially offers a ripe area for future research. In terms of navigating this 'flexible multilingualism', these situations required that the interpreter and I work closely together, often negotiating in the moment, so as to best adapt to different cultural situations and preferred languages.

Exit Interviews and Consolidating Co-research

As the research ended, I decided to conduct a more formal exit interview with the interpreter. Although a clear picture of her intellectual

biography had been established through social and informal interactions and recorded in field notes and research journals, I conducted an interview to make this position overt and formally recorded. Edwards (1998) suggests applying reflexivity to the role of the interpreter through interviews and treating interpreters overtly as key informants, albeit without privileging their insight over that of other interviewees. Using this approach as a guide, I questioned the interpreter about certain life experiences, cultural nuances, her academic background and the issues she saw as relevant to the research questions. The aim of this exit interview was not to retrospectively formally construct the intellectual biography of the interpreter but to provide a space to reflect on and discuss the research and research processes that could also be used as data to inform the research findings. Through this interview, the role of the interpreter as a co-researcher was made visible throughout the written outcomes of the research.

The exit interview revealed some of the cultural difficulties associate with translations, even where the interpreter was of a similar background to the research participants. As discussed, the interpreter engaged for this research was from the same general area as the research sites, but her background was more closely associated with the geographic area of one of the stations. In the exit interview, she explained the challenges created by being from a different geographic area of one of the two radio station field sites.

> I could sense that they had a problem [during the interview]. Because they are very … much Indigenous tribe. Women mostly don't talk out, and even when they talked out, they were very, very, very, very careful in leaving out every single word. So that interview was difficult. (Exit interview)

Here, cultural differences were particularly pronounced, not only between the researcher and the participants, but between the local interpreter and this group of participants too. During the exit interview, the interpreter and I discussed it at length, reflecting on why it was so challenging and what might have been done differently. That field site interview was difficult: The participants were shy and unwilling to talk; they needed a lot of coaxing and spoke very carefully. This was a significant contrast to the talkative and, in some cases, boisterous focus group discussions that had taken place at the other field site. Following the exit interview, I reviewed my field notes and engaged in subsequent discussions with the interpreter about this interview. Through the process of reflexive interviewing, personal reflection, and engaging with the interpreter as a co-researcher, we came to the conclusion that the cultural and linguistic differences with this particular group were too great to facilitate that kind of interview. Both the interpreter and I were outsiders, a significant factor in such a remote tribal village, and the station staff member was only known to one member of the focus group, again, a significant departure from the other

focus groups. Upon reflection, it seemed that the presence of one outsider, even the radio staff member, was a departure from the norm. The impact of this was compounded by both the interpreter, an outsider from the city, and me, a white foreigner. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear the focus group was doomed to fail, and there were simply too many complex linguistic and cultural factors, yet it was only through the exit interview and subsequent discussions that the interpreter and I were able to unpack what had happened and why.

A further issue that came to light through the use of an exit interview was how the interpreter negotiated shared culture at one of the research sites. The second research site was closer to home for the interpreter, geographically and culturally. Although she was not living in that area at the time, her family was originally from that region so there were close cultural and linguistic ties. However, a similar cultural background presented a new suite of challenges:

> In one way, it was easy but in most of the ways it was difficult. Because first of all, from seeing me through, they can't really understand where I'm from. But still when they got to know that I am from their local place, they wanted to know more about me. So that caused a sense of inconvenience to me, letting out all my personal details to them because I cannot be very curt with the elders so I had to talk to. Sometimes it was ok, sometimes it was difficult when someone … tried to find my communal background and caste background. In that way, it was difficult. (Exit interview)

The fact that the interpreter was from the local area provided unique insight and knowledge, not only in terms of research data and translation, but also in the cultural intricacies of how the research should be conducted. The interpreter's status as almost an 'insider', however, meant that she was caught between cultural norms and expectations, and her professional role. While I was aware of the situation, it did not seem to be impacting the research at the time, as far as I knew, at least. These challenges were only really reflected on during the exit interview; thus, the true impact on the research was difficult to ascertain. Not only does this experience highlight the multitude of complexities facing even local interpreters, but it also reinforces the need for viewing interpreters as a unique source of data and knowledge in their own right and embodying a co-researcher identity, as implicitly learned through co-researching together in the field sites, and later, through the explicit exit interview tool.

While it is not always the case in multilingual research, the role of the interpreter was critical to this case study. Given that I needed to engage an interpreter, two key approaches – brought to light by a cognitive justice framework – contributed to this multilingual research. First, it was essential that the researcher and interpreter develop a relationship based on complicity and mutual curiosity through understanding intellectual

biographies and negotiating approaches to interpretation. Second, it can be useful to formalise the knowledge and perspective that interpreters bring to the research through a reflective exit interview process. This allows the researcher to formalise the organic, ongoing process of accessing the intellectual biography of the interpreter and presents the knowledge of the interpreter as data that contributes to the co-creation of resulting research knowledge. While an exit interview represents just one tool for formalising and recording the knowledge of the interpreter, a cognitive justice framework implies that it should be used as a space for reflection and co-creation of reflexive insights rather than an extractive, positivistic exercise at the end of the research. Working with an interpreter within a cognitive justice framework – as I did in the fieldwork of this doctoral research – involves building relationships, mutually negotiating interpretation approaches as co-researchers and creating both formal and informal spaces for reflective and reflexive knowledge creation.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how a cognitive justice framework provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the important role of considering interpreters as co-researchers – particularly when the researcher has minimal linguistic resources in the field site. The analysis drew on postcolonial, multilingual research in anthropology through a doctoral case study of community radio in India. The role of language in postcolonial research is intrinsically tied to specific knowledge systems, cultures and unique experiences of colonial and postcolonial histories, and underpinned by complex power structures and tensions over whose knowledge systems and languages dominate. These conditions must be considered in research design, alongside the linguistic resources of the researcher. This chapter has explored Viswanathan's (2009) concept of cognitive justice as an important epistemological perspective for researching multilingually in postcolonial environments. By applying a post-reflexive analysis of the roles of researcher and interpreter as co-producers of knowledge, through a cognitive justice framework, I have contributed to an understanding and recognition of the important role of local knowledge and languages, grounded in their own cultural, political and historical environment, and the important role of interpreters in uncovering this knowledge. Cognitive justice suggests that western and alternative knowledges can co-exist as equal contributors to understanding and provide equal platforms from which to launch inquiry, but it also requires recognition and involvement of the languages present, particularly in postcolonial contexts. This chapter contributes to the value of operationalising a cognitive justice framework in social anthropological research by advocating for working with interpreters so that their knowledge and languages are valued as meaningful co-researchers.

In order to engage with multilingual research within a cognitive justice framework, the first stage in the research process was to foreground the linguistic resources of the researcher in order to assess the role that an interpreter might play. Having established a need for an interpreter, there were two key approaches facilitated by a cognitive justice framework that contributed to this multilingual research. First and foremost, the researcher and interpreter must develop a strong relationship of trust and complicity, which may be solidified through accessing each other's intellectual biographies and collaboratively negotiating approaches to interpretation. Second, it was useful to provide a more formal space to reflect on and record these processes through a reflective and reflexive exit interview. Through this, the contribution of the interpreter as a co-researcher is formalised and made explicit.

This study should certainly not be read as a best-practice guide on how researchers might work with an interpreter in a multilingual field site. However, it documents areas of learning and reflection and illustrates the potential of a cognitive justice framework for positioning interpreters as co-researchers in multilingual research. Interpreters and translators bring invaluable perspectives to multilingual research and act as a link between the intersecting knowledges and cultures of postcolonial research. Thus, there is a distinct need for a theory that recognises this contribution. The role of the interpreter can be formalised and made visible through approaches such as intellectual biographies, exit interviews and being transparent about linguistic proficiencies. In this chapter, I have argued that a cognitive justice framework provides a theoretical foundation for recognising the contribution of interpreters as co-researchers in multilingual research. There is a clear need for future research to explore how a cognitive justice framework could be used to facilitate the co-design of research alongside interpreters as co-researchers. Such an approach would embed interpreters as co-researchers throughout the research from its earliest stages and contribute to an approach to multilingual research that actively recognises the knowledges of interpreters.

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