

CARE MATTERS Podcast

How Language Matters Mini-series episode three

How language matters in the research process

Jayanthi Lingham in conversation with Rashida Bibi

The Care Matters podcast is brought to you by the ESRC Centre for Care and Circle, the Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities.

In this series, our researchers welcome experts in the field and those giving or receiving care to discuss crucial issues in social care. As we collectively attempt to make a positive difference to how care is experienced and provided.

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Jayanthi Lingham:

Okay, let's get started. So I'm Jayanthi Lingham, and I am a research associate here in the Centre for Care. I'm working on a research study called Borders in Care, which looks at the care needs and experiences of people with a range of different migration histories. And I'm really pleased today to be joined by Dr Rashida Bibi.

Rashida is also at the University of Sheffield. She's a qualitative researcher working in the Department of Sociological Studies, she joined the department in January 2023, and she's working on an ESRC funded project called Ethnicity and Unequal Ageing. The project aims to take an intersectional life course approach to develop richer understandings of ethnic inequalities in later life.

And the research has co-production and collaboration at its core, and aims to critically interrogate normative understandings of marginalised communities and patterns of social inclusion or exclusion, and foregrounds lived experiences of older and black, Asian and minority ethnic and refugee individuals. And a little bit about Rashida beyond this research study. Her interests include intersectionality, ethnicity, religion, and the everyday.

She completed her PhD at the University of Manchester, and this explores the everyday lives of British South Asian Muslim women across spaces of home, work in public spaces, where Rashid recently worked with the Open University as an associate lecturer, as well as on various research projects, including decolonising the school history curriculum. From the perspective of teacher trainers and on changing practices of grief and mourning for British Muslim communities during the Covid 19 pandemic.

So, Rashida, a very warm welcome and thank you for joining us today.

Rashida Bibi:

Thank you Jay, Looking forward to our discussion.

Jayanthi Lingham:

We're here today to talk about how language matters in the research process. And just to kind of set the context a little bit, what we're specifically talking about, and drawing on is, your experience and expertise of working with multiple verbal languages in research. And by verbal, I'm differentiating from and from movement based languages such as sign language.

So we, we both and you especially have experiences working with a range of different languages in past and present research. I wanted to maybe say something about, why this matters in the first place and setting the context a little bit. And perhaps I can start with some very broad quantitative data, which is that in the 2021 census, there were, looking at England and Wales and excluding English and Welsh languages, there are 93 other languages spoken in the UK.

And and so there's a whole range of, of whole parts of the population that are communicating in a range of other languages than English and Welsh. And when we talk about inclusive research, we need to take into account how populations fit, have those is that preferred languages, how we include them in process of research. And I wonder if perhaps I can ask you, Rashida, to say a little bit about what your experiences are of working with multiple languages in your present study and in the past.

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah, of course. I think, definitely is worth remembering that, language is power and there is a sense of, politics around language as well. It's always worth bearing in mind that historically, institutions have used language, as a source of, of power and research I'm working with on at the moment with, older ethnic minority populations in Sheffield and Rotherham, talking to lots of people of black and African-Caribbean, people in the Irish population, people from what's broadly being defined as Muslim, which includes a range of ethnicities, a range of ethnicities, as well as sort of, the Roma population as part of our research as well.

Bearing in mind that, older ethnic minority people have a multiple languages, and English isn't their first language, and their experiences of migration and moving to the UK often language has been and can be, and has been used as a as a tool to silence them as well and to to measure their level of integration and, assimilation and essentially the level of Englishness as well.

So it's always worth bearing in mind that language is a powerful tool that can be used to suppress, but also empower as well. So I'll talk a bit more about, sort of the experiences of working across multiple languages, and the need for academia to take into account, the how to include and how to be inclusive, with, with languages as well, and particularly with different communities.

Jayanthi Lingham:

But I really appreciate that as a starting point, actually, which is to highlight that even though we're talking about the kind of very practical thing about working with multiple different verbal languages, we need to think about the fact that talking about these languages is almost just a jumping off point into thinking about these other very important power dynamics and, and historical, historic shaped, socially shaped, economically shaped, power dynamics.

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah. I mean, absolutely, language suffuses every aspect of our lives as well. So it's important to think about sort of which language is how historically been included, which languages are championed, which languages are considered, most popular and which are which are then languages are then considered marginal or exotic or other. So it's that sort of thinking about why some are included and others are not. And what that means essentially for people who speak another language, essentially.

Jayanthi Lingham:

And it's interesting thinking about which language is included and which aren't when we're talking about research. And I should just say upfront that in our conversation today, we we will be talking about qualitative research methodologies with qualitative researchers. And there is a whole other very interesting and important discussion to be had around language in quantitative and mythological research, but perhaps for another day or another podcast.

But coming back to the question of which languages are included, I think, one of the things that I found, and perhaps you can speak about this in your research, is that when, when, academia or academic projects talk about including other languages, even when they do include other languages, they still tend to only include, like the dominant language from a certain population.

So, for example, from India, it's assumed that it might be Hindi or whereas actually there are so many other languages and most people don't speak Hindi, all of them, then.

Rashida Bibi:

Absolutely. And I think this is essentially this, this notion of assumptions and academia makes about, the communities that it's, it's researching. And I think that that comes down to this idea of this lack of understanding and lack of engagement. And essentially this, this top down approach to research where there's an assumption made about the community that you're that the project is researching and that that's really important point.

It's researching on rather than researching with them the social differences. So when you're researching with, you're making that very conscious to step to really think about the people, but that you're going to research with the people that you're going to work with. And the community itself is rather than sort of taking that top down approach, which makes a sort of general assumption about, across a whole population, which is and is not just, academia.

I think institutions have historically done that, and only now starting to sort of really engage with, different communities and work with sort of picking up the nuances of language and other aspects of social and cultural life amongst sort of what they seem to be a rather homogenous community, which we know really isn't. So, you know, thinking about the things like the NHS and, and councils and the way that they work and have historically worked with communities and the languages that I've been privileged.

And it's really worth thinking about how we approach research and how we approach engagement as well, thinking about how we can do all that learning that's come before and all the assumed knowledge that has come before.

Jayanthi Lingham:

Yeah. And we're going to come on a little in a little bit to talk about kind of the very practical steps that you might take to actually be truly inclusive when you're working with multiple, verbal languages. But I just want to, and stay a little bit on this, on this question of and how people would communicate with languages and, assumptions that are made because you, you discussed the important point for their assumptions made about which language is actually spoken by certain populations, and then that's imposed.

There's also and the question which I think is in your current research study of assumptions made that people will be able to read or write in certain languages, and when actually spoken language might be dominant. And this affects how people are recruited or given access to certain studies or having given information in study.

Rashida Bibi:

And again, going back to sort of the participants that we've left with sort of older participants with a history of migration. And when you think about sort of where people have come from and perhaps, you know, the, the, the, the type of education they may or may not have had before coming to the UK or before moving to any country.

So this idea that, you know, assuming that everybody has a level of literacy and being able to read and write in the language that they speak, in which we know just isn't the case, you know, it doesn't always work that way. So, yes, you can be inclusive and provide sort of materials, such as consent forms on participant information sheets in different languages, and in the languages that are is spoken.

But it there's an assumption there that, you know that the that then the individual can read rights. And so this has implications for the way that you take consent, for example, in a research project as well. So really thinking about if we're going to be inclusive in our research, how do we how do you pull apart those, the, those way of doing those, those traditional way of doing things so that, that inherently traditional way of taking consent as written and maybe thinking about ways in which we include people who don't have that level of literacy and, and thinking about how we can make sure that research, as in, is as inclusive as it

could be. And again, it comes down to sort of that assumption that language needs is is simply just about providing, you know, a consent form or providing information in multiple languages. And yes, but is important to do is important to recognise, languages and recognise the importance of other languages. But it's also about thinking beyond just the very it's moving beyond those assumptions and really unpicking and thinking about what a community and what essentially what an individual needs and really doing it on that basis, very much on an individual focus.

Jayanthi Lingham:

And going back to what you were saying about the reasons why people might, or the populations that we're working with in, in, in your research study on ethnicity and on ageing and also within the centre for care on the Borders and Care study with, people with migration histories where we're centring older people, there might be multiple reasons why people and don't have like written and, don't write and read in their first or second languages, let alone English.

And there's could be to do with it could be socio economic reasons. It could be, the fact that that primary education, secondary education just couldn't be completed wasn't available. There wasn't an expectation that they would complete it. But this isn't to say that the people that were then included in the research haven't had knowledge and haven't uneducated.

It's just the education happens in a different way through oral traditions, for example. And so we need to be very sensitive to that. But it's interesting then, that when we have come to think about, people's access to speaking English and learning English here, some of the communities that we work with have have pointed out, well, if you if you're if there's somebody who is, say, in their 70s or something and hasn't even had the opportunity to complete primary or secondary education in their first or second language, and then it teaching them English, and you're expecting them to sit down in a classroom and read and write off a whiteboard or

whatever in English. You know, that's just completely it just makes no sense whatsoever. So there's a kind of disconnect, not just in research, but also in kind of and people's ability to kind of, access and resources with language here in the UK.

Rashida Bibi:

That that is key to point that out, that, access to English language provision in, in the UK has historically been up and down and it's always been one of the first, one of the first or hardest hit in terms of, you know, costs. That's where that's where, you know, it's assumed that we can cut.

And so and that's historically where, rare cuts have happened as well in English language provision. But at the same time, there's this assumption that that's a preferred way of learning. And as you say, you know, assuming people, but that people will want to be able to sit down in the classroom and learn in that way, whereas, you know, traditions of all oral storytelling or learning in that way are not really privileged in this country.

So that it's, again, it's this idea that we can fit people into particular boxes and, and they should learn this way or they should speak that way. But also, again, going back to sort of the older populations as well, there's an assumption that older people don't want to learn or aren't able to learn. You know, they don't have the same cognitive ability that that the end of a population might have, or a younger migrant might have, for example.

And it goes back to, again, this idea that as you age, as we get older, we aren't as useful to society anymore. So is it worth investing in older people and their learning? I'm just thinking of some of my participants who did speak about wanting to learn English or wanting to improve English, but not being able to access, for example, English language classes.

A because the demand on those classes is so high at the moment. But also the fact that they're not seen as, you know, it's not seen as essential for this population, this older population as it is perhaps seen for people who may later in life contribute to the economy. So it's this idea of how we value people and how we value their learning and how we understand, how important that learning is for them as well.

Jayanthi Lingham:

Bringing it back to the process of research, which, which, which she would started talking about and then I, I diverse as you from you were talking about, we were talking about the kind of the importance but also the limitations of having research tools, research information, consent forms in written form. But we were thinking also about, the fact that it's not enough to have that.

I just wanted to say that in the current research that I'm working on, even though people may not be fluent, at reading in, their first or second spoken language, it is still been really important to have those there and to end as a way of including for those who do want to read in, and also for family members who can read in the other languages to be able to have that.

So not to assume, therefore, that people will only be able to speak or, talk about it, but also because certain populations, especially people who've migrated due to conflict, violence, post-colonial conflict or violence, might have or are likely to have already faced discrimination and marginalisation because of their language. And so then as a research study to to get consent and to provide accurate information in those languages, I think is particularly politically important as well.

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah, absolutely. I, I agree, I think, it's key to recognise the importance of language for an individual as well. And I think that's, that's part of doing good research is to understand how important, language is and to understand the context of language and how it's been years and how, how, how important it is in terms of, identity as well for participants in terms of not only where they are, but where they're coming from as well, in terms of politics and context and migration and, and everything else.

And one of the things that we carry is our language and and of course, our language isn't just about what we speak and how we speak, but also our culture and identity and I know it's so many other aspects of who we are is wrapped up in the language that we speak. And to not recognise that, as you say, you know, providing.

Yes, taking verbal consent, but also providing, information in the language that the participant speaks and recognising that it, it probably it may not be the dominant language or what we understand to be the dominant language, but then building in provision to make sure that we can provide materials in the language that the participant speaks as well, because it's important, you know, Britain should be doing inclusive research, you know, making sure that we are being as inclusive as possible.

Jayanthi Lingham:

So it comes back to that question of power dynamics. And of course, it's not to pretend that just by providing, research, information and consent forms and everything, that you can completely make that power dynamic. It's the researcher versus the people who are participating in the equal. But it can help with that. With that balance. Thinking about power dynamics, just going back to that point that you made about, how language connects to your sense of identity and many other markers, kind of social aspects, cultural aspects.

Another thing to bear in mind when when you're producing these, research tools or information is how in academia we talk about these kind of quite, airy fairy concepts, you know, or airy fairy, quite big concepts, perhaps, you know, belonging, identity, ethnicity, history, you know, all those kinds of things. And, and we assume that those can translate very easily in, in the written words to other languages.

And I wonder what your experience or what you would say about that, what your experience has been by doing that.

Rashida Bibi:

I think we fall into as researchers, we fall into sort of academic speak. And so as we're writing, as we're thinking, we, we use this, these concepts, quite often and sort of, you know, less really thinking about them. We don't sit down and unpick. So things like, for example, in our research, we've been looking at sort of concepts around belonging and identity and community and of course in, in other languages, you know, how do you take a word like belonging and sort of how do you have the equivalent in other languages?

It does just doesn't translate as into a single word as it does. So, so what we've what we've done is, is sort of included the word in, in the sort of interviews guys that we have, but asks the participant themselves, what do you understand? By belonging and often in other languages, it's so it's so long and it's so complicated and it's so complex and it's so rich and detailed, and you begin to realise that sort of the academic little boxes that we have for these concepts doesn't, you know, they don't fit neatly, in other languages.

And this important to think about that as well. So, you know, trying to make, these concepts as open as possible and open to interpretation as possible. And you only begin to realise that once you work with different communities and different languages and you begin to understand how people interpret, words like belonging, words like community, things like family and all of these, these concepts that we take for granted or, or we take from a particular angle can mean so many different things when you, you know, when you come across some different languages.

Jayanthi Lingham:

And appreciate previous research study that I worked on, I think this came up in relation to thinking about care work. Where care work doesn't necessarily very easily translate into different context work where the care that you might do, the unpaid care you might do is not, is not necessarily understood as work and work is under such as a particular thing.

So there might be different language that is used to describe all these things, but also then the notions of duty and responsibility and burden and all of those, and how those translate into and out of English and into the other languages. So it's I think what what you have said and what my experience also point points to is that when you're thinking about when you're working with multiple languages, it's really important to be inclusive all the way through the process.

So as far as you can co-produce those research tools with people who do have that language expertise and that kind of, sociocultural expertise so that you can have those open conversations, as you said, to think about what's the most appropriate and be aware that it's not just a straight hire someone for two hours to do a straight translation of your information sheet from one language into the other.

Rashida Bibi:

Truly inclusive research sort of factors in, you know, different languages and communities and needs right from the beginning. It isn't just about hiring an interpreter and, you know, using them to facilitate the conversation between you and the participants of another language. It's is really about thinking about sort of those nuances and, and those languages, but also the other aspects of a participant's needs as well.

And it's interesting when you, when you sort of mentioned, how caring work and care work is interpreted in, in differently. We have we had a similar, conversation with the idea around

traditions and, and when we talked about one of our questions, because we are looking at such a life history as well, and we talk about family and family traditions and of course, now traditions can mean very different things to very different people.

And whereas, you know, we might of the same traditions meant, you know, having the Santa Rosa going out on a, you know, to a holiday of the month or something, or whatever tradition that meant for others. That was a tradition that was, you know, for some participants it was about traditions focussed on particular events. So wedding traditions for examples or traditions around what happens when someone dies.

Our traditions are very much focussed around a particular cultural religious occasion. So yeah, so really being open to to interpretations of concepts and words and really being aware of a participant's needs in terms of the conversation and that's that exchange of information really, rather than such a that extracting of information, but really being aware that it's a conversation.

When there's a conversation in language which has multiple meanings, and nuances of being prepared for that as well.

Jayanthi Lingham:

And so it really pushes us as, as, researchers to question the kind of assumptions, the meanings that are kind of just embedded in certain words that we assume meanings, we ascribe meanings to, certain things ensue late. They are the same for everyone across the board, but they but they aren't always so. And I wonder then, if this might be a jumping off point to think about, added the very kind of practical aspects of what?

What do we as researchers needs to take into consideration when we're approaching a research study, a research project, and we are committed to working with multiple and viable languages, and, kind of what resources you need, what you need to be thinking about from the off. And perhaps we could, start with the very basic thing, of, how do you even decide what languages you work?

Rashida Bibi:

I think that there is that sort of approach where you can sort of maybe do a bit of maybe do a bit of background research and sort of think about sort of or, you know, from a census, get what languages are being spoken. But for me, I would, I would personally do it the other way around is to really maybe know, go down on the ground looking at sort of community organisations, both well known, well well-established, but also smaller community organisations and approaching them to, to ask about sort of languages.

The community needs, the sort of the makeup of the community, you know, because they are best place to have that information. Census data can be out of date. If, you know, it's every ten years and, and that information isn't released all at once. So, you know, is quite piecemeal as well. You're waiting for that, you know, particular information about particular groups at different times as well.

So yeah. So I would say if truly, you know, inclusive research would be about sort of from the very ground, you know, building up from the very ground is to really engage with community organisations, engage with, people working with, with different communities and understanding from them. What that what, what those needs are including language. And other aspects as well.

Jayanthi Lingham:

So from the often thinking about who their participants are, but that you want to involve in the research, think about who's who already has that expertise and with regards to, working with, supporting, engaging with those participants in what do they know, rather than assuming you can go to the kind of quantitative data set thinking about the quantitative data sets such as census.

When I was looking at some of the data on languages for this conversation. Now, one of the interesting things, one of the most obvious things that probably won't come as a surprise to, to most social scientists is that in England, across the whole of England and Wales, whereas in 2011 Polish was the first, was the top most spoken language apart from English and Welsh.

And it was in 2021. But in 2011 Romanian was the 19th most spoken language. But in 2021 it was the second that where it says how much change that can be. And if, for example, you're working with, migrant populations and you want to understand the needs and experiences of relatively new arrivals, you know, even over the past five years, past ten years, and you need to be sensitive to that.

I was I was struck by looking at I think, the 2021 data, I think on that list of 93, 46 was any other African language which is huge, obviously, because there are hundreds of languages in that continent. So, so yeah, I guess you need to be ready when you're starting the research for there to be unexpected things to come up with regard to languages.

Rashida Bibi:

This is something that can be done sort of right from the very beginning of thinking about a project. If this if there is an idea of a project that's going to heavily involve communities, minority communities and, and other languages, then from the very offset is worth thinking about making sure that is there is provision there for ensuring that, you know, in terms of language and interpreting needs and transcription needs and, sort of building in, other languages and the need to understand the languages.

I'm working with other languages, making sure that, you know, yes, we and that maybe from the census a dominant an understanding what the dominant languages are. But being prepared to for as we say, for surprises is really for being prepared to, to recognise that there are so many languages, and so many nuances to languages that you will come across, in a project. So making sure that you build that in right from the very start of, of your project.

Jayanthi Lingham:

And on a very practical level, this comes to funding when you're building your budget. So I suppose, for example, when you're thinking about how you going to co-produce, how what how you're going to create different research materials than you might initially think to yourself, okay, we'll have English in one other language perhaps, but perhaps your budget actually needs to think, okay, there'll be three other languages and build in and allow for the fact that, you know, most people, might speak, Punjabi, but then others might, speak up, worry or, other languages that are kind of similar but not the same.

And you need to make sure that those your materials are inclusive in that respect. And as you said, that process of co-production, even before you start the research needs to start with, with the community groups, the organisations that are, really embedded and, and, and, and work

with particular participant groups. I can see how quantitative data can be a bit of a use, can be quite a useful guide.

So for example, if you're thinking about, if you want to do research with migrant care workers, you could perhaps look at, you know, where are the places that migrant the care workers have, are coming from. And I'm coming into workforce and think about those mine which is the even then that landscape is shifting so quickly, and not least because of all the changes that are happening with, you know, UK legislation around, care worker rights or lack of rights. So you need to be really flexible.

Rashida Bibi:

And I think is really sort of this idea of co-production. If building that and from the very start of the project and ensuring so connecting with community organisations. But what we've also done in the project that I'm working on and ethnicity and inclusive ageing is to also, recruit community researchers. So these are individuals who are embedded in the community, who live in that community, who understand the needs of their community and essentially understand the different languages of their community as well.

So that's one aspect of sort of co-production and working with it, with the community, working with people that the community trusts as well. I think it's really important to think about how a project works, but also who a project works with as well. So, you know, engaging with and then recruiting community researchers who have really been a hugely essential part of our research.

One to, you know, to interact with and engage with the community in a way that the community trusts us because they know the community research very well, but also in a way that allows us to access those other languages and then to understand, other languages and the needs of of that community as well. So I think that's in a naturally inclusive perspective.

It's not just, sort of providing materials, but it's also thinking about who you're working with and how you're working with and how you are embedding that within the project itself as a longer term approach rather than, you know, engaging with someone for a few hours, in terms of interpreting.

Jayanthi Lingham:

And, and historically and unfortunately still in academia, I think it's all too often assumed that that kind of work will happen for free.

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah, absolutely. Historically, academic research has been, very, exploitative and extractive and exploitative and, of community organisations assuming that community organisations who are already underfunded, and, and, you know, stretched and their resources know have historically provided not only access to communities, but also, sort of language provision as well, and provided that, that help into reaching out.

And they've often done that for free as well. So that's been you know, they're not being compensated fairly. And that's something also that we need to think about as well. I think in this project we have, we've done our best to make sure that where we abused community organisation, community resources, we've done so in a way that compensates them fairly for

their use of their facilities and their time, and but also making sure that two of our co-investigators, in this project are, very well established community organisations.

So we have Sadako in, in Sheffield and we have Rima in, in Rotherham, which are very, very well established community organisations and, and making sure that they are co-investigators. So they are recognised as being very much an intricate, integral part of the project, but also making sure that they're compensated fairly for their time and resources as well.

Jayanthi Lingham:

Yeah. So there's all those things that, that it's, it's a bit too easy for academia to kind of, to kind of skate over the fact that if you are going to be recruiting participants and you recognise that people may not read, a recruitment document or a questionnaire that has that has been translated into another language and put on Twitter, for example, stock up in your surgery because they don't read, languages.

And then you are basically relying on somebody who does speak those languages to phone people up, or to talk to people at a community meeting to explain to them what the study is, to bring them along, to get there, to get their trust. And, you know, people who've been people who have had, interactions with the university or with, you know, establishment institutions and have been very badly treated, might be extra wary of engaging.

So all of that needs to be overcome and all that needs to happen in other languages. And typically we assume as academics that that all that time taken, the effort will happen for free. And so it's really important to build that into your your budget upfront or to take account of it. And as you said in your, ethnicity unequal ageing study, that's happened in the centre for care, we have we've done our best to build that in also with established organisations, but also newer organisations stand as one.

And I think the key thing is, to, to really take, take account of the time and the labour that they are putting into doing that work. And then what about, what about in the participant recruitment, in the data collection.

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah. So with participant recruitment, there's being mindful of understanding, you know, where, where our points of engagement can be. So again sort of having these community organisation spaces that can reach out to older people, as having the community researchers there as well, who, who are well established in their community, have been engaged in community work for years and are well known and trusted in their community as well.

So being mindful of how you're recruiting is really important. I think it's one of those aspects of understanding, understanding individual needs. So it's, it's key to think about how recruiting and where and so in our research, we have been thinking about how we're engaging with our community organisations, how we engaging with our community researchers, the messages that we're putting out.

We talked about sort of, you know, these are older ethnic minority populations who have been in the UK for some of them have been in the UK for a long time. If we're talking about sort of the Windrush generation, and historically their engagements with institutions, and research have been negative, and inherently negative. When we, when we think about and another thing I would say is that as a researcher, be prepared for that level of cynicism and distrust as well.

Rashida Bibi:

Because a lot of our older participants have been part of many research projects and previously they've talked to the NHS, they've told the council. So they, you know, they're well aware of the health of the research and, but it's also a case of, understanding how historically that, that community has been exploited and making sure that you're doing something that's, that's inclusive and different as well.

Jayanthi Lingham:

Yeah. So having different languages as part of your, as part of your research toolbox is, is a step but not enough. You need to be you need to go a bit further on that. And then in terms of the data collection, I guess then we're talking about, working with interpreters in, in, research sessions with their interviews and their or histories.

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah. So it's a data collection, essentially. So making sure that, you know, you have that provision for other languages in there as well, but also thinking about, inclusivity and data collection as well. How are you gathering that information? Again, sort of going back to this idea of being extractive and, such a there is that power dynamic of research and research.

And when there is a difference of language and language as well, that can be sort of magnified. So it's important to think about that relationship between when there is an interpreter there as well. So that relationship between you and the interpreter and the participant as well. I'm thinking about how that dynamic will work, and sort of factoring that into the conversation that you're having and being mindful of the participant as a person as well.

So, so really sort of thinking about conversations that we're having with participants of, of, of other languages and different languages and bearing in mind the needs of, of other people as well.

Jayanthi Lingham:

And I would say that, being mindful of the participant as a person, but also mindful of the interpreter as a person. So in our bodies and care study, we have worked with, interpreters who have come through the community organisation standards, one that we're working with. And I guess there are there are risks and benefits to that.

So the risks might be you can't necessarily assume that because somebody comes from within a relatively small community, that that will make it all okay. You know, there might be issues with trust. People might worry that gossip or confidentiality. So it's really important to have those, those processes as ethical processes of confidentiality agreements in place. But then having someone who participants already know can really benefit in terms of that being trust, but also in terms of making the research then beneficial in a number of different ways for the community.

So the interpreter coming from the community itself is, is I mean, that's work that's going to the community, to somebody in the community. It's kind of, contributing to somebody's skills base. Perhaps if they're doing interpretive work. But also thinking about how they might, what they need themselves to and when they're in an interview.

So I would always and build in a briefing session beforehand, a debriefing session after, it's always been very striking to me in the different research studies that I've worked on, how as an interpreter, you come into contact with difficult information at multiple points. So you ask a potentially very sensitive question, you hear in a different in one language, the participants quite potentially quite raw answer.

You then have to translate it to, to the researcher. You then have to deal with their reaction. You then have to communicate it back. And so it's like an intense load on top of working in different languages. And so that debriefing and thinking about interpreter care is also a really important thing.

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And as you said, there are such as, there can be drawbacks. And in terms of it's, it's interpreted through someone as well known and so that there can be issues of confidentiality, but also huge benefits to using an interpreter from the community as well. Someone you know, who the participant trusts, and will engage with.

But also, yeah, like you said, interpreter care as well, because as you're saying, let me in our, interviews as well, there have been some sensitive issues that come up and having, you know, taking care of the participant, but also the interpreter as well, who who then hears this, the sensitive information and, and the how to deal with sort of the emotions, in research as well.

Jayanthi Lingham:

So then I will that then goes also to the whole, issue of ethics, which so, so this question of languages kind of needs to go into your ethics approval, your ethics application. Crisis researcher. So then thinking, I'm thinking each of these steps in the research process, thinking about data analysis. You've conducted this research in, different languages and you have potentially audio recordings. What kinds of things do you need to think about at that point?

Rashida Bibi:

Part of the one of the issues around sort of data analysis is that, you have audio recordings, but then you also need transcripts as well. So as part of this project, we've been sending audio, off to be transcribed. And there's always something that's lost in the written form. So I'm just sort of thinking about ethics.

And how long do you hold on to an audio and, and so of course, you use the audio. So think about your transcript and to check the transcript as well. But there's also always something that's lost, in the written form. So it's, it's interesting. It's data analysis. Do you, do you analyse the recording? But of course you have to be mindful of making sure that you're ethically compliant as well, that you're deleting recordings appropriately and, you know, anonymizing transcripts appropriately as well.

And then we also have community researchers who have been gathering this research, including them in the sort of analysis approach as well. So thinking about data analysis from a, and a co-produced way, but that elements of sort of language and, and I have been doing some transcriptions as well and thinking about words that are said in another language.

And I'm thinking about what what's the best way. And it goes back to that, that idea of those larger academic concepts that we have that don't translate, into one, one word, or in, in another

language. And then you think about the, the other way, the transfer. So, so there are particular phrases and, words in other languages that don't neatly translate to English as well.

So that, that, that sort of data analysis and being mindful of the richness of language, and, and thinking about writing that up in an academic way, you're always going to lose something, and being prepared to understand that that will happen and, and how to mitigate that is something that's also going to be thought of.

Jayanthi Lingham:

I guess you always have the option of, doing quite a quick and dirty and I would say inadequate. Transcription of just the English language parts of the interview so that you have had the interpreter there, in the process of data collection. But then you do just English language and audio to English language transcription. But to me, you know, as you said, even bearing in mind that you lose something when you go from audio to written, I still think the richness of the participants word as spoken in their own language, especially when you're talking about, you know, histories of, you know, long histories of complexity.

And everyone's histories are complex. I think to be able to have a proper translation is really important for all of those all of those nuances that you talk about, make me think about the fact that my preference, which isn't always possible, research studies, is to be able to work directly with the linguist who is, taking the audio recording and creating and translating, then creating an English transcription in because it allows me to then say to them, okay, I'm not so bothered about what set in English being perfect, but what I'd really like you to do is to focus on, you know, the part between, you know, minute 20 and minute 40 in,

you know, whatever language in Swahili, for example, and, and you don't have the ability to do that when you're working through a language company who then subcontract out, so those are challenges in, in with universities, I think is neck, because universities tend to prefer that you or universities insist that you have an authorised supplier. So that my preference would always be to be able to work with a trusted individual or do a trial with them first, perhaps, of like 15 minutes and make sure you can, but then have a process whereby you can if you read a transcript and you want to double check something, drop them an email and say, what did this mean? And build in all of that extra time to how you and to how you remunerate them for that work?

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah, absolutely. I would love to, to do that. I think for this project, like you say, as universities prefer those big corporations, they like companies with the nice tax numbers. So it's the it's a company registration numbers. So I have been working with sort of rather faceless transcription companies and, sort of the back and forth of asking for, for quotes and, and even sourcing languages, I think.

And then it goes back to this idea of what are the dominant languages, that even transcription companies are, transcribing and what they consider the more rarer languages as they call them. So yeah, I would I would love to do the way that you have talked about sort of using, using someone is, you know, you can have a personal connection with, but unfortunately sort of funding projects and the timeline that we're given to turn things around sort of doesn't often allow for that, which is a shame.

Jayanthi Lingham:

Yeah, there is definitely a timing thing, which is that if you are working with just one individual, you're reliant on that one individual being able to build in all that work into their everyday life. Whereas with a company they might outsource to a number of different linguists. But the flip side is you don't really know what the set up is and how the company is then paying the linguists and therefore, you know, the time that the linguist is able to put towards that work, or how they're briefing the linguist.

Exactly. There's issues with the structure of that service, I think. Isn't that which naturally happens when you work with some subcontracting services. So you have the agreement with one big company and then they're outsourcing IT or outsourcing IT, and you don't know what's happening, you know, at the very end. And, but sometimes in the way university processes happen, it may be the only way that you can do that.

So there's all of that complexity with the data analysis part, which we're, which we're both, you know, deep into in our respective studies at the moment. I guess then you're on to thinking about dissemination, impact and engagement. Follow up. I wonder what you would have to say about, working with multiple languages at those different stages?

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah. I think it's really important very early on to think about how you'll engage with communities, sort of post fieldwork, especially sort of communities who have historically, you know, as we've said, been exploited and, research has been extracting. So how do you engage, how do you disseminate, how do you take the information that you have and, and share it again with communities that you've worked with and, and of course, you've got to think about, multiple languages and language needs as well.

So making sure that the materials that you're using to advertise, any work that you're doing, and, you know, any impact to any, engagement work that you're doing and sharing of the research is done in, in the languages that you've researched with as well, being mindful of that. And, and again, it goes back to thinking about that very early on when you're, you know, designing your budget and the funding for making sure that that is built into them as well.

And so the follow up, long term sort of engagement with communities, I think is key. And one aspect of sort of recognising, the different needs and different languages of communities is to engage with them in those different languages and engage with them in different forms as well. So, you know, I'm not just talking organising a workshop where you talk at communities, but sort of really incorporating the way that those communities communicate with each other as well.

So things like oral history and oral storytelling, you know, incorporating things like music and, sort of drums and sort of building that into the engagement work that you're doing to ensure that it is as inclusive as possible. And it isn't. What that was historically happened is that the talking at communities, rather than sitting and engaging with communities, is really key to think about how that works across different languages, different communities, different cultures.

Jayanthi Lingham:

So it's not enough in your knowledge exchange or dissemination to create a written outfit that is then translations other languages, but it's also not enough to then just have a workshop or a

gathering where you talk at them in different languages. You need to think much, or we can think much more, broadly and creatively thinking about arts methods, like you said.

But different ways of communicating that's going to be that are going to be meaningful to people where there isn't just the assumption that English, spoken English or written English will be the way, for people to access that information.

Rashida Bibi:

What's been, great about this project is the working across sort of different communities and different languages, and you can see points at which we can bring, different groups and, together. So a rich or, storytelling, you know, culture and sort of Somali, dance, for example, would work really well with sort of the Irish community of folk singing and sort of bringing those together and sort of mapping those communities together, but also bringing the stories together of ageing and, you know, sort of language and history and, and sort of process of migration.

So, so they can be very creative with the way that you do, you share information with, with the community that you research and with. And of course, you should be, because, the sort of traditional method of, of talking at a people just puts people off, you know, it really does. And I've seen that in sort of the way that community researchers have engaged with their communities and the feedback that they've given us about sort of events which are quite formal and, and dare I say, boring, but sort of making sure that sort of unpicking the way that we do things essentially is unpicking the way academe.

Yeah, things are ways should be done and sort of really drawing from the communities that we're working with to do something different and to do something, engage in creative and, and sort of that sort of engagement that really draws them, draws community and, but also give something back as well.

Jayanthi Lingham:

That sounds amazing, that dissemination event. I don't know if it's something that's actually being planned or has happened yet. Across Somali, Irish or different communities with different, creative methods. So that sounds phenomenal. And perhaps we'll hear more about it in the future. I wanted to, I guess, finish because we have, talked quite a while, by, asking you if there were if there's kind of one thing for people to go away and sort of bear in mind when thinking about, working with multiple, languages and research, what might that be?

I think I think for me, it is the very, very practical thing about, thinking about all of those steps and building in a budget that takes account of, of what you, what resources you need to be able to do that properly. So it's not just a smash and grab extractive exercise. I wondered whether there's anything that you would that you would, you would say that you'd want people to take away.

Rashida Bibi:

Yeah. Essentially, I think it is, bearing in mind things around sort of funding and also thinking about sort of the limitations of, you know, having short term projects, but also sort of be prepared to do your work beforehand. I think that's the key aspect of sort of really thinking about if you are going to work across multiple languages to understand, you know, the communities that that feed those multiple languages, understanding their needs and, where they are and what organisations are working with them.

And really engaging with that sort of doing that background work before you sort of even think, before you're designing that project. So just so that you can then incorporate that into your funding, and you can then incorporate that into the time needed to build trust with these communities. A time when you did the to, work with interpreters and the time that's needed to, for example, hire community researchers and train them up as well.

So you can then build that into the project. And as you say. So it's not, you know, making you up as you go along, but really, it's a, it's a project that sort of has at its core, the needs of a community and which includes language.

Jayanthi Lingham:

Rasheeda, thank you so much for taking part in this, conversation. It's been fascinating to hear about your experiences working with multiple languages, your past and your current ones. And, I'm really looking forward to hearing more about how the data analysis, dissemination and engagement activities go on your study and, and, sharing them with what we're doing in the centre for care.

Thank you. Thank you. Been a really interesting conversation. And it's important to think through those and those aspects of research, which sometimes we don't always have the time to reflect on. So really think great conversation to think about sort of language and language needs and the practicalities of that when it comes to academia. And, and how academia is structured.