Lost in Translation? Comparative and international work on gender-related violence

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Abstract

150-200 words

Introduction

It is generally agreed that research across countries, with different cultural and/or language contexts, brings difficulties of translation, meaning here both the literal linguistic translation of words and terminologies, and the more complex matching of interpretations, connotations or cultural meanings. In projects concerned with gender and violence there are many difficulties of translation in the wider sense, that need to be acknowledged in order to allow fruitful cross-cultural exchange and/or the comparison of research findings or the sharing of materials. A fundamental issue is the varying understandings of the main terms used, after and beyond translation, including of 'gender violence', 'domestic violence', 'gender based violence' and 'gender-related violence'.

This chapter examines linguistic and cultural translation as key challenges of cross national or comparative projects to combat gender violence. It considers issues of translation in cross-European projects, citing mainly the experience of two projects co-funded by the EU DAPHNE Programme: the GAP Work Project and CARVE[1]. Both used English as the main project language but involved Partners from 10 different EU countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Serbia, Spain and the England). The main challenges explored are i) the difficulties of agreeing relevant translations, ii) the problem of precision across cultural frameworks, iii) the assumption of relevance and iii) the intractable problem of the imperialist privilege of writing in English as mother-tongue. The GAP Work Project and CARVE Project were challenging

in these respects, but succeeded overall. We write this as two multilingual citizens of Catalonia, Spain, and an English mother-tongued, academically monolingual project coordinator.

We will consider what the research methodology literature alerts us to in conducting comparative studies and how international gender/violence research bear out these issues. Then we share some of the challenges we wrestled with in these particular international feminist collaborations. Finally, we examine what the literature on translation can offer for elaborating and working through these challenges. We hope to develop our reflections on the definitional issues raised and our awareness of culturally sensitive modes of international collaboration, and to share the lessons we've learned in support of other (and our own future) international collaborations. First though we contextualize international collaborations on gender violence.

Collaborating Internationally on Gender Violence

In academic and policy circles the term 'gender based violence' tends to refer to NGO, GO and EU-level definitions, such as the 'Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence' [2], in order to anchor meaning in accepted definitions. But even if, in general, academics and policy makers tend to agree on some basic definition of the terms, they are aware that when conducting field research, the interpretation of the terms by lay people, can differ widely country to country, and even within countries, due to a host of socio-cultural as well as language differences.

At the same time, researchers use the definitions and terminology of regional and national law because this sets the frame for what is meaningful in the respective country context. This is partly because the law reflects dominant discourses and partly because the law provides the frame for actions that can be identified by policymakers in order to act on violence against women. Indeed legal discourse can be analysed for what it indicates about the cultural framing of an issue such as gender related violence in a given jurisdiction (e.g. Alldred and Biglia 2015). The connection between 'local' law and dominant norms and values is pointed out in the 'Violence against women: an EU-wide survey: Main results report' by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA, 2014: p159):

'These [survey] findings underline, furthermore, the interdependence of legal context, prevailing social norms and values, and individuals' own actions and thoughts with respect to the subject of violence against women. Researchers can look at these factors together at the level of each EU Member State. This can help to explain the differences between Member States in the level of violence experienced against women and respondents' level of awareness of other women as victims of domestic violence...'

As the FRA report explains, there are local contexts that shape attitudes and norms, but country comparisons are sometimes made to search for shared patterns or suggest the relevance of particular interventions. Furthermore such comparisons can offer new ways to interpret research participants' views or responses. This comparison of local or national to international implies many levels of 'translation' in order to work.

In a comparison of policy on gender-related violence affecting young people in Italy, Ireland, Spain and the England, we ran into difficulties in comparing countries because of debates about translation of our key terms, and because of differences in legal organization and practice between countries (Alldred and Biglia 2015, Biglia et al 2016). For instance, in England legislation strives for gender neutrality, but Catalan law strives to be gender sensitive and specifies gendered effects, and the two legislatures start from differing definitions therefore of 'domestic violence and abuse' (regardless of gender/age/relationship) or gender violence (respectively) as we explore later. This has implications for whether 'homophobic' (meaning lesbophobic or biphobic) abuse is included in the definition – which is possible in Catalunya, but in England, is treated in different legislation. The very definitions in policy of 'young people' differ not simply by age inclusion but by implicit or grammatical gender too.

Comparative Methods

What can the tradition of comparative research offer methodologically? In order to develop comparative research and for analyses of countries, etc. relative to each other, several strategies have been used to manage data and validate outcomes (Lijphart 1971), including conducting matching surveys, secondary analysis of national data, contrasting

personal observation and interpreting findings in relation to their social contexts (Hantrais 1995: 3). Feminist and critical theorists have highlighted the importance of context in knowledge production (e.g. Fraser and Nicholson 1990) and have pushed social science to study phenomena in relation to *where* it occurs and *how it is known*. The high theory of Fraser and Nicholson's 'local empirical narratives' - in preference to grand narratives of universal Truth - have lead to recognition in mainstream methods texts that the production of knowledge through research (or the representation of a social group in any form) are political, and positionality is all about recognizing the vantage point of the researcher, in terms of their cultural, classed, gendered, bodily and professional locatedness (Alston & Bowels, 2003; Creswell, 2013; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013; Whittaker, 2012). This is no longer a specifically feminist position; there's new pressure on natural scientists to account for their perspective and their impact on the data, shaking the pillars of objectivism.

Developments in comparative methods (Collier, 1993) notwithstanding, this recognition of the situatedness of knowledge presents a challenge. First there is the difficulty of identifying matching information from different countries in order to compare, when who can establish that these are well matched? The 'principle of equivalence' (Jowell 1998) presents the problem, and can question the legitimacy of the research process and its outcomes. This equivalence problem is vividly illustrated in relation to research on violence against women where the varied criteria each country employs in legal and criminal matters shape the collection of data and the baseline for comparisons. We know, for instance, that comparison of rates of domestic violence and abuse cross-nationally is made difficult because there are significant differences in the definitions used (Moser 2007; Waltermaurer 2005), in participants' recognition of what constitutes violence, and reporting bias from differing methodologies (Alhabib et al 2010). Thus in our field, it is readily apparent that legal, social and methodological differences complicate comparative work.

Methodologically we also know that surveys may not be measuring the actual numbers of women who have been abused, but rather the number willing to disclose that abuse (Alhabib et al. ibid.) and, to the particular researcher via *that* method at *that* time. Different methods seem to elicit differing rates, such that face-to-face methods elicit more disclosures of violence than self-report measures or telephone interviews, in line with previous research indicating that the use of multiple and open-ended questions increases

accuracy of reporting. Englehart (2014) argues that obstacles to gathering empirical measures of violence against women include the differing definition of violence against women and jurisdictions differing reporting rates and measures. Differing rates of reporting are linked to cultural stigma, as well as trust in the police and other government institutions. One admirable attempt is the Womenstats which compares official statistics on rape but tries to mitigate the problems of comparison by weighting them according to their various legal definitions of rape and the strength of taboos and other impediments to reporting. While it cannot be used to track changes over time in any of them because of the manipulations in order to compare, this does enable comparison between countries within a particular year.

One of the specific issues that arises in comparative analyses of domestic violence (DV) is that not only do the definitions of DV differ such that some will include intergenerational abuse, (child/youth to parent abuse, abuse of elders etc.) while others are more like measures of VAW (or VAWG, depending on age categories), but varying perceptions of what constitutes violence and abuse complicate the picture (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). Thus, in terms of understanding knowledge in its context, women must be able to express how violated they feel within a cultural framework that is meaningful to them and much comparative work is hindered by the lack of attention to socio-cultural context (Yoshihama 1999). In contrast, Moser (2007) argues for universal standards to measure empowerment and context-sensitive indicators. One such approach is to use multi-level indicators, where broader level indicators might apply across a range of contexts, while indicators at the community and household level might be adapted for specific contexts. Waltermaurer (2005) points out that at least 33 screening instruments for intimate partner violence (IPV) were developed between 1979 and 2003, which are a liability in comparisons over time or between populations because they define the abuse and the abuser differently, and so need assessing for validity and reliability in multiple geographic areas and among diverse population subgroups. Reliability between, as well as within instruments needs establishing. This is relevant at local, regional and national level, too: even within a country or a jurisdiction, datasets might not use consistent definitions. For instance, in England, even where definitions of violence cohere, data collected at police force level is not comparable to other indicators that are based on regional data (Plan International UK, 2016).

Demographic breakdown of statistics might be well-intentioned but has to weigh the cost of reinforcing stereotypes, or of understating the tremendous diversity among women in terms of the prevalence, nature, and impact of domestic violence or abuse even within ethnic, racial, religious and socioeconomic groups and sexual orientations (Hampton et al 1998; West 2005, cited from Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). While recent literature emphasizes the polyvocality of women experiencing abuse, this is sometimes undermining of structural analyses, and attending to both individual voices, differences of experience and meaning, and creating powerful structural or country-level analyses are in tension (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). Garcia and Lila's (2015) comparison of attitudes to VAW in EU countries (using the 2010 Eurobarometer and the 2014 FRA survey) raises many challenging issues, such that when a range of questions tapping similar issues (e.g. acceptability of violence towards women), with different samples might consider different behaviours and circumstances. Walby and Myhill's authoritative review of methodologies for researching VAW highlight the need to extend the range of forms of sexual violence that are recorded, broaden the definitions used, identify the various impacts of violence, and seek more coverage of marginalised communities and socio-economic data that is more disaggregated.

Furthermore cross-national comparisons carry the risk of instilling a default centre - the researcher's 'home' culture/society/language - against which other countries are measured. The methodology literature recommends multi-national research teams and so an international 'EU project' team intent on producing collaborative analyses such as ours would seem a hopeful way forward. The aim being that analyses remain grounded in their contexts, rather than variables becoming isolated from their contexts and rendered meaningless (Ragin, 1991). However in practice, this isn't as easy as it sounds.

Suggestions from the comparative methods literature (e.g. Crompton and Lyonette, 2005; Hantrais, 1995; Tonnon, 2011; Pickvance, 2001), include that a broad range of socio-cultural indicators are identified to understand complex social phenomena, institutions or structures and that interpretation of cause must consider whether phenomena could have multiple correlations (Pickvance 2001), and that each might differ across contexts. Not only might correlation differ or be inconsistent, or confounded, but the nuances of cultural politics and social differences within any one location might mean that in gender violence projects, different interventions are needed and different analyses relevant for the different regions in question. This point is frequently made and well received in

international meetings, such as the review of learning from gender violence EU projects we attended recently in Brussels.[3] But what are the implications of this for projects that need to have both enough unity to be 'a project' and enough sensitivity to cultural differences to make meaningful impacts?

Of the suggestions Jowell (1998) makes for mitigating these issues in international comparisons, the idea that international Partners collaborate in the interpretation, as well as the design of comparative research (and not only in supplying data) feels fairly standard good practice in gender violence projects that may seek a more collaborative approach overall or EU projects that will probably have researchers from each country as Partners. The suggestion of not comparing too many countries at once to enable deeper understanding of each makes sense, as it speaks to the increased validity closer attention might bring, but clearly there might be times when a broad brush international comparison table makes a political impact that we feel is worth some compromise to this. So although advocating high standards of inclusion for the data and omitting countries on grounds such as poor response rates, nonconforming fieldwork period, different modes of interviewing or sampling, and so on, might be the ideal in comparative work, and is even more of a challenge in qualitative, interpretive and subjective analyses, it is just one of the political decisions about feminist strategies within research that we are making when we embark on international research.

These recommendations might shape the design of studies that set out with comparative aims. But what we were aiming for in our EU projects were collaborations that offered the benefit of sharing ideas across contexts - theoretical ones, types of feminist interventions and overall political strategies - rather than strictly comparative designs. However the lure of comparable data is felt where similar actions are to be conducted in multiple sites. It might then be easy to assume data would be comparable.

GAP Work Project: Some challenges of comparison and translation

The way issues of interpretation are embroiled with those of comparison can be illustrated by the GAP Work Project. It had Partners from six European countries with funding for training 'actions' to help 'youth practitioners' tackle gender-related violence in young people's lives[4]. Although the design wasn't strongly comparative between the countries,

the issues that arose illustrate how such projects could embed assumptions of, or evoke desire for, comparability.

The original vision was for a project that trained youth workers, teachers and sports coaches, and since it was designed from an English perspective (and by a teacher of Youth & Community Work) it was soon realized that these professional identities don't necessarily map over to those in other countries. After much discussion about the definition of youth worker in order to identify which practitioners in Spain most closely matched, it was decided that teachers were the only professional group that we might expect to engage in all four countries. Although the bid referred to training that would reflect local cultures and needs, implicitly there was the desire for matching data sets and to offer matched figures for how positively teachers in each country viewed the training. Only much later did differences emerge between even professionals with titles that translate the same: 'youth practitioners' in Spain and Italy do not have an equivalent degree of professional autonomy or the power to shape agendas in their work with young people as those in the England or Ireland (Levitan and Alldred, 2018 forthcoming).

In the final report when we reflected on the overall success of the actions in the four countries, what struck us was the way an initial agreement over the definitions of gender-related violence at the start had given way to a diverse set of local interpretations of the definition by the end of the project. Perhaps this revealed the different meanings of the terms in different contexts, and it certainly illustrated the general tension between how unified and 'coherent' such a project is and how much autonomy is allowed to enable context-dependent, locally accountable actions.

The political motivation for the project was the desire to bring queer and intersectional feminist approaches to bear on anti-violence work in schools. In particular, it sought to bridge the gap between interventions tackling Violence Against Women and Girls and those tackling homophobia (which increasingly addressed transphobia too) (Alldred 2014). The concept advanced to bridge this gap was 'gender-related violence' (GRV), intentionally broader than 'gender based violence' and eschewing any identity basis or limitations (Alldred 2014). GRV was defined as 'sexist, sexualizing or norm driven bullying, harassment or violence whoever is targeted' (Alldred 2014). GRV deliberately sought to encompass gender normativity and to frame the gender binary itself as a

problem**.** This meant that it actively expanded the category from violence between intimate partners or ex-partners to include peer violence or bullying that might relate to actual or perceived sexual orientation, or conformity to gender norms, as well as sexual harassment and violence. There seemed no reason to differentiate victims on the basis of their identities when the whole gender system needs questioning and power relations dismantling.

All four Partners agreed the definition at the outset but at the end of the project we realized that the Irish team had developed their training around a definition of gender based violence, albeit one that acknowledged and included homophobia. They drew parallels and identified solidarities between VAWG and homophobia but theoretically centred the problem in male violence or machismo. The Irish team identified working across faith groups and through faith organisations as a key factor in their preference for these terms (see Alldred et al 2014). Linguistically, for the Spanish team in particular, the distinction was significant. They adopted the term 'violencias de genero' (gender violences) that is starting to be used in Spanish and Catalan (violències de gènere), to refer to the multiple gender identities and different experiences of violence, despite the common source of a phallocentric hegemony.

It seemed that the English and Spanish teams were more influenced by debates about intersectionality and Queer Theory, but who's to say whether this reflects national patterns or individual preferences. We asked this question again when a discussion about the meaning of sexualisation foundered and it seemed that the team did not all recognize the same problem. The cultural politics of combining sexual violence/domestic violence and abuse (DVA) with LGBTQi-targeted abuse differed. The Italian team felt that this was particularly novel in Italy and the coalition they formed between Torino Pride and the Gender and Women's Studies Research Centre is unique.

However layers of debate about the cultural relevance of particular strategies for social change might already be based on assumptions that we were using the English words to mean the same thing. Translation between languages is, of course, not a literal thing.

Translating 'Gender-related violence' into Spanish, Catalan, Italian, etc. 'Gender violence' translated into Spanish can be understood to mean domestic violence, but

translated deliberately into the plural, 'violencias de genero' was, in the GAP Work Project, felt to be a progressive step in expanding the concept by the coordinator of the Spanish (Catalan) team, although other Spanish speaking academics contested this, saying that it did not carry the point. The Spanish coordinator suggested using 'violences' in English to emphasise plurality, but instead the grammar rule was obeyed, and the PI insisted that the term 'violence' had an inclusive meaning that didn't elide differences, just like 'food' is not plural but includes many things.

In Spain there is a law on *comprehensive protection measures against gender violence (organic law 1/2004)* and a law on *gender equality (organic law 3/2007)*. These laws have moved beyond the protection of women victims of domestic violence, to recognizing that gender violence is a social problem that is present in all layers of public and private life. However neither law covers sexual harassment, rape, genital mutilation or economic violence. By definition gender violence refers to any type of violence against a person because of their gender. However, as women and girls primarily experience this type of violence, the term is commonly used as a synonym for violence against women. In the above-mentioned laws gender violence refers to violence by a man against someone who is, or has been, his wife or partner. Domestic violence is a term widely used across Europe but not in Spain because there it refers to violence in the family, regardless of the gender of 'victim' or perpetrator, so from a feminist perspective it is seen as imprecise. However in the England, 'domestic violence' hits a more feminist note according to our England-based author because it references a strong feminist history and implies gender-based violence in popular usage (and particularly adult women's experience of violence from men), whilst not specifying it. In fact, a helpline for men experiencing domestic violence or abuse emphasises that men can be victims of domestic abuse to interrupt the elision with violence against women. However the current legal term in the England, 'domestic violence and abuse', deliberately widens to acknowledge abuse other than physical violence and between any household members or partners or ex-partners (Home Office 2013). So it seems therefore that accurate translations imply different coverage and theoretical frameworks because of the connotations they have for historical reasons.

Even within the same country, terms and legal frameworks can vary. Within Spain, autonomous regions have their own laws, and the term 'violencia masclista' is used in Catalan law (*law 5/2008 - the right of women to eradicate male-sexist violence)* and is favoured by many feminists. The Catalan word 'masclista' (in Spanish 'machista') means

'male chauvinist', and is used deliberately in the law to make explicit that the violence is exerted by men against women. In contrast to the Spanish laws cited above, other forms of violence are recognised in Catalan law: physical, psychological and economic violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault, forced marriage, FGM, etc.

Thus specifying gender is the emphasis in Spanish and Catalan law currently, whereas in England law is now gender neutral (although does attempt explicitly to acknowledge power differentials) (Alldred and Biglia 2015).

In the CARVE project [5] (EU co-funded), about how the workplace can help to combat gender violence, it became clear how difficult it is to translate the terms 'gender violence' and 'domestic violence' across languages and cultures. At one event in Barcelona, the term 'domestic violence' was used to refer to violence experienced by a woman in her private life, and how this could be addressed through workplace support. The term was deliberately used to make clear that it did not refer to violence at the workplace, which is legislated differently and was not the focus. A largely feminist audience well acquainted with Spanish and Catalan law and gender violence issues instantly criticized the use of the term, which was considered out-dated, and superseded now in Catalan by: 'violència de gènere' or 'violència masclista' or, in Spanish: 'violencia de género' or 'violencia machista'. To a UK based collaborator the cause of the outrage is not obvious, but in the Catalan/Spanish context, it was to associate the domestic uncritically with women and view the private sphere as traditionally inferior to the male-dominated public sphere. In addition to these associations it loses specificity, as it fails to recognise the gendered pattern of this violence.

For this reason definitions of 'domestic violence' and 'gender based violence' in Spanish and Catalan law, and the subsequent feminist use of them are closely linked, and differ slightly from the use in English. As in many countries the law has been modified in response to social change and often as a consequence of feminist lobbying. In each country social and legal changes have different histories, which can lead to misunderstandings in comparative studies and/or translation of texts.

So it seems that 'correctly' translated definitions of *gender related violence* or *domestic violence and abuse* do not necessarily align culturally. In terms of theoretical framing, whereas GRV is rooted in a 'third wave' feminist post-identity politics, and so insists on

separating *what* from *who*, the concept of *masclista/machista* (a person whose behaviour is male chauvinistic) fixes firmly on w*ho* the aggressor is and the Catalan law is determined to reflect a structural analysis of gender violence. That is, it embodies a gender-based violence approach.

Language is therefore a barrier in comparative methods, since different languages do not have equivalent meanings when they define or communicate the same idea. As we illustrated above, this might be difficult to identify in practice and it is certainly hard to accept the extent to which this might limit collaborative potential; for instance, in the reliance we have on translated material if we do not speak a language. So how literally should we take material written into the academically-dominant English language by non-native speakers? How much context will we be missing? How can we rely on our own translation when we speak the language, but are from a different cultural and/or social background? The 'translation' into 'academese' is an issue we cannot even begin to address here, but what has the academic field of translation studies to offer?

Translation Studies

Texts about translation in gender research, from a range of disciplines and countries, offer insights for those researching across languages and countries. They highlight the importance of subject-sensitive translation processes and practices that need to respect local socio-cultural context as well as the legal framework in which the subjects of research move, and an exciting recent strand argues that translation 'problems' offer an interesting way into discovering new possibilities, to discover new debates or move beyond meta-narratives and conventions.

Alvanoudi argues that 'translation is about contextualizing concepts and understanding the practices that lie behind them' (2015: p.32). This means that the translator has to fully understand the multiple meanings words carry, and the many layers to the cultural practices they describe. She further argues that language conditions meaning, and that cultural conceptions are shaped by language and vice versa.

This helps explain why there can be acute difficulty agreeing a project name or acronym given differing cultural context, language and pronunciation. A functional project title in English (USVSV) that had been devised by the English PI and CO (Alldred and Phipps) proved too difficult to pronounce in Spanish, and thus was changed to 'USVreact'. In a

collaboration it might be surprising how much time needs devoting to a relatively simple issue like agreeing an acronym when there are in fact many angles to consider. Thus international collaborators might need long discussions about seemingly unimportant issues, such as the Twitter hashtag, but perhaps this shouldn't surprise given that the requirements of this short tag/word are: that it carries the right meaning and connotations for each language group, communicates instantly yet needs no qualification, is pronounceable from each language and has no unintended or offensive connotations.

A special issue of the Graduate Journal of Social Science (2015) called Lost (and found) in Translation considers gender across language and cultures, addressing translation in the widest sense - from one language to another, across disciplines, across cultures and/or social groups and highlighting the feminist canon on translation from a range of disciplines (e.g. Spivak, Braidotti, Irigaray, Simon, etc.). Editors Maria do Mar Pereira, Natasha Marhia and Christina Scharff, explain the intention to move translation in social sciences from 'its usual confinement to the linguistic and explore its value as an analytical tool in research' and where problems can become the source of new critical insights (2015: p.6). In this sense translation is not a simple process but a method and tool in itself that helps formulate new research questions.

Translation in research is framed as both linguistic and inter-disciplinary by Alvanoudi (2015), using the metaphor of travelling to signify the movement of meaning across languages and/or disciplines. She explores the terms 'sex' and 'gender' from a linguistic perspective, and suggests that the difficulty of translating them adequately from one cultural context to another throws up opportunities, as well as problems. She argues that even with an in-depth understanding of different cultures and languages, some context will always be lost, but when recognized and acknowledged, this is an opportunity to explore the 'untranslatable' subjects and reach a better (albeit not perfect) understanding. She cites examples from Scandinavian, Bulgarian and Greek languages, and how words such as sex/gender do not translate 'neutrally' from or into English, which is often presented as a gender-neutral language. She shows how language carries, highlights and/or at the same time hides connotations and meanings. In other words, the meaning is always there, but one can decide when translating, if to address and show all its meanings and complications, or whether to choose only one (simplified) translation.

Travelling between disciplines can be a fruitful exchange and potentially enhancing or even inspiring. It can test or explore research from a different angle, although is not necessarily popular in academia:

> 'There are two homogenizing forces in present day academia which work against difference and which we, Women's/Gender Studies scholars, need to overcome: the English language hegemony, and disciplinarity. The first one can be negotiated but it can never be fully resolved. … The second…' [because it requires] 'conceptual translation is not a 'friendly' practice for present day academia, because it addresses issues of interdisciplinarity and it thus challenges the dominant cognitive disciplinary habitus within academia.' (p33)

In our international projects we noted from the start the advantage of native-English bid writing, but increasingly saw the impact on the team dynamics of English-language dominance for meetings, conferences and publications. It should be possible to acknowledge, though not fully mitigate, the extra layer of work for those seeking to publish in languages other than their mother-tongue (Mayuzumi 2011, cited from Acker 2015). For the GAP Work Project we were especially conscious of this because the power differential between a Spanish and English peer developed in the final stages of the project development when the EU bid form required the linguistic discipline of being able to shape the project tightly into very concise statements (e.g. 1000 characters). Not only is the advantage of being EFL evident here but the impact this had on the conceptual and theoretical development of the project is significant.

Esperanza Bielsa (2015) argues that people whose native language is not English are constantly translating themselves into the dominant global language in order to communicate beyond their own locales (citing Cronin, 2003). Her study of news translation from media, cultural and translation studies perspectives explores how information is shared globally, and questions who the translator is, a point relevant for any researcher doing fieldwork in international projects. We could ask who translates the content of an interview? Is the research participant already rephrasing (translating) for the researcher, in order to be understood? Does the researcher translate when transcribing, or do we translate when we read the research? Without wanting to slip too far into a Barthes/Foucauldian debate about who the author/translator is, it is clear that translation is less a source of fixing meaning then a process that offers up new possibilities (and

questions). Bielsa considers how best to present our work to local and international audiences, and what alternative ways of translating can be considered for presenting or disseminating work (performance, etc.).

Sherry Simon (1996) traces a history of women translators whose texts, since the 16th century have been considered inferior and argues that translators' gender is always relevant to process and to the politics of interpretation, meaning both the biological gender of the translator and the gendered use of language, grammatically and as a tool of legitimating patriarchal authority. She calls for a 'disciplinary hybridization' to break the constrictive mono-discipline tradition in academia and considers the problematic power relations of field research as related to translation in its widest sense: is the researcher the translator (of participants' input), and how does this shape the role of the participant? And how to address the inescapable patriarchal hegemony implicit in language, especially when formulating research questions or interpreting participants' words? How is this further complicated when doing research in a second language, transcribing research done in one language into another or sharing research across cultural and language contexts?

The power to define through translation is also an issue for survivors of violence where in seeking legal or medical intervention, the translator is a gate-keeper to services and may be a community leader, a family member, a child or even the perpetrator.

Writing from the US, Merry (2006) explores how global law translates into the vernacular and suggests activists as 'intermediaries between different sets of cultural understandings of gender, violence and justice' (p2; p210) arguing for an empathic attitude towards questionable local cultural practices, which at 'convention' level are dismissed as intolerable, because they do not conform to international law.

Strategies for gender equality

Appropriate translation is sometimes a matter of feminist strategy. Current debates among feminists in Italy and Spain include whether to promote non gendered pronouns using '*' or '@' or to use the female form as generic, when conventionally it is the masculine. This strategic issue is born of a linguistic problem that English speakers have not had to struggle with. In French, Spanish and German the masculine and feminine forms of the

same word can have different connotations in terms of status which might translate differently into English, for instance, the feminine form of secretary in German (die Sekretärin) means someone doing secretarial work whereas the masculine (der Sekretär) means Secretary of State.

So there are issues of political strategy in translation decisions, and translations need to be decided in context. Our example of how the cultural politics of combining gender-related violence with LGBT+ equalities differs between contexts showed this. Given that combining VAW and LGBT equality is novel in Spain and Italy meant situated decisions by the Italian team to work with the LGBT Office and for the Catalan team to adopt their activist practices (of queer and feminist struggles in one) within academia. For a project with English as a common language it meant that terms was less familiar and even awkward for some, and it was hard to establish where translation and cultural politics meet. The equivalence required for comparative studies might not be possible, or rather entails compromises that we should be explicit about. We might also differentiate linguistic from contextual issues. An example of a seeming linguistic issue that had analytic interest for us was our difficulty translating the titles of the professionals attending our training, and on deeper analysis, even when we find a translation (or adopt a broad 'youth practitioners' which might gesture no specific professional formation), they may be differently positioned as regards their professional status and power to intervene on GRV with young people (Levitan and Alldred 2018).

Losses and gains of working across translation

Research projects that intend to contrast data across different countries, and may wish to produce shared conclusions or suggest shared actions, need to contemplate and address the difficulty of translation from the start. They need to work with the tensions (rather then against them) that come up when terminologies and meaning are discussed in a group with people from different countries working on one shared subject across different languages and countries. It is in the fissures or tensions that arise, that truly interesting research questions can be co-created, which can push debates further locally, nationally and internationally. Alternative interpretations of data, or new avenues of intervention might be offered by these collaborations, both of which we think are incredibly valuable and can be very exciting.

Our experience demonstrates that translation must be seen as a cultural and not only a linguistic exercise – the common language of English did not remove the cultural translations needed between England and Ireland in one analysis of our experience - and most of the time it is both of these at once.

As for the intractable problem of the imperialist privilege of writing in English as mother-tongue, feminist journals such as *Feminist Review* and *Gender and Education* have agonized over what it means to be an international journal publishing in English. Sandra Acker's (2015) contribution to the *Gender and Education* discussion reminded us that 'elementary' and 'primary' applied to schools and grammar school have different meanings in English usage in the USA and in the UK, adding yet another layer or distinguishing cultural from linguistic translation.

In future we might be more self-conscious about the process of translating and how we, as an international team of academics, check and validate our translations. We might tolerate and explicitly acknowledge potential lack of precise match across cultures. Can we allow for possible cultural non-translation in spite of language? Framing international collaboration as a way of seeing anew our own cultural politics and strategies, and interdisciplinary work as a 'means for gaining genuine insights on complex phenomena' (Bielsa, 2015, p.209) because working from different fields and texts the researcher achieves a fuller understanding of a subject. Whilst we caution against comparative designs, we think that putting our rich projects into more constructive relation with each other than straightforward comparison can open avenues and offer new insights.

Endnotes

[1] GAP Work project: Improving Gender-Related Violence Intervention and Referral Through 'Youth Practitioner' Training. (EC project code: JUST/2012/DAP/AG/3176) http://sites.brunel.ac.uk/gap and CARVE project: Companies Against Gender Violence. (project code: JUST/2013/AG/DAP/5559) http://carve-daphne.eu/

[2] "[G]ender-based violence against women" shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately[.]
(Art. 3 d, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence)
http://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence

[3] On 6 June 2016, DG Justice and Consumers' Gender Equality Unit of the European Commission organised a meeting entitled "EU Projects on Violence Against Women – Learning for Meaningful Change", bringing together 55 managers of EU funded campaigns against violence and Daphne projects

running from 2012 to 2015. Read a summary here: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_based_violence/summary_report_vaw_en.pdf

4 For the training resources and list of Partners, see http://sites.brunel.ac.uk/gap

5 http://carve-daphne.eu/

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