DISCOURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN NARRATIVES OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF MIGRATION

MARTINA PODBOJ
PhD Candidate in Linguistics, University of Zagreb, Croatia

ACCOMPLISH
CO-ORGANISER: Tonia Cappi
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INTRODUCTION
Recent sociolinguistic and discourse-oriented approaches to language and identity emphasise narrative discourse as a primary linguistic means for organising life experiences in a meaningful and coherent way. Consequently, narrative analysis has become a privileged methodological tool for investigating how identities are constructed and negotiated in an ongoing process of meaning making (Schiffrin, 1996; De Fina, 2003; Bamberg et al., 2007).

By studying migration through the lens of narrative analysis, we gain meaningful insight into how it affects individuals and their identities, rather than only looking into statistics and quantitative data, which tends to depersonalise migration, or into media discourses, which perpetuates negative stereotypes about it.

The aim of this research is holistic. Firstly, it aims to describe the complexity of the genre of narratives of personal experience from a linguistic point of view. Secondly, it aims to understand how various aspects of individuals’ identities are contested, constructed, and performed throughout the experience of migration.

METHODS
This research was motivated by international migration from Croatia in the recent years, which serves a significant demographic and social gap in an already traditionally emigrant society. Therefore, respondents participating in the study were ten young, highly-educated females who emigrated from Croatia in the 2010s. Their countries of destination are: Ireland, Canada, Germany, USA, the Netherlands, and Qatar. Narratives about their experience of migration were collected through semi-structured and individual interviews. These methods were chosen in order to reduce the effects of asymmetrical power relations typical for more traditional interview contexts, as well as to shape a solidary and empowering atmosphere where participants’ accounts were given relevance and legitimacy. Narratives were selected from transcribed interviews and further categorised following canonical criteria of narratives analysis (Labov, 1972), which were enriched with discourse-oriented and functional criteria (Orts & Capps, 2003, 2004).

Once narratives were selected and categorised, they were analysed for linguistic devices that result in identity positioning (Bamberg, 1997). Here, the following three levels of narrative context were taken into account:

• the story world, which includes the order of recounted events, participant deixis, and the setting
• the storytelling world, which refers to interpersonal aspects of narration and the fact that narratives are jointly co-created by both interlocutors – the researcher and the narrator
• the world of migration, which refers to the broader social context, ideological, power relations, and other aspects of the migration hand in question

EXAMPLE - EVALUATIVE NARRATIVE

01 ovdje čudno [nešto da je besplatan]
02 ono to prijatelje upoznaš
03 a ne znam- upoznaš isto ono hrpu ljudi iz drugih zemalja
04 i onda se naravno- upoznaš više ljudi
05 i onda se naravno- dok nisam počela ić
06 bilo je- nemaš prijatelja, nemaš nikog, nemaš ništa
07 pa dobro ispočetka malo teško, jel i šta, onda ste odlučili probat u Nizozemskoj?
08 na tečajeve
09 (1.2) *word*
10 *šta, onda ste odlučili probat u Nizozemskoj?
11 *you have your group of people*
12 *and now after that it's much easier*
13 *you meet some friends*
14 yeah yeah yeah
15 *you have your group of people*
16 *you have your group of people*
17 *you have your group of people*
18 *you have your group of people*

RESULT
Based on their structure and intention, three main types of narratives were identified in the corpus:

• evaluative typically accounts of past events, with casually-contracted agents and prescriptive arousal settings
• evaluative typically accounts of habitual actions, characteristics, and states (of affairs)
• hypothetical (typically about plans and potential events in the future)

The analysis revealed that positioning strategies such as collectivisation, generalisation include... occur simul- taneously and dynamically across more than one linguistic level of analysis, confirming the poststructural notion of identity as processes, rather than as discursive notion. Positioning strategies illustrated that for myth of the time evaluations constructed social agents in positions of power as agents, whereas they constructed themselves as agents in the story world. In the storytelling world, using pronominal shift and other linguistic devices narrator emphasised or mitigated their evaluations by including the researcher-intervener, which resulted in jointly constructed moral stances. Finally, on the third level of narrative context, common macro-topics and master narratives contextualised in the narratives revealed broader issues of the migration experience that affect narrators' identifications. Some of these macro-topics include: anticipated unemployment as risk motivation for migration, discrimination, child rearing, identity and migration, access to language capital, migration policies of certain countries, and ideologues and power relations they are based on.

LEVELS OF NARRATIVE CONTEXT

CONCLUSION AND IMPACTS
By drawing empirically on the interview data, this study demonstrates the dynamic process of identity construction embedded in the experience of migration. From a linguistic point of view, it illustrates the intertextual relationship of language, migration, and identity, and the necessity to enrich traditional approaches to linguistic analysis with new, interdisciplinary criteria. From the point of view of migration, it sheds light on the additional aspects of the migration experience, which are often overlooked by formal and quantitative approaches...

Even though this research was not envisaged as a co-creative project, its co-creative potential was already revealed in the processes of data collection, since narratives are jointly conducted by the interlocutors, one of which is the researcher. For the participants, sharing narratives about important personal experiences, their individual voices, which are partially marginalised and reduced to the particular situation. Finally, findings emerging from this study can have a significant impact in shaping the migration hand in question and shaping further migration policies and discourses about it.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY