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CONSTRUCTING AND NEGOTIATING GENDER IDENTITIES THROUGH BILINGUAL PRACTICES: THE CASE OF RUSSIAN SPEAKING WOMEN IN BRITAIN

Татьяна Линекер (Лондон, Великобритания). Двуязычие на практике – формирование и переформирование личности на примере русскоговорящих женщин в Великобритании. Статья посвящена изучению двуязычного сообщества русскоговорящих женщин в Великобритании и наблюдениям за влиянием двуязычия на личность. Данные собраны на основе девяти биографических интервью с русскоговорящими женщинами, проживающими в Великобритании. Анализ интервью основан на новом феминистском постструктуралистическом подходе к гендерным отношениям и двуязычию, разработанном Джулией Бакстер. Результаты исследований демонстрируют двуязычные стратегии, используемые информантами в дискурсах иммиграции и интеграции в семье и профессиональной сфере. С одной стороны, в результате преобразования личности, женщины пытаются противостоять доминантной гендерной идеологии и изменить объективную реальность, с другой стороны, сама реальность ограничивает развитие феминистского сознания.

Ключевые слова: двуязычие, феминизм, постструктурализм, гендерные отношения, переключение языковых кодов, гендерная личность

The aim of the article is to explore bilingual gender identity performance in the local context. The data is obtained through semi-structured biographical interviews with nine bilingual women of Russian origin living in the UK. The methodology used for collecting and analysing data is Feminist Post Structural Discourse Analysis (FPDA). The analysis reveals the bilingual strategies women employ for identity construction in the discourses of immigration, family and work. Performing multiple identities through discursive narratives, language choice and code switching, allows women to subvert and challenge dominant discourses and ideologies through the framework of empowerment. However, they find themselves in the "double bind" position – their access to the job market is restricted and their innovative feminised approach to the work practice is opposed. The novelty of FPDA approach presents further opportunities for research in the area of gender and bilingualism in the local communities.

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Keywords: bilingualism, feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis, gender identity, code switching, language choice

1. Introduction.

The purpose of this study is to observe, analyse and establish the significance of gender identity performing in the localised bilingual and bicultural setting.

The aim of the project is to elicit the gender identity performance data through semi-structured biographical interviews with nine bilingual women of Russian origin living in the UK.

We believe that the subject of this study is both valid and vital in the emerging field of feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis (FPDA) for a number of reasons. First, there is still a lack of research into the bilingual identity construction through biographical narrative discourse viewed within FPDA framework. Secondly, the field of FPDA is relatively new and requires further empirical research into localised aspects of language and gender interaction to support its practical value. Finally, the study of Russian English bilinguals, particularly in the area of identity construction is still an under-researched area and has been limited to only a handful of studies, most of them carried out in the USA. (Polanyi 1995; Pavlenko 2001; 2001a; 2001b; 2003; 2006; Gregor 2003) This is a timely and relevant project, set within a local community of practice, familiar to the researcher, who is also a member of this community.

The following questions will guide our analysis: (1) What are the particular salient sites of transformation of gender identity and what can we learn from the narratives about the factors that affect the process of identity construction through bilingual practices? (2) How does identity perform through a narrative interview, a creative site for identity construction? (3) Do women in our study challenge or conform to the dominant gender ideology and how do they internalise or resist the change in their gender subjectivities through bilingual socialization? (4) How do bilingual women negotiate gender and professional identity and how is power relations between dominant gender ideology and new gendered subjectivity constructed and challenged in the professional environment? (5) How does gender identity perform through bilingual practices, particularly through code-switching?

Socio-historical background and gender roles in contemporary Russia.

Identity, viewed as a social construct, can be best understood through the discursive interactions between all its aspects, including nationality, ethnicity, language, class, culture and, most salient for our research, gender. It is through interplay between all these categories and through membership of a particular community of practice, that the gendered identity is constructed. The social and professional structure of Russian Diaspora ranges from oligarchs to nannies and from builders to scientists and thus is very class conscious. However, Russian Diaspora in London is characterised as lacking in core values, due to historical (different periods of immigration linked to different historical events), geographical (Russian national identity is mistakenly attributed to immigrants from other countries of the former Soviet Union) and economic (creation of classed society with strong hierarchy of power controlled by new business elite) reasons.

This disparity of values creates and perpetuates the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust, which leads to alienation and detachment between members of the community (Grechaninova, 2007).

In our study this deliberate disassociation with the Russian Diaspora, yet positioning self as a Russian, is viewed as part of identity construction and negotiation. This new emerging ethnic identity is important in our quest for better understanding of gender and language relationship and our study explores the correlation and interaction between ethnicity, gender and language through discursive practices.

The survey of attitudes towards gender roles in post Soviet Russia finds the essentialist understanding of gender roles inherited from pre-revolutionary period and perpetuated through the Soviet period and beyond is still maintained in families and in public life: 'the declining visibility of women in parliaments and councils, following the removal of soviet quota systems, sends a signal to society that women do not have a role to play in the public sphere'. (White 2005: 434) Our study will reveal how the traditional Russian gender subjectivities are contested or perpetuated when conflated with different gender subjectivities of a new culture. 'Negotiating new gendered subjectivities in a new community may not be an easy enterprise, as normative conceptions of femininity and masculinity may be different within different communities of practice. <...> These new subjectivities come with new lin-

guistic repertoires and discourses that have to be mastered and internalised, often at the expense of one's values and beliefs'(Pavlenko 2001: 333).

2. Theoretical framework

We choose the model of feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis (FPDA) as the theoretical framework. We argue that FPDA combines the ideology of Feminism and post structuralist theory of Performativity, thus creating the best possible theoretical framework to analyse the performance of gender. The bilingual element of the study will focus on codeswitching and bilingual practices as sites of gender performance.

The following theoretical principles will be incorporated in our analysis: the diversity and multiplicity of women's identities; the peformative nature of gender; a focus on context specific gender issues; the process of co-construction of identities; the emphasis upon the notion of female resistance to stereotyped subject positions rather than notions of struggle, the subordination of women (Mills, cited in Baxter 2003: 5).

We argue that FPDA can offer an insightful model for analysing individual biographies reflecting identity construction through bilingual linguistic practices, following the principle of localised, individualised approach to the discourse analysis.

In our analysis we will follow the main FPDA guidelines:

The subject is continuously socially constructed within discourses, but also acts as an agent, resisting or conforming to shifting and often contradictory subject positions (Weedon 1997; Baxter 2003).

FPDA embraces the principle of performativity, where gender is an 'act', that is 'open to splitting, self-parody, self-criticism' (Butler 1990: 147).

A woman is aware of the fluid, often conflicting discursive practices that she finds herself involved in, which gives her the power to resist or change reality. FPDA is concerned with individual differences between women in their race, class, ethnicity, age and sexuality and with the ambiguities of power relations in society.

While FPDA is concerned with deconstructing discourses of gender differentiation, it acknowledges the multiplicity and diversity of these discourses, which are culturally and historically contextualised. However, FPDA also recognises that feminism as a movement and dis-

course needs to be self-reflexive and does not present a universal, homogeneous picture.

FPDA's ultimate goal is to release the alternative voices of those who are in minority or marginalised at the given moment of time in order to achieve a polyphony of voices in the discourse (Baxter 2003). Such transformative project lies in the heart of the current study with its purpose to give voice to women on the periphery of our society through deconstruction of their self-reflexive narratives.

Adopting empowerment framework (Cameron et al. 1997), we argue that researcher is not distanced, but empowered by the multiple subject positions and identities he/she performs in the context of research.

The importance of 'bridging the gap' (Pavlenko 2001) between bilingualism and gender and creating a theoretical framework for analysing interaction between language and gender has been on the research agenda for the last thirty years with contributions from Gal (1979, 1991), Ehrlich (1999), Sunderland (2006), Pavlenko (2001), Pavlenko and Piller (2001), Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001), Pavlenko (2003), Stroud (2004), Mills (2006), Cameron (2005), Gardner-Chloros (2009).

The FPDA theoretical framework for studying gender and bilingualism has been mediated by the concepts of performativity (Butler 1990), diversity – shifting gender positions, inflecting or inflected by other dimensions of social identity, such as bilingualism; communities of practice approach to constructing masculinities and femininities (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) and exploration of 'queer' or transgendered identities (Besnier 2003). Multilingualism and multiculturalism have been brought into focus as particularly salient political issues to investigate how cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences inflect the performance of masculinity and femininity (Cameron 2005: 491).

Adopting the FPDA framework, the study of bilingual autobiographies investigates the discursive performance of gender through second language socialisation and demonstrates how new identities are being produced where previous subjectivities cannot be understood and have to be transformed or discontinued. (Pavlenko 2001A) Our study will explore this process further by situating it in the different geographical and historical context – London, 2011 and by shifting the focus on a particular bilingual community – Russian/English.

Code-switching is another multilingual site of identity construction. The study of codeswitching between London English (LE) and London Jamaican (LJ) within poststructutalist framework further developed the 'we code', 'they code' (Gumperz 1982) explanation of codeswitching. The relationship between code and identity goes beyond we-they code explanation: 'if there are only two or three distinct codes available but a multiplicity of social identities to be evoked and manipulated, the relationship between code and identity is necessarily much more complex than one-to-one' (Sebba & Wootton 1998: 284).

The argument is supported by the study of Greek Cypriot and Punjabi communities in Britain in community based research: 'codeswitching carries different connotation in different communities', (Cheshire and Gardner-Chloros 1998: 28) as well as in different groups and individuals within communities.

Code-switching is used as a strategy for women to transgress some 'traditional constraints of female discourse' (Gardner-Chloros 2009: 86). Thus, codeswitching performed by women as the site of their identity negotiation becomes 'a medium for the promotion of social change' (Stroud 2004: 159) and carries a strong feminist transformative message.

We support the argument that 'codeswitching cannot be correlated in any direct way with gender, but intersects with a large number of intervening variables which are themselves connected with gender issues' (Gardner-Chloros 2009: 82).

Gender and language interaction scholarship in post-structuralist framework views gender as a dynamic construct and an essential part of other aspects of social identity: cultural, ethnic, personal, role, relational, facework and symbolic interaction (Blackledge & Pavlenko 2001: 244) in which identity is considered as 'social positioning of self and others' (Butchholtz & Hall 2010: 18).

4. Methodology and methods

By choosing FPDA as the theoretical framework for our study, we expose ourselves to certain methodological risks for the following reasons.

First, FPDA has been criticised for its lack of consistent methodology and 'add the woman and stir' approach (Cameron 1997: 33). Secondly, FPDA has not yet had substantial practical application in the field of multilingualism and gender identity, other than in the educa-

tional context (Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller &Teutsch-Dwyer 2001), thus there is not enough empirical evidence in the sustainability and reliability of this methodology.

However, taking methodological, theoretical and political risks is the only way to make changes and advance research. Using FPDA as an alternative methodology 'helps to challenge the inertia of "linguistic orthodoxies", opening up possibilities for new forms of discourse analysis' (Billing, cited in Baxter 2003: 55).

The main principles of FPDA guided our research strategy and methodology design.

Following the principle of *self-reflexivity* we argue that the figure of researcher becomes crucial in the tension between 'textualising' and 'authoring' the research. While we acknowledge *the agency of the researcher* and her power to make choices, we accept that the researcher's position is only temporary. We also acknowledge that 'researchers do not come neutrally to the analysis, but bring their cultural (gendered) baggage' (Stokoe & Smithson 2001: 220).

The researcher in our study has gradually developed her feminist stance over the years and informed her position through broad and extensive reading of both core and peripheral literature on the subject of gender and bilingualism in the area of applied linguistics and literary criticism. The 'cultural baggage' the researcher brings to the process is her previous study on gender performance in the works by Russian bilingual writers and her close involvement and familiarity with the life of Russian speaking diaspora in London.

Using *feminist focus* as a lens to bring a question of language and gender into focus and FPDA as a theoretical framework we choose the mixed-method approach to analysing gender performance in the local setting. For the data collection we adopt the method of ethnographic observation and recorded semi structured interviews based on the participants' biographical narratives, designed to elicit themes of bilingual identity construction and transformation. Ethnographic observations are vital in the study of individual members of the community of practice, 'in order to understand the internal structure of the community of practice (CofP)' (Moore 2006: 615). The flexibility and sensitivity of this method allows for self-reflection, introspection, better understanding of individual's biographical trajectory and patterns of data. We argue that self-reflexive narrative interview is a useful tool in re-

search on gender identity performance and follows the FPDA *deconstructionist principle*.

The biographical narratives created by our informants are personable linguistic sites for identity negotiation, some of them highly emotionally charged. At this level of trust and understanding the close, almost intimate connection between the researcher and the researched is vital in ensuring the richness of data.

The participants for the study were selected from two communities of practice and based on the following salient characteristics: female adults, of Russian ethnic background, aged between 30 and 50, who immigrated to the UK three or more years ago, achieved bilinguals, whose English skills developed later than childhood, educated to degree level and above, use bilingual skills in professional and/or domestic setting, all mothers. The fact that the researcher shares all the salient characteristics with the participants and has membership in both communities of practice gives her greater agency and self-reflexivity, deeper understanding of the life trajectories of the informants and allows for more intimate relationship between the researcher and the researched to be forged.

As a mother, the researcher has unlimited access to the bilingual mother and toddler group, which formed one group of the study. As a University lecturer, she has membership in the team of bilingual teachers of Russian, who formed the second group. Within each of these communities of practice the researcher also performs the roles of the toddler's group leader and the academic coordinator at work. Thus, from the hierarchical point of view the researcher's positioning as a powerful, hegemonic figure of authority, appears to undermine the feminist objective of the research and upsets the balance of power. So, following the FPDA principle of deconstruction of meaning and textual interplay, the researcher has to look for ways of overturning the hierarchy and creating a 'double movement' (Baxter 2003) by positioning and repositioning herself constantly throughout the study.

The problematic nature of the role of the researcher as an obtrusive outsider in ethnographic studies has been widely debated. In our study, the fact that the researcher and the informants share cultural, social and linguistic background helped to make data recordings less obtrusive and the participants less inhibited, however, we noted after the pilot study that the number of questions were silently rejected by

the informant as being too intrusive and personal and we had to redesign them or group them into themes.

In subsequent interviews we refined the technique further by tentatively guiding the informants through their narratives and letting them develop their own themes and life stories. The loose structure of the interview and the absence of rigid interview framework, allows the informants to gain power and control over their own narratives, which, subsequently leads to self-reflection and deeper revelations on the issues of language and gender. Just like other researchers, who observed the 'muting' factor of the recorder before (Coates 1996: 7), we also noticed, that the process of setting up interview created a sense of formality and personal detachment. To eliminate the factors inhibiting the informants' performance the researcher avoided looking at the interview script, the consent papers were read and signed in advance of the interview and the interviewees were allowed to lead the discussion.

Another methodological tool to empower the informants was to offer them to choose their own pseudonym for the purposes of anonymity. Inventing names for themselves was a performative act, constructing a new identity and most of them elaborated on this process. In the analysis we will explore how some of their invented identities performed in the interview.

Following the principle of empowerment we offered the informants to choose the language of communication. The conscious, self-motivated choice of the language does not only tell us something about the level of bilingual socialization that the informant has reached, but also about what identity and how she chooses to perform in the particular situation. Bilingualism and biculturalism are constructed, unstable, ever-shifting aspects of identity, so choosing to be interviewed in a particular language is an act of performance at any given time. Two out of nine interviews, at the request of the participants, were conducted in English.

The choice of language and the fact that the codeswitching element was very small informed our decision to transcribe relevant parts of interviews directly into English for the benefit of the reader. This decision was also informed by the recent scholarship on the methodology of bilingual data collection. Translation of data entails a process of linguistic and cultural decoding and it is important to bear in mind the reader's linguistic and cultural code while doing the translation. We

accept that we had to make certain linguistic and cultural compromises when translating the data, as argued by the bilingual English/Urdu researcher, who made a conscious decision to conduct his interviews with bilingual teachers in Urdu, but present the data in translation (Halai 2007: 345). We argue that FPDA methodology involves construction and co-construction of data through the collaboration between the researcher and the researched and this process involves experimenting with ways of presenting the data, including translation. We argue that presenting data in English translation with transcription codes for code-switching is a way of interpreting it and giving it a different voice, a different account, thus achieving a more complex reading through the agency of the translator. Undoubtedly, a true polyphonic effect would have been achieved if the voice of the researcher were different from the voice of the transcriber and from the voice of the translator. However, this was not possible due to the small scale and time limitations of our study.

Finally, we transcribed the narrative interviews following the conventions suggested by Cameron (2001: 172), in which

[- indicates the onset of spontaneous speech or overlap
(.) indicates pause of less than 0.1 sec.
? indicates rising pitch
(0.2) indicates pause in seconds
<u>His father</u> underscore indicates emphatic stress
The diacritics used to illustrate codeswitching will be bold italics
Pushy mum

5. Data analysis and discussion

We divided the participants into two groups according to their membership in COfPs and categorised them as 'mothers' and 'colleagues', although this labelling can be misleading as all of our participants are mothers and some 'mothers' work, so they are 'colleagues' as well. We will, however, accept these terms as temporary and fluid and relating only to the researcher's current participation in the particular COfPs.

'Mothers'

Jasmine – aged between 30 and 35, has lived in the UK for 4 years, married to a British man. Works part time as an ESOL teacher in a college.

Aphina – aged between 30 and 35, has lived in the UK for 4 years, married to a Russian man. She does not work.

Lana – aged between 35 and 45, has lived in the UK for 15 years, married to a British man. Works part-time as a marketing manager at her husband's firm and runs her own Saturday Russian school.

Maya – aged between 30 and 35, has lived in the UK for 3.5 years, married to a Russian man. She does not work.

Martha – aged between 35 and 45, has lived in the UK for 6 years, married to a Russian man. She has recently resigned from a powerful position in an investment company in London to look after her children.

'Colleagues'

Katerina – aged between 35 and 45, has lived in the UK for 3.5 years, married to a British man. Works part time at King's college London.

Katya – aged between 40 and 50, has lived in the UK for 5 years, separated from her Russian husband. Works part time at King's college London.

Nina – aged between 35 and 45, has lived in the UK for 15 years, married to a British man. Works part time at King's college London.

Alina – aged between 40 and 50, has lived in the UK for 20 years, married to a Russian man. Works part time at King's college London.

We will now outline the most salient macro-topics for gendered identity construction, which arise in the interviews from the narrative threads.

Immigration and integration as sites of gendered identity construction.

Our analysis reveals that the discourses of immigration and integration are prominent sites of identity construction, as they 'relate to desire – the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety'. (Norton, cited in Barkhuizen & Klerk 2006: 279)

The participants reported mixed emotions related to their identity construction through the process of immigration – being afraid, not confident, shy, insecure, sad, detached, missing family, as well as feeling comfortable, perfect, fully integrated. All admit that they had to go through a painful transformation process and devise adaptation strategies to the new subjectivities.

Katya, for example, performs identity of an active agent in the adaptation process by socialising and feeling positive about the changes:

I feel comfortable here. I think the process of integration has completed and it has been perfect!

At the same time, Aphina declares that her transformation process was 'hard work', but she feels more confident and relaxed now, even though she is overtly negative to the British community, denying any possibility of socialization due to differences in values and perceived rejection:

I find British people hypocritical. They may smile and call you "dear", but they do not fully accept you. There is no point in trying to integrate with them, they will never accept me.

Her negative attitude towards the dominant culture makes the process of integration hard work.

Comparing these reflections on the process of identity construction through integration, it is worth noting that the two women have very similar biographical features – both are coordinate bilinguals, both have lived in the UK for 4-5 years, both are or were married to Russians. However, their socialization patterns are rather different. While Katya positions herself as an active member of both communities – Russian and English, embracing the challenges of immigration, Aphina resists cultural assimilation and the possibility of change.

Similarly to Aphina, Martha does not feel integrated and also has negative attitude towards the host culture. However, unlike Aphina, she does not reject, but feels rejected, as if the process of integration is denied to her:

I don't really have English friends [...] Because English people stick to themselves. So, the English culture does not accept other national minorities [...] They are afraid that they are going to take their jobs (.), their places at schools (.).

Martha constructs a powerless identity of someone who is denied access to integration by the circumstances beyond her control, which is expressed in the discourse of blame. Yet, she constructs and identifies with 'immigrant' identity, which is not passive, but powerful, aggressive and assertive:

Usually immigrants do feel more competitive when they come to the foreign country. They (.) mobilise all their resources, they are more active, more aggressive here, because they feel they need to find the place for themselves and their families here.

For other participants immigration bears positive connotation and is identical to 'London community'. Nina feels fully integrated, but her process of socialisation does not involve any particular ethnic group Russian or English:

I am a member of a London community, which is very multinational and multilingual.

Being part of this multinational community, Nina regrets not having any Russian socialisation:

I do not think I have any Russian friends. I have colleagues, but not friends in the true sense of the word. I came here in 1995. There were Russians here, but fewer than now. So, unfortunately, my socialisation is mostly in English.

In spite of this sense of detachment and lack of native language socialisation, Nina is not in a hurry to join the Russian community in London as she feels that her identity has been transformed as a result of immigration and cultural integration, but they remained the same:

Sometimes I meet Russians who socialise exclusively with Russian friends in so called Russian groups. It is as if they have transferred their world which they were used to in Russia to the different location.

In contrast to Aphina, who feels 100% Russian, Alina denies her Russian origin, overtly and covertly. She chooses to conduct the interview in English, thus indexing her detachment from the Russian language. She also indicates that her English accent helps her disguise her identity: *'Not everybody could think that I am Russian'*. This positioning is not very typical and is most likely related to Nina's past – her reason for immigrating from Russia is political – human rights violation, persecution of religious minorities, lack of freedom of speech (Alina is Jewish). She admits that she feels annoyed by people asking her about Russia, when she wants to disassociate herself from it.

Lana echoes Katya's positive self-image and positions herself as a British woman, who speaks Russian and feels fully integrated and comfortable. Her agency of a sociable, pro-active, friendly person is played out in the interview:

I feel that I am British, who can speak Russian. From the very first day I have felt very comfortable and never thought I was a second class citizen.

Similarly to Martha and Aphina, Jasmine is perplexed by her inability to fully integrate with the British community due to the differences in cultural and emotional values. However, she constructs her identity

not through discourse of rejection or blame, but of sadness and the feeling of loss:

I have a large family in Russia and we always visit each other and here the lifestyle is different. If some misfortune occurs everybody in my family will rush to help. Here, it is quite different, you will only ask your brothers or sisters for help in the most extreme situations. My home is my castle principle is important for the British people.

Katerina and Maya perform hybrid identities through bilingual and bicultural socialisation:

I am a Russian woman, living in the UK and fairly well integrated. My Russian friends living in Russia think that I am more British than Russian and my British family here also think of me as rather British.

The women who identified themselves most positively with change are Nina and Lana. They participate in different CofPs, but two of them share the same salient characteristics – aged between 35 and 45, have lived in the UK for 15 years, married to British men. Those who reported negative feelings towards integration and the values of the host country – Martha and Aphina belong to the same CofP and share very similar characteristics: they are aged between 30 and 35, have lived in the UK for 4 – 6years, married to Russian men.

Based on this analysis, we can identify the following patterns: such factors as age, length of integration and the nationality of the spouse become salient in gender identity performance. As we could see the older women, who have lived in the UK longest and whose husbands were British, view their identity transformation through the discourse of immigration in the positive light and feel empowered by it. At the same time, younger women, living in the UK shorter time and being married to Russian men, reject assimilation in the host culture, considering it hostile and unwelcoming.

Thus, we discovered that the processes of immigration, different stages of integration and bilingual socialization as described in our narratives directly relate to ethnic, cultural and gendered identity negotiation, however these processes are different for each individual. The hypothesis, which has been generated through the analysis needs further testing: the construction of new femininities, identified with positive self-image, active agency and empowerment is correlated with such factors as women's age, marital status and the stage of bilingual and bicultural integration.

Narratives as sites of invented identity construction.

We argue that narratives provide space for identity construction. Bucholtz (1999) grouped them into identity as invention, as ideology, as ingenuity and as improvisation. Simpson (1997) describes the construction of gendered subjectivities in the discourse of a family game, while Hall (1997) illustrates multiple, imaginative identity construction of telephone sex workers in the interplay between power and subordination. In our study, Katya's interview is an example of performative narrative, in which, by inventing a new name for herself, she invents a new identity.

The denotative and connotative analysis of her interview demonstrates how through a combination of linguistic and contextual means, she acts out an invented self. The interview was carried out in Russian, at Katya's request and the following analysis refers to Russian lexical items translated into English and their connotative meaning.

First, during the interview Katya uses impersonal constructions and second person plural or third person singular structures in order to disassociate her real self from some of the threads in the conversation and some of the statements that she makes.

She indicated to the researcher that she knew they were playing a game and she was playing her part:

I understand what you would like to hear from me

Bearing in mind the fact that the researcher was familiar with Katya's feminist stance, she was surprised to hear this statement during the interview:

There is no need in emancipation and feminism. Neither in Russia, nor in Britain do women need to feel discriminated against any more or stand up for their rights. There is full division of responsibilities in the family now.

We believe, this anti-feminist discourse does not represent Katya's view, but is performed as an act of invented identity.

However, guided by the FPDA principle of self-reflexivity and polyphony, we can also consider this without the performative act in mind and accept the voice of the narrator as her own voice. With this in mind, it appears that by employing impersonal linguistic devices and adopting the anti-feminist stance, Katya intends to distance herself from the narrative and create the gap between the researcher and the researched as a way of resistance to the discourse that the re-

searcher would like her to pursue. In this interpretation her phrase *'I understand what you would like to hear from me'* sounds like an opposition to the currently dominant view of the researcher. She displays her resistance to the ideology, which, she perceives, the researcher is trying to impose on her and instead chooses the strategy of resistance and subverts the discursive narrative by providing the answer, which the interviewer does not expect: *'I know what you would like to hear from me, but I am not going to tell you that'*.

We conclude, that individual gender identity can perform creatively and re-invent herself through the medium of narration, which constructs a fertile space for gender identity performance. This conclusion supports the previous studies in the area of gender, bilingualism and identity performance: the autobiographies of bilingual writers (Pavlenko 2001), the analysis of discursive narratives of lives in two languages (Burk 2004), biographical narratives of gender performance (Wagner & Wodak 2006), the transformation of gender performance in the narratives of second language learners (Pavlenko 2001A), the imagined identity construction in the narratives of pre immigrants (Barkhuizen and Klerk 2006), or the evolvement of gender identity of the intercultural medium through the multiple discourses of semi-structured interviews, narratives and academic practices (Mills 2006). We believe that mixed-method approach within the framework of FPDA will promote further exploration of creative sites for gender identity construction and performance.

Challenging or conforming to dominant gender ideologies.

Another macro-topic that emerges through our analysis is the way women resist or internalise the dominant gender ideologies through the process of identity construction. We agree that due to their positioning 'between the two worlds' (Smith, cited in Pavlenko, 2001:141), 'it is not simply the ideologies of gender that are questioned in the narratives, but ideologies of 'gender and X': gender and race, gender and ethnicity, gender and class, gender and culture and <...> gender and language' (Pavlenko, 2001: 142).

The women reveal different attitudes to traditional dominant gender ideologies, which are still perpetuated in Russia. As in the previous discussion on immigration and integration, we observe that the differences between the two CofPs are not significant. However, the majority of informants feel the need to transgress and challenge traditional gender roles. Women feel liberated and empowered by performing

new gender roles, free from rigid boundaries imposed on them by old subjectivities.

Katerina argues that her main reason to immigrate was to escape the restrictions traditional gender roles place upon women:

I was never happy to fully engage with the traditional gender image of a Russian woman. This is one of the very important reasons why I moved to this country.

Adopting a feminist stance, she defied the sexist female image the society constructs particularly through their body image:

The woman is under pressure from society to look well. Here, women have more freedom and they expect sharing of responsibilities at home.

Jasmine echoes Katerina's views:

Men here are more integral part of the family unit playing more traditional female roles, whereas women take more powerful professional positions. The European model of gender roles division suits me more.

Being brought up in the patriarchal family, Nina was determined not to submit to the dominant gender ideology and that partially inspired her move abroad. Nina describes her feelings when she heard that her Russian friend's son was getting married at the age of 19 as 'shock'. She uses this emotionally charged word a few times in her narrative to juxtapose the Westernised views against Russian subjectivities, prejudices and stereotypical perceptions. She describes how she 'was shocked' by the racist and homophobic attitudes the majority of Russians display abroad as part of their cultural heritage.

Lana explains the essentialist gender attitudes dominating in Russia historically. She imagines being unhappy if her currently powerful gender position were to be subverted:

A Russian man dictates his wife what to do – just like his father used to treat his wife – humiliating her. My outlook is impossible to transfer to Russian environment – I would be deeply unhappy if I had a Russian husband.

At the same time, Lana remarks that although her perception of role division underwent transformation, the majority of Russian speaking immigrant families living in the UK maintains traditional gender roles.

This statement is confirmed by the informants, whose husbands are Russian.

Aphina admits that the gender role division in her family has not changed since they moved to the UK, however, her gender performance is empowered through assimilation with new gender subjectivities, as will be demonstrated in our discussion later:

My gender role has not changed from the days when we lived in Russia. They are rooted deeply in Russian and even Soviet culture. I think that the way we live here as a family would have been the same if we lived in Russia. Here I did not have to adjust my personality internally in order to fit with the foreign environment. Yes, we have traditional roles' separation – the husband is working and I stay at home with the children.

Martha, who, until recently, has been working full time and managing the family, conforms to the traditional role divisions and insists that they are important for keeping the balance of family life. However, she admits that even though she does not resist dominant gender ideologies, her Russian husband changed his gender performance, because Martha was working.

Martha defends her position on gender ideologies in her discourse on emancipation:

I think emancipation is very bad for society. (laugh) (.) Because the institute of family is buit on *domostroi*, a Russian word. [...] there should be roles and one of the roles that a woman should take is to balance everything out. (2) Yes, she can be emancipated in a certain way, she can drive a car. For me, emancipation was to earn my MBA and going to work and gaining professional experience, which may allow me to start my own business. But I would always see myself as part of my family, I would not see myself as an individual.

The interview with Martha was conducted in English at her request and the inserted Russian word "*Domostroi*" indexes her intention to contextualise the subject further and to find a better interpretation for her idea of a family. We believe that the pragmatic aim of this switch is to send a meaningful message to the interlocutor, who shares the same bilingual code, which could not have been achieved in English, as this word has no English equivalent.

Martha's argument against female liberation is contradictory, yet rather powerful – it illustrates the position of those who, in their quest to achieve the balance between professional and family lives, are marginalised by the institutional dominant discourses.

Katya's attitude to gender ideologies is even more controversial. She denies there is any need to liberate the women of Russia. In the same breath she argues that a woman can achieve anything, yet she cannot be a president of Russia, as she is 'first and foremost a mother, a wife. Yes, we have to give her the main responsibilities of running a home'.

Thus, we found that the women's positions and gender ideologies are diverse and their views on gender roles are often contradictory. The majority of women share the image of powerful agents who have achieved the balance of gender parity with men. However, the process of constructing new femininities is not linear or straightforward, as it is internalised differently by different individuals. Our findings demonstrate that for one group of informants pre-immigrant bilingual and bicultural socialisation resulted in transformation of their gender identity and resistance to dominant ideologies, which was the reason for immigration and further empowerment. For the other group, however, the construction of the new gender subjectivities is directly related to the process of bilingual and bicultural assimilation as a result of immigration. For the third group, the resistance to essentialist gender positioning and the desire to assimilate to the new gender subjectivities through bilingual socialisation is overpowered by the dominant gender ideology, which is displayed either externally through the family relationship (Aphina) or internally through individual social positioning (Martha).

Interestingly, both Aphina and Martha report being rejected and marginalised by the new community (see discussion above on integration and identity) and above all would like to maintain their Russian ethnic identity for themselves and their children:

Martha: I think I am more Russian. That's how I raise my kids here. I want them to be more Russian.

Aphina: In spite of having a British citizenship, I feel I am 100per cent Russian.

Therefore, the process of assimilation to new gender subjectivities is hindered by the process of rejection and marginalisation by the new community on the one hand and by the need to preserve their ethnic identity on the other hand.

This example of 'double movement' in the gender identity construction echoes the argument that the nature of individual agency is always co-constructed: 'No matter how much an individual would like

to assimilate to a particular community, she won't be able to if the community rejects or marginalizes "outsiders". Similarly, it would be misleading to suggest that individuals, particularly women who come from societies perceived as patriarchal, always attempt to occupy gender subjectivities of their new culture. It is equally possible that [...] they may be engaged in the attempts to maintain their gender identities, which are inextricably linked to ethnicity, culture and religion' (Pavlenko 2001a: 148).

Negotiating and performing gender in the workplace – women's double bind.

Workplace is another fertile site for exploring gender identity construction and negotiation. A bilingual woman performs multiple identities in institutional setting and often finds herself in the position of 'double bind' (Pavlenko 2005: 275). Performing success and performing gender in the workplace are bound by dominant gender ideologies. Women have to explore various linguistic strategies and perform both masculinities and femininities in order to be successful in the work environment. At the same time, as we find with our informants, the women's professional performance is hugely undermined by institutional marginalisation, such as lack of affordable child care and the essentialist gender ideologies dominant in society.

Thus, Lana describes how she struggles to perform her professional role while taking care of the children without any help from her husband. She maintains her agency in choosing to perform multiple roles rather than seeking help:

As a mother, I would not want anyone else to look after my children. But there are such mothers, who prefer to work and leave the childcare to the father.

She insists that she feels happy and fulfilled performing all the multiple identities:

Perhaps it is too hard for somebody else, but I would have been bored not to play all these parts. I have to have all, as you say, pressures, to make my life interesting, otherwise I get bored.

However, she had to make sacrifices too. Having worked in the academic environment before she moved to the UK and had children, she found it difficult to pursue her academic career and look after children:

Here, I realised that having a family and pursuing academic career was impossible, so I found another niche – business.

Lana reports that her positive self-image and successful performance of multiple roles is largely due to her confident character. Linguistically she constructs this image by contrasting the topoi *'boredom'*, *'not interested'* with topoi *'interesting'*, *'confidence'*, *'limitless opportunities'*.

Therefore, in Lana's interpretation the event of immigration led her to the new experience of starting her business and successfully performing multiple gender roles in the work and family environment. Through the discourse of life-changing events she constructs her identity of ingenuity and empowerment.

Contrary to Lana, Jasmine's experiences as a professional are less positive. She uses the topoi of *'sadness'*, *'irritation'*, *'uncomfortable feeling'*, *'detachment'*, *'insecurity'* to describe a sexist episode at work:

My colleagues from New Zealand were discussing Russian women in a derogatory manner, as Natashas and Mashas who work as prostitutes in their country. I did not like it at all. I was upset that as a Russian woman I was associated with such women.

In this episode, she does not overtly challenge the dominant ideologies, but remains silent and powerless. However, in her professional identity as a teacher, she performs solidarity with other women who feel marginalised by their cultural gender ideologies:

Some women from Muslim families cannot register for the follow up course because their husbands would not let them. I do not understand how they can allow their husbands to manipulate their lives and their education. Of course, even though I am very irritated by this turn of events, I have to remain professional, therefore, I do not say anything. So, on a personal level, I would like to display my solidarity, but professionally it would be inappropriate.

We observe that Jasmine is silenced again (*'I do not say anything'*) by the contradiction between her wanting to display feminist solidarity and the need to maintain her professional image of personal detachment.

Finally, despite feeling insecure about the impending closure of her position in the ESOL college, her confidence is boosted by the life-changing event of becoming a British citizen:

But recently I received a British passport and I started feeling much more confident. So, nobody will throw me out of here now. I am a citizen of the UK now and have my rights.

Thus, Jasmine's professional empowerment springs from her confidence in the future, supported by the change in national identity, official status of recognition and a sense of some degree of integration in the new community.

Both Aphina and Maya agree about the fact that successfully performing multiple identities as a professional, a mother and a wife is hard in the UK, because of the lack of affordable child care. They both report the tension between their desire to achieve professional success, the lack of opportunities open to them and insecurity about their professional status.

Aphina*: cannot afford to go to work – it is economically not viable for us. I cannot fulfil my professional ambitions here yet*.

Maya: *It is harder here, because childcare is expensive*.

Both women had successful professional careers in their own countries and both feel the loss of professional identity and the feeling of anxiety as a result of the time gap in their careers and the need 'to start from scratch', due to the lack of professional experience in the UK and the lack of specialised bilingual skills.

Aphina*: I think that I do not have enough linguistic resources to realise my professional ambitions. So, I cannot say that I would be feeling completely confident if I was offered a job tomorrow*.

Maya*: it will be harder for me here to realise my potential, because I would have to start from scratch [...] my professional area is such, that you can start working nine to five only after you have done a lot* ***of overtime***.

Paradoxically, when comparing their professional opportunities in the UK with those in their own country, they agree that in spite of essentialist gender ideology in their countries, women feel more liberated and can find it easier to achieve professional fulfilment due to affordable childcare, extended maternity leave (3 years) and the widespread culture of family support:

Aphina*: In Russia it would have been possible. There are relatives, who are willing to look after children. I had a good job in Russia. I am on my own here and have to look after my family. In Russia I think I would have been professionally successful earlier than here*.

Maya*: it is easier in Russia, because we have grandmothers, who look after children when they are small.*

Both women report a sense of frustration and powerlessness at the lack of opportunity to perform successfully in the workplace due to internal (lack of bilingual skills) and external factors (lack of childcare, institutionalised long working hours if starting from scratch). Yet, their accounts do not portray them as passive victims, but as powerful agents when discussing the gender politics in the work place. For example, Aphina puts her feelings about female professional empowerment in the persuasive discourse, stroke feminist mission statement:

It is harder for a woman to develop professionally than for a man in any society. Not only does she have to be cleverer than a man, but much cleverer. She also has to be ***lucky****. There is still unspoken suppression of female intelligence and the majority of men still prefer to see us at home, not to see us as competitors, colleagues or God forbid their bosses. The majority of powerful leadership positions are taken up by men. But I think that here a woman has more rights, she is more protected by law.*

In this account the legal protection of women in the UK epitomises the sense of empowerment and liberation that the women in our narratives would like to achieve.

Of all the narratives, Martha's is most revealing in terms of bilingual professional woman performance in the workplace. Having confidence in the legal protection, Martha's transformative feminist project was to take her company to court to sue for damages due to sexual discrimination. Having gained considerable compensation out of court, she was able to concentrate on successful performance of her roles as a mother and a wife. However, this is hardly a victory for the feminist project as it proves the woman can be marginalised in the highly pressurised professional environment and forced out of her role, if she insists on introducing changes to some of the work practices and feminising professional performance. This is reflected in Martha's emotionally charged narrative about the frustration that women face when struggling to succeed in the ideologically sexist professional discourse:

You are competing with men working a lot! And that is also very hard, because you have your own ideas, you want to change things, you want to innovate. We see what men do not see. We put emotional kind of input. And basically they don't really let you. They don't let you do it [...] because of this high pressured environment. When you are at an

entry level and you want to introduce new concepts, people don't listen. They don't want to listen. They don't bother. So, this is what I found really hard.

The repetition of negative sentences: '*they don't let you*', '*they don't listen*' in this extract indicates how strongly Martha feels about the dominant gender ideology in the workplace.

Martha builds an image of a powerful agent when she questions the essentialist gender ideologies in the anecdote about her participation in the forum for women in investment banking:

There was a "women's only fair". [...] Diversity, balanced lifestyle, come and hear what we are going to say.[...]. There was a panel of women about 30 of them, sitting there telling us how investment banking works, how enjoyable their work is, how they have a work/life balance, how great a company is. So, I got up and asked them – so you are talking ***about work/life balance, how many of you have children? (2)*** *They looked at each other, they could not answer my question. And (.) one of the women from the audience stood up and said: "Well, I am a very senior person, I have two children. But I can afford to have children, because I have been here for a very long time. (.) I can come in at 8 and leave at 4. But if you are joining the company, you would not be able to do that. Full stop. So (.) (laugh) Who are we kidding? (2)*

In this powerful feminist discourse, Martha uses catchwords '*diversity*' and '*balanced lifestyle*' ironically to subvert the political message that the dominant ideology of investment banking is trying to send to its audience. She puts a special emphasis on her rhetorical question about work/life balance and colloquial '*who are we kidding?*' to juxtapose her own subjectivities against the political discourse of the forum and to challenge the dominant discourse. This anecdote serves to illustrate the discursive construction of her identity in the argumentative discourse.

Martha describes her career trajectory in investment banking metaphorically, thus constructing her own subjective reality of performing gender in the workplace:

You have to crawl your way up like up the tree and people are throwing stuff at you (laugh). The birds are up there and you are taking all the stuff that is falling on you (laugh).

Even though she is pessimistic about her future career in the chosen profession, she is not defeatist, but empowered by the experience, which has been transformative and allowed her to actively voice her

position in the world. Martha's argumentative, persuasive, emotionally charged and cognitively embedded discourse, delivered in English, is a powerful feminist act in itself, demonstrating the transformation of her identity through discursive self-representation.

We conclude that the women construct both powerful and powerless images, which resist and challenge the dominant ideologies. Further FPDA research is needed to study bilingual women professional performance and the gender ideology of the workplace in the localised, context-bound environment in order to 'create spaces to female voices that are being silenced or marginalised' (Baxter 2003: 190).

Codeswitching as identity performance.

Code-switching and language choice have been identified as creative sites for bilingual identity construction mediated by cultural, historical and social conventions of a particular community. The bilingual and multilingual aspect of the narratives enriches them from the contextual and linguistic point of view, yet makes the analysis more complicated due to the multiple implications and connotations that bilingual speech creates. In our self-reflexive stance we re-iterate the questions: 'What is the subject position of bilinguals whose privilege it is to speak one language but feel or think in another? Of multilinguals who utter words in one language with memories of events lived in another? (…) How much context is needed to interpret a multicompetent speaker's utterance?' (Kramsh 2008: 118).

We have discussed some of the language choices that women make in selecting the language for the interviews. We argue that the choice of language is a performative act of identity and can reflect different aspects of the speaker's personality at the particular time. The fact that two out of nine of our informants chose English as the preferred language for their narratives implicates their desire to perform the English part of their bilingual identity as the one most appropriate in the context of the interview.

However, the infrequency of switches that occur in both English and Russian narratives implicates that the narrators positively identify with both cultural, ethnic and linguistic communities and use occasional switches conversationally to alleviate or remove problems of comprehension. Some of them are interpretative CS, for example, *'under threat', 'tolerance', 'lucky'* the others are loan translations, used to fill in the lexical gap in another language: *'pushy mum', 'weekend', 'ba-*

sics'. Pavlenko (2003: 277) finds explanation to these CS: 'regardless of the language in which they are interviewed bicultural bilinguals may attempt to draw on interpretative frame congruent with the context in which the event has occurred, even though such an attempt may result in code-switching and loan translation'. According to Myer-Scotton (2005: 330), 'they switch largely to say something that seems better said in the embedded language'.

Some bilinguals in our study describe their balanced proficiency in both languages metaphorically as 'jumping between languages' (Maya).

Lana explains how she alternates between English and Russian when talking to her children, making intentional, deliberate switching to coincide with the change in setting, topic and geography of the conversation (situational CS):

I codeswitch all the time. When I collect my child from school, I start communicating in English. (...) I have a secret place – somewhere half way down the road – when we switch to Russian. As we are approaching this secret place, I start saying half a sentence in Russian and gradually switch to Russian. After passing this secret place, we only speak Russian for the rest of the journey.

The '*secret place*' – a geographical location – is when the mother and daughter express solidarity by switching to their own '*secret code*', which is half Russian, half English. Through this mixture of codes Lana performs her bilingual identity creatively and uses it as a pedagogical tool in communication with her daughter.

Martha performs her bilingual identity while playing with her children by deliberately switching to English from Russian to index the 'pretend', invented situation: '*when we switch to English, we are playing a game*'.

Her playful and deliberate use of CS is indicative of the positive self-representation of her bilingual identity.

These examples of situational codeswitching by the bilinguals in the narratives demonstrate bilingual identity performance through CS at the level of creativity and invention for the purposes of constructing multiple linguistic identities in multiple situational contexts.

At the same time, the description of alternational codeswitching in the narratives confirms the results of the earlier study of Russian bilinguals in New York: balanced bilinguals display the greatest amount of alternational codeswitching and the tendency to accommodate the

language preferences of speakers (Gregor 2003). Our analysis echoes the conclusion: 'in socially salient realisations of identity work in multilingual interactions, speakers use pitch, duration, gestures, bivalency, ambiguity and presence and absence of switching. Bi- and multilinguals take advantage of the contrasts created by switches in code, or by the mere expectation of switches' (Mendoza-Denton & Osborne 2010: 122).

The area of language and gender will be further advanced by the studies of bilingual identity performing through codeswitching in particular speech communities.

6. Conclusion

This study pursued the followed agenda: to give voice to the bilingual minority of Russian women living in the UK and to explore gender identity performance through bilingual practices, in order to contribute to the feminist project of empowerment.

To achieve these tasks we chose feminist post structrualist discourse analysis (FPDA) approach as the most sensitive, dynamic, innovative, powerful and empowering in gender, language and identity research.

We used FPDA as a methodological framework for analysing women's biographical narratives, elicited through semi-structured interviews in order to gain information on particular salient sites of identity construction through bilingual practices.

We acknowledge that gender identity is co constructed and embedded in the cultural and social context of the particular speech community and can only be considered in correlation with other aspects of identity. Thus, the localised, community focused and culturally specific FPDA analysis made the results valid and reliable.

We conclude that the processes of identity construction are very individual. We observed how new femininities, identified with positive self-image, active agency and empowerment are constructed and transformed through the discourse of immigration, integration and bilingual and bicultural socialization.

We conclude that further research is needed to test the hypothesis that gender identity transformation is correlated with such factors as women's age, marital status and the stage of bilingual and bicultural integration.

We also revealed that performing multiple identities, including invented, through discursive narratives, language choice and code switching, allows women to subvert and challenge dominant discourses and ideologies through the framework of empowerment.

We discovered that transformation of gender identity and resistance to dominant ideologies is viewed by women as either a cause or the result of immigration and bilingual socialization. However, for some the resistance is overpowered by the dominant gender ideology and the desire to preserve their ethnic identity through traditional gender subjectivities. These findings entail a transformative feminist project of empowerment through education and better community integration for women from minority ethnic groups who find themselves doubly marginalised – by the society and by the dominant gender ideology.

We also found that women negotiate their positions in the professional environment by performing new femininities to challenge dominant gender ideologies. However, they find themselves in the 'double bind' position – on the one hand, lack of affordable childcare restricts their access to the job market, on the other hand, they are forced out of work, if they attempt to innovate and feminise the processes (Martha). The transformative project here is to draw attention to some institutional practices, marginalising women from minority ethnic groups and beyond.

The fact that both the subject of the study (bilingual Russian community in the UK) and the methodology (FPDA) are new and underresearched means that there are almost limitless opportunities for further research. There are further areas for developing FPDA model through bilingual gender identity research – focus group approach, multi-authorship of data collection and presentation to create polyphony of voices, interdisciplinary approach and further research into bilingual practices and code-switching. For future studies of bilingual Russian community we recommend to carry out further ethnographic observations synchronically and diachronically in order to provide more in-depth analysis and achieve better understanding of gender identity performance through bilingual practices.

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