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Conducting Research Across Three Languages in a Multilingual Space: Polish Immigrants in Alanya

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Abstract

In multilingual research, language choices and linguistic hierarchies play a significant role. The participants' language preferences reveal emotional connection and confidence in their self-expression. Building on Znaniecki's (1927) concept of humanistic coefficient, Bourdieu's (1991) theory of linguistic capital, and Blommaert's (2010) and Heller's (2007) understandings of multilingualism as social practice, this article examines how multilingual practices reveal underlying power dynamics and social hierarchies. From an ethical and methodological perspective, it proposes a model that prioritizes participant agency, minimizes biases, and redefines the researcher-participant dynamic by granting participants the freedom to choose their interview language. Drawing on fieldwork conducted among Polish immigrants in Alanya, Türkiye, the article shows how multilingual practices during interviews expose hierarchies. It also allows code-switching to function as a resource rather than an obstacle. The study offers a methodological framework for managing multilingual interviews, addressing the ethical and analytical challenges of linguistic hierarchies and code-switching. It contributes to a broader understanding of social inclusion in migration studies by offering practical insights into developing fair participant-researcher interactions. I argue that emphasizing participants' linguistic realities and proposing adaptable strategies for multilingual research contribute to more inclusive and equitable methodologies in migration studies.

Keywords

code-switching; interview; language hierarchies; multilingual research; social inclusion

1. Introduction

Multilingual research presents both challenges and opportunities for migration studies, particularly within transnational communities. When research involves multiple languages, participants and researchers face issues tied to identity, power dynamics, social hierarchies, and agency. Previous works have explored these themes from the perspectives of power and identity (Henry, 2003; Sherif, 2001; Thapar-Björkert & Henry, 2004) and through the lens of agency (Canagarajah, 2012; Lugones, 1987). When multiple languages are involved, new layers are added to these relationships and to the research process itself.

Alanya, a well-known tourist destination and multicultural hub in Türkiye, lends itself well to an examination of multilingualism in migration. Over 62,000 foreigners from 115 countries own property (Alanya Kent Konseyi, 2024), and the city even hosts a Foreigners' Parliament, the first of its kind in Türkiye. Its diverse population, heavily shaped by tourism, creates a living multilingual space. In this setting, language intersects with daily life, identity, and research.

Research on the new Polish migration to Türkiye is almost non-existent, but electoral data from the National Electoral Commission of Poland provides some insight. According to the National Electoral Commission (2023), in the 2023 parliamentary elections, Polish citizens in Antalya (the province where Alanya is located) cast a total of 2,526 votes. By the 2025 presidential elections, a separate polling station had opened in Alanya itself, with 673 registered voters and an 85.3% turnout (574 valid ballots; see National Electoral Commission, 2025). This indicates that the Polish community in the city has grown sufficiently to be recognized as a distinct voting population.

Alanya's growing Polish immigrant population offers a compelling example of how migration, tourism, and multilingualism interact in dynamic ways. The local linguistic landscape is shaped mainly by Turkish, Russian, German, English, and Polish. Based on my fieldwork, many immigrants speak Turkish fluently, which enables them to integrate and navigate daily life. Polish is maintained as a community language and is also used in tourism-related employment, particularly where Polish visitors are the primary clientele. English, meanwhile, functions as a lingua franca in both the tourism sector and interactions with other migrant groups. Rather than one language dominating, Polish, Turkish, and English coexist and gain prominence in different domains, shaping migrants' opportunities and their sense of belonging.

Polish immigrants play an active role in this multilingual environment. They participate in the city's social and political spheres, including forums such as the Foreigners' Parliament, and move across three languages in their everyday routines. The high number of Polish tourists also helps maintain the visibility and use of the Polish language. Many members of these Polish communities belong to bicultural families and are involved in economic migration. In daily life, Polish immigrants shift fluidly between Turkish and English, depending on context. These linguistic movements reflect how they negotiate their identities and position themselves within the local community (field observations, 2024).

In multilingual fieldwork, language choices are never neutral. They shape how researchers and participants relate to one another and how data is produced (Gallego-Balsà, 2018). Allowing interviewees to select their preferred language not only respects their comfort but also reveals the power dynamics behind those decisions. This article explores how participants use language to assert agency during multilingual research, and how these choices affect the quality and inclusivity of the data collected.

Although multilingualism in migration studies has been addressed (e.g., Extra & Yağmur, 2004; Havlin, 2022; Vertovec, 2007; Wei, 2011; Yağmur, 2017), there is still a notable gap when it comes to discussing how to actually manage fieldwork across languages. There is a lack of research on how language hierarchies and code-switching can be approached in practice. This study offers tools and strategies to help researchers navigate these challenges and build more inclusive research practices in multilingual migrant settings.

The research question in this article centers on the challenges of conducting multilingual research and how language hierarchies affect the interpretation of data:

1. What are the methodological challenges of conducting research in three languages?
2. How do language hierarchies influence the collection and interpretation of data?
3. What strategies can help researchers remain inclusive and authentic when working with multilingual participants?

These questions aim to provide a clear framework for exploring the complexities of multilingual research as something shaped by both agency and power. The article draws on three key theoretical perspectives: Znaniecki's (1927) humanistic coefficient, Bourdieu's (1991) work on language and power, and Blommaert's (2010) and Heller's (2007) views of multilingualism as social practice. Znaniecki's framework supports a focus on lived experience and participant agency. Bourdieu helps explain how linguistic capital and hierarchies manifest in fieldwork. Blommaert and Heller emphasize that language is practice tied to context, power, and identity. This study uses these ideas to reflect on what it means to conduct research in Turkish, Polish, and English, and how researchers can remain attentive to language hierarchies, shifting power, and reflexive practice throughout the process.

1.1. Multilingual Research and Migration

Multilingual research in migration studies extends beyond translating between languages. It involves engaging with ideological beliefs, cultural representation, and the production of knowledge across different language settings. Much of the existing literature focuses on translation, interpretation, epistemological challenges, and language use (Squires, 2009; Temple & Young, 2004). These studies highlight the many layers involved in cross-language research.

Translation involves more than words. Steiner (1975) saw it as a transformative and informative process. Venuti (1995) treated translation as a political act, shaped by culture. Lefevere (1992) connected translation choices to questions of power and ideology, while Tymoczko (2007) showed how those same choices can either reinforce or resist dominant structures. Temple and Young (2004) reminded researchers that translation and interpretation affect what knowledge is created and shared. Bassnett (2002) went further, suggesting that cultural fit sometimes matters more than literal accuracy.

In research, translation usually refers to written texts and focuses on semantic accuracy. While both translation and interpretation focus on meaning, interpretation is oral and context-sensitive, requiring real-time choices about meaning (Pöchhacker, 2004; Temple & Young, 2004). In multilingual interviews, researchers often interpret rather than translate. This happens because meaning must be conveyed in real-time for communication to continue. This distinction matters because interpretation highlights how much the researcher is involved in shaping meaning during the interaction.

Beyond translation, the researcher's own multilingual background shapes how fieldwork unfolds and data are interpreted. Researchers often act as both interviewer and translator, both during the interaction and later in translating transcripts or other fieldwork data, which raises ethical and political questions about how multilingual data is represented (Burkhard & Park, 2023).

Burkhard and Park (2023) discuss dilemmas and ethics involved in this dual role, including the challenge of translating participants' voices and maintaining research integrity. It also requires researchers to reflect on their positionality and the choices they make when mediating between languages. As Hawkins et al. (2024) point out, in cross-language studies, researchers must also manage layered complexities related to ethics, validity, and trust in cross-language qualitative research.

These challenges also affect how knowledge is built and shared. Doing multilingual research requires thinking carefully about every step from design and data collection to analysis and reporting (Holmes et al., 2013), since researchers interpret what is said and how it is expressed across languages and contexts. Research into small-scale multilingualism shows that languages shift and evolve depending on social and historical context (Lüpke, 2021). In migration studies, this adds complexity. Multilingual settings come with their own landscapes, risks of exclusion, and opportunities for rich, balanced insights.

Migrant communities often use multiple languages in fluid ways, which means that speakers may shift between languages depending on circumstances, topic, or relationship. For researchers, this creates challenges in deciding which language to prioritize in interviews, analysis, and writing. A single-language approach may not capture key nuances (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Holmes et al., 2013). Therefore, researchers face choices about which language to use during interviews, how to handle participants' translanguaging practices, and whether to translate, summarize, or preserve multilingual data in analysis.

There is also the issue of access. Migrant or multilingual scholars are often excluded from academic publishing due to language barriers. This limits their ability to contribute and be heard in global knowledge production. Liu and Zheng (2024) and Bennett (2023) argue for more substantial efforts to promote epistemic inclusion.

In this light, researching multilingually offers meaningful insights into the lived experiences of migrants. It can help uncover how cultural and linguistic identities develop in real life (Bagga-Gupta & Carneiro, 2021; Holmes et al., 2013a). Working this way supports collaborative and adaptive methods. These approaches give space for both researchers and interviewees to use their full linguistic repertoires. The result is deeper and more inclusive knowledge (R'boul et al., 2023; Reilly et al., 2023).

Language use in research also requires reflection. In migration studies, multilingualism raises questions about how knowledge travels across cultures and how to use language in a way that captures that complexity (Havlin, 2022). Choosing which languages to use in interviews and deciding what language to publish in are key issues (Baumgartner, 2012).

The languages researchers choose also reflect their own identity and biases. These choices affect both the type of data collected and how it is understood (Gallego-Balsà, 2018). Interpreting multilingual interviews requires cultural awareness. It means translating context and meaning, not just words (Colorada, 2024). Together, these studies show that multilingual research is not simply a technical task. It is also a social and political process, shaped by power relations, identity, and access to knowledge.

1.2. Multilingual Research Settings: Language, Power, and Reflexivity

Multilingual practices in research settings often reveal and reproduce power dynamics and social hierarchies. In educational settings, the concept of "legitimate language" (Bourdieu, 1991) highlights which languages are recognized as appropriate in particular situations. That legitimacy usually comes from social or institutional beliefs, but everyday practices can challenge those assumptions. For instance, classrooms show how policies may either limit or support diverse language use (Bonacina-Pugh, 2020; Kiramba, 2018).

Bourdieu's concept of the linguistic market explains how power shapes the value of different languages. Language does not exist in isolation; it is tied to social capital, and its "worth" shifts depending on context. Recent studies show that these markets are not singular but exist as overlapping networks. In multilingual teams, for example, researchers and participants each bring different language repertoires. These shape how relationships form and how power plays out in fieldwork (Zheng & Guo, 2019).

Researchers working across languages must therefore make deliberate choices and remain attentive to how language shapes their projects. This requires practicing linguistic reflexivity: being aware of how language ideologies affect the research at every stage. Here, methodology and ethics overlap. In multilingual work, power, identity, and context influence both the content of speech and the way it is understood (Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2024; Rolland et al., 2023).

This study uses theory to unpack those dynamics. It asks: How do power relations, language hierarchies, and researcher reflexivity shape multilingual research? Linguistic practices do not just affect logistics; they shape the research itself.

Blommaert (2010) and Heller (2007) extend this discussion by shifting the focus from language seen as a bounded system to language viewed as practice. For them, multilingualism in migration is not simply about the coexistence of different languages but about the ways these languages interact within power structures and shifting social landscapes. Linguistic practice changes depending on the settings, the speaker's goals, and the people involved. Migrants adapt strategically, drawing on their full linguistic repertoires. From this perspective, multilingualism is not about mastering multiple languages perfectly: It is about managing complex social spaces with the tools available.

For researchers, this requires flexibility and awareness of our own role in shaping language practices in the field. Their presence, linguistic choices, and institutional affiliations all influence what interviewees say and how they say it. Multilingual research demands positional reflection. It requires a deep awareness of how language, identity, and power work together in real time. Moreover, it reminds us that knowledge is always co-constructed in context, shaped by the languages we include and those we leave aside.

These broader theoretical insights provide the foundation for reflecting on my own multilingual fieldwork. In what follows, I situate these dynamics within the context of my PhD project and outline the methodological challenges and solutions that emerged.

2. Research Context

My PhD project, funded by the National Science Centre of Poland (NCN Poland) from 2022 to 2026, examined the sociolinguistic adaptation of old and new Polish diaspora communities in Türkiye. The old community in *Polonezköy* was founded in 1842 near Istanbul and has preserved Polish identity and language for nearly two centuries. In contrast, the newer diaspora, often formed through bicultural marriages, highlights how Polish and Turkish come into contact in daily life in modern urban settings, including Alanya, Antalya, Ankara, Izmir, and Istanbul. This article, however, focuses specifically on Alanya and explores experiences of conducting research across three languages (Polish, Turkish, and English). Between 2023 and 2025, the project used a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative (participant observation, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic data collection, and digital ethnography) and quantitative tools (an online multilingual survey) through an ethnographic lens.

Multilingualism formed the methodological thread of the study. It was not treated merely as a feature of the research setting but as a working principle that shaped every stage of the process: from recruiting participants and conducting interviews to interpreting and reporting findings. The multilingual character of the fieldwork determined how questions were asked, how meanings were negotiated, and how knowledge was produced.

Conducting research across three languages in migration offered valuable insight, but it also brought complex methodological, practical, and ethical challenges. These challenges first appeared in fieldwork and re-emerged during data preparation, transcription, translation, and analysis. As a Turkish researcher living in Poland, I was constantly engaging with shifting power dynamics and language hierarchies. My linguistic skills and cultural background gave me unique access to the Polish immigrant community in Alanya. They strengthened connections and allowed for deeper engagement during interviews. At the same time, my interactions with interviewees were shaped by that same linguistic and cultural background.

Reaching participants in Alanya required a combination of institutional and community-based strategies. To recruit interviewees, I leveraged networks facilitated by the Polish Embassy, diaspora associations, social media platforms, and snowball sampling. This dual approach supported meaningful engagement and ensured diverse representation. Data collection combined semi-structured interviews, digital ethnography, and bilingual online surveys, with participants encouraged to use Polish, Turkish, or English according to their preference. Interviews explored themes including migration history, language use, integration experiences, and family language practices.

I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews in total, both online and in person, lasting between 30 minutes and 1 hour and 40 minutes. Most of the interviewees were women married to Turkish partners, which strongly influenced their language practices. For this reason, each interview was prepared and conducted in Polish, Turkish, and English. This multilingual structure helped build rapport and capture how language operates in real-life migrant settings. The research was initially designed to explore communication in Polish and Turkish. However, the practical implementation of the research required communicative skills in Polish, Turkish, and English. Speaking these languages was not merely useful; it was essential for establishing trust, collecting meaningful data, and ensuring accurate interpretation. The project was built around multilingual practice from the outset.

3. Methodological Reflections and Proposed Solutions

Znaniecki's (1927) humanistic coefficient helped guide my engagement with participants' narratives by centring their lived experiences within a multilingual, ethnographic setting. In this project, that meant treating interviewees not solely as data sources, but as individuals whose language practices and identity shaped the research process. Through this framework, I was able to capture the lived experiences of multilingual migrants and honor their agency to choose the language that best reflected their reality. In migration contexts, where language is closely tied to identity, accurately representing participants was crucial.

Bourdieu's (1991) notion of linguistic capital and linguistic markets adds a complementary perspective. While Znaniecki foregrounds participants' agency, Bourdieu highlights how social hierarchies and unequal access to valued languages constrain that agency. In this project, working with three languages meant engaging with different language markers. Each carried a different symbolic weight depending on the context. Recognizing these patterns enabled me to understand both the choices interviewees made and why some choices were more likely or advantageous.

Together, Znaniecki and Bourdieu offer a framework for understanding agency within structural constraints. Interviewees actively navigated multilingual spaces, making choices shaped by the unequal distribution of linguistic capital. Drawing on both perspectives allowed me to reflect on how personal experience, communication patterns, and power relations interact in shaping the knowledge we construct.

Although the study was designed with flexibility, my own linguistic preferences and confidence in particular languages also influenced these interactions. I often defaulted to the language I spoke most fluently to foster clarity and connection. Similarly, participants tended to gravitate toward my strongest language to sustain the conversation. These shared choices revealed a blend of practical considerations and underlying power dynamics.

In Türkiye, language is closely tied to national identity, reflecting an ideology of monolingualism (Aydıngün & Aydıngün, 2004). Turkish is expected in public life, education, and many institutional settings, whereas other languages are often relegated to private or informal spaces (Seloni & Sarfati, 2013). This creates a distinct linguistic hierarchy that migrants must negotiate. Beyond institutional prestige, these hierarchies were also evident in interviewees' everyday lives. Many of those who chose Turkish for the interview reported that it was the dominant language in their daily routines, which illustrates how language use in research is often shaped by habitual linguistic practices as much as by formal structures. Still, these choices were not fixed.

Rather than treating language as a static variable, this study acknowledges that linguistic choices evolve in response to context, comfort, and communicative needs. By allowing participants to speak in their preferred language and embedding multilingual flexibility into the research design, the fieldwork became a space where communication patterns revealed both structural hierarchies and individual agency. These patterns support Bourdieu's perspective that linguistic interactions are shaped by both macro-level social structures and micro-level negotiation processes, underscoring the need for multilingual research to account for these layered complexities.

These experiences demonstrated that linguistic reflexivity is not optional but essential. I had to develop context-specific, adaptive strategies that grounded the research and foregrounded interviewees' voices.

What I offer here are methodological reflections and practice-based solutions that arose during the research process. These suggestions are not intended as universal prescriptions, but as situated insights that may support other researchers working multilingually in the fields of migration, identity, and social integration.

3.1. Language Hierarchies in Practices

Conducting research across three languages in Alanya quickly revealed how language choice shaped the conditions of inquiry. Given the focus on Polish immigrants and their sociolinguistic adaptation, outreach was prioritized in Polish, followed by Turkish and English. Figure 1 presents the initial message sent to Polish immigrants in Alanya, written in Polish, introducing my role, the nature of the study, the expected time commitment, and the available languages for participation. The first interactions predominantly occurred in Polish. However, some participants responded in Turkish and English to the Polish-language message (see Figure 2), signalling a preference for the language they felt more comfortable using, and perhaps one they perceived I was comfortable with as well.

obecnie prowadzę badania na temat doświadczeń Polaków mieszkających w Turcji. Od około roku obserwuję z zainteresowaniem Pani aktywność w mediach społecznościowych i uważam, że Pani perspektywa byłaby niezwykle cenna w zrozumieniu społeczności polskiej w Turcji i jej procesu adaptacji.
W ramach tego projektu będę odwiedzać różne miasta od końca października do początku grudnia i byłabym naprawdę wdzięczna, gdyby zechciał Pani podzielić się ze mną swoją historią. Wywiad będzie dotyczył codziennego życia, wyborów językowych oraz doświadczeń związanych z adaptacją do życia w Turcji. Rozmowa (w języku polskim, tureckim lub angielskim) potrwa około 30-50 minut, możemy spotkać się osobiście lub skontaktować się przez Skype lub WhatsApp — w zależności od tego, co będzie dla Państwa wygodniejsze.

Figure 1. Initial recruitment message in Polish.

dziękuję bardzo, może być online, może jutro, kiedy będziesz dostępny 🤗 ☺️

Can be tomorrow:) we can talk in English if it will be easier for you :)

What time would be good for you?

Figure 2. Response from a Polish participant in English to a scheduling message.

For example, one participant replied:

> Merhaba...isterseniz Türkçe iletişim kurabiliriz ☺. Seve seve, buluşalım. Pazartesi için iş takvimine bakıp size dönüş yapacağım gün içinde. Olur mu?
>
> Hello...if you want, we can communicate in Turkish ☺. With pleasure, let's meet. I will check my work schedule for Monday and get back to you during the day. Is that okay?

Such responses illustrate how migrants exercised agency in shaping communication patterns and positioned themselves as both accommodating and attuned to the interaction.

The English or Turkish responses often occurred automatically: Upon seeing my name on a social media message, participants sometimes replied in Turkish or English to signal compatibility or assume I would be more comfortable in that language. These exchanges showed how language hierarchies manifest in research settings. As such, the researcher's perceived identity and expectations could influence which language was ultimately used in the interaction.

To create an open and relaxed tone, I asked interviewees at the outset whether we could begin in English or Turkish. This helped assess their comfort levels and language skills, allowing me to start from a position of ease. Multilingual researchers are constantly engaged in translating not only words, but also positions, relationships, and identities (Burkhard & Park, 2023). Choosing to begin in a language in which I was confident was not merely a practical decision: it was also political, reflecting how my own linguistic identity and perceived authority could influence participants' choices and steer the direction of the conversation. From the very first moment, it influenced how interviewees engaged and how relationships were established.

After the introduction, I asked interviewees which language they preferred to continue the interview in. Most felt comfortable making this choice and opted for Polish, Turkish, or English. In three cases, I initiated the language: once due to my own discomfort with Polish, and in two instances, another family member read the interview questions. Even in those moments, I made it clear that they could respond in whichever language they preferred.

This process demonstrates that language hierarchies are deeply embedded in multilingual research, underscoring the importance of linguistic fluidity. It enabled both the researcher and participants to adapt to shifting communicative needs, highlighting real-life multilingual practices. Without this flexibility, I would have missed crucial language nuances, code-switching patterns, and contextual meanings, as elaborated in Section 3.3.

I intentionally built linguistic flexibility into the design and execution of interviews. As Ganassin and Holmes (2020) argue, embracing participants' full linguistic repertoires helps counteract the epistemic injustice of monolingual frameworks. Moreover, Liu and Zheng (2024) and Bennett (2023) stress that multilingual scholars face structural barriers in producing and publishing knowledge, making such methodological choices acts of resistance.

Importantly, choosing a single language, whether Polish, Turkish, or English, would not have reflected the multilingual reality of migrants' lives. Most could communicate fluently in all three languages. However,

linguistic practice varied: Some households were Polish-Turkish dominant, others Polish-English, and some predominantly Turkish or English, especially among those less connected to the Polish community. These findings underscore the importance of attending to language choice and power dynamics in sociolinguistic research on migration and integration.

The observations from everyday communication were reflected in the interviews, where participants navigated Polish, Turkish, and English depending on context. These patterns pointed to underlying linguistic hierarchies and social positioning, which I explore in the following section.

3.2. Language, Agency, and Power

Based on my fieldwork in Alanya, Polish is a commonly used language among Polish immigrants. The city's tourism industry attracts a steady flow of Polish tourists, and many Polish immigrants work in tourism-related jobs, which reinforces their daily use of the language. Polish is also visibly present in the cityscape: tourism agency signs, storefronts, and even flags display the language, indicating a strong community presence.

Many Polish immigrants I spoke with are in relationships or marriages with Turkish partners. This shapes their speech habits in specific domains: Polish or English at work, Turkish with in-laws or in public spaces, and English often with partners or friends. These domain-specific patterns were reflected in the interviews. One interviewee who has lived in Türkiye since 2001 describes her experience with language as follows:

> *Bende daha önce dediğim gibi hiç Türkçe kullanmadım, İngilizce bilenlerle hayatta Türkçe konuşmadım. İşte yavaş yavaş evlendiğim gibi kayınvalidem ile konuştum, her adımda hayatımda döneminde sözlük yelpazem genişliyordu....Bazen çat soru soruyorlar. Ben de rehber olarak her gün başka şöforle görüşüyorum, seri gibi 10 tane soru var: Eşin ne iş yapıyor, ben ne iş yapıyorum?*

> As I said before, I never used Turkish, and I never spoke Turkish with people who knew English. But gradually, after I got married, I started speaking with my mother-in-law, and with each stage of my life, my vocabulary expanded....Sometimes, out of the blue, people [in public or at work] would ask questions. And as a tour guide, I met a different driver every day, and there was a kind of standard series of 10 questions: What does your husband do? What do you do?

This quote underlines how everyday communication both reflects and reinforces power dynamics in language. The speaker's gradual shift from English to Turkish reveals how social roles, wife, daughter-in-law, and employee, shape language choice. English initially functioned as a language of comfort and symbolic status, distancing her from the local environment, while Turkish became associated with integration and belonging. Her learning process was not only linguistic but also social: She acquired Turkish through interactions that marked her position within family and workplace hierarchies. Her expanding vocabulary parallels her deeper participation in Turkish social life, while also exposing the gendered and hierarchical norms embedded in these exchanges. In this way, it demonstrates adaptation to different linguistic markets, shaped by the context of everyday life.

These patterns do more than reveal community behavior; they also shape how researchers must navigate speech habits and linguistic hierarchies during fieldwork. Observing which languages are used in different

settings reveals the underlying social norms and power structures that guide everyday interactions. This distribution shaped my approach to interviews, my interactions with interviewees, and my interpretation of responses, as my language choices could convey authority, familiarity, or cultural alignment. Understanding these patterns was therefore crucial for effective data collection and for managing relationships, ethical considerations, and the flow of communication in a multilingual environment.

These insights emerged directly from situational questions I asked during interviews, for example, which languages migrants used at home, with partners, with children, with animals, at the bazaar, during Turkish holidays, Polish holidays, at church, and in other daily activities. One participant explained her preference for English in certain situations as linked to her sense of comfort and professional identity, highlighting how language choice was always contextual and relational, but also shaped by assumed social expectations about when each language should be used:

> Half of my apartment *yabancı* [foreigner], so they are not Turkish. Almost everywhere they speak English, not Turkish. Only in Bazaar, as much Turkish as I can.

In this interview, we can see how participants adapted to different linguistic markets, shifting between Polish, Turkish, and English depending on context. These shifts shaped the flow and direction of the conversations.

Reflecting on Lüpke's (2021) concept of small-scale multilingualism, the Polish immigrant community in Alanya engages with daily life through habitual language mixing. The language choices made by Polish immigrants in various situations, as presented in Table 1, illustrate the perceived power of each language within the linguistic marketplace. This has implications for language hierarchies and intergenerational language transmission. During interviews, I observed that younger children in Polish-Turkish families tended to speak Polish, while older children preferred Turkish, indicating how Turkish increasingly dominates in education and public life over time.

Table 1. Language choices of Polish immigrants in different contexts in Alanya, based on situational interview questions (e.g., at home, with partners, with children, at the bazaar, during holidays).

Context	Preferred Language
Home (with children)	Polish/Turkish
Public interactions	Turkish
Professional settings	English/Polish
With a partner (daily talk)	Turkish/English
Social events/friends	English/Polish/Turkish

These language preferences emerged during interviews. In Alanya, Polish immigrants switched between languages fluidly, with Polish generally dominating over English and, to a lesser extent, Turkish. Over time, however, the balance shifted. For long-term residents, Turkish gained importance in daily life through social interactions, schooling, and local institutions. This did not mean losing Polish. Instead, Polish remained central in families, social networks, the job markets, and even in intimate or unconscious practices, such as counting in their heads or talking to their pets. One participant, who had lived in Türkiye for seven years, thus described this situation:

Lehçe'de hayal kurarken....Kendi dilinde küfür etmek daha ağır geliyor.

When I daydream, it is in Polish....Swearing feels heavier in my own language.

In this context, Polish retained its emotional and identity-bearing role, while Turkish was increasingly adopted as a practical tool for managing everyday life in and outside the home.

During interviews, participants also exercised agency by choosing to answer a question in a different language when I invited them to do so in Polish or Turkish. When exploring specific language practices, such as code-switching or vocabulary use, I occasionally offered participants the opportunity to answer a single question in a different language. These invitations were never obligatory; participants could decline or continue in their preferred language. For instance, if an interviewee spoke only Turkish, I might ask one reflective or cultural question that they could answer in Polish.

This approach also allowed me to observe participants' language proficiency, emotional comfort, and the shifts in tone or vocabulary across languages. It further revealed whether my positionality influenced their linguistic agency. Decisions to switch languages, or remain in one, became important data, making visible the patterns of comfort, identity, and social positioning. As Hawkins et al. (2024) note, dynamic equivalence is a real challenge in multilingual research, and inviting participants to respond in different languages highlighted how meanings shifted contextually, deepening the epistemic richness of the data.

Znaniecki's (1927) humanistic coefficient guided this part of my approach. I treated participants as individuals shaping knowledge through their lived experience. The flexibility in language was not a technical choice: it was an ethical one, aligned with interviewees' everyday practices. This was highlighted in my use of multilingual interviews, which gave participants agency to choose their preferred language and co-direct the interview flow. By shifting language roles during interviews, I responded not only to linguistic convenience but also to emotional positioning and trust-building that Znaniecki identifies as central to the human experience in research.

Blommaert (2010) and Heller (2007) describe language in terms of social practice embedded in power relations. These dynamics were visible during participant observation. One interaction took place in a three-way conversation involving Polish immigrants in Türkiye, a Polish visitor, and me, a Turkish researcher living in Poland. The exchange moved across all three languages: The immigrants used Turkish when speaking with me, Polish with the visitor, and I spoke English with the visitor. Notably, the Polish immigrants shifted between the languages fluidly. Although they knew that I understood Polish, they continued talking to me in Turkish.

This choice illustrated how language marked social positioning and belonging. By using Turkish with me, the Polish immigrants presented themselves as integrated members of the host society, demonstrating their strategic positioning and awareness of the social context. Each shift in language served as a way of negotiating visibility and legitimacy within intersecting social settings. These decisions were shaped both by participants' agency and by the context of my presence, underscoring how researcher positionality and participant strategy interact in multilingual settings. This interaction, along with examples from Sections 3.2 and 3.3, shows participants' ability to adapt in different linguistic "markets," shifting between Polish, Turkish,

and English depending on context, which in turn was shaped by the flow of conversation and by how emotions and identities were expressed.

This experience underlines the importance of incorporating all three languages into the research process. Participants' language choices shaped both the content and quality of the data. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) notion of linguistic capital, these multilingual interactions can be understood as negotiations of status and belonging within intersecting social orders. Each shift marked subtle acts of alignment or distinction, positioning participants in relation to me and to one another. The same dynamics of status and belonging that structured participants' language choices also extended to the researcher, which is explored in the following section.

3.3. Researcher's Positionality

A researcher's positionality influences every stage of the research process. Researchers are not neutral observers; they are active participants who shape the field through their presence, choices, and interpretations. Being aware of who I am and what I bring to the research was essential. Drawing on Merton's (1972) classic distinction between insider and outsider perspectives, and Bucholtz's (2000) discussion of politics and positioning in linguistic research, I understand my role as both a linguistic insider and an institutional outsider. As a Turkish researcher living in Poland, when interviewing Polish immigrants in Türkiye, I appeared as a linguistic insider, someone who shared linguistic resources with interviewees. At the same time, I remained an institutional and cultural outsider, not fully participating in their community networks or migration trajectories. This dual positioning shaped both my access to participants and my interpretation of the data (Bourdieu, 1991).

Academic and institutional affiliations often carry implicit authority. They influence who feels safe to speak, how much is shared, and whether participants feel judged, heard, or supported. I was affiliated with a Polish university and supported by the NCN Poland, which lent me credibility. However, after encountering trust issues during early outreach, I contacted the Polish embassy in Türkiye. The embassy sent emails to local associations confirming their awareness of and confidence in my research. This institutional validation, combined with my multilingual background, strengthened my position in the field by increasing participants' trust and deepening interviewees' willingness to engage.

My understanding of Polish, Turkish, and English gave me access to data that might otherwise have been overlooked. This included recognizing code-switching patterns, uncovering the reasons behind newly invented words by children, and understanding shared wordplay among immigrants, both during interviews and through observations. This linguistic awareness also shaped my positionality in the field. Because I shared the participants' multilingual environment, I was not only an observer but also part of the linguistic exchange. My ability to move between languages influenced how participants perceived me: at times as an insider who understood their daily speech practices, and at other times as an outsider, marked by my accent or cultural background. These dynamics directly affected what was shared and how meanings were constructed in interviews. This is illustrated in the account of a mother describing her children's bilingual experience and language logs in Turkish and Polish.

In the following excerpt, underlined words mark points where the speaker switched languages from Turkish to Polish within the same sentences. The bracketed notes (i.e., [switching to Turkish] and [switching to Polish]) in the translation indicate when the speaker changed languages during the interview, showing code-switching patterns in the conversation:

Evet, zaten böyle bir klasör var, teksty dzieci. I będę...şeyde anlatıyor [oğlum] okulda, Waldorf okullarına gidiyor ve işte orada el işleri çok yapıyorlar ve işte orada anlatıyor ki: „i będziemy robić gemi i dlatego takie ipki." Czy możesz mi to asić? [yani] bana asar mısın?...Co jeszcze, „gram na üflecie". Üflecie, po polsku flet yani, üflemek demek.

[Spoken in Turkish:] Yes, there is already such a folder, children's texts [switching to Polish]. And [he] tells me at school, [my son] goes to Waldorf schools and there they do a lot of handicrafts, [he] says: "we will make a boat with some threads, threads" [Switching to Polish]. Can you sew it for me? [switching to Turkish]....What else, "I play the *üflecie*" [invented word from Turkish *üflemek*, to blow]. *Üflecie*, in Polish it is *flet* [flute, from *üflemek*] [switching to Polish].

In her speech, she describes how her children invent Polish-Turkish hybrid words such as *ipki*, *asić*, and *üflecie*. She begins in Turkish, inserts Polish phrases like *co jeszcze* (what else), and clarifies terms bilingually, saying "*üflecie, po polsku flet yani, üflemek.*" This moment underscores the role of positionality in research, showing how my background, affiliation, linguistic abilities, and cultural understanding of Poland and Türkiye shaped both the interaction and the construction of meaning.

Hawkins et al. (2024) conceptualize the "trilingual researcher" as someone who takes on the roles of facilitator, interpreter, and interlocutor in multilingual fieldwork. In this study, I embedded these roles at different stages of the research process. As a facilitator, I guided multilingual interactions and maintained openness throughout the fieldwork. As an interpreter, I engaged critically with meaning during analysis and the presentation of data. As an interlocutor, I adapted continuously within conversations and responded in ways that sustained dialogue. My ability to work across three languages positioned me as both connected to and distant from the Polish community. This partial belonging helped interviewees to relax, but it also required ongoing reflection on how my presence shaped the conversations.

Throughout the research, insider-outsider dynamics proved valuable. I was an insider through shared linguistic, cultural, or migratory experiences and an outsider in other ways. For instance, I was not part of the Polish community's social or religious networks, which sometimes limited access to informal gatherings or private discussions. These shifting interactions influenced interviewees' willingness to share their stories. For an outsider, establishing trust and building meaningful connections with the community were essential, which included sharing aspects of everyday life and speaking a common language.

Overlapping layers of connection are depicted in Figure 3, which illustrates the relationship between the researcher, participants, and institutions within a multilingual research setting. Ethical responsibility, institutional credibility, and trust were closely intertwined. My affiliation with a Polish university gave the research formal legitimacy. At the same time, shared language practices and informal conversations helped strengthen connections with participants. The space between the researcher, participant, and institution was not fixed: It shifted depending on the topic, the language used, and the degree of personal sharing.
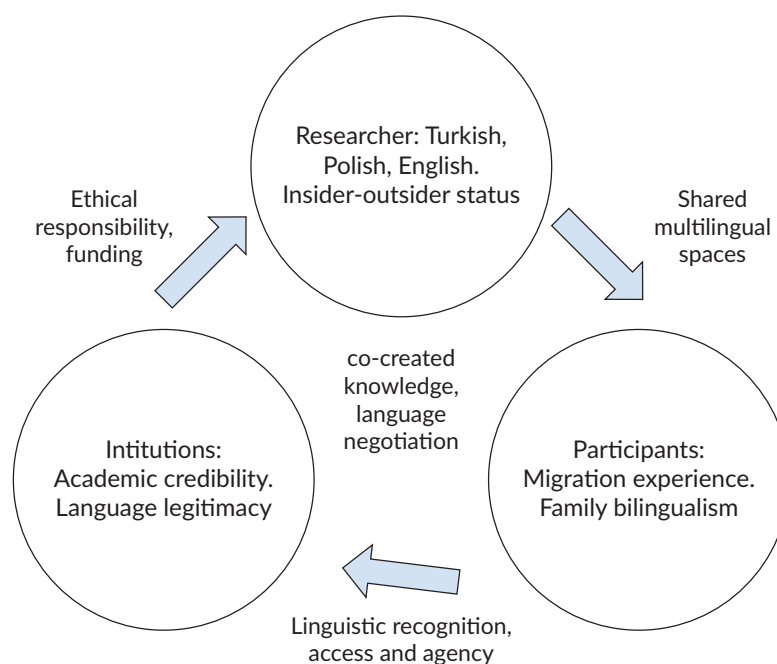
Figure 3. Relational model of researcher, participant, and ınstitutional dynamics.

These patterns shaped how knowledge was co-constructed and how multilingual experiences were lived and represented in the field. Positionality, in turn, requires ongoing self-awareness. Researchers must continuously reflect on how their identities, assumptions, or potential biases shape interpretation.

3.4. Reflexivity and Fluidity

Reflexivity involves sustained critical examination of one's role in research. In multilingual work, especially when language itself is a central object of study, self-awareness is vital. As discussed above in relation to positionality, reflexivity enables researchers to navigate assumptions, power dynamics, and communication patterns that shape each phase of the research process.

In line with Blommaert's (2010) and Heller's (2007) views of language as social practice, this study does not treat Polish, Turkish, and English as discrete tools. Instead, these languages are enacted through lived interactions shaped by context, emotion, and institutional setting. For example, interviewees shifted between Polish and Turkish depending on the interlocuter, emotional tone, or topic. Rather than simply filling lexical gaps, these shifts functioned as acts of self-positioning, enabling speakers to negotiate identity, belonging, and power in relation to others.

To address effectively the complexities of multilingual data collection and interpretation, I employed reflexive tools such as a multilingual field diary, post-interview memos, and a code-switching log. These instruments enabled me to trace how interviewees moved between languages, what prompted these shifts, and how tone or emotional expression varied across linguistic choices. As Holmes et al. (2013) argue, multilingual research requires self-awareness not only during interviews but also in interpreting and representing data. My use of a multilingual field diary and post-interview notes allowed me to document language shifts and emotional responses, providing a layered account of meaning beyond linguistic content.

Reflexivity is a sustained dialogue with the self throughout fieldwork, analysis, and writing. Following Holmes et al. (2013), multilingualism in this study was not confined to fieldwork but integrated across the research process: from recruitment and consent to data analysis and representation. Self-awareness informed each phase to ensure linguistic inclusivity. In this way, the researcher's positional reflection underpins the fluidity of the research.

Fluidity in this context refers to the flexible nature of linguistic practices, roles, identities, and power, as explored through research. Participants' spontaneous shifts from Turkish to Polish, Polish to English, or all three within a single exchange highlighted their dynamic use of language. In one conversation, for example, a participant code-switched between English and Turkish while discussing holidays and traditions:

> We spend time together....Because of Christmas, it is important, Paskalya [Easter], we paint eggs in Poland.

Here, the switches do more than convey information: English situates the narrative in a shared global or intercultural setting, while Turkish signals relational intimacy with me as the researcher. This moment exemplifies fluidity, as the participant actively shapes the interaction, shifting between cultural frames and linguistic resources, with me, as a researcher, adjusting my position in turn. Non-linear power relations, shaped continuously by both participants and researchers, emerge as participants assert control of the conversation through language, resist fixed roles, and negotiate meaning and authority.

For multilingual researchers, language should be understood as a lived, situational practice that is responsive to mood, trust, memory, and a sense of belonging, as well as the needs of the participants. My positional reflection allowed me to observe and appreciate linguistic fluidity, rather than attempting to control it. This approach created a collaborative space where meaning was co-constructed, as opposed to being extracted. It also foregrounded ethical awareness, recognizing that participants' agency is as vital as the study's goals.

Multilingual research offers profound insight into identity construction and discursive negotiation, but it also presents practical challenges. For example, interviewees and I had uneven linguistic competencies: Some were highly fluent in one language but less confident in others, which occasionally constrained the depth of expression or required repeated clarification. Translation fidelity posed another difficulty, particularly when preparing mixed-language examples for publication. Subtle cultural meanings, humor, or invented hybrid words were often hard to render accurately in English, and I risked losing nuance during transcription or analysis. Moreover, there was always a potential for misinterpretation, as shifts in tone, register, or emphasis in one language could be perceived differently when translated into another.

To address these challenges, I employed participant-led language choice, allowing interviewees to speak in the language that they felt most comfortable with. This minimized miscommunication and empowered them to shape the conversation. Careful field notes and reflexive memos helped me track linguistic shifts and contextualize meaning. When translating, particularly for publication or including illustrative examples, I maintained annotated transcripts, marking code-switching, invented words, and cultural references, and added explanatory notes. I also translated data across languages, checking translations against original utterances, and, when necessary, consulted bilingual colleagues or participants to ensure interpretive accuracy. These strategies, combined with my positional reflection and language use, helped me navigate

the complexities of multilingual research while preserving both analytical rigor and the integrity of participants' voices.

4. Methodological Learnings From the Field: Looking Ahead—Rethinking Multilingual Research

This study was guided by three key questions: What are the methodological challenges of conducting research in three languages? (RQ1) How do language hierarchies influence the collection and interpretation of data? (RQ2) What strategies can help researchers remain inclusive and authentic when working with multilingual participants? (RQ3)

Conducting research across Polish, Turkish, and English revealed that language is more than a tool for data collection; it is a lived, situated practice shaped by emotion, ideology, and social context. The study offers three key methodological insights aligned with the research questions.

RQ1 posed: What are the methodological challenges of conducting research in three languages? Multilingual research introduces both practical and conceptual challenges, including uneven linguistic competences, difficulties in translation fidelity, and the potential for misinterpretation. Field observations and interviews showed that code-switching and language mixing were not random but strategic acts of identity negotiation, which required careful attention during transcription and analysis. Reflexive practices, including field notes, reflective journals, multilingual transcripts, and code-switching logs, were essential for capturing these patterns and interrogating the researcher's own assumptions. These tools helped make the research ethically consistent and allowed the participants' perspectives to be accurately represented.

RQ2 posed: How do language hierarchies influence the collection and interpretation of data? Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital illuminated the subtle hierarchies embedded in everyday language choices. Participants adapted to different linguistic "markets" depending on context, and their shifts between Polish, Turkish, and English shaped the flow of conversation, the kind of knowledge that could be shared, and the ways in which emotions and identities were expressed. Blommaert's (2010) and Heller's (2007) views of language as social practice showed that code-switching is an enactment of social positioning, agency, and power negotiation. Recognizing these hierarchies allowed the research process to account for both participants' strategies and the researcher's positional influence.

RQ3 asked: What strategies can help researchers remain inclusive and authentic when working with multilingual participants? Ethical multilingual research requires more than accurate translation; it demands reflexivity, co-construction, and responsiveness to participants' linguistic and cultural realities (Burkhard & Park, 2023; Temple & Young, 2004). Drawing on Znaniecki's humanistic coefficient, the study prioritized participants' agency in language choice, creating space for open and authentic expression. Flexible interviews conducted in participants' preferred languages, systematic multilingual transcription and annotation, code-switching logs, and reflective field diaries were employed to capture the richness of everyday multilingual practices. By treating translation and code-switching as ethically and politically significant, rather than purely technical tasks, the research foregrounded participant voices, promoted inclusivity, and allowed the study to respond dynamically to the fluid multilingual realities of the field.

Overall, this study demonstrates that multilingualism is not a barrier but a resource that, when approached with reflection and care, can deepen understanding. Methodological frameworks should not merely accommodate linguistic diversity; they should be actively shaped by it. Practical strategies include: (a) prioritizing participant agency in language choice; (b) maintaining reflexive journals and field notes; (c) embracing co-construction and flexible, emergent approaches; (d) recognizing the ethical and political significance of translation and code-switching.

Ultimately, these insights contribute to more inclusive, reflexive, and socially aware research practices in migration studies, thus challenging monolingual academic norms and supporting ethically grounded, multilingual scholarship (Bennett, 2023; Liu & Zheng, 2024).

Conflict of Interests
The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability
Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the qualitative data (interviews and fieldnotes) used in this study, the data are not publicly available. Anonymized excerpts may be shared upon reasonable request to the author, in line with ethical research guidelines.

LLMs Disclosure
The author used generative AI tools for language correction, grammar refinement, and improving clarity of expression.

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