

TOWARDS A REFLEXIVE RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERCULTURAL RESEARCH WITH MIGRANT ROMA CHILDREN

HACIA UN ANÁLISIS REFLEXIVO RETROSPECTIVO EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CON NIÑOS ROMANÍS MIGRANTES

C. CARMEN DRĂGHICI*

Abstract: *This article focuses on a reanalysis of fieldwork experiences with Roma children after qualitative and ethnographic data collection and interpretation were undertaken. This approach differs from reflexivity during research and represents a reflexive retrospective analysis two years later which provides the researchers with the opportunity to explore his or her position as participant in the study. The findings are enriched through additional data depicting the researcher's influence on the research process, and it provides useful advice for future research.*

Keywords: *reflexive retrospective analysis; researcher's position; interculturality; Roma children; migrant families.*

Resumen: *Este artículo analiza una experiencia de trabajo de campo con niños romanís después de haber llevado a cabo la recogida e interpretación de datos etnográficos. Esta aproximación difiere de la reflexividad durante la investigación y presupone un*

*University Paris 13 - Sorbonne Paris Cité, Research center EXPERICE, France.

análisis reflexivo retrospectivo dos años después de su realización, el cual proporciona a los investigadores la oportunidad de explorar su posición como participantes en el estudio. La discusión de los hallazgos se enriquece con datos adicionales que describen la influencia de la investigadora en el proceso de indagación y provee consejos útiles para proyectos futuros.

Palabras clave: *análisis reflexivo retrospectivo; posición del investigador; interculturalidad; niños romanís; familias migrantes.*

1. INTRODUCTION

“The knowledge of the neighbour passes necessarily through the knowledge of oneself” (Calvino, 2015:105)¹. This sentence sums up what interculturality, as I experienced it personally means to me – an encounter between people having different linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires. These cultural repertoires are characterized in terms of people’s “familiarity with engaging in particular practices on the basis of what is known about their own and their community’s history” (Gutiérrez and Rogoff, 2003:22). After such an intercultural encounter, while trying to understand “Others” – people having a cultural repertoire different from mine – I can better understand myself and my position in the fieldwork because I can rely on a reflexive approach.

Rather than promoting reflexivity *during* the fieldwork, or presenting how to employ it, this article explores the fieldwork experiences and interpretation of data two years *after* this research took place. I use a *reflexive retrospective analysis* by exploring certain issues in order to better understand my position and influence on the research process and to benefit from the lessons learned through the intercultural context of research.

I reanalysed the qualitative data of an ethnographic study conducted in 2013, in the field of education sciences, while doing volunteer work in a charity association with Roma families in the slums of Paris. In order to explore the encounters between people

¹ Translated from Italian: “La conoscenza del prossimo ha questo di speciale: passa necessariamente attraverso la conoscenza di se stesso (...)”

with different cultural repertoires and to analyse Roma children's leisure activities, I conducted participant observation, informal conversations and picture taking. This article expands upon these processes and contributes to a deeper understanding of the reflexive retrospective analysis, which is different from conducting reflection while doing research because it is realized after completing the fieldwork and the interpretation of data.

I conducted the research mostly during the 'street library' workshop (*bibliothèque de rue*) organized by the charity association 'Secours Catholique'. The objective of this workshop was to forge a link with Roma families through cultural and leisure activities for their children. For 2 months I observed 25 to 30 children attending the workshop, boys and girls aged 0 to 12 years.

At that time, they were living with their families in the precarious conditions of the slums situated at Porte d'Aubervilliers, in Paris. These families were coming from Romania, from different cities such as Videle, Sibiu or Alba-Iulia. Their migration situation was characterized by traveling back and forth between France and Romania. The incomes of families were generated by begging in the street or by working in low-paid and unskilled jobs. Roma adults living in these slums were not educated, and their children did not attend school.

During my fieldwork, I believed that having personal feelings and analysing oneself had no place in scientific research. My reflections often remained at the level of thoughts. I did not materialise them through writing because I was not aware of their scientific implications. Two years later, while working with children of migrants in French preschools for my PhD, I realised how important reflexivity during fieldwork is.

In order to "expand the investigation" (Corcuff, 1995:62) for the study with Roma children, I developed a reflexive retrospective analysis, which adds value and understanding to the research, and provides the researcher with additional tools.

The method used for conducting reflexive retrospective analysis is to revisit key moments in my practice in order to choose the subject of the stories that are to be rebuilt. The key moments consist of situations that generated intercultural experiences between the fieldworker and the participants, and that included linguistic exchanges and interactions with children. By doing so, I attempted to show the importance of reflexive retrospective analysis

in intercultural research contexts. The use of “I” in this article is a deliberate stylistic choice intended to emphasize the character of positioned experiences and knowledge production in this research.

Interculturality – an encounter of individuals with different cultural repertoires

The term interculturality needs clarification, as it can have different meanings according to country and socio-historical context. In the French context, interculturality emerged in the 1970s as a preventive approach in education for children of migrants to diminish difficulties of integration and school failure (Abdallah-Preteuille, 2013, Kerzil, 2002). In the field of education sciences and psycho-sociology, *interculturality* is defined as the contact between individuals and groups from different cultures (Abdallah Preteuille, 2013; Troadec, 2010; Dasen, 2002; Cohen-Emerique, 2011). In this perspective, interculturality entails a relationship and a dialogue between different cultures through subjects carrying these cultures (Giraud, 1995:52).

But what is culture? The national and international connections between peoples reveal the limits of this concept as something that is static and homogenous (Abu-Lughod, 1996). Rogoff (2005) developed the concept of *cultural repertoires* in order to approach the concept of culture as an experience of daily practices. According to her, the idea of culture entails a certain dynamic and a series of interactions between individuals. Cultural repertoires include all practices familiar to individuals that can be used in various formats depending on the situations in which someone is. Individuals living in different cultural traditions can have access to and use different repertoires. From a cultural view, an individual's membership in a community is reflected by the cultural practices in which the one participates. The participation of an individual to the practices of several cultural communities and institutions and the acquisition of a dynamic repertoire of practices stands in opposition to the idea of a stable culture, which characterises a particular social group. Rather than perceiving the members of a group in a rigid and uniform manner, which leads to stereotypes, the concept of cultural repertoires includes certain means of engagement based on common experience in specific cultural

and historical practices. Based on Rogoff's (2005) definition of culture, interculturality is an encounter of individuals having different cultural repertoires. From a researcher's perspective, I can experience the intercultural dimension in my own contact with participants having different cultural repertoires to mine – Roma children and their families.

Retrospective of the researcher's position in the fieldwork

Reflexivity emerged in the 1950s in North-America and developed within post-modern anthropology (Giddens, 1986). The history of anthropology reveals the role of national tradition in the elaboration of this discipline. Despite the globalisation of fieldwork and the mobility of researchers in France, the anthropological paradigms still refers to an ethnocentric national orientation (Copans, 2000). Thus, there is a lack of interest of French anthropologists towards reflexivity, which is partly a consequence of national disciplinary traditions (Pourchez, 2009). However, certain French scholars, as Bourdieu (2004), contributed to the development of this approach. By conducting my research in the French context, this national orientation to a degree was influential.

In the social sciences, reflexivity in research can be understood in different ways. Thus using an anthropological approach, reflexivity in research involves reflections on the self, on the process of producing knowledge, on the search for questions within the research and on one's own positionality (Sultana, 2007). This perspective was also developed in the sociological field and refers to reflecting on the researcher's fieldwork experiences, on history, tools and relationships with the participants (Corcuff, 1995). I use *reflexivity* as a *retrospective analysis* by focusing back in time to the researcher's position in the fieldwork. Taking myself as "an object of study, in order to examine and analyse my own steps" (Giddens, 1986:41) two years later, I tried to reveal additional results of my own participation in the research, and its influence on the research. This allowed me to draw open lessons learned in past research and skills acquired or developed, which can be useful in future research. I explored certain intercultural situations I encountered during my fieldwork with a reflexive retrospective analysis.

Picture taking – strengths and weaknesses of a qualitative research tool

The reflexive retrospective analysis allowed me to explore the use of picture taking as a tool and to analyse its implications on the findings. This qualitative tool aimed at observing participants and their living environment. Using photography in observational research can be useful strength as it provides additional data than the typically fleeting observation (Basil, 2013). I considered this in relation to the conditions of the slums, since images can speak louder than words. In a great measure, I attended this objective, as photography records material rapidly and with great detail (Collier, Collier and Hall, 1986). Picture taking was also a tool that I used for remembering details related to my observations in the fieldwork. The use of such material in ethnographic description is not something new, as anthropologists have been using it in their fieldwork for a long time, highlighting the relationship between photography and memory in the fieldwork (Canal, 2014).

This visual tool proved also to be a challenge in my experience as a researcher, in managing the reaction of the participants towards my camera and their expectations after taking pictures. The research protocol met the reality of the fieldwork, and I had to adjust the use of my tools. For the participants, the camera was interpreted as a tool to remember and store pictures of life (Basil, 2013). Thus, children asked me: “will you give us the pictures?”.

In the initial phase of field research, my camera became a tool to collect data in the slum areas and was used to record certain aspects related to children’s participation in the workshops (e.g. the material used in the workshop, such as books and colouring tools; children sitting on the ground in a group and Roma adults sitting near their wooden shelters and watched from a distance). The main purpose of my pictures was to analyse the environments of the Roma families in the slums in Paris as well as in workshop situations. In a qualitative approach, this visual data described the living conditions of the children and generated richer information than only words in my written notes could have provided.

Initially, when designing the research tools, I did not intend to develop the photos, but at their insistence, I printed and gave some to them. The participants’ demands and their approach to photographs became an obstacle to me in that specific stage of my

research. The photographs' prime purpose as memory collectors for personal interest (Sontag, 1989) that participants expected did not meet my methodological purpose of collecting data for my research.

When I stopped using this research tool as a documentation source, I started using the pictures as tools to engage in social relationships. Thus, the visual material became a bridge between the researcher and participants (Collier, Collier and Hall, 1986). Providing printed pictures allowed me to get closer to the participants, to gain their confidence and to gather more information through informal conversations. Giving printed pictures to the Roma families gave entry to a certain degree into community familiarity and cooperation (Collier, Collier and Hall, 1986).

Sultana (2007) promotes ethics in research arguing that it is important to pay attention to the power relations in the fieldwork and how one relates to the participants. This is essential as it influences methods, as it happened in my case. Approaching the use of picture taking tool in a reflexive retrospective way allowed me to observe the strengths and weaknesses of using such research tool with migrant families.

Participant observation – assuming positionality in the fieldwork

The concern about positionality and participation may lead some researchers to avoid fieldwork and engage more in textual analysis, because writing 'with' participants rather than writing 'about' those researched can be challenging (Sultana, 2007). Conducting participant observation involves accepting that the researcher's position has an impact on the research process. According to Sultana (2007), certain scholars are over-concerned about their influence, so they prefer to avoid engaging in fieldwork. Using a qualitative method and an ethnographic approach, I conducted the fieldwork while being involved in volunteer work with Roma children in the charity association.

After obtaining the agreement of the volunteers and of the Roma families in the slums, I was able to start the field research. Practically, I was participating like the other volunteers and after leaving the slums, I was writing down my observations. Being immersed in the

field allowed me to feel part of the group and be involved in their everyday activities, which I preferred over simply being an observer in the research.

My attitude, the feelings, the motivations and the research choices towards my field findings were influenced by my research-related and personal positioning. During the two months of fieldwork, I was not aware on a scientific level about my influence, thus there was no analysis of self-awareness of my own role at that time. Only looking back, and analysing the key moments, I understand these implications. Bourdieu (2004:95) emphasizes that:

“a point of view is first a view taken from a particular point (...) a particular position in the social space; so this is also a perspective view (...) all perceptions, visions, beliefs, expectations, hopes, etc. are socially structured and socially conditioned and they obey a law which defines the principle of their variation, the law of the correspondence between the positions and the positions taken.”

He approaches the aspect of subjectivity by analysing the specific position that the researcher occupies in the social space. Looking back at my experience in the field allowed me to be reflexively aware about my own position, and thus aim for an “objective science” (Bourdieu, 2004:95).

In this specific fieldwork, I was not particularly confronted from the beginning with concerns about my own positionality, it was rather an aspect revealed *a posteriori*. Therefore, I was aware of my participation in the field and my engagement when choosing this approach. I accepted to learn about “Others” by participating in their everyday life. While observing “Others,” I was also observing my own experiences, feelings and reactions in the fieldwork but this was not part of my study at that time.

Conducting the fieldwork with Roma families posed certain dilemmas for me concerning my position. Roma families come from Romania and migrate to France. I am originally from Romania and I migrated to France. In some aspects, their migration situation was similar to mine, but in other aspects it was very different. My ethnicity was not the same as theirs, as I am not Roma, and my educational background puts me in a privileged position in France. We had certain common cultural and linguistic practices in our repertoire, but also many different practices. As such, in this fieldwork, I was

simultaneously an insider, outsider, both and neither (Mullings, 1999). I was an insider because I knew the process of migration and because I had a common language with the participants (Romanian), and a common country of birth (Romania). These aspects made me feel familiar with the participants.

What made me an outsider was the fact that I had not experienced living in such precarious life conditions and was not part of a Roma community. Thus, my socio-economic status and ethnic belonging was different from that of my participants. Therefore, the context of Roma slums made me feel very uncomfortable from an emotional point of view, which I will elaborate upon in the next section. While a similar migration trajectory and linguistic practices might locate me with the participants, I was the “Other” through my educational privilege and non-Roma belonging.

Yet, carrying out reflexive analysis two years later required “commitment, care, time and skills” (Finlay, 2002:541). Although it may prove to be burdensome, I used reflexivity as an instrument of evaluation of the subjectivity in the research, thus I decided to engage in such analysis (Kleinman, 1991) with a retrospective approach. My personal migration background, moving to and from different European countries (Romania, Italy, and France) enabled me to acquire or develop intercultural skills – such as empathy, curiosity of other cultures and knowledge of foreign languages. These skills facilitated the understanding of intercultural situations in my research. I now understand that my personal background and preferences influenced certain choices in the research. For example, I chose researching children and families in intercultural situations based on my own experience as a migrant and my ease of working with children.

From feelings to retrospective reflection about the emotional dimension

In the position of ethnographer, I was committed and I was willing to participate in the social world I was observing. My commitment was situated on different levels: physical, social, mental and emotional. In this section, I highlight the emotional discomfort, situational tensions and ethical challenges I encountered during this qualitative and intercultural research.

In many aspects, what most affected me during my field research was considered normal in Roma slums. My thoughts when entering the slums focused on my involvement at an emotional level. This implied strong feelings regarding the human suffering because of the precarious life conditions of the Roma and their children. Pain (2009:30) considers that the definition of a sensitive field:

“combines the field, the territory, something of the order of the concrete, of the everyday life, with the sense and the sensitivity, something that strikes emotion. When we are in these places, or in difficult environments, we know that a slight dose of anxiety within us makes us suddenly ‘sensitive’”.

I became almost involuntarily sensitive to “Others”. Stepping into the specific places of the slums, but even before entering them, made me think and become sensitive about the inhabitants’ life and struggles of living in such conditions. In this regard Jullien (1996) addresses a ‘common fund of humanity’, which explains solidarity and empathy with “Others”, despite differences. The specificity of such fields led me to a dimension of anguish and confronted me with emotional violence, characterised by overloads of feelings like compassion, fear and disappointment. Once again, the reflexive retrospective analysis provides collateral data, about myself as a researcher: it reveals my fragility in such contexts, but also the skills I have (or have acquired) that only such situations can highlight. Only by reanalysing certain key moments of the fieldwork I could evaluate my own skills, which I was using or acquiring in this specific context of research.

One of these skills in the field is empathy. I took the role of an empathetic researcher towards children’s precarious life conditions (e. g. deprived of healthy food, clean clothes, school education). The notion of empathy can involve controversial theories, especially in the context of diversity. The traditional meaning of empathy – a way of stepping into another’s world and attempting to see and experience things from the other’s point of view (Clark, 2000) has been criticised because of the inattention regarding the cultural meanings or the socio-political context.

This approach of empathy focuses on feelings rather than on cultural meanings, therefore it does not consider the cultural and socio-political context of human experience (Green, 1998). In order to avoid this inattention, Green (1998) suggests that empathy in

multicultural contexts needs to be redefined. Rather than focusing on feelings, he proposes to give more attention to the cultural meanings attached to behaviour, events, persons, and words needs to be considered. In my research this consisted of being reflexive about my own preconceived ideas about childhood, and to avoid ethnocentrism. In this way, instead of being overwhelmed by emotions in facing certain situations, the participants are confronted with the fact that the children living in the slums were not enrolled in school.

In future research I can take distance regarding the participants' condition, by taking into account not only their socio-economic status, but also their cultural specificities. One of the differences is that family education is central for the Roma compared to school education. The child's education is done through observation, practice and oral learning. The child lives in an environment that promotes community education. Thus, the education is made by intergenerational transmission in the community where the child lives and where his socialization begins. In situations of mobility and insecurity, the family is an element of permanence and stability (Council of Europe, 2005).

The encounter with a different meaning of childhood and reflexive approach imposed an examination of my own belief about childhood, which I realised was dominated by a Western and middle-class view. These experiences influenced my understanding of childhood and the view on how things "should be" (Sanders, 2004).

Intercultural interactions between researcher and participants

De Robillard (2011:19) illustrates reflexivity as an encounter with a boomerang effect, and as an echo. This plastic illustration summarises the attitude I had as a researcher when facing my relationship with "Others": while analysing their intercultural situation in France, I was analysing myself because I had to deal with certain similar aspects related to migration (e. g. learning French). Ethnographic research put me in the position of reflecting on my own life and context, while exploring Roma experiences, but during the fieldwork I was not aware of the scientific aim of such self-reflections. Only the reflexive retrospective analysis enabled me to explore these aspects in the research with Roma families.

“She’s one of us!” – the language dimension of the field

The beginning of my fieldwork was marked by the reaction of the participants toward my cultural background. These Roma were from Romania and they welcomed me easily when they found out about my origin. Once children realised that I spoke Romanian, they stayed around me all the time, and almost forgot about the other (French) volunteers. One of the first phrases I heard was: “She is Romanian, she’s one of us!”. Children’s reaction of surprise and joy when discovering my nationality shows a certain cultural commitment. Roma people in this field had similar ethnic, linguistic and national references: we all came from Romania and spoke the same language. These common elements speeded up our relationship.

In this fieldwork, I was not just a volunteer like all the other ones, but someone with a specific cultural identity. In some ways, I was indeed ‘one of them’, for example when it came to the country of birth or the Romanian language. In other aspects, we had very different repertoires of practices, but this did not prevent the Roma families to call me ‘one of them’. This relational position with the participants influenced the research process. I was there as someone that could not be ignored, specifically because of my cultural roots. According to Barth (1995), identity is defined as the relational expression of people. The language of speech is very important because it allows the individual to react to environmental stimuli (Cuche, 2010). I became ‘one of them’ as soon as the participants found out about my cultural and linguistic repertoires.

Language was a fundamental element in my study, having a significant weight in the relationship between researcher and participants. Chauvin and Jounin (2010) suggest that observation involves all the sensory capacities of the interviewer, such as the use of hearing, through which one collects the words of the participants. Listening to the children speaking I discovered some linguistic aspects. The Romani language is an Indo-Aryan language, having significant similarities with the languages spoken in northern India such as Hindi or Bengali. A certain number of Roma children are bilingual, or even trilingual according to their origin, but more often they use a *basilect*² (Clanet dit Lamanit, 2007). Besides Romani,

² The *basilect* represents the variety of a language of the social microcosm that is used in private informal domains in the family and when in contact with friends (Halwach, 2005:159).

children could speak Romanian and some of them knew some French. These similar linguistic and cultural references were a bridge of communication between researcher and participants. In our cultural repertoires, we had two linguistic aspects in common: we all knew Romanian and we all had struggles learning French.

Being an immigrant also leads to a continuing effort to speak the language of the host country. As Romanian, I was glad I had the opportunity to speak my native language and feel free during my communication with the Roma. These moments reveal the attachment to the mother tongue, which reminded me about my cultural origins. Language refers to childhood memories, to parents and grandparents, family history. It is part of the identity of a person and it is a fundamental element of cultural identity.

Language also refers to a geographic location, a region, a country, a nation (Abdelilah-Bauer, 2006). The concept of 'language-culture' highlights the strong link between these two elements, and stresses the importance of language in the identity dynamics of the individual (Ochs, 1997). The Romanian language, as a shared element with the Roma children and their parents, was the link that helped us to establish a relationship. It was an important aspect of identification with "Others". In intercultural relationships, the role of language is essential, particularly because of its individual and collective identity references. Speaking a language means referring to a worldview, to the common fund of the meanings given to the world by a linguistic community (Abdelilah-Bauer, 2006).

Pedagogical relationship with children

During my fieldwork, I assumed a pedagogical position as a volunteer and as a researcher at the same time. This position was related to my volunteer work, as the animator was tacitly expected, among other things, to fulfil the task of teaching some French. My reflections two years later and the process of looking back on my own position allowed me to understand that the pedagogical dimension of the relationship with the children provided material on the social interactions with the participants in the specific context of the workshop. These data were significant for my qualitative and ethnographic study, as I was exploring Roma children's experiences and linguistic practices. Therefore, besides being a benefit for

data collection, the pedagogical position emphasizes my direct engagement and involvement in the volunteer work.

If on the one hand I spoke my native language in my conversations with the children, on the other hand I encountered the Romani language, their mother tongue, because “when we try to analyse the language and the culture of another group, we are confronted to the otherness” (De Robillard, 2011:14). My interest in the Romani language was reflected by the possibility to say a few words during one of the workshops. The children taught me some words and common expressions like “hello”, “please” and “thank you”. Our interaction was dominated by their enthusiasm regarding my efforts to properly pronounce words in Romani. It is therefore a challenging, dual positioning: being a “pedagogue” – one who knows, in relation to others who do not know, but also about being a learner – the children who know, compared to the adult position (Ranci re, 1987). It represents a balance of power between adult and children, the researcher and the participants.

The pedagogical position allowed me to make detailed observations of children’s linguistic practices. During the workshops, I often tried to analyse the child’s speaking and his or her abilities as in the next empirical example. Here I analyse the language skills of Roma children during the reading activity in the context of the street workshop.

“The books are in French, in Romanian or in Romani. I take a book in Romani (a language which I don’t know at all), and take inspiration from the illustrations, and tell the story to a boy named Amir³. This is the story of a child who went fishing with his father. Amir closely follows the story through the images he sees and through the words I say in Romanian, a language that the Roma, coming from Romania, know. I ask him questions from time to time. For example, I point the finger to an illustration and I ask him what the picture shows. Sometimes he answers quickly; sometimes it is difficult for him to find his words. I realize he is not mastering the Romanian language.” (Field Journal, June 16, 2013)

Taking advantage of the presence of Romanian-speaking volunteers, children requested stories in Romanian, as this example shows.

³ The names mentioned in this article are fictitious names.

“David takes a book and gives it to me. Many children gather around me and wait for me to read. Speaking Romanian has a powerful impact on the children. They gather around me automatically. I start reading in French.

- Not French, says David, Romanian!
- Okay, I say, and I start to tell a story by translating from French into Romanian. Children listen and are focused on the story.” (Field Journal, June 13, 2013)

I told stories in Romanian especially for the children who did not know French. However, learning French is possible at these moments, because when I tell stories I sometimes introduce words or phrases in French, and I translate them immediately. Again, in a pedagogical position, I try to convey to the children the language skills that I consider necessary in their immigration route.

In the initial analysis of my data I did not consider my own position in relation to the children. But the reflexive retrospective analysis emphasised that my relationship with the children was characterized by the pedagogical dimension of my position. Such a stance also showed the reversal of the pedagogical relation, when Roma children took the role of the pedagogue to teach me, an adult, certain Romani words. I also understood that this ease in interacting with them was also related to my experience of working with young children as a caregiver.

Body related aspects in the relationship with Roma children

Personally, I was touched by the reaction of the children and their way of approaching me with physical gestures. It was a reaction that I had never encountered before in my experience as a caregiver for Western families. During the fieldwork I was confronted with body related aspects in the relationship with Roma children which surprised me, but at that time I was focusing my observations on children’s activities, rather than on my own. Two years later, my retrospective analysis of my participation and relationship with the children in the fieldwork makes me move the focus of the observation from the researched to the researcher.

My relationships with children have been characterised by a strong emotional dimension. The compassion for children was evident from the beginning of my work as a volunteer and researcher, when

I observed their need for affection expressed by physical proximity. The placement of the body in the relationship with the children shows how physical proximity reflects their need for affection. Garnier (1997) proposes a definition of affection as proximity, as the capability to be affected by what happens to people close to us, instead of a biological connection type of relationship (e.g. mother-daughter relationship). This was my interpretation of their body language, and two years later this aspect provoked reflection.

My data does not provide clear proof on whether this was a way to express their need of affection or just a style of approaching adults. Thus, my interpretation of the personal relationships between researcher and children shows that the children transmitted a certain degree of affection through this body proximity, such as sitting on the grass very close to my body or wanting to play with my hands or my hair.

A key moment is represented by a girl coming up to me and hugging me and leaving me no time to react. Other children stayed close to me, almost stuck to my body, during the first workshop I attended. In general, I show body affection with family members, thus I considered the approach of Roma children as being rather odd or inappropriate. This key moment could also be interpreted as being a regular practice of children in certain cultural communities, where body language is expressed in a different way than the one I was used to. Such moments highlight the different views on body aspects and provide elements on the intercultural situations the researcher encountered in the field. The reflexive retrospective analysis allowed me to question my own reactions in the fieldwork and to analyse further my position, as well as my view on the child-adult relationship.

From reflexivity and research ethics to engagement

Key moments in the relation between researcher and participants can lead to ethical issues. During the fieldwork I was confronted with such issues, but I was not fully aware of this ethical dimension of my position as a researcher. Rather, I acted as a human being in front of other human beings.

In my fieldwork I was presented with the following *ethically important moments* (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) and I felt like I

had to be sensitive in my response to it. There was a grandmother of one of the children who asked for my help regarding her son who was in prison. With tears in her eyes, she told me the details of the situation. In those moments some questions arose: "What should I do? Is this dangerous for me? Should I help her?". I was not there to manage these kinds of issues, but my response to this situation was to help her however I could. So, I talked to the lawyer on the phone and then I translated to the grandmother what the lawyer transmitted. My research study in that situation was not a priority anymore and suddenly, I took off my "coat of researcher", to respond to the need of the woman in front of me. At that moment this was a spontaneous reaction, but two years later, I understood the ethical dimension of this situation better.

Hopper (2003:205) claims that ethnography research should not resume at the description and commentary stage of the field, but "engagement must be the complement to witnessing in a discipline that prizes the well-being of those whose lives and cultures they study." In this situation I was confronted with the double necessity of engagement and distance in doing ethnography work. The limits of witnessing (Hopper, 2003) sensitive situations such as in the Roma field, are evident and they raise the question of the engagement, as in the example with the grandmother above. Therefore, the question is: "engage, but to what extent?" The border is thin and this type of field requires standing on the "border". This was a tension that I had to manage in the fieldwork.

Being reflexive is important because it strengthens our commitment to conduct good research based on a relationship of mutual respect (Sultana, 2007). In order to maintain ethical commitments and to conduct ethical and respectful research, the academic research plans can be shifted away and adapted to the ethical situation that arises, as in the key moment described above. Reanalysing the data highlighted the importance of using reflexivity as a tool for being aware about the ethical dimensions of the research and showed the skills acquired by the researcher while conducting the fieldwork. Being able to respond to ethical concerns if and when they arise in the research is part of a reflexive process and of an awareness that I developed by looking back at the key moments of my research. This analysis allowed me to develop a sensitivity to the ethically important moments in my future research practice.

2. CONCLUSIONS

I reanalysed empirical data with a reflexive retrospective approach of my own position in a fieldwork with Roma families. Going back and thinking about issues two years after they occurred is distinct from reflection while doing research. I have argued that reflexive retrospective analysis is important because it brings added value to intercultural research by enriching the initial findings and because looking at the past experiences of the fieldworker can highlight certain lessons learned and skills that can be developed for future research. This analysis is all the more important when the fieldwork is intercultural, and I can face the risk of ethnocentrism (more or less profound) and because I am a migrant myself.

A reanalysis of my position as researcher has emphasized my motivations that led to the choice and to the object construction in this specific study, a position that influences the research process from design to fieldwork and to knowledge production. It revealed that the subjectivity of the researcher and her own specific position (Bourdieu, 2004), as well as the intercultural dimension between researcher and researched, has an implication, as the key moment regarding the body aspects showed. Therefore, several aspects can be viewed and interpreted differently in certain cultural contexts, such as the meanings of childhood. The analysis of relational and interactional dimension of the investigation was expanded through a new look at my implication and the relationships with the research participants.

The reflexive analysis in retrospective of my experience by conducting a second analysis of the data provided useful advice from lessons learned in this fieldwork. Using this analysis allowed to determine intercultural situations where I was one of the participants, and thus to develop helpful skills for future research with migrants.

Based on my experience, I propose a few perspectives below in order to overcome some difficult situations in the research field. In terms of methodology, I consider that it is necessary to be flexible and to adapt the methodology to the field which might change the tools that were initially planned. For example, I had to readapt picture taking as a different tool – from visual data collection to become a bridging tool between researcher and participants. I replaced formal interviews by informal conversations with the Roma families

in order to build a trust based relationship with the participants. Secondly, it is important to be emotionally prepared for the field work. This might imply having someone to talk to, to be able to take breaks in between the fieldwork sessions in order to handle difficult situations and to be accompanied if the field is potentially unsafe. And finally, I believe it is very important to be sensitive to ethically important moments. Sometimes, this means putting away the research plan and responding to ethical concerns if and when they arise in the research.

Reanalysing the empirical data two years later has allowed me to conclude that the researcher's reflexivity can be used as a tool for being aware about the ethical dimensions of the research. This includes the interpersonal aspects of research and the interactions between researcher and participants. In these interactions lie the possibilities of respecting the autonomy, dignity and privacy of the participants. Engaging in a reflexive retrospective analysis contributes to ethical research by acknowledging the dimensions of ordinary, everyday research practice. Conducting such analysis provides the researcher with a tool that expands the horizons of qualitative researches with migrant families.

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks Prof. Pascale Garnier and Carmen María Sánchez Caro for constructive feedback. Thank you to all those who have taken the time to review this paper.

4. REFERENCES

- ABDALLAH-PRETCEILLE, M. (2013): *L'éducation interculturelle*. Paris, Presses universitaires de France - PUF.
- ABDELLAH-BAUER, B. (2006): *Le défi des enfants bilingues : Grandir et vivre en parlant plusieurs langues*. Paris, Editions La Découverte.
- ABU-LUGHOD, L. (1996): «Writing against culture». Fox, R., G. *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*. School of American Research Press, pp. 137-62.

- BARTH, F. (1995): «Les groupes ethniques et leurs frontières». In: Poutignat, P., Streiff-Fenart, J., *Théories de l'ethnicité*. Paris, PUF, pp. 203-249.
- BASIL, M. (2013): «Use of photography and video in observational research.» *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 14(3) pp. 246-257.
- BOURDIEU, P. (2004): *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- CALVINO, I. (2015): *Palomar*. Palermo, Mondadori.
- CANAL, G. O. (2014): «Photography in the field: Word and image in ethnographic research». *Research Gate*, 19(1) pp. 3-20.
- CHAUVIN, S. and JOUNIN, N. (2010): «L'observation directe». *L'enquête sociologique*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 143-165.
- CLANET DIT LAMANIT, E. (2007): «La scolarisation des enfants du voyage au Centre national d'enseignement à distance». *Distances et savoirs*, 5(4) pp. 559-574.
- CLARK, J. (2000): «Beyond empathy: an ethnographic approach to cross-cultural social work practice». Toronto, University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work. [Online], Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.110.538&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed 19 September 2015].
- COHEN-EMERIQUE, M. (2011): «L'interculturel dans les interactions des professionnels avec les usagers migrants». *Alterstice - Revue Internationale de la Recherche Interculturelle*, 1(1) pp. 9-18.
- COLLIER, J.; COLLIER, M. and HALL, E. T. (1986): *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press.
- COPANS, J. (2000): «Mondialisation des terrains ou internationalisation des traditions disciplinaires? L'utopie d'une anthropologie sans frontières». *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, 24(1) pp. 21-42.
- CORCUFF, P. (1995): «Quand le terrain prend la parole... Éléments de sociologie réflexive». *L'Homme et la société*, 115(1) pp.61-73.
- COUNCIL OF EUROPE (2005): Access to education: teaching kit concept, François-Xavier Bernard, Dominique Steinberger. [Online], Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/ConceptMallette_EN.PDF [Accessed 12 December 2015].
- CUCHE, D. (2010): *La notion de culture dans les sciences sociales*. Paris, La Découverte.
- DASEN, P. R. (2002): «Approches interculturelles: acquis et controverses». In: P. R. Dasen et C. Perregaux, *Pourquoi des approches interculturelles en sciences de l'éducation*. De Boeck Supérieur, pp. 7-28.
- DE ROBILLARD, D. (2011): «La linguistique autrement: altérité, expérientiation, réflexivité, constructivisme, multiversalité: en attendant que le Titanic ne coule pas». *Carnet d'Ateliers de Sociolinguistique (CAS)*, 1. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.u-picardie.fr/LESCLaP/spip.php?article46> [Accessed 10 November 2014].
- FINLAY, L. (2002): «'Outing' the Researcher: The Provenance, Process, and Practice of Reflexivity». *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(4) pp. 531-545.

- GARNIER, P. (1997): *Les Assistantes sociales à l'école*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France - PUF.
- GIDDENS, A. (1986): *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. New Berkeley, University of California Press.
- GIRAUD, M. (1995): «L'approche interculturelle: faux débats et vrais enjeux». In *Identités et cultures à l'école, Migrants formation, CNDP*, 102, pp. 51-73.
- GREEN, J. W. (1998): *Cultural Awareness in the Human Services: A Multi-Ethnic Approach*. Boston, Pearson.
- GUILLEMIN, M. AND GILLAM, L. (2004): «Ethics, Reflexivity, and 'Ethically Important Moments' in Research.» *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2) pp. 261-280.
- GUTIERREZ, K. AND D., ROGOFF, B. (2003): «Cultural Ways of Learning: Individual Traits or Repertoire of Practice». *Educational Researcher*, 2 (5) pp. 19-25.
- HALWACHS, D, W. (2005): «Romani in Austria». *Romani Studies*, 5 (15), No. 2, pp. 145-173.
- HOPPER, K. (2003): «Limits to Witnessing: From Ethnography to Engagement». In: Hopper K., *Reckoning with Homelessness*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, pp. 204-207.
- JULLIEN, F. (1996): *Fonder la morale: Dialogue de Mencius avec un philosophe des Lumières*. Paris, Grasset.
- KERZIL, J. (2002): «L'éducation interculturelle en France: un ensemble de pratiques évolutives au service d'enjeux complexes». *Carrefours de l'éducation*, 2/2002 (14), pp. 120-159.
- KLEINMAN, S. (1991): «Field-Workers' Feelings: What We Feel, Who We are, How We Analyze». *Experiencing Fieldwork: An Inside View of Qualitative Research*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc., pp. 184-195.
- MULLINGS, B. (1999): «Insider or outsider, both or neither: some dilemmas of interviewing in a cross-cultural setting». *Geoforum*, 30(4) pp. 337-350.
- OCHS, E. (1997): «Cultural Dimensions of Language Acquisition». In: Coup-land, N., Jaworsky, A., (eds.) *Sociolinguistics*. Modern Linguistics Series. Macmillan Education UK, pp. 430-437.
- PAIN, J. (2009): «Terrain sensible : stratégies et projets d'intervention». *Revista Andaluza de Ciencias Sociales (Anduli)*, 9 pp. 29-38.
- POURCHEZ, L. (2009): «Traditions disciplinaires nationales et réflexivité: Pourquoi l'approche réflexive est-elle si peu valorisée en France ?» *Cahiers de sociolinguistique*, 14(1) p. 67.
- RANCIERE, J. (1987): *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Stanford. Stanford University Press.
- ROGOFF, B., MOORE, L., NAJAFI, B., DEXTER, A., CORREA-CHAVEZ, M. and SOLIS, J. (2005): «Children's development of cultural repertoires through participation in everyday routines and practices». In: Grusec, J., E., Hastings, P., D. (eds.) *Handbook of socialization: theory and research*. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 490-515.
- SANDERS, B. (2004): «Childhood in Different Cultures». In: Maynard, T., Thomas, N. (eds.) *An introduction to early childhood studies*. London, SAGE, pp. 53-64.

- SONTAG, S. (1989): *Susan Sontag On Photography*. The Noonday Press.
- SULTANA, F. (2007): «Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research», *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*. 6(3) pp. 374-385.
- TROADEC, B. (2010): «Culture et interculturel en psychologie: préférence pour la démarche scientifique et conséquences épistémologiques». *Recherches en éducation*, (9) pp. 18-31.