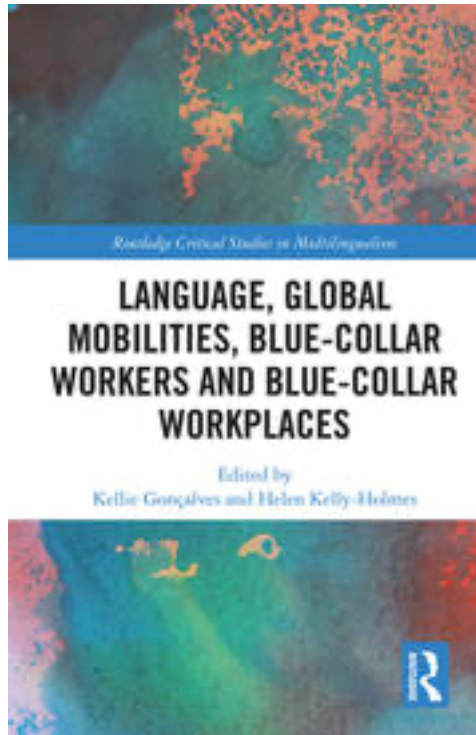


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Researching language at work in public and hidden domains. Historical time and temporal contextualization

Florian Hiss

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss ways to investigate the sociolinguistic conditions and language practices surrounding ‘blue-collar’ work in historical settings. Such work not only took place in (more or less) hidden domains; also temporal distance limits our access to historical work sites, agents, practices and ideologies, and the temporal context of our research is distant and different from that of the situation and people we study. While a look at historical cases can provide valuable insights with respect to today’s situation, I argue that it is necessary to consider the temporality of the practices we investigate as well as that of the associated research practices. How are we positioned vis-à-vis the people we study? And is it, for example, reasonable to apply the contemporary term *blue-collar worker* to a completely different spatial and temporal context?

To illustrate the challenges, I present and compare two examples of historical, work-related multilingualism from 19th century Northern Norway and their investigation by linguists: a copper mine recruiting a large number of Kven and other migrant workers; and the trading encounters between Norwegian fishermen and Russian merchants resulting in a Russian-Norwegian pidgin language called *Russenorsk*. Both concern linguistic practices which unfolded ca. 150-200 years ago. Because of this temporal distance, it is important to consider the position of both data and research in time and how these become entangled with the production of scientific knowledge about historical blue-collar work. In particular, I discuss the impact of both public and hidden domains on this process.

This study has implications not only for the investigation of historical language practices, but for contemporary research as well. Like all contributions in this volume, my interest in language use in historical workplaces is motivated by a more general, and quite timely, research interest in language use at work. The historical examples show that the production of scientific knowledge and the ways in which research reproduces social relations in and around the workplaces are influenced by the original situation, the access to data, research agendas, and the dominant research discourses at the time of investigation.

I begin this chapter with a brief sketch of the regional and historical context and then present an overview of theoretical perspectives on the temporality of language practices and research. The core part of the chapter consists of an analysis and discussion of the two example cases. The first case describes my own research experience from investigating language practices, policies and sociolinguistic relations in the Alten Copper Works (Hiss 2017). The main challenge was that

practically all original texts are written by the directors and administrators and thus only provide indirect information about blue-collar workers' practices. Knowledge about the second case, the so-called Pomor Trade between merchants from White Sea Russia and the local population, has been passed on to us through more than a century of scientific description and analysis. Accessing the historical linguistic practices today is affected by the meanings that emerged in these historical processes of knowledge production. In the final section, I compare and discuss these two cases in the light of contemporary research agendas and the volume's focus on blue collar workers.

2. The regional context

Northern Norway displays many of the complex dynamics of language, diversity, work and mobility of interest in this volume. It is the home of Sámi, Kven and Norwegians and has been linguistically and culturally diverse for centuries. The Sámi are the indigenous people of Central and Northern Scandinavia. In historical time, Norwegians settled in the region, and the Kven migrated to the Northern Norwegian coast from Northern Finland and Sweden between the 16th and 19th centuries. The Sámi and Kven languages are Finno-Ugric and thus considerably different from Norwegian, a Germanic language. The region is also rich with natural resources. Throughout history, fish has been a vital source of livelihood and an export article. With the advent of industrialization, the region's deposits of metal ore became attractive for exploitation. More recently, the offshore extraction of natural gas and industrial seafood production have become important industries. International immigration increased with economic growth in the late 20th and early 21st century (e.g. Aure 2012). Both cases presented in this chapter are examples of historical migration and mobility connected with the access to natural resources (ore and fish).

Previous research has covered a broad range of aspects of Northern Norwegian multilingualism, including language shift and revitalization in Sámi and Kven communities (e.g. Huss and Lindgren 2010, Johansen 2013, Lane 2010), language policies (e.g. Lane 2009, 2015, Pietikäinen et al. 2010) and ideologies (e.g. Hiss 2013, Sollid 2014). Though some authors mention workplaces as arenas of multilingual encounters and the implementation of language policies (e.g. Eriksen and Niemi 1981, Huss and Lindgren 2010), none of these studies actually focuses on the relationship between language and labor (cf. Hiss 2017).

The 19th century was a period of major change, with respect to linguistic diversity as well as the development of labor and the economy. Like in many other parts of the western world, industrialization, modernization and nation-building had a major impact on working life and linguistic diversity in the region. One of the most momentous developments was the introduction of linguistic and cultural assimilation policies against the Sámi and Kven population from the 1860s onwards (e.g.

Eriksen and Niemi 1981, Huss and Lindgren 2010, Pietikäinen et al. 2010). Meant to strengthen the Norwegian nation in its northern periphery, these Norwegianization policies were in force until after WW2 and made many speakers of Sámi and Kven abandon their heritage languages. At the same time, the traditional livelihood, where major parts of the population sustained themselves through fishing, farming, trading and (among parts of the Sámi population) reindeer herding were gradually replaced by a more industrial economy. This is visible in the two example cases. In the first example, we encounter the region's first community of industrial workers while the trading activities in the second case, which took place at the same time and in the same area, were connected to rather traditional ways of living and finally ceased when the economic base changed. Before taking a closer look at the cases, I will focus on the role of time in the investigation of historical language practices.

3. The temporality of practices and research

Investigating language use in historical contexts encounters a number of challenges, most of which have to do with temporal distance. In research on contemporary settings, our data are drawn from actions in real space and time, e.g. through ethnographic observation or interviews. Research turns such temporal and context-sensitive action into written text and often produces generalizations. Fabian (1983) calls this freezing of actions and contexts a “denial of coevalness”, which he identifies as a problem of ethnographic research. Even if we are aware of this challenge, research on historical contexts is obliged to deal exclusively with materials—or practices turned into materials—that are already removed from their original contexts and have been transmitted over time. Such historical practices, which unfolded in time, usually appear synchronic in the retrospective—, which “inevitably contains the seeds of essentialism” (Blommaert 2018, 65).

Research on historical settings takes place in temporal and spatial contexts distant from the practices we investigate. Accessing historical texts therefore requires a critical awareness of the processes of genesis (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2012). Inspired by Bourdieu's (e.g. 1972) interest in located subjectivities, Thomas (1994) advocates for an analytic strategy which situates representations and narratives of historical actions and societal conditions in terms of agents, locations and periods, aiming for a more differentiated vision of historical practices. Thus, it is important to consider the development of and relations between individual voices, positions and stances in addition to the wider contexts as meaningful conditions for linguistic practices (Blommaert 2005, Meeuwis 2011). Capturing the interplay of individual voices and the processes of genesis surrounding a historical text, i.e. those contextual aspects that allow us to view the text as a practice, is a challenging task in itself. Historical sources may pre-select certain voices, in particular those of elites (Meeuwis 2011).

But not only our access to the past poses challenges. In every new here-and-now, the past is continuously reconstituted with reference to the present and future (Adam 2004, Mead 1932, Schütz 1962). We cannot escape the varied aspects of the past, but we can only appropriate it selectively. By choosing some possibilities over others, we reshape and remold it into the legacy we are passing on (Sherover 1991, 43). The interplay of historical becoming with its reshaping and reinterpretation affects the itineraries of discourses across longer and shorter timescales (Scollon 2008). This also affects the production of knowledge through research. The scientific process of knowledge construction is an essentially social activity and embedded in social, institutional and ideological contexts (Gillespie 1991, Latour 1987). Gillespie's (1991) historical analysis of the Hawthorne experiments (investigating the effectiveness of blue-collar workers) demonstrates the impact of such contexts at the time of research on the production of scientific knowledge. At the same time, Gillespie shows that the scientific knowledge produced in the experiments has been constantly reshaped in light of new scientific debates. In the case of multilingual workplaces, such reshaping of knowledge may go hand-in-hand with the shifting ideological perceptions surrounding the relationship between language and labor. Boutet (2001, 2012) demonstrates in a French context that the role of language in the workplace has changed radically from being viewed as almost irrelevant during the time of industrialization to taking a pivotal position in many contemporary workplaces.

Both the temporal and historical contexts of the practices investigated and the contexts of the research process have an impact on knowledge production. When proceeding to the cases, it is thus important to consider the interplay of the temporal contexts of original practices, preserved data, the research process and the reception and reshaping of produced knowledge.

4. Hidden underground: migrant miners and industrialization

My first example concerns the British owners and Kven miners in the Alten Copper Works. It is also a narrative of my own research experience. I have analyzed and discussed the case of the Alten Copper Works as an example of historical workplace multilingualism and an arena of language political engagement in Hiss (2017). I will now review the findings and experiences in terms of what they can tell us about language and blue-collar work.

The Alten Copper Works was a copper mine near today's town of Alta in Finnmark and the first large industrial enterprise in a society which had made its living in traditional ways, typically a combination of fishing and farming, but also reindeer herding and barter trade. It was founded by British industrialists in the 1820s and was in operation until 1878. The ore had a good quality, the location close to the fjord was ideal for transporting copper and supplies by boat, and financial capital was provided by investors in London. The major challenge was to recruit workers in the sparsely

populated periphery. The owners managed to recruit a mining community consisting of miners from southern Scandinavia and a large number of Kven from Northern Finland and Sweden. In the middle of the century, the mining community grew to more than a thousand people. More than half of these were Kven.

When I became aware of the case of the Alten Copper Works, the mine had previously been investigated by historians (Drivenes 1985, Nielsen 1995), but research was needed addressing questions of language practices among the multilingual workforce. In the original location, one can still see the ruins of the mine, together with the remnants of later mining activities and of the military presence during World War 2. Except for a few gravestone inscriptions, there is little left that would be indicative about past linguistic practices. The material I had access to and investigated consists of the directors' hand-written correspondence, bookkeeping and lists of workers and materials, collected in large, leather-clad files, which are preserved in the state archive in Tromsø. The correspondence alone covers over 50 years of mining activities and contains between 50 and 200 letters per year. When I started reading these letters, sitting in the archive's reading room, a location radically different from the miners' work environments, my goal was to find comments, descriptions or other hints that would inform me about multilingual practices in the mine. However, the letters express the voices of the directors and administrators, not of the workers. I quickly learned that they dealt with a great variety of topics, including accountancy, organizational concerns, geology, transport, politics, religion, education and the workforce, but nothing about how the workers spoke in terms of languages used or how they communicated with one another. This way of not paying attention to language use in the workplace fits with Boutet's (2012, 214) observation that during the time of the industrial revolution, "language was not considered likely to participate in accomplishing a task; its productive role had not yet been imagined, and, in that sense, the language component of industrial labor had yet to be recognized."

From what I learned about the organization of labor in the mine, I concluded that in terms of oral language practices at least Kven and Norwegian were used actively among the workers, likely with language brokers in key positions, while administrative documents and business correspondence were all written in English and Norwegian. The British managers used both languages effectively in their written communication. I also found tables with headings in English and entries in both English and Norwegian, which suggests that English was the main language of the administrative system but that Norwegian also was used between the leaders and those who made the entries. Kven is not used in the written documents. The different ethnic groups of workers were kept relatively far apart in the beginning, with respect to work tasks and accommodation, but mixed later on. In the mine, workers were organized in small groups of four or five with one experienced leader. It is likely that some of

those group leaders also functioned as language brokers. According to Friis (1861), Kven was widely used in the mining community; few Kven spoke Norwegian while many Norwegians also knew Kven. Though the use of Kven is not revealed in the written documents, this reflects that Kven speakers were the majority in the mining community and a constitutive part of it. Paulaharju (1928), who interviewed some remaining Kven miners in the 1920s, reports a few, isolated expressions such as *kroosteini* ‘greystone’ and *malmisteini* ‘orestone’. Both words are derived from Norwegian and adapted to Kven pronunciation and morphology. If we can trust Paulaharju’s report, these must be outcomes of linguistic contact between speakers of Kven and Norwegian. All documented expressions are technical terms directly connected to work tasks. As they are preserved only as isolated terms, we do not know if these were borrowed into the workers’ Kven or part of a shared workers’ repertoire. We might see these terms in the light of contemporary cases where, for example, migrant construction workers adopt central technical terminology in the language of their supervisors (Lønsmann and Kraft 2018). In the case of a fish production facility, I observed that the management urged their employees to learn and use the Norwegian words for machines and processes while communication in the facility built on English and available repertoires. This comparison still tells us little about linguistic practices in the mine but points towards a linguistic hierarchy between Norwegian and Kven at work.

The directors neither interfered with nor paid much attention to the language practices at work, likely because work in the mine was mainly physical and took place in—literally—hidden domains. However, the directors supported the use of Kven in public domains in the community. They offered school education to the workers’ children and church services in Kven and argued politically against the linguistic and cultural assimilationist policies of the Norwegian state. A discourse analytic look at the correspondence, highlighting the relations between individual voices and positions (cf. Meeuwis 2011, Thomas 1994), provides a nuanced picture of the reasons and motives for this engagement and shows that for the company, economic interests counted more than national politics. The directors’ letters differ in their texture, the construction of interpersonal relations and the presentation of the Kven workers according to the addressee and communicational ends. I identified three types of letter, linking to the network of economic, political and social relations surrounding the mine (Hiss 2017): reports to the London investors; letters to state authorities; and correspondence with representatives of the workers’ home communities in Finland and Sweden.

The reports to London were routine communications where the relationship between writer and addressee was defined in advance: The local directors had to account for their use of the investors’ capital. Here, the Kven were presented as part of the solution and, given the difficulties of recruiting workers, as constitutive of the mining business securing a reliable supply of workers. Most letters to

the state authorities (the second category of letter) lobby for particular political and economic interests. Establishing a mutual relationship is a central part of the letter opening, typically by showing the company's economic power and simultaneously expressing respect vis-à-vis political power. Here, the Kven are praised as good workers and economically valuable to the company as well as the region. Finally, letters to the workers' home communities often deal with questions of social responsibility and welfare payments. As the directors tried to avoid financial responsibilities for workers who had returned home, these—and the Kven in general—are presented as foreigners to the mining community and the region. These ways of treating the Kven miners as constitutive of the mining population and at the same time as foreigners were part of a flexible strategy, which aimed at a steady supply of workers at low cost. The overall premise was economic profit. This economic motivation also explains the company's language political engagement in favour of the Kven workers: The company did not want to risk that assimilation pressure would make the Kven workers leave the mine.

5. The Pomor trade: pidgin in public

My second case is situated in the same region and the same historical period. Though the Alten Copper Works also had trading connections with Northwest Russia, the case of the Pomor trade is quite different from that of the mine. During the summer season, Russian merchants from the Archangel region visited the harbors, fjords, and villages along the Northern Norwegian coast to exchange goods such as timber, flour, and corn against fish. An important property of the Pomor trade was that a major part of it took place directly between the local population and the Russian sailors, i.e. without involving Norwegian merchants as middlemen. This means also that a large number of individuals were directly involved in trading encounters. Unlike work in the mine, the trade was not organized in institutional hierarchies. The trading encounters were not limited to a particular place and space such as the tunnels of the mine but took place in many places along the coast. Likely, the Pomor trade and its linguistic practice (Russenorsk) caught the attention of contemporaries precisely because their multilingual communication was visible and audible in public and because participation in the trade was open to practically everybody living on the coast. Unlike the case of the mine, the preserved data contain dialogues and descriptions of oral practices. This fact is an immediate outcome of the attention and interest of contemporaries. All we know about Russenorsk today, including linguistic data, has been passed on to us by others (contemporary observers and several generations of linguists) and filtered through their attention, research agendas, ideologies and other contexts.

One of the contemporaries, the linguist Jens Andreas Friis (1891, 27) writes in a travel report that during summer, when it was too warm to dry the fish outside and the Norwegian merchants did

not want to buy it, Russian boats came to the coast; and the fishermen only needed to deliver their “not always totally fresh fish”. The Russians accepted all kinds of fish and conserved it by salting it on board. In exchange, the fishermen received some sacks of flour. Asking what kind of language was used in this exchange, Friis continues:

Yes, during this barter trade, a kind of *lingua franca* is spoken, which is called “Russenorsk” and which consists of a roughly equal mixture of both languages. The Russian believes, by the way, that he speaks pure Norwegian, and the Fisherman, for his part, is convinced that he speaks perfect Russian. But they do not come to an understanding, and after some shouting and gesticulation they agree about the deal. It is quite amusing to see these people and listen to their strange gibberish. (Friis 1891: 27, my translation from Norwegian)

According to Broch and Jahr (1984a), Russenorsk emerged in the late 18th century. Until the mid-19th century, it was used by all social classes. Later on, most Norwegian merchants learned standard Russian (partly through extended visits to the Russian harbours) while only the fishermen continued using Russenorsk, which increased the social differences between the users and non-users of Russenorsk in Norway and decreased its social value (Broch and Jahr 1984a, 78). The trade between the Russian sailors and Norwegian fishermen developed as an informal and partly illegal economy, disliked by the Norwegian merchants who held the trading monopoly, but was later legalized. The use of Russenorsk ceased in the early 20th century when the barter trade was replaced by a monetary economy (Broch and Jahr 1984a, Nielsen 2014). In most trading encounters, the users of Russenorsk were socially equal. Many fishermen made their living through a combination of fishery, farming and trading. Many of the Russian captains ran their own small businesses, some with boats they had built themselves (Reusch 1895). Most participants in this trade, thus, were not employees, but socially equal pre-industrial laborers working for themselves.

Though the views and conceptions of how language contributes to labor have changed greatly over time (Boutet 2012), the linguistic and social practices surrounding this historical trade offer insights with respect to contemporary discussions of language use and practices at work. The historical development of Russenorsk shows how a multilingual practice emerged, became a routine and ceased again based on the communicative needs and linguistic repertoires of the persons involved. When revisiting the case today, we must consider that all knowledge about the historical practices has been passed down to us for over a century. All we know about Russenorsk is based on reports of contemporary witnesses such as Norwegian merchants, customs officers and travelers, literary texts and other documents (e.g. Brun 1878, Friis 1891, Reusch 1895). Lists of words, phrases and short dialogues were collected, assembled and analyzed and supplied to researchers via several stations. Broch (1927a, b, 1930) was the first to publish a scientific analysis of Russenorsk and a collection of

these materials. The texts in his collection are edited because the lay persons they derived from were deemed untrustworthy since they lacked scientific expertise (Broch 1927a, 213). Though probably unintentional, this emphasis of the distance between research experts and lay persons may be seen as an example of how research can reproduce social inequalities and partly silence others' voices. The effect of this editing on later analyses is unknown, but the same texts were analyzed in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Broch and Jahr 1984a, b), then with the aim to describe Russenorsk as a pidgin, following a general wave of scientific interest in language contact and pidgin and creole languages.

I will present one of the “original” texts in Russenorsk to demonstrate the challenges arising from this mediation of knowledge over time. Example 1 presents a dialogue between a Norwegian fisherman and a Russian merchant written down by the journalist A.W.S. Brun (1878) “from memory” and presented as a “pleasant taste” of Russenorsk. The text is also found in the collections by Broch (1930) and Broch and Jahr (1984a). Originally, the dialogue was embedded in a longer article entitled “Skildringer fra den norske kyst” (‘Stories from the Norwegian coast’), which follows an imaginary traveler to the north. In the dialogue, the traveler (*nordfareren*) takes the role of the fisherman who wants to sell fish to the Russian merchant. The text was printed in the weekly magazine *Nor og syd* (‘North and South’), published in Trondheim (i.e. with some geographical distance from the region where the Pomor trade took place) and advertised as a “cheap and entertaining” periodical for all social classes. This suggests that entertainment was a central aim of publishing the dialogue. The example does not depict a real dialogue between a fisherman and a merchant, it accommodates to a great extent the author’s perception of authenticity and of his readers’ expectations, and it may be hyperbolized for comedic effect. I have translated the author’s Norwegian translations and comments into English in example 1 below.

Example 1 (Brun 1878)

- 01 The Russian on the deck and the traveler/fisherman in the boat.
 02 Nordf.: Kjøp I Seika, Træska, Tiksa aa Balduska?
 (Do you buy coley, cod, haddock and halibut?)
 03 Russ.: Da, da – maaja kopom altsamma, davai paa Skip kom.
 (Yes, yes, I buy everything, please come on board.)
 04 Nordf.: Spasiba! har I Mokka, har i Groppa?
 (Thank you! Do you have flour, do you have corn?)
 05 Russ.: Da, da! Davai paa Skip kom, Brat paa Tjei driki.
 (Yes, yes! Please come on board, brother, and drink tea.)
 06 Nordf.: Blagdaru pokorna! Kok tvoja betalom for Seika?
 (Many thanks. What do you pay for the coley?)
 07 Russ.: Pet Pudof Seika 5 Pud Moki.
 (Five pounds coley for five pounds flour.)
 08 Nordf.: (forgetting Russenorsk) Kor i Tykje e de laga? I maa gjær de billiar!
 (Where the hell are they made? You must make them cheaper.)

- 09 Russ.: Kak sprek? Maaje niet forstaa.
(What did you say? I don't understand.)
- 10 Nordf.: (calming down) Dorgaa, dorglaa Rusmain – prosjai! – (wants to cast off his boat)
(Expensive, expensive, Russian – farewell.)
- 11 Russ.: Nietsjevaa! sjtiri – gall!
(Let go! Four and a halv, showing 4½ with his fingers.)
- 12 Nordf.: Davai fir – (counting on his fingers), nietsjevaa verrigod.
(Four, here you are, let go, very good.)
- 13 Russ.: Njet, Brat! Kuda maaja sælom desjevli? Grot djur Mokka paa Rusleien den Aar.
(No, Brother! How can I sell so cheap? Very expensive flour in Russia this year.)
- 14 Nordf.: Tvaaja niet sainfærði spræk.
(You are not telling the truth.)
- 15 Russ.: Jes, grot sainferði, maaja niet lugom, djur Mokka.
(Yes, very true, I don't lie, expensive flour.)
- 16 Nordf.: Kak tvaaja kopom – davai fir Pud; kak tvaaja niet kopom – saa prosjai!
(indicating departure) (If you want to buy, four pounds, if you don't buy, then farewell.)
- 17 Russ.: Naa, nietsjevaa brat, davai kladi paa Dæk.
(Well, let go, brother. Bring the fish on the deck.) At this, the deal was closed.

Example 1 displays a number of traits typical of the documented material. Most dialogues display similar generic moves: Establishing contact and initiating the trade; making offers; negotiating the price; and reaching an agreement. Previous research has described and interpreted a range of structural features and drawn conclusions about the status of Russenorsk as a semi-amorph mass (Broch 1927a, b) or a restricted pidgin language (Broch and Jahr 1984a). Characteristic of many pidgins, Russenorsk had a limited lexicon specialized on trading and a simple grammar. Lexical elements were mainly from Norwegian and Russian but also English (e.g. *jes* (15), *verrigod* (12)), Low German or Dutch (e.g. *grot* 'great, big, very, much' (13)) and Sámi (e.g. *tiska* 'haddock' (02)). Grammatical features such as the verbal ending *-om* (e.g. *kopom* 'buy' (03, 16), *betalom* 'pay' (06), *lugom* 'lie' (15)) and the preposition *paa* (03, 05, 13, 17), which emerged in Russenorsk were used as arguments to underpin the pidgin status (Broch and Jahr 1984a). A certain lexical variation is also typical (e.g. *kjøp* (02) and *kopom* (03, 16) 'buy'). Numbers were highly important when negotiating prices and therefore expressed in both Russian and Norwegian (e.g. *sjitiri* and *fir* (11, 12) 'four') (Broch and Jahr 1984a, 49). In addition, as mentioned in Friis's (1891) description above, multimodal resources such as gestures, e.g. using fingers to show numbers (11, 12) and moving the boats (10), were also part of the interaction.

The scientific impact of the investigations by Broch (1927a, b) and Broch and Jahr (1984a, b) was quite strong: Weinreich (1953), Jakobson (2002 [1960]) and other influential scholars refer to Russenorsk to underpin general theoretical claims (cf. Broch and Jahr 1984a, 37-38); and Russenorsk is represented in introductory books (e.g. Romaine 2000, Trudgill 2002) and linguistic encyclopedias (e.g. Jahr 2006). Thus, the case of Russenorsk and its investigation have contributed to and left their

traces in the generation of scientific knowledge on a broad level and the number of voices contextualizing and interpreting the original, historical practice has increased continuously.

In consequence, even if we presume that the merchant and the fisherman in example 1 had a conversation very similar to the dialogue presented here, the text should be read today in the light of a multi-voiced, historical process in which each step of passing-on includes the making of new meaning. Our contemporary understanding is affected by previous analyses as well as the conditions and ontologies of contemporary research practice. For example, we might reconsider the question if Russenorsk should be called a pidgin language in the light of recent, critical approaches to the concept of *language* (e.g. Makoni and Pennycook 2007) and extend our view of the repertoires in use. Example 1 suggests that not only different linguistic repertoires are at play here, but also spatial resources, social activities and relationships, which all may intertwine to form the communication between the merchant and the fisherman (cf. Pennycook and Otsuji 2014).

Fabian's (1983) criticism of the denial of coevalness applies to the study of Russenorsk in that oral and temporally situated multilingual practices are analyzed exclusively in the form of written text. There is also a strong monolingual bias, where the understanding of Russenorsk as a language is strongly tied to Norwegian and Russian. Many users of Russenorsk, inhabitants of multilingual Northern Norway, lived a multilingual life in which Sámi or Kven were more central than Norwegian. They likely had a different understanding of multilingual practices than the educated Norwegians who collected and reported texts in Russenorsk. Such lay voices were explicitly muted in Broch's (1927a, b) analysis. While for Broch, the subjectivity of witness reports could be balanced by researcher expertise, Broch and Jahr (1984a) point out that the lexical repertoire reproduced in the sample texts varies according to the writers. These were mainly Norwegians and a few Russians.

Though we are offered extensive analyses and interpretations of language practices in Russenorsk, we are left with a number of questions: How was the writer involved in the action? What was that person's relationship to other immediate and distant participants? Who were the addressees when a text was originally written down? What were the writer's communicational ends? And under what sociocultural, spatial and material conditions did the original action take place? Some of these remain unanswered. Today, we might describe the Pomor Trade as an informal economy. Informal economies have their own rules and conditions, which must be viewed in relation to the micro social environment in which they are articulated and in which they matter for the participants themselves (Vigouroux 2013, 227). Though many trading encounters took place in public spaces, visible to observers, crucial aspects may have remained hidden in the transmission and interpretation of knowledge over time.

6. Discussion

I began this chapter stressing the impact of time on research as well as research data and the way these entangle in the production of scientific knowledge about historical blue-collar work. Temporal distance limits our access to historical language practices and the surrounding contexts and conditions. Temporal distance does not first and foremost imply a chronological distance but rather the differences between temporal contexts and the process of communicating knowledge over time, which, again, involves the activities of researchers and their positions, including our own.

Both historical example cases were situated in the same historical and geographical contexts. With respect to analyzing historical language practices in relation to blue collar work, however, they reveal quite different challenges. In the case of the Alten Copper Works, I had access to original communication, but the material was limited to the voices of the directors and conveyed only indirect information about the workers' practices. In the case of the Pomor Trade, reports of oral practices of participants have been handed on to us. But the historical process of mediating and interpreting knowledge about the participants' linguistic practices makes these reports somewhat opaque. Therefore, I want to point out three aspects of dealing with language use in historical settings: The first has to do with the historical context, the second with the transmission of knowledge from past to present and the third with the present.

First, in neither of the cases are the voices of those agents I was most interested in (i.e. the miners, fishermen and merchants) transmitted directly to us. Dialogues in Russenorsk such as example 1 were written down by others than the interacting participants with different communicative ends. Cases such as the Alten Copper Works are typical in that written texts were produced by few persons, while the practices of the workforce only are reported through the voices of their bosses (cf. Meeuwis 2011). Therefore, it is crucially important to study carefully the circumstances of text production, including agents, relations, and ideologies. In the context of the two example cases as well as the topic of this volume, this includes also the question of public and hidden domains. In comparison between the two cases, one gets the impression that the Pomor Trade, which took place in public domains and was open to many, also has received more public and scientific attention. Linguistic practices in hidden domains, such as blue collar work, have few witnesses, a limited number of participants, and information about linguistic practices is passed on through a limited number of voices. These are circumstances which immediately affect historical data. When a historical practice attracted the attention of many, the number of standpoints, subjective perceptions and communicational ends increases—within the immediate temporal context and in the transmission and reinterpretation of knowledge over time. The two cases are good examples of this. Whether a

practice took place in a hidden or public domain, thus, can determine the further itinerary of how knowledge about it is handed on and taken up, by whom and with what interests.

This leads me to the second point, the transmission of knowledge from past to present. In particular the case of the Pomor Trade and the description, analysis and mediation of practices in Russenorsk show how important it is not only to consider the past conditions but also the ways in which knowledge has been treated selectively, analyzed, interpreted and made sense of in other ways before it caught our attention. The transmission of the voices of blue-collar workers in historical settings is not only affected by public or hidden domains and surrounding power relations, but also by all those who process the knowledge later on. In line with Gillespie's (1991, 264) argument, making sense of the two examples and similar historical cases today—as historical events and as scientific knowledge—must build on an understanding that scientific knowledge is manufactured rather than discovered. This, again, allows questions about the conditions and intentions of manufacturing knowledge at different points of time and invites us to view the transmission of knowledge itself as a process unfolding in time. Such a perspective is particularly important when the voices of blue-collar workers and other agents in hidden domains were restricted or silenced through there-and-then contextual conditions.

Third, my interest in these two historical cases was driven by a more general research interest in language use at work. Research into language at work is a timely phenomenon today. The major part of it has emerged in the last fifteen years (A search in the MLA International Bibliography for *language* and *workplace* produced 10 hits for the period from 1970-1989, 195 between 1990 and 2004 and as much as 540 between 2005 and 2018). Being aware that scientific knowledge is manufactured within a temporal context, the knowledge about historical workplaces I am presenting to future readers is affected both by the past and by the present, in particular by the contemporary research discourse surrounding language at work. This concerns also the use of the term *blue-collar* and its application to past contexts. *Blue-collar* is one of many metonymies in English which connect the blue color of uniforms or clothes with the bearer's role and status. The figurative use of *blue collar* to denominate manual laborers has been documented from the 1920s onwards (Hamilton 2016). Can I reasonably apply the same metonymy in a geographical and cultural context where it has no cultural roots or equivalents? And is it appropriate to transfer a relatively recent concept to the past and apply it retrospectively across temporal contexts and distances? While the miners in the first case could typically be characterized as blue-collar workers, the agents in the second case are self-sustaining fishermen (many likely made their living from a combination of fishing, farming, trade, etc.), sailors and merchants in trading situations.

It may be difficult to answer these questions exhaustively, but the historical itineraries of the two cases offer relevant insights. Especially the case of *Russenorsk* shows that the historical practices were repeatedly reassessed in the light of new research trends. Thus, I am not the first to apply a new, contemporary reading to this set of historical data. The history of knowledge production and transmission in both cases shows also that certain aspects have received less attention or even been obscured, in particular the situation and linguistic practices of those carrying out the work. Therefore, viewing the past settings through the lens of a contemporary concept such as blue-collar worker, helps to bring to the fore what has been neglected at earlier times—because of research interests directed purely at linguistic structure or because of ideologies downplaying the role of language in the workplace (cf. Boutet 2001, 2012). At the same time, bringing together a contemporary concept and historical cases may also shed new light on the here-and-now. These two cases show that multilingual blue-collar workers are not purely an outcome of international mobility and global economic development in the last few decades. However, as I have shown in this chapter, the transmission and construction of scientific knowledge over time is a multi-voiced and complex process. Contextualizing and reassessing data in any new temporal context requires careful attention to these temporal dynamics, which we are inevitably taking part in. Therefore, when characterizing the agents in the two cases as blue-collar workers, I acknowledge that my intention is to engage in contemporary research discourses.

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