POWER *BEHIND* DISCOURSE AND POWER *IN* DISCOURSE IN COMMUNITY INTERPRETING: THE EFFECT OF INSTITUTIONAL POWER ASYMMETRY ON INTERPRETER STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper assumes that ideology, discourse and power are intimately connected, and that discourse is the mouthpiece of ideology. Power is thus negotiated, manipulated, expressed, rejected and challenged interpersonally through discourse in settings defined by institutional power asymmetry. This paper examines the issue of power as a governing factor in community —and public service interpreting by using Fairclough's distinction between power *behind* discourse and power *in* discourse, that is, hidden power that guides the interpreter's status and role, guiding the interpreter's discourse and interpreting strategies. Three categories of institutional relationships are examined: relations between actors in any institutional setting, these same relations in cross-cultural encounters, and these same relations in interpreter-mediated public service encounters. Lastly, the paper discusses power in relation to the interpreter's role.

KEY WORDS: Community interpreting, public-service encounters, interpreter, power, cross-cultural communication, interpreter competence.

RESUMEN

Este artículo defiende que ideología, poder y discurso están íntimamente conectados y que el discurso es la voz de la ideología. El poder se negocia, manipula, expresa, rechaza y se le reta interpersonalmente en espacios definidos por una asimetría de poder institucional. Este trabajo examina el poder como un factor determinante en la interpretación comunitaria y para los servicios públicos, utilizando la distinción de Fairclough entre poder *detrás* del discurso y poder *en* el discurso; esto es, un poder oculto que conduce el discurso del intérprete y las estrategias de interpretación. Se examinan tres categorías en las relaciones institucionales: relaciones entre actores en cualquier contexto institucional, relaciones en encuentros crosculturales, y relaciones en encuentros mediados por intérpretes en los servicios públicos. Por último, se aborda la relación entre el poder y el papel del intérprete.

PALABRAS CLAVE: interpretación comunitaria, encuentros para servicos públicos, intérprete, poder, comunicación croscultural, competencia del intérprete.

Compared to other sites of translation activity (conference interpreting and translation), community interpreting is so visibly guided by power asymmetries that it serves as a useful test case against which to examine how context functions as a field of power play between interlocutors in language-mediated communication. This paper explores ways in which power is manifested and negotiated (linguistically, culturally, institutionally, ethnically) in interpreter-mediated communication for public services and how power asymmetries lead to the construction of power-governed identities which are in their turn informed by the wider socio-cultural context. Such power asymmetries are played out more subtly at the individual level (class, gender, ethnicity, individual political positioning) and more blatantly at the collective level (institutional: client vs. service provider, and socio-political: host country representative vs. migrant).[1] The paper argues that the manner in which each actor brings his/her (multiple) socially and historically constructed identity/ies in relation to power asymmetries in public service encounters is manifested and negotiated through pragmatic discourse features. Despite the general assumption that the interpreter is exclusively the mouthpiece for and voice of both interlocutors, this paper sees the interpreter an active, meaning-creating agent in this process, bringing to the encounter her own voice and identity. Another presupposition of this paper is that "interpreter competence" is traditionally assessed according to the parameters set by the host institution rather than the migrant's own cultural parameters. This communicative asymmetry reflects a clear power hierarchy in the migrant-institution relationship which may affect communication effectiveness. Furthermore, the consequences of culture-specific interpretations of communication strategies, such as politeness markers, by the service provider (judge, police officer or immigration officer) may be very grave indeed for a defendant, witness or asylum applicant. I also argue that the higher the degree of politeness negotiated through self-lowering and face-saving techniques in traditionally individualist, less hierarchical Western societies, the interlocutor who is at the higher end of the politeness scale is inevitably at a disadvantage. Communication failure and the consequences of communication failure for patient, defendant, petitioner etc. may thus be profoundly exacerbated by the prevailing power asymmetry.

1. TAXONOMIES. DIALOGUE INTERPRETING AND COMMUNITY INTERPRETING

Although the nuances and complexities of taxonomy will not be addressed in this paper, it might be useful to define, very roughly, what is meant by "community interpreting"[2] in this paper: Namely face-to-face interpreting in the public,

semi-public or private institutional sector, such as hospitals, police stations, immigration offices, welfare, business and commerce, etc. For the purposes of this paper, I also include court interpreting in this category. I would like to divide the areas of application of face-to-face interpreting into two main sectors: one pertaining to the private commercial world in which professional ethics are guided by a relatively arbitrary market-governed set of rules, and the public institutional half in which professional ethics are guided by very specific rules, conventions and hierarchies mandated by the state (and ultimately, in theory, by democratic vote). I would include in the second category all community-based interpreting (e.g. for volunteer organizations) which, even when they are not state-funded or mandated, are accessible to the general public. Although the issue of power is relevant in the private sector also, this paper will focus primarily on the public domain, using business interpreting as a case of comparison rather than an object of investigation in itself.

The issue of power is profoundly relevant to community interpreting for reasons which pertain both to the area of application and mode. I think it might be useful to illustrate the division of application and mode by drawing upon Fairclough's distinction between "power *behind* discourse" and "power *in* discourse," respectively (43). For Fairclough, "power *behind* discourse" is the social order which exercises hidden power (55) and governs how and how effectively the power-holders in the institution are able to police the shared conventions, how these are enforced and which sanctions are taken against the actors if they are infringed (61). The manifestation of such conventions would be for example the codification of standard languages and socio-lects (e.g. the class and ethnicity based "Received Pronunciation" socio-lect in the UK).

2. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "POWER"?

Before embarking on a discussion of power and language, however, it might be useful to clarify what exactly we mean by "power." I would suggest that the following description could be broad enough to use as a working tool for the purposes of this paper, and also broad enough to avoid unnecessarily negative connotations: A relationship of power between A and B, where A and B might be individuals or groups, is any asymmetry (both arbitrary and non-arbitrary) that allows party A to take decisions concerning B that B might not agree with, that B is not aware of, that is damaging to B, or that is advantageous to B but which B him/herself is not in a position to implement.

It must not be forgotten, however, that asymmetrical relationships are an intrinsic part of the social and possibly biological fabric of human society, and

although the abuse of such asymmetry could be said to be the one mechanism which is most destructive to that same society, it is also a fundamental prerequisite for the effective functioning and management of any society from the small group level to the national and supra-national level. It might be useful to make a further distinction between constructive power and damaging power, or power that empowers the interpreter positively and power that hinders effective communication. The distinction between institutional and state-sanctioned power versus "private" more arbitrary power is more relevant in the present context. Institutional power is precisely that power by which an individual is mandated by a public body to take decisions for other individuals. That power is enacted partly according to strict conventions and in part the subjective interpretation of those conventions.[3] The focus of this paper, then, will be not only how this power imbalance is translated into discourse strategies, but also how the interpreter addresses, confronts, tackles, and negotiates these imbalances.

3. CONTEXT AS INSTITUTIONAL POWER

If discourse is a mode of social production, as anthropologists and sociolinguists have been demonstrating since Malinowksi,[4] it is the right to control that discourse which is most pertinent to the study of power and interpersonal asymmetry in verbal communication. Numerous studies on institutional discourse (legal, health, academic) and discourse in the workplace setting governed by both cooperative, corporate and hierarchical networks in the media and in politics have illustrated how that right is exercised and how institutions appropriate and monopolize discourse forms, creating a "secret" privileged group of individuals with access to goods, commodities, services and decision-making potential to which access is limited. An example from the everyday lives of individuals in most modern societies today is that of the bureaucratic language of public institutions creating barriers of comprehension and access to information and services to those unacquainted and unfamiliar with this particular type of formal register, *not least* to those whose native language is not that of the country in question. The wider political framework

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[3] Arbitrary power-defining contexts are harder to define: illness for example (and resulting physical and possibly social and economic weakness) might be considered to be an arbitrary factor, and yet it is well-known that illness and socio-economic (and therefore class and gender) factors impact on individual health. Likewise, in the context of legal interpreting, the state of being witness to a crime might seem arbitrary, and yet here too socio-economic factors impacting on where an individual lives and works will statistically affect the likelihood of him/her being involved in the scene of a crime, especially the more public and visible forms of petty crime.

[4] Books such as by Joseph et al. with a chronologically organized collection of essays by anthropologists, language philosophers, linguists and socio-linguists, give a useful idea of the development of context-based communication studies.

sustaining the power base is in essence the context that sets the stage for the enactment of the dialogue. Power issues in monolingual service encounters have been studied extensively in terms of the larger contextual issues governing discourse (the institutional, ethnic, economic and racial traits of each participant) and in terms of the enactment of that power asymmetry in discourse.[5] However, very few studies have been conducted on bi-lingual service encounters where the language asymmetry naturally becomes a significant and often insuperable obstacle exacerbating the already underlying and defining hierarchical structure. Even fewer studies have been conducted on how power impacts such cross-cultural encounters when they are mediated by interpreters and to what degree the interpreter is affected by and affects the encounter in terms of power negotiating strategies.

It might be useful at this point to isolate the power-generating factors as they pertain to institutional authority per se, as they pertain to institutional authority in institutional bilingual and cross-cultural encounters, and as they pertain to interpreter-mediated institutional encounters:

– power in public service encounters
– power in cross-cultural public service encounters
– power in interpreter-mediated public service encounters

For each category, I will address first the issue of power as a hidden ideological force governing discourse in the public domain (power *behind* discourse) and then discuss the way in which these power factors are played out and enacted in discourse (power *in* discourse).

3.a. Power in Public Service Encounters
Power *behind* discourse

The first category, in which the interlocutors would be of the same national language and culture but not necessarily the same discourse group at the moment of contact, includes the default power asymmetry between institution and individual. I would suggest that there are five important context-based power factors *behind* discourse, all of which consolidate the institution's/representative's role in their "gate-keeping function" (Fairclough 47). The first and most important would be the fact the client/individual is seeking a service from an individual or institu-

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[5] Philip Riley has addressed the issue of identity formation —highly relevant to power asymmetry in service encounters in France. A plethora of literature exists on the socio-economic and ethnic factors impinging on illness as well as on the access to health care and also some on discourse asymmetry as a power base in health care and in social services. A number of sociolinguistic studies, such as Lakoff, do address issues of power in legal discourse however.

tion who is in a position to grant or deny that service (see the definition of power in 2. above), even to decide over the other person's life, according to parameters that follow shared, authorized state-sanctioned parameters but are subject nonetheless to individual interpretation.[6] This would hold true not only in a court of law but also in the health sector, especially in such delicate areas as the administration of life-altering treatment. Because the service provider is at that moment a public body, a professional subject rather than a "private subject," s/he is in that moment not generally personally accountable for or responsible for any mistakes, delays, misinterpretations, damage that his/her service or lack of it might have for the other party. This may profoundly affect his/her motivation in providing service and the speed and quality with which it is done.[7] Furthermore, the numerical relationship alone (individual client versus group institution) is a source of significant actual and psychological strength for the service provider. Secondly, the relationship is asymmetrical due to the service provider's position as expert versus the client's status as non-expert in which the service provider has access to a limited pool of expert/technical knowledge from which the client is excluded, even when they impinge on non-technical aspects of the client's life (e.g. euthanasia). Thirdly, in many professions the service provider (judge, doctor, bureaucrat) not only represents an institution, and thus the country as a whole, but also statistically (see Lakoff) represents the dominant classes, either by birth or by acquisition through adhesion to that particular professional group as a result of training and experience. The fourth factor would be the situational vulnerability of the client versus the service provider: the client is not only seeking a service or a commodity, but is doing so because s/he is in a particularly vulnerable situation (health, crime, financial stress, application for residence permit or migration, application for basic services without which the quality of the client's life would be impoverished). The last issue that I would propose also has to do with the vulnerability of the client, namely that the subject-matter is always "high-status" for the service provider professional and social group: the nature and interpretation of the country's Laws, the challenge of understanding and applying the laws of Science/Medicine, the application and interpretation of immigration laws, being in a position to offer monetary benefits, etc. For the client, however, the subject matter is the exact reverse, and low-rather than high-status: infringing the Law and illegality, illness/disease/weakness, seeking/requesting services and money. Foucault's notion of "patriarchal gaze" might here be aptly referred to the "institutional gaze."

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[6] If not in the actual granting of the "commodity" —applications, treatment, benefits, sentence, etc.— then in the manner and the rapidity or slowness with which it is done.

[7] The issue of speed may seem trivial, and yet if one considers the fact that those service-seekers who have continuously stood in queues for hours at a time to acquire basic services to which they are entitled often have to take unpaid time off professional work, this will often strain the relationship with their employers —from official reprimand or economic punishment to general irritation— and put them at a disadvantage in yet another professional domain marked by power asymmetry.

Power *in* discourse

The social and political relationship that defines institutional encounters is played out discursively —i.e. power *in* discourse— by the use of a limited discourse-strategy pool to which only that restricted, elite discourse community (which constitutes a social as well as a professional class) has access. This of course is part of the intrinsic nature of professional relationships, it is unavoidable, necessary and not necessarily "damaging" as such. One of the most visible/audible class group-membershipping strategies in the Anglo-Saxon world is that of sociolect —the use of a standard dialect identifying one's membership in the dominant group, either in-born or acquired successively— Riley uses the term "membershipping" in adhering to different groups simultaneously. Other strategies are more immediately situational and context-based: in the legal setting where tension is often high the client's vulnerability is increased through strategies such as aggressive language —tone of voice, semantic choice, aggressive turn-taking— by the institutional parties. His/her own inappropriate use of the same strategies will lead to a reprimand by the judge and possibly a source of discrimination by the evaluating expert —judge or jury. The courtroom in particular is essentially the site of a power struggle enacted predominantly through face management and other discourse strategies. "Discourse" as Ralph Grillo says, is a "semantic space in which social meanings are produced or challenged" (12). In the public institutional domain, however, rather than a struggle it is often such a blatant unilateral display of hegemonic power played out so effectively that it hinders the interlocutors from actively engaging in any real reciprocal struggle. I have argued that the display of identities enacted in that struggle is both situational (the tense situation, the defendant being evaluated) and social (class-based). Linguistic competence, both as a professional and social group-identifying strategy, is part of the individual's social/cultural capital.

Formal situations are of course more intensely governed by face co-ordination than "everyday" situations because the stakes are so much higher. Although both politeness and aggression can be used as power-generating distancing techniques (e.g. Lakoff), politeness and distancing are perhaps even more effective than aggression as they prevent the interlocutor from engaging in open "battle." A common interrogation strategy used by police investigators and magistrates is that of verbal aggression, manifested through strategies such as tone of voice, intonation, syntax, body language and eye-contact. According to one judge I interviewed informally in Bologna in 2002, the interrogation technique is built on the presumption that fear-inducing aggression will draw out the truth from the interlocutor more effectively than more collaborative communicative tactics. I would suggest that interviewees who are paralysed by fear, given the range of factors mentioned above that exacerbate their vulnerability, are equally likely to say nothing at all rather than tell "the truth" for fear of saying the wrong thing and damaging their case.

Turn-taking too is an effective empowering or disempowering strategy. Interruptions and overlaps can be used both collaboratively to confirm, acquiesce, confer face, or to openly challenge and/or demonstrate control —for example Fairclough's doctor who interrupts his medical students during the hospital rounds in a blatant

display of power and control (44-45). Equally the right to ask and answer questions and the obligation to reply is a power-negotiating strategy in all public service encounters. By the same token the right to shift frames at will is also a power —and identity negotiating technique. Paediatric medical consultations are frequently quoted to illustrate how doctor and parent shift frames from professional to private when they address the patient (Rosenberg, Tebble, Fairclough). The permission to shift frames —crack jokes, talk about weather, shift frame— will depend on the institutional hierarchy in that particular culture and discourse community. The selection of text too, is a display of power: on various occasions I have interpreted for judges who request that I disregard or summarize a defendant's narrative (these narratives are often told to motivate or justify and contextualise the criminal act and to show the criminal act was committed for a higher and more noble motive, for example the illness or death of a close relative and the need to earn money to look after siblings). The judge interrupts the defendant's emotionally-charged narrative and asks the interpreter to summarize or simply skip the narrative. Both in content and tone of voice (indicating its lack of importance and admissibility as relevant context and thus a mitigating factor) s/he is in effect selecting which text (i.e. which part of the defendant's narrative) should be interpreted to be used as an authoritative text (presented in court, submitted for evaluation, transcribed in records). In the same way the doctor in the Western health system disregards figurative and metaphorical illness descriptions and general description of life-situation for "factual" ones.[8]

3.B. POWER IN CROSS-CULTURAL PUBLIC SERVICE ENCOUNTERS
Power *behind* discourse

In this category the two key factors governing the power asymmetry in cross-cultural relations, I would argue, are that of ethnic status and ethnic identity. By ethnic status I mean the fact that the client in this type of situation has a temporary status (until s/he has acquired host-country citizenship), a migrant status, and the status of a non-citizen, or "second-rate" citizen. By ethnic identity I mean the cultural identity of the client. Culture difference will include differences in the basic premises and understanding/interpretation of illness, disease, health, body-awareness, gender differentiation, crime, legality, patronage, truth, right to basic services and commodities, to an infinite range of discoursal strategies —the issue of culture difference in community interpreting settings is clearly too wide to be discussed adequately in this paper; I have addressed these issues in more depth in Rudvin, "Cross-cultural". When the client's culture and health/legal system is not compatible with or simply has a different epistemological basis with respect to the dominant host culture, it is the client who will be at a disadvantage rather than the service provider.

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[8] Kleinman is an excellent guide to non-Western, so-called traditional health systems.

Power *in* discourse

Limited access to a restricted discourse code shared by a limited group of people significantly complicates an already complex culture-differentiated communicative relationship. Where ultra-formal bureaucratic language is an obstacle to accessing public services efficiently for same-group members, it may have very serious consequences for out-group members: getting the wrong information, not enough information, coming back again and again each time with long queues, etc. In my own experience with immigration services in Italy (especially when applying for residence permits, the service most crucial for new migrants and one which is particularly fraught with administrative hurdles), bureaucrats do not adequately simplify the language when explaining administrative procedures and will show openly their frustration when the interlocutor does not understand. This reifies the interlocutor's position of inferiority in that relationship (irritation, not having the information needed, not being able to get or know how to get a service s/he desperately needs, not being able to question or challenge the system). Discussing the situation with co-applicants in the queue I have frequently found that many pretend to understand out of a sense of politeness, respect and/or accepting of the prevailing cultural hierarchy even when they do not —thus having to return yet again for more information and start the entire procedure again if they have not in the meantime been able to acquire the relevant information from co-nationals and/or other peers, or perhaps from private voluntary organizations. Along the same lines, from my own work in the courts I have noticed that certain ethnic groups tend to use the "I don't know/remember" hedging formula much more frequently than Italians, even when there seems to be no real need to avoid answering. I would suggest that this may be simply a form of respectful indirectness, a standard politeness marker, rather than non-cooperation, which may of course negatively affect the Italian judge's impression of the client and potentially the final outcome of the legal proceedings. A strong sense of politeness, deeply embedded in many non-Western cultures and exacerbated by the position of inferiority, also prevents the interlocutor from complaining or insisting on getting the right information. The interlocutor with the stronger sense of politeness —employing self-lowering strategies and face-enhancing strategies in favour of the counterpart— will always be at a disadvantage in a system (institutional or cultural) that privileges aggressiveness. (Interlocutors from more aggressive cultures on the other hand, who speak the language well or whose inbred understanding of institutional hierarchy does *not* accept the bureaucrat's professional and ethnic superiority will not be disadvantaged in the same way and may resort to a number of repair strategies: complain, resist, ask, insist, use indignation as power leverage). A good example of politeness as a potentially damaging factor is reported by Storti in the business context.

| Mr Williams: | We agreed the building would be completed by the middle of October. |
| Mr Papas: | Yes. That's what it says in the contract. |

Mr Williams:	But now there's not enough time. You'll need at least two more months.
Mr Papas:	Oh yes. At least.
Mr Williams:	The only way you could finish in time is if you hire twenty-five more workers.
Mr Papas:	Yes. There's no question. The only way we could meet the contract as it is now written is if we hire more workers.
Mr Williams:	But if you hire more workers, you won't make a profit. In fact, you'll lose money.
Mr Papas:	Very true. We can't afford to hire more workers.
Mr Williams:	Then you can't possibly meet the terms of the contract.
Mr Papas:	We must honour the contract. We are an honourable company. (Storti 90-91)

Politeness may be used as a source of power through social distancing, but more often it is a means to which relinquish power, especially in hierarchical societies. In commenting on this dialogue, Storti suggests that Mr Papas is hoping that Mr Williams himself will suggest that the contract be modified, but cannot himself threaten Mr William's face by suggesting it —a request which Mr Williams himself might not necessarily have deemed face-threatening and may gladly have complied with. If Mr Williams does not suggest this, Mr Papas will have two options: lose honour and jeopardize his company's reputation by not respecting the deadline, or lose money by hiring more workers and work at a loss. Unless Mr Williams helps him save face, Storti suggests that Mr. Papas will choose the second option. (108) In the majority of encounters reported in this collection of samples it is politeness, expressed through distance, indirectness, formality and hedging techniques, which is the differential variable. For example, not saying "no," answering indirectly, avoiding eye-contact, interrupting or staying silent, understating or overstating physical or emotional pain, etc. are all politeness markers in a host of cultures, but often construed according to Western discourse norms as indications of "shiftiness" or even "untruthfulness/dishonest."[9] Politeness, especially self-lowering strategies and indirectness in hierarchical "vertical" communities are easily misconstrued as weakness in more egalitarian, "horizontal" communities. Although this will not be the case in all situations, in the context of service encounters in Western societies and

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[9] Linguistic anthropologists such as Foley or Duranti have conducted numerous studies on cultural difference in socio-linguistic models of communication, and cross-cultural studies by socio-linguists abound. Another rich area of research in cross-cultural differences in politeness forms, the use of indirectness and hedging formats is in the literature on cross-cultural business management. The large-scale cross-cultural business studies co-conducted by Fons Trompenaar and Charles Hampden-Turner are probably the best known, along with those by Gerd Hofstede. In addition to these well-researched and statistically backed studies, more popular books on cross-cultural management, with titles such as "When "no" means "yes"" are becoming increasingly popular in a wide range of workplace settings.

encounters with individuals from groups with a hierarchical communicative system, the latter will be disadvantaged rather than the former.

For what concerns power *in* language specifically related to cross-cultural institutional dialogue, the underlying power-generating factor, I believe, is that the host language is considered to be the default language: The interpreter has been called in for the *client*, not the service provider: the judge requires that the entirety of the interlocutor's utterances be interpreted to him/her or what the judge him/herself selects as relevant (this is at least frequently the practice in Italy), and not vice versa. The non-native speaking client does not, in practice, have a legal right to understand the proceedings, but the judge needs the information s/he possesses to arrive at a verdict. The interpreter is called in to put the judge in a position to understand that information. An amusing anecdote related to interpreting and translation students in Norway (miscellaneous personal communication) is that of the Lapp defendant charged with illegal strike activity and sit-in demonstrations protesting against the building of a dam in Lapp territory in northern Norway. When he opens his address in the Lapp language the judge interrupts the monologue and, addressing the courtroom generally, says "this man needs an interpreter." The bilingual Lapp answers calmly "No, Your Honour, *you* need an interpreter."

John Gumperz's essay (163-195) describing the Filipino Tagalog mother-tongue doctor with perfect English who was accused of perjury in a child-abuse case where the child under his care died shows precisely how it is standard British or American that is considered to be the default language, not colonial/international varieties. This case had very serious consequences indeed: it turned out that it was the difference between the Filipino-English use of tense and standard American usage that had largely led to misunderstandings about the chronology of the case and in particular how the doctor had diagnosed the child's symptoms initially and how he later evaluated his own diagnosis.

The first of these three categories is perhaps, to some extent obvious (discussed in more detail in Rudvin forthcoming. As the basic structural fabric of most modern societies it is obvious that institutions must function according to some kind of hierarchy and that they use power strategies to implement this hierarchy; if that hierarchy were ignored the system would be ineffective. The display of power is often covert, mitigated in an attempt to emphasize the democratic basis of the state and its representatives (the institutions). What interests us here in this discussion is not only how this power is enacted through discourse in a cross-cultural situation —the norm-based constraints that govern discourse (category 2), but how the interpreter negotiates the power negotiating strategies, along which lines she aligns herself in coordinating these strategies, and how the power asymmetry and power-governed discourse governs her interpreting strategies.[10] These issues will be the focus of the following section.

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[10] "She" will be used consistently in reference to "the interpreter."

Power *behind* discourse

According to the tenets of traditional mainstream interpreting theory, which envisions and prescribes the interpreter roughly as an invisible non-intrusive and non-pro-active participant, the entry of a third person onto the scene does not and should not upset the power balance or any other kind of balance in the interaction. I do not intend to recapitulate the discussion that has been taking place both in Translation Studies over the last two to three decades or in Interpreting Studies more recently, but it might be useful to distinguish between what might be called the endogamous and exogenous reasons for this: the interpreter cannot be "a pane of glass" because of the essentially interactive nature of language. Being both a reflection of and a vehicle of expression for a particular culture —or set of cultures— a language is unique to that culture and cannot overlap fully with another language, the expression of another culture or set of cultures.[11] Furthermore, the interpreter as an individual and unique subject interprets any utterance or text with an unspecified degree of subjectivity. Thus, the very act of translating cannot be mechanical because of the fluid nature of its vehicular mode. The "exogenous" reason is related to the externalisation of language and the enabling of communication: the interpreter in a face-to-face encounter will be drawn into that encounter actively by the other participants.[12] She is, therefore, also in a position to affect and be affected by the power symmetry inherent in the communication encounter. What concerns us here is that the second exogenous category's positioning is pro-active; the interpreter is a participating subject rather than the inert language machine of earlier mainstream theory.

The social, psychological and ultimately ideological parameters governing power *behind* discourse relating to the first category mentioned above (3.a.) remain unchanged as the basic and generally hidden power-governing features "behind the scenes" and need not therefore be repeated here. Although the interpreter is in a very different position from the client, I would suggest that frequently the same power asymmetry applies between interpreter-service provider as between interpreter-client. This affirmation should however not be over-generalized as it touches upon the basic professional ethics and role of the interpreter, and is also restricted geographically. Indeed, the following assumptions are based on my work and experience in Italy, which is a country of recent immigration and as yet highly unstruc-

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[11] This has been stated rather simplistically. There are of course numerous other issues here too, beyond the scope of this paper, such as sub-cultures, specific languages, register, field-specific language, youth language and not least diachronic change in language etc. that complicate the language = culture × equation.

[12] Even traditional prescriptive studies and linguistic based studies examining exclusively interpreter omissions and additions such as that of Jakobsen and Jekat demonstrate these same principles.

tured language services. Migrants enjoy very low status, especially those we find in the "typical" community interpreting settings described at the beginning of this paper. Official policy in training and hiring culture brokers (who are frequently, indeed almost always, used as interpreters in the health and social services domain) is that they belong to the same ethnic group as the client. Demographic parameters are different in Italy compared to most other Western countries where language services are more structured, and as such the following claims may not be representative for countries in a more advanced stage of intercultural integration and of professional organization of language services (see Rudvin, "How Neutral"; "L'interprete medico" for details on the situation in Italy).

In Italy, the interpreter tends to be recruited from the same ethnic group as the client. Because service providers often do not require extensive training or credentials and —unless trained culture-mediators are used— they are recruited on an ad-hoc basis and therefore do not enjoy the prestige of highly trained professionals in the eyes of the service provider, but would be seen as someone who has come along "to help us out so that we can understand what the patient is saying." The interpreters often tend automatically to be "lumped" together with the client and subject to that same superior, condescending, hostile or patrician gaze reserved for most migrants in this country. Conference interpreters, of course, enjoy a significantly higher status, reflected in their generous pay scale. Furthermore, the very setting of the type of encounters we are dealing with (social services, crime, illness, foreigners applying for services) are conducive to stigmatising not only the client but, I believe, also the interpreter. The fact that interpreting is a relatively low-status job and extremely poorly paid, exacerbates then this underlying attitude of condescension. Moreover, an interpreter reduced to such a low-status profile will be given less leeway for active participation and manoeuvring in the communication encounter. The strict hierarchical nature of Italian society and specifically of its legal institutions has repercussions on the interpreter's performance: it renders it extremely difficult for the interpreter, let alone the client, to challenge or question the magistrate/judge's authority and not follow his/her instructions.

The interpreter's source of power in the interpreting session derives exclusively from the fact that she is the only interactant in that situation (in a simple bilingual triadic configuration) who can understand what all participants are saying, what is being said in the room at all times. This is an enormous, even daunting, source of power considering the possible settings and decisions made in such settings (high risk health, big politics, the court). It might in fact be interesting to study why service providers have not been at pains to control and limit this source of power rather than trust the interpreter's loyalty blindly. I would suggest that this might have something to do with the interpreter's low status and also to do with the prevailing mechanistic view of language transferral that does not acknowledge the interactive role of the communicating subjects. I have heard anecdotes but read no studies demonstrating that this power has been deliberately and systematically abused.

I would argue that access to the most effective and tangible power leverage tools rest with the service provider. Indeed, the second source of power that is basic

to the interpreter's task and role is that of her access to both cultures, her capacity as a "cultural expert." As Inghilleri reminds us, however, her positioning in and between those two cultures is not an unambiguous, simple or neutral position, but construed by her own experience and by her own interpretation and understanding of both cultures, as well as her own current agenda. Here it is the interpreter who has exclusive access to a restricted pool of expert technical knowledge —language and culture— in the same way that the service providers have monopoly over field-specific technical knowledge: it is her cultural capital. As a "mediator," the interpreter has the potential power to smooth out misunderstandings, conflict and tension deriving from cross-cultural differences. The degree to which this is effective is related of course to each party's understanding of the interpreter's role and active participation and limited to the degree to which the service provider and the institution allow her to exercise it. This issue is particularly pertinent in countries such as Italy where the role of "interpreter"/"language mediator" versus "cultural mediator" has not yet been clarified. Cultural mediators have tended to have an important role and the whole largely neglected issue of the basic notion of "mediation" in the sense of mediating in controversies, between opposing parties has weight.[13]

Interpreter vulnerability and manoeuvring potential

Factors that affect the interpreter's ability to manoeuvre and control the situation are the fact that she is visually and tactilely exposed to the other parties, unlike a conference interpreter who is safely hidden at the back of the room in a booth. Although this increases her vulnerability, it also increases the ability to control and coordinate non-verbal communication strategies. Other factors which increase the vulnerability of the community —as opposed to the conference interpreter is affect. The settings in which such interpreters work, as mentioned above, is marked by a high situational stress factor (i.e. not only the stress of language transferral). Little work has been done so far on affect-related interpreter stress —one brief study is that of Baistow— but it is clear that emotivity, anger and tension in health, welfare and crime related settings is experienced by all of the interlocutors. Baistow's study suggests that the interpreters experience this stress vicariously. In times of stress she may indeed be drawn into the interaction to function either as a buffer or as a scapegoat. Gerri-Ann Galanti, in reporting case studies of cross-cultural miscommunication in American hospitals, describes how an Arab woman's mother-in-law, acting as her ad-hoc interpreter after the patient's recent delivery, deliberately omits in her translation the nurse's health teaching information to the patient on the use of contraception in the hope that she would become pregnant

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[13] In Italy this is due I believe to the fact the migration is recent, intercultural integration very low, and the idea of assisting, aiding and mediating for migrants still predominant.

again soon (22). Although it will not be discussed here, I think the use of ad-hoc versus trained interpreters in relation to their power or controlling potential is interesting. Loyalty to the client and loyalty to the professional dictum of impartiality affects how freely they feel they are "allowed" to interpret, to omit or add information at will.

Power *in* discourse

How then are interpreting strategies affected by power asymmetries and how is power enacted through discourse? The basic assumption that I am working with here is that the interpreter takes control of the situation, in particular the floor management, with the aim of establishing communication between the parties concerned. I would suggest that power relationships are marked in discourse primarily through extensive floor management but also other factors such as social deictic, body language (distancing, inclusion), tone of voice, and formality of register.

Mode and Floor-management

In the courtroom, shifting between the simultaneous (chuchotage) and consecutive mode is acknowledgement of inherent power asymmetries: if the interpreter uses chuchotage it will be for the client (defendant or witness) rather than the judge, who will hear a consecutive interpretation. I would also suggest that the length of chunks an interpreter is willing to accept before interrupting is a further indication of the inherent power balance: the higher the speaker is on the hierarchy, the more reluctant the interpreter will be to interrupt, and the more she will make an effort to remember the entire chunk. This would apply more to inexperienced interpreters rather than veterans who would have built up more professional self-esteem to challenge authorities. Various studies (Wadensjö, Gentile) note how the use of the 1st/3rd person vacillates as the interpreters are drawn into the encounter as members/non-members (Garzone 94ff), reflecting either the stress level or the interlocutors' understanding of the interpreter's role —as a ratified participant and listener/speaker (3rd person) or as an invisible, glass-like non-person (1st person; the commonly accepted norm in mainstream interpreting theory and training). Studies like Jakobsen's and Jekat's on interpreter renditions, omissions and additions show how interpreters control the course of the communication encounter imperceptibly and unknowingly, but there are ways in which interpreters themselves take control of the situation to ensure effective communication, for example to insist that the interlocutor slows down, that the interlocutors do not speak at the same time, to ask for repetition or clarification, etc. In such moves her visibility and identity as an active discourse participant increases. In another study, Garzone (102) notes how in the floor management of interpreter-mediated sessions, it is usually the interpreter who is most often interrupted and subject to overlaps, probably because of her low status and because she is not considered to be an autonomous

participant; she herself rarely interrupts. At the same time, however, she has the potential to assert a "buffer effect," reducing the impact of aggressive moves and preventing abusive interruptions and overlaps between main interlocutors (102).

Videos produced for training purposes show how interpreters can ideally use floor management and other strategies to project their role positively, exploit their skills to the best of their ability and facilitate communication to the satisfaction of all three parties. Real-life cases are probably less clear-cut than these, and social and professional hierarchies will probably be far more invasive, but they do show the potential for a positive and constructive use of the interpreter's power when circumstances allow it. In a pre-session meeting between an interpreter and a psychiatrist in Robert Pollard's *Mental Health Interpreting: A Mentored Curriculum* video, the interpreter immediately takes control of the situation and affirms not only her active participation but her decision-making power by statements such as "You can speak...," "You must understand that...," "Let me tell you why..." and "I will speak in the first person," etc. in the imperative or in simple declaratives with no hedgers and low modality. In another pre-session in which a Vietnamese woman and her mother and grandfather are waiting in the waiting room before a mental status exam, the interpreter pre-emptively takes control of the situation by asking who will be accompanying the patient. Although moderately hedged for politeness, the interpreter uses assertive declarative and interrogatives forms, or imperatives: "What's happening is that...," "Who is out there?" and "Well, maybe you will get into difficulties." Upon hearing that her grandfather is present she suggests that the doctor uses a range of communication strategies to facilitate what might become a communication obstacle between doctor and patient, namely that she (the doctor) avoids eye-contact with the grandfather, uses her first name, and lowers her tone of voice. This is done to respect the prevailing gender and age hierarchy in the patient's culture and thus ensure effective communication by allowing both parties to save face. The interpreter effectively uses controlling strategies to harness the potential and limit the possible misunderstandings and obstacles by immediately clarifying her role and requesting information about the participants in the meeting that will put her in a position to help the service provider communicate effectively with the patient (she is exercising her role as a cultural informant, a culture expert). When the interpreter negotiates these discoursal strategies, she is positioning herself along a continuum of empowerment, participation, visibility and ratification (in Goffman's terms, see esp. chapters 1 and 3) according to the immediate needs of the situation, according to the demands made on her by either interlocutor, and according to her own understanding of the interpreter's role.

3.D. POWER AND THE INTERPRETER'S ROLE

The most important, but also the most hotly disputed issue in the literature on community interpreting, is that of the interpreter's role. The interpreter's role is closely tied to a number of factors: institutional infrastructure; the interpreter's specific mandate and job-description; professional codes of ethics that are de-

termined either at the state-public level; the professional association or the individual institution as well as the development of the discipline and profession locally. It also affects and is governed by the power relations embedded in each institutional domain.

The interpreter's most basic source of power derives from her monopolistic position as knowledge-holder of both languages and cultures (language/culture A and B, her cultural capital, at the level of power *behind* discourse) although of course her knowledge of any culture, or language, can never be exhaustive and is furthermore a representation of her own subjectivity. Her task, at the most essential level, is to put individuals A and B in a position to understand each other. Her ability to do this, however, hinges not only on her command of her cultural capital and ability to convey this effectively, but also on her management of the communication process. She needs to be in a position to control that process verbally and non-verbally. To be able to fulfil this task, her role as communication coordinator must be acknowledged by the other parties —her authority must be recognized and institutionally mandated— and she must herself proactively control and manage the situation, especially if floor management gets out of hand. Her role and the power to fulfil that role hinges on her ability to control the situation by asking the interlocutors to slow down, to repeat etc. in order to hear and relay what she hears. This skill is naturally a psychological skill as much as it is "technical," and one that is learned largely through experience. Interrupting and challenging a person in authority, insisting that they slow down, clarify, repeat etc. requires maturity and experience as well as terminology, memory and communication skills. Professional and social hierarchies between service provider and interpreter, ethnic and cultural hierarchies, experience and familiarity with the setting and dominant discourse, low status and low pay are all factors which further exacerbate the situation and which make it more difficult to challenge the service provider. We have seen in the preceding section how her role is managed at the micro-level through discourse and non-verbal communication strategies —at the level of power *in* discourse— but also how she is actively participating as a cultural informant, an "expert witness" (e.g. in the case of the Vietnamese patient and the American doctor) at the level of power *behind* discourse.

If and when the interpreter's mandate and role is challenged by an interlocutor who either restricts her ability to perform (the doctor or judge or police officer not granting repetition or refusing to listen to the defendant's or patient's utterance), or to go beyond her role by asking for opinions and advice (especially when the interpreter knows the client), it is both her duty and her privilege to safeguard her professional ethics, role and reputation by resisting the claims of a bullying "superior" because she can fall back on national laws prescribing the duties and limitations of her profession. In the private sector, however, this may change somewhat as that prescription no longer holds: a client can draw up any manner of contract with an interpreter, prescribing a very different role. Being paid by a private party, she no longer enjoys that same level of protection. The public vs. private factor will then also affect the interpreter's own stance and group alignment and the relationship with the service provider.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to show how power asymmetry affects interpreter-mediated discourse as a result of power asymmetries inherent in the client—service-provider relationship in institutional encounters and as a result of institutional power asymmetries inherent in cross-cultural relations in Western countries. I have attempted to show how this power imbalance is translated into discourse strategies. The degree to which the interpreter takes control of the discourse situation is indicative of the degree to which she is willing to wield the power inherent in her professional role and her positioning in the general power structure. The degree to which she is able to overcome the obstacles that hinder her ability to perform effectively —aggressive and non-collaborative turn-taking by the other interlocutors— will affect, it has been argued, the resulting communicative success. The paper has suggested that these formal constraints are subject to the prestige and status of the setting and service provider —higher in the more prestigious and authoritative institutions such as the courts and lower in the social services or hospitals. Thus the judge's utterance would be a text that was intrinsically authoritative and non-mutable "maximally protected from compromising transformation" (77). This is due not only to the intrinsic authority of the text ("The Law"), but also to the professional, political and social power asymmetry between the interactants and to differential access to texts. We have also seen in the example of the judge disallowing narrative passages in the defendant's report, how the selection of texts/utterances for translation is both culture-bound and an example of power leverage.

There are two areas which I believe are important to the issue of power and interpreting which have only been alluded to here but which would be extremely profitable avenues of investigation. One of these relates to the difference between public and private settings and in what way the domain affects the interpreters' strategies: i.e. in what way does the interpreter's role change from the legal sector to the health sector to large charity organizations to the social services sector to the private business sector? Is her role more flexible, pro-active and empowered in the lower-status sectors? Although communication is more rigidly coded in the legal sector than in many other sectors, I would not wish to give the reader the impression that there is no room for active interaction or negotiation. Certainly in the less strictly codified professional domains the negotiation process is fundamental and continuous: a cooperative endeavour in which all parties are active "meaning-makers" constantly involved in speaker-identity realignment. Many service providers are anxious to actively negotiate discourse and collaborate with both client and interpreter to understand each other, to reach an understanding or agreement rather than wield their power authoritatively and destructively over the weaker party. Textual production is a dialogic, dynamic process, not static. Institutional relations should be seen as part of an on-going interactive process in which contextualization cues are constantly re-negotiated. The public service encounter is indeed a negotiation process, a site of struggle and constant readjustment and reaffirmation of roles and identities at the collective and individual, private and public level.

The second area that would profit from further research is that of the interpreter as a buffer, as a "positive power-broker" with the potential to smooth out damaging power asymmetries between the primary parties that hinder effective communication. This aspect of the interpreter's role is a delicate one, however, touching upon issues of advocacy and impartiality. It would be interesting also to see how and under which conditions service providers accept or reject the interpreter's pro-active role and power base, whether they are willing to accept any deviation from the norm of dominant discourse or the norm of the interpreters' invisibility. In Fairclough's terms, we could ask how effectively the power-holders and institutional gatekeepers are able to police the shared conventions, how these conventions are enforced and which sanctions are taken against the actors if they are infringed or affirmations given to those who abide by them (61). The degree of permissible participation and/or advocacy role may also be a result of the acceptance or resistance of the interpreter's mandate to control her power base. The higher the advocacy, the higher the dependency, it would seem, but also the threat of unwelcome intrusion, encroaching on specialist territory. If interpreters are trained to deal with power asymmetries in cross-cultural negotiation processes, this —as well as raising awareness among service providers— could contribute to improving the level of communication between migrant and institution in public services. Interpreters' awareness of their role as "power broker" is, I believe, grossly underestimated, and the potential it holds for constructively managing and coordinating language-mediated discourse is highly undervalued. Increased awareness of this role in training might also alleviate the frustration of role-ambiguity common to many interpreters.

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