Neutral intermediaries, gatekeepers, or intercultural mediators? 
Interpreters’ stance-taking in institutional talk

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Overview

• Introduction: approaches to interpreter-mediated interaction in institutions
• Data
• Interpreter stances and intercultural difference
Community Interpreting

- Interpreting in face-to-face talk, especially involving migrants speaking minority languages in institutional contexts (law, government, education, health)

- “Dialogue interpreting” (Mason 1999, Wadensjö 2004, Pöchhacker 2004); but interpreting often involves more than two primary participants, i.e., multiparty-interaction rather than dialogue
Community interpreting

Professional interpreting
• Trained professional interpreters in institutions like courts and other legal settings (Berk-Seligson 1990, Angermeyer 2007), hospitals (Angelelli 2004), police or government settings (Wadensjö 1998)

Non-professional interpreting (may be “ad hoc”)
• Family members, friends, or nurses translating in doctor-patient interviews (Davidson 2000; Angelelli 2004; Meyer 2004)
• Children interpreting for their parents in parent-teacher conferences (Valdés 2003, Reynolds & Orellana 2009),
Community interpreters

Mediating between participants
• who speak different languages,
• who have different cultural backgrounds,
• who have different roles in encounter and different levels of experience (e.g. with institutional settings)

How do the interpreters relate to these opposing sides?
Neutral intermediaries?

- Interpreters negotiate stances towards:
  - The other participants
    - Does the interpreter have a personal relationship with any of the participants involved?
  - The context of cultural and linguistic contact
    - What is the social history of contact? What is the interpreter’s own background? the interpreter’s “Linguistic “belonging” (Wadensjö 1998); Solidarity with fellow native speakers (“wantoks”)?
  - The institution
    - Employed by the institution? Bound by institutional norms? Influenced by “institutional culture”?
Data for empirical investigation

COMmunity INterpreting DATabase
Online corpus, data sharing project
(Angermeeyer, Meyer & Schmidt, in press)

http://www.yorku.ca/comindat/comindat.htm

Components at pilot project stage:

– Court interpreting data (NYC Small Claims, Angermeeyer 206)
– Medical interpreting data (German hospitals; DiK corpus Bührig & Meyer 2004)
– Data from simulated medical interpreting for translation students (Bührig et al., in press)
Interpreters in the data

- Native speakers of minority language (Haitian Creole, Russian, Polish, or Spanish in US; Turkish, Portuguese, Polish, Russian or Romanian in Germany)
- Second language speakers of majority language (English or German), but mostly quite balanced bilinguals (some may be dominant in majority language)
  - Professional court interpreters: mostly certified, full-time employees of the court system; mostly middle class, university-educated
  - Non-professional interpreters in medical settings: mostly family members of patients ("ad hoc")
  - Interpreting students: in training not-yet professional, but no longer "ad hoc" interpreters
Investigating interpreter stances

• Qualitative: identifying interpreters’ reactions in situations where cultural differences become relevant and may warrant explanation

• Quantitative: investigation of linguistic markers of stances
  – Person marking (“verbatim” vs. reported speech)
  – Marking of evidentiality (knowledge source)
Example 1
Example 2

1 Claimant: M te kite polisye ale
   {‘I let the policemen go’}
2 paske m vin kalkile se avek yon ayisyen li marye.
   {‘ because I thought to myself that he married a Haitian.’}
3 Arbitrator: So you are claiming +...
   [Interpreter makes hand gesture to interrupt claimant]
4 Interpreter: (1.5) Yeah, I let the police go
5 because since you know he married an Haitian woman?
6 Claimant: (Yeah).
7 Interpreter: = Ki koze bullshit ou ap vin bay la?
   {‘What kind of bullshit are you coming up with?’}
Contrasting approaches to “inappropriate” talk

• “this is common in Romania” (1): problematic request is translated, then explained as culture-specific

• “what kind of bullshit are you coming up with” (2): problematic comment is translated without explanation, speaker is then reprimanded
Example 3

1 Arbitrator: #4.4 I am still confused.
2 Interpreter: Jak będziemy tak rozmawiali to
   {'if we keep on talking like this’}
3 Arbitrator: What is the relationship
   between these two people?
4 Interpreter: do północy stąd nie wyjdziemy.
   {'we won’t leave until midnight’}
5 Claimant: No dobrze, dobrze. No to ja powiem +/.
   {'Okay okay, I’ll say it’}
6 Interpreter: = Niech Pan powie o co chodzi po kolei,
   {'Say what it is about, in order’}
7 (. ) stało się to i to, tego i tego dnia +//.
   {'this and this happened, this and this day’}
8 Claimant: Dobrze, dobrze.
   {'Okay okay’}
9 Interpreter: przyczyna, skutek, a nie od, # że tak powiem czego strony.
   {'the reason, the outcome, and not from, let me say, what part’}
Example 4

1 Doctor: *Deshalb müssen wir da einmal mit einer Nadel reingehen, n bisschen Knochenmark* - ‘that’s why we have to go in there with a needle, a little bone marrow --’

2 Interpreter: *Raus--.*
   ‘(take) out’

3 Doctor: *rausnehmen und untersuchen.*
   ‘Take out and examine’

4 Interpreter: *Hmhm*

5 Doctor: *Darum geht’s.*
   ‘That’s what it’s about.’

6 Interpreter: *Das is am Becken gleich, oder?* 
   ‘That’s at the pelvis, isn’t it?’

7 Doctor: *Am Becken. Fragen Sie Ihren Vater bitte,*
   ‘at the pelvis. Please ask your father’

8 *ob er das soweit/ oder übersetzen das soweit?*
   ‘if he has (understood) so far, or translate so far?’

9 Interpreter: *“Blutarmut” Das hab ich selber nicht ((lacht)) verstanden.*
   ‘Anemia’ I didn’t understand this myself’ ((laughs))
Contrasting approaches to institutional “culture”

• Court interpreter relates institutional needs to litigant, without instruction from institutional representative (3): “we won’t leave until midnight”

• Ad-hoc medical interpreter requests clarification from doctor (4): “I didn’t understand this myself”
Different stances of interpreters

Interpreters with institutional ties

• Expect minority language speaker to adapt to majority culture and institutional practices, taking knowledge of these for granted
• Do not seek to explain cultural practices of minority speakers to institution

Interpreters without institutional ties

• Request clarification about institutional practices
• Do explain minority practices
Stances are marked linguistically

• Through translation style (Wadensjö 1998, Angermeyer 2009)

• Through evidential marking
Two main styles of interpreting

Wadensjö (1998: 19)

• “relaying by replaying,” “re-presenting the whole appearance of another person’s utterance.”

(1) Source:  
Yo juro decir la verdad

Target:  
I swear to tell the truth

• “relaying by displaying,” “presenting the other’s words and simultaneously emphasizing personal non-involvement in what they voice.”

(2) Source:  
Yo juro decir la verdad

Target:  
He (says he) swears to tell the truth
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>“Replaying”</th>
<th>“Displaying”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Source speaker</td>
<td>Interpreter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Source addressee</td>
<td>Recipient (addressee?) of target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Third person in source (e.g. target recipient, if different from source addressee); Interpreter</td>
<td>Source speaker Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Replaying vs. displaying

• In interpreting studies, “replaying” is seen as primary characteristic that distinguishes professional interpreters;
  – Harris (1990: 115-116): first person usage is ‘one of the first things interpretation students have to be told to be consistent about,’

• “Displaying” generally involves reported speech; while it may seem redundant to indicate the epistemic source of translated talk, reported speech enables the speaker to avoid responsibility for the expressed beliefs
“Replaying” in court

• Legal interpreting/court interpreting is governed by clearly defined legal guidelines, giving rise to specific translational norms (Inghilleri 2003); explicitly requiring “replaying”

• US (Berk-Seligson 1990), UK (Colin & Morris 1996), Canada (Bergeron 2002), Australia (Hale 2004)

• Example: Code of Ethics and Responsibilities, National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators

http://www.najit.org/about/NAJITCodeofEthicsFINAL.pdf
“Use of same grammatical person”

“relaying by replaying […] re-presenting the whole appearance of another person’s utterance.”
(Wadensjö 1998: 19)

Defendant: And I have the proof she’s lying to.
Interpreter: [for the Polish-speaking claimant] Mam dowód na to że ona kłamie. ‘I have proof that she is lying.’

• Berk-Seligson (1990: 53-4) court interpreter is supposed to be “invisible” and “should not exist as a verbal participant in her own right,” speaking “solely in place of the other participants.”
“Verbatim” translation

Focus on accuracy and maintenance of grammatical person (e.g. first-person translation) enables institutions to treat interpreting as an exact, “verbatim” reflection of the corresponding source language talk

• Statements of the interpreter “are regarded as the statements of the persons themselves” and therefore not subject to the hearsay rule (Berk-Seligson 2000: 225)

• Court record contains only the words of the translator, not those spoken by a witness in another language (Berk-Seligson 1990: 31)
“Verbatim”? 

• Morris (1993: ix) calls verbatim translation a “convenient fiction.”

• Haviland (2003): notion of verbatim translation based on a language ideology of “referential transparency” that believes that words from one language can be substituted for words from another, “as though … [it] is merely an exotic costume for a shared meaning” (p. 772).
Adherence to norm

Translating from LOTE into English
- Testimony by litigant, translated for the arbitrator (and addressed to him/her), and for other participants
- Near exclusive use of “verbatim style” (reported speech only in 14/1138 tokens; Angermeyer 2009)

Translating from English into LOTE
- Talk by arbitrator or litigant translated for LOTE-speaking participant who may be addressee or unaddressed recipient
- “Verbatim style” predominates, but all interpreters also use reported speech
Participation status

• In “verbatim” interpreting, the participation status of the participants of target talk is not marked; 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} person forms index may be misinterpreted by recipient, especially in translating from English in multiparty interaction (5)

  Defendant: \textit{And I have the proof she’s lying to.}
  Interpreter: \textit{[for the Polish-speaking claimant] Mam dowód na to że ona kłamie. ‘I have proof that she is lying.’}
Participation status: Translating 1st person

• Norms require 1st person in the source to be translated as 1st person in the target, potentially creating the impression that the interpreter is not just the animator who performs the speech sounds, but the principal “whose position is established by the words that are spoken” (Goffman 1981: 144)
  – “we have decided not to give you permission to stay in Sweden” (Wadensjö 1998: 239)
  – Some interpreters avoid first person translation to avoid being associated with the translated message, or to adapt to community norms (Angermeyer 2009)
Contexts for “displaying”

Reported speech (and other forms of deictic shift) basically confined to translation from English

• Three interpreters use it consistently

• Others use it in certain contexts
  – Translating contentious testimony by the opponent
  – Translating arbitrator’s talk about the decision-making process
  – Identifying self-selecting speakers
Reported speech: opponent’s voice

(5)
1 Defendant: Ah the day we delivered we informed him that ah
2 this is not appropriate for a computer to be like this.
→ 3 Interpreter: Li di <ah ke> [?] jou ke l te delivre yo ba ou a +//. ‘he says that the day he delivered’
4 Arbitrator: Did he tell you when he +/. ‘he told you that it was not appropriate to be done like this’
5 Interpreter: li te di ou li pat apropriye pou te fè l konsa.
6 Arbitrator: You can sit down.

Reported speech: speaker not responsible for views or beliefs that are expressed, responsibility deferred to other source (Bauman 1993, Schiffrin 1996)
Decisions

(6)

1  Arbitrator:  You’ve elected (.)

2    to have your dispute resolved
        before /me.

3  Interpreter:  Ustedes han venido delante de él
        ‘you have come before him’

4    para que él decida.

5  Arbitrator:  my decision is /final.

6  Interpreter:  Lo que él diga es definitivo.
        ‘whatever he says is final’

Interpreters regularly avoid 1st person when translating talk that relates to decision-making (Angermeyer 2009)
Participation status: Translating 2nd person

Court interpreting norms require *you* in the source to be translated as 2sg in the target. However, the addressee of the source is often not identical to the recipient of the target (see Angermeyer 2005).

- Misunderstandings can arise when the addressee is not clear from context.
- Target recipients may feel addressed because of the use of polite address forms (Angermeyer 2005).
Translating for a source addressee

1. ARBITRATOR: [addressing the Spanish-speaking defendant] When did you become aware that the van had been broken into?
2. INTERPRETER: [for Spanish-speaking defendant] Cuándo supo Usted que la [/-] que se habían entrado en la guagua? {‘When did you know that — that the van had been broken into?’}
3. DEFENDANT: Cuando él me llamó. {‘When he called me’}
4. INTERPRETER: When he called me.

Figure 1. The participant structure of interpreted dialogue (cf. Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff 1985)

(Angermeier 2005: 209-211)
Translating for an unaddressed recipient

1. **Arbitrator:** [addressing the English-speaking claimant]
   Have you had to have any repair work done to the engine?

2. **Interpreter:** [for the Spanish-speaking defendant]
   Usted le ha tenido que hacer reparaciones al motor?
   {‘Did you have to make repairs to the engine?’}

3. **Claimant:** Not to the engine. We had to change the alternator.

4. **Interpreter:** No al motor, tuvimos que cambiar el alternador.
   {‘Not to the engine, we had to change the alternator.’}

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**Figure 2. Interpreting for an unaddressed recipient**
Misunderstood “you” (no deictic shift)

(9)

1 Arbitrator: [addressing the defendant]
(4.0) Do you have a lease with this lady?

2 Defendant: I have ah +/-.

3 Interpreter: [for the benefit of the Polish-speaking claimant]
Czy ma Pani umowę z tą panią?
‘Do you, Ma’am, have a contract with this lady?’

4 Claimant: No ja to nie mam umowy.
‘But I don’t have a contract.’

5 Interpreter: Nie nie nie, Pani. Ja tylko tłumaczę co pani pyta.
‘No no no, Ma’am. I’m only translating what the lady is asking’

• Misunderstanding blamed on claimant’s unfamiliarity with professional interpreting style;
• Interpreter insistence on institutional norms, instead of accommodation (gatekeeping behavior, alienating the claimant by referring to her in the 3rd person)
Overview

• Court interpreters adhere to institutional norm when translating into English, but not always when translating from English

• By insisting on institutional norms when translating from English, some interpreters alienate the LOTE-speakers,
  – emphasize the inadequacy of the litigants’ linguistic and social competence in the courtroom and in the English-dominant society as a whole;
  – act as gatekeepers (Davidson 2000, Müller 2001, Jacquemet 2003), agent in reproduction of social domination (Inghilleri 2003); enforcing legal system's control over litigants as well as the subordination of minority language speakers;
“Displaying” in medical interpreting

• In contrast to professional court interpreters, the non-professional interpreters in the hospital data consistently use a “displaying” style, independent of the direction of translation
  – Consistent with research on medical interpreting (Davidson 2000, 2002; Angelelli 2004),
  – Institutional focus on patient’s body may discourage use of first person when translating patient’s talk into German (e.g. “my leg hurts here”)
  – Summarized or selective interpretation from German, as interpreter assumes that the patient will partially understand (accompanied by frequent codeswitching into German by patients)
Abundant use of reported speech

(10) (interpreter: nurse, acquainted with patient)

1 Doctor: Wir wissen nicht ganz sicher, (.)
   ‘we don’t quite know for sure’

2 ob der Tumor auf die Chemotherapie reagiert
   ‘whether the tumor will respond to the chemotherapy’

3 (. ) aber es gibt außer der Chemotherapie
   ‘but apart from the chemotherapy’

4 (. ) keine Behandlungsmethode.
   ‘there is no treatment method’

5 Interpreter: (1.4) Ondan [başka, diyor]
   ‘Besides this, he says’

6 Patient: [Ondan (sonra da) tera)/ şeyi yok, yani.
   ‘And after that there is no thera- so, there is no thing’

7 Interpreter: He. "Başka çaresi yok", diyor. (.)
   ‘Yes. There is no other way, he says.’

8 "Bilmiyoruz tabii", diyor.
   ‘Of course we don’t know, he says’

9 "On", diyor, "anca" diyor, "yaptıktan sonra", diyor,
   ‘that, he says, only, he says, after we have done it, he says’

10 (2.5) "bi seferden sonra", diyor, (.)
   ‘after one time, he says’

11 "bi şeyleri söyleyebiliriz", diyor.
   ‘we can tell something, he says’
Use of evidential marker

Turkish has an evidential suffix (−miş) to indicate that the speaker’s knowledge is based on inference or hearsay;

-miş occurs frequently in translation from German

(11)

1. Doctor: man muss für die Anlage dieses Katheters
   ‘in order to put on this catheter, one has to’

   ‘be in the hospital first. And that’s done under anesthesia’

3. Interpreter: hm

4. Doctor: Ist also einen k/ allerdings kleinere Operation
   ‘so it’s a sm- admittedly a smaller operation’

5. Interpreter: Narkozla veriyorlar mış o şeyi. Eğer yaparlarsa.
   ‘Evidently, they give the thing under anesthesia. When they do it.’

6. Patient: Tamam.
   ‘Okay’
Epistemic stance in doctor/patient talk

-miş also occurs in talk of patients

(12)

1 Patient: On üç' ünde olduğum ameliyatta, ‘In the Operation that I had on the thirteenth,’

2 diyor, kalbim çalışmamış. ‘she says that evidently my heart didn’t work’

Inherent imbalance in epistemic rights:

- Doctor is most knowledgeable about diagnosis and treatment, other participants often do not assert direct knowledge
Aligning with the doctor

(13) (interpreter: patient’s adult son)

1 Doctor: *Okay. (2.5) Ja, der Blutzuckerspiegel wird *halt nicht nur durch (.).
‘okay, so the blood glucose level is elevated not only by’

2 *Zucker erhöht, sondern durch (.). Kohlenhydrate. (.)
‘sugar but also by carbohydrates’

3 *Kohlenhydrate sind zum Beispiel in Milch, (.). in Obst,
‘carbohydrates are contained in milk and fruit for example’

4 (.). in Brot und Getreide, (1.1) halt Reis und Kartoffeln enthalten.
‘in bread and grains, so rice and potatoes’

5 (.). *Und diese (1.2) Kohlenhydrate aus diesen Lebensmitteln
‘and these carbohydrates in these foods’

6 *erhöhen halt den Blutzuckerspiegel°. Deswegen (.)
‘just elevate the blood glucose level. That’s why’

7 *müssen diese (.). Lebensmittel halt eingeschränkt gegessen werden.
‘these foods have to be eaten in moderation’

8 *Es könn/ kann nicht in, ähm in beliebiger Menge gegessen werden,
‘They can’t be eaten in random amounts’

9 *sondern es muss über den Tag verteilt,
‘but over the course of the day’

10 (.). in kleinen Mengen gegessen werden.
‘it has to be eaten in small amounts’
11 Interpreter: Dün sana dediydim ya teminden sana
‘Yesterday I had told you, and earlier’

12 patatesde de filan de var diye. =
‘that there are potatoes and stuff’

13 Patient: = He.
‘Yes’

14 Interpreter: Patates, [pilav filan.
‘Potatoes, rice and stuff’

15 Patient: [He’

16 Interpreter: Onların hepsini (.) yiyebilirsin, ama az az.
‘All of these you can eat, but in small amounts’

17 Günlük de dağ/ günün içinde dağıtıp da yiyeceksin.
‘and daily/ you will eat them over the course of the day’

18 Öyle hepsini bi anda değil.
‘Not all at once’

19 [(Pade diye)]
‘Because’

- Translation not third-person reported speech, but framed as first-person reporting (cf. Clift 2006)
- Interpreter aligns with the doctor
20 Patient: [Oğlum,]  
My son’

21 Interpreter: (xxx)

22 Patient: [simdi]  
‘now’

23 P’s wife: [Mehmet.]  

24 Patient: (xxx) onu söyle de.  
‘now say that’

25 Tabağın ba/ dibine az bişey koyiyi.  
‘he puts so little on the plate’

26 İki kaşıği ye.  
‘and now eat two spoons’

27 İki kaşığından nasıl doyarım ben?=  
‘How can I get full from two spoons?’

28 Interpreter: =Baba, günde altı defa!  
‘Dad, six times a day!’

29 Patient: Altı defa.=  
‘Six times’

30 Interpreter: =Günde altı defa o küçük şeyleri,  
‘Six times a day, those small things’

31 bi/ bi anda yimiyeceksin.  
‘you won’t eat all at once’
Summary

• Non-professional interpreters in medical interaction also vary in their stances towards other participants;

• Deictic shift to the target recipient and reported speech are the norm, but stances may be indexed through types and frequency of evidential marking
## Summary comparison

### Institutional norms

- “Invisible” interpreter
  “Relaying by re-playing” (Wadensjö 1998)
- “Verbatim” translation
- Maintenance of pronominal reference from the source talk
- Institutional culture is internalized
- No explanation of minority practices

### Non-professional practices

- Interpreter as participant
  “Relaying by displaying” (Wadensjö 1998)
- Reported speech and deictic shift
- Institutional “culture” may be unfamiliar
- Minority practices explained
Concluding remarks

• Interpreters share knowledge with both sides, evaluate other participants’ epistemic rights and responsibilities
  – Epistemic and affective stance linked (Haviland 1989)

Different epistemic stances of interpreters:

• Where the knowledge source is not overtly acknowledged, interpreters align with source speaker; this may highlight the inadequateness of recipient’s resources (gatekeeping)

• Overt acknowledging of source and of recipient’s needs – solidarity with recipient (brokering)
Concluding remarks (2)

• Intercultural communication benefits from mutual willingness to establish common ground and accommodate to other’s communicative behaviour (“two-way street”)

• Interpreters mostly display an asymmetric, “one-way” approach, identifying primarily with one side and accommodating less to the other

• While they aim to translate in both directions, they may not communicate equally well in them
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