

Covert Self-talk as a Tool for Dialogue Interpreters

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Abstract

This paper examines the interplay between interpreters' affect, behaviour, and cognition from the perspective of dialogue interpreters' conscious reactions during interpreting. It focuses on the use of covert self-talk as a means to regulate strong distracting emotions and other internal listening filters. Self-talk refers to verbalizations or statements people make to themselves, either internally (covert) or aloud (overt) (Theodorakis, Hatzigeorgiadis & Chroni 2008: 11; Hardy 2006: 84). The study qualitatively investigates overall self-talk function and linguistic manifestation in 78 interview quotations referring to the interpreter's reported covert self-talk during interpreting. The data were derived from a 233,600-word corpus containing transcriptions of 22 individual in-depth interviews with practising dialogue interpreters. The study then focuses on covert self-talk statements used for addressing distracting internal listening filters. Results illustrate the primary use of instructional non-first-person covert self-talk as a tool for dialogue interpreters to address internal listening filters.

Keywords: dialogue interpreting, covert self-talk, metacognition, internal listening filters, in-depth interviews

1. Introduction and background

“We use inner speech (the little voice inside our head) when we silently talk to ourselves about all sorts of things, at different times, and for various reasons.”

(Morin, Duhnych & Racy 2016: 377)

This article addresses the phenomenon of covert self-talk as a tool for dialogue interpreters to address and manage internal listening filters (Viljanmaa 2020: 477–479). The study approaches dialogue interpreting from a listening-centered perspective. In listening-centered communication, listening is seen as “the primary process influencing communication outcomes” (Brownell 2010: 143), and is defined as “the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages” (ILA 1996: 4). Listening is a dynamic and multi-dimensional process that takes different shapes and forms depending on the context where it is used. It is a complex everyday phenomenon that contains a cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimension (Halone et al. 1998: 64; Halone & Pecchioni 2001) (see 2.1). The dimensions come to play in all listening settings, including interpreting.

The effectiveness of the listening process can be compromised by listener-related, situation-related or speaker-related factors that negatively affect the listener’s ability to hear or process and understand the uttered information. These factors are part of what is called listening filters (See Section 2.1). Various kinds of external and internal listening filters can come to play in interpreting situations and interfere with the interpreter’s listening process and affect it negatively. Interpreters address them in different ways.

Self-talk is similar to listening in that it is also a complex everyday phenomenon. It refers to verbalizations or statements people make to themselves, either internally (covert) or aloud (overt) (Theodorakis, Hatzigeorgiadis & Chroni 2008: 11; Hardy 2006: 84). Talking to oneself is a “ubiquitous human phenomenon” (Kross et al. 2014: 321). However, there is a growing body of evidence that self-talk can be used deliberately to improve individual performance in highly demanding settings, such as in sports (e.g., Hardy 2006; Theodorakis, Hatzigeorgiadis & Chroni 2008).

So far, there is only a very limited number of studies on the role of self-talk in interpreting (see 2.2). This study tries to contribute to this area by investigating the specific functions and linguistic forms of self-reported covert self-talk statements used by dialogue interpreters during interpreting. It revisits qualitative interview data from the author’s PhD research that investigated the dialogue interpreter’s professional listening competence at different stages of the listening process (Viljanmaa 2020: 481–488). In the research data that consisted of the in-depth interviews of 22 dialogue interpreters, interpreters reported two kinds of verbal metacognitive activities during the processing stage of their listening process. These activities were coded as examples of personal thoughts (*eigene Gedanken*) and inner voice (*innere Stimme*) (Viljanmaa 2020: 338–346). Personal thoughts referred to an interpreter’s general thoughts in the situation when listening to a speaker. These thoughts were evoked by the interpreting context, the participants, or the content to be interpreted, and they contained the interpreter’s personal experience or opinion, amongst other elements (ibid. 338–343). Inner voice was defined as metacognitive talk used by the interpreter to talk to themselves, i.e., interpreters’ directing the words to themselves, which is covert self-talk. Instances of reported self-talk in interpreting situations included moments when

the interpreter became aware of personal emotions, wandering thoughts or other internal distracting factors, and reacted to them internally in a verbal manner, i.e., with covert self-talk (ibid. 338–346).

One specific finding from the qualitative analysis in my PhD research was that interpreters used covert self-talk statements to address internal listening filters (Viljanmaa 2020: 477–479).

However, due the scope of the PhD project it was not possible to investigate the overall occurrence, the other functions and the linguistic form of covert self-talk statements in the data. The aim of the current chapter is to gauge into the aforementioned. In other words, it will use theoretical concepts from self-talk research in other domains (see 2.3) to first investigate the functions and linguistic forms of all covert self-talk statements in the qualitative interview data and then follow up specifically on the function and linguistic form of those covert self-talk statements used by interpreters to address internal listening filters.

This chapter starts by presenting a theoretical framework, i.e. the concept of listening filters and the listening-centered approach to dialogue interpreting, and then it looks at previous research on self-talk in interpreting and on self-talk in other domains. On the basis of these, more detailed research questions are formulated (see 2.4).

2. Theoretical framework and research questions

2.1 Listening filters and a listening-centered approach to dialogue interpreting

From a listening-centered perspective, dialogue interpreting can be conceptualized as a listening process containing three main stages: perceiving (sensing), processing (constructing meaning), and responding (Viljanmaa 2020: 18; Comer & Drollinger 1999; Drollinger, Comer & Warrington 2006; ILA 1996). In the sensing stage, the interpreter perceives various verbal and non-verbal information signals (Viljanmaa 2020: 303–306). In the processing stage, the interpreter constructs meaning from the perceived signals by employing various sub-processes. This stage also contains the processing of the interpreter's personal feelings and other reactions to the perceived information; it can also contain metacognitive elements, namely, the interpreter's personal thoughts and self-directed covert talk (ibid. 346–352). In the responding stage, the interpreter reacts to the perceived and processed signals. The interpreter's response stage can be further divided into two substages. These are the initial behavioural, cognitive, and/or affective reaction of the interpreter to the perceived and processed information, and the production of the interpretation in the target language (Viljanmaa 2020: 406–414).

The different process stages overlap and are interrelated. The interpreter's listening process is thus an interplay of affect, cognition, and behaviour. The affective dimension consists of the interpreter's affective and emotional reaction to the perceived signals. The cognitive dimension covers the processing of various information perceived from external sources, e.g. from the participants in the interpreted communication, from the physical location, and from internal sources, i.e., the interpreter's personal emotions and other personal reactions. Finally, the

behavioural dimension consists of the interpreter's acting responses upon the basis of the perceived and processed external and internal information signals.

The concept of listening filters is an umbrella term that refers to factors and variables that affect the interpreter's listening process. (Viljanmaa 2020: 481–488; Brownell 2010: 144). They can influence the aspects of the listening situation either negatively or positively (Thompson et al. 2010: 272). Listening filters can be further divided into internal and external listening filters. Internal listening filters are individual factors related to the listeners themselves that interfere with or complicate the listening process. These factors can be related to the listener's own background, his/her current physical or mental condition or state, or the listener's attitude towards the speaker or the topic, among others (Brownell 2010, 150–151). External listening filters are factors related to the speaker, the location or the situation, which similarly influence the effectiveness of the listening outcome (Brownell 2010, 151). The speaker might mumble, speak quietly or very fast, the location can be noisy or have bad acoustics, and the situation can be a tense or a threatening one. An effective listener recognizes, analyzes and addresses the influence of negative listening filters either in advance or as they occur during the listening event (Thompson et al. 2010, 273).

In dialogue interpreting, it is the speaker's poor articulation, overlapping speech or disturbing background noises that can create an external listening filter in the interpreter's listening process (Viljanmaa 2020: 483). Internal listening filters in dialogue interpreting are, on the other hand, interpreters' physical exhaustion, their positive or negative emotions, their wandering thoughts or reawakening of personal experiences from the past, etc. (ibid. 485). Personal emotions can form

an internal listening filter for the interpreter if the interpreter pays too much attention to them. The same applies to wandering thoughts or the prolonged searching for a certain word in the target language. All these elements or factors negatively affect the interpreter's ability to listen comprehensively and attentively if they remain unaddressed. As such, they need to be managed effectively so that their negative effect on the listening and interpretation processes remains minimal. Interpreters address distracting external and internal listening filters in various ways, both during the interpreting as well as before and after (Viljanmaa 2020: 481–488).

2.2 Existing studies on self-talk in interpreting

As a phenomenon of intrapersonal communication, self-talk can be further defined as self-directed or self-referent overt or covert speech that serves a variety of self-regulatory and other functions (Brinthaupt 2019: 2). It is the syntactically recognisable articulation of an internal position where the sender of the message is also the intended receiver (Van Raalte et al. 2016: 141). The phenomenon of covert self-talk has been studied under different names such as *inner speech* (e.g., Morin, Duhnych & Racy 2018; Alderson-Day & Fernyhough 2015; Lee, Wang & Ren 2020), *private speech* (e.g., Deniz 2009; Winsler et al. 2009), and *self-talk* (e.g., Hatzigeorgiadis, Theodorakis & Zourbanos 2004; Kross et al. 2014). It has also been investigated by scholars in different fields, such as psychology (e.g., Furman, Kross & Gearhardt 2020; Morin, Duhnych & Racy 2018; Alderson-Day & Fernyhough 2015), sports psychology (e.g., Hardy 2006; Hardy, Oliver & Tod 2009; Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Galanis & Theodorakis 2011), and educational psychology (e.g., Deniz 2009; Lee, Wang & Ren 2020), amongst others.

However, to the best of my knowledge, there is only one existing study on self-talk in interpreting. This is a survey conducted by Maddux and Nicodemus (2016). Their study reported on the experiences of 445 American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreters and their reports of self-talk in terms of its frequency, valence, overtness, self-determination, motivation, and function. The findings in Maddux and Nicodemus’s study (2016: 186) verified that self-talk is a ubiquitous phenomenon among interpreters as 94% of ASL–English interpreters reported experiencing self-talk. Self-talk was also reported to occur frequently: 41% of the respondents who reported self-talk experienced self-talk at least six times or constantly in their work, and 54% of them experienced self-talk between one to five times during their assignment (ibid.). As for valence (that is, positive self-talk vs. negative self-talk), 62% of the respondents stated their self-talk was a mix of both positive and negative messages, 46% reported they felt their self-talk served to facilitate interpreting, and 43% respondents stated that their self-talk was a mix of facilitative and debilitating messages (ibid. 189). As for the conscious or unconscious nature of self-talk, the survey asked the participants if they felt their self-talk was carried out consciously or whether it occurred unconsciously. Almost half of the respondents (48%) reported that self-talk was a mix of both conscious and unconscious thoughts, 29% stated that their self-talk was always unconscious, and 19% said that their self-talk was always conscious (ibid. 191). As for self-talk functions, the most reported function in the survey was “improving interpreting”, followed by “preparation”, “awareness” and “mental focus” (Maddux & Nicodemus 2016: 192). Three of these functions, namely, “improving interpreting”, “awareness” and “mental focus”, can be directly linked to the function of self-talk as a tool for interpreters to manage internal listening filters during interpreting, as they can all be linked to improving concentration levels and to

refocusing the interpreter's attention on the speaker. However, the question is, does spoken-language interpreters also employ self-talk in a similar manner? The results from Maddux and Nicodemus (2016) cannot be generalized as such, because there are differences in the interpreting process between Sign language (SL) interpreters and spoken-language interpreters. This is because spoken-language dialogue interpreters interpret mostly consecutively, whereas SL interpreters interpret in the simultaneous mode. The listening processes also involve input channels (audio, visual) differently, which applies to the delivering of the interpretation.

In my PhD research, spoken-language dialogue interpreters did report examples of covert self-talk. Covert self-talk was found to happen prior, during, and after the actual interpreting assignment. It was linked to situations where an interpreter needed to calm down, was afraid of irritating a client, wanted to refocus on the actual task (interpreting), or needed to remind themselves to stay focused, amongst other instances (ibid. 343–346). The results of the analysis in my PhD study showed that covert self-talk was also used as a tool for addressing internal listening filters both prior to interpreting and during the interpreting assignment (2020: 477–479). During the interpreting assignment self-talk was used to regain focus on the actual task of interpreting or to return to the 'here and now' from personal memories evoked by the client's story. Interpreters also reported instances where self-talk was accompanied by a physical touch, or where the interpreter talked to themselves using their first name or another reference (e.g., "honey") (ibid.). The actual linguistic forms of the reported covert self-talk statements and their

different functions were not studied in my PhD research and will form part of the focus of the present chapter.

2.3 Existing studies on self-talk in other domains

The current chapter draws upon an abundance of previous research on self-talk in sports psychology. Just like sports, interpreting can be seen as a complex performative act that requires highly trained skills and an intense concentration so that maximal performance can be executed. In addition, both interpreters and athletes rely on extensive preparation in advance. As such, the assumption is that interpreters may exhibit certain similarities with athletes, particularly related to their self-talk and its related effects.

In sports psychology, self-talk is divided into motivational self-talk and instructional self-talk.

The roles and functions of instructional and motivational self-talk differ (e.g., Hase, Hood, Moore & Freeman 2019). Motivational self-talk refers to self-talk cues that encourage and motivate (e.g., “let’s go”, “I can do it”), maximize effort (“give it all”) or build confidence (e.g., “I can do it”) (Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Galanis & Theodorakis 2011: 349). Instructional self-talk includes self-talk cues that aim at focusing or directing attention, providing instruction regarding technique, strategy, or the kinesthetic attributes of a skill (ibid.).

Furthermore, self-talk can be categorized into proactive and reactive self-talk (Van Raalte, Vincent & Brewer 2016: 141). Proactive self-talk is used with a specific intention or outcome in mind, and its use requires mental effort from the performer. In contrast to proactive self-talk,

reactive self-talk occurs as a response to an emotionally charged and bias-driven situation (ibid.). Finally, self-talk can be conceptualised as goal-directed and undirected self-talk (Latinjak, Zourbanos, López-Ros & Hatzigeorgiadis 2014).

Results from various sports psychology studies suggest that self-talk can improve athletes' performance. This improvement is linked to the various functions that self-talk seems to serve (Tod, Hardy & Oliver 2011: 680; see also Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Galanis & Theodorakis 2011: 348). For example, the results of two experiments conducted by Hatzigeorgiades, Theodorakis and Zourbanos (2004) indicate that the use of self-talk has an important impact on the reduction of unwanted interfering thoughts irrespective of self-talk content. Later, Theodorakis, Hatzigeorgiadis and Chroni (2008: 25–27) have identified five functions for self-talk in sports: attentional focus, regulating effort, increasing confidence, controlling cognitive and emotional reactions, and triggering automatic execution. The results of their study further indicated that athletes' self-talk mostly served to regulate effort, control attention, and build confidence (ibid.). More recent research by Morin, Duhnych and Racy (2018) on university students' self-talk indicated that the most frequently self-reported self-talk activities were self-regulation, self-reflection, and critical thinking (see also Lee, Wang & Ren 2020: 545). From the listening perspective, many of the functions listed above would also appear to be relevant to measures or functions for addressing distracting internal listening filters (e.g., control effort and emotional reactions, control attention, reducing number of unwanted interfering thoughts) during interpreting.

One particularly interesting element is the linguistic manifestation of self-talk. Self-talk can occur as immersed first-person self-talk (e.g., “I have to go now”, “I have to do this”) or as a distanced, non-first-person self-talk using one’s name and the second person singular (“Emily, you have to speak up now”) or the third person singular including a name (e.g., “Emily needs to speak up”). Research has shown that using non-first-person self-talk can have many positive effects. These include promoting self-distancing (Kross et al. 2014), strengthening intentions and task performance (Dolcos & Albarracin 2014), and reducing emotional reactivity (Moser et al. 2017; Nook, Schleider & Somerville 2017; Orvell et al. 2021), etc. Furthermore, Zell, Warriner & Albarracin (2012: 553) found that the use of second-person self-talk and the use of the imperative co-occurred in situations where self-control was required. The use of these kinds of self-talk forms was more frequent during activity and action than during behaviour planning and evaluation (ibid.). Distancing self-talk (non-first-person ST) thus seems closely linked to self-talk during action.

Research on self-talk in sports psychology indicates that self-talk improves performance mostly by helping athletes to control attention, to regulate emotions, and to reduce the occurrence of interfering or distracting thoughts. Using distanced self-talk, that is, non-first-person self-talk, can further enhance the positive effects of self-talk on athletes’ performance. It is thus interesting to find out whether non-first-person self-talk could also be an effective tool when addressing distracting internal listening filters in dialogue interpreting.

2.4 Research questions

Based on existing studies on the functions and the use of self-talk, this chapter sets out to explore the overall functions and the linguistic forms of covert self-talk statements originally collected for my PhD research. Furthermore, the chapter also sets out to investigate potential relationships between the function and linguistic form of covert self-talk statements specifically used to address strong distracting emotions and other interfering internal listening filters during interpreting. Three research questions (RQ) are formulated below:

RQ 1. In terms of the functions of covert self-talk: What are the main functions of covert self-talk? How much of covert self-talk is instruction-related and how much is motivation-related?

RQ 2. In terms of the linguistic forms of self-talk: What are the main linguistic forms of covert self-talk? How much of the covert self-talk is first-person self-talk and how much is non-first-person self-talk?

RQ 3. What is the potential relationship between the functions and the linguistic forms of covert self-talk?

3. Research methods and data source

The data for this study was derived from a 233,600-word corpus containing the transcriptions of 22 individual in-depth interviews with practicing dialogue interpreters in Finland. I compiled the corpus originally for my PhD research (Viljanmaa 2020). The qualitative semi-structured

interviews were conducted between May 2016 and May 2018. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, which was one of the working languages of all the interviewees. Their other languages included: Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Kurdi, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Thai, Turkmen, and Turkish. Some interpreters had more than two working languages. The interpreters ranged in age from 29 to 61 years (mean age 45) and their educational backgrounds varied. All informants had several years of working experience as dialogue interpreters in various community and/or court interpreting settings. Some of them also had additionally experience in conference interpreting. (For further granular demographic data, see Viljanmaa 2020: 250–254).

The interview corpus contains a large number of narratives and anecdotes about the dialogue interpreter s' work as perceived and recounted by the interpreters themselves. The semi-structured interviews focused on the interviewees' personal experience of carrying out their work in different communicative settings. There were four main themes in the interviews: manifestation and goals of the interpreter's professional listening behaviour throughout the interpreting process (pre-process, in-process, post-process), listening filters, interpersonal relationships and interaction management in interpreting, and listening competence in relation to professional identity and self-efficacy. For all four main themes there were several questions. The interpreters were invited to express themselves freely but to maintain professional secrecy. They were instructed to describe how they usually work and what they do, and also to elaborate on individual assignments of their choice, i.e., recount in their own words particular cases they remembered well. These could be cases from the day of the interview or the day before, or cases dating several years back. (For further data on the interviews, see Viljanmaa 2020: 237–250).

It must be noted that neither metacognitive talk, inner voice nor covert self-talk were specifically asked about in the interviews, and yet the category “Metacognition – inner voice” emerged from the content-based analysis of the data in Viljanmaa (2020). The current chapter focuses on this particular category. To be more precise, it contains interview excerpts referring to one or more of the following elements: interpreters’ inner voice, interpreters reminding themselves of something that needs to be done, interpreters’ talking to themselves using their inner voice either before, during or after the interpreting assignment. The category consists of a total of 114 direct quotations from the interview data. For the current chapter, I revisited these 114 quotations. As the first step, I selected all quotations directly referring to situations during interpreting for further analysis. Those quotations containing only implicit references to the interpreter’s personal thoughts without an explicit self-talk statement were deselected. Only those quotations that contained at least one explicit verbal self-talk statement (e.g., “keskity nyt mitä sanot”, “now focus on what you say”) were kept. These self-talk statements were explicit statements that were immediately preceded or followed by a reference about oneself or commanding oneself to do something (e.g., “mä koko ajan *mietin* että älä ärsytä tota”, “I kept *thinking* all the time that don’t irritate that guy”), or explicit statements that clearly indicated that the interpreter reported to a self-talk statement that had occurred in the situation (e.g., “*hei*. mä oon tulkki. mä oon täällä”, “*hello*. I’m the interpreter. I’m here”). This resulted in 78 quotations stemming from 20 individual interviews. The quotations contained the interpreter’s description of a specific moment during interpreting. The quotations were of different length. Some of the quotations contained several self-talk statements related to the situation and others contained only one self-talk statement. These 78 quotations constitute the research data source for the current chapter.

In the first round of analysis, the 78 quotations were categorized as either immersed “first-person self-talk” or distanced “non-first-person self-talk” according to the linguistic form of the self-talk statements reported in them. The quotations in the category “non-first-person self-talk” were then further divided into the subcategories “second-person self-talk” and “third-person self-talk” according to their actual linguistic forms. Most quotations contained only one kind of self-talk statements, but in some quotations interpreters reported two different kinds of self-talk statements (e.g., first-person self-talk statements and second-person self-talk statements, first-person self-talk statements and third-person self-talk statements, or second-person self-talk statements and third-person self-talk statements). In these cases, the quotations were thus coded into both categories respectively. The result is 82 cases of reported self-talk statements for the current study stemming from 78 interpreting situations.

These cases were then further categorized into situations where covert *instructional* self-talk statements were reported, and those where covert *motivational* self-talk statements were reported. The categories were named “instructional self-talk” and “motivational self-talk” respectively. During this analysis round a third category emerged. This category includes instances of self-talk where an interpreter was talking to themselves without a clear instructional or motivational focus. For example: “What should I do?” These self-talk statements were all reflective in nature, and the category was thus named “reflective self-talk”. In all stages specific attention was paid to covert self-talk statements that were used to address internal listening filters.

4. Data analysis and results

The results of the data analysis are presented in Table 3.1. It shows the number of cases for each type and sub-type of self-talk statements under investigation as well as their functions.

Table 3.1. Occurrence of linguistic and functional self-talk statements

<i>Occurrence of linguistic and functional self-talk statements</i>				
	First-person self-talk	Non-first-person self-talk	<i>Subcategory: Second-person self-talk</i>	<i>Subcategory: Third-person self-talk</i>
<i>Instructional self-talk</i>	8	22	14	8
<i>Motivational self-talk</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Reflective self-talk</i>	37	14	1	13
Total	46	36	15	21

There was more first-person self-talk in the data (46 cases) than non-first-person self-talk (36 cases), but both categories are well represented. As for the function of self-talk in the data, the category reflective self-talk was the biggest category (51 cases), followed by instructional self-talk (30 cases). Details analysis can be found in 4.1.

4.1 Functions of covert self-talk

RQ 1 addressed the function of reported covert self-talk. It is found that there are 3 main categories: instructional self-talk, motivational self-talk and reflective self-talk. The third

category, reflective self-talk referred to covert self-talk statements where the interpreter pondered and/or wondered about situational or setting-specific elements. This category turned out to be the biggest category among the three (see Table 3.1). In fact, more than half of the quotations contained reflective self-talk statements. The reflective self-talk statements were often reactive as a response from the interpreter to the situation. However, the situation did not need to be emotionally charged and bias-driven in order for the reflective self-talk of the interpreter to occur (cf. Van Raalte, Vincent & Brewer 2016: 141; See also Section 2.3). Out of the 51 reflective self-talk statements, 26 is found to be related to clients' behavior or reactions, whereas 25 is related to the interpreters' personal performance or other personal thoughts.

Instructional self-talk was found in 28 out of the 78 quotations (two quotations contained two linguistic types of instructional self-talk, so there is a total number of 30 cases of instructional self-talk). This instructional self-talk was mostly reactive in nature. The majority of instructional covert self-talk found in the data was self-talk that served to address internal listening filters (see Section 4.3). However, there were also two occasions where the interpreter used instructional self-talk to instruct herself to behave or act in a certain way, i.e., not to irritate the client and to take shorter and more logical notes, respectively.

Surprisingly, there was only one quotation portraying motivational self-talk. The interesting feature of motivational self-talk was that it did not appear during the interpreting assignment but it did appear before and after the assignment.

4.2 Linguistic forms of covert self-talk

RQ 2 addressed the linguistic forms of covert self-talk in dialogue interpreting. It asked what the main linguistic forms were and how much were first-person self-talk and how many were non-first-person self-talk. First-person self-talk has been described as immersive self-talk, whereas non-first-person self-talk is distanced. The results of the analysis showed that first-person self-talk statements were found in 46 out of the 78 quotations and non-first-person self-talk statements in 36 out of the 78 quotations. (The total number of reported self-talk statement cases (82) is bigger than the total number of quotations analysed (78), because some of the quotations contained two different kinds of self-talk statements and they were coded into both categories respectively.) Interestingly, the result also reveals that the use of the linguistic forms might be linked to the function of self-talk, as first-person self-talk statements are mostly reflective, whereas non-first-person self-talk statements are often instructional.

Of the 46 immersed first-person self-talk statements, the majority (37 quotations) is reflective self-talk. This self-talk was all reactive self-talk, that is, self-talk that resulted as a response to the situations from the interpreter. It was either related to specific factors in the situation (see Examples 1 and 2 in Table 3.2) or related to the interpreters' meta-observations or reflections on their personal reactions and performance (See Examples 3 and 4) or even extending to what they should do next as a result of such reflections (See Examples 5 to 7).

Table 3.2 Examples of reflective first-person self-talk statements

<i>Example #</i>	<i>Original Finnish self-talk statements</i>	<i>English translation</i>
Example 1	ei helkkari mihin mä olen päätenyt	damn what have I got myself into
Example 2	mitä tuokin tuossa häiritsee tätä mun työtä	why does that person there disturb me when I'm doing my work
Example 3	aha. nyt mulla jäi toi sana.	a-ha. now I missed that word
Example 4	ei hitto, mä en tiedä, että osaanko mä enää tätä	oh man, I don't know if I'll manage this any longer
Example 5	mä en halua sanoa	I don't want to say it
Example 6	uskallanko mä kysyä että suuttuuko se nyt mulle	do I dare to ask or will he be angry with me
Example 7	mitä mä teen että olenko vaan hiljaa annanko mennä vaan	what should I do or should I just remain silent should I simply let go

The non-first-person self-talk category, on the other hand, contained more instructional rather than reflective or motivational self-talk. The analysis showed that 22 out of the 36 non-first-person self-talk quotations were instructional self-talk. When non-first-person self-talk is further divided into the subcategories of second-person self-talk and third-person self-talk, the results became even clearer: 14 out of a total of 15 second-person self-talk quotations are instructional in nature, whereas in the third-person self-talk sub-category, only 8 out of 21, e.g. approximately one third, are instructional. These results indicate that there may be a link between instructional self-talk and distanced, e.g. non-first-person self-talk in general, but especially between instructional self-talk and second-person self-talk.

Table 3.3 illustrates some examples of second-person instructional self-talk statements made by interpreters. Most of the instructional second-person self-talk statements were used to address internal listening filters (see Section 4.3), but in the data there were also two instances where instructional second-person self-talk is used for other purposes. They were linked to the interpreter’s instruction of oneself in how (not) to behave or (not) to act (see Example 12).

Table 3.3 Examples of instructional second-person self-talk statements

<i>Example #</i>	<i>Original Finnish self-talk statements</i>	<i>English translation</i>
Example 8	muista roolisi hoida työsi, tulkkaa asiallisesti älä anna tämän vaikuttaa	remember your role, do your job, interpret appropriately, do not let this have an effect
Example 9	suppress, paina se heti pois	suppress, put it away immediately
Example 10	fokusoi fokusoi fokusoi	focus focus focus
Example 11	sulle ei makseta siitä mitä sä tunnet. vaan sulle maksetaan siitä että sä autat näitten kommunikointia. sano nyt mitä hän sanoi.	you’re not paid for what you feel. you’re paid for helping them communicate. now say what he said
Example 12	älä ärsytä tota	don’t annoy that guy

4.3 The relationship between the functions and linguistic forms of self-talk

RQ 3 focused on the potential relationship between the functions and linguistic forms of the reported covert ST statements. The results show that a total of 28 out of the 30 instructional

covert self-talk instances is actually self-talk that served to address internal listening filters.

Based on this empirical data, one could argue that addressing internal listening filters is a core function of instructional self-talk in dialogue interpreting.

The interpreters' instructional self-talk statements used to address internal listening filters referred to various situations in which the interpreter's attention was drawn to other phenomena other than listening to the current speaker. These included, for example, a situation where a participant or specific content made the interpreter feel uneasy (see Examples 13 and 14 in Table 3.4). Another example was that the interpreter failed to recall a specific word in the target language (Example 15). A further example was that the interpreter needed to refocus his/her attention on the task at hand after being distracted by personal memories that were acute and emotional (Examples 16 to 19). A further reason for the interpreter to engage in instructional self-talk was fatigue (Examples 20 and 21).

Examples for the self-talk statements as mentioned above can be found in Table 4 below.

Table 3.4 Examples of instructional self-talk statements addressing internal listening filters

<i>Example #</i>	Finnish original self-talk statement	English translation
Example 13	keskity nyt ja tulkaa mitä se sanoo	concentrate now and interpret what he says
Example 14	mun tehtävä on tulkata	my task is to interpret
Example 15	hani jo unohda se	honey, forget it already

Example 16	hei. mä oon tulkki. mä oon täällä.	hello. I'm the interpreter. I'm here.
Example 17	ei, kun nyt tulkataan.	no, now we interpret.
Example 18	ei nyt. ei nyt itke.	not now. no crying now.
Example 19	ole läsnä. ole läsnä, it's not about me.	be present. be present, it's not about me.
Example 20	nyt täysin mukana. kuuntele.	now fully attentive. listen.
Example 21	tässä on käänne. tarkkana.	that's a turning point. pay attention.

As for the linguistic form of covert self-talk statements used to address internal listening filters, the question was whether self-talk statements were expressed in first-person or in non-first-person form. The results show that the instructional self-talk statements used to address internal listening filters were most often in the linguistic form of non-first-person self-talk, more specifically in second-person self-talk. There was, however, also evidence that this kind of instructional self-talk could occur as first-person self-talk (e.g., Example 16 in Table 3.4). In the data, the most frequent function of instructional self-talk was to manage internal listening filters by refocusing the interpreter's attention on their task at hand and/or controlling and addressing distracting thoughts and other distracting elements, such as the interpreter's personal emotions (see Examples in Table 3.4). This finding largely tallies with those from previous studies in psychology (e.g., Kross et al. 2014; Hatzigeorgiadis & Galanis 2017).

5. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the use of covert self-talk during dialogue interpreting in general, as well as to study specifically the linguistic forms and functions of covert self-talk. The analysis showed that 28 of all 82 self-talk occurrences, e.g. approximately a third, are concerned with instructional self-talk used for addressing internal listening filters. Although instructional self-talk does not appear to be the most used type of covert self-talk during interpreting, it is found to play a crucial role for the quality of the interpreter's listening process due to its function and mitigating effect on internal listening filters.

As for the actual linguistic manifestation of covert self-talk in interpreting, the results show that although some instructional self-talk statements took the form of immersed first-person self-talk, most instructional self-talk occurs as distanced non-first-person self-talk, and more specifically as second-person self-talk. The types of self-talk statements reported in the data of this study are very much in line with the samples of self-talk reported by ASL–English interpreters in Maddux and Nicodemus (2016: 187), where covert self-talk during assignments concerned both non-first person instructional self-talk (“Stay calm. Focus. Breathe, breathe.”), as well as more reflective or reactive first-person self-talk (“I am really bored with this discussion”, “I can see this person is getting upset. Get ready.”) (ibid.). One could argue that from the two self-talk types, non-first-person instructional self-talk is likely to be an effective way to address listening filters as it creates self-distancing which benefits emotion regulation and attention and helps reduce the occurrence of interfering thoughts.

In addition, the results of this study showed that a large part of the reported covert self-talk during interpreting is concerned with reflective self-talk. Reflective self-talk points to instances where dialogue interpreters engaged in reactive self-talk with themselves by reflecting on and thinking about various topics related to the situation or the speaker. The large amount of reflective self-talk in the data would point to the experienced interpreters' ability to perceive and process various other details of the communicative situation in addition to the actual verbal and non-verbal content of the speaker. These include the reactions and behaviour of the other clients as well as the interpreters' personal reactions, among many other factors.

While successfully demonstrating the importance of self-talk in dialogue interpreting, the present study also has its limitations. First, the data is derived from a small sample, with 78 self-talk quotations stemming from 20 individual interviews with dialogue interpreters. In addition, the data was collected with a specific focus on elements of the dialogue interpreters' professional listening competence, which undoubtedly has influenced the topics that interpreters report on. Furthermore, for the validity of the reported self-talk statements, it must also be noted that research on self-talk always carries an amount of vagueness. As Oleś et al. (2020: 8) stated, not all intrapersonal communication is conscious, and self-talk statements are also highly context-dependant. Therefore, self-talk data is often limited to situations and experiences that respondents are able to recall or infer based on their consciousness and awareness. Despite this, we can learn from the covert self-talk reports and experiences that interpreters do recall and remember.

The role of covert self-talk in interpreting deserves more attention from interpreting researchers. After all, self-talk can serve a variety of functions in interpreting as indicated by Maddox and

Nicodemus (2016). Also, the role of covert instructional self-talk in the management of internal listening filters (Viljanmaa 2020) points to the direction of pedagogical implications. In other words, future interpreting students may benefit from learning more about different self-talk functions and their benefits and possible effects on interpreting performance. Equally, interpreting practitioners could also benefit from more information on the role of instructional self-talk and its effect on their performance.

Meanwhile, a question arises as to whether the use of covert instructional or motivational self-talk is something that needs to be learned deliberately or it is a natural human phenomenon that will occur anyway (cf. Orvell et al. 2019: 570). The interpreters interviewed for this study clearly already used instructional self-talk frequently in their practise. At the same time, evidence from self-talk research in the field of sports psychology would suggest that focusing on specific self-talk cues and paying attention to the linguistic forms of self-talk can actually improve performance. It would be interesting to find out whether or to what extent this also applies to interpreting. More research is needed to determine and confirm the various functions of instructional and motivational self-talk in interpreting as well as its effects. In addition, self-talk that occurs before and after an interpreting assignment would need to be investigated. A more holistic picture of spoken-language interpreters' self-talk uses is also needed. Future research could address this with the help of self-reports elicited through a questionnaire with prompts that have been successfully used in previous self-talk research in other domains (e.g. Morin et al. 2018: 379).

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