

**THE ROLE OF THE POLITICAL INTERPRETER
IN BILATERAL RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW**

Linda Brown
University of Tampere
School of Modern Languages and Translation Studies
Translation Studies (English)
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1. Introduction

”Prime Minister Churchill sat up all night drinking with Stalin at the Yalta Conference and said to him the next morning, ”I hope I didn’t say anything indiscreet last night.” ”Don’t worry,” Stalin supposedly replied, ”I had the interpreter shot.” (Korchilov 1997: 20)

”When asked what he would do if his entire cabinet were to strike, President Johnson replied that, without a doubt, he would replace all his ministers with interpreters until a permanent solution could be found, as he felt that interpreters had the breadth of knowledge and understanding of State affairs that the job requires.” (Obst in Cohen 2004)

These interpreters are the “language artists working in the shadow of the mighty.” (Die Flüsterer 2005). The above quotes portray a side of interpreting that political interpreters rarely witness (and one sincerely hopes that the Stalin anecdote is just a myth). The everyday interpreting in ministries, embassies, political organisations and political negotiations is far from the glamour associated with meetings between heads of state, as will be made clear in the discussion in this thesis. However, there is no denying that interpreters play a significant role in facilitating communication between states today as they have for millennia.

This thesis starts out with levelling the playing field. In Part I the term political interpreting is discussed, defined and classified within the larger context of dialogue interpreting, and I justify my use of a term that up to now has not been in common use in Interpreting Studies. I then briefly present the available research and discuss the lack of research in the field and present my own hypothesis and research questions. I then provide a short overview of the history of political interpreting and very briefly discuss the profession today.

Part II concentrates on the theoretical background of role discussions. I present what various authors have to say about role and the factors that affect it. I also critique and discuss some of these ideas and present some of my own conclusions and ideas. Aspects such as neutrality and impartiality, visibility vs. invisibility and various role definitions are relevant in all kinds of interpreting, no less so in political interpreting.

In Part III I turn from the theory and the literature to the practical side. I present the questionnaire and explain how the interviews were conducted and how the data was analysed. I discuss the results of the analysis – the interviewees' own role definitions, the impact of an interpreter on the interpreter-mediated event, and neutrality and objectivity – in three main chapters, investigating what interpreters themselves have to say about their role and how the users perceive interpreters.

PART I – The Fundamentals:

Definitions, Classifications, Previous Research and History

2. Levelling the Playing Field: Definitions and Classifications

2.1 Defining Political Interpreting

In order to avoid misunderstandings and to provide a solid foundation for this thesis, it is necessary to define a few terms. First, and most significantly, the term *political interpreting* requires some defending and explaining as the term is not in common use in Interpreting Studies. Mona Baker refers to political interpreting in her fascinating article *Interpreter Strategies in Political Interviews*, which discusses an interview between Trevor McDonald and Saddam Hussein before the first Gulf War¹.

There is, however, no accepted definition for the term political interpreting. For the purpose of this study, I have defined political interpreting as any interpreting where either the primary participants or the topic discussed is political. Granted, this definition is not unambiguous, but at this stage when so little research has been conducted on political interpreting, I feel it would be presumptuous to try to come up with a hard and fast definition. My main purpose is to distinguish it from other types of interpreting, such as business interpreting or community interpreting, and this can adequately be done by defining it according to mode, topic, situation and participants, based on Alexieva's (2004) parameters of categorisation (p. 221-222). These parameters include mode (simultaneous or consecutive) and the "[e]lements of the communicative situation, namely: the primary participants (Speaker and Addressee), the secondary participants

¹ Baker provides justifications for why such interpreting assignments merit investigation and why political interviews can be seen as a distinct category of interpreting assignment. Cecilia Wadensjö has also investigated political interviews in her article *Co-constructing Yeltsin – Explorations of an Interpreter-Mediated Political Interview*.

(Interpreter, Organizer, Moderator), the topic discussed ... the spatial and temporal specificities of the communication ...”. I will now briefly turn to these parameters.

Depending on the situation, the mode used in political interpreting may be either consecutive or simultaneous. In multilateral conferences, the mode will usually be simultaneous (this type of interpreting is prototypical conference interpreting).

Consecutive interpreting is used in several other political situations, such as diplomatic negotiations, press conferences, one-on-one meetings between ministers or heads of state and political interviews. This is the type of interpreting investigated in this thesis. The other parameters – the participants, topic, and the spatial and temporal specificities – form the basis of my definition. In political interviews, even though one of the primary participants is a non-political actor (the interviewer), the interviewee is often a high-ranking political leader, and so political interviews can also be classified as political interpreting because two out of the three criteria are fulfilled (situational and topic). Similarly, there are certain diplomatic situations where the topic is not necessarily political², but where the situation and primary participants fit the description, so it can likewise be classified as political interpreting.

2.1.1 Diplomatic interpreting

Diplomatic interpreting is an old and distinguished form of interpreting (cf. Chapter Three). Diplomatic interpreters have written their memoirs, and they are mentioned in

² For example after a day’s business is over, the delegates may have an evening of socialising or a visit to the theatre, etc. The topic is not political, but the primary participants are still in their diplomatic or political role.

much of the literature (cf. Roland 1999; Cohen 2004; Kucerová 1990). The term diplomatic interpreting was also a viable option for this study, but I have chosen against it, because it implies a much narrower range of interpreting than I wish to cover. There is a lot of political dialogue that cannot necessarily be termed diplomatic dialogue (e.g. political interviews) and indeed, as Hamilton and Langhorne explain in their book *The Practise of Diplomacy*, there is a lot of ambiguity about what actually comprises diplomatic dialogue nowadays:

Dialogue between old and new sources of power and old and new centres of authority are blurring the distinctions between what is diplomatic activity and what is not, and who, therefore, are diplomats and who are not. Such dialogue is also creating an additional layer of diplomacy in which non-state actors communicate both with states and associations of states and other non-state actors and vice versa. (Hamilton-Langhorne 1995:3)

Hamilton and Langhorne's definition of diplomacy is: "the peaceful conduct of relations amongst political entities, their principals and accredited agents" (p. 3). It follows that if diplomacy as a phenomenon is not as clearly defined as it once was, diplomatic interpreting is also somewhat ambiguous. The interpreters of days gone by were often diplomatic interpreters (cf. Chapter Three), and in a sense, one can say that political interpreting has developed from diplomatic interpreting.

2.2. Simultaneous vs. consecutive; conference vs. community interpreting

Interpreting can be divided and defined in several ways. As already mentioned, *mode*, i.e. simultaneous, consecutive, short consecutive or chuchotage is one commonly used element to differentiate between various types of interpreting (Alexieva 2002:221). The *spatial and temporal aspect* is also a viable deciding factor, i.e. whether the interpreter-

mediated event is in a conference hall, a courtroom, a hospital, a police station, in an immigrant hearing or in business or diplomatic negotiations.

The most commonly used classification of interpreting is into conference interpreting and community interpreting. Although far from exhaustive, this delineation is quite helpful and helps to define the specialised sets of skills necessary in each type of interpreting. For example, a conference interpreter will typically sit in a booth at the back of a conference hall with a booth partner interpreting delegates who usually are well educated and knowledgeable about the subject matter. The booth shields the interpreter from most interpersonal contact. Topics include almost anything imaginable, often of a very technical nature, and the interpreting mode is usually simultaneous. The speech is usually monologic, but dialogue can take place in question and answer sessions. Community interpreters on the other hand routinely have to deal with a hierarchical situation, where one of the parties – the ‘service provider’ – is significantly more educated and knowledgeable about the subject matter and on whom the other party is very dependant. The ‘dependant’ party often has very little information about the subject matter and the decision that the ‘service provider’ makes may have a significant impact on his future. In community interpreting the mode used is commonly consecutive and the interpreted situations tend to be in medical or legal contexts. An important element which distinguishes community interpreting from conference interpreting is that the interpreter is face-to-face with the primary participants and the speech is dialogic (cf. Handbuch Translation 2005; Alexieva 2002).

2.3 Liaison interpreting

Handbuch Translation (2005) provides in-depth explanations (p. 301-307) of the two main modes (simultaneous and consecutive) and a classification of interpreting into conference, media, court, liaison, community, sign language and video-conference interpreting (p. 208-326). Here the situational element is decisive in all the classifications except liaison and sign language interpreting³. *Handbuch Translation* says about liaison interpreting that it often comprises a very broad spectrum of more or less formal negotiation situations (p. 316). The most relevant fields where liaison interpreters work are diplomatic, industrial, business and political negotiations and conversations. Although such negotiations may be interpreted by one interpreter, who would have to interpret in both directions, it is also commonplace for each party to bring its own interpreter. Other authors (Cohen 2004; Kucerova 1990) also talk about the practice – particularly in political situations – of each party using its own interpreter. Furthermore, the interpreters usually interpret their ‘own’ party, so in practice they are interpreting out of their native tongue in the ‘wrong’ direction.

There is some disagreement about whether this practice is to be desired or not. *Handbuch Translation* comments on the necessity of an interpreter having a good accent in the non-native tongue, but does not elaborate on whether this A-B direction is better or worse than B-A. Others, particularly diplomatic interpreters themselves and the diplomats who

³ Although in video-conference interpreting the situational element does not play as great a role as in the more traditional forms such as court interpreting (takes place in a court) or community interpreting (takes place in the community i.e. in hospitals or social service agencies, etc.), one can view the aspect of distance as a situational element.

use interpreters (cf. Cohen, 2004; the discussion in Part III of this thesis) describe it as a necessary practice, because in high-level political negotiations, it is absolutely imperative that the interpreter understand every nuance and shading in the speech, and that this level of comprehension is only attainable in the native or A language. Thus we can see that liaison interpreting is a bit of an exception to the other types of interpreting. It cannot be strictly defined according to the situational element, and it diverges from the common practice of interpreting into the A language.

2.4 Dialogue interpreting

The term *dialogue interpreting* is sometimes used interchangeably with liaison interpreting⁴ (Handbuch 2005:316). For example, Alexieva (2002) discusses liaison interpreting and refers to the interpersonal element as the deciding factor (p. 223-224). However, she does not take into account the hierarchical difference inherent in most community interpreting situations. According to her definition, then, community and business/political interpreting can both be classified as liaison interpreting. Wadensjö, on the other hand, talks about dialogue interpreting in her work in community settings (cf. Wadensjö 2002, 2004). Indeed, much of the research on dialogue interpreting has been conducted in community interpreting and court interpreting situations (Mason 1999:381-385). For lack of tried and tested definitions, I have defined dialogue interpreting as being an umbrella term for community and liaison interpreting.

⁴ For comparison: neuvottelutulkkaus/keskustelutulkkaus (Finnish); Verhandlungsdolmetschen/Gesprächsdolmetschen (German).

Community and liaison interpreting share certain elements, such as the interpersonal and spontaneous nature of communication, but the element of the hierarchical difference inherent in community interpreting that does not exist to the same degree (if at all) in liaison interpreting is, in my opinion, so significant that it is necessary to clearly define and distinguish the two types of interpreting situations. In business or political negotiations, the primary participants often have approximately the same social status and educational background and the communication may be significantly different than in community interpreting.

Dialogue interpreting started attracting the attention of researchers in the 1990s (Pöchhacker 2002:354; Mason 1999:381-385). Dialogue interpreting is mostly performed in the consecutive mode, but differs from normal consecutive interpreting in that the communication is built up of shorter, spontaneous, improvised dialogue (Snell-Hornby 2005:317).

2.5 Classifying Political Interpreting

These definitions are not exhaustive, and the lines separating the different kinds of interpreting are hazy. However, I have classified political interpreting as a subcategory of liaison interpreting, which in turn is a subcategory of dialogue interpreting. Parallel subcategories to political interpreting are, inter alia, business interpreting and military interpreting. Political interpreting can further be divided into specific interpreting assignments, such as press conferences, one-on-one meetings, diplomatic negotiations and political interviews. The following diagram illustrates my system of classification.

The categories are tentative and by no means do they claim to be exhaustive. However, I feel that being able to locate political interpreting within the broader spectrum of interpreting helps to put things in perspective.

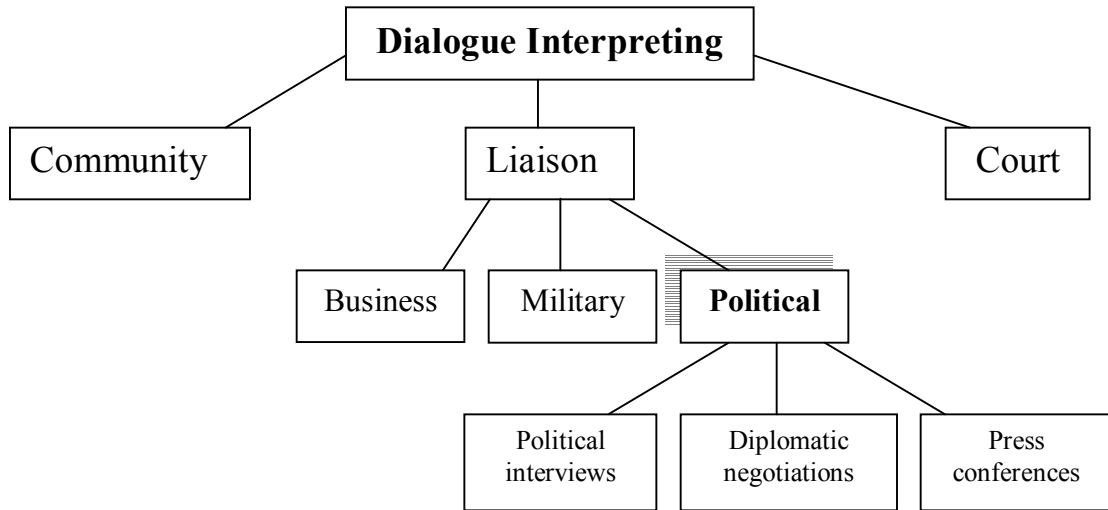


Figure 1. Political interpreting as a subfield of dialogue interpreting.

3. Lack of Research on Political Interpreting

During the past fifty years Interpreting Studies has become a recognised academic field of study with scholars, teachers and practitioners, but very little research has been done on political interpreting⁵ (cf. Gile, Seleskovitch). It is ironic that although political interpreting is one of the oldest professions in the world, it is rarely mentioned in scholarly work. As already mentioned, dialogue interpreting has received some attention from scholars from the early 1990s (cf. Mason 1999), albeit very little in comparison to conference interpreting, but political interpreting goes almost unmentioned. As far as I have been able to discern, solid research about the performance, role and user perceptions of political interpreters is virtually nonexistent.

Political interpreting as such is not taught at universities, but political subjects are included in most teaching programmes⁶. The London Metropolitan University offers a four-day course in diplomatic interpreting (see the Bibliography for the website) which focuses on the skills needed in “interpreting in the diplomatic environment (political talks, consular situations, visa interviews, diplomatic receptions)”. Several political interpreters have written their memoirs, giving us a glimpse of what their work is like⁷, but these books cannot be counted as scholarly work.

⁵ Books such as *The Interpreting Studies Reader* and *Introducing Interpreting Studies* edited by Pöchhacker and Schlesinger provide an overview of the history of the profession and of current trends in research.

⁶ I say this from personal experience from two universities and from hearing about the experiences of fellow students in interpreting programmes in Graz, Herriot-Watt University, ESIT and Geneva.

⁷ Pavel Palaschtschenko’s *My years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze*, Valentin Bereschkow’s *Ich war Stalins Dolmetscher* and Eugen Dollmann’s *Dolmetscher der Diktatoren* to name but a few.

Mona Baker (2006) investigates the potential of interpreting in political interviews to shape cultural images and to further the cause of world peace and the enormous psychological and emotional strain involved in interpreting politically sensitive issues (p. 43, 49). She claims that the strain results not from cognitive overload as in conference interpreting, but from the “tension and acrimony that often pervade the whole encounter” (p. 45). She also recognises “the awesome moral and historical responsibility” involved in interpreting for a political leader in times of international crises (p.45). It must, however, be emphasised that such interpreting assignments are extremely rare and that more mundane political issues are usually the subject of political interpreting. Baker also comments on the ambiguity inherent in an interpreter’s role in such situations (p. 45). Baker surmises that in such difficult and stressful situations, the interpreter often resorts to a very literal, semantic interpreting strategy (p. 45, 46).

Baker states that there is a need for further research on the topic of political interpreting because, in order to avoid the problems involved in stressful political situations and to improve interpreter performance, it is necessary to understand the constraints inherent in such situations and the motivations for the strategies adopted by the interpreters (p. 49). At the time of her writing there were only two other papers published in English that discussed political interpreting (Baker 1997; Wadensjö 1997). Perhaps this thesis can set the stage for further research.

3.1 The Hypothesis

This thesis is based on the view that an interpreter does indeed have an affect on the interpreter-mediated events that take place in political settings, but that she does not play as active a role as the primary participants. Rather, on the spectrum of non-participant – participant, her role is somewhere in the middle. This thesis is a preliminary study of how political interpreters and their clients perceive the role of interpreters and how active the interpreter’s role is in interpreter-mediated political events. My hypothesis is that people find it easiest to communicate with people with whom they share common experiences and knowledge, therefore interpreting is most successful in situations where all parties have these aspects in common, as it minimises the risk of miscommunication and misunderstanding. When this shared foundation is lacking, the interpreter takes on a more active role in the exchange – either intuitively or on purpose – to keep the communication from breaking down. The less the primary parties have in common, the more active a role the interpreter feels she must play and the more of an impact she will have on the situation. For example, a community interpreter has to be able to construct communication and understanding between two individuals or parties of potentially vastly different backgrounds, so it is conceivable that a community interpreter would have to be more active in the interpreter-mediated events than a political interpreter, whose clients are likely to be from similar social and educational backgrounds and, furthermore, are usually accustomed to functioning in international environments and speaking through an interpreter.

Much of the research conducted in community interpreting can be extrapolated to political interpreting and, more generally, liaison interpreting because both share the similar aspect of spontaneous, face-to-face dialogue. However, because of the significance of the distinguishing aspect (the hierarchical difference inherent in most community interpreting situations that does not exist in political interpreting) one has to be very careful not to draw parallels too easily.

4. A Brief History of Political Interpreting

The need for communication between people of different nationalities has existed since the beginning of recorded history. As Ruth Roland (1999: 7) points out in her book *Interpreters as Diplomats*, it has always been an exception rather than the rule for people to be able to communicate in foreign languages. These exceptions did exist, but they were as rare then as they are today, and interpreters have played an important role in the communication between nations throughout history. This communication between rulers and nations is what is thought of as diplomacy⁸ (cf. Section 2.1.1).

The oldest references to interpreters can be found in the literature on ancient Egypt around 3000-4000 years ago. These interpreters served the pharaohs and can be seen as the first diplomatic interpreters (Hermann 2002: 15; Saresvuo 1988: 14). Bilingual inhabitants of the border region between Egypt and Nubia were known as *dragomen*, or interpreters (Saresvuo 1988: 14). Hermann (2002: 16) tells of a man called “Overseer of Dragomans, Head of Missions, Keeper of the White Bull and Courtier”, which shows that interpreters played an important role in external and internal Egyptian matters, both outside the borders as well as in the Egyptian administration.

The Bible and the literature of the ancient Near East, Greece and Rome have several references to interpreters, even though their names are seldom mentioned (Roland 1999: 9). There are references to chief interpreters, or *rabi targumanne*, in Cappadocia in

⁸ For details concerning the history of diplomacy, see Hamilton-Langhorne’s *The Practise of Diplomacy*.

Eastern Turkey from the 1800s BC, where the rabi targumanne played such an important role that a Turkish sultan once erected a mosque in his honour (Saresvuo 1988: 15). In historic accounts we often read about ambassadors or messengers visiting far off nations, but it is rarely made clear how they managed to communicate (Roland 1999: 8). We assume that they used interpreters, who in those days often also functioned as translators, scribes and diplomats (Roland 1999: 10). Interpreters in Egypt were not very highly respected, and were known as “speakers of strange tongues” (Hermann 2002: 16).

Sometimes young men were actively recruited as interpreters. Egyptian boys were sent to the Nile Delta to learn Greek, and it has been suggested that they were the first class ever of interpreters (Hermann 2002: 18). The majority became interpreters almost by accident; they had just happened to be born into a bilingual family (Roland 1999: 11). These linguists were often given the equivalent of diplomatic status, although not all leaders respected their inviolability (Roland, 1999: 12).

The ancient Greeks viewed the interpreter as almost divine; he carried out certain linguistic tasks belonging to the god Hermes (Hermann 2002: 18). Ancient Greece is widely known for the importance its rulers placed on diplomacy (Hamilton-Langhorne 1995: 8-12). Greek envoys were gifted, trained orators, and it was considered a loss of face if rulers tried to stumble through a message themselves rather than entrusting the task to their interpreter (Roland 1999: 15). These interpreters were far more than just envoys the way we understand the term today; they even had the right to argue their master’s case before the assembly to which they were sent (Roland 1999: 15).

This broad view of an interpreter's responsibilities was not unique to Ancient Greece, rather it seems to have been a general trend in the ancient and mediaeval world. There were situations when Julius Caesar entrusted interpreters with the task of carrying out negotiations with representatives or rulers of other nations (Roland, 1999: 18). There is evidence that in the fifth century AD the Magister Officiorum (the equivalent of the Chancellery of the Ministry of the Interior) had recorded interpreters for the barbaric languages, and sometimes the interpreters had diplomatic duties as well (Hermann 2002: 19).

In some cases, however, it seems that the interpreter had no other practical function than to be an element of the pomp and ceremony involved in high-level negotiations.

Sometimes Roman rulers used Greek interpreters even though they would easily have been able to communicate in Greek; the Roman Empire from the time of the late Republic onwards was, after all, bilingual to a large extent (Hermann 2002: 16). An educated Roman citizen was almost certain to be fluent in Greek as well as Latin, however, the aversion to Greek often led to Roman citizens using interpreters even it was not necessary (Hermann 2001: 16). Presumably this was a way of emphasising the superiority of the Latin language and the Roman culture (Roland 1999: 20).

There are also mentions of interpreters during the crusades, which can perhaps be better classified as military interpreting, and the time of colonialism (Saresvuo 1988: 16-19). As international dialogue increased in Europe, for long periods of time there was a lingua franca that restricted the need for interpreters, at least in diplomatic dialogue. Until the

mid 17th century, the lingua franca in Europe was Latin and in the *dar al-Islam*, the Abode of Islam, Arabic was the common language (Saresvuo 1988: 19; Hamilton 1995: 20). In Europe, French gradually took over as the language of the educated elite and of diplomacy, until it grudgingly gave way to English (Saresvuo 1988: 19-20). Indeed, French as the language of diplomacy was so deeply-rooted that it was not until 1907, when a significant decision was taken in the International Court of Justice in The Hague and the parties themselves could decide which language to use, that English began to establish its position as a viable alternative (Saresvuo 1988: 20). In 1919 in the Paris peace negotiations, English was formally granted official status next to French, and in fact the two official languages of the League of Nations were French and English (Saresvuo 1988: 20). The period between the two world wars in Europe was a golden age for diplomatic (consecutive) interpreters, but as technology developed and the equipment enabling simultaneous interpreting came into common use, consecutive interpreting gradually gave way to simultaneous conference interpreting, although it certainly still plays a very important role (cf. Handbuch Translation 2005: 304-305; Saresvuo 1988: 23).

5. Political Interpreting Today

We must ask ourselves, “In what way is diplomatic interpreting different from other kinds of interpreting?” First, the normal requirements of the professional interpreter become more stringent: general qualifications as to language, culture, voice, diction, tact, the awareness of confidentiality. The diplomatic interpreter must inspire confidence and trust, always putting the objectives of his principal first – which may include accepting undeserved blame – and be equally at ease in front of large audiences, millions of television viewers, or in face-to-face meetings between heads of state. (Kucerová 1990: 37)

Although a political interpreter is not subjected to conditions such as millions of television viewers or face-to-face meetings between heads of state on an everyday basis, they do come up occasionally (cf. Cohen, 2004; personal interviews). There is a flattering anecdote about President Lyndon Johnson that I have quoted in the Introduction.

President Johnson, when asked what he would do if his entire Cabinet went on strike, replied that he would immediately replace all his Cabinet members with interpreters until a more permanent arrangement could be settled on, as his interpreters had the necessary knowledge and understanding of political matters that would be required in the job (Obst in Cohen 2004).

As one can easily imagine, political interpreters may witness very sensitive conversations. High-level political leaders are responsible for decisions that affect each one of us, and clear communication is obviously of paramount importance (Baker 2006: 44). The role of the interpreter in these exchanges is therefore a very sensitive one and one which all interpreters must think through for themselves.

There are diplomatic interpreters today as well, for example the US State Department employs so-called escort interpreters for visitors under The International Visitor Leadership Program⁹. The German Ministry for Foreign Affairs has a subdivision called the Sprachendienst¹⁰, which in turn has an interpreting division that provides the German Government and Foreign Ministry (and in foreign policy matters, the German Parliament) with interpreters. However, not all governments have a separate language or interpreting service, and so interpreters are commissioned from the free markets to interpret in political and diplomatic situations (personal communication). The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has a few in-house interpreters for Russian, but interpreters for other languages are commissioned from outside the Ministry (personal communication with one of the Counsellors at the Protocol Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs).

⁹ See the Bibliography for the website

¹⁰ See the Bibliography for the website

PART II – Theoretical Foundations:

Elements Involved in Role Definitions

”Interpreters don’t have a problem with ethics, they have a problem with the role” (Fritsch-Rudser in Roy 2002)

6. Aspects of Role

An interpreter can be the determining factor to whether communication is successful or completely breaks down, and therefore whether the primary participants achieve their goals or not. The role and the behaviour of the interpreter (and researching it) is therefore far from irrelevant. Cynthia Roy (1989) was the first to emphasise the fact that the interpreter does indeed play an active role in interpreter-mediated interaction in her PhD thesis about the consultations between a Deaf doctoral student and her supervisor.

Even though Roy’s work investigates signed-language interpreting, Pöchhacker and Schlesinger point out that ”the socio-psychological dynamics reflected in her account are strikingly similar – and relevant – to the conceptual issues dealt with by spoken-language interpreters working in community settings.” (2004: 340). The discussion about the role of interpreters is so central to the actual practising of the profession that when Fritsch-Rudser, speaking to a room full of interpreters, said ”Interpreters don’t have a problem with ethics, they have a problem with the role” the entire room applauded (Roy 2002: 347).

6.1 Visibility vs. Invisibility

The debate about the visibility or the invisibility of the interpreter has ranged over several decades between two arguments. From the claim that the interpreter should be invisible, and the less one notices her, the more successful the interpreted communication event has been, IS has moved on to accept that the interpreter is actually physically present, and patently not invisible, and therefore it is ridiculous to even argue that she should be. Instead, we should concentrate on studying what kind of an effect she has on the communication, as it is clear that a third person taking part in a dialogue is sure to have an impact on it. Claudia Angelelli has conducted a lot of research on the visibility/invisibility of interpreters in medical settings and has argued against the view of interpreters as non-participants. In *Revisiting the Interpreter's Role and Medical Interpreting and Cross-cultural Communication* Angelelli discusses the role definitions of interpreters not only in community settings, but also in court interpreting and conference interpreting based on the idea of visibility/invisibility¹¹. It must be emphasised here that this research was conducted in community, court and conference settings, which, as has already been made clear, differ significantly from liaison interpreting settings such as business or political interpreting.

6.2 The development of role definitions for interpreters

Roy (2002: 349) explains how the role definition of interpreters has developed over the years. The view of interpreters as helpers was prevalent at the time when community

¹¹ Angelelli's doctoral work is presented in *Revisiting the Interpreter's Role* with a seminal discussion of role definitions and how court, medical and conference interpreters themselves view their role.

interpreters were family members or friends of people who did not speak the dominant language (whether immigrants or Deaf people), and who went along to important meetings to help with communication. They also saw it as their prerogative to help out in other ways as well, even to the point of making decisions on behalf of their friend or family member. This reflected the attitude that the people dependent on the interpreter were not able to take care of their own affairs.

As community interpreters started to professionalise, they took the other extreme in an attempt to prove their professionalism. They portrayed themselves as neutral machines, or conduits, through which the message was passed without being affected in any way by the interpreter herself. This, however, led to interpreters not accepting responsibility for failed interpreter-mediated communication, and the users of interpreters were often dissatisfied (Witter-Merithew in Roy 2002: 350).

In an attempt to rectify this negative view of the role of interpreters, the profession adopted a third view based on communications theory: the interpreter as a communication-facilitator (Roy 2002: 349). The 'conduit' had become a 'language and communication-mode expert', enabling communication by converting the message from the sender to the receiver. Roy also explains that since the late 1970s, most definitions of the role of the interpreter have included an emphasis on the necessity for bilingualism and biculturalism (p. 351).

As noted by Roy, however, such metaphorical definitions have served to harm the profession's view of an interpreter's role:

these definitions and descriptions have limited the profession's own ability to understand the interpreting event itself and the role of the interpreter within the event. This has led to a belief system about interpreting which is based on the unexamined notion of the interpreter as a conduit." (Roy 2002: 345)

Roy recognises that the profession of interpreting has been influenced by conflicting views of the reality of the role of interpreters. On the one hand we have the stringent rules laid down by Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct for interpreters to be neutral and impartial at all times, and on the other hand interpreters themselves have recognised that they by necessity do more than just rendering words from one language to another (Roy 2002: 351; Mason 1999: 22).

This conduit metaphor is very persistent. The term was coined in 1979 to describe what is commonly assumed to happen in language communication (Reddy in Mason 1999: 150). We tend to talk about 'getting our message across' or 'getting through' to someone or 'sending the wrong message' and this reflects what we think about communication (Mason 1999: 150).

In the article *Establishing Communicative Contact through a Dialogue Interpreter*, Linell, Wadensjö and Jönsson show that dialogue interpreters are often compelled to take on an active role and intervene in the communication activities and to act as mediator (Linell et al 1992: 125). Concerning the interpreter's overall task, they argue that "she must both create shared understanding of the factual subject matter talked about and

establish contact and rapport between the parties. The latter task would involve a good deal of face work” (p. 129). Even though this article is based on research conducted in a medical setting, this particular aspect of dialogue interpreting can be carried over to political interpreting, because both share the distinctive element of spontaneous face-to-face communication.

6.3 An interpreter’s Simultaneous Roles of Relayer and Coordinator

Wadensjö is well known in the field of Interpreting Studies for her pioneering work on dialogue interpreting in the early 1990s. One of the most significant insights of her research for studying the role of a dialogue interpreter is that a dialogue interpreter simultaneously acts as a relayer (translating or rendering the speech into the other language) as well as a gatekeeper (coordinating and actively shaping the mediated event) (Wadensjö 2002: 357). Linell et al. also support her argument that these roles are not mutually exclusive, rather that they exist alongside each other (Linell et al. 1992).

Wadensjö’s research exploded the myth that interpreters merely mechanically render words from one language to another, and showed that they play an active role in the mediated event. However, it must be emphasised again that Wadensjö’s research was conducted in community settings and her conclusions cannot necessarily be extrapolated to liaison interpreting.

6.4 Role Definitions: Bilingual, Middle Man or Power Figure?

In 1976 Anderson wrote a seminal article on the role of an interpreter. He presents three ways of viewing an interpreter: the interpreter as bilingual, the interpreter as a middle

man and the interpreter as a power figure (Anderson 2002: 214). The interpreter as bilingual often finds herself identifying more with the speakers of her dominant language, thereby running into conflict with trying to maintain impartiality. The interpreter as a middle man has obligations toward both clients he is serving, which can also lead to conflicts of loyalty. It is the interpreter as a power figure that interests me here, since I am investigating the interpreter's active role. It is clear that an interpreter does have an affect on the interpreter-mediated event, but how, why and to what extent? Anderson puts it succinctly in his article:

... his position in the middle has the advantage of power inherent in all positions which control scarce resources. This advantage, when combined with the relative ambiguity of the interpreter's role, allows him considerable latitude in defining his own behavior vis-à-vis his clients. His behavior may, therefore, be expected to have an unusually great impact on the structure of the entire situation. The interpreter's control over the interaction pattern that develops, and thereby over the structure of the triadic relationship, is founded in his ability to translate selectively. He may translate all that is said by both clients with as great fidelity as he can muster – or he may choose not to. His monolingual clients will be unable to ascertain the difference unless he oversteps rather wide bounds. (Anderson 2002: 212).

This sort of absolute power inherent in the interpreter's role in an interpreter-mediated event places an enormous burden on the interpreter. As she is the only one able to keep checks on herself, her moral, ethical and linguistic responsibility is awesome.

6.5 Role prescription, role overload and role conflict

Anderson maintains (2002: 211) that one of the reasons why it is difficult to define the role of an interpreter is because her role is always somewhat undefined, i.e. there is a lack of role prescription. An interpreter's role can change and develop according to the situation, the participants and type of speech (cf. Alexieva 2002; Roy 2002). In certain

situations the interpreter may be perfectly able to keep active intervention to a minimum, whereas in other situations she may be compelled to take on a more active role to minimise misunderstandings and bridge cultural differences. As has already been stated, there is virtually no research on political interpreting, so the lack of role prescription is a particularly salient feature in this field.

Anderson defines role overload as when the interpreter is expected to do things that she cannot objectively cope with (Anderson 2002: 210). Examples of role overload are when the participants both talk at once and the interpreter cannot cope, or when the interpreting goes on for too long, inducing mental strain (Anderson 2002: 211). Anderson claims that "a powerful interpreter could solve the role overload problem simply by insisting that his clients take turns talking, pause often, and break off the exchange after an hour or two." (p. 212). However, as one of the roles ascribed to interpreters is that of a power figure, I think it more logical to say that an *assertive* interpreter could solve the role overload problem. All interpreters are powerful, as it is a quality inherent in their position of linguistic and cultural go-between, but not all interpreters are assertive. One major caveat must be added at this point when considering political interpreting: protocol sometimes determines to a large extent who says what, to whom and in what manner; who stands where; even what kind of clothes are to be worn. In situations where protocol is followed precisely, an interpreter has very little leeway to solve potential role overload, no matter how assertive she is.

Role conflict or role strain becomes evident when an interpreter's role is that of a man in the middle. Serving two clients, the interpreter can run into a conflict of loyalty (Anderson 2002: 212), the only way out of which is to have an interpreter for each party. As has already been mentioned, this is common practice in high-level political situations. This eliminates role conflict and greatly reduces the power of a single interpreter. With two interpreters, there is always at least one other person able to monitor the interpreter's performance.

7. Factors that Affect the Role of the Interpreter

Interpreting never takes place in a social or situational vacuum, rather, it is moulded by the particular socio-cultural context in which it takes place. The institutional framework in which the interpreter-mediated event takes place – whether in a political, medical or legal setting – also affects the interpreted event (Wadensjö 2004: 107). This fits in with Alexieva's parameters for categorising interpreting (cf. Chapter 2). The empirical data from the research conducted by Linell et al prove that changes in the behaviour of the interpreter are directly traceable to elements of the socio-cultural and institutional context in which they act as mediators.

7.1 Global and local conditions

Linell et al (1992) discuss two types of factors – global and local conditions – that determine how active a role the interpreter plays in an interpreter-mediated event (p. 130). These factors are relevant in any kind of dialogue interpreting, regardless of the venue or type of interpreting. Global conditions are conditions which are inherent in the setting, such as the strictly delineated order of events and roles of participants in a court hearing, where there is very little room for interpreter intervention. The level of linguistic competence of the primary parties is also a significant global condition (Linell et al 1992: 130). I would also add the element of cultural competence because cultural and linguistic competence often go hand in hand and are difficult to separate from each other. A third global condition is how accustomed the primary parties are to communicating through interpreters and their attitude towards using an interpreter (Linell et al 1992: 130). Tying

in to this is how accustomed the primary parties are to functioning in an international setting.

In a political setting, protocol can be seen as one of the main global conditions, as it is very much a factor inherent in certain political situations. Other global conditions are the history of the political and political relations between the countries of the representatives in the interpreter-mediated event. We can imagine that the atmosphere of American-Soviet political negotiations were surely vastly different during the Cold War than American-Russian political negotiations today, as the relations between the two countries have mellowed since the end of the Cold War. After all, as Baker notes (2006: 45), much of the psychological and emotional stress involved in political interpreting results from the general atmosphere, which, in times of international crises can be quite fraught. The current political climate and geopolitical situation will also affect the atmosphere and dynamics of the exchange.

Local conditions are conditions associated with turn-taking getting out of hand, such as when both primary participants talk at the same time, or if one of the participants says something in the other party's language and temporarily eliminates the need for the interpreter, or if one of the parties addresses the interpreter directly with a comment that they do not want interpreting (Linell et al 2002: 131). These local conditions are just as valid in a political setting as in a medical or legal setting.

7.2 The Linguistic Competence of the Participants

Alexieva discusses several factors that effect the role of the interpreter¹² (Alexieva 2002: 224). Firstly, the degree of linguistic competence of the primary participants. The interpreter's role is clearly different if she is there as a backup for participants that are mostly conversant in a common language than if both parties have absolutely no knowledge of each other's languages. The level of monitoring can be between 0% and 100%. In the case where the parties are completely dependent on the interpreter's mediation, there is nobody else monitoring her performance. If, in addition to a lack of linguistic competence, there is the added burden of vastly differing cultural backgrounds, the interpreter may be called upon to play a very active role in bridging intercultural differences (Alexieva 2002: 224, 230-231).

The linguistic competence of the interpreter also has an effect on her role, and by this I do not mean merely how well she commands her working languages. Anderson discusses the relationship between an interpreter's dominant language and her tendencies to identify with speakers of that language, so unless an interpreter is fully bilingual and bicultural, there may be an imbalance in her attitude towards her languages and therefore towards her clients. Anderson also suggests that we can expect multicultural interpreters to be more impartial (Anderson 2002: 211, 213).

¹² Alexieva discusses five factors in her *Parameter 2* (p. 224) , but for the purposes of this study, only four are relevant.

7.3 The Status, Role and Number of Participants

7.3.1 The Status of the Participants

In addition to the linguistic competence of the primary participants as a factor that affects the role of the interpreter, the status of the participants and the power relationship between them and between them and the interpreter affect the interpreter and her role (Alexieva 2002: 225). The social status of the primary participants and of the interpreter affect the dynamics of the event. Factors such as age, gender and wealth are all aspects of status. Furthermore, in political settings, we have the added element of the diplomatic or political status of the primary participants and of the relative status of the countries they represent. For example the Finnish foreign minister and the American foreign minister may have equal diplomatic status, but their relative status in terms of world politics is vastly different. This, however, should make no overt difference in political or diplomatic negotiations, where people of high rank are always shown the degree of courtesy demanded by their office. It might, however, have an effect on how approachable they are (cf. discussion of interviews).

Where the primary participants are on an equal footing in terms of social status, communication is likely to proceed without tension, but if their social status is very different, it adds an element of tension to the group dynamics. This applies to the interpreter as well. The interpreter's age, gender and level of education are likely to affect the atmosphere and the group dynamics of the interpreter-mediated event (Alexieva 2002: 225-226). Alexieva writes, "research has shown that male speakers generally tend to dominate female speakers, especially in terms of control of topics, and to interrupt in

turn-taking (claiming a turn and holding the floor)” (p. 225). This could be very significant in an interpreter-mediated event if, as often is the case, the interpreter is the only woman in the room. If the interpreter is not assertive enough to claim a turn when necessary, it could have an adverse effect on the success of the communication.

Roy has shown how an interpreter makes decisions about turn-taking based on her socio-cultural understanding of the status of the primary participants and what is appropriate within a particular event (Roy in Mason 1999: 150). Baker’s analysis of the interpreter’s behaviour and interpreting strategies in the interview between Sir Trevor McDonald and President Saddam Hussein is also an interesting example of the interpreter’s socio-cultural understanding affecting her behaviour (cf. Baker). This is probably a subconscious instinct of the interpreter to maintain face on her own behalf but also on behalf of the primary participants. Mason also mentions the fact that interpreters seem to be very conscious of threats to face, both of their own and of the participants, and they tend to adopt politeness strategies, hedging and down toning to cope with this difficulty (Mason 1999: 159).

7.3.2 The Role of the Participants

The third factor that affects the role of the interpreter is the role of the participants. In political negotiations, their role will be their formal function as political leaders or diplomats. However, once the day’s business has been accomplished, there may well be a museum to visit or an informal evening of entertainment where the primary participants may engage in small talk or friendly chat with the help of the interpreter. In such a case,

their role shifts to more of that of private individuals, keeping in mind that when visiting a foreign country, a delegate of another country is never fully free of his role as a representative of his state.

7.3.3 The Number of Participants

The finally factor that effects the role of the interpreter is the number of the participants. According to Alexieva (2002: 226), the smaller the gathering, the cosier and more informal the atmosphere. This leads to less self-monitoring on behalf of all the participants (including the interpreter) and more culture-specificity and non-verbal behaviour in the communication. Events where large numbers of people are present tend to be more formal. In political settings another factor that affects the formality vs. informality of the situation is protocol. Some situations will be far more formal than others, and in political settings, protocol always plays a very important role. For example, diplomatic negotiations between two heads of state will always have a degree of formality that does not exist between meetings of lower ranking political leaders, e.g. ministers.

7.4 The socio-cultural factor in political interpreting

As already stated, the socio-cultural context of the interpreter-mediated event has an effect on the role of the interpreter. This factor is especially interesting in the context of a political setting. The primary participants – diplomats or political leaders – are themselves rooted in a particular social and cultural background as private individuals, but they are also representatives of their countries, and so one could imagine that culture-

specificity would play a large role in such exchanges. However, diplomats and political leaders are usually used to diplomacy and interacting in international settings, therefore one would expect that they would intuitively minimise the amount of culture-specificity in their behaviour and communication. Perhaps this is a factor that they use strategically in order to facilitate communication or to hinder it; to make communicative contact with the other party or to create tension; to maintain diplomatic politeness while still conveying different messages. This is, however, merely conjecture and these hypotheses merit empirical investigation.

Alexieva maintains (2002: 230-231) that if we can predict the level of culture-specificity in the interpreter-mediated event, we should be able to determine what kind of a role the interpreter will adopt. This shows once again that role is not something that exists in and of itself in a vacuum. Role is created by the situation and the people involved in the exchange, not just the primary participants, but also the interpreter. Depending on various factors, the interpreter may merely be an interlingual mediator, a so-called 'ghost' having a minimal part in the event, or, at the other extreme, she may have to actively intervene in the communication as an intercultural mediator, preventing or smoothing over cultural misunderstandings, in which case she will be more visible in the exchange (Kopezyski in Alexieva 2002: 230-231).

7.5 Monitoring

As already mentioned, the level of monitoring varies in different interpreter-mediated events, and the degree of monitoring that takes place has a significant effect on the role of

the interpreter and how she performs. In exchanges where both participants have some degree of linguistic competence in the other language, both of them will be able to monitor the interpreter's performance to some degree and the interpreter may adopt different interpreting strategies. In any case, her so-called margin of error will be far narrower, as the likelihood of one of the parties realising her mistake will be much higher than if she was the only one in the exchange with an understanding of both languages.

Another instance where monitoring will be higher than usual is if the event is going to be televised. Although this is not very likely in political negotiations, where confidentiality and secrecy are of importance, there are certain situations that are televised, for example greeting a visiting head of state or political interviews. Sometimes such interviews are broadcast live, and this adds a level of monitoring that can scarcely be measured¹³.

Political analysts, researchers, and 'normal' individuals will watch the interview in their homes in potentially several countries, many with a degree of linguistic competence.

Baker estimated that the Saddam Hussein interview was watched by approximately three and a half million viewers in Britain alone (Baker 2006: 43).

Baker's article portrays many of the difficulties involved in such a high degree of outside monitoring. The interpreter sometimes used several synonyms strung after each other to interpret one word, presumably in an attempt to cover all his bases and to provide a very literal rendition, as he was painfully aware of the sensitivity and tension in the

¹³ The interpreting is then likely to take on aspects of media interpreting, which has been researched by authors such as Eliane Bros-Brann and Ingrid Kurz.

communication. He would have been conscious of all the viewers and would not have wanted to leave himself open to criticism. In addition, President Hussein also had a high degree of linguistic competence in English, and was able to (and indeed did) monitor the interpreter to a large extent. The negative impact of the interpreter's literal interpretation strategy was, however, that to monolingual English-speaking people, Saddam Hussein's speech seemed stilted and awkward, even though he is a very lucid speaker and gifted orator (Baker 2006: 46).

8. The Problem with Neutrality

Several translators' or interpreters' organisations and associations have Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct delineating the work of conference and community interpreters from before the assignment to the follow-up after the actual interpreting (AIIC, SKTL, NAJIT to name just a few¹⁴). Many of these associations emphasise the importance of impartiality and neutrality, and this has been a controversial topic within Interpreting Studies for quite a while. Authors such as Holly Mikkelson and Susan Berk-Seligson have investigated the impartiality and neutrality of court interpreters, and Cecilia Wadensjö and Cynthia Roy have investigated the non-participation vs. participation of interpreters in community settings (Mason 1999: 381-385).

In Paragraph 11 of the Code of Ethics for Community Interpreters of the Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters (SKTL) and in Article 5 of the Code of Professional Ethics for Court Interpreters of the same association, the interpreter is obliged to maintain neutrality and impartiality at all times without letting her personal attitudes or opinions have an effect on her work. A brief scan of the Codes of Ethics of other interpreter organisations on the internet provides similar results (e.g. NAJIT). Interestingly enough, AIIC's Code of Professional Ethics does not mention neutrality or impartiality.

¹⁴ AIIC's Code of Professional Ethics can be found at <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article24.htm> and its Professional Standards at <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article122.htm>. SKTL's Codes of Ethics for court interpreters and for conference interpreters can be found at http://www.sktl.net/en_infopiste.html.

Many authors, as already discussed in this thesis, have made it clear that an interpreter is not neutral and impartial, rather that an interpreter participates in an active way in constructing the communication (cf. Wadensjö, 2002, 2004; Roy, 2002; Linell et al 1992). Furthermore, simply from a common sense perspective, it seems illogical and unjustified to expect that interpreters are more capable of completely suppressing their emotions and eliminating any subconscious or unconscious prejudices or biases than any other human being. Perhaps the need for the primary participants to believe in the complete impartiality of the interpreter is so important and the danger of communication breaking down so grave that the interpreter is put forth as some kind of superhuman (or inhuman) medium, who is never influenced by emotions or personal attitudes so that the interpreter-mediated event can proceed successfully. It is conceivable that if the primary participants suspected that they had relinquished control over the exchange, they would not be as happy working with an interpreter. This sounds a bit like a charade, with all the parties 'in on it', and refers to the very essence of what this thesis seeks to clarify.

Mäntynen (2003: 44-45, 54) points out in her MA thesis that several of these Codes of Ethics lay down very stringent guidelines and rules but that practitioners have to break them on a daily basis and that experience has shown that they do not hold water.

Wadensjö (2002: 120) discusses the difference between *professional ideology* and *professional practice*, and I would suggest that perhaps this is a solution to the problem of neutrality. The professional ideology of interpreters maintains that the appearance of impartiality and neutrality are to be maintained at all times, whereas professional practice admits that this is not possible. Instead, interpreters should always strive towards the

appearance of neutrality, as it is essential for the success of communication and the interpreter-mediated event.

8.1 Neutrality, Impartiality and Non-partisanship

Young (1967: 81) provides what seems to be a good definition of *neutrality* and *impartiality*. *Neutrality* is when a third party (in our case the interpreter) feels no loyalty to either primary participant, and is therefore completely neutral as to the outcome of the situation. In such a case we could expect minimum intervention from the interpreter. Instead she would be likely to render almost literally the words uttered by the primary parties. On the other hand, *impartiality* is when the third party feels equally loyal to both parties, and strives for what she sees as a just outcome for the situation, with both parties achieving their goals or at least benefiting. In this case we could expect a much more active interpreter. She would be likely to use her power to control the structure and the flow of the communication and to intervene in other ways as well if she felt there was a danger of misunderstanding. An interesting topic for study would be whether interpreters as human beings are capable of the complete detachment that Young's definition of *neutrality* implies.

Anderson (2002: 213) combines both types of roles (neutral and impartial) under the classification *non-partisan*. He also states that there is a difference between non-partisanship resulting from a personal detachment and indifference as to the outcome of the interpreter-mediated event and non-partisanship resulting from the interpreter being pulled in both directions. In the case of a *neutral interpreter*, Anderson argues that her

non-partisanship would lead to her playing a very passive role in the interaction, whereas an impartial interpreter would have a seemingly fair, but covertly manipulative role (Anderson 2002: 213).

Both Young and Anderson seem to have the same idea, but use different terminology. They both differentiate between a kind of passive neutrality and an active neutrality. I still question whether it is possible for a human being to be neutral in the kind of passive way implied by both Young and Anderson. This would seem to require more than just apathy on behalf of an interpreter; she would almost have to be a robot. Perhaps this is what would be achieved if translation and voice recognition interpreting software was developed to the extent that it actually was a viable option. It is, however, important to understand that when we talk about neutrality and impartiality, it does not necessarily mean impartiality, and that even a neutral interpreter may act in a partisan way, if it is to achieve the goal of a fair outcome.

9. Interpreter Intervention

In an ideal interpreted communication event the primary parties take turns speaking, allowing the interpreter to do her job. However, when an interpreter-mediated event starts to get complicated, for example if the discussion becomes heated and turn-taking starts to get out of hand, the interpreter may be forced to step outside her role of interpreter to direct the conversation in order to ensure that even a minimum of communication ensues. Linell et al bring up an interesting point regarding this dissolution of our pretty picture of dialogue interpreting when they question the nature of the interpreter-mediated discourse and criticise whether an interpreter really can be merely a 'recoder':

But we have seen that the normal interpreter seldom fits this description; she is very often forced or lured into taking a more active role, becoming, at least momentarily and partially, an author and a direct addressee, thus occupying a position of a primary participant [...] Under what circumstances do these discourses merge into something which approaches a multi-party conversation with (at least) three participants? (1992: 129)

Baker (2006: 46) reports on an interesting and significant intervention of the interpreter into the communication situation. The interview has become quite tense with President Hussein practically accusing Trevor McDonald of lying, and the interpreter is so concerned about interpreting a particular key word wrongly that he interrupts President Hussein in mid-speech. The interpreter and Hussein discuss the term in Arabic without explaining to McDonald what is going on, and then the interpreter, on his own initiative, turns to McDonald to bring him up to speed. As Baker points out (p. 46), such interruptions and active participation in the communication is highly uncommon. She suggests that "other participants in contexts of this type (or at least Saddam in this

particular context) may be equally concerned about the meanings of key words and therefore willing to relax definitions of the role of interpreter to ensure that such words are translated accurately.”

One often hears anecdotes from professional interpreters about situations where it was made clear that their services were not necessary or welcome. Perhaps people who are accustomed to working with interpreters have intuitively recognised what Linell and co have found in their research: that what normally would have been a monologic dyadic exchange does not necessarily become a clean cut 1st party – interpreter – 2nd party / 2nd party – interpreter – 1st party exchange with the addition of an interpreter. Perhaps they have a not-quite-conscious fear of losing control over the situation as the interpreter takes on a more active role, and that is what leads to their unwillingness to work with interpreters. This recognition is probably a subconscious one, though, as it is unlikely that professionals from fields other than Interpreting Studies would be familiar with the research done on interpreter-mediated events.

Linell et al’s propositions discussed above have, again, arisen in interpreting in a medical setting where there are significant differences to political interpreting. My hypothesis that aspects such as mutual knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, common cultural heritage and familiarity between the primary parties and the interpreter have an impact on how active a role within the exchange the interpreter adopts is built on Alexieva’s (2002) claim that the higher the degree of culture-specificity inherent in an interpreter-mediated event, the more important the interpreter’s role as intercultural

mediator becomes. She has to actively intervene in the communication and becomes more visible. In contrast to the primary parties in community interpreting, the parties in political settings often have similar social standing, level of education and are possibly more used to working with an interpreter and functioning in international settings.

Although there are cultural differences between different European nations, we all share a strong cultural heritage based on a common history, Graeco-Roman sense of justice and religion of Christianity (Dunkerley et al. 2002: 111, 114; Wiener-Diez 2004: 188).¹⁵

Communication tends to be easiest with people with whom we have something in common, and this seems to be true of interpreter-mediated events as well. The stronger the background of shared information and experiences is, the less danger there is of miscommunication and misunderstanding, both between the primary parties as well as between the interpreter and the primary parties. Therefore we could assume that interpreters working with European languages have a less active role than those working with Asian or Semitic languages.

9.1 Third Party Intervention in Political Negotiations

Young's (1967) book *The Intermediaries. Third Parties in International Crises* investigates the identity, role and function of third parties in political negotiations in international crises. Young is a researcher in the field of political science and does not

¹⁵ Admittedly, these are very categorical arguments, and one can see factors such as religion being more of a dividing force than a unifying force. Similarly, one could argue that the Graeco-Roman sense of justice is a thin basis to claim a common cultural heritage. For a more in-depth discussion of a shared European identity and cultural heritage, see Dunkerley et al 2002.

specifically mention interpreters in his book, but his definition of an intervener and of a third party coincide with our perception of an interpreter. For example, when defining intervention, he writes: "intervention will be defined here as any action taken by an actor that is not a direct party to the crisis, that is designed to reduce or remove one or more of the problems of the bargaining relationship and, therefore, to facilitate the termination of the crisis itself." (Young 1967: 34).

The interpreter fits this definition as she is not one of the primary participants of the interaction, and her purpose is to overcome the obstacle of communication and, if the political negotiation she happens to be interpreting is to end a crisis, to facilitate the termination of the crisis. Moreover, according to this definition, just by being present in the situation, she has already intervened in it.

Young suggests that

"at a minimum the very presence of a third party in the bargaining process is likely to have a noticeable effect on the behavior of the principals. Such a presence very often affects expectations and attitudes concerning acceptable behavior patterns."

"The mediator is a catalytic agent. The mere presence of an outsider, aside from anything he may do or say, will cause a change, and almost certainly a change for the better, in the behavior of the disputing parties.... Rudeness, irritation, and the habit of not listening... these are as vexing as the untenable arguments that accompany them. Progress has been made through the mediator's presence, though that presence has brought nothing more than temperate speech." (Young 1967: 36)

If this is true, even a less-than-proficient interpreter could have a positive effect on acrimonious political negotiations, as her very presence would lighten the atmosphere and lessen the tension. Young goes on to talk about the advantages of having a third party

in maintaining neutral channels of communication and delivering undistorted messages between the participants. Again, he does not mention interpreters, but in essence, this is exactly what an interpreter does. Young mentions that one of the advantages of the third party is that he is not tied up by the emotions and the conflict between the primary participants (Young 1967: 38). However, it is likely that the emotional spill-over from the conflict between the primary participants will have a very real effect on the interpreter, even if she is not directly a part of the conflict.

Young discusses the power inherent in a position that controls the communication structure at some length:

“A rather powerful though delicate and even dangerous role for a third party may develop in cases where that party has control or partial control over the communications structure of the bargaining process. [...] There is a great deal of power involved in controlling the flow of communications [...] Techniques and tactics involved in this connection would include, for example, the suppression of information in cases where such information might be disruptive, timing the delivery of various messages, selecting material for emphasis and de-emphasis, and even distorting messages in appropriate directions. (Young 1967: 39)

As Wadensjö (2002) and Roy (2002) have shown, the interpreter exerts a high degree of control over the communications structure by coordinating the turn-taking and sometimes by actively intervening in the communication. According to Young, then, her role is powerful, delicate and even dangerous. We have already investigated the power inherent in an interpreter's role, and delicacy is also quite self-explanatory. The interpreter is constantly walking a tightrope, gauging the primary participants, their level of comprehension, the dynamics of the situation, the atmosphere, the necessity for her to take on a more active role or to pull back, etc. Danger, though, is an aspect not discussed

in research on dialogue interpreting. Presumably the danger is inherent in the political dimension of the interpreter-mediated event rather than in the social, communicative dimension¹⁶. As Baker points out (2006: 45) “interpreting for a political leader at times of international crises (with potential war looming in the horizon) is an awesome moral and historical responsibility.” Therefore, it follows that there is a high degree of danger in the interpreter’s role, as the success of the communication is, to a large extent, her responsibility.

The techniques Young mentions (suppressing or distorting emphases or information and timing the delivery of messages) are all well within the scope of the interpreter’s competence if there is nobody present who can monitor her performance, but these are clearly not permissible strategies (cf. the various Codes of Ethics). Young concedes that “roles of this type would carry with them great responsibilities, and wherever responsibility is involved there is also room for its abuse” (Young 1967: 40).

¹⁶ Although we have moved on from the times when a messenger (i.e. interpreter) might be executed for bearing bad news, Baker suggests that President Saddam Hussein’s interpreter had to work with the very real danger that Saddam could literally end his life that very day.

10. User Expectations and Perceptions of the Role of the Interpreter

10.1 The Element of Trust and its Effect on the Interpreter's Role

If communication depends on the primary participants believing in the interpreter's impartiality, it follows that trust is a critical element in the interaction between the primary participants and the interpreter. In fact, according to the research carried out by Edwards, Temple and Alexander, trust was a very important element to the users of interpreters regardless of their gender, age, ethnic background or what type of services they needed an interpreter's help in accessing (Edwards et al 2005: 82). Even though this research was carried out within the realms of community interpreting, I suggest that this applies to political interpreting as well as it seems to be an aspect necessary in constructing the communication. Perhaps this can be extrapolated to all dialogue interpreting, but more empirical evidence is necessary before making such a categorical claim.

In a typical interpreter-mediated event, the only person capable of gauging the accuracy of the interpretation is, ironically, the interpreter herself. This obviously depends on the languages involved in the interpreter-mediated event; there are far larger numbers of people with a certain degree of linguistic competence in English than in Portuguese or Polish. The primary participants are therefore forced to place an enormous amount of trust in the interpreter. They must first trust that she will, indeed, interpret faithfully and correctly everything they say. Secondly, they must trust that she will not go off and use the information she has gained for her own financial benefit, or to do the primary

participants a disservice. Edwards, Temple and Alexander found that some of their interviewees appreciated it when they were able to use the same interpreter consistently (Edwards 2005: 87). This, presumably, gave them the opportunity to build up trust with their interpreter.

10.2. User Expectations of the Role of the Interpreter

A lot of research covers the role of the interpreter from the point of view of the interpreter and interpreting services. There are the common guidelines of maintaining impartiality and neutrality, not using the information gained in interpreter-mediated events for ones own gain, etc. But what about the end users? What about the people who really are dependant on interpreters to achieve a goal which, without the help of a linguistic bridge, cannot be attained?

Edwards et al found that a lot of the people they interviewed in community interpreting situations preferred interpreters who, as well as being linguistically competent, were also friendly and willing to help them and provide them with advice (Edwards et al 2006: 85). One of the women who were interviewed even said that it was irrelevant whether the interpreter's language skills were impressive or not, what was most important was whether the interpreter was a nice person.

This goes contrary to everything interpreters are taught at universities. Interpreters are not *helpers*, and are not allowed to give advice in a medical, judicial, or any other setting.

Their realm of expertise is communication; they are not medical or legal experts, and

should refrain from taking part in such activities. Can the profession really be so far off the mark that interpreters are refusing to do the one thing which their clients find most important? In order for interpreters to successfully meet the needs of their clients, it is essential that research be conducted to find out whether this is unique to community interpreting where the users are often from a minority group, possibly poorly educated and somewhat marginalised from society, or whether this argument can be extrapolated to dialogue interpreting in general. For example, do political leaders and diplomats sometimes wish for a more active interpreter in helping bridge cultural differences and misunderstandings?

Perhaps the answer again lies in the difference between professional ideology and professional practice. It is easy for interpreting scholars and researchers to talk about impartiality and being cultural bridges in a situational vacuum, but presumably, once an interpreter is in an actual interpreting situation, all the situational and interpersonal elements have an affect on the interpreter, and she is able to construct her performance based on them. As already stated, interpreting never takes place in a social or situational vacuum, instead it is rooted in the socio-cultural context in which it takes place. An interpreter presumably has to gauge the participants and test how much they need and want the interpreter to take an active role, and how well communication can continue without any active intervention on behalf of the interpreter.

PART III – The Practical Side:

The Views of Political Interpreters and their Users

11. The Questionnaire and the Interviews

A total of eleven interpreters and three users took part in the survey. Most of the interviews were conducted in person, but one interpreter interview and two user interviews were conducted by phone. There were a total of 26 questions for interpreters and 20 questions for users. The questions were open-ended questions, and the objective was for the interviewee to speak freely; I was not concerned with strictly keeping to the questionnaire.

I drew up a separate questionnaire for the interpreters and for the users of interpreters. The questions were based on ideas that arose while doing the theoretical research for my thesis. As I have little interpreting experience myself, I could not draw on problematic aspects that I have personally experienced and so was reliant on what I could pick up from the relevant literature. As already mentioned, there has been very little research conducted on political interpreting, so some of the questions were a shot in the dark, with the hope of triggering something interesting. I did, however, try to cover certain aspects from several different viewpoints, and this also functioned as a system of checks. For example, in question 2 I ask the interviewee to describe his or her role as an interpreter, and in question 4 I ask the interviewee to choose between two definition options.

The questionnaires for the interpreters and for the users covered mostly the same issues, but from different perspectives. For example, where I asked the interpreters if the personality of the primary participants affected the interpretation, I asked the users

whether the personality of the interpreter affected the communication. Some questions were almost identical for both groups, e.g. question 4 regarding whether the presence of an interpreter has an impact on the group dynamics.

Although originally both questionnaires were approximately the same length, in the actual interview situations I had to shorten the questionnaire for the users, because they were extremely busy and could not spare as much time as the interpreters I interviewed. I based my decision on which questions to cut on an impromptu analysis of the situation and previous answers.

I had hoped to be able to interview a few more users, but several of the people I contacted did not reply, which is understandable, as they do not really have a vested interest in interpreting other than having access to competent interpreters when they need them. However, those who did reply were extremely gracious and helpful and I am indebted to them. It was particularly difficult to get hold of diplomats who used interpreters, as in Finland apparently almost all diplomatic negotiations are conducted in English. The users consisted of one foreign ambassador, one Finnish minister and one Member of the European Parliament.

The interpreters I interviewed were all experienced interpreters with several years' experience in the field. Most of them interpreted in other situations as well, not only in political situations, but a few interpreted solely in political and diplomatic situations. The language combinations varied, but they were almost exclusively European languages.

The only exception was an interpreter whose language combination included Russian. It would have been very interesting to interview interpreters from cultures outside of Europe, and would have helped to either validate or refute my hypothesis that interpreters take on a more active role when the participants are from very different backgrounds in order to ensure the continuity and success of communication.

I realised in the course of finding interviewees and conducting the interviews that getting hold of interpreters took place on very much a who-you-know basis. I was fortunate enough to get help from SKTL and a few interpreting bureaus that I contacted in the initial phases, and those interviewees were kind enough to suggest others, who in turn knew other interpreters or users who might be interested, etc. Almost all the interpreters I interviewed were extremely encouraging and seemed very interested in the subject and several of them spontaneously offered to give me contact details of other interpreters or users, which was extremely helpful. I chose not to refer to any of the interviewees by name for reasons of confidentiality.

The interviews were very informal and, as I mentioned, I tried to encourage the interviewees to provide examples and to speak freely. I then analysed the interviews in a relatively informal manner. I created a chart with the questions from the interviews as column headings, and each interviewee's answers in the rows below. I then used the chart to analyse three major topics: interpreters' and users' definitions of the role of interpreters, the impact of interpreters on interpreter-mediated events, and interpreter neutrality and objectivity. This analysis formed the basis for the discussion in this section,

which I present together with the results of the interviews.

12. Interpreters' Role Definitions

I asked the interpreters to describe, in their own words, their role as an interpreter. The interpreters all brought up different aspects of role in their definitions, but most considered some aspect of mediation or channelling, or rendering the message from one language or culture to another the central aspect of their role. This seems to be in line with Roy's role definition of a communication-facilitator. Two interpreters in fact said flat out that they were mediators, but did not specify whether they were cultural or linguistic mediators. Out of eleven interviews, eight considered some aspect of rendering the message or mediation important in their role. One interviewee stressed the aspect of facilitating contact in addition to ensuring that the message gets through. He also emphasised the fact that there is often a second, non-verbal level to the message, and the interpreter has a responsibility to mediate this level as well.

One comment that I consider particularly insightful is that the interpreter's main role is to be prepared for the assignment so that the primary participants (PPs) can communicate *as if* no interpreter was present (author's emphasis). The PPs should feel that they can express their thoughts exactly the way they want to without having to worry about whether the interpreter has understood the message or whether the interpreter will be able to render their words with the same terminology and in the same way as the speaker. In addition to this main role, an interpreter may have other roles, such as that of a facilitator in social events or mealtimes, or in explaining cultural concepts.

Two other aspects that came up a lot were some kind of reference to the (in)visibility of the interpreter and to the requirement to be neutral and impartial. Five interviewees mentioned neutrality and impartiality as important, and out of those five, four referred to the interpreter as not being there as herself or as being invisible. Several interviewees who didn't mention invisibility in their definition referred to invisibility later on in the interview. However, some of those who said that the ideal is for the interpreter to be invisible also recognised that this can never entirely be achieved.

Three interviewees discussed their prerogative in adapting the message to it would come across to the target culture in the way the source culture would have understood it. They considered it their responsibility, and if they failed in this, they had failed in their task of interpreting. All those who felt that such adaptation of the message was within the bounds of the permissible also mentioned that there are limitations and that the interpreter must be aware of those limitations. Two interpreters also conceded that the interpreter cannot be required to adopt full responsibility for cultural mediation and bridging, rather the PPs in political situations are highly qualified individuals who are usually thoroughly briefed before the event, and have to be able to handle a certain degree of cultural difference.

Another interviewee stressed the flexibility and fluidity of an interpreter's role, and recognised that it changes from one situation to the next, depending on several variables. She described herself as a shadow or as the speaker's voice, and described interpreting as acting, or stepping briefly into someone else's shoes. Three interviewees discussed the adaptability and flexibility inherent in their role, depending on factors such as the

atmosphere of the situation, how experienced the PPs were in speaking through interpreters, how many interpreters were present and the type of interpreting assignment. However, it also came up elsewhere in the interviews (not when I asked them directly to define their role) that in political interpreting, the role of the interpreter is quite well defined and unambiguous. Protocol plays a significant role, and the situations are so well-planned and organised that there is little room for manoeuvre for the interpreter.

Some interviewees used metaphors to describe their role. One metaphor was that of an interpreter as a transmission belt. This interpreter saw interpreting as a process, and himself as the force that keeps the process moving. If he fails or starts to struggle, the transmission belt slows down and eventually stops. Another metaphor that was used was that of a black box. The interpreter felt that it is not enough just to be a black box, you had to be a thinking black box. Still another likened herself to an amoeba.

Two interpreters described themselves as facilitators or helpers. They saw their role as helping other people understand each other. One interviewee responded that the interpreter is not present as himself and does not have a role, because that would mean he could start expressing his own opinions. In fact, he seemed quite indignant about this.

One interpreter mentioned the social element of interpreting in political situations. She felt this was an important aspect and awareness of this issue should be raised in training programmes. In political situations, there are often social events where the interpreter is present as an interpreter, but also as herself, and it is important that she be able to socialise with the PPs and behave appropriately.

Two interpreters brought up the fact that if the interpreter has travelled with a delegation for several days, she is viewed differently than if the interpreter-mediated event lasts only for a few hours. She is accepted as part of the team and sometimes, particularly if the interpreter has had to interpret the same speech five or six times, the PP might say to the interpreter, “Right, do the same spiel again.” In such cases, the interpreter’s role shifts suddenly to that of being a PP, and she has a significant degree of responsibility.

Several interpreters talked about social situations, (such as dinner at a restaurant, accompanying the delegation to the opera or theatre or a relaxed evening with sauna and chatting) where the interpreter’s role changes quite significantly. The interpreter is present not only in her professional role as interpreter, but also takes part in the socialising as a private individual. One interpreter gave an example of dinner at a restaurant where she had been asked to dance by one of the delegates – an elderly gentleman who apparently had been widowed long ago – and that when he gave a speech thanking the Finnish delegation for a successful visit, he also thanked the interpreter for the dance, as he had not had the opportunity to dance for such a long time. This is an example of the fluidity and flexibility inherent in the interpreter’s role.

12.1 Factors that Influence the Interpreter’s Role

According to the interviewees, aspects such as familiarity with the clients, the status of the PPs and the atmosphere in the situation were general factors that affected the

interpreter, and thus indirectly, her role. However, this cannot be taken as a hard and fast rule, as there were always one or two interpreters whose views differed from those of the majority of interpreters.

All the interpreters felt that familiarity with the clients was a definite advantage, because if they knew the PPs way of speaking, possible speech defects, train of thought, etc., they could invest more cognitive capacity in the actual interpreting rather than on concentrating on understanding the PP. Regarding the personality of the PPs, six interpreters felt that it does, unfortunately, influence the interpreting, although one should try to distance oneself from it. One interpreter said that the more experienced she becomes, the less of an effect the PPs' personality has on her. She said that as a young interpreter it was sometimes difficult to distance herself from such antipathies, but that experience and routine make it a lot easier. Two interpreters felt strongly that it has no effect and described interpreting as just a job and that personality has nothing to do with it. One of them also correlated it to the interpreter's professionalism; if an interpreter does her job well, she does not allow the PPs' personality to influence her.

The status of the PPs also influenced the interpreters to a certain extent. The interviewees were unanimous in the opinion that although the status of the PPs does not affect the interpreting quality as such, if the clients are presidents or foreign ministers, the interpreter is more nervous during the actual interpreting than with a lower-ranking official.

One interpreter mentioned that when interpreting for heads of state, one is more psychologically alert and nervous. Another interpreter discussed the fact that presidents and prime ministers are institutions, not private individuals and they are addressed as such. Some interpreters said that the higher-ranking the client, the more rigorously one prepares for the assignment, but others said that the status of the client does not affect the level of preparation.

One interpreter discussed the huge feeling of responsibility she had when interpreting for the Finnish President abroad in front of dozens of photographers, half-blinded by the flashes of the cameras and with video cameras recording every word; and this all when interpreting the ‘wrong’ way (as discussed in section 2.3). Three interpreters mentioned that despite their high status, some presidents and other high-ranking officials are so friendly and approachable that it alleviates the level of stress and their status does not have much of an influence on the situation. One interpreter also mentioned that it is important for the interpreter to have the courage and confidence to interact with high-ranking officials on an equal footing. This is in line with the discussion in section 7.3.1 concerning the tension that can be added to the group dynamics if the participants have vastly differing social status.

Two interpreters mentioned that the higher ranking the clients are, the more formal the situation usually is, but also that the speech is usually at a more general level. Apparently all the actual work is done behind the scenes in working groups and task forces, where the atmosphere is informal enough that the interpreter can intervene and ask for

clarification if necessary. When it comes to meetings between high-level officials, there is seldom much technical terminology or otherwise difficult speech, so the interpreter can spare some of her cognitive capacity from linguistic processing to deal with the extra level of stress inherent in interpreting for high-level officials.

13. The Interpreter's Impact on the Communication and Group

Dynamics

The interpreters were relatively unanimous in their agreement that they influence the communication and the group dynamics to some extent, but that ideally, this influence would be minimal. They recognised that the presence of an interpreter invariably adds an extra element to the equation and that this cannot be denied. Interestingly enough, a few interpreters said flat out that no, they do not affect the communication or group dynamics, but as they started to think about the issue and to give examples, they admitted that they did influence the group dynamics or communication to a certain extent, but that they should strive not to.

Two interviewees mentioned that the interpreter influences the turn-taking in the conversation. The PPs are forced to adapt the length of their speech turns to a certain extent, and they cannot interrupt each other as easily as if they were in a monolingual conversation. This is in line with Wadensjö's (2002) and Linell et al's (1992) discussion on coordinating and gatekeeping. One of the interpreters described interpreter-mediated communication as less spontaneous.

An interesting aspect was that several interpreters associated the impact they make with how well they have prepared for the assignment. They saw the quality of the interpreting as a direct result of the level of preparation, which was a deciding factor on whether the communication situation and group dynamics were influenced. If the interpreter was

poorly prepared for the assignment, the communication might be clumsy and slow, and would have a negative impact on the group dynamics and the communication.

One interesting example was that of President Reagan's interpreter, who, when Reagan was once talking about the 'position of power', interpreted it as 'position of force'. *Power* is a relatively neutral word, but *force* has negative connotations of forcing someone to do something against their will. This was then used in ideological rhetoric to prove that Reagan was uncooperative and difficult. Apparently this went on for several years, and is an example of the dramatic impact interpreting and interpreters can have on both the interpreter-mediated event itself as well as in shaping history. The interpreter who gave this example also said that political issues tend to get hashed and rehashed over and over again, so that if the interpreter makes one little mistake, it will usually be corrected at some point down the line, however, occasionally the mistake makes it through to the news and media.

One of the interviewees referred to Kaarina Hietanen's term indirect communication (välillinen viestintä) when she said that it is impossible for the interpreter not to have an impact on the communication situation. Because the communication is not direct, the interpreter will invariably influence the communication in some way.

Two interpreters described the ideal situation in which the impact the interpreter has on the communication is minimal. They said that if the interpreting goes very smoothly, it seems as if the interpreter was not there, even if the PPs occasionally look at her and

recognise her presence, and that the communication flows so seamlessly that it is as if the interpreter was not present. They both mentioned that some interpreters, (or sometimes interpreters) have the ability to blend into the woodwork and to make themselves invisible. One of them said that in the beginning, the PPs might be more aware of the interpreter, but as the communication progresses, the interpreter fades more and more into the woodwork and her presence is forgotten. I find this a fascinating phenomenon. As I wrote in chapter eight, this sounds a bit like play-acting. All three parties are present and fully capable of understanding that there are actually three parties present, but through mutual, (un-spoken?) agreement, they act as if the interpreter was not there. Because the interpreter is not there, she cannot influence the communication, and in this way the PPs are not really relinquishing control over the communication. This conjecture is by no means meant in a depreciating way towards the PPs. I see it more as a functional necessity in order to make communication in an interpreter-mediated event as effortless as possible.

One interpreter mentioned that he never does proper consecutive (with notes)¹⁷, rather he sticks to short consecutive, as he finds that the group dynamics do not change as significantly with short consecutive. He explained that if one party has to listen for several minutes to something he does not understand, and then the interpreter renders the message, it is a very clumsy and awkward way of communicating. Instead, he felt that

¹⁷ In contrast, one interpreter said in the course of the interview, "of course all interpreters use notes in these kinds of situations."

speed was of the essence, and that interpreting quickly and fluently was very important in maintaining the group dynamics.

One interpreter talked about the difficulties involved in interpreting “emotional nuances in the metaspeech”. He explained that if he did not understand these emotional nuances or the emotional level between the two PPs, it would have an impact on the interpreting and thus on the communication. He also mentioned that sometimes in meetings between heads of state, the two PPs will be on first-name basis, and that if the interpreter does not have the courage to say, “Hey Tarja” when addressing the Finnish President, even though the other party has addressed her in such an informal way, it will have a significant impact on the communication.

Another interviewee talked about the relationship between rendering the culturally applicable message and maintaining group dynamics. He explained that if the message is rendered in a way that has the same impact in the target culture as in the source culture, the interpreter will have had no impact on the group dynamics. He saw the interpreter as being able to fine-tune the group dynamics by fine-tuning the cultural aspects and their applicability. In order to illustrate this, he explained that in some cultures, the speaker starts his speech turn with all kinds of irrelevant and unessential points before actually getting to the real issue. This can be very off-putting for the listener if he comes from a culture where you come right out with the main point before moving on to the not-so-important aspects. In such a case, the listener might become worried, thinking that the speaker has not really understand his question at all, as he is talking about all kinds of

things that have nothing to do with the issue. The interpreter then, has to be culturally aware, and in some way imply to the listener that the speaker has understood the message.

Two interviewees also mentioned the fact that politics is still a very male world, and that often the interpreter is the only woman present in the negotiation or meeting. Without wanting to belabour or exaggerate this aspect, they admitted that if you are the only woman in a room full of men, you are bound to affect the group dynamics. One of the interpreters also said that she consciously tried to dress in a neutral and modest way so as not to attract attention to herself. She also said that interpreters dress and behave in a very professional way and that most PPs accept this high degree of professionalism of interpreters, so it is difficult to say how much the gender issue actually influences the group dynamics. One of the male interpreters also commented on the fact that the interpreter should always be dressed in a neutral way so as not to attract attention to himself.

Another aspect that influences the communication and group dynamics is how many interpreters are present. As already stated, in high-level political negotiations, both sides bring their own interpreter. Sometimes one of the parties will provide both interpreters, for example if a Polish delegation visiting Finland does not have its own interpreter, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs might hire two interpreters: one for the Polish delegation and one for the Finns. What is important is that both parties have their 'own' interpreter.

13.1 Factors that Influence Interpreter Impact

As an example of a situation where the interpreter might involuntarily have an impact on the communication, I asked the interpreters if they were ever addressed directly by the PPs or in some other way involved in the communication situation. The answers again varied significantly from ‘quite a lot’ to ‘very rarely’. However, five interpreters were all of the opinion that it correlates directly to how much experience the PP has of speaking through an interpreter. Inexperienced users ‘fall victim to’ or ‘are guilty’ of this ‘tell-him’ phenomenon (two interpreters referred to it as a tell-him phenomenon), but that political actors at high levels are so accustomed to using interpreters that they almost never address the interpreter directly.

One interpreter explained that although some PPs, even experienced PPs, might look at the interpreter while speaking, it is so natural in the actual situation that it does not disturb the communication. Everyone understands who the main participants are, and who they are addressing their speech to. She also said that some PPs are very aware of their position and their rank, and stick rigidly to a formal way of speaking, in which the interpreter is very much just a shadow in the communication.

Other interpreters said that they might be directly addressed, but not as part of the interpreted event. One of the PPs might say something in the form of small talk before or after the event, but that this is kept strictly separate from the interpreted negotiation or meeting.

13.2 User Perceptions of Interpreter Impact

The Finnish Minister said in the interview that meetings with foreign delegates are prepared in advance, and that the interpreter is included in the briefing. She gave an example of when her counterpart from another European country was expected in Finland, and that he had requested an interpreter in order to ensure successful communication (and, of course, it's only polite to provide an interpreter). The Finnish Minister considered it important for the interpreter to be at the preparation meetings so that he or she would be familiar with the Finnish party's thoughts and approach. The Minister also said that if an interpreter is present in the situation, it is automatically more formal. However, there are some social situations where it is important for an interpreter to be able to adapt and relax the level of formality in her role.

The foreign ambassador also mentioned this aspect of formality. He explained that diplomatic negotiations are, by their very nature, formal, but that an interpreter adds a certain degree of formality to the situation. The PPs are forced to listen to each other and cannot interrupt each other as easily when the communication is being mediated by an interpreter. He also differentiated between professional interpreters and 'one of our own'. The Ambassador said that professional interpreters were highly trained and qualified, and were able to interpret in a way that cultural misunderstandings did not arise, and they never interrupted the conversation or intervened in any way. However, if the interpreter was 'one of our own', he or she would often add explanatory comments and provide personal views on the situation and speaker. This was quite normal in diplomatic settings.

The Member of the European Parliament saw the interpreter more as a service provider who was to be used if there was absolutely no other way to communicate, but that communicating through an interpreter was sort of a handicap because the communication was less spontaneous. He felt that an interpreter should be very active in pointing out cultural misunderstandings, because being a cultural expert is part of the interpreter's profession. An interpreter should put herself heart and soul into her work, and cannot just limit herself to linguistic mediation. She must facilitate communication, no matter what that involves.

14. Neutrality and Objectivity

Neutrality¹⁸ and objectivity caused quite a bit of discussion and emotion among the interviewees, both interpreters and users. Many of the interpreters referred to the aspect of neutrality as one of the most important aspects of their profession and mentioned interpreter neutrality several times during the interview, even if they were discussing something else. Interestingly enough, a few of the interviewees seemed to equate neutrality with invisibility.

All the interpreters felt that they were mostly able to maintain neutrality and objectivity, but not necessarily in every situation, which of course, is natural as we are all humans. A common argument was that part of practising the profession is to learn how to distance yourself from the topic being discussed and how to reign in your emotions so that you do not get personally involved in the situation. The interpreters seemed to accept this as part of being an interpreter and did not question it. Neutrality is part of an interpreter's professional ethics, and it is always to be the goal.

There were, however conflicting views on the degree of emotionality that appears in political interpreting. Several interpreters commented on the fact that in comparison to other types of interpreting, such as community or court interpreting, political interpreting never gets anywhere near as tense or emotional. The topics discussed in interpreter-mediated events are very matter-of-fact and emotions are not really a part of the equation.

¹⁸ Unless otherwise specified, in this discussion I use the word neutrality to mean impartiality as well, as most of the interviewees did not make it clear what kind of neutrality they meant.

Because of Finland's neutral position, issues rarely arise in bilateral relations that are very tense or where it would be difficult to remain neutral. Even if issues arise that the interpreter feels very strongly about (one example was an issue to do with women's rights), the issue is still at such an abstract, political level that it never gets personal.

Other interpreters, however, felt that it was sometimes difficult to maintain neutrality particularly in situations where one of the PPs voiced a political view that was completely contrary to the interpreter's own view. One interviewee said that she always tries to maintain at least the appearance of neutrality. Two of the interpreters who had interpreted in emotional situations said that an experienced and professional interpreter learns to distance himself from the event so that no personal bond is created between the interpreter and the situation. Although interpreters must utter the words of the speaker and put their soul into it to a certain extent, experience and routine help the interpreter to keep a certain emotional and intellectual distance. Putting one's soul into the interpreting is just an interpreting strategy and helps the communication to flow smoothly.

Two interpreters said that when they were young interpreters, it was more difficult to maintain neutrality, but with experience it gets easier. One interpreter explained that he once had to interpret some very nasty language, and at some level he was afraid that the other PP would perceive the insult as coming from him, the interpreter. However, experienced interpreters have learned that they are just a mouthpiece and that any emotion is not targeted at them, rather at the other PP. Maintaining the appearance of

neutrality and learning to distance yourself emotionally and intellectually therefore seem to be signs of an experienced and professional interpreter.

Several interpreters were also aware of the role that body language plays in communication. Two interpreters commented that they would be interested in seeing a video-taping of their performance or that it would be fun to be a fly on the wall in one of the interpreter-mediated events so that they could see if their body language gives them away. Three interpreters referred to the need to learn to keep your facial expressions and body language extremely neutral.

One interpreter referred to the contradiction between the interpreter playing an active role and being neutral. This interpreter seemed to view neutrality the same way as Young, and the way Anderson defines non-partisanship (cf. Chapter 8.1). He said that if the interpreter is active in any way, his interpreting has become interpretation and that that is outside the scope of the interpreter's prerogative.

In regard to neutrality, a few interpreters said that in court or community interpreting situations, it is easier to side with the weaker party, but that in political interpreting this does not come up. This was more of a minor point in their interviews, but in regard to this thesis, it is a crucial statement. I have hypothesised that the role of political interpreters is different to that of community interpreters because there is no hierarchical difference in political interpreting, whereas the hierarchical difference plays a very important role in community interpreting. If the interpreters in political settings are not being drawn to take

sides, they are more likely to be neutral or impartial, and this has a significant effect in determining their role.

14.1 Factors that Influence Interpreter Neutrality

I asked the interpreters whether they had ever experienced unwillingness on behalf of the PPs to work with interpreters and received conflicting responses. Some had never experienced any unwillingness or hesitancy on behalf of the PPs, and others had often been in such situations. In fact, when I posed the question, one interpreter answered, “Of course. This is something every interpreter comes up against every now and then.” It is interesting that interpreters themselves have such different experiences, and that they sometimes extrapolate their own subjective experiences to the interpreting profession in general.

Those who had been in such situations said that it was often unpleasant, and that they felt unappreciated and even undesired. One interpreter talked about the difficulty in maintaining her role in such situations. One of the PPs might gesture impatiently while she is interpreting, or even start to interrupt. She said that she would try and hold her own and finish interpreting, and sometimes would start speaking more quickly, but if the other PP just kept talking, she had to stop.

In section 7.3.1, I quote Alexieva (2002: 225) where she talks about male speakers tending to dominate female speakers and interrupt them. On the basis of just one

example, it is impossible to jump to conclusions, but it would be helpful to investigate whether male interpreters get interrupted less frequently than female interpreters.

Most interpreters who had experienced unwillingness to work with interpreters also felt that it was much less common in political interpreting than community interpreting or court interpreting. One interpreter suggested that perhaps the reason was that the PPs did not want to lose control of the situation and felt that they could establish closer rapport with the other PP if communication was direct, rather than being mediated by an interpreter. Another interpreter explained that sometimes his clients tried to use English, even though neither party spoke it fluently, because they seemed to feel that their level of English was better than his capacity to interpret between his A and B languages. He told me that in such situations, he would normally wait patiently for them to realise that it was taking far too long to say what they were trying to, and that communication would be far smoother with an interpreter, and then he would jump in. One interpreter thought that the unwillingness to work with an interpreter stemmed from the user's inexperience in using interpreters and a certain degree of distrust. She felt that experienced users were more confident in the interpreter's ability.

Those interpreters who had never experienced any unwillingness to work with interpreters explained that political negotiations are usually extremely well organised and thoroughly planned and it is usually clear to all the participants how the event is to proceed. If an interpreter has been hired for the event, she is just a part of the organisation, and as such is accepted.

14.2 User Perceptions of Interpreter Neutrality

The users also seemed to have differing views of interpreter neutrality. The foreign ambassador emphasised the importance of interpreter neutrality above everything else. He felt so strongly about this issue that he said, “an interpreter who is unable to do so [maintain neutrality] should not be allowed to practise the profession.” He admitted that of course interpreters are humans like everyone else, but when interpreting at that level (high-level diplomatic negotiations), the interpreter must have learned a certain degree of control. He then gave an example of when he had functioned as a mediator between two countries that at that point did not have diplomatic relations, and he explained that even though he had very definite opinions on the matter, he never allowed it to show. In the same way, he felt that an interpreter, as a mediator, must be able to function neutrally, even if she does not feel neutral.

In chapter eight I discuss neutrality and suggest a sort of charade as an explanation for the interpreter-mediated event. I propose that the most important element is for all the participants to believe in the interpreter’s neutrality. If she can look, appear and function in a neutral way, this will lay the foundation for mutual trust and for smooth communication. The ambassador mentioned trust and loyalty as the most important characteristic of a good interpreter in diplomatic interpreting. He felt that at that level, loyalty was even more crucial than a spectacular linguistic performance.

The Finnish Minister on the other hand seemed to appreciate it when an interpreter actively intervened in the communication or adapted the message to make it culturally

equivalent. She used the word ‘censor’ when she referred to the interpreter’s adapting of the message, and specifically mentioned ‘politeness terminology’ as something that was well within the interpreter’s prerogative to fill in.

The Member of the European Parliament felt that neutrality and objectivity were very much culture-specific elements. For example he said that if he asks a Chinese delegate about the situation in Tibet, it is not certain whether the interpreter will interpret completely neutrally and objectively. Instead the interpreter might try to hedge around the issue and maintain face. However, he felt that interpreters in democratic countries are relatively neutral.

15. Further discussion

15.1 Monitoring

Certain other aspects also influenced the interpreter, such as the level of linguistic competence of the PPs, which affected the level of monitoring. There were two clear views on this subject. Some interpreters felt that it makes the situation more challenging, because they are constantly aware of the possibility that someone might interject and correct them (often in an uncalled-for manner) and the interpreters might be concerned about what the listeners think about their performance. These interpreter views ranged between those who found it highly disturbing and those who found it just mildly disturbing. Other interpreters said that if the PPs have a relatively high degree of linguistic competence in the languages interpreted, it can ease the burden on the interpreter, especially in situations where a lot of technical terminology and jargon is used, because if the interpreter does not know a particular term, the PPs tend to help out.

One interpreter said that a professional interpreter learns to distance herself from the level of monitoring in the same way that she distances herself personally, emotionally and intellectually from the event. Another interpreter said that although she might be more nervous beforehand if she knows that there is someone in the audience that can monitor her performance, she usually forgets about it in the course of the interpreting.

15.2 Protocol

Protocol also plays a role in political interpreting where the PPs are high ranking officials. Most interpreters had positive experiences of the Protocol Department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and said that they had always received a lot of help from the protocol officers and chiefs. Some of the interpreters mentioned, however, that the interpreter was not always taken into consideration when planning the event. For example, the interpreter might ride in the last car and have to run to catch up with her principal, who was in the first car. Sometimes bodyguards and security officers had not been briefed in full, and caused problems for the interpreter when she tried to follow her principal into a room. Two interpreters emphasised that an interpreter in political situations must know how to follow instructions. The interpreter is told where to stand, how to dress and when to talk, and she must be able to function according to these set patterns. If the interpreter is unclear about something, there is usually a protocol officer around who can advise her.

Almost all the interpreters talked at some point in the interview about how important it was to be able to assess the situation and act accordingly. When interpreting for high-ranking officials, the interpreter does not step into a room first or take on a major role. The interpreter dresses appropriately and acts professionally and politely. These considerations are all part of the interpreting profession, but the interviewees felt that they become more stringent in political situations where protocol plays a role.

15.3 Miscellaneous

Several other minor aspects that influence the interpreter or interpreting came up in the course of the interviews. For example, in situations where there is an audience, for some reason listeners consider it appropriate to interrupt and correct the interpreter, even though they most likely would not interrupt the speaker and even though their linguistic competence leaves much to be desired. Several interpreters mentioned experiences of this kind and how annoying and unpleasant they are.

An interesting, and perhaps even encouraging, aspect was that two interpreters talked about the positive effect that interpreter mistakes can make on the interpreting situation. It is important, though, that this not be misunderstood; it is only certain types of mistakes. For example, one interpreter was interpreting in a situation where the economic relations between Finland and Germany were being discussed, and he inadvertently said Sweden instead of Germany. The whole party noticed this mistake and everyone burst out laughing, but it was not a significant mistake and served to lighten the atmosphere. Another interpreter also gave examples of similar blunders that, contrary to influencing the communication in an adverse manner, actually served to break the ice and lighten the atmosphere. They emphasised, however, that such mistakes must never be contrived, and it seems that these types of mistakes are only mistakes that are immediately recognisable to all participants and openly corrected.

16. Conclusion

My original hypothesis was that interpreters in political situations do have an influence on the communication and that their role is active to a certain degree, but not as much as a community interpreter. As I mentioned in Chapter Eleven, all of my interviewees worked in a more or less European environment, so major cultural differences did not arise in the course of their work. To better validate my hypothesis, I would have had to interview a far greater group of interpreters, both within a European environment as well as those working between Asian and European or African and European languages.

However, some of the comments of the interpreters do seem to validate my hypothesis and also to add weight to the argument that political interpreting merits investigation as its own branch of interpreting – at least that it should be distinguished from community interpreting. I do not wish to emphasise the importance of political interpreting as compared to other types of liaison interpreting, such as business interpreting or military interpreting, but I think it necessary to recognise that there are major differences inherent in liaison and community interpreting, and they cannot necessarily just be lumped together.

Although there were no outright statements validating my hypothesis, in Chapter Thirteen I discuss the comments some interpreters made of the differences in political and community interpreting, in particular about how in political interpreting it is easier to maintain neutrality because there is not a weaker party to identify with. Presumably this

lack of a weaker party stems from the fact that both parties in political interpreting are on a similar standing. And although being on a similar standing is still far from proof that the parties have similar backgrounds and shared experiences, I feel that the general idea is still clear. Political leaders and diplomats deal with each other on an equal footing because they can; and what enables them to do this must be the fact that they have similar experiences and social standing.

As there does not seem to be a single, consistent view among users of interpreters as to the role and function of interpreters in political situations, perhaps it is important to accept that each user has individual needs and requirements, and that part of the interpreter's preparation for the interpreting assignment is to talk to the PPs to find out what their views on the subject are. Several interpreters mentioned that they discussed these topics with their colleagues on a regular basis, but none of them mentioned discussing it with users (although just because they did not mention it does not mean that it does not happen).

There were several other fascinating aspects that came up in the interviews that cannot be discussed here because they are not relevant to the subject of this thesis. Aspects such as what characteristics interpreters considered important in political interpreting as opposed to other types of interpreting verified the argument that political interpreting merits investigation as its own independent type of interpreting. Both users and interpreters seemed to have very clear ideas of what the differences are between political interpreting and other types of interpreting. Several times the interviewees referred to certain aspects

of their work that are very different to community interpreting, which I feel indicates that although traditionally liaison interpreting has been classified together with community interpreting, actual practitioners are very aware of the distinguishing aspects and of the differing needs of the clients.

16.1 The Research, its Relevance Today, and Future Research

According to the feedback I received from the interpreters I interviewed, this is an important topic, and very relevant to the current state of research in Interpreting Studies. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the interpreters and the users who took part in this thesis. I was surprised and gratified at how helpful they all were and that they took this topic seriously and felt that it was important. I now feel strongly that apart from its significance in allowing me to fulfil my graduation requirements, this thesis may have relevance to real live interpreters who work in the real world.

Several of the interpreters said that what would be most helpful for interpreting in political situations is not necessarily investigating political interpreters or political interpreting itself, rather investigating political rhetoric and diplomatic dialogue. Many interpreters felt that it is such a completely different way of communicating to what we as private individuals are accustomed to, that research on the way political leaders communicate and on aspects of diplomatic dialogue would help interpreters understand the PPs more thoroughly, and therefore to perform better. One interviewee explained that different political parties may have their own jargon or dialect, and what one party means

with a particular term may have very different connotations compared to what another party means with the same term. It is investigating this textual aspect of political interpreting, which includes political rhetoric and dialogue, that interpreters feel would be most helpful to their work. In contrast, some of them felt that 'book knowledge' or academic research is so distant from the actual practising of the profession, that further research would not necessarily be helpful.

I feel that investigating the role of interpreters is by no means unimportant. Nine out of eleven interpreters said that they think about their role a lot, and that it is important to be aware of your role as an interpreter. One interpreter emphasised that ethical training and the questions of role it involves should be included in interpreter training courses to a far greater degree. One of the interpreters who did not think about role said that if interpreters still need to think about their role after interpreting for several years, perhaps they are in the wrong profession. The other interpreter implied that he does not have a role, he just interprets neutrally. He seemed to equate having a role with being active. However, at another point in the interview, he admitted that he often discussed how much you could intervene in the communication to smooth over cultural differences (e.g. politeness terminology), so he apparently does think about role to a certain extent; he just seems to have a different way of describing his thought processes.

I would like to finish with a quote from a book that I was unfortunately not able to get my hands on as it has only recently been published and is quite expensive. In a description

about *Crossing Borders in Community Interpreting - Definitions and dilemmas*¹⁹ it is written " ... one burning issue that reappears constantly: the interpreter's role. What are the norms by which the facilitators of communication shape their role? Is there indeed only one role for the [...] interpreter or are there several? ..." This has been written about community interpreters, but I feel it is just as true for political interpreters.

¹⁹ eds. Carmen Valero-Garcés and Anne Martin University of Alcalá / University of Granada

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Poliittisen tulkin rooli bilateraalisissa suhteissa: yleiskatsaus

Pro gradu –työni käsittelee tulkin roolia poliittisissa tilanteissa. Tulkkeja on toiminut poliittisissa tilanteissa jo tuhansia vuosia, ja heillä on ollut tärkeä rooli valtioiden välisessä kommunikaatiossa eli diplomatiassa. Poliittinen tulkkaus ei ole tulkkaustieteessä vakiintunut termi, joten olen pro gradu –työtäni varten määritellyt ja luokitellut sen. Työssä käsittelem, mitä alan kirjallisuudessa kirjoitetaan tulkin roolista ja siihen vaikuttavista tekijöistä, joista esimerkkeinä objektiivisuus, neutraalius, puolueettomuus ja näkymättömyys.

1. Määritelmiä, luokituksia ja tutkimuskysymys

Tulkkaus voidaan jakaa karkeasti kahteen ryhmään: konferenssitulkkaukseen ja asiointitulkkaukseen. Konferenssitulkkaus on yleensä simultaanista tulkkausta, jossa tulkit istuvat kopissa konferenssisalin takana ja ovat suurimmalta osin suojattuina puhujien ja kuuntelijoiden väliseltä kanssakäymiseltä. Tulkattavat ovat yleensä alansa asiantuntijoita ja heillä on samanlainen kulttuurillinen, koulutuksellinen ja sosiaalinen tausta.

Asiointitulkkauksessa taas tulkkaus on yleensä konsekutiivista tai lyhytkonsekutiivista. Tulkattautilanteessa vallitsee hierarkkinen ero. Toinen tulkattavista on usein ei-vallitsevasta kulttuurista ja tarvitsee tiettyjä palveluja. Toinen tulkattavista on taas asiantuntija, joka päättää siitä, myönnetäänkö nämä palvelut hakijalle.

Alan kirjallisuudessa käytetään usein termejä asiointitulkkaus ja neuvottelutulkkaus sekaisin. Molemmat käsittelevät sekä tulkkausta sairaaloissa, poliisikuulusteluissa ja virastoasioinnissa, että tulkkausta liikeneuvotteluissa ja poliittisissa tilanteissa. Kuitenkin hierarkkinen ero vaikuttaa merkittävästi puhujien käyttäytymiseen ja puhumiseen sekä näiden kautta koko tilanteeseen. Siksi tilanteet, joissa tämä ero vaikuttaa, pitää erottaa niistä, joissa se ei vaikuta. Näin ollen asiointitulkkaus (sairaaloissa ja poliisiasemilla) pitää erottaa neuvottelutulkkauksesta (liikeneuvottelut ja poliittiset neuvottelut).

Termi poliittinen tulkkaus on miltei tuntematon tulkkaustieteessä. Mona Baker on käyttänyt sitä artikkelissaan, jossa hän kuvailee Presidentti Saddam Husseinin haastattelua ennen Persianlahden sotaa. Hän kirjoittaa, että lisätutkimus tällä alalla on tarpeen. Baker kuvailee niitä psykologisia ja emotionaalisia paineita, jotka vaikuttavat poliittiseen tulkkaukseen ja puolustaa näkökantaa, että poliittiset tilanteet ovat tarpeeksi erilaisia kuin muut tulkkaustilanteet. Tästä syystä niitä kannattaa käsitellä erikseen.

Alexieva määrittelee tulkkausluokittelun neljän parametrin perusteella: moodi (konsekutiivi tai simultaani), osanottajat, aihepiiri ja tilanne (ajalliset ja tilalliset tekijät). Poliittisessa tulkkauksessa on hyvin paljon simultaanitulkkausta esimerkiksi suurissa multilateraalisissa organisaatioissa (Euroopan Unioni, Yhdistyneet Kansakunnat, Pohjoismaiden Ministerineuvosto yms), mutta tässä työssä käsittelen vain kahdenvälisiä eli bilateraalisia poliittisiä tilanteita.

Tutkimuskysymys perustuu lähtökohtaan, että tulkit vaikuttavat läsnäolollaan ja tulkkauksellaan tulkkaustilanteeseen, mutta että heidän roolinsa ei ole niin aktiivinen kuin tulkattavilla. Tulkkaustieteessä puhutaan paljon tulkin näkyvyydestä ja näkymättömyydestä. Hypoteesini on, että poliittiset tulkit eivät ole yhtä aktiivisia (näkyviä) kuin esimerkiksi asiointitulkit. Oletan, että ihmiset, joilla on samankaltainen kulttuurillinen, koulutuksellinen ja sosiaalinen tausta, tulevat parhaiten toimeen ja kommunikoivat sujuvammin kuin ihmiset, joilla ei ole näitä yhdistäviä tekijöitä. Asiointitulkkauksessa tulkattavat ovat hyvin erilaisista taustoista, joten tulkin roolin pitää olla aktiivisempi (näkyvämpi) kuin poliittisen tulkin, jonka päämiehet ovat yleensä samanlaisista taustoista ja samalla sosiaalisella tasolla.

2. Tulkin rooli ja rooliin vaikuttavat tekijät

Tulkin rooli on hyvin keskeinen tekijä tulkkauksessa. Se on jopa niin tärkeä, että Fritsch-Rudserin puhuessa huoneessa, joka oli täynnä tulkkeja ja sanoessa: ”Tulkkien ongelma ei ole etiikka, vaan tulkkien ongelma on rooli”, koko huone taputti.

Cynthia Roy ja Cecilia Wadensjö ovat tutkineet paljon asiointitulkin roolia ja he esittävät, että tulkin rooli on aktiivinen. Wadensjö on tutkinut poliisikuulusteluja, joissa on ollut tulkki mukana ja hänen mukaansa tulkilla on samanaikaisesti kaksi roolia: välittäjä ja koordinaattori. Roy taas on tutkinut tulkin roolia koordinaattorina neuvotteluissa kuoron jatko-opiskelijan ja tämän professorin välillä. Vaikka nämä tilanteet ovat olleet asiointitulkkaustilanteita, sosio-psykologisia tekijöitä voidaan pitää relevantteina myös muunlaisessa tulkkauksessa.

Roy on tutkinut tulkkimääritelmien kehittymistä ajan myötä. Silloin kun asiointitulkit olivat tulkattavien ystäviä tai perheenjäseniä, tulkkia pidettiin usein avustajana. Tällöin tulkki osallistui aktiivisesti tilanteeseen ja saattoi neuvoa tai jopa tehdä päätöksiä päämiehensä puolesta. Kun asiointitulkit alkoivat järjestäytyä ammatillisesti, he ottivat vastakkaisen asenteen, että tulkit ovat neutraaleja koneita, joiden kautta viesti välittyy. Tämä kuitenkin johti siihen, etteivät tulkit ottaneet vastuuta epäonnistuneesta tulkkauksesta. Siitä puolestaan kehittyi näkökanta, että tulkkien rooli on mahdollistaa kommunikaatio ja toimia kielellisinä sekä kulttuurillisina asiantuntijoina.

Monet tulkkien ammattisäännökset määräävät, että tulkin on aina oltava puolueeton ja neutraali, mutta monet ovat kuitenkin huomanneet, ettei tämä aina ole mahdollista itse tulkkaustilanteessa. Young ja Anderson määrittelevät puolueettomuuden kahdella tavalla. Ihminen voi toisaalta olla puolueeton, koska tapahtumat eivät kiinnosta häntä, hän on kokonaan ulkopuolinen tai sitoutumaton tilanteeseen. Toisaalta ihminen voi olla puolueeton ja tavoitella oikeudenmukaista lopputulosta, jolloin hän aktiivisesti osallistuu tilanteeseen, mutta ei kuitenkin puolla yhtä osapuolta.

Tulkkaustilanteissa on monia tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat tulkkaukseen. Esimerkkeinä näistä Alexieva luettelee tulkattavien kielellisen kompetenssin, statuksen, roolin ja lukumäärän sekä tilanteen sosio-kulttuurisen ja valvonnan asteen. Baker mainitsee myös poliittisissa tilanteissa mahdollisesti vallitsevan kireän ilmapiirin, joka tuottaa tulkille suuren psykologisen stressin ja suuren vastuun tulkattaessa korkeatasoisia poliittisia vaikuttajia.

3. Haastattelu ja tulokset

Haastattelin yhteensä yhtätoista tulkkia ja kolmea tulkin käyttäjää. Tulkit olivat pitkään ammatissa toimineita tulkkeja ja tulkin käyttäjät olivat ulkomaalainen suurlähettiläs, europarlamentaarikko ja suomalainen ministeri. Kysymykset koskivat tulkin roolia. Kysyin tulkin käyttäytymisestä eri tilanteissa, käyttäjien suhtautumisesta tulkkiin, ryhmädynamiikasta tulkkaustilanteessa ja tulkin omasta mielipiteestä roolinsa ja tehtävänsä suhteen. Kysymykset tulkeille ja käyttäjille olivat hieman erilaisia, mutta aihepiirit olivat samat. Lopuksi kokosin aineiston taulukkoon, jonka sarakkeissa oli tärkeimmät aihealueet ja jokaisella haastateltavalla oma rivinsä. Käsittelin kolmea pääaihetta työssäni: tulkkien ja käyttäjien roolimääritelmiä, tulkin vaikutusta tulkkaustilanteeseen sekä neutraaliutta ja objektiivisuutta.

3.1 Tulkkien roolimääritelmät

Tulkeilla oli vaihtelevia painotuksia omissa roolimääritelmissään. Pääosana kuitenkin tulkit toivat esille viestin välittämisen yhdestä kielestä ja kulttuurista toiseen. Muutamat sanoivat suoraan, että he ovat välittäjiä, mutta eivät tarkentaneet, ovatko he kielellisiä vai kulttuurillisia välittäjiä. Eräs hyvin oivaltava näkemys oli, että tulkin on oltava valmistautunut tehtävänsä, jotta tulkattavat voisivat kommunikoida niin kuin tulkkia ei olisi.

Monet tulkit puhuivat myös siitä, että tulkin tulee aina pyrkiä olemaan näkymätön ja puolueeton, vaikka sitä ei aina joka tilanteessa voi saavuttaakaan. Kolme haastateltavaa kertoi, että he kokevat, että heidän rooliinsa kuuluu viestin muuntaminen kohdekieleen ja

–kulttuuriin sopivaksi. Kaksi tulkkia kuitenkin nosti esiin, että korkean poliittisen tason toimijat ovat sen verran koulutettuja, informoituja ja tottuneita toimimaan kansainvälisissä tilanteissa, että heidän pitää itse ottaa vastuu kulttuuriin sopivasta kommunikaatiosta. Muutamat tulkit myös kokivat roolinsa joustavaksi ja olivat sitä mieltä, että heidän tulee sopeuttaa roolinsa eri tilanteisiin.

3.2 Tulkin vaikutus kommunikaatioon ja ryhmädynamiikkaan

Suurin osa tulkeista oli sitä mieltä, että seikat kuten tulkattavien tuttuus, tulkattavien status ja yleinen ilmapiiri tulkkaustilanteessa vaikuttavat tulkkaustilanteeseen ja siten epäsuorasti myös tulkkaukseen ja tulkin rooliin. Jos tulkki tuntee ennestään tulkattavan ja hänen puhetyylinsä sekä mahdolliset puheviat yms, on hänen paljon helpompi tulkata ja tilanne on rennompaa. Kaikki olivat myös sitä mieltä, että tulkattaessa presidentille ja pääministerille ilmapiiri on jännittävämpi ja tulkki joutuu keskittymään enemmän sekä olemaan psykologisesti tarkempi kuin muissa tilanteissa. Kuitenkin suurin osa haastateltavista oli sitä mieltä, että tämä ei vaikuta tulkkaustehtävään valmistautumiseen.

Mielenkiintoista on, että jotkut tulkit kertoivat, että mitä korkeammalla poliittisella tasolla toimitaan, sitä yksinkertaisempaa on tulkattava kieli, koska varsinainen työ ja valmistautuminen tapahtuu asiantuntijakokouksissa ja työryhmissä kulissien takana. Tällöin kognitiivista kapasiteettia voi käyttää kielellisen prosessoimisen sijasta stressin prosessoimiseen. Tulkit olivat myös suurimmaksi osaksi sitä mieltä, että yleinen ilmapiiri vaikuttaa tunteiden kautta tulkkiin ja siten epäsuorasti tulkkaukseen sekä tulkin rooliin. Monet tulkit ja kaikki tulkin käyttäjät kertoivat lisäksi, että tulkin läsnäolo tekee

tilanteesta automaattisesti muodollisemman eikä kommunikaatio ole yhtä spontaania kuin yksikielisessä neuvottelutilanteessa.

3.3 Neutraalius ja objektiivisuus

Joillakin tulkeilla oli hyvinkin vahvoja mielipiteitä neutraaliudesta ja objektiivisuudesta. Jotkut sanoivat suoraan, että he ovat aina puolueettomia, mutta kuitenkin jossain vaiheessa haastattelua tuli ilmi tilanne, jossa tulkin oli sittenkin ollut vaikea pysyä neutraalina. Haastattelemani suurlähettiläs piti tätä seikaa tärkeämpänä kuin kaikkia muita tulkin ominaisuuksia. Hän oli sitä mieltä, että tulkki ei saisi harjoittaa ammattiaan, jos ei pysty olemaan neutraali ja objektiivinen. Ministeri taas oli sitä mieltä, että tulkin on hyvä aktiivisesti puuttua kommunikaatiotilanteeseen kulttuuristen väärinkäsitysten välttämiseksi. Monet tulkit sanoivat, että yleensä poliittisessa tulkkauksessa ei ilmene emotionaalisesti latautuneita tilanteita, koska käsiteltävät aiheet ovat yleensä hyvin asiallisia.

4. Yhteenveto

Jotta olisin voinut paremmin vastata tutkimuskysymykseeni ja vahvistaa tai kumota hypoteesini, olisi pitänyt haastatella paljon suurempaa joukkoa tulkkeja. Varsinkin ei-Eurooppalaisia tulkkeja olisi pitänyt haastatella enemmän. Kuitenkin pystyin tietyissä määrin vahvistamaan hypoteesini. Luvussa 13 käsittelen joitakin haastateltavien kommentteja poliittisen ja asiointitulkkauksen eroista. Jotkut tulkit olivat sitä mieltä, että poliittisessa tulkkauksessa on paljon helpompi pysyä neutraalina kuin esimerkiksi asiointi- tai oikeustulkkauksessa. Tämä johtuu siitä, että poliittisessa tulkkauksessa ei

yleensä ole heikompaa osapuolta, johon samaistua. Heikompaa osapuolta ei ole, koska tulkattavat ovat samalla tasolla eli oletettavasti samanlaisesta koulutus- ja kulttuuritaustasta sekä sosiaalisesta ympäristöstä.

Yhtenäistä roolia poliittiselle tulkille ei voida määritellä, koska tulkit itse ovat jokseenkin eri mieltä hyvin tärkeistäkin asioista kuten neutraaliudesta ja tulkin aktiivisesta puuttumisesta kommunikaatiotilanteeseen. Tämän takia on ehkä järkevää käsitellä tulkin roolia siten, että hänen roolinsa kehittyy yksilöllisesti jokaisessa tehtävässä. Tulkki valmistautuu yksilöllisesti jokaiseen tehtävään. Myös tulkattavien näkökanta kommunikaation suhteen olisi hyvä ottaa huomioon roolin määrittelemisessä. Monet tulkit puhuivat poliittisen tulkkauksen ja asiointitulkkauksen välisistä eroista, mikä osoittaa, että vaikka näitä tulkkaustyyppisiä ei perinteisesti ole eroteltu, tulkit itse ovat hyvinkin tietoisia niiden eroista ja asiakkaiden erilaisista tarpeista.

Questions for Interpreters

1. Have you ever sensed an unwillingness to work with an interpreter?
2. How would you define your role in situations where you are interpreting between 2 parties?
3. Do you feel you (the interpreter) have an impact on the exchange?
4. Do you feel that your presence changes the dynamics of the situation?
5. How often are you directly addressed by one of the participants or directly involved in the event?
6. Would you define the ICEs where you have interpreted as
 - A) conversations between two parties mediated by an interpreter or
 - B) a three-way conversation with the interpreter as an active participant?
7. Do you feel that you are able to maintain neutrality/objectivity?
8. What characteristics are most important in an interpreter?
9. Do you have certain clients that you work for on a regular basis? If so, do you feel that it is easier to establish rapport with them? Does familiarity with the clients have an affect on how successful the interpreting is?
10. Does the personality of the primary parties affect how successful your interpreting is?
11. Does the level of linguistic competence of the primary parties affect how you interpret? How?
12. Are there certain situations where you feel you need to take a more active role than in others? Do you ever find yourself unconsciously/intuitively taking on a more active role? If you do sometimes consciously decide take a more active role, do you make your decision based on cues from the primary parties?
13. Do you think that political interpreters could benefit from more research being done in the field? Specifically what aspects should be studied? How could political interpreting be researched without impinging on the need for confidentiality?

14. Do you/Have you thought about your role or the role of an interpreter in general? Do you think it is important for interpreters to think about it?
15. Do you find that you identify more with one of the parties or with speakers of a particular language? What could be the reason for this? Might your language combination have something to do with it?
16. Does the primary participants' relationship with each other (friendly, hostile, competitive, distant) have an effect on your interpretation?
17. Does the status of the primary participants affect your interpretation?
18. What are the main differences between political interpreting and community or business interpreting? (or conference interpreting)
19. If you know that the people you are interpreting for have a certain degree of linguistic competence in the other language, does it affect your interpretation?
20. Have you ever thought about the power inherent in your role?
21. Do cultural misunderstandings often arise in political interpreting (in comparison to community or other interpreting)?
22. How often do you adopt 'politeness strategies', e.g. hedging, down toning?
23. Have you ever sensed that the primary participants are deliberately being obtuse or vague?
24. If you intervene in the situation for some reason, how do you refer to yourself? As 'I' or as 'the interpreter' or something else?
25. Do you ever sense any mistrust on behalf of the primary participants?
26. Why do you think that politicians sometimes insist on using English (when it's not their mother tongue) even when an interpreter is present and even if English is not in her language combination.

Questions to ask the people who use interpreters:

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt it would be better to do without the services of an interpreter or where you felt an interpreter would hinder your goals?
2. Are there certain situations where you would always/never use an interpreter?
What are the criteria you use to choose an interpreter? (reputation, prior experience with an interpreter, particular company?)
3. Would you define exchanges where an interpreter is present as A) conversations between two parties mediated by an interpreter or B) a three-way conversation with the interpreter as an active participant?
4. Do the dynamics of the exchange change significantly when an interpreter is present?
5. Does your attitude towards the other party or your interaction change when an interpreter is present?
6. Do you directly address the interpreter or directly involve her in the event?
7. Do you feel that an interpreter is able to maintain neutrality/objectivity?
8. What characteristics are most important in an interpreter?
9. Are there some situations where you feel the interpreter plays a more active role in the exchange than in others?
10. Do you have certain interpreters that you work with on a regular basis? Does familiarity with the interpreter have an affect on how successful the interpreting is?
11. Does the personality of the interpreter affect the success of the ICE?
12. Are there ever situations when you wish that the interpreter, as a cultural and linguistic expert, took a more active role in the exchange in order to help the communication?
13. Do you ever think about the role the interpreter plays in the ICE? Do you think research done in this area would enable interpreters to do a better job?
14. How would you describe a perfect interpreter?

15. Is there any other aspect concerning the role of the interpreter that I haven't covered that you think is significant?

16. Do you act differently when an interpreter is present? If so, how and why?

17. Do you sometimes with the interpreter would be more active in pointing out misunderstandings?

18. Can you please define the process of arranging for an interpreter from the point where you are given a commission or are organising an event where interpreting will be needed to the point where the interpreter has completed her task and sent you the invoice?

19. What do you think about the fact that many Codes of Conduct maintain that an interpreter must always maintain neutrality and objectivity?

20. I've defined political interpreting to cover all interpreted communication events where either the topic or the participants are political. What do you think are the main differences between political interpreting and conference, community and court interpreting?