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Point of view in free indirect thought and in community interpreting☆

Fabrizio Gallai *

University of Bologna, Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Moderne, LILEC, Via Cartoleria 5, 4016 Bologna, Italy

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Abstract

In this paper, I apply Blakemore's (2010, 2011) relevance-theoretic analysis of the role of discourse markers in free indirect thought representations to the use of similar expressions by police interpreters. Interpreting is analysed within relevance theory as a special case of attributive use (cf. Gutt, 1991/2000; Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995). However, the role of discourse markers in the representation of a point of view that is not the interpreter's shows that this account must be modified in order to explain how interpreters suppress their voices to maintain an impression of mutuality between hearer and original speaker. My data from interpreter-mediated police interviews shows that interpreting practice is variable with respect to the inclusion of discourse markers. In particular, renditions may include discourse markers not found in the original but which are understood as attributed to the original speaker. While the addition of discourse markers might be regarded as evidence for a mediating interpreter, and hence as contrary to public authorities' Codes of conduct, such additions are justified by the aim of providing a rendition that achieves relevance by increasing the sense of mutuality between hearer and original speaker. Thus, the interpreter's 'interference' may (paradoxically) contribute to the impression of the interpreter's invisibility required by public institutions.
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Keywords: Interpreting; Discourse marker; Attributive use; Free indirect thought; Point of view; Relevance; Voice

1. Introduction

The last decades have seen a movement of citizens throughout the world, affecting the linguistic and ethnic make-up of societies. As a result, Community interpreting[1] is arguably the most common form of interpreting, enabling ''people who are not fluent speakers of the official language(s) of the country to communicate with the providers of public services so as to facilitate full and equal access to legal, health, education, government, and social services'' (Mikkelson, 1996:77). Community interpreting events include police interrogations, immigration hearings, classroom interaction, doctor–patient consultations, Job Centre interviews, or social worker–client interviews. The language of the interaction may be spoken or

☆ In this paper I shall refer to the speaker (or author) as 'he' and the hearer (or reader) as 'she'. I shall also distinguish: (a) interpreting or to interpret (lower case), which indicates the activity of a community interpreter; and (b) Interpretation or to Interpret (upper case), which denotes the meta-representation of a speaker's thoughts recovered by a hearer. Lastly, all names, dates and locations in the transcripts are fictitious and do not relate in any way to any real events. Any resemblance is purely coincidental.

* Tel.: +39 0512097165.
E-mail address: fabrizio.gallai@unibo.it.

[1] Community interpreting is also known as *liaison*, *ad hoc*, *dialogue*, *face-to-face*, *contact*, and *public service interpreting* and there is little consensus amongst scholars about whether or not these terms are synonymous (Hale, 2007).

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sign language, and the working mode may be simultaneous, consecutive or sight translation. A fairly recent trend is the use of remote interpreting, whereby services are provided via telephone or videolink (Heh and Qian, 1997; Braun, 2013).

A number of community interpreters' Codes of Practice at national level state that police interpreters should 'just interpret' (e.g. Laster and Taylor, 1994). In other words, the interpreter is frequently expected to be an invisible machine who can produce literal or word-for-word (and thus allegedly 'accurate') renditions of the original utterances. This widespread view – challenged by the vast majority of interpreting studies scholars (e.g. Mikkelson, 1998; Roy, 2000; Wadensjö, 1998) – is coupled with a continuing resistance to the use of interpreters by public officials, who may equate their presence with a loss of control over their interaction with the non-English counterparts. As a forensic consultant puts it, ''it is hard enough working with an interpreter and having to make allowances for cultural and linguistic diversity without having any inaccuracies or misunderstandings creeping in'' (Gozna, 2012:32).

As a legal interpreter registered in the National Register of Public Service Interpreters and working in the UK justice sector, I noticed that my presence did affect the interaction in ways that were both subtle and pervasive, sometimes leading to miscommunication, unsuspected by primary participants and possibly undetected by all parties concerned. Individually, although these differences between the original and the target utterances may each have affected the interaction locally, they did not alter the outcome overall. Cumulatively, however, the features modified in my renditions appear to suggest that, despite their treatment as identical events, the two interview events were indeed disparate. In these interactions, I singled out a particularly frequent component for analysis, namely ''discourse connectives'' or ''discourse markers'', which I saw as ''extraneous to the 'meat and potatoes' of the sentence – that is, the subject and predicate – for they do not refer to who did what to whom'' (Berk-Seligson, 1990:142–143). These elements are thus routinely left out altogether.[2]

Since the 1990s, researchers have come a long way towards dispelling this image of the community interpreter as a ''necessary evil'' (Herbert, 1952:4), and the sub-discipline of community interpreting has developed into an applied science in its own right. In particular, a number of authors (e.g. Blakemore and Gallai, 2014; Mason, 2006a) have argued that a pragmatic, relevance-theoretic approach to communication (Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995) is well placed to examine the (micro-level) inferential processes involved in interpreting and the Interpretation of discourse markers, and I will take up that argument here.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2.1 discusses the notion of interpretive representation, which has been used in relevance theory to describe translation and interpreting (Gutt, 1991/2000; Setton, 1998, 1999; Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995). Further, taking Blakemore's (2010, 2011) account of free indirect thought representations in fiction as a starting point (section 2.2), the notion of community interpreting as 'interlingual interpretive use' (section 2.3) is challanged. Section 3 describes the account of interpreters' use of speaker-oriented expressions (such as discourse markers) adopted to describe my data and the methodology used to gather and analyse my corpus of interpreter-mediated police interviews. Section 4 contains the fine-grained analysis of the police interpreters' treatment of procedural discourse markers. In particular, it defines and qualifies, with the support of empirical evidence, four categories which are argued to be typical of the interpreters' behaviour. Examples from the corpus are provided and accompanied by a discussion of how they contribute to the argument put forward in the paper. Lastly, section 5 summarises the findings, highlighting the way in which the use of discourse markers by the interpreters alters the enhanced cognitive interview (Milne, 2004; Milne and Bull, 1999), and their ''intrusive behaviour'' (Berk-Seligson, 1990:214) needs to be defined more accurately in legal interpreters' Codes of Conduct in terms of its extent and possible impact on the interaction.

2. Relevance theory: a cognitive approach to translation and interpreting

2.1. Attributive and interpretive representation

In the picture of communication presented in relevance theory, communicative success does not depend on the exact duplication of thoughts (Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995:193). Instead, the goal of communication may be to achieve a looser sort of coordination. As Wilson and Sperber (2012:46) put it, ''the type of co-ordination aimed at in most verbal exchanges is best compared to the co-ordination between people taking a stroll together rather than to that between people marching in step''. This looseness may be introduced at either the speaker's or the hearer's end. In the first place, an utterance is merely a clue to the speaker's meaning, and the proposition it expresses may not be identical to the speaker's own thought. In the second place, the hearer cannot simply decode the speaker's meaning, but must construct

[2] This 'disregard' of such elements is also not uncommon in monolingual settings; in fact, the same happens during the transformation of interview data through the judicial process as the tape of the original interaction is converted to a written transcript by police clerks (Haworth, 2006).

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