

THE IMPACT OF PARTIAL BILINGUALISM AMONG SPANISH-SPEAKING SUSPECTS UPON INTERPRETER-MEDIATED POLICE INTERVIEWS: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS



Eloísa Monteoliva García, Year 2 PhD Student - E.Monteoliva@hw.ac.uk
 Supervisors: Prof. Ursula Böser, Prof. Jemina Napier
 Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies in Scotland, Heriot-Watt University

Background

When an interpreter is called to enable communication in a police interview, the interactional dynamics and communicative practices are reshaped to accommodate the bilingual nature of the exchange.

The interpreting process turns the **dyadic** monolingual interview (police-interviewee) into a **triadic** bilingual interaction model (police-interpreter-interviewee).

Despite the crucial role of language and communication in investigative interviews and the growing multilingualism in current societies, interpreting in police settings is still **under-researched**. Difficulties to access authentic data is one of the main barriers for researchers, which has translated into an area researched mainly through experimental studies.

In an attempt to contribute to the understanding of interpreter-mediated investigative interviews, this study explores an aspect emerging from observation of **authentic interpreter-mediated police interviews in Scotland**: the impact of partial bilingualism among suspects upon the interpreter-mediated police interview.

Aims & Research Questions

The use of English by migrants, tourists and other users of interpreting services in today's multilingual societies challenges the notion of interpreting as a task performed by a bilingual individual between monolingual speakers (Angermeyer 2008, Eades 2010).

When users of interpreting services find the other's language partially transparent, they are referred to as having "Transparent Language Constellations" (Müller 1989, Meyer 2012). The aim of this study is to explore the impact of suspects' partial competence in English upon the interpreter-mediated interview as a **complex situated communicative practice**.

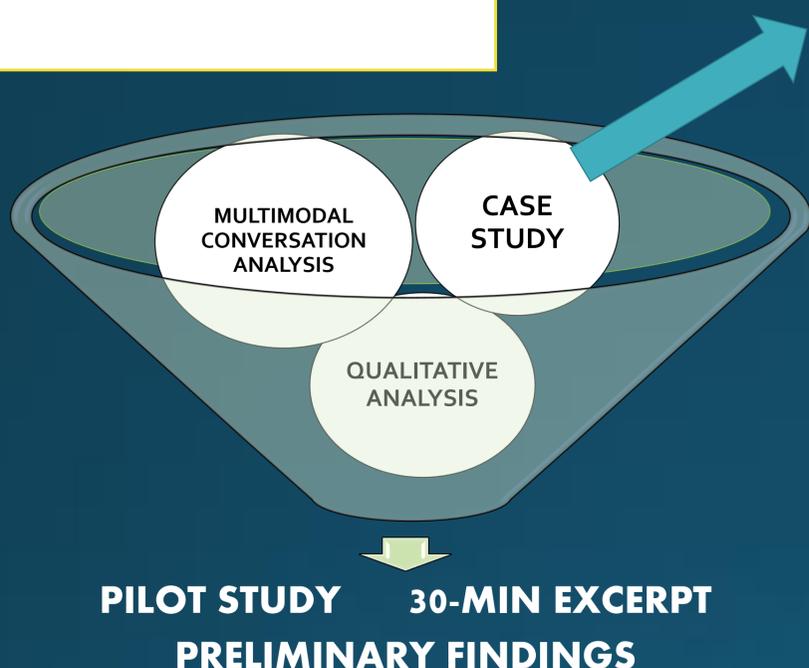
This broad topic is addressed through the following **three questions**:

1. What are the features of interactional dynamics in the framework of the interview process & phases?
2. How are suspects' communicative practices shaped by the use of English in the interpreter-mediated interview?
3. How is interpreting shaped by suspects' use of English? How are spaces of interpreter participation initiated, organised and operated?

Case Study

Based on authentic data –anonymized.

- Case of Misuse of Controlled Drugs (Class A and Class B)
- Edinburgh, Scotland, 2012.
- 2 video-recorded interviews.
- 2 male Spanish-speaking suspects with English as a FL.
- 2 male English-speaking interviewing officers.
- 1 female interpreter. Bilingual, Spanish as a native language.
- Material evidence: **cocaine, cannabis, ecstasy, a roll of thread, bags, a shoehorn, a scales**, mobile phones, **100-pound bundles**.



Distribution of Dyads & Triads



THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

- Turn-by-turn re-negotiation of the interactional model: constant shifts between monolingual (dyadic) and interpreter-mediated (triadic) sequences.
- Interactional models are evenly distributed in the data analysed in the pilot study.
- Triadic interaction decreases in the information-gathering phase.
- The interactional flow is temporarily interrupted by shifts into triadic sequences.
- Eye contact with the suspect is lost momentarily when used to request interpreter participation.

THE SUSPECT: COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICES

- The suspect replies in English from the beginning of the interview.
- The suspect deploys a range of communicative strategies in English as a foreign language to address comprehension and production difficulties.
- Correlations between communicative strategies and interpreter participation: code-switching, gestures and requests for help typically trigger interpreter participation.
- Ambiguity and vagueness in the suspect's answers in English typically remain unaddressed in the excerpt analysed.

Sometimes I finish work, sometimes I'm going there and we was watching a movie
 o like a:- ((su/int))
 ¿Cómo es "serie"?

THE INTERPRETING TASK AND PROCESS

- Participants align with a "stand-by" mode of interpreting (Angermeyer 2008): the interpreter is on an off.
- Assessing the need for interpreter participation and the type of intervention required.
- Interpreter participation oriented primarily towards solving comprehension problems.
- Collaborative nature of sense-making processes.
- Participation framework: the interpreter moves from the middle to the side.

Typical triggers of interpreter participation in the data	Range of tasks performed by the interpreter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Code-switching (En-Sp) ▪ Shifts in gaze direction ▪ Gestures ▪ Mismatching or incoherent answer ▪ Perceived relevance of the question asked ▪ Silence and pauses ▪ Hesitation in suspect's answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interpreting ▪ Clarifying ▪ Requesting the turn for the suspect ▪ Providing the suspect with lexical support in English ▪ Repetition of words and sentences mispronounced by the suspect

REFERENCES

- Angermeyer, P. S. (2008) 'Creating monolingualism in the multilingual courtroom', *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 2(3), pp. 385-404.
 Eades, D. (2010) *Sociolinguistics and the Legal Process*.
 Meyer, B. (2012) 'Ad hoc interpreting for partially language-proficient patients', *Coordinating Participation in Dialogue Interpreting*, pp. 99-113.
 Müller, F. (1989) 'Translation in bilingual conversation: Pragmatic aspects of translatory interaction', *Journal of pragmatics*, 13(5), pp. 713-739.

