



Interpreter–Mediated Interviews of Minors

An Annotated Bibliography

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**Championing and Strengthening the
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Scope

This annotated bibliography provides citations and annotations to a wide-ranging literature on the topic of interpreter-mediated interviews of minor children. One publication included examined interpreter-mediated interviews with victims of domestic abuse. It was included due to the nature of the research and its implications for interpreter-mediated interviews with children. Publications examining interpreter-mediated interviews in mental health situations are not included, nor is research investigating the issue of interpreter-mediated interviews with suspects.

Organization

Publications include articles, book chapters, reports, and research briefs and are arranged in date descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible. However, this collection may not be complete. More information can be obtained in the Child Abuse Library Online.

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Interpreter-Mediated Interviews of Minors

An Annotated Bibliography

Salaets, H., & Balogh, K. (2019). [Interpreter-mediated questioning of minors \(imqm\): The voice of children and their rapport with interpreters](#). *Revista de Llengua i Dret*, 71, 27- 44.

Heidi Salaets is the head of the Interpreting Studies Research Group at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Leuven (Antwerp, Brussels and Leuven campus). She trains interpreters in the Master and also conference interpreters (Italian-Dutch) in the postgraduate interpreting programme. She is also responsible for the evaluation procedure in the LIT-training. She was and still is involved in several European projects on legal interpreting and translation. Katalin Balogh is the coordinator of the Legal Interpreting and Translation (LIT) training programme at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Leuven (Antwerp Campus). She teaches Intercultural Studies to the students of the Master in Interpreting. She was and still is involved in several European projects on legal interpreting and translation.

The paper reports on the results of the European project Cooperation in Interpreter-Mediated Questioning of Minors (CMIQ). Following review of extant research, the researchers detail part two of this project. In part two they determined to deal with vulnerable victims: children under the age of 18 who did not speak the language of the legal system to which they found themselves subject.

Salaets and Balogh conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve Flemish children, boys and girls aged five to 17, of which 11 were hearing and one was deaf. The questions asked the children who had been involved in questionings about their thoughts, needs, fears and experiences during interpreter-mediated (IM) interviews. The child who was deaf was the only one with previous experience with an interpreter. For this quasi-experiment, a bilingual interaction was simulated and a professional female interpreter

(one Hungarian–Dutch, one Italian–Dutch, one Flemish Sign Language–Dutch) were used. The interviewer was also female except the in the case of the deaf child. Prior to the experiment, the researchers explained the procedure to the children. The minors were in the role of witness and received open, non-suggestive questions from the interviewer. Questions were asked in Hungarian or Italian by an interviewer who did not understand Dutch: both children and interviewer therefore needed an interpreter, who was present but was not introduced officially.

The themes that the researchers endeavored to examine included personal feelings, role/reasons between persons in experience. The researchers were especially interested in relationships between the children and the interviewers. In an interpreter-mediated setting they are supposed to address each other. However, in this experiment the children spoke mainly to the interpreter instead. The result for the issue of spatial/temporal organization was that most of the children preferred the seating arrangement with interpreter and interviewer sitting in a typical triad, so the children can see both at the same time. Results were very mixed for the issue of technical implementation of the interview. The final theme of trust was of most importance to the researchers because they wanted to gain an understanding of how an interviewer could gain the trust of the minor and build rapport through the interpreter. They found that most of the children were more trusting of the interpreter rather than the interviewer. Trust in the interpreter was very high and the children “mostly addressed the interpreter (or both the interpreter and the interviewer) rather than the interviewer and were confident that both were listening” (p. 38). In agreement with previous studies, rationale for team briefings also became patently clear in the results of the experiment. However, they stressed that also in agreement with previous studies, briefings can have influence on the interpreter’s impartiality, competence of the people involved, trust/rapport, spatial organization, and technical implementation. Results showed that for the most part the children “were impressed by the interpreter’s knowledge of the foreign language and therefore had

genuine trust in the interpretation” (p. 34). Additionally, they all found the IM interview to be a positive experience.

Salaets and Balogh point to limitations of the study, namely that the interviews were held in a safe environment with children who, to the researchers’ knowledge, had not undergone any traumatising experiences. The conclusion reached by the researchers was that rapport-building with the interviewer must be encouraged, but also that we must take into account the children’s reality and their perceptions. Furthermore, in agreement with Nilson (2013), the authors concluded that open communication about the roles of interviewer and interpreter should be developed in briefings at which the interpreter is presented as a professional member of the team.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Böser, U., & La Rooy, D. (2018). Interpreter-mediated investigative interviews with minors setting the ground rules. *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 13(2), 208-229. DOI:10.1075/tis.00012.bos

Ursula Böser is Professor in the School of Social Sciences, Languages & Intercultural Studies at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her research focus is upon public service interpreting in legal settings. David La Rooy is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Law and Criminology at Royal Holloway University of London.

Böser and La Rooy examined literature in support of use of ground rules in forensic interviews of children in the context of using the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Child Interview Protocol. A review of literature on interpreter-mediated (IM) interviews showed that ground rules needed to be enhanced or altered within the context of the IM interview.

Reviews of the literature led the researchers to assert that the main focus of research on interpreting in police settings is the clash of institutional assumptions and the reality of police interpreting. They stated that there was a “prevalent perception of interpreters as invisible, a perception which in turn is grounded in the conceptualisation of languages as essentially isomorphic” (p. 211). Further, they found that studies had demonstrated how underlying principles of interview formats come under pressure in bilingual contexts. Additionally, they found that previous studies demonstrated ways in which the perceived profile of minors as interlocutors whose communicative practices are limited by his or her lack of command over the linguistic resources or contextual cues may impact participation in an interpreter mediated interview setting.

Following review of the literature, Böser and La Rooy noted some problem areas when applying the NICHD interview protocol to IM interviews. First, the NICHD structured interview protocol does not cover briefing between participants for child interviews. They state that “in a bilingual context, briefings may not just provide an opportunity for preparatory interaction with the interpreter and the other professionals present, but also for an interaction with the young interviewee which may benefit from a degree of guidance” (p.219). The change to the protocol they suggested was one which would accommodate interpreted interaction that provides the interpreter with the opportunity to interact with the child prior to the interview to establish informal contact. The second area of concern found was at times during interpreted interaction it falls upon the interpreter to explain his or her role to the non-institutional user prior to the beginning of formal interaction. However, in the case of child interviews this should originate from the lead interviewer. The researchers suggest a modification to the NICHD protocol for bilingual contexts to address this issue in which the interviewer will introduce himself to the child and then will explain that the interpreter is a person who helps people understand each other when they do not speak the same language. Additionally, it will be explained that the interpreter will not tell anybody about any of the things talked about. A third area of concern is that the need to explain conversational rules in interpreted

interviews is even more acute given the need to build rapport. Böser and La Rooy suggest adding this to the ground rules: “When you speak, please look directly at me and I will do the same, because this is a conversation between the two of us. When the interpreter says “I” she repeats what you have said and I have said” (p.222).

In concluding remarks the researchers stated that in IM interaction with minors, the pre-substantive phase provides an opportunity to state and rehearse ground rules related to the altered dynamics of communication taking place via an interpreter. The authors called for the data-based testing of these proposed adaptations and suggested that modifications of institutional speech genres for bilingual use may be a component of mainstreaming public service interpreting.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Lee, J. (2017). A case study of interpreter-mediated witness statement: Police interpreting in South Korea. *Police Practice and Research*, 18(2), 194–205.
DOI:10.1080/15614263.2016.1248840

Jieun Lee is an associate professor at the Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation of Ewha Womans University in Seoul, South Korea. She received her PhD in Linguistics from Macquarie University in Sydney, and taught there before joining Ewha Womans University in 2010. Her research interests include legal interpreting, community interpreting, interpreter and translator training, and discourse analysis. Her research work has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Interpreting*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Multilingua*, *Perspectives*, *Meta*, and *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*.

This work was based on a case study of South Korean police interview with a Russian-speaking witness in a murder case. The study examined some of the critical moments in

the interpreter-mediated witness statement-taking sessions and shed some light on the intertextuality in the interpreter-mediated interview, written witness statement and court judgements. The primary data used for the study consisted of approximately four hours' video recording of the witness' interview. The recordings were transcribed by the author and a Russian-Korean interpreter, and the author's English translation of Russian utterances was checked by a Russian-English interpreter.

Transcript analysis showed that the interpreter did not manage turns effectively. He did not interpret the witness' narratives immediately, and instead continued asking checking questions. It was twelve turns after he interpreted the interviewing officer's question when he interpreted her statement into Korean. Delayed interpreting hindered the interviewing officers from asking follow-up questions in response to her statements. The researcher reported finding several problems with his interpretation including mistranslation in the summary translation which could have had serious consequences in legal settings.

There were numerous discrepancies between the witness' statement and the interpreter's rendition. Lee found that the interpreter effectively suppressed the voice of the witness while "the interviewing police officers simply let the interpreter play a very active role in the interview. As a result, the interviewing police officers were excluded from the interview they were supposed to conduct" (p. 200). Furthermore, the witness signed the interview transcript with all of its mistranslations confirming that it was her statement.

During the subsequent trial, the witness contradicted the statements from the interpreted interview. However, the court upheld the statements from the interview since it was shortly after the crime. The case was appealed to a higher court, but the issue of the poorly interpreted interview was not taken into account. Lee suggested that "higher courts were not easily convinced about the impact of poor quality interpreting unless the interpreting errors were directly related to an issue of specific significance to the case" (p. 203).

The researcher asserted that the case demonstrated that poor interpreting during the police interview process may have had a direct bearing on the police officers' perception of the case, the official witness statement and the court judgements. She also stated that the findings indicated that police should examine its protocol of engaging interpreters in interviewing witnesses and suspects and that police investigators needed to engage competent interpreters for interviewing people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Finally, Lee suggested that courts should also establish a proper protocol for dealing with the interpreted evidence.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Powell, M. B., Manger, B., Dion, J., & Sharman, S. J. (2017). [Professionals' perspectives about the challenges of using interpreters in child sexual abuse interviews.](#) *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 24(1), 90–101. DOI:10.1080/13218719.2016.1197815

Martine Powell is a Professor at Griffith University (Griffith Criminology Institute) and Founding Director of the Centre for Investigative Interviewing. Her particular expertise relates to the interviewing of vulnerable people such as children, adults with communication impairment, and people from different cultural backgrounds. Bronwen Manger is Administrative Officer and Assistant to Professor Powell at Griffith University. Dr. Jacinthe Dion works at the Department of Health Sciences, University of Québec in Chicoutimi. Dion does research in Clinical Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Forensic Psychology. Stephanie Sharman is Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology at Deakin University. Her research interests are in the area of memory, including impact of interviewing on people's memories for events that they experienced or witnessed.

This study elicited interviewers' perspectives about the challenges of using interpreters, with the aim of understanding how investigative interviews could be improved. From the review of the literature the authors noted two main challenges in interpreter-mediated

interviews that they wanted to examine in this study. The first challenge related to the limited availability of interpreters, especially prevalent in situations wherein the alleged victim is from a relatively small language group. The second challenge concerns the lack of scrutiny of interpreter competence and inadequate training. These challenges had been extensively shown through the extant research. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine what (if any) additional challenges needed to be considered when using interpreters with child abuse complainants. In-depth telephone and face-to-face interviews were conducted with 21 sexual assault prosecutors and investigative interviewers who regularly conducted interviews with non-English-speaking child complainants of abuse in Australia.

Each of the professionals interviewed recognized the important role that interpreters play. They had two major concerns relating to the “difficulties of accessing interpreters and the poor quality of interpretation, particularly in remote locations and for small language groups” (p. 93). Even in cases where interpreters were available, several professionals mentioned instances where they had observed clues of inaccurate interpretation. This is of major concern because of the possibilities of contamination of witness accounts, potential inadmissibility of evidence and diminished credibility of the witness in court.

The professionals indicated two broad areas of concern other than the two found in previous research. First, they indicated that interpreters frequently lacked preparedness to deal with the traumatic and sensitive nature of children’s abuse histories, and second, interpreters seemed to have insufficient understanding of ‘best-practice’ child investigative interview process. Some mentioned cases where interpreters had clearly been uncomfortable with the topic of child sexual abuse. Additionally, lack of knowledge of the justice process and the protective factors that follow the interview was perceived by the professionals to exacerbate interpreters’ psychological distress.

Several of the professionals believed that a “lack of consideration of the impact of emotional content on interpreters not only hampers the evidence-gathering process (through its impact on interpreter performance) but it also compromises the child’s well-being” (p. 94).

On the topic of understanding best practice child interviews, the participants reported two reasons why the interpretation process itself can hinder the elicitation of a detailed narrative account. First, adding to a child’s already stressful situation having one’s language interpreted is often unfamiliar and stressful for children who have not previously used an interpreter. Second, while best-practice interview guidelines indicate that interviewers should avoid interrupting the child’s responses, when a child’s narrative is relayed through an interpreter it is necessarily disrupted while each segment of speech is translated. The professionals who were very keenly aware of the legal requirements of obtaining the child’s story stated that some interpreters, especially those inexperienced with child complainants, seemed to underestimate the high level of skill involved in translating questions in a developmentally appropriate and non-leading way.

Participants provided three suggestions for minimizing the detrimental impact of interpreters on the evidence gathering process. First, they suggested that independent scrutiny checks on the process (e.g. back-translation, peer review and the use of independent intermediaries) should be conducted to ensure that interpreters have adequate skills in asking developmentally- appropriate questions. Second, many of them recommended briefings between the interviewer, child and interpreter prior to the interview. The briefings would cover such topics as the necessity of accurate translation, encouragement of the interpreter to clarify ambiguous questions before putting them to the witness, and the need to remain impartial and maintain the appropriate professional distance. The third suggestion was better training for interpreters in child developmental protocol, as well as training about “sexual offences and child protection that might better equip them _ emotionally and professionally _ to work within the system” (p. 97).

In their discussion of these findings, the researchers argued that putting more rigorous screening of interpreters into place would likely exacerbate the already existing strain on a limited pool of interpreting services for many non-English-speakers. They also noted that there have been numerous advances in recent years in the development of brief training exercises that have successfully promoted sustained adherence to best-practice interviewing and that these trainings could be useful in the context of interpreter training. They also stressed the need for evidence-based systemic improvements to address the concerns raised by the study participants.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Tipton, R. (2017). ['You are foreign, you are nothing in this country': Managing risk in interpreter-mediated police interviews with victims of domestic abuse](#). *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 75, 119-138.

Rebecca Tipton is a lecturer in Translation and Interpreting Studies and currently the Programme Tutor for the MA in Translation and Interpreting Studies in the Division of Languages and Intercultural Studies at the University of Manchester. Her research on public service interpreting is aimed at shaping policy debates on reducing health and social inequalities and promoting quality interpreter-mediated services in statutory and non-statutory service contexts.

This research examined approaches to police interviews involving limited language proficient victims of domestic abuse. The author cited previous research that had brought to light the issue of interpreter involvement that may limit the interviewing officer's access to critical cues, either because of the interpreter's omission or neglect of certain discourse features or because of a general lack of awareness of how interpreting impacts on interaction in such cases. Extant literature also highlighted the issue of interpreter's wellbeing.

To further investigate these issues from previous research this author used a questionnaire and a series of interviews that were conducted with registered interpreters at the Cambridgeshire Constabulary. This site was selected due to its high number of interpreter-mediated interviews conducted. Eighteen interpreters completed the questionnaire with eight of those consenting to interview. Several languages and various experience levels were represented. The focus of the study was upon these main themes: training experiences; interpreter perception of officer approach to victim/witness interviews; pre-interview briefing; use of artefacts (e.g. risk assessment models); interpreter involvement in trust/rapport building, handling of narrative flow; cultural issues and recommendations for service improvements.

On the topic of *cultural issues*, the findings suggested that domestic violence was taken more seriously by the police in Britain than in the cultures represented by the interpreters. On the issue of *training* only four of the 17 who responded to the training question had attended the dedicated training offered by the Constabulary. Those experienced *pre-briefing* reported the briefings as short. With regard to the issue of *interpreter perception of officer approaches to victim interviews* quite a number of interpreters had expressed surprise at how 'cold' and 'distant' officers appeared in the interviews. With regard to the issue of using *artefacts* several interpreters made reference to a 'pack' used by officers to structure the interview. This was viewed positively by the interpreters in terms of helping to shape the victim's understanding of the police's role. Several of the interpreters reported difficulties with code switching. They expressed a sense of helplessness due to fact that when an alleged victim tried to respond in English using the wrong words, they could not correct them.

The researcher noted some conclusions to this limited study. She suggested that the guidance for interpreters "contained very little attention to the interview process aside from brief mention of the interpreter being able to interrupt proceedings to ask for repetition or seek clarification" (p. 132). Furthermore, the interpreter experiences

presented seemed to suggest that particular strategies were needed for handling emotional distress, rapport-building, the explaining the purpose of certain questions and why repetitions are needed, identifying linguistic features that can impact on the assessment of abuse, and the use of risk assessment models. It was also suggested that the current guidelines display a number of gaps in institutional knowledge about interpreter mediation and how such knowledge is managed, particularly in investigative interviews.

This research was funded through an ESRC Impact Accelerator Account at the University of Manchester.

Antila, D. (2016). [The child's experience as a customer interpreter and user of translation services](#) (Master's thesis, Helsinki: Diaconia University of Applied Sciences).

The objective of this research was to discover how children experience being a client for authorities and further to find about their opinions on being a client for authorities and using the community interpreting services when they are in asylum process in Finland. The aim was to gain information about the children's level of trust of the interpreter and their understanding of the language and dialect that the interpreter speaks.

The researcher interviewed six underage asylum seekers in Finland. The children were ages 15 to 17 years. Children were also from different countries as Iraq, Somalia and Vietnam. The interviewing data was collected by interviewing the children in their own language or in Finnish language if they were good in Finnish language. The interview questions were the same for all children.

The results showed that underage asylum seeker children had trust in the interpreter, although there were some problems with the dialect used in Arabic language. In the beginning when children applied for asylum, they believed that the interpreter for a

representative of the authorities. They thought that the interpreter was a type of law enforcement officer. The results also showed that the children who came from the Arabic countries preferred the interpreters who used their own dialect. Results also indicated that the children services users considered community interpreters reliable and professional.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Fontes, L. A., & Tishelman, A. C. (2016). Language competence in forensic interviews for suspected child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 58, 51-62.
DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.06.014

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In this publication, the authors focused on findings related to language competence, which formed part of a larger study on cultural competence. The method was semi-structured qualitative individual interviews with thirty-nine professional child forensic interviewers and directors working within children's advocacy centers (CACs) from 22 states across the United States. The data analysis led to the identification of themes related to foreign languages and interpreting in child forensic interviews for suspected child sexual abuse.

Ten major themes were presented with sample statements of participants. The themes included, the languages encountered in forensic interviews, interviewing children in their primary language, code switching, accuracy and completeness, procedures for interviewing children who are English language learners, Finding the right interpreter,

difficulties in the interpreted interview, Telephone interpreting, effect of interpreter gender, and Interpreter strengths and preparation.

The authors indicated that participants stressed the importance of language access and the difficulty finding forensically trained interpreters. Another indication from the results was that “although participants generally described interpreted interviews as time-consuming and difficult, they also expressed gratitude that the interpreters were available to make interviews possible in children’s preferred language” (p. 60).

Several participants described their preference for bilingual interviewers over conducting interviews through interpreters, while only a small number of CACs employed bilingual forensic interviewers. Fontes and Tishelman offered some recommendations based upon these findings. The first recommendation was the development of CAC guidelines on language competence, including best practices with regard to working with children and their families who speak a language other than English. Second, recruiting and training forensic interviewers with diverse language skills matched to their communities should be a high priority. They further suggested that the guidelines should also discuss options for preparing interpreted interviews for court.

This research was supported in part by a grant by the Child Protection Program at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA.

Balogh, K., & Salaets, H. (Eds.). (2015). *Children and justice: Overcoming language barriers*. Intersentia.

Katalin Balogh is the coordinator of the Legal Interpreting and Translation (LIT) training programme at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Leuven (Antwerp Campus). She teaches Intercultural Studies to the students of the Master in Interpreting. She was and still is involved in several European projects on legal interpreting and translation. Heidi

Salaets is the head of the Interpreting Studies Research Group at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Leuven (Antwerp, Brussels and Leuven campus). She trains interpreters in the Master and also conference interpreters (Italian-Dutch) in the postgraduate interpreting programme. She is also responsible for the evaluation procedure in the LIT-training. She was and still is involved in several European projects on legal interpreting and translation.

The Co-Minor-IN/QUEST (Cooperation in Interpreter-Mediated Questioning of Minors) project brought together partners from six European countries to collect information and in-depth knowledge on interpreter-mediated child interviews. A third function of the project was focusing on highly-vulnerable interviewees: traumatized minors, minors with physical or mental disabilities, and children from minority groups.

A portion of the project involved gathering data from numerous professionals across Europe who worked as interpreters for child witness/victims who were interviewed in criminal cases. Questions for the survey were developed through roundtable discussion between the project partners. The survey was completed by 610 police officers, child support workers, psychologists, justice workers, and professional interpreters. Quantitative analysis of the results found that 1) the majority of respondents seemed to know that it is not the task of the interpreter to support the minor, 2) about half of respondents agreed or were undecided about whether it is the job of the interpreter to support the interviewer's purpose, 3) most agreed that literal translation is best practice with the caveat that sometimes it is not feasible due to different linguistic, cultural and situational factors, 4) the majority agreed that the interpreter's task was to interpret the "core" of the message, 5) although it is not the job of the interpreter to explain technical/legal terminology to the minor, over 50% of respondents agreed that this is something they do, 6) results were mixed about the issue of adjusting the interviewer's language to the level of the minor, 7) the majority of respondents believed that putting the minor at ease was something the interpreter can do as part of the job, 8) many agreed that the interpreter can take the initiative of keeping communication flowing, and

9) the largest number of respondents agreed that it is not part of the interpreter's job to offer an opinion.

The survey also addressed needs of interpreters. The four main areas of needs found were more time, trust building, briefing teamwork, and training. The interpreters were aware of the fact that they need more specialized training in interviewing techniques, about child psychology and child development. The final section of the survey dealt with briefing, debriefing, and support of interpreters. 18% of interpreters report always receiving a pre-interview briefing, while 26% reported never receiving briefings. 54% reported face-to-face briefings, while 20% reported receiving telephone briefings, and 20% received documents. In the case of debriefing, 53% reported never receiving debriefing, while 34% responded "sometimes" and 10% responded "often". Only 3% of interpreters reporting always having access to counselling support after traumatic cases, while 84% responded that they never receive this access. The final sections of the report addressed interpreting techniques and suggestions for joint trainings of professional involved in interviewing and interpreting for minors.

Blakemore, D., & Gallai, F. (2014). Discourse markers in free indirect style and interpreting. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 60, 106–120. DOI:10.1016/j.pragma.2013.11.003

Diane Blakemore is professor in the Centre for Applied Linguistics at University of Salford in Manchester, UK. Dr Fabrizio Gallai is Lecturer in Interpreting Studies at the University of Macerata. His research is conducted within the framework of relevance-theoretic pragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics, and he has a particular interest in legal interpreting and (legal) interpreters' treatment of non-truth-conditional elements of speech.

This paper contributes to the discussion of how free indirect style (FIS) and interpreter's renditions are accommodated in a relevance theoretic approach to communication. The researchers begin by review of an important issue in interpreting. Because the gap between the linguistically encoded meaning of the utterance and the intended interpretation is filled by pragmatic inference, there can be no guarantee that the interpretation that the hearer recovers is an exact copy of the speaker's thoughts. It can only be an interpretation of them. To examine this issue further, the purpose of this research was to ask how this picture of communication works in situations in which the hearer derives the intended meaning not on the basis of the evidence provided by the person whose thoughts are being communicated, but on the basis of evidence provided by another person.

The researchers analyzed dialogue interpreting, where the audience may have access to other non-verbal behaviours produced by the speaker to accompany his utterances. The examples were extracted from video-recorded naturally-occurring data provided by Greater Manchester Police, consisting of 9 hours and 32 minutes of transcribed and anonymized excerpts drawn from seven interpreter-mediated police interviews in the UK. The interviews involved four NRPSI-registered interpreters, two language combinations (English-Italian and Portuguese-Italian), and both a (child) victim of robbery and two suspects of murder.

Blakemore and Gallai found that although the child had previously stated that the alleged robber was holding a gun in his hand wrapped around a white cloth, he does not remember whether the robber had the gun when he ran out of the park. The interviewer's use of *so* (rendered by Portuguese *então*) contributes to relevance by activating an inference which has the proposition it introduces as a conclusion. The believe that the hearer is encouraged to access whatever contextual assumptions allow him to interpret this proposition as a conclusion. The authors also examined the interpreter's additions in another part of the child's interview. In this instance the use of a different word for "*so*"

was provided to the interviewer to encourage the child to report every detail he could remember.

Following analysis of the recorded interviews the authors concluded that the additions examined show that there was a sense in which the interpreter “could be said to be aiming at invisibility: her aim in adding a discourse marker which was attributed to the original speaker was to create the illusion that the audience was ‘hearing’ the ‘voice’ of that speaker rather than that of the interpreter” p. 118). Additionally, they concluded that without the interpreter’s contribution, the original act of communication could not achieve optimal relevance for the audience.

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Böser, U. (2013). “So tell me what happened!”: Interpreting the free recall segment of the investigative interview. *Translation and Interpreting Studies: The Journal of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association*, 8(1), 112–136.
DOI:10.1075/tis.8.1.06bos

Ursula Böser is Professor in the School of Social Sciences, Languages & Intercultural Studies at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her research focus is upon public service interpreting in legal settings.

This study analyzed the impact of interpreter mediation on the police investigative interview of witnesses. This case study used experimental data comprised of six recorded witness interviews about a car theft. The six adult eyewitnesses were native speakers of the language they provide evidence in (French and German). None of the three interpreters had previous professional experience in a legal setting. However, the level of interpreter competence in this experimental exceeded the qualifications routinely encountered in police interpreting. Prior to the assignment the interpreters were informed that they would interpret an eyewitness interview concerning a car theft. Immediately

before the interview the interviewing police officer also provided the interpreters with a short briefing consistent with the pre-interview preparation and planning phase. The interviews were videotaped, and the analysis drew on research about interactional dynamics in face-to-face interpreting that illustrates the active role played by interpreters.

Results indicated that the “sequential interpreting model observed in this study represented a “trouble source” for the maintenance of the free recall, thereby calling for skillful joint negotiation by all speakers” (p. 131). The author also found that a number of interpreters’ renderings of frame transitional turns failed to serve an investigative interview sub-goal, highlighting the need for joint negation among all speakers. The data analysis also demonstrated that co-constructed talk about turn duration in the interpreted interview failed to rationalize the requested segmentation or explain the form this segmentation should take. This ambiguity seemed to lead to instructions about discursive behavior that was not conducive to attaining a free recall.

Among Böser’s conclusions was that training should equip interpreters with the ability to analyze institutionally-embedded speech genres and to understand institutional discourse practices and the intended goals and sub-goals. She also concluded that institutional users of interpreters would benefit from training in the instantiation of speech genres such as forensic interviews with the assistance of interpreters.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Davitti, E. (2013). Dialogue interpreting as intercultural mediation: Interpreters' use of upgrading moves in parent–teacher meetings. *Interpreting*, 15(2), 168–199.
DOI:10.1075/intp.15.2.02dav

Elena Davitti earned a PhD in Translation and Intercultural Studies from the University of Manchester and an MA in Conference Interpreting from the University of Bologna at Forlì. She has worked as an interpreter trainer at different universities, including the University of Leeds and UNINT, Rome. She has recently been appointed Lecturer in Translation Studies at the University of Surrey, UK. Her research focuses on authentic, mediated interaction in community settings, particularly pedagogical and medical ones. Among her research interests are conversation analysis, multimodal analysis, video-mediated interpreting and interpreter training.

Davitti sought to examine how actively interpreters might participate in a mediated event, combining the roles of interpreter and mediator. To address this issue, she conducted a descriptive study to identify patterns in interpreters' behaviour and examine their interactional consequences. The study explored how dialogue interpreters' engagement, including verbal and non-verbal dimensions of dialogue interpreting (DI), can manifest itself in the specific pedagogical setting of mediated parent-teacher meetings. The material used was the transcripts of three authentic video-recorded parent teacher meetings (PTMs) involving migrant families, mediated by qualified dialogue interpreters.

The three PTMs analysed were collected in the UK and Italy. Each had four participants: two teachers; one professional interpreter, who is an Italian native speaker in all three meetings and one mother. The three mothers were from Egypt, Nigeria, and India. All three meetings had the same language pair (English and Italian), aims and organisation.

Following analysis of the transcripts the researcher presented discussion and implications. She asserted that “recognising an evaluative component in the interpreters’

activity supported the argument that they are very actively engaged in PTMs and, at times, position themselves as responders and co-principals” (p. 187). She also suggested that when interpreters independently produced evaluative assessments (EAs) combined with a gaze pattern indicative of engagement they approached full participant status and seemed to be acting in compensation for the teachers’ lack of mutual gaze with the mothers. Davitti further suggested that the interpreters seemed to play the function of “articulating the unsaid” by the teacher.

Davitti also found that the reinforcement produced by verbal upgrading and the display of an engaged non-verbal attitude could be perceived as a significant contribution towards the establishment of a solid rapport and the involvement of both parties in the interaction. Furthermore, she found that “interpreters seemed to take up what is normally expected to be the teacher’s task as ‘co-operators’ building common ground for mutual understanding and for the display of solidarity while ensuring that understanding is achieved and the agenda pursued” (p. 188). The analysis also suggested that the teachers produced the report or recommendation, and then left the interpreter with the task of conveying the informational content and building the common ground that may lead to agreement and smooth the interaction with the mothers. The mothers very rarely questioned the teachers or contributed to generating “new” knowledge and seemed to be passive recipients. The researcher suggests that a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to research on DI may lead to enhanced understanding and awareness of the dynamics of mediated encounters.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Gallai, F. (2013). "I'll just intervene whenever he finds it a bit difficult to answer": Exploding the myth of literalism in interpreted interviews. *Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice (II-RP)*, 5(1), 57-78.

After studying for a BA in Translation and Interpreting (EN-DE-PT) and a Master's degree in Conference Interpreting (EN-DE) at the University of Trieste (Italy), Dr. Gallai moved to the UK and obtained the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting and the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP). In 2014 he completed his PhD in Police interpreting at the University of Salford (Greater Manchester). Gallai is the author of a range of articles on discourse connectives, police interpreting, and the provision of legal interpreting services.

Within the literature review Gallai suggested that there has been a dearth of studies on pre-trial interpreting that may be linked to a power asymmetry where interpreters are considered on a level with courtroom officers or ushers and seen as subordinate to legal professionals. In addition to this, the Codes of practice for courtroom and police interpreters around the world state that interpreters should 'just interpret'. Thus, there remains a continued resistance among police interviewers to use of interpreters. Gallai also suggested that there continues to be confusion about the role and experience of police interpreters. For this study the researcher examined the roles elucidated in previous research: interpreter as animator, interpreter as author, and interpreter as principal.

A descriptive, qualitative method of inquiry was used to identify key features of the rapport building phase and impact of the interpreter. Gallai analyzed data provided by Greater Manchester Police, consisting of transcribed excerpts drawn from seven interpreter-mediated police interviews in the UK. One interview was of a child victim of a robbery, two interviews were of adult witnesses, and four were interviews of suspects under arrest.

Findings indicated that “shifts of footing in interpreted interaction characterise passages on the role of the interpreter in the introductory phase of the interview” (p. 62). In particular, the mode of *interpreter as principal*, whereby the interpreter gave a straight answer without translating for the primary participant appeared relatively frequent. Furthermore, the role of *animator* was infrequent throughout the corpus in both directions and language combinations. The researcher included examples of these phenomena within the article. In one passage, the researcher notes that the analysis of the interpreter’s role as a *principal* showed that the “attitude of interpreters towards primary participants may be seen as ‘biased’ towards the authorities, specifically towards their image of an interpreter as a translation machine” (p. 65). In another passage an interpreter who appeared aware of the risk of miscommunication and eager to protect her reputation as a competent interpreter the interpreter abruptly shifted from principal to author and animator. Then she quickly switched back to the role of principal which prompted the police officers to respond directly to the interpreter rather than the interviewee. The researcher asserted that the disruption in turn-taking made accurate and complete renditions difficult, and some of the source utterances were not rendered at all. Gallai suggested that the lack of rendition was not acceptable, because the original utterances were not rendered and the interpreter answered the questions. The changes in role within the passages suggested to the researcher that “interpreters’ conversational initiatives have a significant role in the introductory stage of the Cognitive Interview model, specifically in relation to the interactional control and the effectiveness of rapport building strategies” (p. 69).

Gallai suggested that the results corroborated previous studies in police interpreting, finding similar examples of role shift and arguing that interpreter-mediated police interviews are a type of discourse that is co-constructed by the police officer, the interpreter, and the interviewee, rather than police–interviewee interaction through a ‘conduit’ translator. He further suggested that the interpreter can be viewed as a dialogic mediator, combining the roles of translator and coordinator in order to promote effective

expectations and communication in the interaction. Furthermore, the researcher asserted that the unrealistic institutional demands for verbatim translations by 'invisible' interpreters should be abandoned and the coordinating role of the interpreter as co-participants and co-constructors of meaning fully integrated into Interpreters' and Police authorities' Codes of Practice. He also stated that part of a solution would be the professionalization of legal interpreting in order to improve the provision of the conditions that contribute to higher standards. In agreement with previous research outcomes, Gallai suggested that the findings show the need for more extensive training for interpreters about the demands and difficulties of their job.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Maryns, K. (2013). Disclosure and (re) performance of gender-based evidence in an interpreter-mediated asylum interview. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 17(5), 661-686. DOI:10.1111/josl.12056

Katrijn Maryns earned a PhD in Linguistics at Ghent University and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication, where she teaches multilingualism and interpreting courses. She is a member of the MULTIPLES Research Centre for Multilingual Practices and Language Learning in Society (Ghent University). Her linguistic-ethnographic research examines the role of discourse, multilingualism and linguistic inequality in institutional contexts of globalisation, with a particular focus on asylum and migration.

This study adopts a linguistic-ethnographic approach to procedural interaction and combines ethnography with a combination of discourse analytical methods to analyze the complexities of disclosure and (re)performance in a triadic asylum interview. The analysis was completed upon a recorded interview of a man from Sierra Leone seeking asylum in the Dutch-speaking asylum agency in Brussels Belgium. Selection of asylum

officers and interpreters depended on who was immediately available at the time the interview took place. No other factors, such as gender neutrality, were considered. In this interview, the Dutch-speaking asylum officer translated the interpreter's English rendition of the asylum seeker's account into Dutch. The asylum seeker requested an interpreter. An untrained female lay interpreter was employed. During the interview, the asylum seeker described in graphic detail his experience of being forced at gunpoint to commit incest with his sister.

The researcher describes three major issues with the interpreter's behavior. First, the interpreter adopted an event perspective that allowed her to dissociate herself from the asylum seeker's stance. She lost the direct quotes and the interactive element that was so striking in the man's narration which made her rendition rather impersonal. Second, her rendition of sexually charged matters contained pauses, hesitations, self-corrections and unfinished sentences, which contrasted sharply with the asylum seeker's narrative performance. Third, a lack of explicitness characterized the interpreter's rendition. She used euphemisms, as well as vague and evasive expressions to deal with taboo topics. In other words, her rendition was not impactful as was the account told by the asylum seeker. The researcher asserted that the use of euphemisms under-represented the severity of the facts and the interpreter's 'disembodied' rendering of the sexual assault. Maryns' stated that "the interpreter's conduct can hardly be described or considered as 'interpreting' but rather as a fragmentary summary translation at best" p. 668. His claim was eventually denied.

The researcher states that it has been confirmed in language and asylum studies that the assessment of asylum seeker credibility is closely related to the evaluation of how they present themselves and their experiences in interaction with the authorities. Furthermore, she states that for applicants disclosing accounts of sexual abuse, the way they disclose sensitive personal information raises particular assumptions about the credibility of their account and their true identity. Maryns then raised the question as to

“whether the interpreter, given the brutal nature of the narrated experiences, can be expected to remain neutral, objective and uninvolved, rendering a shocking account such as this without showing empathy” p. 681). Finally, in conclusion Maryns suggests that specialist training is required to ensure that asylum officers and interpreters feel more comfortable in addressing gender-sensitive terms when rendering a conversation with somebody who has been abused.

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Nilsen, A. B. (2013). [Exploring interpreting for young children](#). *Translation & Interpreting Studies: The International Journal of Translation and Interpreting Research*, 5(2), 14-29.

Anne Birgitta Nilsen is associate professor at the Department of International Studies and Interpreting at the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, where she teaches Interpreting Studies. Her research includes various types of discourse analysis. She has done research on interpreting for children in the public sector, on courtroom interpreting, and on interpreting between Norwegian and Arabic in police interviews.

The aim of the pilot study was to use the explorations of a few children’s interactions with one particular interpreter to generate hypotheses and identify new research areas that may be further investigated through a larger collection of data. The emphasis of this enquiry concerned children’s participation in interpreter-mediated dialogues. The experiment involved four young (ages 3-6) Norwegian-speaking children. The interpreter selected for the experiments held a bachelor’s degree in interpreting and was a Norwegian state-authorized interpreter from Spanish and English with many years’ experience of interpreting in the public sector in Norway. The theoretical framework for this research regarded interpreting as interaction, with the interpreter having two

different functions, as a translator and a mediator: a person with a position between two parties who coordinates the dialogue. The four interviews were recorded and transcribed. The examination of the transcripts focused on how young children at different ages interact with the interpreter and respond to the interpreter's translating and coordinating activities.

Nilsen found that the interpreter attracted the child's interest by making eye-contact, and in this way established a relationship, since gaze can be understood as a demand to interact. The researcher also found that the children adapted to the interpreter's coordinating role with regard to the coordination of turn-taking. None of the children seemed to have difficulties adapting to the interpreter's coordinating role in this respect. Nilsen also found that "the experimental dialogues were successful in the sense that both parties – the adult and the child – participated, and the interpreter managed to translate the content of the dialogue from one party to the other" (p. 27). Furthermore, it was found that it seemed important to arrange for non-verbal communication between the primary speakers, so that the child was not left with the understanding that she was talking principally to the interpreter. The researcher pointed out that the same was also true for adult interviewees. Finally, Nilson argued that the challenge for the community interpreter appeared to be much the same as in dialogues with adults: not to attract too much attention, but to attract enough to establish trust.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Crezee, I., Jülich, S., & Hayward, M. (2011). Issues for interpreters and professionals working in refugee settings. *Journal of Applied Linguistics & Professional Practice*, 8(3), 253-273.

Ineke Crezee completed studies in English and Translation Studies in the Netherlands, where she also graduated as a Registered Nurse and interpreted for refugees. She has

been involved in healthcare interpreting training in Auckland, New Zealand since 1991. Her PhD is in Applied Language Studies. Shirley Jülich is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Health and Social Services, Massey University. Her PhD was in the area of historical child sexual abuse and restorative justice. Shirley is particularly interested in the intersection of justice and recovery. Maria Hayward is a Senior Lecturer and Manager of the Centre for Refugee Education, which is aligned to AUT University in Auckland. She has worked in refugee education contexts for over 20 years. Her research interests are refugee education and resettlement.

The rationale for this study was to address three issues: an understanding of the vulnerability of interpreters working within a context where most clients have experienced trauma, the vulnerability of refugees who may be re-traumatized during the session, and possible lack of professionalism among some interpreters working with refugees. The study focused upon interpreters in Australia and New Zealand who were under ethical guidelines composed of the need for accuracy, the need for impartiality, disclosure of any possible conflicts, and decline of assignments outside of interpreter's competence.

The study used an anonymous online survey for interpreters working in refugee settings, a focus group of seven experienced interpreters, and a focus group of five professional interviewers. Approximately two thirds, of the survey respondents indicated that they had experienced areas of difficulty when interpreting for refugees, including speaking too fast professionals speaking too fast, professionals using difficult terminology, the use of dialects the interpreter was not familiar with, and speakers mumbling or speaking in a low voice. Additionally, 76% of those who reported problems in interpreting said that many stories reminded them of things that had happened to them or to their friends and family who were still in unsafe environments or had mental health problems. A significant survey result was the overwhelming response that interpreters would like briefing and debriefing, as they said, "no amount of training could adequately prepare them for interpreting assignments involving refugee clients and that briefings might protect them from

vicarious traumatization” (p.261). Almost half of respondents felt that although training had prepared them to some extent for traumatic or sensitive content, it was insufficient. With regard to briefing and debriefing, just over a quarter of respondents replied that interviewers had briefed them thoroughly, while 65% replied that they had been briefed ‘to some extent, but not enough. 35% of respondents reported being debriefed after they had interpreted for refugees in traumatic settings, while 65% reported no debriefings.

During the focus group, interviewer participants mentioned the differences between agencies when it came to making counselling available to interpreters. It was mentioned that one agency had approached the agency to see if they might make body therapy available to interpreters. Overall, it appeared that interpreting agencies within New Zealand were becoming more aware of the needs of interpreters. 78% of respondents felt that further training on refugee issues, counseling, and mental health might help them feel more comfortable about interpreting in refugee settings. There was consistent agreement on the necessity for tools to cope with the traumatic nature of refugee experiences. Some participants felt that a number of interviewers did not treat them with respect. They believed that professionals appeared to have a limited understanding of what was required of interpreters.

During the focus group with interviewers, they seemed to sympathise with the interpreters’ need for briefing but argued that statutory and legal reasons sometimes prevented them from providing interpreters with detailed information prior to interviews. They were also quite supportive of the need for debriefing and counselling. Furthermore, many of those using interpreting services agreed that they should have training sessions on how best to work with interpreters.

The researchers offered four main recommendations based on these results. First, briefing sessions before assignments should be provided to interpreters that include the opportunity for questions and answers and for checking possible conflicts of interest, and

discussion of mutually agreed processes. The second recommendation was strengthening of refugee-specific training in interpreter professional training programmes. Third, the training of interviewers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse clients was recommended. Lastly, they recommended debriefing of interpreters to work through any issues that might have emerged, as well as the offering of counseling and supervision sessions.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Linell, P., & Keselman, O. (2011). Trustworthiness at stake: Trust and distrust in investigative interviews with Russian adolescent asylum-seekers in Sweden. In I. Marková & A. Gillespie (Eds.), *Trust and conflict: Representation, culture and dialogue* (pp. 156-180). Routledge. DOI:10.4324/9780203806265

Per Linell was senior professor in Communication in the Department of Education, Communication and Learning at Göteborg University. His research interests included the place of linguistics among other approaches to language and talk-in-interaction and other communicative activities in their social and cultural contexts. Olga Keselman is a senior lecturer in the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning at Linköping University, Sweden. Dr. Keselman has conducted extensive research into the topics of interpreter-mediated interviews and asylum seekers.

This study dealt with analyses of the actual interaction in the interpreter-mediated asylum interviews. Twenty-six unaccompanied Russian speaking asylum seeking children who had applied for residence permit in Sweden from 2001-2005 were included in the study. The six girls and twenty boys were ages 14 to 18. Tape recordings of their asylum hearings were analyzed for this study. The goal was to explore the asylum interview as a communicative activity type and study the impact that the underlying agendas might have on the communicative behavior of the interlocutors, especially with

regard to mutual trust and distrust between them. The results confirmed the view that this communicative activity type exhibits a high level of mutual distrust.

Results led the researchers to conclude that it is not easy to communicate through interpreters, and to treat them as if they do not exist, and at the same time be dependent on them, and aware of their presence and involvement. They also concluded that interpreters might have problems handling child clients who share the same origin as they do. They might find it difficult to understand and to adhere to the agendas of the hearing. Remaining neutral, balance their own roles and coping with the vicarious traumatisation were found to be concerns.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Bögner, D., Brewin, C., & Herlihy, J. (2010). Refugees' experiences of Home Office interviews: A qualitative study on the disclosure of sensitive personal information. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(3), 519–535.
DOI:10.1080/13691830903368329

Diana Bögner is a Chartered Clinical Psychologist with the Intensive Management of Personality Disorder and Assessment Recovery Team at Goodmayes Hospital. Chris Brewin is Professor of Clinical Psychology at University College London, and Jane Herlihy is a Clinical Psychologist at the Trauma Clinic, London, UK.

This study was conducted to explore the factors involved in the disclosure of sensitive personal information during Home Office interviews of refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. The Home Office had been criticized for the poor quality of decision-making over asylum claims. One of the issues affecting decisions was disclosures in second interviews in which no mention was made in the first interview. This was commonly cited as a reason against an asylum-seeker's credibility. The authors cited several issues related to poor interviews from previous research. Included were findings

of interview rooms that were small and bare, reminding interviewees of places where they were previously tortured. Cultural issues were also found since asylum-seekers often came from cultures with different attitudes towards sexuality and the role of men and women in society. Sexual violence and rape were commonly taboo subjects, and survivors may feel very uncomfortable discussing their experiences. Previous research also found that concepts such as confidentiality and privacy were alien in many cultures. Therefore, fear and suspicion often arose when an interpreter from the same ethnic background was present.

The researchers sought to elucidate some of these factors from previous research. The method was semi-structured interviews with twenty-seven refugees and asylum-seekers who had experienced Home Office interviews previously. The participants included 11 men and 16 women who originated from 14 countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Questions included both open-ended and closed items and were based on issues identified in the literature as potentially affecting asylum seekers' disclosure during interviews.

The participants indicated that disclosing personal details was very difficult for a variety of reasons. First, they felt they did not feel physically safe and that the interviewer made them feel persecuted. The majority of the participants reported negative experiences with interviewers that increased their anxiety and interfered with their ability to disclose. Eight of the participants reported interviewer gender as a deterrent to disclosure. Yet, those who did not report gender as a deterrent indicated that harsh interviewer demeanor was more of a problem.

With regard to process, none of the participants had a chance to meet the interviewer before the interview, while eighteen people felt that procedures were not well explained and they did not know what was expected of them or what was going to happen during the interview. Another problem indicated by participants was difficulties with interpreters.

Seven reported that the “interpreter spoke a different dialect, which made it hard for them to understand everything that was said in the interview, and six [reported] that the interpreter was from a different tribe or political group, which made it hard for them to feel safe, have trust and disclose in the interview” p. 530). Six participants felt that interpreters did not interpret accurately and even took over the interview.

Several recommendations were made by the participants for facilitating disclosure. Similar to findings in previous research by Brown et al. (1999), the most frequently cited factor related to facilitation of disclosure were interviewers’ qualities of empathy, patience, acceptance and non-judgmental listening. The second recommendation related to atmosphere. They suggested using bigger rooms, sitting in a circle rather than behind a desk, making the room look more inviting, and making people feel more welcome. Other recommendations included using female interviewers and interpreters for women, allowing someone in the room the person can trust, having more knowledge about the person’s country of origin, and providing some information about the interview procedure beforehand. Lastly, it was recommended that interpreters should speak the same dialect and come from the same background as the applicant. Furthermore, they indicated that the interpreter’s role should be solely to translate everything that is being said.

The researchers noted some limitations to this study. First, the sample size was small and was not randomly selected. Second, the accuracy of self-reported emotional experiences of participants could have been influenced by the amount of time between their Home Office interviews and the researcher conducted interviews.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Keselman, O., Cederborg, A. C., Lamb, M. E., & Dahlström, Ö. (2010). Asylum-seeking minors in interpreter-mediated interviews: What do they say and what happens to their responses?. *Child & Family Social Work*, 15(3), 325–334. DOI:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2010.00681.x

Olga Keselman is a senior lecturer in the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning at Linköping University, Sweden. Dr. Keselman has conducted extensive research into the topics of interpreter-mediated interviews and asylum seekers. Ann-Christin Cederborg is professor in the Department of Psychology at Stockholm University. Cederborg's research has focused upon vulnerable children, youths and their families who are in need of treatment and support from society at large. Michael E. Lamb is Professor of Psychology and Fellow and Director of Studies at Sidney Sussex College. His research has focused upon forensic interviewing and the factors affecting children's adjustment. Örjan Dahlström is a senior lecturer in the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning at Linköping University, Sweden. His research examines how the brain understands speech when communicating in adverse listening conditions.

This study examined interviews of asylum-seeking Russian minors in Sweden. All interviews with asylum-seeking minors who have no, or limited command of the Swedish language were conducted through interpreters. The researchers examined two specific areas. First, they examined the extent to which the minors' informativeness (in terms of disclosures or non-disclosures) was affected by the quality of the information-seeking prompts. Second, they examined how accurately the interpreters managed to transmit substantive information provided by the minors. Audio-recorded asylum hearings with 26 Russian-speaking asylum-seeking separated minors were coded for open and closed questions and for interpreters' accurate and inaccurate renditions of all the minors' responses. Results of the analyses found no significant difference in the response pattern for the non-disclosures elicited from open and focused questions. Sixteen percent of interpreter renditions of responses were found to be inaccurate. Inaccurate renditions were sources of concern because each could potentially negatively affect the quality of

information provided to migration authorities. “This was especially true when interpreters ignored or ‘improved on’ the style and semantic choices made by the minors” (p. 332). The authors assert that findings indicate that interpreters may be powerful participants who can profoundly influence the factfinding aspects of asylum investigations. They also point to two study limitations. The sample was not representative, and interpreters had varied levels of proficiency. The authors recommend further research on the ways asylum-seeking minors present claims and how inaccurate renditions can affect the disposition of their cases.

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Maddux, J. (2010). Recommendations for forensic evaluators conducting interpreter mediated interviews. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, 9(1), 55–62. DOI:10.1080/14999013.2010.483343

Dr. Jemour Maddux, Psy.D., ABPP is the Managing Director of Lamb and Maddux, LLC. Office of Psychological Services, Court Advisory Center in the New York and New Jersey area. He is board certified in forensic psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Psychology. He earned his doctorate in clinical psychology from the Department of Psychology at Indiana State University. His areas of interest include child abuse/maltreatment, assessment of psychological injury/damages and sentencing.

This publication reviews the published literature on how interpreter-mediated communication impacts the reliability and validity of forensic evaluation. Following the review of the literature, the author offers several recommendations to inform forensic psychologists of methods to increase the validity of interpreter-mediated interviews.

Maddux reviews numerous issues that have been indicated through research. First, the supply of forensic psychologists fluent in languages other than English has not met the demand for their services. Furthermore, U.S. courts do not change the language used during proceedings to accommodate ESL speakers and courts do not appoint an interpreter if the speaker's limited English ability is adequate for conducting their case. Additionally, Maddux states that it was highly unlikely that forensic psychologists received supervision and didactic instruction on working with interpreters during their graduate school training.

Some issues of concern that Maddux indicated as affecting reliability of interpreter-mediated forensic evaluations included: interviewee factors, forensic psychologist factors, and interpreter factors. Maddux also reviewed factors in these evaluations that could affect validity. In conclusion, the author asserted that the findings of the reviewed research strongly suggested there were several threats to the reliability and validity of interpreter-mediated forensic interviews, but that it was unlikely that attorneys and judges were aware of these threats.

Based on the issues raised in the literature the author listed 27 recommendations for increasing validity of interpreter-mediated forensic interviews. These recommendations ranged from only using certified court interpreters and routinely using the same interpreter, to learn the translation of key words in the patient's native language that are relevant to the psycho-legal question(s). Other recommendations include documentation of whether the interpreter and patient knew each other prior to the evaluation, provision of time for the interpreter to develop rapport with the interviewee and get accustomed to any regional dialect, and avoidance of altering typical speech style and professional practices to accommodate for the interpreter.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Truter, E. (2010). [*Language interpreting during the forensic interview: A social work investigation*](#) (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University).

At the time of this research, Elmien Truter was a doctoral student at North-West University Potchefstroom Campus in South Africa. Her research interests relate to resilience in child protection social workers, prevention of child sexual abuse, enhancing child protection systems in South Africa, and developing resilience promoting intervention programmes for child protection social work supervisors.

This exploratory research sought to answer two questions related to forensic interviewing of children in South Africa. The first question addressed was Is there a need for language interpreters during forensic interviews? The second addressed the issues of competencies that language interpreters should have when they are appointed for forensic interviews? Truter completed a literature review that indicated several issues in the context of forensic interviewing of children in South Africa. These issues included the shortage of professionally trained forensic social workers needed to deal with the high number of sexually abused victims and the possibility of inaccuracies in interpreting, which may defeat the purpose of the forensic interview.

Truter conducted personal interviews with seven social workers who functioned as forensic social workers in the Gauteng and North-West Provinces of South Africa. All seven participants had experience with interviewing at least one alleged victim of sexual abuse who spoke a language different to their own. Only one of the seven participants regarded the role of language interpreters as unimportant. Six of the seven reported having utilized a language interpreter during interviews. The one exception stated that language interpreters were not readily available when their services were required.

The participants pointed to several problems experienced with the use of language interpreters during forensic interviews. The main problem indicated was the issue of interpreters giving a summary of the child's statement rather than an exact

interpretation. Another problem was interpreter changing format of questions. Interpreter inability to explain the 'sayings' of the child's specific culture, as well as providing his own interpretation of the child's answer were seen as problems.

During the next phase of the interviews, the researcher asked the participants what areas they believed language interpreters should be competent. Answers were wide ranging from interpreter having knowledge of sexual abuse to having the stamina to continue, and not get tired. Other competencies mentioned were ability to interpret and translate without changing the content and knowledge of secondary trauma, debriefing, and the forensic assessment process. Additionally, there was belief that interpreters should receive training on how to exactly ask the question as the forensic social worker asked it. The participants then indicated that the interpreters they had previously used did not possess the competencies identified. Participants also describe unprofessional behaviors experienced when working with interpreters that had the potential to harm the case processing.

Solutions proposed by the participants included provision of specialized training in interpreting and in forensic social work to include the importance of complete accuracy of translation. Additional training in the questioning/interviewing of alleged victims of sexual abuse as well as background knowledge of the phenomenon and dynamics of sexual abuse was also indicated. The researcher also suggested that language interpreters who work in the forensic social work field should be supported and supervised to prevent burn-out. She further argued that more in-depth research should be conducted on the training and education of language interpreters to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Fontes, L. A. (2009). [Interviewing immigrant children and families for suspected child maltreatment](#). *APSAC Advisor*, 21(2), 7-11.

Lisa A. Fontes, Ph.D. is Senior Lecturer in the Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Program at University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Dr. Fontes regularly trains social workers, psychologists, attorneys, police, physicians, educators, women's crisis workers, nurses, parents, and others in cultural competence and family violence issues.

The purpose of this paper was to help professionals conduct interviews, medical examinations, and investigations related to child abuse in ways that may empower immigrant interviewees from a variety of cultures. Fontes provided some background and listed problems that can arise during such interviews. Subsequently, she listed several strategies for overcoming these problems. She posited that biases, cultural differences, and linguistic misunderstandings may exert influences upon interviews. For purposes of this paper she focused upon interviewees who are less acculturated and whose culture is very different from that of the United States.

Fontes stated that child whose first language is not English may have more difficulty than other children with complex verb forms. Therefore, the interviewer should sometimes ask whether the interviewee understands the question. She also asserts that foreign language interpreters should be arranged for in advance of interviews and that children should never be asked to interpret for their caregivers. Additionally, she stated that interpreters do not just convey spoken word. They also serve as agents of exchange and negotiation. She also pointed out that interpreters also edit, delete, emphasize, and embellish statements from both sides. Furthermore, the interpreter must have thorough mastery of the language, otherwise the likelihood of errors increases.

The next topic addressed was *rapport building*. Interviewers should provide as much information about the procedures, the conversation, and other aspects of the interview as possible. Additionally, the interviewee should be told whether the interview is a one-

time event or an ongoing relationship. Fontes added that, Interviewers “should minimize any possible aura of invasion or intrusion by paying special attention to their voice, phrasing, and a host of nonverbal elements” (p. 8). Furthermore, by doing the utmost to show respect, the possibility of shameful feelings could be thwarted and dignity maintained. The interviewer must self-examine his demeanor by paying attention to what they say and how they present themselves.

Other issues that interviewers should examine are demeanor and voice quality. Fontes stated that when questions are posed, procedures explained, and so forth, the interviewer should regard how these activities may feel from the interviewees’s perspective. She points to research that has consistently shown that when interviewers are warm and friendly, the interviewee is more likely to provide correct information. Additionally, Fontes pointed out that “support and human warmth are especially important in interviews with immigrant children and families, who may feel especially threatened in typical interview settings” (p. 9). An important aspect of demeanor is voice. Fontes suggests that interviewers should occasional review recordings of their interviews and pay attention to what they really sound like.

The next topics for consideration are *pace and time*. Fontes suggested that as much as possible, the interviewee should be allowed to set the pace. The interviewer should keep in mind that in some cultures the quality of an interaction can be partly determined by the amount of time spent together. Interviewers should guard against showing impatience. Often this calls for scheduling of longer sessions. Another important issue for the interviewer to understand is that often children may exhibit trauma symptoms that do not emanate from abuse. The child may have experienced traumatic events associated with travel, family separation, or a host of other issues unrelated to abuse. The author indicated that when possible, professionals should take a full trauma history and also inquire about behavioral changes over time. Fontes concluded by stating that when

interviewers take steps to improve their cultural competence, they will be able to improve the accuracy and fairness of their interviews.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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This study evaluated caseworkers' information-seeking prompts in interviews with asylum-seeking minors and assessed the accuracy of the translations provided by interpreters. The researchers describe previous research that has shed light on problems associated with inaccuracy of interpretations.

The study involved audio-recorded asylum hearings with 26 Russian-speaking asylum-seeking separated minors (6 girls and 20 boys, ages 13 to 18). The interviewers were 13 caseworkers employed at different Migration Board units in Sweden. Seventeen

interpreters were hired for the asylum hearings. However, the researchers were not provided any information about their training or background. All the minors included some sort of abuse as part of their asylum claims. The interviews were transcribed from audio tapes by the first author who is fluent in both Swedish and Russian. Subsequently, each transcript was reviewed and classified both the original utterances and the corresponding renditions using the categories developed for research on forensic interviews.

Utterances were classified by open questions (invitations and directives), focused questions (option-posing and suggestives), and others to include summary, clarifications, advice giving, and social support. Interpreters' renditions of utterances were classified as: equivalent rendition, modified rendition, expanded rendition, blocked renditions, and simplified renditions

The analysis of single utterances showed that the caseworkers relied extensively on focused questions, especially option-posing prompts. Open questions, especially directive questions, were also quite common although there were very few invitations. Only two thirds of the caseworkers' question types were translated correctly, but open questions were translated correctly more often than focused questions were. Furthermore, 33 per cent of all the questions asked were altered during the process of translation. Additionally, summaries, requests for clarifications, advice giving, and suggestive prompts were most commonly mistranslated, while invitations, directives, and social support statements were least commonly mistranslated.

In the discussion of these results, the researchers argued that by relying heavily on option-posing questions and minimally on invitations, the interviewers inhibited the minors' opportunities to give free-recall accounts of their experiences. They also noted that "because the caseworkers had no command of the Russian language, they could not identify the misrepresentations, and so the inaccurate renditions passed undetected,

with the caseworkers assuming that the question posed to the child communicated the propositional content of the original utterance” (p. 112). They also noted that since simplification was the most common form of transformation when the original utterances were compound questions and of course the interviewers, not knowing about the transformations, would not have known which question was being answered. The researchers also commented that similar to previous studies of interpreter-mediated court proceedings with adults this study found that interpreters involved in asylum-seeking interviews with minors participate in the co-construction of the dialogue. Thus, they submitted that because interpreters “may reconstruct the questions asked without the caseworkers’ knowledge, the interpreters actually determine which messages the minors receive and thus hold powerful positions in asylum-seeking hearings” (p. 112).

Several recommendations were made for both caseworkers and interpreters. It was recommended that caseworkers should be encouraged in the future to obtain more information using invitations because with fewer contaminating question types, they could obtain richer and more accurate information which would facilitate decision-making in these complicated cases. Further it was suggested that both caseworkers and interpreters need special training in the characteristics of desirable interview techniques. Also it was suggested that not only should caseworkers and interpreters need to work together to ensure that the information obtained is as accurate as possible, but they also need to ensure that their collaboration is based on a joint understanding of how messages should be translated and of the ways in which meaning can be changed when the form and structure of utterances are changed.

Lastly, the research team stated that the study’s findings underscored the need for further research on the ways minors respond to the interpreters’ rendition, and how disposition of the asylum cases is influenced by inaccurate renditions.

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Davidson, B. (2000). The interpreter as institutional gatekeeper: The social-linguistic role of interpreters in Spanish-English medical discourse. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 4(3), 379-405. DOI:10.1111/1467-9481.00121

Dr. Davidson is the Director of Medical Anthropology at Havas Health and You, an integrated global network of health and wellness communications agencies. He has been studying medical culture for over 20 years. He earned his doctorate in linguistics from Stanford University in 1998, examining the experiences and processes in place for multilingual patients in a large public hospital, and since then he has focused on doctor-patient dialogue and medical anthropology in numerous settings, including hospitals, multicultural clinics, and patient's homes.

In this study, Davidson examined the linguistic and social roles played by hospital-based interpreters in medical discourse. He identified the problem that hospital administrators and physicians insisted that it is both possible for, and the duty of, medical interpreters to interpret without adding or subtracting meaningfully from the content and intentions. However, most serious analyses of interpretation acknowledged that perfection in interpretation is unattainable. Davidson sought to understand what were the patterned ways in which the interpreters influenced the discourses they interpret through small and not-so-small, changes in linguistic form; what were the 'interpretive habits' of the socially positioned agents known as 'interpreters' in a typical medical encounter, and how did they conceive of their role in achieving conversational goals?

To answer these questions, Davidson observed interpreted medical interviews and the institutional contexts that supported the speech events within a hospital setting in Northern California. Analyses centered on the ways in which hospital-based interpreters were utilized within the clinic, how their presence during medical interviews helped to shape the course and content of the interviews, and how they mediated the potential clash of institutional goals of diagnosis and treatment that are set by standard medical

practice, and the goals of the patients. The interpreters who were the focus of this research did not have formal degrees in interpretation or translation.

The analyses of the interpreted interviews indicated one factor that Davidson suggested stood out as being overwhelmingly contextually salient. It was the scarcity of time in modern medical institutions. The amount of time patients spent waiting for their physician, the even longer amounts of time spent waiting for interpreters, and the brevity of the physician patient- interpreter encounter were quite significant. Thus, when the interpreters would arrive while the physicians were busy elsewhere, they would begin some form of interaction with the patient before the physician arrived. This phenomenon had two effects noted by Davidson. First, the process of patient explaining their chief complaint was simplified to the point that on occasion the interpreter would meet the physician at the door with an explanation of the complaint. The second effect was that the interpreter “set the focus of the initiation of the interview, and would occasionally go so far as to conduct the initial portions of the interview” themselves (p. 387). Another issue related to the amount of time set aside for these interviews was that a consistent attempt to keep patients ‘on track’ led to a number of quantifiable phenomena. First, the analyses of the data showed that for the patients using an interpreter over half of all of the questions which were directed at the physician were answered by the interpreter, without the physician ever hearing the question. Davidson asserted that this increased the likelihood that these Hispanic patients were seen as ‘passive.’ It also had the potential of preventing the physician from following up on difficult questions or questions that showed a deep misunderstanding, on the part of the patient. Another effect identified by the researcher was that the treatment of the questions posed a threat to the physician’s authority within the medical interview. He further found that “patients’ physical complaints themselves, were often lost in the conversational shuffle” (p. 391). In one transcript there was confusion that was also equally evident in the actual interview; the physician was visibly upset that he could not get a clear picture from the patient of what

was wrong, and the patient was also visibly upset that he was asked the `same' question over and over.

Major conclusions reached in the study included Davidson's contention that both the quantitative and qualitative, data pointed strongly away from a conclusion that interpreters were acting as `advocates' or `ambassadors' for interpreted patients. Rather they seemed to be acting, at least in part, as informational gatekeepers who kept the interview `on track' and the physician on schedule. Additionally, Davidson suggested that time pressures caused competing mandates for the interpreters. Institutionally, they were officially required to act as `instruments', saying all and only what has been said, yet in practice, they were encouraged to keep the interview short, and to keep patients `on track'.

The researcher also asserted that it was possible for interpreters to interpret evenly, and that "it is not the case that professional, hospital-based interpreters need to work as an extra gatekeeping layer through which patients must pass in order to receive medical care" (p. 401). Lastly, he suggested that the invisible nature of the interpreter's role as "co-diagnostician" was the effect, rather than the interpreter's incompetence being the cause, of the dissatisfaction physicians and patients at the hospital expressed towards medical interpreting in general.

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