



Institute of
Translation
and Interpreting

Name:

Date:

Course:

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Abstract

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This dissertation focuses on the field of public service interpretation, a domain distinct from other interpreting categories such as conference, media, escort, business negotiation, and military. The name 'public service interpreting', widely used in the UK, gained its first official recognition from the European Union specifying it as a specialised service aimed at serving the government bodies or various support agencies (Ester, 2020).

Public service interpreting is thus defined 'as an oral or signed interlingual service, offered in the market to address the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse community members. This facilitates effective and efficient delivery of public services by government departments and agencies (Ester, 2020: 26). According to Webb and Rabadán-Gómez (2016), those government departments and agencies could be related to justice (courts, police), immigration, health, housing, education and asylum seeking.

The identification of the topic of non-direct responses originated from my studies in interpreting modules, including the module on liaison interpreting for public services, as well as from my real-life experience as a public service interpreting practitioner. This revealed noticeable differences between interpreter training and real-world interpreting scenarios. For example:

1. Although separate modules are dedicated to various interpreting categories, as previously mentioned, there is often an overlap among these categories. For instance, my first assignment in public service interpreting took place in an educational context but was conducted in the form of escort interpreting.
2. A typical interpreter-mediated encounter is a three-party face-to-face meeting involving service user, service provider and the interpreter. The role-play practices sessions are also organised this way too, but in real world interpreting assignments, there are occasions when there are more than one service user or provider attend the meeting, for instance, the hearing organised by Child Administrator.
3. The topics and the settings are not necessarily congruent. I have encountered legal topics in a health settings and health topics in legal settings.

These practical, real-world interpreting experiences strongly support Angelelli's (2019: 148) assertion that public service interpreting is 'contextually bound' and 'situated.' As a result, newly graduated interpreters must navigate the significant gap between interpreting exams, which are often based on scripted scenarios, and the dynamic, fluid nature of real-world interpreting. In

particular, when interpreters face specific situations such as non-direct responses, their guidance often comes from two main sources: theoretical knowledge from academic scholars and the industry's codes of conduct. However, I have learned that these two critical references can be contradictory.

In academia, Wadensjö's (1998) conception of interpreting as interaction has broadened the territory of public service interpreting studies. Rather than treating interpreting as type of machine-like translation, this broader definition allows interpreting to be conceived as the interpreter-mediated *situation* and opens up for studies of providing knowledge which would benefit interpreters to understand the nuances posed by diverse interpreting situations and suitable strategies how to deliver quality service (Gavioli and Wadensjö, 2023: 3). For the past twenty years or so, a growing body of empirical research has been carried out as a result of adopting Wadensjö's (1998) theoretical approach. Scholars in the interpreting studies are treating interpreters as active participants of communication (Gavioli and Wadensjö, 2023). By contrast, the employers of public service interpreters (PSIs) often regulate interpreters to strictly following the role of interpreting as machine-like translation and a non-participant role. This conflict between academia and industry forms a challenging landscape for all PSIs to navigate on a daily basis.

Conducting empirical research provides a third reference point, enabling an exploration of the specific situation of non-direct responses and the identification of appropriate interpreting strategies. The focus of this study originate from my real-life interpreting experience, particularly what I will refer to as 'non-direct' responses. During my interpreting assignments, there have been multiple occasions when a question was asked by a service provider, the service user then responded with a non-direct answer. Instead, the service user (mandarin Chinese speaker) tends to provide a much more detailed narrative. These experiences have motivated me to examine this phenomenon in greater depth and to understand how other interpreters experience and handle 'non-direct' interactions.

Therefore, this dissertation embarks on a substantial reflective journey on public service interpreters' real-life practices with a clear focus: non-direct responses. Equipped with the thinking skill of self-reflection taught during my studies at Heriot-Watt University, this study aims to better understand non-direct responses during interpreter-mediated encounters, and explore interpreters strategies when presented with non-direct responses. Specifically, this aim will be achieved through operationalising the following objectives:

1. To categorise non-direct responses in interpreter-mediated encounters from interpreter's perceive.
2. To explore what factors to shape PSIs' strategies when presented with non-direct responses?
3. To understand how interpreters handle non-direct responses?

In order to achieve the research aim of this study, Chapter 2 delves into the relevant literature from pragmatics and social psychology. These efforts will develop a theoretical framework and inform the most suitable research approach, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will focus on the findings in relation to each research question identified. Chapter 5 will summarise key findings, reflect on the research limitations, and recommend potential research topics and application benefits.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This research focuses on a unique feature in dialogues or spontaneous spoken exchanges in interpreter-mediated encounters, namely 'non-direct' responses. This term refers to an interactional exchange where non-matching or apparently excessive information is provided by one interlocutor (the primary participant) in response to a question asked by another interlocutor (also a primary participant) in an interpreter-mediated encounter. Despite a theoretical framework transitioning the concept of interpreting from a monological to an interactive perspective, as led by Wadensjö (1998), non-direct responses as a situated interpreting phenomenon have attracted little scholarly attention within interpreting studies. Thus, the key theories drawn upon for this study are from three disciplinary fields: Pragmatics, Social Psychology, and public service interpreting studies.

Hence, this chapter will first discuss the phenomenon of non-direct responses in monolingual situation, followed by an examination of key theories for interpreter-mediated encounters. After critically reviewing the key theories, professional dilemmas faced by the interpreters will be addressed. This chapter concludes with a clear identification of the research gaps in both theory and practice that this study aims to fill.

2.1 Non-direct responses in monolingual conversation

Non-direct responses have been addressed in the field of Pragmatics, particularly- since the 1980s- led by Grice's (1989) theory of conversation. Grice (1989) argued that in order to ensure conversation to be carried out smoothly, the participants of the conversation need to observe 'the principle of cooperation' (cited in Parikh, 2019). That is, a speaker makes a utterance with a intention of communicating a message and hopes that this message will be understood by a listener. According to Grice (1989), in order to achieve this communicating outcome, the participants of the conversation must follow the four conversational Maxims (quantity, quality, relation and manner). Thus, the speaker would make their utterance concise and clear, truthful, relevant to the context and right to the point (Risma, et al, 2020).

However, non-compliance does happen in our daily conversations, which Grice (1989) terms 'flouting' (cited in Parikh, 2019: 63). As a result of flouting, conversational implicature is created (Grice, 1989). According to Yule (1996), this implicature is an additional meaning conveyed in conversations (cited in Musa and Mohammed, 2022: 887). Non-direct responses could be one of the sources of conversational implicatures, since this sort of reaction clearly violates the Maxim of Quantity and potentially other Maxim too. Additional meaning conveyed

via non-direct responses could be an intention of utilising falsehood utterances to hide truth (Parikh, 2019); or could also be an effort to maintain a social distance (Llewellyn-Jones and Lee, 2014). Moreover, non-direct responses are utilised to save face (Brown and Levison, 1987), or in Indonesian society non-direct responses means to show politeness (Risma, et al, 2020). Such diverse meanings could be conveyed by the non-direct responses alone showcase the richness in our conversations from the speaker's perspective. The field of Pragmatics led by Grice has excelled in improving the understanding of this field. However, when encountering with such rich message in multi fold dimensions from the listeners' perspective, it is necessary to seek knowledge out with the field of Pragmatics, Social Psychology.

Javier's (2007) analysis of communication process in monolingual condition puts a spot light on the receiving end. He suggests that there are two phases involved in the receiving end: the listening phase and the restructuring phase (Javier, 2007). This cognitive process evolves from being open and receptive at the listening phase to being focused and narrowing down the alternatives in order to consolidate the message at the restructuring phase (Javier, 2007). Thus, anyone who engage in a conversation will go through this cognitive process even in a monolingual situation.

Moreover, Javier (2007: 87) points out several factors which could complicate the communication process or result in distortions in communication:

- different perceptions
- experiences of various kinds, beliefs
- thought processes
- worldviews
- individual and group identities
- specific cultural characteristics
- affective components associated with these perceptions, experiences, beliefs and thoughts

These factors span into social, cultural and economical and emotional dimensions, but Javier (2007) didn't specify how those factors cause miscommunication. Moreover, Javier (2007) places an particular emphasis on active listening skills which requires suspending judgement on both the listener and the speaker. This active listening will contribute to building a 'information bank' between the listener and speaker while the conversation progresses (Javier, 2007: 88). This information bank Javier (2007) describes is similar to Parikh's (2019:63) notion

of ‘common knowledge. Hence, even the speaker intends to use implicature to communicate. The listener is aware of it, and ‘not opting out of cooperating at a conversation level. Then, under the circumstance of the ‘common knowledge’ is established, use of implicatures is more likely to enrich our communication experiences than derail the whole communication.

The efforts taken so far in breaking down a spontaneous interactive exchange inform that the message conveyed in our conversations is rich and multi fold and the linguistic meaning is only the partial of a whole message conveyed. A non-direct response is one of the resources the speaker dips in to carry additional meanings, and examining this conversation phenomenon in turn sheds more lights on an invisible arena- or referred as the information bank or the common knowledge-established between the speaker and the listener. However, it should be noted that the theoretical knowledge reviewed in 2.1 is for illuminating an interactive communication process in a monolingual situation. The following section will turn to analysing key theories for understanding the interpreter-mediated encounters.

2.2 Interpreter-mediated public service encounters

Public service interpreting studies were once heavily influenced by the monological perspective of language. That means ‘the meaning of a word was the thing the word stands for’ (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997: 148). According to Bellos (2011:84), this perspective is termed as ‘Nomenclaturism, the notion that words are essentially names’, which is deeply rooted in the Western culture and influenced by religious scripts such as Hebrew Bible. As a result, interpreting was often described as conduit’ metaphor and the interpreter was treated as a machine, code converting, invisible, rational and cold.

However much power this perspective has been exerting historically, it has not been without any challenges. For instance, Wittgenstein (1958) managed to escape its influence in his later intellectual career after recognising that a language includes words which aren’t just names. Wittgenstein rejected his own theory and replaced it with a concept of language games. According to Wittgenstein (1958): ‘the meaning of a word is given by its position in a complex and the part that it can play in combination with other words that we use and with the things we do.’ (cited in Hughes & Sharrock, 1997: 149) In other words, the meaning of a word derives from how it is used with other words in social interaction.

By the same token, there are a number of scholars within public service interpreting studies who were unsatisfied with the ‘conduit’ metaphor of interpreting. Wadensjö (1998) introduced an alternative perspective that defining interpreting as the interpreter-mediated *situation* for

spontaneous spoken communication. Her work completely revolutionised how public service interpreting was broadly and rightly conceived. Wadensjö (1998: 105-110) highlights the changes the interpreter makes to the mediated encounters in comparison with monolingual conversation by conceptualising two lines of functions that the interpreter fulfils: ‘translating and coordinating’. The first function, according to Wadensjö (1998), is comparable to rendition where original text can be analysed to the target text in terms of the accuracy of the content and style; the second function means that interpreters’ utterance is provided to ‘solve a problem of communication...bridge a linguistic gap and a social gap’ (Wadensjö, 1998: 109). More importantly, Wadensjö (1998) argues that those two aspects of interpreting are intertwined and ‘simultaneously present’.

Within her argument of coordinating aspect of interpreting, generating a shared focus of interaction is specified, which echoes with the notion of information bank or invisible arena mentioned in 2.1. Thus, every participant including the interpreter during the interpreter-mediated encounter is constantly feeding in and taking out from the shared meaning arena being co-created as conversation progresses. This theoretical understanding is significant in informing that the choice of the interpreter can make between text production mode of interpreting and coordinating mode of interpreting is a fallacy. As Wadensjö (1998: 106) states, the interpreter ‘cannot avoid being both’. Therefore, interpreting is no longer merely about text production but also a ‘sense making’ activity on the basis of specific communicative situations (Gavioli and Wadensjö, 2023). More importantly, Gavioli and Wadensjö (2023: 4) argue for an undeniable role of interpreters are playing in sense-making during interpreter-mediated encounters and state that ‘the meaning that participants attribute to what is said and done is instantly co-created as interaction unfolds’.

2.3 Applicability of monolingual communication theories as the first research gap

Having explored spontaneous interactive communication in both monolingual and interpreter-mediated encounters, it has become clearer that the cognitive process of interpreting isn’t the thinking process exclusively carried out by the interpreter during the interpreter-mediated encounters; likewise sense-making activity is participated not just by the service user or provider as the interpreter is also taking part in. Therefore, it is a collective effort to ensure a successful communication outcome during the interpreter-mediated public service encounters and the interpreter’s presence in the conversation shouldn’t alleviate service provider or users’ own duty in bridging the communication gap.

In that case, it seems suggesting that what Javier's (2007) theory of communication process for monolingual context would still apply in the interpreter-mediated encounters. As Javier (2007: 87) describes, a successful communication experience entails is only when the individuals as the speaker feel being 'understood' and the listener feel being 'receptive' is achieved (Javier, 2007: 87). But there is lacking empirical evidence to support this proposition and this research gap could be filled with this study. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence supporting this proposition, and this research gap could be addressed by this study. Before moving to the next stage of research, it is vital to discuss professional dilemmas, as non-direct responses represent situations when PSIs encounter these dilemmas. These issues will be further explored in the following section.

2.4 Dilemmas faced by PSIs when encountering with non-direct responses

The knowledge, brought forward by academia, which treats interpreting as the interpreter-mediated *situation* and the interpreter as a co-creator of the shared meaning, is not widely acknowledged in the wider stakeholders involved in PSI including language service providers, government bodies and support agencies and charities, PSI accreditation bodies and training providers (Webb and Rabadán-Gómez, 2016). This probably explains why the regulator of PSIs in the UK struggles to harness an unified voice from various public representing bodies of PSIs in order to move this profession to be underpinned by law as other professions i.e. doctors.

However, there is a general consent of ethical principles for PSIs. As Hale (2008) found, three fundamental principles-impartiality, accuracy and confidentiality- have been adopted as the Codes of ethics across a range of countries and professional bodies and the language service providers. Reflecting upon what been discussed in 2.1 and 2.2, on the one hand, the knowledge gained from Grice's theory of conversation informs that our communication is richer than what we directly express. On the other hand, the principle of accuracy bounds PSI to practise at the level of linguistic meaning and interpret as close to verbatim as the language allow, without adding, omitting or substituting; on the one hand, social psychologist Javier (2007) points out that both rational or logical thinking and emotional or affective element both at work in the communication process. On the other hand, the principle of impartiality demands all PSIs to keep our sympathy and empathy at bay and 'overcome the urge of wanting to help' the service user (Heimerl-Moggan, 2016: 125). Those two dilemmas are only a few out of many interpreters would face in public service settings.

There are two fundamental influences causing the interpreters having to make difficult decisions. One influence is ‘the tension about reality and prescription’ (Angelelli, 2019). As Angelelli (2019: 167) explains, ‘the reality of the roles, the responsibilities, the expectations and job requirements of healthcare in their workplace, intricacies of interpreting as a situated practice and theoretical assumptions about those roles, responsibilities, job requirements and expectations.’ In particular, the assumption made about what public service interpreting is all about rests upon the outdated understanding of interpreting as the conduit metaphor is misleading and even counterproductive in pinpointing what the right skills should be equipped for PSIs.

The other influence derives from fluid nature of public service interpreting. Angelelli (2019) characterises public service interpreting as ‘situated practice’. Thus, interpreting is a practice where the role is formed and shaped in accordance with the different settings, the specific interactions and commonly adopted rules of the various professional bodies that take part in the interactions. Her notion of ‘situated practice’ highlights the fluidity of role the interpreter could play which has been supported by a number of empirical studies for example Leanza’s (2005) typology of medical interpreters. Thus, roles could evolve between faithful renderer to advocate ‘within the same interaction, even within the same turn of talk (Angelelli, 2019: 152).

Hence, when facing with non-direct responses, the dilemmas would become more acute begging PSIs to navigate them skilfully. As the turn of talks becomes irregular, the interpreter would be compelled to make a decision on their rendition and interactive management when encountering with ‘non-direct’ responses: shall I keep (or not) my rendition within the linguistic meaning? Shall I interrupt (or not) the speech in order to ensure both parties have an equal turn of speaking? Do I need to change (or not) my interpreting mode? Or any situational related questions will occur too.

For Wadensjö (1998), no matter what decision the interpreter made spontaneously would inevitably influence how the interaction progresses. In particular, the implication of strictly adhering the principle of impartiality could ‘drive a wedge between interlocutors, increasing social distance and not allowing for presentation of true selves’ (Llewellyn-Jones and Lee (2014: 21). Furthermore, as Musa and Mohammend (2022: 887) point out that the linguistic meaning of a conversation radically underdetermines the message conveyed and understood. Thus, focusing on the text production would run the risk of capturing the partial message

intended and potentially results in undesirable responses i.e. aggressive reactions from the speaker as they may feel they have not been understood at all.

It is never an intention to question the significance of ethical principles to PSIs by opening up the disputes surrounding them. Rather it is the first step to recognise ‘interpreters’ agency’, as Angelelli (2019) points out, in their exercise of discretion throughout the interpreter-mediated encounters. According to Grimen and Molander (2008: 180), exercise of discretion refers to ‘the professionals’ ability to discern between a “good” and “bad” solution to a problem that occurs within their area of expertise (cited in Skaaden, 2023: 267). If considering code of ethics as forming a boundary of restrictions, description of discretion would be an area left open which the gap this research will be addressing.

2.5 The Exercise of Discretion as the second research gap

The disputes surrounding on the principles of ethics combined with Angelelli’s (2019) argument of interpreting as situated practice imply that protocols of actions prescribed by the code of ethics and written/unwritten rules cannot cover every detail of the situation, which exposes the room for discretionary power comes in play. However, limited research has been conducted in gaining understanding on how PSIs make a decision on what is a good or bad solution to the problem occurs during the interpreter mediated encounters.

Non-direct responses is one of common problems occurs and the research focusing on how PSIs handle non-direct responses would pave the way for gaining an in depth understanding of the area of PSIs’ exercise of discretion. More importantly, it will bring the academic knowledge achieved so far from the leading scholars in public service interpreting studies to benefit more tangibly PSIs’ daily practices. In addition, this study would provide an alternative consideration for the UK regulator to set the criteria between qualified and unqualified public service interpreters.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter aims to unravel the complexities of interpreter-mediated interactions, particularly where non-direct responses frequently occur. It begins by exploring key theories in Pragmatics and Social Psychology within a monolingual context. Consequently, a research gap in theory is identified: the need to provide empirical evidence supporting or refuting the applicability of monolingual communication theories in the context of interpreter-mediated encounters.

Subsequently, the chapter addresses the professional dilemmas faced by interpreters, as derived from public service interpreting studies. This examination uncovers a second research gap in practice: gaining a deeper understanding of how public service interpreters (PSIs) decide what constitutes a good or bad solution to problems such as non-direct responses. It appears that firsthand experiences of PSIs are crucial in bridging these research gaps. The next chapter will discuss the most suitable methodological approach for this study.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

The efforts in reviewing relevant literature in Chapter 2 have been fruitful in threefold: firstly, it synthesised the theoretical basis in exploring the phenomenon of non-direct responses; secondly, it identified two research gaps for this study; lastly, it paved an epistemological path for this study to follow. Hence, this chapter will first discuss the philosophical approach underpinned by the subject of this study. Then it will reveal all the details on how this study was carried out.

3.1 Research strategy

According to Hale and Napier (2013), two broad philosophical approaches have been adopted for interpreting studies-the positivistic and phenomenological approach. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) assert that what characteristics of the subject matter are determine how the subject can be studied. As described in the research gap, this study focuses on PSIs' exercise of discretion under the situation of non-direct responses in interpreter-mediated encounters. It aims to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of non-direct responses and interpreters' behaviour and from their perspectives. In order to achieve this research aim, the phenomenological approach is the most suitable for this study.

As there exists considerable gap in the public service interpreting literature on the interpreters' exercise of discretion and no empirical research formulated specifically for handling non-direct responses, this study is primarily exploratory. Thus most suitable research strategy is the qualitative approach.

3.2 Data collection method

The qualitative data required answering the research questions could be accessed by deploying a number of research techniques such as interviews, observations, focus groups, or authentic interpreted renditions (Hale and Napier, 2013). However, due to the sensitivity the topics in public services and bounding professional codes of ethics exercised by both interpreters and service providers, the access to the qualitative data via authentic interpreted renditions or even observations is severely restricted. Furthermore, this research relies on what interpreters describe and reflect upon their own experiences, and explain their own courses of action. The focus group technique would put individuals under unnecessary social pressure which in turn would likely impair the validity of data. Therefore, the best available research technique for this study was individual interviews.

Specifically, the semi-structured interview technique was the data collection method used. Prompt interview questions, as shown in Table 3.1 and Appendix 1, were developed in close connection to answering each research question proposed.

Table 1 The integral links between research aims, research questions and interview questions

Research Aims	Research Questions	Semi-structured Interview questions
Aim 1: The phenomenon of non-direct responses	1. To categorise non-direct responses	e, f, g,
Aim 2: PSIs' exercise of discretion	2. Situational factors	c, d, j
	3. PSIs' coping strategies	h, i

The sequence of arranging the prompt questions was intended with starting with familiarising the respondent with the situation of non-direct responses during interpreter-mediated encounters; the respondent was prompted to reflect upon their own experience of interpreting under this circumstance. From then on, the prompt questions posed would serve due purposes of both guidelines and pointers. In doing so, a sense of 'agency' was preserved for the respondent when recollecting their previous experiences so that the opportunity of eliciting necessary relations and factors was maximised. Having a research methodology postulated, the following section will report how this design was executed.

3.3 Data collection process

Prior to taking any actions in reaching out for potential respondents, there needs to a sampling criterion. As this study was not taking the quantitative route, non-probability sampling strategy specifically the network sampling, was used. The network of practising interpreters is the community for this study to reach. Considering this study is at the exploratory stage and limited timeframe allowed for completing this project, it is decided not add on additional sampling criteria such as geographical locations, the length of the service and working language pairs.

As soon as the ethical approval was granted by the research ethics committee at the Department of Languages & Intercultural Studies at Heriot-Watt University, a notice of call for participation was sent out via professional network, language service providers and various voluntary interpreter associations. 15 interpreters sent their initial interests and nine of them (three were from the social network dedicated for interpreters community and the rest were from the language service provider's contact list) took part in the semi-structured interviews.

Table 2 An overview of all the participants taking part in this study

Participants	Working Language pair	Length of public service interpreting experiences	If specialised in particular setting
1	English < > French	N/A	No
2	English< > Spanish	N/A	No
3	English< >Portuguese	N/A	No
4	English< >Arabic	2 years	No
5	English< >Polish	11years	No
6	English< >Farci	8 years	No
7	English< >Norwegian	4 months	No
8	English< >Mandarin	2 months	No
9	English< >Polish	14 years	No

For the consistency of condition under which the interview was conducted, all the interviews were carried out via MS Teams and video recorded after all the respondents were informed the details of this study (see Appendix 2 the Information Sheet) and gave their written consent (see Appendix 3 the consent form).

During the process of conducting interviews, the researcher was aware of the powerful role interviewer could play in affecting the quality of data being collected. Hence, a great care was taken to ensure plenty of room for reflection and recollection was created for each respondent without the feeling of being judged or evaluated.

3.4 Data analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted through manual thematic analysis, a method particularly suited for interpreting rich, qualitative data like interview transcripts. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of public service interpreters (PSIs) in situations involving non-direct responses. Initially, all interview recordings were transcribed focusing on the content only. These transcriptions were then read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. The initial reading was to familiarize myself with the content and nuances of the responses, while subsequent readings focused on identifying patterns and themes.

Coding began with an open-coding process, where segments of the text were labelled with descriptive tags. These tags were generated inductively, grounded in the data itself and deductively derived from the theories discussed in Chapter 2. This phase was crucial for identifying recurring concepts and ideas shared by the participants. As coding progressed, these

initial codes were grouped into potential themes. These themes represented patterns across the data set that were relevant to the research questions. For example, codes relating to 'contributing factors' or 'Individuals' background' were clustered into broader themes.

Throughout the analysis, reflexivity was maintained to acknowledge my own biases and perspectives as a researcher. This awareness was crucial in interpreting the data, ensuring that the findings were a representation of the participants' experiences rather than my own perspectives.

3.5 Research Ethics

A stringent adherence to ethical standards was adopted in this study, particular attention was given to ensuring the ethical treatment of all participants, guided by the principles of respect, integrity, and responsibility.

As soon as an approval was received from the Research Ethics Committee at the Department of Languages & Intercultural Studies at Heriot-Watt University. The PSIs community was approached by distributing the information sheet. As shown in Appendix 3, it outlined the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, the voluntary nature of involvement, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Contact information for the research team was included, offering participants an opportunity to ask questions or express concerns.

Prior to the commencement of data collection, informed consent (Appendix 2) was obtained from all participants. The consent form was provided to participants well in advance of their scheduled interviews, allowing them ample time to review and consider their participation. Signed consent forms were then collected before the interviews commenced.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach employed in this study. The qualitative approach, specifically through the use of semi-structured interviews, was justified as the most appropriate strategy for this study. This method was chosen for its ability to delve deeply into the experiences and perceptions of public service interpreters (PSIs), offering rich, nuanced insights into their professional dilemmas and decision-making processes.

The thematic analysis culminated in a set of coherent themes that provided deep insights into the phenomenon of non-direct responses in interpreter-mediated encounters. These themes not only shed light on the interpreters' experiences but also highlighted their coping strategies and decision-making processes in such situations. The findings from this analysis form the basis for the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Research Findings and discussion

An overall finding regarding how common the phenomenon of non-direct responses is shows that it is not unusual for the interpreter to encounter this sort of speech situation. Moreover, non-direct responses were found occurring in every language pair covered in this study. 2 out of 9 respondents used ‘all the time’ to describe the occurrence frequency and 4 out of 9 put it as ‘often enough to be noticeable’ and the rest three respondents referred it being ‘sometimes’. The characteristics of the phenomenon of non-direct responses noticed by the respondents resemble what Grice’s (1989) four conversational Maxim in particular about quantity and relation. For example, respondent 6 gave an example:

I was going to interpret for the accused and before the accused was called in front of the sheriff, the solicitor wanted to consult with him. So he took him and me into a room to consult. The solicitor, started explaining that there are five charges and the Procurator fiscal has agreed to drop four of the charges if he agrees to this one charge. And he was all about his dad's cowshed is bigger than this building. And I thought, the solicitor must think I'm crazy or something. It was completely irrelevant to what the question.

Given the very limited size of sample and non-random sampling strategy used, this finding is not claimed to be representative. In fact, an unintended finding during the process of data collection reveals that some interpreters even having experienced non-direct responses hesitate to recognise the meaningfulness of non-direct responses as a research topic for the interpreters. At the same time, it is hard to ignore that more than half of the respondents of this study confirm their experiences of the non-direct responses, which underlies the value of researching this topic.

This chapter will proceed in accordance with three specific research questions identified in chapter 2 and relevant findings for each research question will be reported thematically.

4.1 Research Question 1

The first research question aims to describe the phenomenon of non-direct responses by attempting to categorising the situations based on public service interpreters’ experiences. The interview questions proposed proved to extremely fruitful in aiding the respondents to open up with the researcher. Rather than applying the specific setting where the interpreter-mediated encounters take place as the categorising criteria, it is found that the contributory factors to the non-responses situation are often referred by the respondents. As complex and diverse contributing factors described, the encounters itself could be used as categorising criteria to

describe the space from which the contributing factors are originated: out of encounters and in-encounters. What contributing factors fall into each category of those two camps will be reported in detail below.

4.1.1 Out of encounters contributory factor-Situation Dissonance

One of advantages being exposed to a diverse of public service settings as PSIs is the sensitised awareness of the context. When the respondents of this study were asked about their observation of the non-direct responses, their reflections were overwhelmingly pointed to the disparity between the situation of service users found themselves and service users' tasks as Respondent 1 expressed:

My explanation is that the health professional is in a position of power and the person...being interviewed is the person who needs the service user who needs the support is probably not in the best place because it's powerless, doesn't understand the language, and so has to rely on the interpreter.

The sort of support the service users seeks quite often resembles a sense of urgency. As Respondent 9 described:

Most of the times or more than half of the time, people who are the service users are in a stressful situation like seeing doctors for some serious surgeries or attending tribunals.

Respondent 4 added that the significance of some interpreter-mediated encounters were high in stake for the service user:

... it's the evaluation if seeing the Home Office... the Home Office sees if you have valid grounds for applying or not. It's for really critical information that can make or break someone's life.

Moreover, Respondent 4 illuminates another feature of chronology presented in the situation the service users could end up with:

I've seen people's claim be rejected and because the process is very slow... it takes years for them to reapply and get a proper interpreter who will tell their story. There are plenty of people who have lost these years just because someone unqualified was allowed to do something he wasn't trained for.

In spite of different and specific encounters the respondents' recollection derived from, a common theme immediately emerges as highlighted by a key vocabularies used to describe the situation of the service users were in such as 'vulnerable', 'stuck' and 'powerless'. My own working experience affirms what other respondents described for example seeking permanent

accommodation to avoid being homeless; legal process in securing reunion with their offspring; assessing the suitability for rehabilitation during the prison term; the trial of the offence being alleged to, etc. A sense of needing help is prevalent in many the interpreter-mediated encounters and service providers are there for offering such help. If examining this circumstance from which those public service interpreting encounters organised from the point of view in communication, there seems to be a matching base for establishing a common arena (see chapter 2) allowing for a successful communication happening.

However, interpreters are more likely to find themselves stepping in two separate and detached realms withheld by service providers and service holders, which are extremely difficult if not impossible for the interpreters to establish a common arena to serve the communication purpose. This situation dissonance is illustrated by a number of respondents' reflections. As respondent 1 gave a specific example:

Questions were asked, and his answer was constantly to do with the court case that was coming up. So the social worker was instructed to look after the wellbeing of this person. But he was so focused on what was going to happen to him and what the lawyers are told him ...And so he was so worked up with this, that he never answered the sort of direct question ever, you know, except how do you feel?

Respondent 9 similarly expressed this situation dissonance and highlighted it with an example:

...maybe they [service users] think that the person on the other side would be the person that helped them and resolve all their problems, you know, but everyone there [service provider] got their own specific tasks and they [service users] don't understand that well.

When I'm interpreting for people who are applying for benefits having their health assessment...when they're assessed, there're a lot of specific questions asked and they're[service providers] expecting for the person to answer yes or no to those questions. For example, how far can you walk? Or maybe are you able to shower on your own or are you able to put clothes on your own? And then they [service user] just give you the story rather than say yes or no.

Or perhaps even the service users may understand that there is a certain limit of help that service providers could supply, respondent 1 interpreted as telling the story is an act of wanting to be heard:

... as an example, there was a Bulgarian woman once, and she had a bad knee. The doctor was basically just saying [that] we're not going to do anything just now. And she was like but my job is, you know... she went on a lot about her job that she needed to keep. The doctor wasn't interested and only said you know, well I'll refer you to physio but so now we're not doing anything...but She was worried about losing a job so she

was trying to explain, you know, I have children, I'm separated, I need to work...so that goes beyond the question and answer.

If conceiving non-direct responses as a type of speech act, under the situation dissonance non-direct responses could be understood as the efforts made by the service user to manage or even reduce the dissonance. More crucially, this situational dissonance has almost taken away the base for the interpreter aiming to build a 'information bank' (Javier, 2007) or 'common knowledge' (Parikh, 2019) to enable effective communication happening. It looks like PSIs are more likely in a disadvantaged position even before starting interpreting. Moreover, the respondents revealed that non-direct responses are also related to service users' individual background, which will be reported next.

4.1.2 Out of encounters contributing factor- Individual's background

A number of factors related to individual's background were highlighted including the level of education, age, the country of origin. Those factor are closely intertwined.

4.1.2.1 LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The non-direct responses could be seen as an indicator of poor communication skills which are often influenced by the level of education received. As respondent 6 described:

I always think that usually the problem is from the service user because of lack communication skills. I think it is about their level of education, their background... the most frustrating experience was recently when I was interpreting at the High Court. It took as many as 20 minutes to get a straight answer from this witness... and it's just so frustrating for everyone.. I put it down to the person maybe not listening.

Respondent 6's observation is also echoed by respondent 4:

I think it's just individual differences. It's similar to when you're trying to talk to a friend and you don't have a word to describe it or you don't have like the best way to conceptualize what's happened. So you tell them the story or you tell them the situation you were in and hope that can communicate to that situation. So I think it's just like a human form of communication when you're stuck and when you can't accurately describe something, you just tell them what happened. [When] they don't have a good grasp on something just happened or something that is happening, it's very easy or easy for them to tell you what happened than to tell you ...an overview of a situation. Not everyone can do that.

Indeed, as respondent 6 put it: *some people are just simply better at communicating than some others*. That applies to both service users and service providers as respondent 3 points out:

They're [service providers] not very flexible in the way that they speak and communicate. So they're kind of using scripts almost to get through certain things. And we're just more on the professional side where they're dealing with that kind of

language and they're not flexible enough about adapting it to the person that they're with. They use terminology from their own profession, focusing on a lot words but not the meaning. So they're not making their meaning clear.

It doesn't seem that higher level of education received, the better communication skills should have. The two distinctive perspectives-listeners and speakers- taken by the respondents are congruent with two analytical angles what the relevant literature of the communication process follows (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, it seems to suggest that the non-direct responses could be sign that there exists a social gap (Wadensjö 1998). between the service user and the service provider. It is further found that level of education is not the only contributing factor related to the individual's background.

4.1.2.2 AGE

Having basic education quite often is not personal choice. As respondent 1 stated:

I think it's because somebody who's not had the full education or maybe, you know, has just arrived in the country... I mean, he had just arrived in this area ...it's really hard to know what goes on in people's minds when they go into a different country. And I find that that can be quite, scary.

The respondent 6 had similar experience of interpreting for youngsters:

I have done interpreting for a lot of the minors recently, unaccompanied. And then they started talking about, for example, the abuse they suffered... And after the abuse, they had to leave their home country to come to another country where they don't speak the local language. They aren't familiar with the culture. There is no family support around them. You're afraid.

It is further noticed that another embedded influencing factor both respondents touched upon: feeling of fear, which confirms that the Javier's (2007) social psychological theory on communication- both logical thinking and affective element associated with the thinking are working. Moreover, if the force of affective element generated was so powerful that it could intervene the logical thinking. As Respondent 6 precisely described:

When people are upset, sometimes they're not listening. They don't listen to what you're saying. They're just... they've got this mental block that's upset them and they can't get past that.

Hence, non-direct responses could be a sign that the service user might be overwhelmed by their feelings.

4.1.2.3 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Another influencing factor was repeatedly suggested by the respondents is the country of origin. The country of origin could be related to the service user and the interpreter. It is found more interesting that whether the interpreter comes from the same country as the service user can make or break the trust the service user has for the interpreter. Respondent 1 described:

My mother doesn't trust other interpreters. I have to use the same one all the time because she just says, I don't understand her accent. I don't understand her dialect. She's not Italian. You know, there's somebody who's not even from the country. And so especially older people, I think they will refuse things that they are not familiar with.

Then if working with a different language pair, having the same country origin could have an adverse impact. As respondent 6 explained:

I was sometimes asked to interpret for the service user [who] is from Afghanistan, not from Iran. And Afghans speak a different dialect of Farsi. And what I have experienced is that they can understand Iranian Farsi very well, but I struggle to understand them, especially when they have a very strong accent. And this has become a problem on a number of occasions. But these Afghans within their own culture have tribal issues and they sometimes don't trust their own interpreters and they want to use an Iranian interpreter.

Then respondent 6 further elaborated on their experience of working with different dialect:

I can remember I was in those situations that I got many indirect responses, because most of the time I couldn't actually understand them. So I had to keep asking for them to repeat it.

Respondent 5 reported a similar experience of being requested to interpret for a service user who is from Bulgaria but insisted on a Polish interpreter due to lack of trust in Bulgarian interpreters. Some interpreters choose to work with a different dialect, but others have no choice. As respondent 4 pointed out:

Arabic, because it has varying dialects and these dialects can vary so much so that even I don't understand all of them. And I know my native languages Arabic. But some countries like Moroccan dialects, Tunisian, they're very different from the rest. They use French on Arabic or slang lingo, and you can't understand them. And that's not something you were asked when you get a job. It's either Arabic or not. You are not told what dialect of Arabic is that going to be. And so as a result, when they got there...just try to manage as they go. And they will not understand everything.

Whether it is the interpreter's choice or not, working with a different dialect of their own language would increase the risk of misunderstanding and complicate the communication process. Thus, non-direct responses could be a result of linguistic diversity the interpreters having to work with, or As Wadensjö (1998) points out, there is a linguistic gap.

4.1.2.4 PRE-EXISTING MENTAL CONDITION

Apart from those pre-set demographic factors discussed above, the mental status of the service users is also an influencing factor. As respondent 5 raised:

Some have mental health issues as well. And I've noticed depression is a big thing here. People who are depressed are having problems answering the questions or understand things. Wherever that is, they just to talk something. And in severe cases, it's sometimes almost, impossible to even get any conversation out of people who are really severely depressed.

Respondent 6 shared more insight with examples:

I remember going to the courts once, to the sheriff's court. They have cells in the lower ground floor. And we went down to the lower ground floor to the cells with the lawyer. The service user that I was going to interpret for had severe mental health issues. It didn't matter what we said. He was he was saying things that were absolutely irrelevant.

Another example of this when I went to Barlinnie prison to meet with an inmate to interpret. So there was myself, a couple of prison guards, a couple of medical experts who had come to see him. And there were a group of us. We went up to his cell and he had taken his shirt off and he was standing with his back to us. And no matter what we said, he wouldn't turn around. And it was a very sad situation. Obviously, he was very frustrated and mentally in a very bad place. I never saw his face.

What the respondents' experience showed that mental capacity required for engaging a conversation perhaps is often underestimated. Stable mental status and competent communication skills are among other contributing factors outside the actual encounters. It further evidenced that communication process is rich and multi fold, as informed by Grice (1989) and Javier (2007). As respondent 5 commented:

It's very human thing, you know, especially communication and face to face communication. It's very, very, very complex. So it's not straightforward.

The following part detailing the within-encounter contributing factors revealed by the respondents provides further evidence to this view.

4.1.3 Within-encounters contributing factor-Parameters of questions being asked

When prompted with the question focusing on the type of questions being asked which are more susceptible with generating non-direct responses, more insights were brought forward.

Respondent 5 gave a specific example:

There's this cultural difference between Britain and Poland. Where here in the UK, the question about how do you do or how are you? This is just a general question in the UK. In Poland, this is an important question and you don't ask this question for no

reason. So people start explaining the whole thing, how they actually feel. Some people who have been here for a while, for a few years, they understand those differences. Otherwise, they start talking about their health, life stories and things like that. So we do not have this question like that. We don't use it like that. There is a question like that, but we don't use it so casually.

Respondent 5 captures the moment when language and culture are two sides of the same coin. What is exactly the question meant ask is underpinned by the underlying culture. Then, there is a difference in parameters of the questions between different culture. Thus, respondent 5 recommended that service users to modify their questions to be more targeted and specific if the interpreter was asked to translate word by word.

This calling for being more specific is also highlighted in a different language context. As respondent 4 described:

Arabic is such a different language when it comes to interpreting. You have to be very specific. Arabic doesn't have like umbrella terms. It's very rare. For example, well-being doesn't mean your psychological and physical health. It is the assumptions behind umbrella terms and the questions that cause miscommunication. They should have been direct with their questions.

The different parameter of questions project in different cultural context poses an acute problem of adhering verbatim as often defined by the codes of conduct of the PSIs. It further exposes a deeper layer of influencing factors at work which is the cultural influence.

4.1.4 Within-encounters contributing factor-Cultural nuances

Relying on assumption isn't just what the service provider does and the serve user behave similarly too. As respondent 6 reflected:

And in a lot of cases, in our culture, the way Iranians talk, they say, Yes, I told him, and then he told her. And then she told me. And we went. They make references to he and she and them as if I should know. Because it's in their head, they think I should know who they're talking about or when they're talking about situations. They just assume that because I'm also from Iran, and I should know.

Respondent 6 further highlighted the problem of making assumptions with another example:

The reason for the reaction because asylum seekers from our country... is that they come from an oppressed system. Their minds are poisoned. They've been brought up with a lot of restriction. They have a certain way of thinking. Their culture has had an impact on their thinking, and there is a mistrust of authority in our country altogether. And I try to reassure them that this country is not the same and they can trust the authority. For example, I try to reassure them in a situation when I'm interpreting for a lawyer, that lawyer they can trust. The lawyer can guide them.

Respondent 2 highlights the importance of self-reflection on their assumption made as a result of cultural influence for communication purposes as the interpreters:

Even when speaking to a person that speaks English, but they are from a different country. There is a lot of cultural things that you have to explain, like in my country we do this, or there is a saying that goes kind of like this. I do that a lot here in New York with my friends or even my colleagues that are from other parts of the world. That means clarifying cultural nuances. So I think when there is somebody that doesn't even speak English and mentions those cultural things, it's important to clarify them.

Those findings in relation to cultural nuances have informed how those cultural related factors as Javier (2007) suggested, could result in communication distortions. The influence of the hidden assumption cultivated by different cultural characteristics is easily overlooked and the non-direct responses are the result from being unaware of the assumption.

4.2 Research Question 2

In close relation to question 1, the second research question attempts to explore the triggering factors compelling the interpreter to exercise their discretion. Does the interpreter take action (or not) for every encounter of non-direct responses? 8 out of 9 respondents answered: it depends. This dependence is primarily influenced by four key factors.

4.2.1 The setting

The setting under which the interpreter-mediated encounters is hosted is not found in particular close association with the occurring frequency of non-direct responses. However, It seems that the nature of the setting can be a triggering factor, influencing interpreters how to exercise their discretion, with some environments necessitating a more active role in enabling effective communication. For example, in formal settings, such as legal environment, interpreters often adhere strictly to protocols, limiting their discretion. As Respondent 5 explained:

You need to be very sensitive about it. If it's a very, very formal situation, you can't do it. For example, when I'm interpreting in a court, especially for a witness, who has to describe and talk a lot and all that, I have to interpret what they actually say. Exactly. If the witness is not answering the question. Lawyer or the solicitor or prosecutor has to ask again or definitely are more specific or stop or, you know, modify the question over. So I just translate what they say.

Respondent 9 shared a similar view that they are more likely to consider to exercise discretions in community based setting than the legal setting. In less formal settings, interpreters may have more room to exercise their discretion. As respondent 2 gave an example:

Last week I was at a legal clinic. Helping asylum seekers with their asylum application and. In the application they ask about addresses, and addresses in Latin American

countries are completely different as how you would write an address here in the United States. And the people that were seeking asylum were like, oh, this is how you write the address. I would have to do something a little bit beyond interpreting. Just so that information was conveyed properly, like, this is how the address is written in Ecuador. And the best way you can do so that it looks similar or it makes sense in the application.

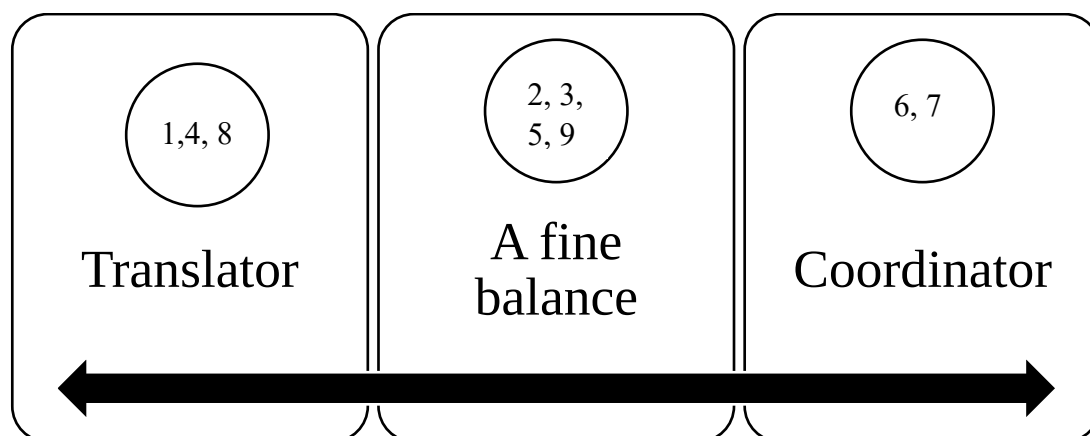
Some of them, don't even go to school, so they don't even know how to write the address in Spanish. Right. And that's not something that the volunteer asked me to do. And in a way, I'm stepping out a little bit of that role. But just for a brief second, you know, just so that information is conveyed properly.

As well as the setting, the interpreters' character is found influencing how they perceive their roles played in the encounters.

4.2.2 Interpreters' character

The second factor is about interpreters' character which affects how they position themselves in fulfilling the double roles of PSIs between translator and coordinator. It is found that the emphasis placed by each respondent varied. Three clusters of respondents could be identified (See Graph 1)

Figure 1. The varied position taken by the respondents in fulfilling the duo roles of PSIs



As shown in the Graph 1, respondent 1, 4 and 8 strongly state their position in line with the metaphor of translator in practicing public service interpreting. As respondent 4 claimed:

You need to do this word by word. It's not up to you to rephrase or tell them what they meant rather than what they actually said. Even if you know it's not going to make sense when interpreted. And that unfortunately does happen. It happens so much so that it leads some people have rendered using Duolingo and Google translate than using an interpreter.

Respondent 8 also shared this view by stating that:

In our job, we are responsible for translating. It doesn't matter if it's the first time meeting or not. As for us, just translate what they say.

By contrast, whether rendition makes sense or not does matter for respondent 6 and 7. As respondent 6 articulated:

I remember I learnt when I was doing the course was that when you interpret, you convey the understanding. You're not doing verbatim. And I remember this came off in a tribunal and the judge asked me to do verbatim translation. I said, if I do that, it wouldn't make sense. I could make sense to you as an interpreter. Obviously, it's called, you interpret according to your understanding, according to your culture, and this is what you convey.

Then respondent 6 shared an example of playing a role towards medicator:

I remember once I was called upon in La Porte, which is where you take a ferry across to Ireland. And they had detained someone. This was an Iranian asylum seeker who was actually escaping from Britain to go back to Iran. And he was caught because he was using a fake passport and he just had enough of the system here and he wanted to go back. And because he was so upset that they had caught him and they had detained him, he just wasn't listening to the lawyer. There was a lawyer there I was interpreting for and she wanted to help him.

But she he was so upset that he kept lashing out at the lawyer. And then the lawyer said, I'm just going to leave. And then I was with the chap for almost ten, 15 minutes to try to calm him down. So I managed to calm him down and I managed to convince him that speaking to the lawyer is the best option he has. There is no one else who's going to help him. So eventually calm down. And he spoke to the lawyer. I called the lawyer back and he spoke to her. You find that you do have to have different skills and different hats on from time to time. And that's the kind of time that when you're successful at doing something, it feels good actually, because he feels like you've managed to help the situation.

Respondent 7 pointed out that the role of medicator does not necessarily involve the linguistic translation aspect:

But in the way that people speak. Especially potential offenders [in the police setting] both in Scotland and in Norway. People do tend to swear. I still have to translate that swear word to the police. So, you know, a lot of F words were happening. I said. You need to stop it, because this is not going to help you. Scale it down. Let's be reasonable about this. They [service user] won't like it. But I'll say that in English so that the police will hear it in the manner.

Grinding between the translating and mediating role, respondent 2, 3, 5 and 9 took a balanced view on their adopted position. For instance, on one hand, respondent 9 maintained that:

Every person is different and every interpreter is different. But I'm some people who are trying to stick to the rules. Some do not. And I know that I would say that they should not be interpreters because they will go beyond the rules and doing advocacy than interpreting. I'm not trying to brag, but as much as I can, I'm trying not to step

out of my role. So I would just always try to leave that lead for what it should be done to the other people. So I'm trying not to step out at all, you know, as much as I can from the role, because in my mind, that's not how it should be. You should be in your role in the capacity of being interpreter, not someone that is trying to manage the situation.

On the other hand, respondent 9 admitted that:

I would say people skills and soft skills are essential. Because if you're not flexible enough, or you are kind of a person ...is a technical and binary. No, that's not the field for you, I think. it's hard to find this fine balance. I'm not saying and doing everything correctly. What I'm always trying to find, you know, a fine balance. I keep that in my mind.

Respondent 2 also explained her similar position in details:

I think, we want to. I mean, ideally, we're just interpreting, as accurately and just rendering the information. But we're not in an ideal world. So I think what our goal essentially is that they're able to communicate... I think everything is to a great extent, like everything in grade X is wrong. You can't be too flexible. You can't step out of the role of interpreter all the time, because otherwise you're not interpreting, right? But you also can't be like, I'm here only to interpret. He didn't say that word, so I'm not going to say that word. He didn't understand that. So I'm not going to clarify.

The respondents' experiences support Leanza's (2005) empirical research findings, which propose a typology of different roles that medical interpreters can play. It was further found that the varied roles interpreters assume are more likely to be decisions made in response to the situation, rather than a conscious choice of a particular role the respondents prefer to play. The findings for the last research question of this study offer additional insights.

4.3 Research Question 3

The last research question was proposed with application benefit in mind. Deriving from respondents' wealth of practising experiences, two general guiding principles and an working strategy have been developed as to when and how PSIs are recommended to exercise their discretion during the interpreter-mediated encounters in particular in facing with the phenomenon of non-direct responses.

4.3.1 Two general practicing principles

The first general guiding principle underlined refers to in what overall state PSIs is best to prepare for. Respondent 4 recommended to *be more alert* in order to, as respondent 5 commented, to *feel the situation*; or, as respondent 2 suggested, to *assess how the exchanges play out*. Similarly, respondent 6 emphasised on *garaging on the situation*. Deploying all the senses not just our ears is paramount for ensuring to achieve what the respondents described.

The second crucial advice received from the respondents is that don't jump in the conclusion immediately. It is not coincident that Respondent 2, 3, 5 and 9 -the cluster group of seeking a fine balance- stressed that. As respondent 2 reminded:

I think it can be also harmful, when you try to clarify things too soon...It's also good to let it play out a little bit. Not to jump in too soon.

Respondent 9 expressed the same view:

Well, you could try to improve the situation here. So maybe the entire interview will go more smoothly or better. But I think it's crucial to know not to do it at the very beginning, but only after a few times when someone is doing that continuously. And before you do it clearly. Make the service user and the service provider aware.

Seizing the right moment is equally important as deciding on what appropriate actions to take.

4.3.2 A working strategy

A working strategy revealed by the respondents is characterised by being proactive, reactive, responsive and strategic.

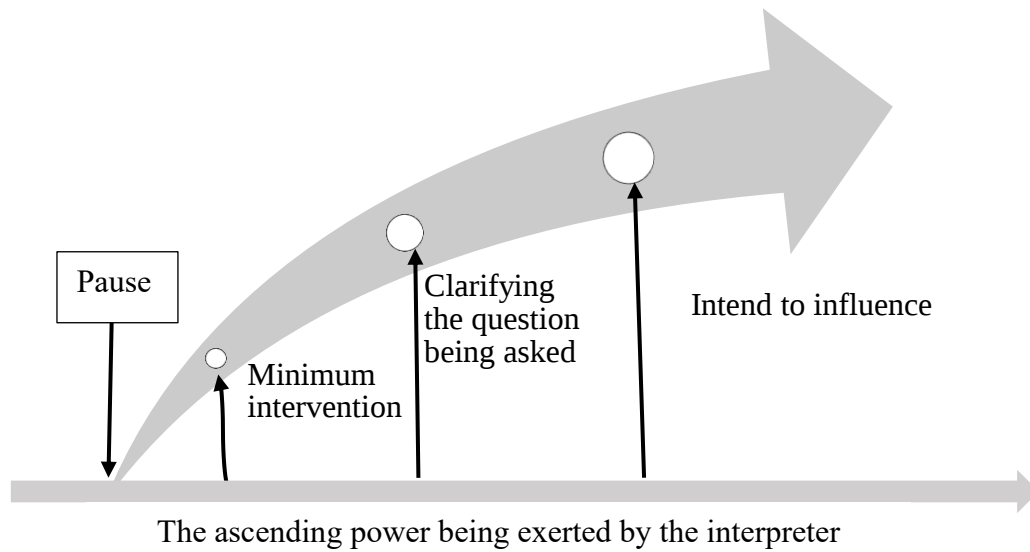
Being proactive brings the moment for PSIs to introduce themselves to the service user and provider under the spot light. Respondent 9 detailed the proactive measure taken:

I would say to the person [service user], and I'll say to the service provider, that, okay, I'm the interpreter, and I will just briefly explain my role to them before I start to interpret. And I will say to them that I'm the interpreter. I'm impartial here. My role is to interpret everything. And I'm bound to keep confidentiality. So I will say in English and in Polish. And that way, even though they [the service user] might forget quite quickly, what I'm going to do after so they will not be surprised, maybe an hour down the line that I'm interpreting everything when they maybe started to swear at the police officer or do something or speak to me directly because they think that I'm the friend who would help them.

As respondent 9 implied, having a proactive measure in place is critical at the start of interpreting but as the encounter progresses, there could be several contributing factors as revealed before in affecting the communication. The respondents shared more reactive measures in depth.

There are 7 out of 9 respondents claim taking an initiative in requesting pausing the non-direct responses. This measure seems fairly straightforward though it does require a fair amount of confidence from the interpreter. However, it is found that those 7 respondents took different follow-up measures once the non-direct response was paused. Those different follow-up measures can be illustrated in accordance with varying strength of the power which the interpreter is exerting (see Graph 2).

Figure 2. Different follow-up measures taken for coping with non-direct responses



For example, respondent 4 explain her action taken:

I do interfere with in the conversation is that I pause as soon as I feel like I'm not going to remember after this point so that I can interpret word by word. So I just say pause and I then let them continue.

Respondent 6 decided on clarifying the question:

When I feel that they [service user] are off the track, their response is indirect. I cut them off and I explain the question again. If I didn't do that, they would be frustrated because they would probably say that to themselves, why didn't explain all this and then tell me this was irrelevant. And sometimes I have to explain it several times before they actually get it, actually give the direct answer.

Respondent 5 went a bit further by reminding the service user:

Sometimes when it is at the doctor's, and you have service users who will not answer the question, they will start talking about a person and that person. But if it happens once, that's fine. Some people can just get carried away. That's okay. But if it happens again and again and again with every question... and it can't go on like that because it will take three hours instead of an hour. So you have to kind of stop them and say, look, the question is this and that. Could you answer the question. We need an answer here. And it's appreciated when you do that as well. Sometimes you just have to do it.

Different follow-up measures expose a field in practice called the power of interpreter. The power of interpreter doesn't only include managing the turn for each interlocutor as shown above, but the choice of using what manner of speaking the same message is also within the interpreter's power. Respondent 9 gave an rare insight:

You would say the same words or you would still convey the meaning. But how you do it could play a big role. You can say the same sentence loud. You can say, go ahead, you can say it in that manner or that manner. And people sense that body language and everything that. I think there's that saying that most of the communication that people are actually getting from us it's not coming from the words from speaking, it's from how we do it and the body language and everything else. I think people are unaware of that.

The manner of speaking could mean the tone of the voice also mean deconstructing the questions. As respondent 6 explained:

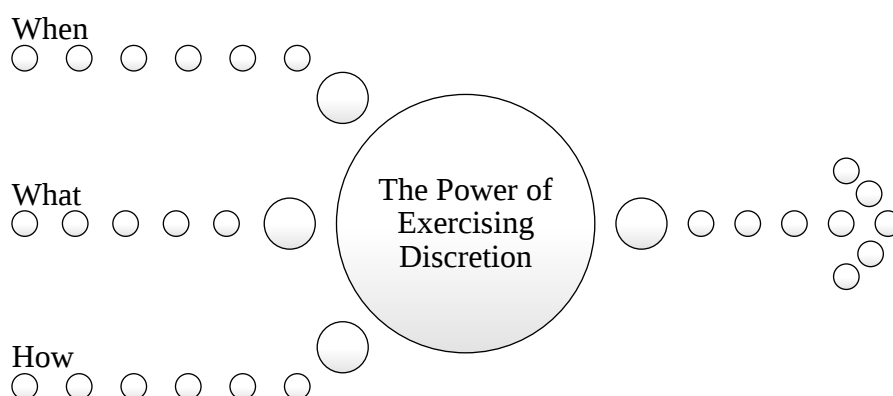
I either ask the service provider or I try and break down the question myself. And I keep the service provider informed of what I'm doing or ask them to do it, how to do it, to break it down so that they can understand the question better. Some are a little bit complicated so it helps breaking it down. For them [service users] to be able to follow it better. Dividing it into two three questions so that they can understand better.

Respondent 3 and 5 also reported using this similar measure of framing or boxing up the content clearly to ensure the gap of understanding is filled and the possibility of encouraging the non-direct responses is closed down. As respondent 3 explained:

When I've been in a school setting with parents talking about their child in school. I was quite aware that the parents didn't have a very sort of high level of literacy themselves. Also culturally, probably less used to attending meetings and schools and talking about things in such detail. So you can get the teachers and the professionals kind of talking in those quite formal terms. so I would, in that case, make it more accessible.

For example, I remember one time there was an educational psychologist there and he said something about the zone of proximal development. Instead of interpreting it directly into those words, I said, can you explain what a zone of proximal development is to the speaker? And then they would break it down as what is quite specific for a child and how you help a child to learn and that sort of thing, and then I would interpret it.

Figure 3. The decision-making process for handling non-direct responses



Various examples described by the respondents substantiate Wadensjö (1998)'s argument for two inseparable lines of function the interpreter fulfils: to render and to bridge a gap either socially or linguistically. Moreover, the finding for addressing the last research question informed that the power of exercising discretion doesn't necessarily mean breaching professional codes of conducts. As Figure 4.3 demonstrates, the decision-making process is multi-dimensional:

- Finding a right timing is critical. The interpreter could take action as soon as the non-direct responses occur or later when this situation sustains.
- The choice of what action to take represents varied power the interpreter could exert on the subsequent conversation.
- How the interpreter handles the non-direct responses will depends on what function the interpreter is hoping to achieve by their action.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter provide a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play in non-direct response scenarios within public service interpreting. By addressing three research questions, the contributing factors of the non-direct responses identified are inline with the factors Javier (2007) pointed out suggesting that monolingual communication theory seems applicable to the interpreter-mediated encounters. However, the implicature meaning of the non-direct responses conveyed by the respondents in this study doesn't seem to be related to saving face, showing politeness or maintaining a social distance (Brown and Levison, 1987; Risma, et al, 2020; Llewellyn-Jones and Lee, 2014).

Secondly, a working strategy was developed for handling non-direct responses which doesn't starting from making a choice of role between translator and coordinator. In addition, there two additional guiding principles were found for the practical applications in real-life interpreting encounters.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This research embarked on an exploratory journey into the complexities of non-direct responses in interpreter-mediated interactions. By delving into the existing literature in Pragmatics, social psychology and public service interpreting studies, the research identified critical gaps in existing literature, particularly in understanding how interpreters navigate non-direct responses and exercise discretion in professional settings.

Through adopting the phenomenological approach delivered by conducting semi-structured interviews, rich data was collected from public service interpreters. The findings revealed that the implicatures of non-direct responses convey are multi fold:

- The non-direct responses could be understood as the efforts made by the service user to manage or even reduce situational dissonance.
- The non-direct responses could be a sign that there exists a social gap between service user and service provider.
- The non-direct responses could also be the emotional reactions of service users.
- The non-direct responses could be a sign there exists a linguistic gap between service user and service provider.
- The non-direct responses could be resulting from falling into the trap of hidden assumption influenced by cultural background.

The findings further reveals varied roles of the PSIs are playing in accordance with different settings and affected by their own character. A multi-dimensional nature of interpreters' decision-making process was outlined, emphasizing the criticality of timing, the variability of interpreters' actions, and the influence of their intended functions in handling non-direct responses.

This study contributes on two fronts: the findings of this study supports applying the key theories for understanding monolingual conversation to the study of the interpreter-mediated encounters and it extends the work of leading scholars in public service interpreting area, providing insights into the real-world challenges faced by interpreters, contributing to a deeper understanding of the soft skill sets required in the profession.

While this study provides valuable insights, it acknowledges certain limitations. The scope of the research was constrained by the number of participants and the specific contexts in which they operate and the perspective of interpreters for exploring the phenomenon. Additionally,

the focus on non-direct responses may not encapsulate the full spectrum of challenges interpreters face in diverse settings.

Future research should aim to include a broader range of participants, potentially incorporating various cultural and linguistic contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the field. Further investigation into how interpreters manage other complex scenarios beyond non-direct responses would also be beneficial. The findings are also beneficial for the development of training and professional development programs for interpreters, where emphasis can be placed on the nuanced decision-making skills required in complex interaction settings.

In conclusion, this study has made significant strides in bridging the gap between theory and application. All respondents have shone a bright light on humanity, which will always inspire me to continue striving to be a better interpreting practitioner.

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Appendix 1. The semi-structured interview questions

- a. Start with briefly introducing my experience of non-direct responses in order to clarify describe and identify this phenomenon.
- b. Can you recall some examples of interpreting assignments when non-direct responses occurred?
- c. What sort of information of about the interpreting task before you attended the appointment? Settings, number of participants, nature of the event (Q2)

Did you pick up any situational cues as soon as you arrive at the site? What were those? (Q2) First meeting? Or have met or talked several times before Any brief from the professional? Do they come with a clear purpose to be achieved? Or exploratory?
Body language shown? Gaze?

- d. Can describe under what circumstances non-direct responses occurred? (Q1)
- e. How frequent it happened? Throughout the whole dialogue? (Q1)
- f. What sort of question being asked which led to the non-direct responses? (Q1)
- g. Then how did you and the professional handle? (Q3)
- h. How do you perceive what's happened? (Q3)
- i. What do you think of the meaning of non-direct responses trying to make? And why? (Q1)

Appendix 2

CONSENT FORM

Study: Understanding Non-Direct Responses in Interpreted Encounters

Researcher: Wei Du

Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies, Heriot-Watt University

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

Please delete or underline as appropriate:

I have read and understood the study information. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	YES/NO
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	YES/NO
I agree to the interview being audio and video recorded.	YES/NO
I understand that the information I provide will be used for Wei Du's <i>dissertation</i> and that the information will be anonymised, removing direct and indirect identifiers.	YES/NO
I agree that my information can be quoted in research outputs.	YES/NO
I understand that any personal information that can identify me will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone <i>other than Wei Du/Wei Du's supervisor/external examiner</i> .	YES/NO
I give permission for the anonymised information I provide to be deposited in a data archive so that it may be used for future research.	YES/NO

Please retain a copy of this consent form.

Participant name:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer name:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For information contact Wei Du at wd2003@hw.ac.uk

Appendix 3

Information Sheet

Study: Understanding Non-Direct Responses in Interpreted Encounters

Researcher: Wei Du

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research study. This study aims to better understand non-direct responses from service users during interpreted encounters in public service settings, and to explore interpreters and service providers' strategies when presented with non-direct responses.

This study is being conducted by Wei Du at Heriot-Watt University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc degree of Interpreting and Translation.

Why is this study important?

This research will contribute to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of communication dynamics in public service settings. Your experiences and perspectives will help us identify areas for improvement, benefiting both service users and providers.

What will I have to do if I take part?

If you are interested in taking part, you will be invited to give consent by answering some questions on a separate form (consent form).

Once your consent has been received, you will be invited to join a meeting with me via MS Teams, which will last approximately 30-40 minutes.

What are the possible risks with taking part?

It is not expected that there will be any disadvantages or risks for you by taking part in this research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The results would help our understanding of the meaning carried by non-direct response during interpreted encounters. This, in turn, is to be beneficial in improving communication in public service settings.

What will happen to the information given during the study?

No personal data, as specified by the Information Commissioner's Office, will be collected at any point during the interview. However, the precautions taken for the collection, storage, and processing of personal data are still being used to ensure the security of the data.

All research data will be anonymised at the point of data collection. Only the research team will have access to the anonymised data generated through this study. Data will be stored only in a single computer account (i.e., the researcher's University Microsoft OneDrive account). Results from this study will be analysed by Wei Du and written up as part of a MSc dissertation.

Who has reviewed the study?

All studies involving human participants carried out at University are reviewed by an ethics committee. The role of the ethics committee is to protect the safety, rights, well-being, and dignity of study participants.

This study was reviewed by the Languages and Intercultural Studies departmental research ethics committee and given ethical approval on **16th June 2023**.

How do I make contact with the study team?

If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to me at dw2003@hw.ac.uk or my research supervisor Eloisa Monteoliva at eloisa.monteoliva@hw.ac.uk

Thank you for considering this invitation to contribute to our research. Your time, expertise, and willingness to participate are sincerely appreciated.

Let's work together to enhance communication in public service settings!