

(Re)constructing the Model of Interpreting Professionalism through  
Institutional Work: the Perceived Impact of Agencies on Interpreters' Work  
Practices

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## ABSTRACT

The changing British economic climate and the austerity-led contractualism across public services have brought the role of interpreting agencies to the fore. Drawing on conceptual frameworks derived from the sociology of professions, knowledge-based organisations and institutional theory, this study documents the institutional work of a number of interpreter-turned-managers aimed at creating new practices against the corporatisation logic in the field of public service interpreting (PSI). Through closely observing the everyday managerial operations of interpreting work processes, these findings reveal that interpreters' 'professional project' at the local level is carried out through the institutionalisation of their professional jurisdictions and knowledge claims. The micro-tactics employed by frontline managers constitute important forces of resistance against the procurement logic and sharply contrasts against the outcome of senior-level professionalisation strategies. Therefore, this thesis has made the following contributions. Theoretically, it challenges the traditional 'association-centred approach' to modelling the trajectory of PSI and highlights the role of commercial agencies in engineering the work practices of interpreters and the formation of organisational professionalism. It argues that agencies have gone beyond the traditional role of an information broker to a key institutional gatekeeper and central arena for inducing field-level change. An alternative hybrid model is proposed in order to reflect that PSI is changing from a technical profession towards a *managed* profession, in which traditional values are increasingly merged with business principles and market tenets. Empirically, it provides novel insights into the organisation of interpreting services in practice and opens up the unexplored field of interpreting agencies as a fruitful research site. A wider implication of the research is the need to extend the notion of the interpreting workplace beyond the space where communication-mediation tasks are performed, to where interpreting services are planned, organised and managed. Importantly, professional interpreters should be consulted in the procurement process rather than being treated as numbers by mainstream agencies for contract-bidding purpose.

## DEDICATION

To my dear Grandmother GU Xiuqin (谷秀琴) who passed away before I started this great journey abroad. She and my grandfather Shi Qin dedicated their life to the service of Air Force China in the war time but had never been on their beloved planes to see the world outside China. Their bravery always gives me the strength to carry on.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

‘BSL’ - British Sign Language

‘CIoL’ - Chartered Institute of Linguists

‘CPD’ - Continuous Professional Development

‘DPSI’ - Diploma of Public Service Interpreting

‘NRPSI’ - National Register of Public Service Interpreting

‘PSI’ - Public Service Interpreting

‘PSFs’ - Professional Service Firms

## Chapter 3 Introduction

### **Introduction**

This study explores the perceived impact of interpreting agencies on the working practices and conditions of public service interpreters in the UK and the role of agencies in the professionalisation of public service interpreting (PSI). Chapter One provides an introduction to the thesis, including setting the scene, stating the rationale of the research, justifying the significance of the research, introducing methodology and outlining the structure of this report.

### **Research Background**

The following section details the political and industrial background of the research by depicting recent advances in PSI professionalisation in the UK and the changing landscape of PSI provision over the past decades. Attention is also directed at the specific context of the Scottish PSI industry upon which this research is based.

#### *3.2.1 The Trajectory of the PSI Profession*

Public service interpreting (PSI) has been undergoing professionalisation in the UK for over two decades. Compared to traditional disciplines such as law and medicine that are built on hundreds of years of development, PSI is still a nascent profession. Before 1994, Townsley (2007) reports there were no formalised arrangements for interpreting services provided by public sector bodies. The UK is not alone in the situation where PSI (or “community interpreting”<sup>1</sup> as known in the US, Australia and other countries) has a severe lack of regulation and organisation. It is a historical problem across the world where “consciousness of the role of the interpreter is limited and of little interest either to the minority group or to institutions” (Gentile et al. 1996, p. 10). As a result, the PSI industry has perennially been under pressure from multiple institutions as a result of its freelance-based structure (Harrington 1997), low prestige (Pöchhacker 1999), cheap labour (Mikkelsen 1996), contract-driven work (Ozolins 2007), market disorder (Witter-Merithew and Johnson 2004) and ad-hoc provision (Hale 2007).

Recent decades have witnessed growing demands from professional bodies for re-

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<sup>1</sup> No distinction is made between “community interpreting” and “PSI” for the purpose of this thesis.

landscaping the field of public service interpreting in the UK (Townesley 2007). In 1991 and 1994, the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) and the National Register for Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) were respectively launched. Although DPSI and NRPSI do not function as a statutory licensing framework for interpreters, the creation of the two makes tremendous strides in advancing the professionalisation process of PSI. Meanwhile, a range of professional associations such as Institute of Interpreting and Translation (ITI) and the Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI) have reset their remits to govern the affairs of PSI and especially legal interpreting. All these signal high-level efforts to mimic the classic pathway towards securing occupational autonomy, as achieved by established professions (e.g. law, medicine).

More recently, the EU Directive (2010/64) that comes into force in October 2013 prescribes not only the right to, but also the quality and cost of, interpretation and translation. There is a call for setting up national register systems in all member states of EU:

Member States shall meet the costs of interpretation and translation...shall endeavour to establish a register or registers of independent translators and interpreters who are appropriately qualified. Once established, such register or registers shall, where appropriate, be made available to legal counsel and relevant authorities. (Directive 2010/64, Article 2)

While progress has been made in the self-regulation of PSI, there are problems that remain unresolved and emerging issues to be addressed. Firstly, although senior-level measures including professional qualification, degree education and national register are well in place, there is no statutory professional body dedicated to taking care of the profession. As Townesley (2007) puts it, PSI should be subject to a regulatory framework mimicking the law and the medicine professionals to safeguard their interests and the body of the knowledge. Secondly, setting up the national DPSI qualification test is not a panacea to guard the entry into the profession, as low demand languages are not regularly offered in the DPSI exams. Moreover, interpreters having language relevant certificates or credentials issued by other countries might not be adequately qualified in the UK. Thirdly, there is an imbalanced development across different public sectors, with legal interpreting provision attracting more attention from policymakers than the rest of settings such as hospitals, local councils and schools. Given the fact that numerous stakeholders are involved in the professionalisation process of PSI, and that senior-level professionalisation strategies are yet to be effective, the concerns beg the question of how

frontline interpreting work is organised and implemented in everyday practice and connected to broader objectives of the PSI provision project. This has not been extensively explored in the extant literature.

### 3.2.2 *The Changing Landscape of PSI Provision*

In contrast to the top-down enthusiasm for restructuring, interpreters increasingly find their legitimacy questioned by policy-makers. The success of legislative endeavours (e.g. EU Directives) seems to do little to improve the reality of frontline interpreting. This can partly be explained by the introduction of contracted agencies—characteristic of neo-liberalism which favours flexible specialisation, blurred boundaries and centralised management control (Freidson 2001)—into the PSI sector.

Particularly in the legal interpreting field, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has since August 2011 contracted out interpreting services to a single private company Applied Language Services (ALS) that has been acquired by CAPITA six months later (PI4J 2012). In the campaigns starting in 2012, 2,350 registered interpreters across the UK have been collecting evidence to prove the inability of CAPITA to provide quality interpreting services since it cuts the pay rate and uses untrained interpreters. The major purposes of these campaigns are to reverse the outsourcing to commercial agencies, reintroduce direct employment of freelancers by the courts and police and persuade the government to provide statutory regulation for the interpreting profession (ibid). Campaigners believe that the government's "single provider approach" has deserted NRPSI self-regulation thus undermining the status of PSI professionals. The "monopoly scheme undercuts professional standards" and forces many interpreters to "consider alternative careers due to a bleak prospect ahead" (ibid).

Their resistance against the implementation by the MoJ of the Framework Agreement can be said to reach to a new high by the establishment of an umbrella organisation—Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J)—to formally engage with the legal institutions. This organisation comprises nine influential professional bodies across UK and a number of qualified interpreters. Their concerted efforts have provided compelling evidence that triggers the investigation by the National Audit Office (NAO 2012, 2014), Public Accounts Committee (PAC 2012) and Justice Committee (Justice Committee, 2013). Their reports prove that the contracted agency "failed to deliver on many aspects of the Agreement and did not...ensure that the interpreters it provided were of sufficient standard", asserted by the Chair of the Commons Select Committee. Despite the on-going

boycott by practitioners and the painstaking negotiations with supervisory institution, MoJ continues to partner with the agency and the quality of interpreting has not been substantially improved. According to an independent market review report (MoJ 2014), the quality arrangements under the Framework Agreement, 70% (N=570) of standard language interpreters felt dissatisfied with “the current procedures in terms of the evaluation of skills and experience required for face-to-face interpreters”. There are no training programmes offered, and over half of the interpreters working for this agency do not possess acceptable qualifications.

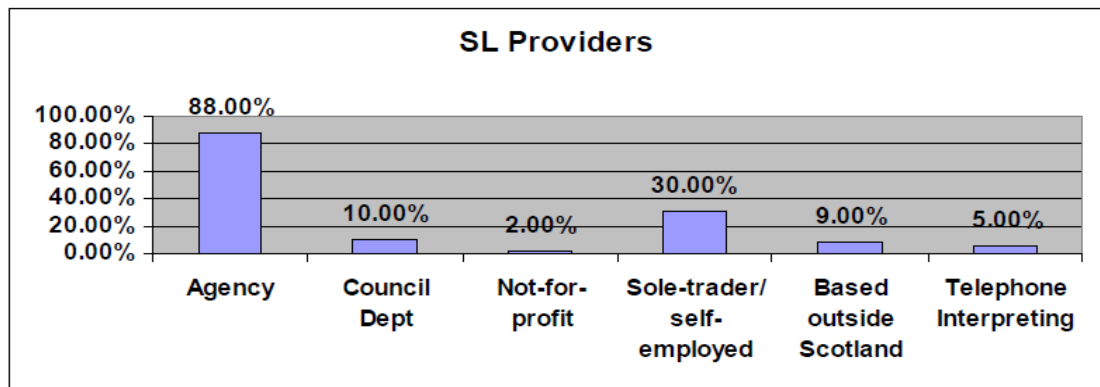
As such, it can be argued that PSI is becoming a member of the “hybrid professions” (Noordegraaf 2007; Colley and Guéry 2015)—a cluster of occupations (e.g. homecare workers, paralegals, midwives) in the public service domain who take on the look of professions without having actual jurisdictional control over practice (Evetts 2011). Compared to the model of “pure professionalism” (Noordegraaf 2007, p.765), these occupations’ pursuit of higher quality service has little to do with respect for knowledge or a shared “service ethic” (Wilensky 1964), shaped throughout years of professional training. Rather, it comes as a result of the bureaucratic measurement and external monitoring which force interpreters to ‘behave professionally’. This professionalisation process of PSI is therefore initiated “from above” rather than “from within” (McClelland 1990; Evetts 2011), signalling a shift of work sovereignty from individual interpreters to the organisational (agency) managers.

### *3.2.3 Agencies in the Regional Context*

Existing literature that specifically investigates the operational process within interpreting agencies remains rather limited, but research that focuses on service provision may provide insights into certain issues associated with the management of agencies in the PSI sector. This section largely draws upon Perez et al. (2006) to provide some regional background for this study. More studies exploring the relationship between interpreters and agencies in the wider context will be reviewed in section 2.3 and 2.4.

According to Perez et al. (ibid), the ad-hoc interpreting provision in the region is primarily because there is no national register available for spoken language interpreting. Approved interpreters are unable to be sourced, resulting in a lack of human resources data base for public sector’s reference. NRPSI can provide spoken language resources to some extent, but there are very few NRPSI-registered interpreters even in the most populated areas. Unlike British Sign Language (BSL) providers that are mainly charities or public-funded,

spoken language providers (84%) in the region were, in 2006 (see Figure 1.1), predominantly commercial organisations, private agencies or self-employed traders.



Rounded to nearest whole figure

Figure 3.1: Spoken Language (SL) Providers in the Region (taken from Perez et al. 2006)

Established around early 1990s to respond to the drastically increasing demand for interpreters, spoken language agencies employed very few full-time staff on their books relative to the large number of freelance interpreters or sessional workers. Whilst these agencies claim to be contactable by mobile phones round the clock but in fact as many as 58% of them are having difficulty to cover 24/7 requests. Regarding the issue of verifying qualifications, the regional public services primarily rely on agencies to conduct the check and have little idea of the existing credentials for interpreters. Furthermore, they also depend on agencies to ensure quality service and monitor delivery performance. In contrast, managers only count on an early sample of a given interpreter’s work, but pay little attention to the fact that “results could be distorted as tests and samples of work were not required on a systematic basis” (Perez et al. 2006, p.59). Regional “continuous professional development” opportunities for interpreters were rather sporadic. Existing trainings are mainly offered by agencies through their internal training. In particular, the lack of training materials and reference resources for all languages create difficulties for stakeholders or skilled interpreters to conduct evaluations or training.

## Research Rationale

### 3.3.1 Problem Statement and Research Aim

Current socio-political changes set the scene for a re-examination of the contemporary role of agencies in organising the work of interpreting professionals. On the one hand, discredited agencies are criticised by practitioners for their unethical practice (see 3.2.2),



substandard provision and monopolised status in the market; on the other hand, they are continuously ‘trusted’ by public sector clients (Perez et al. 2006), rightly or wrongly, to conduct vetting, training and quality control as part of the service procurement contract. Such contradiction renders the stance of agencies and their backstage influence on interpreter work rather controversial.

Contrary to the ongoing heated debate among practitioners is the scarcity of the research that unveils what is really going on inside the agencies. There is inadequate evidence elucidating the organisational impact on practitioners and their expectations of both sides. As will be explored in Chapter Two, in interpreting studies, mainstream work tends to overlook agencies as one of the key stakeholders, whereas research on professionalisation primarily focuses on the patterns of classic professions without sufficient consideration of the professional work operating in organisational contexts.

The overarching aim of this study is therefore to take stock of the range of managerial activities undertaken by agencies (in the form of ‘institutional work’, introduced in 4.5.1) and to understand its impact on the working practices of interpreters and the profession at large. Pivotal to this tripartite symbiosis between the interpreter, the organisation (language services) and the profession is the management that oversees the PSI work system. Accordingly, further investigation is needed to understand the role of agencies in setting industrial standards and the potential consequences of the agencies’ practice in the formation of PSI profession.

### *3.3.2 Research Questions and Objectives*

Drawing on a combined perspective of institutional work and key constructs of the sociology of profession, three theoretically-informed research questions are structured as follows:

Research questions	Research objectives
What types of institutional work do the focal organisational actors perform to resist the mainstream practice of agencies in PSI professionalisation?	1. To investigate the types of institutional work enacted to resist the dominant institutional logic;
	2. To document the constructing of organisational logic as a means to cope with institutional pressures;
	3. To understand actors' motivation and experiences of navigating through multiple logics;
How do front-line realities of service provision (re)construct the model of interpreting professionalism?	4. To trace the practical forces in everyday managerial work that (re)shapes the working practices of interpreters;
	5. To identify the role of agencies in PSI knowledge management and recreation;
	6. To conceptualise organisationally-defined professionalism.
How do interpreters perceive the impact of agencies on their working practice and response to it?	7. To uncover the challenges in the work processes between interpreters and agencies;
	8. To problematise the effect of senior-level professionalisation on frontline work practices;

Table 3.1: Research Questions and Objectives

## Scope of the Research

Certain boundaries have to be drawn due to the purpose of the research.

1. The interpreter participants in the research are limited to professional interpreters working on a sessional basis and have no guaranteed minimum working hours.
2. This research is based in the UK<sup>2</sup> and all the participants are working within or in relation to British PSI domain.
3. The agencies are limited to those who focus on providing PSI service with profitable purpose other than non-profit organisations, governmental bodies, charities or business specialising in other types of interpreting provision (e.g. conference interpreting).

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<sup>2</sup> The specific region and local context is deliberately omitted for anonymity purposes.

4. This study focuses on spoken language provision. Therefore it does not intend to assess the perception of sign language interpreters.

## **Justification of the Research**

### *3.5.1 Industrial Significance*

As a piece of *applied research*, this study has practical significance to those working *in*, partnering *with* and fighting *for* the PSI sector. For practitioners, this study concerns their immediate interests as it opens up the ‘operational workshop’ in which interpreting assignments are pre-processed before being handed over to interpreters. It provides opportunities for interpreters to articulate their perceptions about work process incompatibility and aims to enable them to be better prepared for a more balanced expectation of agencies. For agency managers, it provides insight into the unique role that they occupy in setting industrial standards and in the formation of the PSI profession. The institutional work they undertake has consequences for service provision, social status of interpreters and inter-professional relationships. There is a need for agencies to behave ethically and responsibly so that the structural and ergonomic barriers in actual work practices can be reduced. For community-based services and state-run service providers, this study highlights the tacit nature of interpreting knowledge and the resulting cognitive challenges taking place in the knowledge sharing process. It thus draws their attention to working closely with agencies so that effective job information can be channelled through beforehand. Since there is evidence that public sector staff have unrealistic expectations of agencies and interpreters (Perez et al. 2006), it is crucial to familiarise them with the role of the two parties. After all, a high quality service for the public requires shared responsibilities from all stakeholders.

### *3.5.2 Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*

Societal issues have given rise to a variety of emergent areas that are multi-disciplinary in nature. Yet the saying that “universities have their departments, but society has its problems” seems to indicate a dissatisfaction with the impracticality and limited applications of contemporary academic research. Situated in the current socio-economic situation characterised by the austerity-led contractualism, the heated debate on the damages inflicted by ‘contracting-out’ begs the question of “what would work as an alternative to service delivery?” The result of this study thus attempts to provide some evidence for such an inquiry by exploring the case of an interpreter-run social enterprise. To that end, cross-disciplinary knowledge drawn from the sociology of professions, organisational and institutional studies are deemed indispensable to the understanding of

the multi-faceted challenges in the actual work practices of interpreters. A theoretical framework fleshed out by insights from different fields of knowledge helps to account for the developmental processes of the interpreting profession. It therefore responds to the call for more empirical research into the social and spatial features of the work environments of translators and interpreters (Risku, Dickinson and Pircher 2010) in an effort to recognise the developmental dimensions of translation knowledge. Recommendations based on results and personal insights will be formulated for policymakers to intervene when appropriate.

### *3.5.3 Current Knowledge*

PSI is born within a social setting, embedded in social encounters and develops as a practice profession (Dean and Pollard 2004). The social nature of PSI allows researchers to identify the causal factors in a broader socio-organisational context impact the technical delivery of interpreting. Although perceptions of participants involved in interpreter-mediated interactions have been recently explored (Mesa 2000; Pöchhacker 2000; Napier and Rohan 2007; Napier 2011), agencies as one behind-the-scene protagonist have rarely been touched upon. Issues about work and employment in relation to agencies remain relatively under-researched. This study tries to address this gap by investigating into the institutional function of commercial agencies intersecting with the forging of the profession of PSI. While it is largely inspired by the body of literature on studying professions within their organisational contexts, it is found that the typicality of interpreting occupation has hardly drawn attention from studies outside its discipline. The rise of interpreting agencies and the freelance-based work practices intersect with many interesting aspects of the scholarship on professional service firm, public sector professions and non-standard forms of employment, for example. Current research thus tries to engage with wider academic communities to explore research possibilities and raise the profile of interpreting studies through potentially collaborative working.

## **Overview of Methodology**

In order to address the research questions stated in section 3.3.2, an inductive approach is adopted to analyse the multiple sources of data. Under the interpretivist philosophical paradigm, a case study strategy is employed. Three phases are outlined in the research design, with the first two—purposeful sampling and pilot study—paving the way for the third phase—formal investigation. Purposeful sampling aims to locate, describe and justify a single case strategy. In the pilot study, questionnaire and participant observation

were conducted to develop initial understanding of the fieldwork practice and refine the research questions. In the second stage of data collection, ethnographic methods were used within the office of an interpreting agency followed by semi-structured interviews with interpreters and managers. A detailed description of methodology can be found in Chapter Three.

## **Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured as follows. It starts with an introduction of the research context and rationale, followed by the aim, questions and specific objectives of the research. An outline of the methodology and the significance of this study will also be included in Chapter One. Chapter Two reviews the extant literature that is relevant to the three main themes of the research enquiry: the sociology of professions, the flexible work arrangements and the professionalisation of PSI affected by the emergence of interpreting agencies. Drawing upon the theoretical lens of the first two themes, the research gap in interpreting studies will be identified. Next, an institutional approach to the professional work will be proposed to address the gap, with its emphasis on connecting the micro-actions and everyday strategies of lower-level professionalisation to the field-level institutional changes. Multiple lenses will then be integrated into a theoretical framework to inform and define the structure of this study. In the methodology chapter, the author's philosophical positions will be firstly discussed before the presentation of the case study design. Data collection methods and data analytical approach will be described in relation to the construction of the theoretical framework. It is ended with a section of the author's ethical reflections. Chapter Four and Five present the results and findings incorporating multiple sources of data. The aim of Chapter Six is to discuss the importance of the results and how they answer to the research questions. The final part summarises the main arguments of this study and reflects on the theoretical and empirical implications of the findings. This thesis is concluded with limitations and an agenda for future research.

## Chapter 4 The Sociology of the PSI Profession and Professional Work

### **I**ntroduction

Given the cross-disciplinary perspectives of the study, this Chapter reviews the extant literature in a number of research fields that inform the theoretical framework of the current enquiry. It starts with an introduction of the sociological perspectives of professions, in order to identify the different theoretical underpinnings of the professionalisation of PSI. Next, the thesis proceeds to account for the issues and challenges associated with flexible employment and non-standard work, setting the scene for understanding the peculiarity of PSI as one of the freelance-based occupations. Further on, a taxonomy of PSI definitions is developed in an attempt to identify research gaps in interpreting studies. Built on the reviewed perspectives, a new category is then proposed so as to examine the current changing context of PSI professionalisation in the UK. Finally, an institutional approach is suggested and justified, which finalises the theoretical framework of the thesis that gives primacy to the interplay between contracted language services and the evolving landscape of the PSI profession.

### *Profession and Professionalisation*

According to Johnson (1972), the sociology of professions founded its work on two fundamental inquiries. One line of inquiry, also known as the ‘functional approach’ (Parson 1954), seeks to account for the special role that professions play in the social, economic and political aspects of an industrialised society. The other inquiry is to examine whether professions come as a unique result of the labour division in the capitalist system. The latter endeavour gradually evolves to the search for ‘marked attributes’ that distinguish professional from other work groups, hence the birth of the ‘trait approach’ (Hall 1994; Macdonald 1995).

#### *4.1.1 Trait Approach*

The central aim of the ‘trait approach’ is to identify a set of professional ‘characteristics’. It uses the constituent elements of an ‘ideal-type’ profession (Abbott 1988) as benchmarks to assess the features of a given occupational group. A classic set of these traits summarised by Greenwood (1957) includes:

1. A basis of systematic theory

2. Community approval and society sanction
3. Authority recognised by clients
4. An ethical code to prevent the abuse of power
5. A professional culture supported by professional associations.

The list is further expanded by Millerson (1964, p.5) to include 23 elements of traits such as “tested competence”, “skill based on theoretical knowledge”, “intellectual training and education” and “altruistic service”. Rather than being measured singularly, these attributes form a continuum from defining new born occupations with few status features to full-flown ones with the supremacy to exert self-regulation (Wilensky 1964). However, exponents of this approach presuppose that there exists such a perfect profession characterised by all desirable strengths, and therefore it is short of empirical evidence and rigorous theoretical reasoning (Abbott 1988). Furthermore, little attempt has been made to analyse the relationship between the traits, which “too easily falls into the error of accepting the professionals' own definitions of themselves” (Johnson 1972, p.25). Without unveiling the power struggles that active actors are experiencing all the time, professionalisation appears to be taking place as a matter of course.

#### *4.1.2 Functional Approach*

As mentioned in 2.1, the functional approach (Parson 1951; Goode 1969) attends to the intersection between the professions and society. Professionals are perceived to play an indispensable role in the operation of the social system. Since the society comprises different structures working together in an orderly manner, professions must maintain this equilibrium rather than creating conflicts by meeting the structural requirements (Parson 1951). Therefore, in order to prevent their knowledge from being abused and ensure the professional practice is effective, a set of norms and values conducive to social stability needs to be set up and agreed upon. In the words of Parson (1968, p.53): “a full-fledged profession must have some institutional means of making sure that such competence will be put to socially responsible uses.” These include, among others, the service provision by trained practitioners, affective neutrality, institutional altruism and unwavering integrity.

Until the early twentieth century, professionals still regard the social trustee professionalism (Brint 1994) as an important part of their professional practice. It gives them the moral strength to shoulder more social responsibilities and adhere to nonmarket ideals rather than just trading their expertise for a profit. As pointed out by Brint, such

an ideal is largely absent in present-day professional work organised mainly in corporations. While the functional approach is more theoretically informed than the trait approach, it cannot grasp the dynamics of the professionals' agency and expert status (Saks 2012). Similar to the trait approach, they both incorporate the professional ideal and assume that interests of the professions are coincidentally in line with the needs of the social system in which they are embedded. Professionalisation in this perspective becomes "a process which in one aspect is almost synonymous with that of rationalization"(ibid. p.545). This implies that such a process is ahistorical and conflict-free, and that professionals are groups of high-minded, disinterested individuals dedicating to fulfilling the required functions of society (Johnson 1972).

#### *4.1.3 Power Approach and Professionalisation*

The apparent flaws in trait models and functional orthodoxy invite criticism in the 1970s and gives rise to another line of reasoning—the 'power approach' (Hughes 1958; Johnson 1972; Larson 1977; Macdonald 1995). It centres on the power dynamics in the journey of professionalisation, including changes in the relationship between producers and consumers (Johnson 1972), organised autonomy against external forces and interference (Freidson 2006), strategic actions of claiming knowledge monopoly and social closure (Larson 1977; Witz 1992).

Scholars in this perspective generally follow either a Marxist paradigm or the neo-Weberian paradigm (Macdonald 1995). The former focuses on the position of middle classes in the social relations of production. Here the role of professionals is tremendously debatable in that they could either be manipulated by the state to fulfil the functions of capitalism or treated as proletariats gradually losing their skills and power (Braverman 1974). Followers of neo-Weberian paradigm argue that capitalist market structure is based on the outcome of the collective actions of group members, with their aim to achieve the closed monopoly and the "closure of social and economic opportunities to outsiders" (Weber, cited in Macdonald 1995, p.28).

It is the power approach that brings the concept of 'professionalisation' to the fore. In line with the objectives of this study, a few theoretical perspectives below are deemed revealingly relevant. Firstly, professionalisation is seen as a strategy for an occupational group to further their economic and political interest by forming relationship with different systems of social stratification (ibid.). According to Larson (1977, p.xvii), it is defined as "an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources—specialised knowledge



and skills—into another—social and economic rewards. To maintain scarcity implies a tendency to monopoly: monopoly of expertise in the market, monopoly of status in a system of stratification”. As such, social mobility is the driving force behind such processes, which are by nature fraught with tensions and conflicts of interest (Macdonald 1995). Far from pursuing the ‘service ideal’, professions are ‘conspiracies against the laity’. It follows that whether professionals are after financial reward or shun away from social accountability, their agenda is driven by self-interest.

Secondly, a crucial element inherent to professionalisation is the control of a codified body of knowledge. In Johnson’s (1972) point of view, this is related to the ‘mystification’ endeavour aiming to create a social distance between the professionals and their clients. The greater dependence that the public has on professionals’ esoteric, formalised expertise, the higher status the professionals can aspire to achieve. Without a delineable ownership of knowledge and systematised training of practitioners in its application, the occupational jurisdiction and status are unlikely to be recognised by the lay public (Abbott 1988). The inaccessibility of professional knowledge to the uninitiated is also recognised by Freidson (2001) as a defining feature of the ideal-typical professionalism, or the *third logic* of organising work besides the free market logic and the bureaucratic logic. While the modern state typically exemplifies the formal bureaucratic logic, the market logic is characterised by consumers’ absolute power in deciding the price and the value of the professional service provided.

Thirdly, occupations with their ‘marketability’ of specialisation alone cannot succeed in securing the conditions of their “professional project” (Larson 1977, p.6). They become professions because their claims are acknowledged by key sponsors in the field, including not only their clients and the state who approve the quality of their work, but also their rival occupational groups (Abbott 1988). In this connection, professionalisation advances when knowledge workers form coalitions with the powerful and legitimise resources as means to make jurisdictional claims. Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist (1990) echo this argument by proposing the well-known actor-based framework. Their work specifies four active players involved in the professional network, namely, the professional, the state, the service users and the universities. Each party has heterogeneous interest and goals. For example, professionals’ attempt to control the entry cannot be realised without them cooperating with other stakeholders in the field.

Finally, professionalisation takes place at the national level as well as at the local,

individual level. McCann et al. (2013) in their study of the emergency ambulance workers identify that there are two levels of professionalisation carried out by different actors. The senior level professionalisation is often triggered by external demands of coercive isomorphism and manifested in the search of exclusive knowledge, official licensure, legalistic frameworks and inter-professional recognition. Lower level professionalisation, on the other hand, seeks to gain control over the local delivery of work and strives for decent working conditions and considerable social status. It often involves actors with limited power options and resources in their everyday attempts to define the disputed boundaries.

#### *4.1.4 The Professional Project*

In reviewing Larson's work, Macdonald (1995) enriches the concept of the 'professional project' by not only looking at profession's actions and avowals, but also examining the "ways in which professional behaviour is enacted and displayed to various appropriate publics by the professional body...and by the constituent firms and individuals" (Macdonald 1995, p.14).

Specifically, Macdonald (1995) identifies four additional constructs have been appended to the original framework. In order to achieve a monopoly or at least licensure, an occupation must be able to talk and bond with the state to gain its regulative bargain. Next, a profession has to compete with its peers in the same market in order to successfully defend or expand its jurisdiction of its professional activities (Abbott 1988). Such a territory has to be well protected against the encroachment of its predatory rivals. A profession is also a relational concept. It is subsequently understood, monitored and (de)valued by social audience, who constantly engage in defining a profession. The ultimate goal of a professional project is to achieve social closure. Following Larson (1977), Macdonald diagrammatically maps out the dynamic process of the professional project pursued by different occupational groups in order to achieve their respective social closure (Figure 4.1).

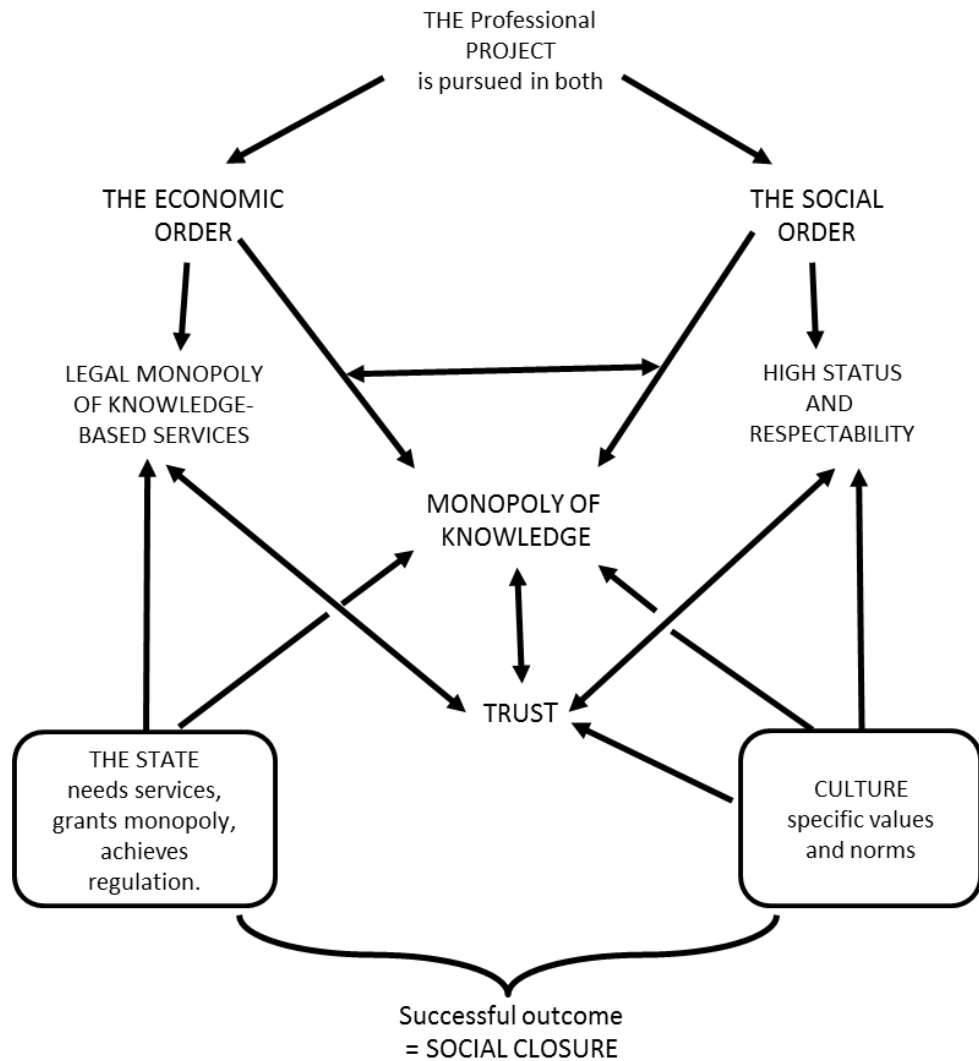


Figure 4.1: A Working Theory of the Professions: A Conceptual Outline (Macdonald 1995:32)

So far, major theoretical lenses and debates in the sociology of professions have been reviewed. It is natural to query how each of these approaches has been received in the studies of PSI professionalisation and broadly informs the theoretical framework of this study. Before proceeding to that, it is necessary to examine the extant literature pertaining to the characteristics of the flexible employment. This will provide insight into the occupational structure of PSI as well as the advantages and disadvantages of doing professional work on a contingent basis.

## **Flexible Work and Freelancing Expertise**

### *4.2.1 Background*

Influenced by the rapid development of technology and the robust growth of knowledge-intensive sectors, the past decades have witnessed dramatic changes in labour relations and the organisation of work. Tenured jobs offered in the industrial-manufacture sectors are incrementally giving way to fixed-term work based on new contractual relationships

in service-centred industries (Schoemaker 2003). Digitalisation not only diversifies the single permanent offices into multiple workplaces but also transforms the working habits of many individuals. For example, employees can now work from home and they attend meetings without being physically in the conference room via various digital software or apps. Organisations have promptly responded to this trend and adapted themselves into network organisations (Castells 2000) or virtual work environments (Fiol and O'Connor 2005).

Opposite to the traditional form of work that offers full-time status, well-defined job responsibilities and a clear career path (Castells 2000), the type of employment sharing little of those features is often conceptualised as flexible work (Schoemaker 2003), non-standard employment relations (Kunda et al. 2002), or contingent temporary work (Carey 2011). This type of work features fewer routine working hours and more fragmented work structures. Location wise, workers have more chances to work on the move, work from home or work with clients at the designated venues (Osnowitz 2010). Performance wise, they are increasingly placed in temporary teams and evaluated heavily on short-term performance rather than long-term commitment (Schoemaker 2003). The feeling about losing their grip on employers have been intensified by the 'zero-hour' contract arrangements, creating the experiences of becoming "adrift at work" (ibid. p.192).

#### *4.2.2 The Self-Employed Freelancers*

One particular category of the workforce under this umbrella is commonly known as freelance workers/freelancers, though the definition of the term is still subject to academic debates. Broadly, they are workers that are not hired by a single company but self-employed with assignment-specific contracts being provided by one or more companies (Kitching and Smallbone 2012). In the UK, it is customarily applied by service providers and end-users of labour service industries involving IT, engineering, management consulting and translation (IPSE 2016). Researchers, on the other hand, tend to specifically describe freelancers as independent practitioners working in media and creative industries (e.g. Storey, Salaman and Platman 2005) or workers who have multiple employers juxtaposed to staffed employees. As argued by Kitching and Smallbone (2012), the lack of clarity of what constitutes freelance work renders the group hardly distinguishable from 'independent contractors' (Kalleberg 2000) and "portfolio workers" (Handy 1994). Such ambiguity creates barriers in understanding freelancers' work patterns and social identity, as well as their job responsibilities to the employment organisations.

Another relevant concept that is often used interchangeably with ‘freelance’ is ‘self-employment’. As of March 2016, self-employed workers accounted for 17.15% of 4.69 million people employed in the UK (Labour Market Statistics 2016). As a form of freelance-based work<sup>3</sup> in the UK, self-employment generates income directly from providing services to clients without being an employee of an entity. Interpreters in this study belong to this category, since they are not typically legally employed by a third party (e.g. a large contractor company) or client organisations, but work as solo practitioners or independent contractors in the form of ‘one-person-operation’. Therefore, they are distinguished from temporary agency workers who are formally employed by staffing agencies on an explicitly short-term basis, though research on flexible contractors might group them differently (e.g. Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow 2006). Pym et al. (2013) estimate that the translation market in Europe has 74% freelancers, and those work on a part-time basis account for 60% of the sectoral workforce.

#### *4.2.3 The Pros and Cons of Freelance Work*

Non-conventional forms of employment outperform classic work in terms of self-control over time, the flexibility of working methods and direct contracts with multiple clients. Considerable studies suggest that the higher job satisfaction enjoyed by freelance workers stem from their greater autonomy to pursue what they are genuinely interested in (e.g. Benz and Frey 2008; Tuttle and Garr 2009). The self-employed have the opportunities to learn new things, try out creative ideas and make decisions outside any sort of subordination. The time/spatial autonomy (Pisljar, van der Lippe and den Dulk 2011) offers the freedom to adjust work hours and location according to one’s preference and circumstances. This creates higher degree of “procedure utility” (Frey, Benz and Stutzer 2004)—the noninstrumental pleasures and displeasures of processes, which is conducive to human well-being. This has been echoed by Benz and Frey (2008) that, compared to normal employees in bigger companies, the self-employed derive more satisfaction from work since they value more of the processes and feel less subject to corporate hierarchy. A voluntary move into the contingent work market is in line with what Kunda and his

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<sup>3</sup> Freelance work can be carried out in an array of legal forms: self-employed sole practitioner, partners in unincorporated businesses, and as PAYE umbrella company employees, etc. However, an array of factors can complicate the distinction, including the specific structure of the organisation, contract duration, part time or full-time basis, and (ir)regular hours of work, etc. More information can be found at:

<https://www.ipse.co.uk/sites/default/files/documents/guides/Guide-to-Freelancing-v1.pdf>

colleagues (2002) term the 'free agent perspective'. It sheds light on the financial and spiritual benefits that workers can gain from 'portfolio careers'. However, the degree of autonomy may differ depending on the occupational group and individual motivation. Among the flexible workforce, Purcell et al. (2004) identify that one end of the spectrum is occupied by the unskilled, low-wage workers in unregulated occupations, while the other end consists of highly skilful, independent professionals such as doctors and lawyers. In management literature, the former is also known as 'commoditised employment' that is overrepresented by low status job and poor work environment, in contrast with the 'privileged' latter which is characterised by knowledge-intensive services and greater discretion in work practices (Fraser and Gold 2001; Kirkpatrick and Hoque 2006).

To the extent of entry decisions, most freelance work is motivated by seeking higher economic return and entrepreneurial opportunities, aided often by established network of social and economic capital (Kelley, Bosma and Amoros 2011). However, some only find themselves forced into self-employment due to the absence of alternative means (Tuttle and Garr 2009). The latter group is often associated with low-skilled workers stranded in an unfavourable state where appropriate paid employment is unavailable. This gives rise to a potential division of labour based on skill level and organisational entry requirement. Of note, Marks and Scholarios' (2007) study of software high-tech workers indicates a causal link between employees' qualifications and their organisational identity. High-skilled workers who hold university degrees, regardless of employment contract, show lower levels of identification with the employing company. In contrast, members who do not have an IT-based qualification and primarily receive their training on the job tend to have stronger organisational identity. This is interesting because interpreters in reality hold different levels of qualification and work with various language services intermediaries. Qualified interpreters can be trained through formal educational institutions or simply by way of self-study towards certifications. Yet uncertainty remains as to how well this observation can account for the freelance-based PSI workforce.

One of the deterring factors for professionals to participate in freelancing is the difficulty in skill development. It is common sense that freelancers are responsible for their own continuous professional development. Few firms are likely to invest heavily in freelancers in exchange for their little loyalty, short-term commitment and high interorganisational mobility (Gunz, Evans and Jalland 2000). Moreover, according to Barley and Kunda (2004), providing training can easily confuse a company's legal status

as the contractors' client rather than their employer. Independent contractors therefore have to spend a large amount of their own time keeping their expertise updated. This is a tough choice not only because skill acquisition requires one's financial and intellectual input, but also because when faced with a sea of information and fast changing technologies, what is worth to be learned and surely to be returned become rather unpredictable (ibid.). One has to be sufficiently informed, socially versatile and commercially shrewd in order to secure a place in the rough-and-tumble market. As such, the flexible workforce are likely to engage in what Barley and Kunda term "itinerant professionalism" (2006, p.52)—a mode of practice distinguished from organisational employment because of one's ability to maintain expertise, to negotiate business opportunities and to leverage social network. Notably, itinerant experts have undisguised aversion to agencies. They do not believe these intermediaries tally with the traditional image of professionalism, and loathe placing themselves under the control of non-professionals who literally thrive on making a substantial profit out of their services. Therefore, "being savvy in one's dealings with agents" becomes part of their overall capabilities and "a form of expertise" (ibid. p.52).

#### 4.2.4 Precarious Employment and Occupational Risks

Recent research has also paid attention to the risky side of the flexible work arrangements. Owing to the personal responsibility for the sustainability of their business, self-employed workers often end up being more involved and stressed in their work, blurring life and work boundaries and disrupting activities in other life domains (Annink and Dulk 2012). Furthermore, the perceived autonomy is often achieved at the cost of prolonged and unfixed work hours, continued sense of job insecurity and limited access to employer-provided training and support (Parasuraman and Simmers 2001). A generic term often used to describe these attributes related to work conditions is *precarious employment*. According to Rodgers (1989, p.3), typical precarious jobs are characterised by short time and high risk of termination, minimal control over working conditions and pay, lack of protection insecurity and socio-economic vulnerability and an ambiguous legal status. Focusing on factors resulting in labour insecurity, Standing (1997) adds two salient characteristics of precariousness—representation insecurity that emphasises the choice of the workers when faced with unfair treatment, and skill reproduction insecurity that relates to opportunities to acquire knowledge and get trained.

Precarious employment is the main cause for high occupational health and safety risks (Quinlan, Mahew and Bohle 2001; Quinlan and Bohle 2004). Based on a review of the

published studies on nonstandard employment in small and outsourcing business from roughly 1984 to 2000, Quinlan and other colleagues (2001) summarise three reasons to account for such correlations. The first reason is that workers are under increasing economic pressure to earn a decent income. This is worsened by the prevalent contract systems that encourage underbidding on work in less-regulated labour markets. Relevant industries do not have adequate entry standards in place, allowing workers without proper qualifications and safety knowledge to flood in and take jobs. Secondly, the outsourcing arrangements complicate the work processes and prevent workers from coordinating decisions and anticipating hazards. The third reason is the lack of effective occupational health and safety procedures for contingent work. In particular, self-employed subcontractors largely fall outside the general regulatory protections. In a more recent study specifically exploring the work conditions of homecare agency workers (Quinlan, Bohle and Rawlings 2015), the major occupational risks encountered by them include the absence of risk assessments of workplace, unfavourable safety procedures, few training opportunities and a range of competing work demands.

The literature on the features of non-standard employment and freelancing expertise has set the scene for understanding the work practices and career structure for interpreters as an freelance-based occupational group. While translator colleagues seem to have benefited a great deal from being portfolio practitioners (Fraser and Gold 2001) who enjoyed higher levels of autonomy and control over the work than other comparable self-employed groups, it is not sure to what extent their circumstances are relevant to interpreters working in the public sectors. As indicated in the aforementioned studies, the sophistication of skills and prestige of knowledge in part divide the flexible workforce into 'free agents' at one end, and precarious, flexibilised labour at the other end. It remains unknown, however, how this superior/inferior-status dichotomy is manifested in the PSI profession and whether interpreters are threatened by the precarious employment.

Likewise, although IT contractors roundly prefer to distance themselves from intermediary organisations, other less independent professions might engage with these organisations in an utterly different manner. This raises the question of the relationship between agencies and PSI practitioners, since the routes and motivations of professionalising is often occupation-specific. To grasp the professionalisation of an emerging profession thus requires a closer examination of how professional work is regulated in its respective institutional environment, since both working conditions and practices are key indicators of the professionalisation outcome. The reviewed literature



also reveals the importance to note that professionalisation is equally a local practice, situated in the sites of day-to-day service provision mediated by different actors in the field. The following section will begin to address the tripartite symbiosis between the interpreter, the organisation (agencies) and the profession in the context of professional work.

## **Defining PSI as Professional Work**

The professional work of PSI might be construed literally as interpreting in public service sectors at first sight. However, to account for the complexity of the antecedents, processes and significance of this type of work and its relevant socio-technical system, a literal interpretation like that is deemed inadequate. Due to its intra-social characteristics, there is not a definitive description of PSI across the world. The term might be referred to as ‘community interpreting’, ‘cultural interpreting’, ‘*ad hoc* interpreting’ or ‘dialogue interpreting’, to name just a few (Gentile et al. 1996; Ozolins 2014). This section reviews various attempts to define and describe PSI as professional work with the aim of illustrating the extant theoretical perspectives. It does not intend to be exhaustive but to develop a taxonomy of current debates based on its definition so that research gaps can be identified.

### *4.3.1 Public Service Provider's View*

Historically, PSI emerged in the 1960s and expanded its reach around the 1980s in reply to the growing need of multilingual communications in public sector institutions (Pöchhacker 2004). The service is provided mainly to facilitate immigrants, refugees, patients, witness and other citizens requiring language assistance to access government services at various levels. As Pöchhacker (1999, p.127) defines, public service interpreters work in the “institutional settings of a given society in which public service providers and individual clients do not speak the same language....[they] facilitate communication within a social entity that includes culturally different sub-groups”. Such a definition specifies the authoritative institutions as both interpreters’ client and common workplaces. It also implies that the development of PSI is very much dependent on the political attention to language policies and the democratic structure of a particular country (Ozolins 2000). In the report investigating PSI in five sectors in Norway, Myran and Lunder (2012) quote the official definition of PSI activities by public sector employees:

Public sector interpreting enables professionals to guide, inform and ‘hear’ the parties in the case at hand, despite language barriers. (Skaaden 2001, p.171)

As the authors point out, “the whole of government approach” is the guiding principle in the field and service providers take a larger share of responsibility for ensuring effective communications (ibid. p.114). As a result, although interpreters are appointed because the service needs to be provided to limited proficiency speakers, they act as part of the state officialdom and assist the personnel in doing *their* job. This more or less confirms the social function of PSI in the wider institutional framework and highlights the antecedents of the interpreter-mediated encounter. The nomenclature itself is an institutional decision (Corsellis 2008) because its alternative term ‘community interpreting’ “automatically implies an element of advocacy” for minority-speaking groups in the country of residence (Erasmus 1999, p.50).

Ozolins (2014) also clarifies the ethical implications of the institution-driven approach to language services provision. He argues that the institutional policies such as equal access and due process do not originally concern the nature of interpreting tasks. This means that interpreters are constituents of the public policy and their status are decided by the twin objectives of the interpreting profession and the institutional imperatives. Subsequently, role conflicts can occur when an interpreter is considered as ‘officer of the court’ (Rosado 2012), as a “function of the legal system prevailing in the country in question” (Mikkelsen 2000, p.22), as a co-interviewer in medical consultations (Suurmond, Woudstra and Essink-Bot 2016) or as an institutional advocate (Angelelli 2004).

#### *4.3.2 Technical View*

Another approach to defining PSI activity centres on its technical difference from conference interpreting. PSI sometimes is taken for granted that it is ‘little more than a chat in two languages’, whereas conference interpreting requires years of professional training (Corsellis 2008). For that PSI tends to be associated with “lay interpreting” or “natural interpreting” (Pöchhacker 2004, p.22), meaning that all bilinguals have at least some translational ability can do the job (ibid). As such, professional interpreters are reduced to ‘back-ups’ for ordinary bilinguals and interpreting is done by untrained interpreters in everyday circumstances. While such a view is still common in the regions where PSI remains less professionalised, it overlooks the specialised skills and experiences required of the interpreters. Unlike conference interpreters who have work partner(s), prepare for the speech script beforehand and mostly only translate into their native language, public service interpreters usually work alone and interpret in both language directions. In court interpreting for example, interpreters often have limited

access to case information related to the context, topic and length of the proceedings (Hale 2011). They need to cope with the power imbalances between the participants (Berk-Seligson 1990), the inexplicit and ambiguous utterances (Lee 2007) as well as the nuances and subtlety in dialogic turns of questions and answers (Pöchhacker and Shlesinger 2008). On top of that, interpreters are faced with the paralinguistic challenges including the unfamiliarity with the courtroom layout, the unpleasant acoustic environment and overlapping talks (Hale 2007). As argued by Hale (*ibid.* p.30).

The need for the services of the interpreter is real, as they would simply not be able to communicate without interpreters...This requires a higher level of precision and accuracy than conference interpreting.

PSI is possibly conducted in all modes—simultaneous/chuchotage, consecutive and sight translation (potentially occasional summarisation). While using consecutive mode can better communication effect, simultaneous mode is preferred typically when speakers are emotionally unstable or under medical conditions, and in situations where time is constrained (Mikkelson and Jourdenais 2015). While the delivery of the meaning is arguably more important than the manner in conference interpreting, in PSI both elements are equally essential. Martí (2006) proposes a competency model for community interpreting, which includes communicative and textual competence, cultural and intercultural competence, subject area competence, professional and instrumental competence. The sensitivity and complexity of the PSI settings also require practitioners to have moral integrity and reliability (Hale 2007). Other authors emphasise the importance of interpreting techniques, memory skills and professional ethics, and especially one's ability to understand the communicative multimodality and decipher culture-specific non-verbal cues (Mason 1999; Davitti and Pasquandrea 2013).

### *4.3.3 End-User's View*

As important as the technical dimension of PSI, the end-user centred perspective draws attention to the indispensable role of interpreters for the social disadvantaged or “those who want to get a diagnosis, get better, get educated, get asylum, get acquitted” (Corsellis 2008, p.vii). Interpreters in this perspective carry even more risk and more responsibility (Garber 2000). As a critical link between two interlocutors, their work is crucial for the lives of people who would be otherwise unable to communicate. Understanding the importance of PSI from this viewpoint often stresses the right of the limited proficiency users to access equal and fair procedures (e.g. Corsellis 2008, p.4) due to their lack of

awareness of the institutional culture and procedures in the receiving society. Subsequently, ‘cultural interpreters’ attend to the needs of the end-users who might be, implicitly or explicitly, discriminated by some public institutions through making cultural clarification during the interaction (Ozolins 2014). Because of the presence of power asymmetries, interpreters can be perceived as a buffer, or in Rudvin’s (2005, p.177) term, a “positive power-broker with the potential to smooth out damaging power asymmetries between the primary parties that hinder effective communication”.

Ironically, it is the intimacy-with-the-public nature of PSI that distances itself from high-status professions. PSI work often takes place in the private sphere of the clients and interpreters can be highly emotionally charged. As Corsellis (2008, p.viii) argues, “the social embeddedness of PSI practice, together with the status of its often disadvantaged client, has contributed to its lack of prestige”. While Robert (1997) attributes the lower status to the servient nature of PSI, Putignano (2002, p.215) records that PSI is “the least prestigious and most misunderstood branch of the interpreting profession”. The focus on end-users can also be used to account for the ethical dilemma that interpreters are faced with. Virtually all public service interpreters of minority languages share more or less the background of immigrants themselves. The perceived identification with minority language speakers may be seen as a source of disruption to neutrality, as interpreters (inadvertently or not) integrate practices preferred by service users. The ‘natural’ connection with the community thus foregrounds the hybrid role of interpreters and their controversial status (Colley and Guéry 2015).

#### *4.3.4 All-Stakeholder's View*

As mentioned in 2.4.1, PSI can be classified as a type of liaison interpreting based on language directionality (Gentile et al. 1996; Pöchhacker 2004). However, this term implies an escorting or accompanying role of interpreters when they are with interlocutors (Harris 1983, cited from Roberts 1997). It is the typical notion of ‘dialogue interpreting’ brings the interactive elements and the visibility of interpreters to the fore (Tipton and Furmanek 2016). From an all-stakeholder’s point of view, interpreter is no longer a subordinating player but an important participant and stakeholder in the communicative events.

Scholarship on both spoken language interpreting (e.g. Berk-Seligson 1990; Wadensjö 1998; Davidson 2000; Angelelli 2004; Hsieh 2007) and signed language interpreting (e.g. Tate and Turner 1997; Metzger 1999; Roy 1999; Cokley 2000; Leneham and Napier 2003)

have paved the way for a more collaborative model of interpreting. Typically, interpreters coordinate the interaction process in which meaning is negotiated and reconstructed (Mason 2000). However, neutrality is still a preferred standard in legal or asylum-seeking settings due to the often conflicting expectations of the interviewing officers and users (Fowler 1997; Pöllabauer 2004), the norms of the institutional system (Mikkelsen 2000) and the occasions where a heightened power imbalances require ethics of anonymity to be followed (Moeketsi and Wallmach 2005). A key counterview to the ‘conduit model’ of interpreters is that the aim of the interpreter-mediated interaction is to draw all stakeholders into an “active appreciation of what interpreter is doing”, so that consumers will share the understanding of interpreting process and thus react “knowingly” and not “naively” (Turner 2007, p.187). It follows that interpreting is a collaborative event in which participants work with each other to co-create best practices for the public well-being. This also draws attention to the interdependent nature of interpreters and interlocutors in the sense-making process and highlights the outcome of empowering service end-users (ibid).

#### 4.3.5 Justification for Interpreting Service Provider's View

While the ‘social turn’ (Wadensjö 1998; Pöchhacker 2004; Pöchhacker 2006) in interpreting studies is highly represented by the PSI sector due to its natural bonding with social institutions and welfare policies, relatively little research has been conducted to document interpreters’ ‘communities of place’—where they work and how they form their profession, and their ‘communities of interest’— who are their stakeholders and what they care about, want and need. Issues around access to the profession and employment status are among the sociological topics of interpreting, but this area remains under-researched. As Pöchhacker (2004, p.173) explains, this is due to “few systematic data are available outside the realm of professional associations”, which is deemed “particularly acute for community-based interpreting” characterised by “a lack of recognition and a low degree of organization”.

PSI is born within social settings and embedded in social processes. The correlate of that underpins the notion of *practice* profession proposed by Dean and Pollard (2004), as opposed to a technical profession. The authors argue that the multiple contextual components of an interpreting task cannot be encapsulated in the traditional constructs of bilingualism and inter-cultural ability. This draws attention to the need to examine the quality of the relationship between interpreters and broader social agents who, although stay invisible in the triadic interaction, in many ways exert their impact on the interpreter

performance and work practices. Recognising the social nature of PSI allows researchers to identify the causal factors in a broader socio-organisational context in which the interpreted interactions situate. Rather than following the “social turn”, this thesis argues that PSI studies should start with the social world (following Dean 2015) and attends to what interpreters perhaps concern most—the everyday organisation of the interpreting work. Turner (2013) illustrates a multiple layers of perspectives to study interpreting (Figure 2.2). Apart from “in the very moment” of interpreting, the whole spectrum of “besides/around moments” of interpreting is yet to be explored.

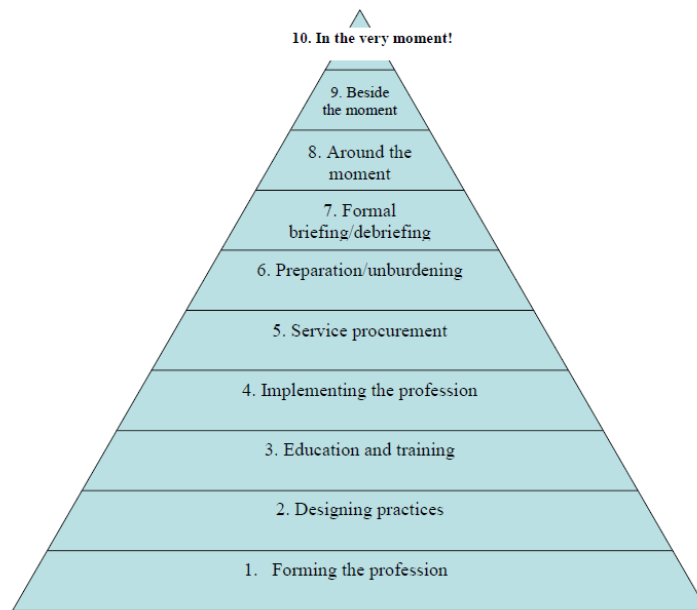


Figure 4.2: Momentous Occasions. Turner (2013)

Figure 2.2 presents the tiered institutional work which lays the foundation for the actual interpreting practice. At the bottom of the pyramid rest the basic building blocks of the profession, ranging from formation work, designing practices, to training and education (“1-3”). In the middle sits the implementation and service procurement, linking up to the preparation of interpreting assignments and the briefing stage (“4-7”). These stages often have direct impact on the capstone of the structure—interpreter performance (“8-10”). Mapping this holistic view to the reviewed literature in previous sections suggests that one of the stakeholders—interpreting agencies—is largely left out from the picture. In reality, they are involved in a broad range of categories as presented in the above spectrum, including “Educating and training”, “Implementing the profession”, “Service procurement” and all the way to the “very moment” of interpreted interactions (and potentially more). Studies that have approached PSI from an interpreting service provider’s view remain rather limited (a few exceptions will be reviewed in 2.4.3). Although scholars realise in order to achieve improvements, all participants involved in

interpreted events should take shared responsibility for quality (Ozolins and Hale 2009), and despite the fact that some unethical agencies have triggered tremendous controversy among practitioners (discussed in 3.2.2), the constitutive part that agencies play in the professionalisation of PSI has yet to be seriously included in the academic debates.

This study attempts to fill this gap by examining PSI from a service provision perspective. It argues that PSI can be defined as a professional service procured by government and delivered by interpreting agencies to facilitate public sector service and meet the needs of consumers. Fundamental to this attempt is the acknowledgement of language service agencies as an integral part of the communities of places and communities of interests of public service interpreters. It thus tries to foreground the work processes between interpreters and agencies informed by the broader research on the interplay between professions, organisations and institutions. Built on this line of enquiry and further to the theoretical orientation discussed earlier on, the section below is dedicated to firstly take stock of the existing studies on PSI professionalisation issues. Next, recent advances on professional work in organisational context will be reviewed, followed by a focused discussion on agencies-interpreter relationship that have been so far inadequately addressed in the interpreting literature.

## **|The Character of the PSI Profession**

### *4.4.1 The Three Sociological Approaches as Applied in PSI*

Inspired by the influential ‘trait approach’ (discussed in 2.1.1), earlier claims of interpreting scholars tend to present a generic analysis of the professional issues and special attributes that distinguish PSI from neighbouring activities, such as translating and interpreting at conferences, in businesses or in other settings. For example, contributors to the first Critical Link Conference devote a whole volume to presenting a global picture of the initial efforts in professionalising community interpreting (Carr et al. 1997). In this volume, issues of standards, evaluation methods, accreditation procedures and training are measured against the constituent elements of an established profession. Efforts have been made to subdivide the field by accentuating the untransferability of codes of practice from conference interpreting as a relatively mature profession to PSI as an emergent profession (e.g. Angelelli 2006; Hale 2007). Ozolins (2000) maps out four stages of professionalisation of PSI provision across the world, namely non-comprehensiveness, *ad hoc* services, generic language and comprehensiveness.

With regards to the credentials and standards that set the entry requirements of the

profession, there appears to be a lack of uniformity and clarity. Apart from the main professional associations and qualifications mentioned in 1.2.1, the recently promulgated International Standard ISO 13611:2014—Guidelines for community interpreting (ISO 2014) marks a great leap forward for the profession. It establishes necessary criteria to ensure quality services provided to various stakeholders and introduces guidance to language service providers. However, it is critiqued to be another superficial document that does not specify concrete measures and poor practice (Remael and Carroll 2015). Another supranational endeavour lately is the set-up of the European Network of Public Service Interpreting and Translation (ENPSIT) in an attempt to remove the chaos and raise the standard in PSI. Built on a multi-stakeholder membership system, this non-profit organisation aims to consolidate and professionalise PSI at the EU level. While these senior-level efforts unquestionably reassert the importance of quality assurance and a sense of shared responsibility, there is uncertainty regarding whether they are consistent and effective. As argued by Hlavac (2013), standards that serve to cohere through functional connections should be distinguished from those dedicated to enhancing ‘demonstrated performance’ in a narrow sense. For example, in an attempt to validate the professional standards and codes in health interpreting, Angelelli (2006) identifies the difficulties encountered by interpreters when they try to balance the defined standard with the reality of the working environment. Her research also reflects the conflicts of interpreters’ role boundaries in the day-to-day practice.

The functional approach to professionalisation can be argued to have informed studies centring on the specialised knowledge and service ethics of interpreting profession. The complexity and the multifaceted challenges involved in cross-cultural communication often require interpreters to have social skills (Pöchhacker 2000), cultural competence (Hale 2007), all-rounded expertise (Gentile et al. 1996), and to be able to adapt to the application of new technologies and virtual tools (e.g. Kelly 2008, Ozolins 2011). A common theme underpinning the extant competency models of community interpreting (e.g. Martí 2006, Refki et al. 2013) is that interpreters cannot develop full-blown competencies without being reflective of their practice and committed to continuous professional developments (Tipton and Furmanek 2016).

A few studies also draw attention to the role of PSI in sustaining societal stability and supporting the functioning of the social system. Tipton (2012) critiques the media misrepresentation of the purposes of language services and contends that PSI enables the new entrants to integrate into the society through interacting with the institutional system.



This moral and ethical dimension of PSI underpins the role of some health interpreters as ‘enablers’ who promote integration and act as role models for new immigrants (Bischoff, Kurth and Henley 2012). The correlate of the emphasis on the interests of service users is the ‘institutionalised altruism’ expected of practitioners. This is the core value of PSI work that justifies their claim to a recognised professional status (Turner and Harrington 2000). After all, despite the empirically-examined argument that PSI (more broadly translation and interpreting) is a profession held in low esteem and offering substandard working conditions, practitioners still have expressed a positive attitude towards being part of it because of the importance and meaningfulness of the work itself (Norström, Fioretos and Gustafsson 2012; Dam and Zethsen 2016).

Tseng (1992) is among the few pioneers who studies the professionalisation of conference interpreting using the ‘power approach’ (Figure 2.3). He examines the organised autonomy exercised by conference interpreters in preventing external interference. The professional project that interpreters undertake enables them to claim the control of knowledge with the ultimate aim of closing off the occupational jurisdiction. His work is later reinforced by Mikkelson (1996) to highlight the vicious circle in PSI where:

Practitioners receive little recognition and low pay, and therefore have no incentive to obtain specialized training; consequently, training programs are rare and not well-funded; the low prestige and limited earning potential makes community interpreting unattractive as a career option for talented, well-educated individuals with bilingual skills. (Para 5.3)

The power approach further convinces Kent (2007) that professionalisation is a process of institutionalisation. The outcome of the former is not so much about establishing standardised practice as about mapping out a macro-institution whereby professionals are able to trade their expertise with other public bodies.

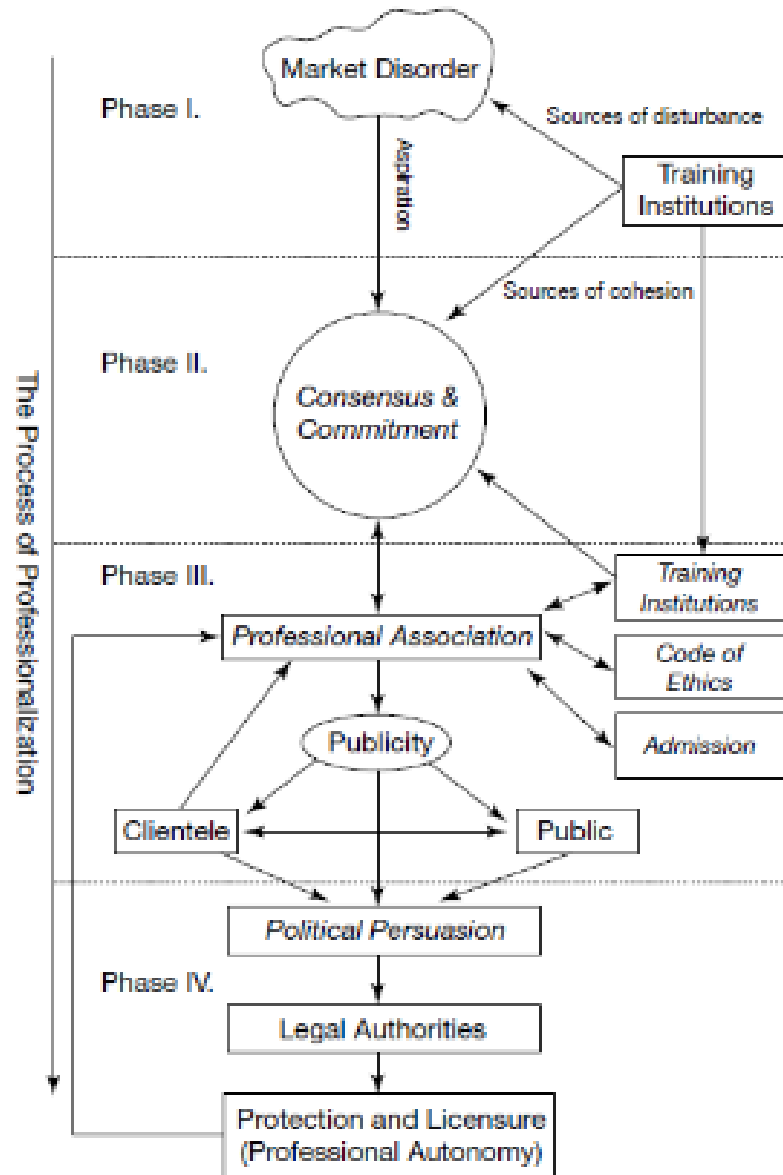


Figure 4.3: Tseng’s Model of the Professionalisation Process (Tseng 1992, p.43)

Despite the fact that Tseng’s sample only targeted conference interpreters, his model is instrumental in defining key actors and stages in the professionalisation of PSI (e.g Pollitt 1997). However, the current state practice of public procurement and the emergence of interpreting agencies in the market may render Tseng’s framework defective. This is due to the scant scrutiny of agencies on PSI practice—the potential cause of the ‘market disorder’ in his roadmap. The term has been applied by Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004) to describe the market incapacity in setting minimum standards for entry into the interpreting profession and in exercising consistently reliable professional control over the variables impacting the effective delivery of interpreting services. For example, access to the profession, working conditions, role and responsibility, labour relations.

The aforementioned concerns are also highly relevant to Gieryn’s (1983) original

metaphor of ‘boundary work’, which has inspired a considerable portion of the boundary-related research conducted across a wide range of social science disciplines, including anthropology, history, political science, social psychology, and sociology. Boundary theory accounts for the way in which actors create, maintain or shift boundaries in order to categorise and distinguish the context they are embedded in (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate 2000). Perceiving ‘boundary crossing’ and ‘modifying’ as a fundamental, relational social process, Lamont and Molnár (2002) suggested that research on this topic can be classified around four areas: (1) social and collective identity; (2) class, ethnic/racial and gender/sexual inequality; (3) professions, science and knowledge; and (4) communities, national identities, and spatial boundaries. This thesis thus attempts to borrow the notion of ‘boundary work’ to broadly examine how interpreters use the organisational boundary as a professional ideological device to distinguish themselves from rival occupational groups.

In translation and interpreting studies, Grbić (2010, 2014) initially applies this concept in searching for the demarcation attempts by sign language interpreters. Further on, boundary work is elaborated by a couple of recent studies examining the porous, arbitrary and occasional characteristics of the translation profession and the deplorable conditions of translators (e.g. Pym et al. 2016; Dam and Zethsen 2010). As pointed out by Pym et al. (2016), the emergence of virtual communication platforms (e.g. Proz.com) have established a set of new internal hierarchical orders. They gradually replace the traditional professional hierarchy defined by solid academic degrees. It is the newly-developed signalling mechanisms of status that effectively ensure non-professionals’ work is of ‘professional’ quality. The authors also identify significant sub-divisions of professionalisation within the translation sector, leaving the professional boundary rather fluid and fragmented.

The ambiguous territory of PSI can also be attributed to its historical origin in the British voluntary sector (Tipton 2014), or more fundamentally, the easily accessible nature of the knowledge (see 2.1.2). The indistinguishable knowledge base allows lay interpreters to enter into the profession without proper qualifications, thereby creating a vulnerable status for trained interpreters who are forced into the price-cutting competition. Combined, these observations point to the possibility that agencies as an alternative type of management platforms (such as Proz.com), and a type of key information interface (such as translation companies), might also bring in a system of hierarchy on their own. But it remains uncertain whether their participation in the boundary work will worsen or

improve the current discrepancies between the recruitment, work arrangements and regulations in the PSI industry.

#### *4.4.2 Revisiting Professionalism in a Socio-Organisational Context*

The lack of reference to interpreting agencies in the study of the PSI profession is problematic. Prevailing sociological models of professionalisation (such as Burrage et al. 1990) have tended to neglect the role of organisations as characteristic vectors in such professionalisation processes. There is a strong call in organisational studies to look beyond the sociological professionalism characterised by a “peculiar type of occupational control” (Johnson 1972, p.45) based on independent discretion and lengthy development of occupational identities. Instead, it is asserted that attention should be given to “revisit[ing] theories of professionalism, which did not fully anticipate the shift of professional work to the context of large organizations” (Suddaby, Copper and Greenwood 2007, p.25) and recognise the rise of organisation as a central locus for staging professional projects and redefining occupational boundaries (Muzio and Kirkpatrick 2011).

The antecedents of such an organisational turn is the traditional assumption that professionals hold competing loyalties toward their profession and the employing organisations. Underlying the conflict professional-bureaucracy model is the argument that being a solo practitioner is the best approach to maintaining one’s professional ideals (Parsons 1954; Goode 1957). This is because the said two social units have inherent contradictions in terms of goals, values and way of organising work (Scott 1966). The autonomy of the professionals is often constrained by organisational mandates, and the influence of managerial logic often creates loyalties competitions (Alvesson 2000). However, this model has been recently under attack because the solo practitioner is not a chosen form in the present-day economy (e.g. Derber and Schwartz 1991). Professionals are generally able to cope well with the challenges arising from being employed by large corporations (Ackroyd 1996) despite certain degrees of their discretion have been subjected to budgetary, behavioural and ideological controls.

Following this ‘organisational turn’ in the study of professions, scholarly work dealing with professional service firms (PSFs) (Greenwood, Hinings and Whetten 1990; Maister 1993) has accordingly extended from long-established professions to semi-professions. The latter is often characterised by claiming autonomy and social status while simultaneously testing organisational forms and developing practices. The extension

covers commercial industries as well as public service providers such as paramedics and social work agencies (see a detailed taxonomy by Von Nordenflycht 2010). Typical of the latter group is the low level self-regulation in the professional work and the lack of state-recognised status for the knowledge workers. In contrast, a shared feature of all PSFs is managers’ ability to potentially regulate professional activities infused with organisational logics. In particular, PSFs may react to the interpretation of professionalism differently from the professional associations (if any) that are representative of the entire profession (Greenwood and Hinings 1993). For example, Kipping and Kirkpatrick (2013) document how managerial strategies of consulting firms disrupt the policies of professional associations by manoeuvring organisational resources and status, leading to a progressive “hollowing out” of traditional professionalism underpinned by community values.

The changing circumstance for contemporary professionalisation also affects newly emerging occupational groups. Reed (1996) labels non-traditional professions as “late modernity experts”. He categorises contemporary expert workforce into three types bases on the nature of knowledge, power strategies and organisational forms (Table 4.1).

<b>Expert Groups</b>	<b>Knowledge Base</b>	<b>Power Strategy</b>	<b>Organizational Form</b>	<b>Occupational Types</b>
<b>Independent/ liberal professions</b>	<b>abstract; codified; cosmopolitan; rational</b>	<b>monopolization</b>	<b>collegiate</b>	<b>doctors; architects; lawyers</b>
<b>Organizational professions</b>	<b>technical; tacit; local; political</b>	<b>credentialism;</b>	<b>bureaucracy</b>	<b>managers; administrators; technicians</b>
<b>Knowledge workers</b>	<b>esoteric; non-substitutable; global; analytical</b>	<b>marketization</b>	<b>network</b>	<b>financial/ business consultants; project/ R&amp;D engineers; computer/ I.T. analysts</b>

Table 4.1: Expert Division of Labour in 'Late Modernity' Reed (1996, p.582)

According to Reed, traditional professions (e.g. lawyers, doctors) are liberal/independent professions (Abbott 1988; Freidson 1994) characterised by the formalised structure built on specialised education and training with strict entry and licensure. Professional knowledge tends to be “formally rational abstract utilitarian knowledge” (Murphy 1988, cited in Macdonald 1995, p.1). They represent the ideal type of true profession (Abbot 1988) who are capable of “producing the producers” (Larson 1977, p.71). By transferring

their exclusive knowledge from one work setting to another, these independent professionals “have been very successful in optimizing the political, economic and culture advantage to be derived from striking the right balance between occupational and organisational expertise” (Reed 1996, p.583-584). In contrast, the knowledge features of organisational professions are more ‘organisation-specific’, craft-like and lack of abstract codification. This body of knowledge is relatively fragmented and acquired through task-oriented practice and reflective learning (Whitley 1989). Although they are constrained by bureaucracy, organisational professionals are able to “turn their localised knowledge into political advantages through strategies of partial occupational closure and control” (ibid. p.585). Other knowledge workers fall into the third category: entrepreneurial professions. Experts of this type are distinguished from traditional professionals because they invest in developing soft skills (e.g. leadership, communication) and translate it with hard knowledge into routine work. As they prefer to work in an administrative-free organisation with a decentralised logic, their resistance to the hierarchical structure and bureaucracy also make them stand out.

Given the increasingly connected tie between knowledge and organisation, it is worth reviewing here a body of literature on the role of organisation in knowledge creation and learning (Nonaka 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Nonaka, Toyama and Byosiere 2001; Nonaka and von Krogh 2009). Based on the claim that knowledge can be fundamentally distinguished between ‘tacit’ and ‘explicit’, proponents of knowledge management theory argue that knowledge is initially tacit and inhabits the mind of individual (Polanyi 1966). Unlike explicit knowledge that can be stored and easily transferred, tacit knowledge cannot be shared with organisational members without going through a series of knowledge conversion modes comprising socialisation—tacit to tacit, externalisation (tacit to explicit), combination (explicit to explicit) and internalisation (explicit to tacit) (Nonaka 1994, pp.18-20). This is because tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in experience and practice, and it can only be arguably sensed in the moment when “we can know more than we can tell” (Polanyi 1966, p.4). In this connection, social processes that include communities of practice (Brown and Duguid 1991) or self-organising teams are crucial because they provide a platform for externalising tacit knowledge and developing new ideas. Putting it in an organisational context, this means that knowledge is organisationally amplified and crystallised into parts of its asset and network, before being further transferred and shared (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). Notably, Nonaka also explicitly states that there are mainly two factors that affect the quality of the tacit

knowledge. One is that individuals should have a *variety* of experiences (Nonaka 1994, p.21):

If this experience is limited to routine operations, the amount of tacit knowledge obtained from monotonous and repetitive tasks will tend to decrease over time.

The second factor is related to one's dedication to bodily experiences and practices through social interactions. An example given by the author is the "on-the-spot-ism" which highlights the necessity of forming judgement through authentic interaction with customers rather than by following scientific theorisations. This is key before the next step of transforming the tacit understanding into the explicit knowledge. Knowledge management therefore aims to identify how managers encourage individuals to participate in the knowledge exchange process so that the organisation can benefit from the newly recreated knowledge.

Located within the context of PSFs, increasing attempts have been made by organisational theorists to enrich the sociological understanding of professionalism. Built on their observations of globalizing law firms in the legal practice field, Faulconbridge and Muzio (2008, p.20) argue that 'organizational professionalism' is formed through the professional project mobilised and secured by the "support of appropriate organizational systems, structures and procedures" and ultimately in the interests of professionals. Evetts (2013) further distinguishes 'organisational professionalism' from 'occupational professionalism' based on the source of control. The former relies on *externalised* forms of regulation and is characterised by the standardisation of work procedures to achieve a managerial outcome. In contrast, the latter prioritises *internal* control deriving from professional peers and incorporates collegial authority. Expert professionalism (Brint 1994) perhaps better captures the dynamism in emerging, yet less-regulated, groups. In this context, emphasis is given to the "relatively less restrained consumer markets and corporate power" (ibid. p.124). One case in point is management consultants as "marketized experts" (Furusten 2013). This group digresses from the traditional pathway of professionalisation to the building of 'commercialised professionalism'. This implies that being accepted by the consumers is a key form of authorisation for prospective professionals, thereby highlighting the interdependence of business practice and professional service. Noordegraaf (2007) uses the term 'situated professionalism' to embody his understanding of similar contexts. He elucidates the inevitable intersection

of occupational control and organisational logics in the knowledge society. Whilst it is challenging to retain strict professional autonomy, organisational considerations of costs, budgets and clients do not necessarily restrict professional development. The role of managers and professionals are no longer clear-cut but rather overlapping. As Freidson (2001) argues, professionalism is a third logic of the contemporary division of labour in addition to the market and the state-bureaucracy logics.

In the public sector domain, Hanlon (1998) proposes two models that professional groups primarily operate on. One is based on ‘commercialised professionalism’ that places emphasis on the package of professional knowledge, organisational skills and economic benefits, whilst the other foregrounds the social welfare values and provides services pursuant to the need of the citizens rather than their ability to pay. Considering the recent development of PSFs and the evolving theorising of professionalism in alternative professions, the thesis questions the relationship between interpreting agencies and the organisation of interpreting work. It remains uncertain as to what extent the ‘organisational professionalism’, with its emphasis on the intersection of occupational and organisational principles, will be relevant or applicable to account for the status-quo of the PSI work and the profession. Furthermore, while prior research successfully establishes that professionalisation comes in all shapes and sizes, little attention has been paid to the contexts where a nascent profession is developing alongside the evolving definition of professionalism in practice. PSI with its distinctive flexible work structure may therefore contribute to this school of thought.

#### *4.4.3 The Influence of Neoliberal Policy in the Public Sector*

It is hard to get to grips with agency-interpreter relationships without attending to the emergence of managerialism and contractualism in British social and welfare professions since the 1980s (Flynn 1990). After Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan took power, state policies that aimed to radically shake up the post-war Keynesian settlements were soon widely adopted across the world. Key to the reconfiguration agenda was neoliberals’ attempt to replace the public administration model featuring communitarianism and “orderly hierarchies” with one integrated with the principles of “contestability, user choice, transparency and close concentration on incentive structures” (Hood 1991, p.5).

Under the banner of new public management (NPM), some influential strategies were introduced, including deregulating financial markets, liberalising trade unions, casualising labour force and reviving competition in public services. Inspired by



institutional economic theories, advocates of NPM argued that public bureaucrats with disparate objectives and significant elements of self-interest cannot generate economically rational actions (Buchanan 1984). Faced with the increasing power of organised workforce and various interest groups, it was argued that welfare governments must be brought under control so that public institutions can be more “incentivized” and functional (Dean 2008). In the UK context, the NPM initiatives are synonymous with the term ‘Thatcherism’ or ‘managerialism’ which strongly promotes corporate governance and privatisation in all public life (healthcare, education and social services) alongside the ‘hollowing out of the state’.

In early 1980s, one of the major controversial changes introduced by the Labour leadership was the policy of contracting out or outsourcing. In the health sector for example, non-clinical service are often no longer provided directly by hospitals but by external companies selected through a tendering process (Moran 1999). Public organisations can face pressure to privatise their supporting functions in the spirit of ‘doing more with less’. Greater managerial power was delegated to local agencies who are in turn subject to more elaborated monitoring (Clarke and Newman 1997). Furthermore, contractualism supported a flexibilisation and peripherization of labour that treated certain jobs as sessional or ‘as requested’. It also encouraged a functional differentiation of work where workers can be “agencified” into discrete managerial units (du Gay 2006, p.151). In this way, specific portions of tasks can be performed by cheaper, less skilled labour suppliers who might not be qualified members of a profession.

Therefore, interpreting agencies arise as a result of what is often described as Thatcherist legacy, further embedded by successive Labour, coalition (Conservative/LibDem) and Conservative governments. As the autonomy of traditional professions is increasingly shrinking and subject to the influence of corporate managerial practice, the situation for semi-professions and emerging professions has been described as worsening. The use of a self-employed workforce is also evidence of the current political reliance on a free market that favours flexible labour and ‘lean’ employment relationships (Purcell et al. 2004).

#### *4.4.4 Interpreting Agencies: Beyond the “Third Client”*

As a vital part of contemporary workplace, many agencies do not merely act as neutral go-betweens but exercise various modes of control over the non-standard workforce (Gossett 2006). While the organisational modes of agencies vary, it is their role in

managing contingent workforces that has hitherto appealed to many researchers (King et al. 2005; Hoque and Kirkpatrick 2008; Carey 2013). A major problem is that agency personnel are often hired in a selling capacity against a sales-oriented work culture. They often “have an inferior knowledge of the task environment in which candidates will be required to work” (King, Burke and Pemberton 2005, p.987). This arguably restricts their chance to match a satisfactory person to the task. Agency workers typically cover the full spectrum from highly-skilled free agents at one end to low-valued, easily replaceable labour at the other (Kunda et al. 2002). The latter are often faced with undesirable work conditions and limited professional support (Kirkpatrick and Hoque 2006).

While British PSI work may seem to epitomise flexible employment in large measure, the interactions between interpreters and agencies remain relatively under-researched (cf. Ozolins 2007). Scant examination has been dedicated to the specifics of managerial activities taking place within agencies, though the scandals of outsourcing legal interpreting services in the Criminal Justice System spurred huge anger from many practitioners (discussed in 1.2.2). In the wider literature, accounts of the structural change generated by the changing patterns of employment tend to be general and explanatory. In Australia (Ozolins 2000) and Sweden (Norström, Gustafsson and Fioretos 2011), as well as in Scotland (Perez et al. 2006), interpreting provision is predominantly delivered by freelancers. There are rarely permanent staff employed either by agencies or directly by the public authorities, making interpreters’ situation in the international labour market highly insecure.

A Swedish case study (Norström, Fioretos and Gustafsson 2012) on the working conditions of community interpreters shows that professionalism was undermined by worsening salary structures, low social status and poor employment support. In particular, the authors point out that the deregulation of the market leads to competition between many agencies, forcing down prices and compromising quality. No public supervision is exercised to monitor their management, nor is there any guarantee that they will send qualified or authorised professionals to deliver services. On the other hand, interpreters in the Swedish study report that they are rarely informed of assignment details by agency representatives and are thus unable to be emotionally prepared for potential challenges. The work process can be further complicated by the convoluted layers of stakeholders nested in the system. Harrington (1997) identified some management forms adopted by sign language interpreting providers, ranging from agencies funded by local authorities on a corporate basis, to those contracted by responsible authorities such as social services

departments. Yet uncertainty remains as to how effectively multiple parties' expectations are communicated via relevant channels of information to the point of service.

Discussion of the employment status of interpreters is equally noteworthy. Harrington (1997) compares the working conditions of freelance and salaried interpreters. Given the two co-existing working modes, he asserted that agencies, in order to continue employing qualified interpreters, should formulate equivalent policies for both part-time and full-time practitioners. One particular concern was that managers did not allow interpreters to comment on inappropriate assignments and working conditions via a formal grievance procedure. Moreover, although Cokely's (2000) has specified that agencies that are ultimately responsible for making payment are among the major *clients* to interpreters, it is unclear how each client plays its role in the working lives of interpreters. In fact, Ozolins (2007) points out that many self-employed interpreters fail to recognise that agencies are actually their "third client"—besides the two main parties (i.e. the service providers and users) in common interpreting encounters. It therefore raises the question of where agencies now position in the system. And if they are not just clients of interpreters, then the inter-dependence between the two is much more complex than a client-provider relationship would suggest.

This study therefore takes the view that an investigation into how agencies act beyond the perceived clientele role is necessary. There is an ongoing tension between agencies' requirements and interpreters' autonomous decision-making. Tipton (2014) considers the rise of agencies represents the accelerating pace of corporatisation. The adoption of 'tiered system' in agency-led service provision disrupts the then institutional order and prevents NRPSI from regulating the terms and conditions for legal interpreters. Understandings of professionalism sometimes diverge and managerial priorities may not always coincide with the interests of interpreters. This may be, in part, due to an unequal distribution of power between the parties. Given agencies' exclusive access (under the procurement mechanisms currently widespread in Britain) to public sector clients and their discrepant management approaches, it is hard to imagine that individual interpreters can actually respond to all three 'clients' in the same fashion.

So far, starting with the broader theories of the sociology of professions, this thesis has reviewed the literature in nonstandard employment and the organisational turn in professional work. Combined, they underpin the extant interpreting research examining PSI professionalisation and bring into focus the site of interpreting agencies. Two major

gaps in the study of the agency-interpreter relationship are identified. On the one hand, the scarce research so far has only implicitly touched upon some dimensions of working conditions as experienced by interpreters. Agency-related factors that may prevent interpreters from functioning effectively at work have been subject to little in-depth investigation: much of what has been claimed proceeds from a weak empirical base. Secondly, studies of the actual work process choreographed by interpreting agencies have, at best, been rudimentary. The effect of managerial control at the operational level is rarely linked explicitly to the frontline practices. Concomitantly, mutual expectations of this ‘cooperative pair’ have rarely been contextualised or cross-examined. This calls for a systematic approach to examine the components of managerial practice in situ and to see how they impact upon the work process of interpreters.

## **|Linking Up: Implementing a Professional Project Through Institutional Work**

### *4.5.1 Institutional Work and Other New Forms of Work*

To examine the micro-actions of managers who operate an interpreting agency, this study draws upon the theoretical perspective of institutional work developed by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006). In their seminal book chapter of the *Handbook of Organizational Studies*, institutional work is conceptualised as “the purposive actions of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (ibid. p.125). The theoretical foundations of this concept can be traced from the work of DiMaggio (1988) on institutional processes and the array of studies on the sociology of practice (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). The three broader categories of institutional work: creation, maintenance and disruption of institutions highlight the relationship between human agency (micro-actions) and institutional change (macro-influences). With regards to the work aimed at creating institutions, nine types of such purposive actions are identified, including vesting, defining, advocacy, constructing identities, changing norms, constructing normative networks, mimicry, theorising and educating (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). Among others, ‘theorising’ involves proposing new concepts and practices to guide the cognitive development of the field, and ‘educating’ refers to imparting knowledge and skills to actors so that they can contribute to the consolidation of the new institution (ibid.).

The recent scholarly engagement in new forms of ‘work’ has been theorised by Phillips and Lawrence (2012, p. 223) as the “turn to work” in organisational studies. In the authors’ review article, fifteen types of work that involve actors’ purposive effort to affect their

social-institutional context have been identified, including institutional work, identity work, boundary work, practice work, emotion work and idea work. Their summary of prior research on the intersection of institutions and work in organisations provide a useful reference for conceptualising the themes and participants' activities that might emerge during the field work.

Specifically, 'identity work' is initially developed by Svenningsson and Alvesson (2003: 1165) to define people's engagement in "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness". Constructing professional identities is performed primarily through actors' interaction with other professional groups and inner group members (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). From a management point of view, 'identity work' can also be considered as a less obtrusive and increasingly intentional medium of organisational control, or "identity regulation" defined by Alvesson and Willmott (2002, p.622). It is by nature a discursive framework fleshed out by socially established norms and practices, with the aim of influencing employees' self-definition and commitment (ibid.). Particularly in the knowledge-intensive, professional firms, managers generally adopt four mechanisms to achieve regulation (Alvesson 2001), namely, 'constructing an appealing organisational identity' through rhetorically boosting members' pride and image management; 'cultural control' that promotes ideology and ethos; 'normalisation' focusing on setting performance and behavioural criteria, and 'subjectification' that enables individuals to shape themselves around a specific self-defined standard.

The term 'technical work' is related to the 'cultural-cognitive pillar' of institutions. As defined by Scott (1995), all institutions comprise three pillars of the institutional order—regulative system, normative system and cultural-cognitive system. Each system requires effective input coming from what Perkmann and Spicer (2008) termed 'political work', 'cultural work' and 'technical work' respectively. To imbue a degree of rigour and rationality into a provisional institution, technical work must be undertaken properly by specialist actors often with technocratic expertise or professional skills. Similar to the institutional work of 'theorising' and 'educating' (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006), technical work involves developing abstract models, theorising new practice, standardisation, and organising learning activities. It thus requires institutional entrepreneurs to be able to predict the outcome of certain decisions and connect new practices to existing frameworks using analytical skills (Scott 1995). The result of technical work is often the optimisation of present knowledge structure or creation of

official standards that can be operationalised by adopters. Combined, the institutional work perspective provides an insightful starting point for the examination of actors' motivations and intra-organisational activities that might lead to field-level change.

#### *4.5.2 Agency and Institutional Changes*

Central to the concept of institutional work is that institutional practices, boundaries, rules or values are constituted by the actions of individual and collective actors (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). Rather than being restricted by their social role scripts or organisational arrangements, actors are able to operate strategically within the institutional framework where they are embedded. This is related to the broader structure-agency debate within institutional theory. The paradox of embedded agency (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Holm, 1995; Seo and Creed 2002) has the argument that if actors are embedded in an institutional field through which their cognition, values and power are structured, how can they introduce new practices and change these very institutions they are embedded? Indeed, the understanding of institutions in early literature centres on their stable and homogeneous nature. Institutions in this context are referred to as "rules of the game" or "humanly devised constraints" (North 1990, p.3). Because institutions are the cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative structures that give sense to social behaviour (Scott 1995), individual actors are at most 'cultural dopes' submissive to institutional process.

More recent (since 1990s) developments in new institutionalism resurrect the themes of change and human agency in institutional debates (DiMaggio 1995; Greenwood and Hinings 1996). This line of reasoning instead highlights how individual entities respond strategically to institutional pressures (Oliver 1991) and induce changes in a dynamic yet contested terrain (Fligstein 1997; Lawrence 1999). Generally, focal actors can be distinguished between two breeds. Institutional entrepreneurs (Garud, Jain and Kumaraswamy 2002; Dorado 2005; Battilana and Leca and Boxenbaum, 2009) are typically powerful, heroic actors who are often in possession of abundant resources and therefore capable of architecting the macro structures of the society (Suddaby and Viale 2011). They are largely associated with the successful instances of institutional changes that produce new rules and practices at the policy level. In contrast, the other breed of actors are primarily peripheral and under-resourced. Their actions and intentionality to enact changes are framed as institutional work that places emphasis on the everyday mundane actions of the less powerful actors (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). While studies of institutional entrepreneurship are predominantly outcome-based (Kraatz 2009), institutional work lends support to more practice-based enquiry. Actors tend to use less

definite, more ambiguous and nonaggressive strategies, but their work are equally important in introducing field-level changes (Martí and Mair 2009).

Such strategies are associated with the episodic form of power that organisational actors employ (Clegg 1989; Lawrence, Winn and Jennings 2001; Lawrence 2008). It refers to “relatively discrete strategic acts of mobilization initiated by self-interested actors” (Lawrence et al. 2001, p.629). In order to encourage or discourage certain activities, agents engage in sense-giving process where they “develop, support or attack forms of discourse and practice” (Lawrence 2008, p.174). This notion foregrounds the importance of discursive strategies in influencing a certain organisational agenda. This also brings to life actors’ motivation to break through the constraints when faced with competing institutional practices. In this connection, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) has conceptualised a more refined view of agency as they unpack its various dimensions. Projective agency emphasises the actors’ capacity to envision, plan and prepare for the future change, which has often been associated with their efforts of creating institutions (Battilana et al. 2009). Iterative agency, on the other hand, reproduces the established norms and practices, attending to actors’ routinised and take-for-granted precedents. The typical present-oriented dimension is the practical-evaluative agency which allows actors to prioritise the demand of here and now and seek immediate solutions for emerging problems (ibid.).

#### *4.5.3 Institutional Logics and Hybrid Organisations*

Worth elaborating on here is the notion of institutional logics. It is first introduced by Alford and Friedland (1985) to broadly describe the contradictory practices and values inherent in the institutions of western societies. Each of the contending orders (e.g. capitalist market, bureaucratic state, religion) has a central logic that guides its organising principles and provides social actors with options to develop their identities, as well as constrains individual behaviours (Friedland and Alford 1991). They are the socially constructed institutional rules embodied in human practices and agency (Thornton and Ocasio 2008). Despite their variations in different fields, the institutional logics presuppose that the understanding of individual or collective behaviours must be situated in the institutional context which shapes the behaviours of the actors (Thornton 2004). In relation to organisations, it also means that a given organisational field is fraught with potentially contradictory logics (ibid.).

Note that institutional logics do not emerge from the fields: “they are locally instantiated

and enacted in organizational fields as in other places such as markets, industries, and organizations” (Thornton and Ocasio 2008, p.119). They are also subject to change from dominant to subordinate status. Take the case of health care service in Alberta as an example (Reay and Hinings 2005). The organisational field is compared to battlefield where power struggles are flared up by contending institutional logics of medical professionalism vis-a-vis commercialism. The former is temporarily subdued rather than eliminated by the latter. As a result, the pluralistic institutional environment (Greenwood et al. 2011) may exert competing demands on organisations over a lengthy period of time (Meyer and Rowan 1977). In particular, multiple logics prescribe norms for collective actions to conform to and determine whether their goals and decisions are legitimate or not (Lounsbury 2007; Thornton and Ocasio 2008).

However, this is not to say that organisations are passive recipients of the institutional order all the time. For example, in Gawer and Philips’ (2013) study of Intel Corporation, a crucial premise for Intel members to effectively influence the dominant business logic is its possession of sufficient resources and recognised corporate brand. These advantages are apparent when members try to promulgate their newer identity claims (e.g. catalyst for the industry, architect of the microcomputer) to the field. As pointed out by the authors, historical success and a track record of consistently reputed quality product enable Intel to believe in its own leadership, and therefore it is more natural and acceptable to establish new facts based on accumulated glory. Furthermore, even if internal oppositions against the development of new product exist, top management of Intel can still rely on its mature organisational mechanisms to mitigate the tension among employees. Other organisations may be able to work around logics or participate in ‘bricolage’— a way to draw on coexisting logics as ‘cultural toolkits’ (Pache and Santos 2013) to solve different problems. A typical example is the type of the hybrid organisations which incorporate elements prescribed by multiple logics (Battilana and Dorado 2010). As they embody potentially competing logics, hybrids are by nature arenas of contradiction. By the same token, it is likely for them to project at least partial compatibility to the external institutional referents (Greenwood et al. 2011). The key lies in how well organisational actors can mitigate or reconcile the contradictory demands and leverage the extensive collection of organising components in pluralistic environments (Besharov and Smith 2012).

#### *4.5.4 Linking Up: Professionals as Institutional Agents*

Linking institutional analysis to the sociology of professionalisation, recent studies have



started to address the leading role that professionals play in creating institutions and enacting institutional changes (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013). In this context, Scott (2008b, p.223) reconceptualises the professions as “institutional agents” and the “most influential, contemporary crafters of institutions”. According to the author, professionals exercise their institutional roles mainly in three ways. As regulative agents, they are involved in formulating and implementing the legally-binding rules and regulations, influencing the acquisition and use of coercive power; as normative agents, they promote social obligations and guide moral decisions by specifying work roles, norms, values and standards; as cultural-cognitive agents, they provide ontological frameworks, conceptual tools and interpretations of shared meanings to solve problems (ibid.). For example, according to Lockett et al. (2012), English NHS medical professionals have successfully taken control of the threat caused by the introduction of workforce development policy. Such a policy aims to reconfigure the professional roles and organisational division of expert labour. One of the major expected outcomes is the substitution of specialist doctors with less specialist professionals (e.g. GP) in the primary care and the alteration from a professional-led service to a patient-centred service. In response to this potential restructuring, specialist professionals enact different types of institutional work (e.g. “theorising”, “defining”, “educating” and “policing”) to protect their privileged territory, and ultimately to “shape the change trajectory to ensure continued professional dominance” (ibid. p.958).

Using an institutional approach to study a profession thus connects the professional project to the wider patterns of institutionalisation. It acts as a unique alternative to the functionalist approach and power approach (discussed in 4.3) in that it recognises “the possibility of the coexistence, co-penetration, sedimentation and hybridization of different institutional, managerial, occupational, and organizational logics” (Muzio et al. 2013) in the field. The coexistence of different logics also generates a mixture of managerial, organisational, and commercialised forms of professionalism beyond the traditional collegial professionalism. Furthermore, an institutional approach formally connects research on professional organisations and professional work with its origins in sociology of professions (ibid.). Conventional models of professionalisation tend to either overlook the role of professional service firms in such processes (Burrage et al. 1990) or regard professionals working in organisations as signs of deprofessionalisations (Barley and Tolbert 1991). However, findings from a series of organisational and management studies (Muzio et al. 2011; Faulconbridge and Muzio 2012; Ramirez 2013; Kipping and

Kirkpatrick 2013) have shown that professions become increasingly capable of controlling key organisations to gain power, status and authority for extending institutional influences.

To explicate the causal relationship between results of professional projects and the creation of institutions, Suddaby and Viale (2011) sequences four essential dynamics through which professionals reconfigure the organisational fields. The first mechanism that professionals apply to challenge the dominant logic is to colonise a new intellectual and economic space. Such territory can be defined internally through extending or recreating extant knowledge and skills, and it can also be explored externally through encroaching the jurisdiction of neighbouring professions (Abbott 1988). Secondly, professionals populate this new space with legitimate actors and new identities by using their social skills. Here the authors identify a gap in the research that “theorists have largely the micro (often individual) level at which professional identities, talents and attributes are constructed and reproduced” (Suddaby and Viale 2011, p.431). The third mechanism is establishing new rule systems. This has been recognised by the authors as a key component for professionals to maintain and expand their boundaries, particularly in terms of subordinating some occupations or excluding others from understanding the new standards. A consequence of these jurisdictional battles is the creation of new category of labour force in society as presented in Reed’s (1996) taxonomy (Table 2.1). Fourthly, professionals are good at reproducing a status hierarchy or social order by manipulating followers, supporters and allies using their social capital. In particular, rhetoric strategies and categorization strategies are commonly used to shape their professional actions and influence social life (Suddaby and Viale 2011).

Finally, based on the above theoretical underpinnings of the institutional approach to professionalisation, the conceptual framework drawing upon three theoretical orientations (profession, organisation and institution) has been constructed for this study (Figure 4.4). Inspired by Macdonald’s ‘professional project’ (Figure 2.1) in section 4.3.4, interpreters’ professional project is shown in solid lines and their institutional work is depicted in dashed lines.

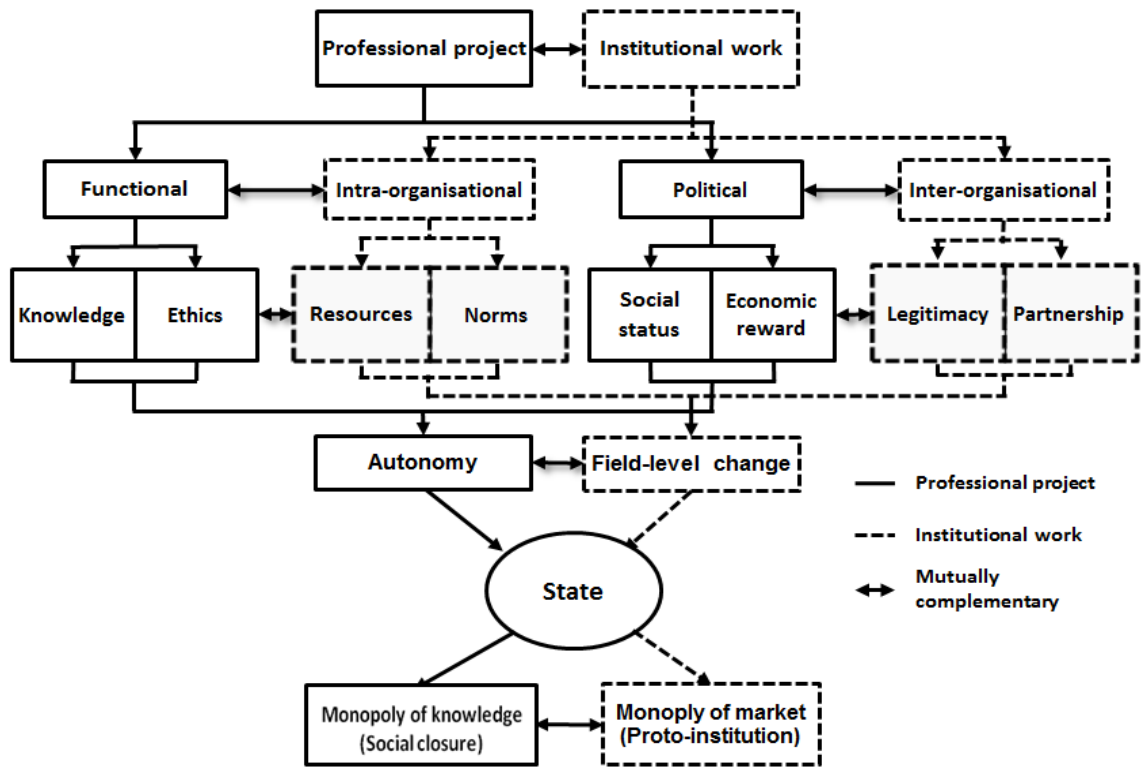


Figure 4.4: The Theoretical Framework of the Study

In light of the aim of the research, the framework contextualises the interpreting professional project at the heart of the service provision coordinated by interpreting agencies. It supposes that relevant organisational actors perform a set of institutional work to achieve their collective regulation and social closure. In other words, the professional project at the local level is presumably managed by interpreting agencies through different types of institutional work. As discussed, this echoes the theoretical underpinning that professionalisation forms part of the institutional process and professionals are contemporary institutional agents (see 2.5.2). Subsequently, by elucidating the theoretically-informed processual constructs (e.g. “knowledge”, “ethics”, “social status”) and contrasting against the corresponding organisational objectives, the framework serves as a useful road map to trace the concrete impact of managerial activities on interpreting work practices. Given the research gap is rooted in the lack of understanding of the agencies’ power and status, this study aims to provide a useful starting point by examining how frontline interpreting work components are organised, connected and managed. Special attention will be given to the organisational imperatives manifested in the everyday work of interpreters and the professionalisation process at large. A key rationale of this cross-disciplinary perspective is that only through close observation of the every nook and cranny of the actual work system can we grasp the grid

of high and low practical forces bearing down on the working lives of interpreters. Subsequently, this study also attaches importance to the motivations and strategies of the more peripheral actors who are embedded in the social structures but able to conceive of new practices and effect institutional change.

### **|Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter reviews the extant literature that is relevant to the three main themes of the research enquiry: the sociology of professions, the flexible work arrangements and the professionalisation of PSI in the wake of the emergence of interpreting agencies. Drawing upon the theoretical lens of the first two themes, a distinct research gap in interpreting studies has been identified. To address the gap, an institutional approach to the professional work of interpreters is discussed, with an emphasis on connecting the micro-actions and everyday strategies of lower-level professionalisation to the field-level institutional changes. A theoretical framework combining multiple lenses has been constructed to inform and define the structure of this study. The following chapter will focus on the research design and methodological issues. Data collection methods and the analytical approach being adopted for this study will be described in relation to the construction of the theoretical framework. A detailed description of fieldwork opportunities will also be presented along with researcher's reflections on ethical choices.

## Chapter 5 Methodology and Research Design

### **|Introduction**

This chapter details the methodology undertaken in this research. The philosophical position and research paradigm that underpins the theoretical perspective of this research are discussed first and foremost. Following is the justification of the case study strategy and data collection methods, where the local context of the case is introduced together with a presentation of the multiple sources of evidence obtained in the fieldwork. Next, the data analytical approach is explained with references to the structure of the result presentation and theoretical framework. This Chapter is concluded with a reflection on fieldwork practice and ethical decisions.

### **|Research Approach**

#### *5.2.1 Philosophical Positions*

All research is conducted under the guidance of “a basic set of beliefs” (Guba 1990, p. 17) or “highly abstract principles” (Bateson 1972, p.320) held by researchers. Each methodology has an underlying philosophical stance that lays groundwork for its logic and criteria (Crotty 1998). Pursuing an enquiry necessitates a reflection on three aspects of the philosophical perspective: ontology, epistemology and methodology, which can be respectively linked to three questions (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, p.245): What is the nature of reality? How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? This study follows Creswell (2014) in suggesting that good research undertaking starts with searching problems as well as the research paradigm. It also adopts Crotty’s (1998) assertion that epistemological understanding dictates the methodological design and ultimately how the data is pragmatically interpreted. The following section briefly reviews the major existing paradigms and explains why a social constructivist perspective is adopted for this study.

#### *5.2.2 Research Paradigms*

Ontology asks the nature of the world, examining what constitutes the reality (Gray 2009). While epistemology concerns “what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge” (Bryman 2004, p.11), methodology addresses the best means by which one acquires knowledge about existence. These ‘three-ologies’ underpinning different research paradigms together define the “worldview of researcher-as-interpretive-bricoleur” (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, p.245). Standing at one end of the paradigmatic spectrum is

positivism, which can be best exemplified by the natural science inquiry and favours quantitative methodology. A positivist usually believes that the reality is concretely structured (Collis and Hussey 2009) and knowledge is acquired through testing hypotheses, replicating experiments and generalising reliable results (Bryman 2004). Under the positivist paradigm, the inquirer remains objective from the subjects because “science must (and presumably can) be... value free” (ibid, p.11) in order to elicit ‘factual information’ that is reliable and correct (Silverman 2011). At the other end of the spectrum sits the social constructivism paradigm that defines reality as socially constructed and individuals as active social actors who are constantly framing and reframed by their realities. Unlike the impersonal distance maintained by positivist researchers, constructivists foreground the interactive component of a set of methods characterised by strong intersubjectivity and reflexivity (Cunliffe 2003), therefore they themselves constitute an integral part of the research process.

According to Denzin and Lincoln’s (2008) proposed typology of qualitative research, there are primarily five paradigms at the most general level, namely positivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical realism (Marxist, emancipatory), feminist-poststructural and participatory. They vertically extend to concrete levels and horizontally represent a continuum of ontological and epistemological assumptions (Collis and Hussey 2009). Crotty (1998, pp.1-6) points out the importance of philosophical underpinnings in justifying researchers’ choice of methodology and methods. The three basic elements of a theoretical perspective—ontology, epistemology and methodology—must be clarified as they inform each other and altogether determine the concrete methods.

### *5.2.3 The Current Study*

Interpreting studies has been pursued under diverse paradigms since 1970s when the influential Paris School started with a highly reflexive, practice-based way of enquiry. Although drawing upon empirical measures from psychology, the first piece of doctoral research on interpreting was gravely questioned to be lacking in scientific rigor (Gile 1990). Over several decades of development, the scholarship has been continuously enriched by a variety of perspectives involving anthropological, cognitive, neurophysiological, linguistic and sociological (Pöchhacker 2003). It is also characterised by interdisciplinary contributions and wide-ranging methodological possibilities (Gile 2000, Hale and Napier 2013). As Pöchhacker (2011, p.5) portrays, interpreting is “an empirical-interpretive discipline with an affinity to the social sciences

and a natural sensitivity to constructivist orientations”.

Given the social rationale of this study is to recover the front-line locus of the professionalisation project of interpreters, a qualitative inquiry approach is chosen to unveil the dynamic work processes between interpreters and agencies. This is due to its appealing prospect in bringing into an ostensible focus the on-going workplace phenomena and human micro-actions in the naturalistic settings (Liu 2011, p.106). In addition, implementing the qualitative rigor responds meaningfully to the call for “going social” and “going qualitative” in interpreting studies (Pöchhacker 2011, pp.38-40). Although it might be of interest to gauge managers’ attitudes by quantifying the allocation of workloads to different interpreters and frequencies of criteria applied to judge interpreters’ performance, such calculation does not well serve the purpose of understanding individual perceptions as well as the forging of alternative professionalism in the organisational context. As van Maanen (1979, p.520) puts it,

[Q]ualitative methods... is at best an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.

For the same abovementioned reasons, it is important to clarify that the author follows the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm built upon the premise of one or multiple socially constructed realities (Searle 1995). It posits that truth is relative and negotiable through interactions, and the social world is organised by individual interpretations based in a particular moment or context (Berger and Luckman 1966). Since researchers’ values are inherent in the entire process of investigation, an advantage of the epistemological view of interpretivism is that researchers can and should work closely with participants and enable them to narrate their stories. In this connection, knowledge claims are co-created by both parties as the dialectical enquiry proceeds. In terms of methodology, a case study design is adopted for this study, considering the motivation of this study is partly to draw attention to the shop-floor, real-life situations within the agencies (Yin 2003). The following section is dedicated to describing the fundamentals of this methodology and explaining how they are consistent with the philosophical stance discussed above.

#### *5.2.4 Case Study Methodology*

A case is described as a system bounded by time and place (Creswell 2014). Case studies

are commonly used in organisational studies and in other social science disciplines of sociology, industrial relations and anthropology (Hartley 2004). This type of analysis consists of an in-depth investigation with “fine-grain” data collection over a period of time, and is regarded as useful in “understand[ing] how the organizational and environmental context is having an impact on or influencing social processes” (ibid. p.325).

A case study is distinguished as a research strategy and a methodology from other methods such as experiment, survey and history (Yin 2003; Creswell 2007). It is most suitable for addressing the “how” and “why” types of research questions (Yin, pp. 5-7), since it involves the exploration of an issue through one or multiple cases within a bounded system (Creswell 2007). Two sources of evidence are distinctively provided by this strategy: physically witnessing the whole course of the events and interviewing participants concerned immediately or retrospectively (ibid, p.8). While its beneficial points abound (see Table 5.1), case study has historically been stereotyped as a “weak sibling” in social science inquiry (Yin 2003, p.xiii) for the lack of generalisability, rigor and reliability (Hartley 1994, p.208). This line of reasoning, however, does not seem to do justice to this strategy as it proceeds from a positivist point of view and ignores the “analytic generalisation”(Yin 2003, p.32) that a case study is capable of. For this reason, Bryman (2004, p.30) pointed out that the use of “credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability” as criteria for qualitative study should replace respectively the set of standards commonly adopted in natural enquiry, i.e. internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

<b>Advantages of Case Study Methodology</b>
Better able to shed light on the under-researched areas
Better able to understand formal and informal processes in organisations
Tracking changes over time
Uniqueness of the case enriches data collection
Multiple methods
Grounded-theory building

Table 5.1: The Advantages of Case Studies in Organisation Studies (Summarised From Hartley, 1994)

Qualitative case studies can be classified differently by the size of the bounded case (Creswell 2007), by the intent of the researcher (Stake 1995) or by the nature of the study



in relation to the number of the cases needed (Yin 2003). For example, Stake (1995) uses the term “intrinsic” to describe the type of cases where researchers have a genuine interest in the particularity of the object by itself without the intent to illustrate it for generalisation purpose. This is in contrast to the “instrumental” case study where the example itself often plays a secondary role; it facilitates the understanding of something else or helps to refine a theory. In the instance of Yin’s (2003) classification, another critical decision to make, which matters to ‘scoping the case’, is on conducting a holistic single case study or a multiple case study. While the former provides insight into the uniqueness of a singular phenomenon, the latter allows the researcher to approach the similarities and differences between the cases. In any typology, there is a consensus on properly defining the boundary of a case, or the ‘unit of analysis’ (Miles and Huberman 1994) which is associated with the research objectives. Despite its diverse possibilities of categorisations, mainstream academic works primarily base their approach to qualitative case study on a constructivist paradigm (Baxter and Jack 2008).

So far, three fundamental elements (ontology, epistemology and methodology) of the philosophical underpinning for the research have been discussed. Their relationship and importance can be presented in a concerted order of inquiry as follows:

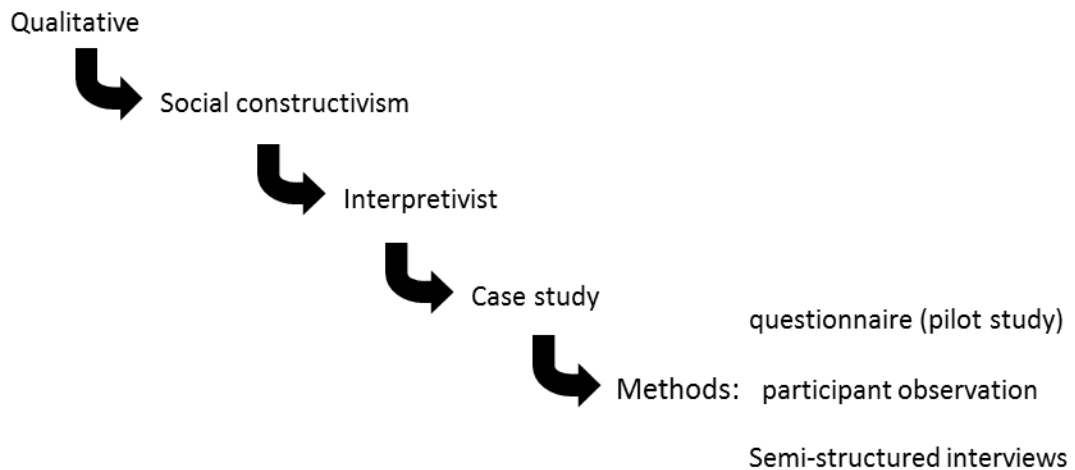


Figure 5.1: A Summary of Three ‘Ologies’ and Methods in This Study

### **Determining the Case**

With a view to the research questions and the aforesaid guidance on the methodological design, the research can be defined as a single case study with an embedded unit. Firstly, it is bounded by the time, place and group of participants. It specifically looks into one interpreting agency in its own developmental timeline, and the actors that belong to (i.e. founders, managers and members) or relevant to (e.g. freelance interpreters, personnel of

other rival agencies) this particular agency. By this logic, freelance interpreters are naturally treated as an embedded unit given the fact that they do not work physically within the focal organisation, and that they work closely (though not exclusively) with the managers under study.

Secondly, although managers and interpreters constitute the major informants of this study, the unit of analysis is *not* their individual life histories or the emerging culture of the focal organisation; rather, it is the strategies and actions revealing the multi-directionality of interpreting work that matter most to the enquiry. This is because the aim is to seek how the interpreting service is organised and provided on the ground and its impact on the professionalisation project at the grassroots level. In this connection, the case is essentially instrumental as it is about understanding the complex and contested nature of the local-level professionalisation choreographed by agencies, though the group with their activity under study bears certain unique traits that are of analytical value and appealing in its own right. To put it another way, without digging deeply into the day-to-day work processes between management and flexible workforces, it is difficult to grasp the barriers that actually prevent this occupational group from evolving into a more recognised profession. This also explains why a purposefully selected case (Patton 2002) is suitable for this study, leading to the third point to make here in order to build the case.

A single, ethnographic case with an embedded unit proposed by Yin (2003) makes sense because it avails itself of presenting information-rich and revelatory evidence, as opposed to multiple cases chosen for sampling purpose in correlational research (Stake 1995). Centring on seeking what is going on within an agency in question, such design is able to include the voice of interpreters by treating them as a sub-unit outwith the agency. Worth mentioning here is that, as Yin (2003) emphasises, while the embedded unit allows the researcher to engage in rich analysis, it only serves to better illuminate the case and the focus must stay on the global issues set to be addressed initially (otherwise it turns to a multiple case study). To this end, the findings (Chapter Four) is presented in a way that interpreters' perception is always compared, whenever is relevant, to that of the managers as a main discussion thread, rather than being structured into a stand-alone section. Another benefit of using case study is the availability of mixed-method toolkit inherent to it, which will be discussed in the next section.

## **Data Collection Methods**

### *5.4.1 Introduction*

There are three major phases of the data collection process:

1. Purposeful Sampling;
2. Pilot Study;
3. Formal Investigation.

Prior to Purposeful Sampling, extensive desktop research was conducted on the topic of professionalisation of contemporary expert work, professionalism and interpreting agencies in the literature of both interpreting and organisational studies. This stage naturally came to a pause when the research gap was identified, the research design with questions was refined and the theoretical framework was provisionally devised. The fieldwork began with purposively sampling an appropriate local interpreting agency as opposed to random selection (see section 3.4.2). This is a key step in the overall study, largely deciding the feasibility and quality of the research design. The second phase aims at testing the appropriateness of research questions, evaluating the validity of propositions and exploring the potential values and interests of this project to the practitioners in the workplace. Preliminary results and learned lessons deriving from the pilot study inform the Formal Investigation. This also involves two stages of data collection: ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interview. In sum, methods were sequentially implemented in different stages of the research process so that assumptions can be tested and further inform or refine subsequent procedures.

A more visually explicit description of methodology can be presented as follows:

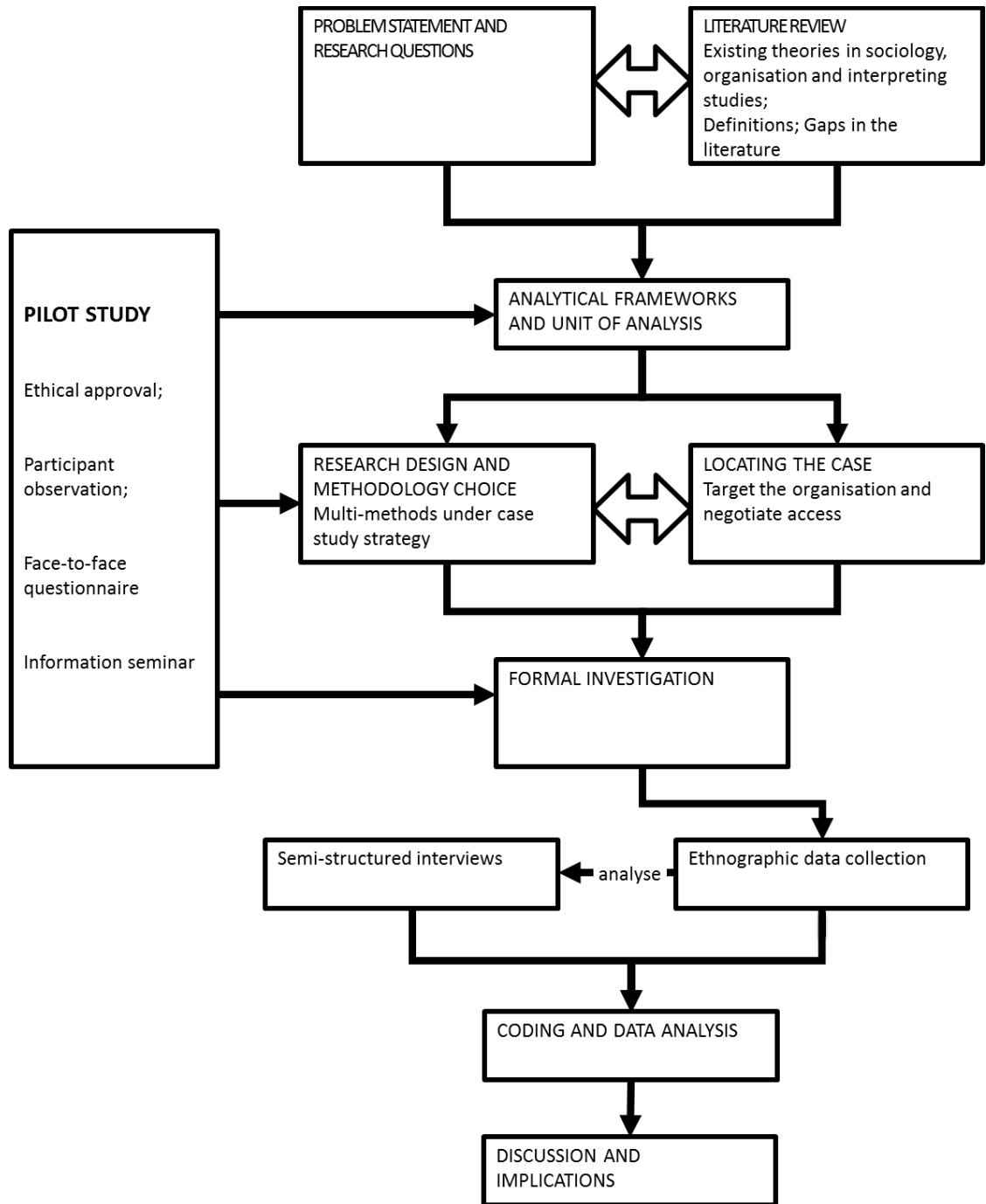


Figure 5.2: Overview of Research Methodologies

To justify the pertinence of chosen methods and showcase the link between research questions, objectives and methods, a map of the three constituents are shown in Table 5.2 as follows:

Chapter 5 Methodology and Research Design

Research questions	Research objectives	Methods
What types of institutional work do organisational actors perform to resist the mainstream practice of agencies in PSI professionalisation?	1. To investigate the types of institutional work enacted to resist the dominant institutional logic;	Observed managerial activities within the agency; Interviewed managers and interpreters; Participated in interpreters' campaign meetings;
	2. To document the constructing of organisational logic as a means to cope with institutional pressures;	Questionnaire (Pilot study): interpreters' expectations and perceptions of agencies; Interviews with interpreters;
	3. To understand actors' motivation and experiences of navigating through multiple logics;	Participated in members' social gatherings; Informal conversations with members;
How do front-line realities of service provision (re)construct the model of interpreting professionalism?	4. To trace the practical forces in everyday managerial work that (re)shapes the working practices of interpreters;	Attended board meetings and review meetings; Attended CPD events and programmes organised by the agency; Company websites and promotional leaflets.
	5. To identify the role of agencies in PSI knowledge management and recreation;	Collected archival information about milestone events; Interviewed founding members and partners of the agency;
	6. To conceptualise the organisationally-defined professionalism.	Observed job interviews with applicants; Interviewed managers;
How do interpreters perceive the impact of agencies on their working practice and response to it?	7. To uncover the challenges in the work processes between interpreters and agencies;	Interviewed interpreters; Studied the work rules and norms formulated by the company.
	8. To problematise the effect of senior-level professionalisation on frontline work practices;	Studied PSI guidelines, policies and code of conduct issued by professional bodies and governmental organisations; Procurement contract/service delivery agreement.

Table 5.2: Linking Research Questions to Objectives and Methods

### 5.4.2 Purposeful Sampling

#### *Locating the case*

It has been mentioned that a single, revelatory case study is instrumental in yielding in-depth insights and understanding of the context. Besides, there is a scant examination of industrial practice in PSI studies as well as a paucity of literature on interpreting profession in organisational studies. The rarity of this type of research may mean that however minor attempt at exploring these work processes, it will reveal worthwhile findings. The explorative feature of this study could well serve as a door-opening experiment for future studies. Notably, given the controversies of agencies' practice primarily revolves around the private sector (section 3.2.2), the non-profit, council PSI service providers were deliberately omitted in the sampling process. With a view to the aforesaid principles, together with other practicalities such as geographical, logistic and financial factors, two local agencies stood out and appeared to be reasonable candidates: SG and Insight<sup>4</sup> in Townsville. The former was the first awarded private contracted language services for providing court interpreters across the country. It still held the national contract when the project started. Whilst the latter is younger and relatively smaller than SG, it is known to be "very concerned about professional issues" (comments from several colleagues in the department). What's more, it is one of the very few major agencies in the country run by interpreters-turned-managers. It has also secured key indications of government recognition including responsibility for certain high-stakes national training provision. These features suited the search for an information-rich example, where the possibility for the agency to engage with interpreters and the extent of management intervention could be maximised. In addition, an independent research perspective would constitute a welcome learning opportunity for the business, thus bringing to life the concept of empowerment through knowledge exchange (Turner and Harrington 2000).

#### *Negotiating the access*

Insight was founded in 2009 and based in the UK. Small as it appears to be, this organisation has around 200 interpreters on its books. Its board of directors is made up of four senior advisors who all have prior (managing) interpreting experience. The

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<sup>4</sup> SG and Insight are pseudonyms used to replace the real names of the agencies involved. Same rules apply to all the names of the local companies, associations, areas and streets and documents appearing in this thesis.

Executive Director (known as “Director”) is the top decision maker who oversees the daily operations of the agency. Actors who have certain management roles also include the Head of External Relations, the Administrator and the Training Officer. For analytical purposes, they are consistently grouped into the “managers” cohort, to be differentiated from the other several interpreters (known as “members”) who are only offered limited hours to work in the office when they are available. What makes Insight truly unique is perhaps its social enterprise nature. Compared to its rival SG that positions itself as a globalised and high-tech driven company providing all types of interpreting and translation services, Insight stands out for address[ing] language barriers that profoundly affect social inequality and injustice [web<sup>5</sup>], with its focus being PSI alone. Its profit is used to reinvest in interpreters who are lack of training opportunities and promote the standards of interpreting by improving work processes. These features warrant its goal to safeguard the interest of the interpreter community by acting differently from the mainstream private, profit-driven agencies. Although there is a growing suspicion of actually combining social missions with business ventures in related discipline (e.g. Smith et al. 2012), and a detailed review of that is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that this form of management is likely to have distinct leadership and hybrid logics. Subsequently, it makes sense for the research objective set to trace the logic dynamic and the way professionalism is redefined in the sectoral context.

Liu (2011, p.92) points out in her review of interpreting research methods that researchers often leave out one crucial element in their case study report –the description of how they gain access to the field context, and how the permission of processing sensitive data is granted in their research. To avoid such opacity, a detailed record of this process is provided in the remaining sections. The initial contact began with an email query stating the author’s background, affiliated institution and concerns about the industrial practice of PSI, whilst explicitly asking the possibility of sharing organisational resources for research purpose. A positive reply was not long after obtained from the Director, who was found to be the gatekeeper and able to grant such access into the business venue where day-to-day interpreting work is organised. In response to the Director’s request, the author agreed to reciprocally assist Insight in developing a training programme for

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for a list of reference codes to denote different sources of data.

interpreters at a later stage.

### *5.4.3 Pilot Study*

According to Patton (2002), fieldwork is often filled with unexpected opportunities that cannot be planned well in advance compared to other experimental designs. Researcher should always “take advantage of whatever unfolds as it unfolds” and be “open to following wherever the data lead” (ibid. p.240), as one of the strengths of doing fieldwork. The opportunity came along when a group of 25 newly-registered interpreters were invited to attend the induction session organised by Insight. At the prospect of conducting participant observation, I further reassured the Director of complete confidentiality of their in-house data and explained the ethical clearance procedure that I went through with the university. The consent forms specifying research purposes and anonymity considerations were signed by relevant parties before fieldwork started. On the induction event day, I was introduced to trainee interpreters and other members/managers of Insight as a practitioner and PhD student with a research interest in PSI professionalisation.

The pilot study obtained questionnaire results from 25 participants during the induction event and three-day observational data in the Insight office (a detailed account of the pilot study can be found in Dong and Napier 2016). Using a questionnaire was mainly because of its usefulness in eliciting self-perceptions and seeking factual, behavioural and attitudinal information (Hale and Napier 2013). Briefly, interpreters’ understanding of the role of agencies were explored, together with their expectations of management functionality. Attention was chiefly given to the management team dealing with recruitment and bookings during the observation. Preliminary findings have confirmed some propositions deduced from the literature, signposting two most salient facets that worth further exploring in the Formal Investigation. On the one hand, agencies are not merely acting as a broker party mediating between interpreters and clients, but have diversified its primary function of booking into screening, socialising and training new talent as well as supporting, monitoring and supervising front-line services. This indicates the possibility of agencies as an influential actor charting an ongoing ‘locally distributed’ professionalisation project. On the other hand, interpreters are showing increasing dependence on agencies. They identify with, or even attach personal emotions to their agencies as if they were interpreters’ higher-up ‘employers’. Failing to recall the free-agent status that an independent profession traditionally possesses triggers the search for how senior-level professionalisation strategies are translated into interpreting work on the ground, hence the research questions are reformulated.



#### *5.4.4 Formal Investigation*

In the Formal Investigation phase, a series of ethnographic fieldwork methods including participant observation, informal talk, archival materials and vignettes (Brewer 2000, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) and semi-structured interviews were adopted. This is because case study avails itself of repertoire of data collection techniques (Section 5.3). The purpose of tapping into multiple sources of evidence, however, is not to ‘triangulate’ the findings so that biases of other methods can be neutralised (Creswell 2007), which implicates the tradition of positivism. Rather, it is to facilitate an in-depth interpretation of the data by verifying the results from one method “nested within another method to provide insight into different levels or units of analysis” (Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) as cited by Creswell 2007). The emphasis on ‘data triangulation’ other than ‘methodological triangulation’ (Denzin 1978) is also recognised by Hale and Napier (2013) as effective in a number of interpreting studies.

The first stage involved a period of three-month field research conducted within the Insight office. Assigned with a workstation and some paperwork, I was able to work relatively unobtrusively with the rest of colleagues while observing their daily managerial activities. The aim was to retrieve a ‘naturalistic’ perspective on managerial work as it takes place. Participant observation allows researchers to access the “naturally-occurring” (Silverman 2006, p.21) data and experience the nuanced group dynamics that are not readily detectable by less immersive means (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). It was agreed that I could come to the office two to three days a week depending on my availability. With the permission of the Director, field notes were taken manually to record informal interaction, incidents, and the observation of work procedures, ranging from lunch breaks and in-car conversations to chance encounters on the stairs. Further descriptive accounts were noted down after the event, so that what was left out due to the strain of keeping pace with the ongoing communication could be filled in in a timely manner. On occasions formal events such as board meetings, job interviews and training sessions were audio-recorded with complementary notes. Additionally, a research journal was written to record my own reflections. The documentation analysis is also possible owing to the regular access to email conversations between managers and interpreters and to the corporate archives. An overview of multiple types of data is shown in Table 5.3.

Data type	Quantity	Source	Original data (intended) audience
<b>Questionnaire (pilot study)</b>	22 questions	25 interpreters who newly registered with Insight attending the induction session at Insight.	Analysis for this study.
<b>Field notes (observational)</b>	25,000 words (250 hrs)	Conversation between staff; comments on emerging incidents; applicant screening and recruitment process.	Internal staff; job applicants; analysis for this study.
<b>Meeting minutes</b>	5,000 words	One board meetings and training planning meetings.	Meeting attendees (board members and training team).
<b>Audio-recording of the induction</b>	4.5 hours	Key-note speech and presentation slides.	Interpreters who newly registered with Insight.
<b>Research journal</b>	3,000 words	Reflective notes on participant observation.	Analysis for this study.
<b>In-house archival data</b>	50 pages	Email communications; corporate rules and norms.	Freelance interpreters.
<b>Artefacts/ websites</b>	N/A	Organisational logos, symbols and information leaflets.	Prospective interpreters; stakeholders; general public.
<b>London PIJ seminar</b>	4 hours	Seminar discussion, remarks of manager from Insight.	NRPSI interpreter representatives across the country.

Table 5.3: Data Matrix

In the second stage, the focus then shifted to sessional workers who not only interpret for

Insight but also for other local agencies. The objective is to problematise the institutional constraints on interpreters' front-line work performance and identify how they relate their behaviour to the agencies. This makes plausible a comparative analysis of the perceptions of two focal groups. One is the Insight-related stakeholders including all members of Insight, its business partners and clients, and the other is the practising interpreters. Each set of data attends to specific issues but overall weaves together the global picture of the complex demand-supply system of PSI. To that end, it was perceived to be equally important to gather 'research-provoked' data (Silverman 2006), which would allow interpreters to give voice to their work experience with agencies and their perception of professionalisation policies, especially when their voices are mostly unheard in the organisational discourse. Moreover, controversial issues emerging from the unobtrusive data could be further clarified by the parties concerned. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four key agency members (Table 5.5) and 15 interpreters who are sessional workers not only for Insight but also for other agencies. As is shown in Table 5.4, interpreters were locally sampled from the company database taking into consideration the diversity of languages (European and Asian languages) and ethnic backgrounds, years of working experience (ranging from one to twenty years), qualifications and training records. During the individual interviews, the protocol of "grand tour questions" followed by "mini-tour questions" (Spradley 1979, pp. 86-88) was adopted. Examples of the questions asked include: "How did you start to work as an interpreter?" and "Could you describe your understanding of professionalism?" This is to "encourage informants to ramble on and on" and "offer almost unlimited opportunities for investigating smaller aspects of experience" (ibid.). All interview lasts from 60 to 90 minutes; they were digitally recorded and fully transcribed.

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No.	Gender	Age (Years)	Years of interpreting experience	Most frequent work settings	Education background ("TI" is short for "Translation and Interpreting")	Working languages	Main providers of professional development training ("prf" is short for "professional")	No. of contact agencies
Int-1	female	30-39	2-3	Hospital	MSc in TI and languages	German, Italian	agencies	2
Int-2	female	30-39	3-5	Hospital	BA in laws, DPSI	Slovak, Czech	agencies	8
Int-3	male	50-59	5-7	Court	DPSI	Latvian, Russian	agencies	6
Int-4	female	>60	>10	Court	BA in languages, DPSI	Czech	CIOL, agencies, Home Office	6
Int-5	female	30-39	7-10	Hospital	MA in education, DPSI,	Polish	prf bodies, agencies	7
Int-6	female	30-39	7-10	Court	MA in TI, DPSI	German, French	agencies	6
Int-7	female	30-39	3-5	Court	BA in laws, DPSI	Russian	prf bodies, agencies	6
Int-8	female	30-39	3-5	Court	MSc in TI	Spanish	prf bodies, agencies	7
Int-9	female	40-49	2-3	Court	BA in languages	Slovak, Czech	agencies	6

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Int-10	male	30-39	1-2	hospital	BA in languages	Hungarian	agencies	1
Int-11	female	20-29	<1	hospital	BA in other fields, DPSI	Cantonese	agencies	1
Int-12	female	40-49	7-10	Court	BA in other fields, DPSI	Mandarin	agencies, Home Office	5
Int-13	female	30-39	3-5	Court	BA in other fields, DPSI	Lithuanian	prf bodies, agencies	5
Int-14	female	40-49	3-5	hospital	others	Somali/Arabic	agencies	2
Int-15	male	30-39	5-7	hospital	BA in other fields, DPSI	Polish	agencies	6

Table 5.4: Interpreters' Backgrounds

No.	Gender	Age (Years)	Responsibilities in the agency	Years of interpreting experience	Education background
Mng-1	Male	30-39	Booking management	2-3	MA in TI
Mng-2	Female	30-39	Booking management /Training support	2-3	BA in languages
Mng-3	Female	30-39	Training officer	5-7	BA in languages, DPSI
Director	Female	40-49	Executive director	>10	DPSI, MBA

Table 5.5: The Backgrounds of Members of Insight

## Data Analysis

Data analysis and collection went hand in hand in the research field, but for the purpose of clarity, they are presented in separate stages. To make sense of the full data-set, a Template Analysis approach (King, Cassell and Symon 2004) was adopted. Referred to as a list of codes consisting of themes or categories identified in the textual data, Template Analysis constitutes a style of thematic analysis and is widely used in organisational and management qualitative research (ibid.). Fundamental to this approach is the creation of a hierarchical coding template, or a selection of *a priori* themes, usually on the basis of a subset of data, debates emerging from the extant literature or relevant policies. A distinct feature of such a technique, as compared to alternative thematic approaches such as Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) and Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA), is that it is not an integral part of a particular methodology and philosophical perspective, nor is it insistent on a clear distinction between descriptive and interpretive accounts (King 2012). The flexibility inherent in the tentative template, followed by an iterative process of coding, allows researchers to follow where the richest data leads and reformat the coding structure accordingly. It is thus preferred by those who do not adopt

a realist methodology, consider grounded theoretic approach prescribes a too stringent procedure, and have a sampling of over 20-30 participants in the studies (King 2004, p.257).

Following the main procedural steps proposed by King (ibid), the coding began by constructing the *a priori* themes using the subset data collected from pilot study, in light of the theoretical framework, the stated aims of the research and the author’s own work experience as an interpreter. For example, drawing upon the power paradigm in the sociology of professions, an occupational group pursues two broad goals in the course of professionalisation. One is more “functional” as the task is to control the specialised knowledge and establish ethic boundaries, as compared to the more “political” other which is about earning the social status and economic rewards. Based on that, an initial template can be constructed as shown in Figure 5.3 (shaded areas):

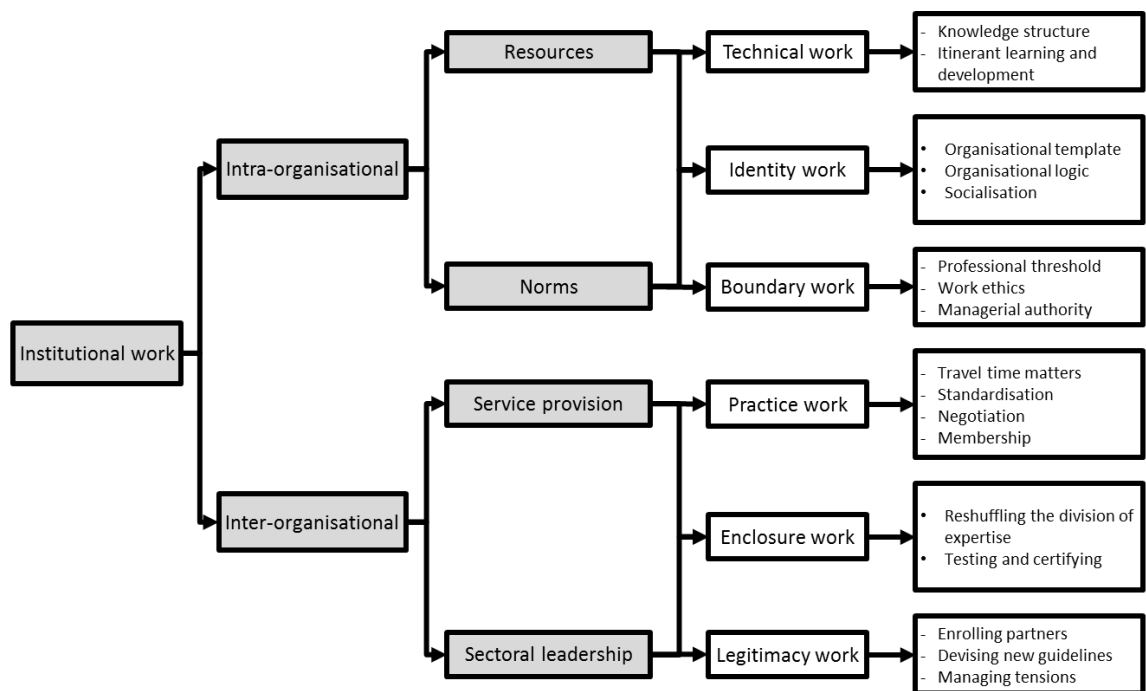


Figure 5.3: Template Skeleton of the Study

Importantly, only a few broad *a priori* themes were chosen to avoid being influenced by possible presuppositions about the topic and overlooking original evidence, so that the analysis can be adequately grounded in the viewpoints of participants and the interpretivist stance can be pursued consistently throughout.

Once all the collected evidence was assembled into a single digitalised file, a comprehensive coding of data was undertaken using the qualitative research software N-

Vivo 10<sup>6</sup>. The full document was scrutinised line by line to gather emerging themes, which were then grouped into a number of meaningful clusters for cross-examination. Meanwhile, the initial template was applied to identify the potential relevance of the new themes (to the study), which were then subsumed into lower-order categories. Data that appeared to be less relevant is temporarily stocked under the “free code” section, allowing for possible revisits at a later stage should it become significant. Existing themes were subject to modifications, including insertion, deletion, changing scope and higher order classification (ibid, p.262) whenever necessary.

The iterative process continued until hierarchical and parallel coding were organised and the data failed to reveal new findings. As is shown in Figure 5.3, Template Analysis brings to life the ‘depth’ of the story and enables a fine-grained processing of the data. As such, salient findings from the first stage investigation were used to inform the creation of a pertinent template for second stage data analysis. This is partly due to the scarcity of literature addressing the backstage influences on interpreting work and the embedded nature of the second-stage investigation focusing on interpreters (see 3.3).

### **Ethical Reflection**

The observational process that captures everyday real-life contexts is an essential but rather “messy”, unstructured part of qualitative research, as fieldworkers automatically become part of the “whole event occurring over time, in which stages merge and not sequenced”(Brewer 2000, p.5). As the story unfolds, not only people’s behaviour, discourse and perception constitute the data, but also researchers’ personal experiences, and in particular the interaction with informants largely determines the way these stories are narrated. In this sense, the data is never ‘raw’ but throughout coloured by the evolution of the co-construction relationship. The complex fieldwork practice that is full of “interpersonal contingencies” (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997, p.68) thus requires researchers to adopt a more carefully self-critical approach (Seale 1999, p.15) to question: 1) the value of the data in relation to the interest of the participants and 2) the likely methodological consequences of the insider/outsider positioning of the researcher relative

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<sup>6</sup> Information on using N-Vivo can be found at: <http://download.qsrinternational.com/Document/NVivo10/NVivo10-Getting-Started-Guide.pdf>. (Accessed April 8 2016).



to the informants. This study argues that a proactive reflection on these two facets, though challenging and intense in its own right, was helpful in laying the groundwork for identifying preventative approach to handling ethical dilemmas.

One case in point is that the rapport-building process which, although eventually enables me to gain in-depth insights into the management core of the agency, considerably blurs the boundaries between professional and personal roles. After one month of working together in the office, it quickly became apparent that the trust had built up and managers started to invite me to their routine social gatherings outside the workplace. Along with the increasing number of invitations for further interactions beyond research, their expectation of me to more actively ‘help out’ at work was rising. Occasionally, I was instructed to phone up interpreters and introduced myself as “Jiqing from Insight speaking”. Such ‘open’ visibility of my residence in Insight made me feel slightly uncomfortable, not because I do not believe that a more participatory stance undertaken by the researcher can bring about positive social changes an established academic practice equally valued under the action-research paradigm, but because my perceived ‘membership’ with Insight might create confusion for fellow interpreters who are currently in great tension with mainstream agencies. Their understanding of my role is just as important in the second stage of data collection and should thus be handled with care. In other words, it is worth being often reminded that how do my routine engagements with people affect the kind of knowledge that is created in line with the research purposes (e.g. Lerum 2001, p.470) On the other hand, standing between the two potentially antagonised groups calls for a razor-sharp emotional intelligence and trained ethical reasoning ability in order to be “simultaneously detached and yet intensely engaged” (Willson 1995, p.255). The fieldwork experience, therefore, is hardly neat and light-hearted but resembles what Kumar (1992, p.1) describes as a ‘brash, awkward, hit and run encounter’.

Once the ‘ticket into the club’ is earned, the opportunity for further exploration abounds. But being an insider demands no less prudence as the relationship might backfire simply by staying too close to the informants. This happened to me when one agency worker felt comfortable enough to confess several “unfair decisions” the manager made to her and how she “suffers from the [office] politics” over years. As this informal talk was started by her and she emphasised it must be “only between us”, I naturally entered into the role of office confidante and addressed her concerns tangential to the research focus. This resulted in her later regret in discussing certain issues with me, and the eventual

choice of withdrawal from my interview proposal due to the emotional stress (Kvale 2009). The kind of guilt I felt for the person, as shared by other novice ethnographers, lingers on the project and triggers the question of how to decide the point where a conversational intimacy starts to develop into an emotional burden or even a psychological threat to both informants and researchers themselves? The latter should be aware that continuous adjustments must be made according to the changing situations and theological ethic reasoning should be exercised in order to anticipate the potential risks.

While observing the principle of ‘do no harm’ is key to protect the interests of the participants (Palmer et al. 2014), there are times when such a principle clashes with the research objectives and probably leads to methodological changes. In this study, the fieldwork conducted within Insight allows me to witness a lot of backstage managerial activities of interpreting work that is relevant but perhaps remain unknown to individual interpreters. Some of the business information is strictly bounded by confidentiality laws; some indirect details have no clearly-defined boundaries, but without ‘the benefit of being there’, one would be unlikely to have the knowledge (e.g. hourly rate commission, corporate sustainability, training and booking loopholes and contract bidding plans). However, such ‘privileged’ information would not disappear when I continued to my second stage interviews with interpreters. For example, knowing that local agencies are all going to use the DPSI as a single standard to classify assignments and interpreters, I felt the need to inform interpreters of the imminent change that might affect their chances of work. Yet should I mention that before the news is formally released, the intended data—interpreters’ perception of Insight might change in the forthcoming interviews since Insight is endorsing this change. More importantly, my role as a researcher will possibly give way to a *de facto* ‘informer’, replacing the position of interpreters as informers in the dialogic turns. This is far distant from the desirable research outcome. Therefore, the ethically-loaded decision of partly withholding information was made by acknowledging that it was an ethical dilemma and a difficult choice. Instead of directly disclosing relevant details, questions related to particular issues were hypothetically asked in an effort to alert interpreters to think pre-emptively.

Over the course of the project, it is the everyday habitual introspection and the self-critical scrutiny that helped me to deal with the multiple, often conflicting demands stemming from respecting the interest of participants, adhering to the approved research agenda, establishing rapport and trust while being aware of the costs that each party is prepared to pay. Such reflection is also instrumental in examining how those factors may influence

the analysis, thus enhancing the ethical vigilance needed to acquire new dimension of understanding. The very feeling that I am still in the field even if the data collection is done further attests that the fieldworker is the ongoing co-creator of the data who will “never return ‘home’ quite the same” (Hyndman 2001, p.265). My conversation with the data and informants carries on, a process that is internalised in me and urges me to narrate it. Then, how did the story begin?

### **|The Intrinsic Interest of the Researcher**

It is mentioned (5.2.4) that an intrinsic interest of the researcher can sufficiently account for the motivation of pursuing a particular case study. Here the story began with me as an interpreting practitioner in China. Wherever interpreters are based, it seems inevitable to encounter intermediate agencies in today’s mega-corporate world at one point or another. Some are very good; others are barely satisfactory. In either situation, interpreters should always have the choice to live with it or leave it. This essential autonomy and the decent status of being a professional, however, appears to be missing for public service interpreters in the UK. Under the austerity-led contractualism, their pay rate is cut, traveling becomes voluntary and almost possess no bargaining chip with the government-sponsored agencies. Whilst the interpreter's workplace is often construed as 'that space in which communication is mediated by interpreting', every practitioner knows that what happens 'backstage' is in fact critical to delivery of frontline services.

We interpreters are both independent and dependant. The work itself is mostly undertaken using our linguistic, cultural and communicative expertise that are independent of the skillset that public sector professionals have, yet we are equally dependant because we almost never take the lead in the presence of clients, and our functioning at their workplace only constitutes a tiny part of the broad demand-supply system of PSI. We are both powerful and powerless. In most of the interpreter-mediated conversations, we are the only person knowing what is going on between the speakers/signers—we make the communication happen or halt. Yet once our job is done, we are not often invited to access the information and decision-making process outwith the interaction. The feeling of not being understood, sometimes underappreciated by the lay public, and the struggle with the structural barriers to work productivity and ergonomic needs shift my focus from the technicality of interpreting sessions onto how this occupational group pursue their professionalisation project on the ground. Inadvertently or not, while I tried my best to capture as many emerging scenes as possible in the field, what ultimately drew me under tight time constraints is always what I genuinely care, resist and enjoy as an interpreter.

Such a subjective approach guides the research progress, and is believed to be helpful in eliciting valuable, personal meaning by reliving the experience of others through a co-participatory inquiry.

### **|Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter discusses the ontology and epistemology of the researcher as well as their relationship with the methodology of this study. This is followed by a justification of the case study design and data collection methods. The background of the case is also provided. Given the multiple sources of data collected during the fieldwork, a template analytical approach is adopted, with its structure informing the presentation of the findings of the study in later chapters. This chapter concludes with reflections upon fieldwork practice and ethical decisions. The discussion reveals the intrinsic interest of the author as a practising interpreter and the multiple challenges associated with having an insider's unique access to information and identities. The results of the study will be presented in the following two chapters based on the nature of the observed activities, namely, the intra-organisational work and the inter-organisational work.

## Chapter 6 Intra-Organisational Work of (Re)structuring Professional Practice

### Introduction

As mentioned, the first two research questions aim to explore how organisational actors engage in different types of institutional work as they attempt to resist the dominant logic that characterises PSI professionalisation. Accordingly, the findings are expressed in two themed chapters based on a series of work activities that Insight members performed as they *internally* restore the building blocks of interpreting professionalism, and as they *externally* disseminate their intended professional order to drive institutional change. In terms of the third research question, interpreters' viewpoints of the work processes with agencies will be compared to managers' perceptions whenever possible. Three types of intra-organisational work emerge from the data: 6.2 *Identity work*; 6.3 *Technical work*; and 6.4 *Boundary work*.

The results will be presented in a coherent narrative fitted together by different sub-themes. Direct quotes of the participants will be integrated (see their corresponding reference codes listed in Table 3.4 and 3.5) whenever is relevant and appropriate. The distinction has been made between the naturally-occurring data (marked as "A-") and elicited data (marked as "B-"). Such a narrative draws upon various sources of data, including company written documents ("doc"), websites ("web"), Email threads ("email") and field journal extracts ("jnl-") (noted in Appendix A).

### Identity Work

The concept 'identity work' (Svenningsson and Alvesson 2003) is adopted to conceptualise the type of institutional work through which focal actors endeavour to construct a unique sense of who they are and expect members of the group to develop their 'organisational selves'. Such work is found to be extensively performed throughout the creation of Insight, where managers focus on giving senses to special organisational missions that mainstream agencies have yet to conceive of. This type of institutional work typically involves three key steps: 4.2.1 crafting an underexplored template of hybrid organisation; 4.2.2 constructing a unique organisational identity; and 4.2.3 socialising subsidiary actors into new practices in line with the organisational identity claims. The following three sections will present these processes in detail.

### 6.2.1 *Crafting an Under-Explored Organisational Template*

The institutional logic of commercialism had been prevailing over a few years before Insight was established. Founding members reflected that the available options to change the situation remained rather limited, as “multiple attempts were made to stop the outsourcing scheme but failed” [A-Mng]. Many veteran interpreters “ditched their job” and changed career ever since the Service Agreement came into effect in early 2000s [B-Int]. Reflecting on the motivation of setting up Insight, the Director described the historical backdrop as “a time of darkness and despair for interpreters”:

My heart sank when I learned that SG got the contract. Not long after that they started to change their face and slash the pay. Many of us argued with Brown [the director of SG] and questioned his motives, followed by declining jobs. That drives him mad. He threatened us, claiming that he would use new people and abandon us, and he did! [A-Director]

Several participants reported that their fight against the privatisation has never formally stopped over the decade. These attempts include political movements, such as campaigns, demonstrations, news write-ups, unionisation and meetings with government representatives take place periodically; members of the NRPSI were even called to London to launch a joint petition. But “the efforts are sporadic” and it is like “closing the stable door after the horse has bolted”[B-Int-1], since “they all kind of die down eventually” [A-Director]. Such context provides important references to Insight managers who tried to identify a feasible pathway without repeating the abortive precedents. To quote the remarks of the Director:

Our intention was to do something that we are all good at from on the ground. We were pushed to the cliffs already, and we can’t bear the business fall into the wrong hands of the capitalist company. [A-Director]

This quote to some extent explains the rationale of Insight’s organisational statement [doc] “Raising the quality and standard of PSI” and reflects the unique aspiration of Insight members in contrast to that of the dominant agencies from the start. As is reflected earlier in the field journal, “their premise and ambition make one feel hard not to develop attachment to them, not to be part of them, as their story is sharply evocative of a professional ideal that appeals to so many practitioners today” [jnl].

In order to resist the capitalist logic, managers consistently focus on two major sense-

giving tasks in the hybrid organisational model they experiment with. One is to attach social objectives to the organisational template. The idea is to distinguish itself as a “community-interest company”[web] from conventional profit-driven corporations. By foregrounding the social course of PSI, Insight often advocates the importance of interpreting provision in maintaining human rights and providing public service access to ethnic minorities. Such a goal is essentially attacking the commercial encroachment of the communal facilities. In the words of a manager,

What makes us different is that our starting point is not to make money, our starting premise is the non-English speaking clients—we care about the equality of access. [A-Mng-2]

This echoes the sublime values of traditional professions that ‘serving for the public good’ tends to be prioritised over personal compensation. It thus highlights the social mission set in the founding principles of the organisation. In the managerial discourse intended for trainee interpreters, the intention to highlight the consequences of cheaply outsourcing public services to irresponsible agencies is obvious. Great importance is frequently attached to the interest of service users.

A bad interpreter makes things so much worse, and that is the driving force for us, because they need the right access, not just any. The bottom line is, what if what you are provided is ‘rubbish’? [A-Mng-2]

The detailed and often emphatic introduction of Insight’s characteristic social commitments to many freelance interpreters helps “it kind of stand out from the crowd” [B-Int-1]. However, the business arm of the enterprise seems to be less known and clear. A somewhat ‘standard’ set of statements is consistently presented to outsiders as:

We have to run the business and make money like everyone else, but it’s what we use our surplus makes us different. Although we set up Insight, we don’t own it, because the profits would not go to our pockets; it’s gonna be used to achieve social objectives, which is about raising the standard of PSI. [A-Mng-2]

Noticeably, the speech quoted above merely touches upon the social aspects of the organisation without detailing how exactly the surplus is distributed to accomplish the stated missions. Further observations reveal that whilst all interpreter interviewees are aware that Insight is a social enterprise, none of them can spell out how this organisational

model is relevant to them. In other words, interpreters are not so sure about how they would benefit from the welfare side of the organisation. Even an internal members of Insight feels confused about it and describes the ‘hybrid concept’ as “the so-called aura of the ethos”. [A-Mng-2]:

I thought that makes a difference because I know what social enterprise is about, your profit turns to something to profit the community; it is based on a certain goal. In theory it is like that. But I don’t actually see that is happening, because we don’t do free training for example. Every training we do we get money for it. So I don’t see how that money is turning toward a special goal.

Her comment confirms other observations that the identity claims of Insight might be selectively reported to suit the need of the communicative occasions and audience in question. It is common that certain aspects of Insight are highlighted more often and others are left unattended. This strikes me as a strategy of “balancing the seemingly conflicting principles (the business side and the charitable side) into a new relationship where the former presupposes the latter, i.e. profitability is a means rather than an end” [jnl]. In order to bring the social responsibility to the fore, managers are found to be capable of ‘toning down’ the inherent incompatibility of the two lines of demands and promote what they believe to be most appealing to a specific group of audience.

Different but no less important, the other sense-giving task is to align the organisational vision with the missions of the professional project. Managers hold the belief that Insight was founded to lead and unite the occupational group to resist corporatisation. As such, identity work requires a careful design of the organisational vision—a collectively construed action plan that can remove the existing economic and social status barriers and advance their professional project. Figure 6.1 presents a cluster of the organisational discourse relevant to such action plan (right column) targeting the identified status quo in the organisational field (left column). Managers interpreted the political environment (“lack of leadership” and “direction”) and economic austerity (“use procurement strategy to save money”) as top-level factors that gives rise to the subordinate issues at the provision level, such as substandard interpreting service and anti-professional development sentiments.





Figure 6.1: The Alignment of the Professional Project and the Organisational Vision<sup>7</sup>

Noticeably, each organisational target has been phrased in a way that matches the challenges faced by the profession at large. For example, in response to “[the] Lack of motivation to gain recognised qualifications”, Insight claims to “provide training and financial support to interpreters”; to counter the situation where there is “lack of clear leadership and action”, they are ready to “assume leadership and define the standards for the profession” [A-Mng]. Through positioning itself as a problem-solving expert and realigning organisational objectives with the professional aspirations, managers incrementally turn Insight into the central arena of resistance against the dominant commercial logic in the institutional field.

The five themed identity vows also reveal the interpreter-turned-managers’ renewed plan for staging the comeback after years of arduous yet unsuccessful attempts. For them,

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<sup>7</sup> This illustration is developed based on the coded data. See more detailed quotes in Appendix B.

Insight represents an under-explored repertoire of resources at their discretion, which has rarely been exploited in previous rounds of acts of resistance:

A few years ago you might remember when the court contract is awarded, there were some professional interpreters saying “No, I’m not going to work for this”. But the unfortunate thing is, if you don't want to do it, someone else will do it, because they [peer agencies] don't care about the qualification and experience. So if they take someone else, he or she would think, “Oh, great! I don't need qualification now and I can do it!” The boycott, if you like, has no way. [A-Director]

The Director maintains the distinctiveness of this hybrid template by distancing Insight from mainstream practice and antagonising the major agencies in the field:

SG is colluding with the government and agreed on a ridiculous price behind our back. I know everything changes overnight and becomes better is almost impossible, and that’s why we need to pick a battle worth fighting.[B-Director]

It quickly becomes apparent that under-resourced interpreter-managers do not have much choice in the irregular price-cutting competitions. The initiative to create an organisation with a hybrid identity, though lacking heavyweight sponsors and institutional resources, opens up a new possibility for these pioneering actors to regulate the profession. Insight is reserved as a relatively safe and private space to test ideas and strategise for future plans, which enables interpreters to carefully “pick a battle worth fighting” in an unfavourable environment. In this connection, the two sense-giving tasks are meaningful because Insight members can at least “take steps to make sure the interpreters meet the criteria we set” [A-Director] and formally become an independent institutional player in the PSI field rather than a loosely organised group of individuals.

### 6.2.2 Constructing Insight Logic over Competing Logics

This type of identity work refers to constructing a separate organisational principle that re-scaffolds the competing logics inherent in the hybridity. Doing so is to ensure that the contradictions can be mitigated or superseded by alternative factor(s) that is deemed important by Insight members in a given situation. Such a guiding logic of action is conceptualised as *Insight logic* for the purpose of the analysis.

One outcome of crafting the hybrid template is that the organisational targets have been aligned to the professional objectives through a sensegiving process (6.2.1). However,

this is not to say the former is *equal to* the latter. As a newborn enterprise, the for-profit side of Insight inevitably introduces challenges of maintaining financial sustainability. As such, professionalism is only *part of* the overall organisational discourse and it is mainly intended for practitioners *outside* Insight. To the *internal* management team, economic demands seem to be more imminent and therefore remains to be of greater concern. This is when the claimed standard-raising work is temporarily ‘put aside’ or “pursued in the long-run” [A-Mng-3]. Such pragmatic decisions prevailed in the initial development of Insight. According to the Director, Insight had a very humble beginning. Founders only used sessional interpreters to administer bookings when they are not doing interpreting jobs. Flexible employment helps the company to keep its operational costs to a minimum.

Before we worked from home. It’s not a job that they can work 9 to 5, it’s all ‘asked and when’. I’ve chosen to do in such a way that, I want it to have a long hold, so from the very beginning it’s very much about watching the money very carefully. [A-Director]

The legacy of “watching the money very carefully” underpins the commercial aim of Insight which is to “increase their market share through tendering for all appropriate contracts” [A-Mng-2], though this has been less emphasised to the outsiders. Such an aim seems to somehow stain the noble ideal of Insight at the first glance, since it drives towards the “dirty competition route” [A-Director] that they set out to oppose, making it less different from the mainstream agencies; however, were it not aiming for the contract, Insight would struggle to survive and flourish, not to mention introducing any field-level changes. This was described as the “chicken-and-egg situation” in the words of the Director:

The impact of procurement on small business is absolutely phenomenal. It favours bigger company, and we all know what bigger company is like in PSI. This puts us in jeopardy because if we can’t get bigger contract, we can’t grow. If we don’t grow we won’t have that kind of financial standing and track record to get even bigger contract, a chicken-and-egg situation for us. [A-Director]

Using *Insight logic* can arguably bring this “vicious circle” to a halt: managers’ immediate goal is to gain a firm foothold *here and now*, as opposed to something that can be achieved in the long-run. The adopting of such a reflective stance is also manifested in the strategy of “sorting our own house first”:

The government doesn't want to listen at the moment. I do have a view that we actually need to sort our own house first. If we get ourselves sorted, then we have much more credibility and clout when talking about what we are doing and why we are doing this. [A-Director]

Here *Insight logic* is applied to justify their participation in the tendering process, the result of which is perceived as a spring board for Insight to eventually influence the government policy. “To get bigger contract”[A-Mng-3] thus articulates a hybrid identity involving both resisting and accepting the dominant logic. As noted in the field diary, “this indicated a strategic shift towards a more flexible and tactful approach to effect changes” [jnl].

Identity work is also performed through the interaction between managers and practising interpreters. Insight insists on a “non-agency” approach in an attempt to oppose the prevalent industrial practice, calling for interpreters’ understanding of “why we do things our way”[A-Director]. Managers sell the idea that Insight is “transparent and approachable”, “efficient and effective” and “open to communication”[web], which stands in contrast with the conglomerate agencies who are “notorious for imposing unpleasant working conditions”[A-Mng-1]. A typical experience with these agencies can be:

The problem with agencies is they don't respect our profession. They scan a certificate and then everything goes to their folders, and then I don't get any job. Later I learned someone who doesn't have a diploma, work without asking for travel costs. Nowadays, you can't really negotiate... they can't help because they don't know your language problems. Except for Insight, I think Linda [the Director] is the only person I could ask because she's been working in this field for so many years. For other agencies, no way. They are not trained interpreters there. Most of them are doing management work [B-Int-5].

Most saliently, managers enrich the identity concept by dedicating to “building the team” and “making sure each interpreter is valued and fairly treated” [doc]. Unlike mainstream agencies where candidates “are only asked to upload copies of certificates online before ‘getting sent’ to assignments” [B-Int-7], members of Insight try to build rapport with the workforce, said by the Director:

I don't want a thousand names on our books. That's not the type of agency we are, and we need to know every single person who is working for us and I want

everyone to have some sort of opportunity to work, and have some sort of relationship with us, and feel that they belong to us, somehow. [A-Director]

In the observations, through sharing workload (“some sort of opportunity to work”) and bonding with interpreters (“some sort of relationship with us”), Insight is creating a sense of belonging for *their* interpreters so that a collective identification with the organisation can be forged (see also 6.4.3). Insight’s approach is commonly recognised by the freelance interpreters who work for multiple agencies. 15 interviewees all spoke highly of Insight’s approachable style and expressed a unique experience with the managerial staff. One informant expressed:

I really respect the values of Insight, sort of support, care, very friendly. They know how to organize training and they do it great. They are the exception...Very different. I don't feel exploited by Insight, and I have no respect for other agencies really. [B-Int-10]

In particular, members actively ‘tie up with’ interpreters to plan and manage different functionalities of the business. According to the Director, Insight has “not recruited external people for anything” and members of the management team are “kind of our interpreters with an additional role” [B-Director]:

So you’ve got people dealing with booking, administration, supporting the operation for Insight; Jessica who is leading the DPSI course, Mike helps us with marketing, and Rachel is ‘on loan’ to our partner HC to deal with recruitment stuff so that we can get going.

In this sense, Insight established itself as an enterprise ‘owned’ and run by interpreters, which enables interpreters to have their voice heard in the management process of interpreting work. Although it is undeniable that such arrangements have been so because they are financially viable, the participatory approach works effectively to enhance group cohesion and identity building. Evidence can be observed from interpreters’ communication with the management team. Some of them are found to have strong identification with Insight, as reflected in an apology email from an interpreter<sup>8</sup>:

Dear XX [the Director],

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<sup>8</sup> Some parts have been modified or omitted for confidentiality reasons.

First of all, please accept my apologies for the situation that should not have happened at all.

You must be aware how important it is for me to complete your expectations and requirements that, I hope, I have been showing you for over a year now.

Today's situation went out of my control as, you are right, I took too much on my back, hoping I would still be able to have my cake and eat it.

My definite fault is that I should ... let you know that as early as you could cover me there.

On way to XX [the job location] I was doing my best to avoid letting you down...

I do understand the issue regarding the network of hospital, partnership and us, as I still find myself as a member of our team.

Today's lesson is very important for me, as much as do hope I will not let you down again. [email]

The field notes recorded my immediate impression after reading the above: “between the lines revealed a self-confession expressed in an utmost apologetic and regretful tone. For [Interpreter A] the completion of the organisational expectations matters a lot because Insight becomes more than a mere job provider, but a community in which he feels part of it”. The fear of losing his share of the “cake” and “letting [the Director] down” reflects his strong attachment to the “team”. In another case, Interpreter B would rather identify herself as an “employee” instead of being an independent contractor:

I am terribly sorry for putting you in a position where one of your employees not showing up! I would do my very best not to have something like that happening ever again and would certainly make it a point to keep better track of the jobs I agree to take! [doc]

This demonstrates how interpreters position themselves differently in their employment relationship with Insight. When individual self-concept is shared and defined by the collective identity, their role as a solo practitioner becomes less distinct, resulting in a growing interdependence between the profession and the organisations. Identity work is finally epitomised in the consistent pursuit of better skills and service quality by Insight professionals. Reliant on their own expertise, managers have established some foundation training structures to facilitate CPD for “people that are part of Insight, because by doing so we become better interpreters” [A-Mng-3]. One mechanism worth

mentioning is the built-in membership subscription that lends support to interpreters' professional development. While the purpose is to encourage interpreters to adhere to the required standards, the agenda is also to strengthen their collective identity. In the words of the Training Officer:

We don't want to charge because it is a resource that we want to make available... if you charge, you can potentially open up to other people. If not it can be reserved for our own interpreters exclusively. And that would be the part of the benefits for working for Insight. [A-Mng-3]

In this way, working for Insight becomes the only precondition for accessing knowledge, which works quite differently from major associations that charge membership fees periodically. By 'trademarking' the module and patent the 'hidden benefits', insiders are authorised to have exclusive access to organisational resources, meaning interpreters outwith Insight are automatically excluded from sharing the knowledge. In this way, Insight's organisational distinctiveness is reinforced, and managers are able to monitor individuals' self-learning process.

However, Insight is after all not a training school. The pursuit of elitism via identity work is laborious and requires both financial and human-resource investment, quoting the Director's comment: "there is a limit on how much I *want* to help and how much I *can* help" [A-Director, author's emphasis]. The observations suggest that managers still find themselves mired in the capacity gridlock when nurturing their improvement culture. The inherently contradictory logics are not wiped out but vigilantly, temporarily downplayed by managers using their *Insight logic*. For example, one of the drawbacks to involving interpreters in the daily operation is that "no one is actually as full-time as the Director", who frankly admitted that there is "not many human resources to really support", and "It's very difficult to keep up with this" due to the large number of registered interpreters:

The kind of support I talk about is me. I describe lots of situations that might possibly appear in the appointment, tell them what to study, email them some links about the information, and then check on them afterwards, how's going on...After that they know they need to do homework; if they have any problems they need to report back. [B-Director]

Behind the surface reality, Insight's commercial obligations still put its claimed professionalism at risk, because to materialise quality assurance procedure requires expertise as well as corporate capacity. Nonetheless, *Insight logic* constitutes a coping

strategy to combat the multiple sources of institutional pressure. It allows organisational actors to improvise responses to the competing logic demands and seek opportunities for change in a compromising position.

### 6.2.3 Socialising Interpreters into Insight Standards

Organisational socialisation (Van Maanen and Schein 1979) refers to the process in which new entrants learn the organisational value system and standards, and adjust their behaviours according to the role that fits the organisation's need. In this study, Insight's socialisation involves managers' intention to shape interpreters' understanding of their work and an expectation of the collective adherence to organisational doctrines. This practice is by definition an interactive process, created by Insight to test and educate the entrants with the organisationally-defined standards.

Accordingly, recruitment is not handled as it would be at comparable mainstream interpreting agencies, which collect candidates' CVs online and file copies of certificates, at best followed by a brief phone chat with the candidate. Each interpreter with Insight, however, has to go through a 1.5-hour assessment (sometimes longer) comprising interviews and interpreting assessments. Applicants' qualities beyond language proficiency are carefully scrutinised. Managers are always looking at the "full package" rather than a single aspect of the interpreting competencies. There is a strong emphasis on *person-organisation-fit* in a sense that one's personality, work attitudes and values should satisfy what Insight requires. A typical interview usually starts with the interviewer's explanations:

We have set our own standards, so I am going to put everything I have seen today against our standards and make a decision on whether you [applicants] meet the standards or not. [A-Mng-1]

This suggests that those who are linguistically competent but do not suit the organisational culture are likely to be excluded. Of central importance is that "people get into this profession with the right frame of mind" [A-Director]. Often, candidates making a poor impression in this round appear to stand little chance of being selected, no matter how well they perform in the following assessment. The goal to find like-minded people is even more obvious in the following speech in reply to a candidate:

I'm sorry I seem to give you a hard time. We are looking for people who are **trainable**, and we want to make sure you have various things that we are looking for. If you are very closed-minded about what you are supposed to do,



then you are not trainable.[A-Director, author's emphasis]

Here, being open-minded reveals the kind of personality which Insight deems important. Being “trainable” however, reflects the organisational anticipation of one's response to the managerial imperatives. This can also be traced from how Insight defines the ‘right attitude’ towards work, as one manager argued with a candidate:

Regardless of full-time or part-time, there is no excuse to do a bad job...We speak to people, you need to prepare every time before you go to any assignment. You always get some level of information, so there is no excuse.

[A-Director]

“Interpreters must take their work seriously in order to earn the title of ‘professional’”[B-Mng-2]—This principle is instructed to all shortlisted interviewees regardless of whether they are invited to work for Insight or not. “The test itself is not an end”, said by the director, “but you need to **have the attitude** to look at that”, since “the attitude is half of the battle”. Adding multiple layers to screen qualified interpreters is therefore an organisational mechanism to act against substandard interpreting caused by “too many cowboys around” [A-Mng-1]. Managers have particular concerns regarding lay interpreters:

What I find most difficult, is when you have someone who is not too sure, a bit hesitant about certain meaning, and he thinks that it is okay or at least actually better than someone who says the complete wrong thing. **That is a very dangerous act.** [A-Director, author's emphasis]

As noted in my field diary, the above statement points to Insight's preference for applicants who are honest in revealing the complexity of an interpreter's decision-making or show no trace of over-assertiveness. “Their concerns further explain why Insight is keen on injecting attitudinal traits into the construction of professionalism. Arrogance and contempt leave too much room for untrained interpreters to misuse their power without knowing their actual limits” [jnl]. This problem is also recognised by most interpreters that were interviewed:

I just think there is a lot of ignorance, bring your mother along or your daughter and she could interpret—that's what people think. Even when I say I'm an interpreter, they don't even think I study for this, they just think “yeah you speak many languages”. [B-Int-9]

In the observations of training sessions, interpreters are made aware of the importance of being meticulous about their work, and their identification with organisational identity is consciously reinforced through the socialisation by Insight managers. As is shown in the follow-up meetings, managers often indoctrinate the new recruits with what Insight regards as the root problem in PSI industry and promulgate Insight standards. Trainees are expected to be all ears when they are ‘told’ how to do the job correctly. Often, the ‘lecture mode’ is switched on and the organisation representative will assume the role of educator as a matter of course so as to inform the candidate of the right things to do. In some extreme cases, such authority can upgrade to a confrontational level where disagreement from the candidate is not ‘welcomed’ at all. In one interview interaction where a manager raises issues about the importance of note-taking skill:

Manager: To be honest with you, I am not honestly interested in what you said about conference interpreting; we don’t do that...Your idea of consecutive interpreting it is not applicable in a PSI situation.

Candidate: Sorry, can I disagree with you? Because we had some courses and we learned that UN or EU interpreters, and they can’t just rely on their memory. Although they have experience...(interrupted)

Manager: No! You, I find the more you talk, the more trouble you get into, which worries me when you are out to do interpreting if you get into this kind of situation. Taking note is a good technique especially for those who cannot retain all of the information, but it’s not mandatory...and you disagree with US when we have interpreted for years! [jnl]

The field note further records that “while I was busy jotting down this encounter, I could sense the anger betrayed in the tone of the manager” [jnl]. After several turns of argument on the function of note-taking, the candidate’s remarks finally “got on the nerves of manager because she, based on her own experience, challenged the manager’s understanding, which caused a breakdown in the otherwise smooth socialisation” [jnl]. This discord in the interview raised the manager’s concerns about the candidate, as “her ability to perform professionally in unpredictable real-life situations is questioned”[A-Mng]. Even if the candidate’s opinion were right, her way of arguing revealed traces of “being uncoachable” or “close-minded”, contravening the very qualities desired by the organisation. After she left, the Director commented below:

We are the ones that are here, and I am selecting people to work with so you do

not say I disagree or I don't think so, It concerns me because this our business.

We know how to do it. [A-Director]

This incident represents a characteristic Insight standard guiding the selection and socialisation process of “true” professionals. Although the candidate is capable of two languages, the fact that she does not match with the ethos phases her out from working with Insight. Corporate values become part of the criteria to measure the competence of interpreters. On the other hand, interpreters described their initial engagement with Insight as “challenging”, “stressed” or “surprising”[B-Int], since none of them had been checked by other agencies to such an extent. A few interpreters “have never seen the face behind the phone every time they [agencies] call” [B-Int]. A German interpreter stated:

They found me from the Translator's Café and didn't ask me for anything before sending me to the job. Every time I spoke to a different person and I don't think they are keen on knowing me. [B-Int-6]

Compared to Insight's institutional work, mainstream agencies do not seem to care much about the recruitment process. Neither do they feel obliged to engage actively with interpreters. Their detached stance and a simple transactional relationship with interpreters stand in sharp contrast to Insight's strict recruitment process. Managers' purposive socialisation reinforces the uniqueness of Insight in the eyes of interpreters, thus paving the way for forging new forms of professionalism.

#### 6.2.4 Summary

This section presents the findings based on three empirically intertwined but analytically salient themes of the identity work that Insight actors perform as their acts of resistance against the prevalent logic of contractualism. First of all, crafting a sheltered organisational template (6.2.1) is considered fundamental because entrepreneurial interpreters cannot carry out their purposive social movement without an uncharted territory.

The template becomes unique because it has been aligned with social causes and professional objectives, and it simultaneously remains unobtrusive and accessible because it still has the shell of “agency” and partially aims for profit. Such hybrid foundation gives birth to the distinct organisational logic—the second theme (6.2.2) that documents how Insight members re-energise professionalism under the guidance of *Insight logic* while navigating through three pairs of conflicting pressure: to combat the privatisation scheme whilst taking part in the bidding competition; to enhance the quality

of interpreting and working conditions of interpreters whilst surviving the price-cutting competition in the disorderly market; to free interpreters from price-cutting conditions whilst subjecting them to managerial-organisational control.

Finally, identity work requires the efforts of organisational actors to not only screen and educate the candidates but also to promote new entrants' identification with the organisational doctrines (6.2.3). Under *Insight logic*, managers delineate their own professional horizon and equip themselves with limited yet developable organisational resources to counter the aforementioned ever-increasing pressures while simultaneously seeking the opportunities for change. As they are faced with pluralistic institutional constraints, other types of institutional work needs to be done.

## **Technical Work**

Technical work is related to the cultural-cognitive pillar of institutions (Scott 2008a) which emphasise the centrality of symbolic systems, including the use of common schemas or the construction of mental models. The term is applied here to conceptualise the kind of activities that Insight members participate in order to develop freelancing expertise and warrant the knowledge framework underpinning the professional project of PSI. Two facets of knowledge building are identified at the organisational level: 4.3.1 Re-evaluating the knowledge structure of the profession and 4.3.2 Itinerant learning and development

### *6.3.1 Re-Evaluating the Knowledge Structure of the Profession*

This aspect of technical work reveals managers' endeavour in re-evaluating the substance of the professional competence required for PSI and replenishing interpreting practice with organisationally-synthesised knowledge input. Experts in Insight do so via developing a national training scheme focusing on what can be termed as 'contextualised competence' (Svensson 2006). This has been perceived by Insight as "commonly overlooked in practice" [A-Director]. The competence is characterised by the understanding of the tacit dimension of the working knowledge and the ability to analyse specific contextual factors for a given assignment.

In their proposed "Learning and Development Programme", managers have designed two "Enhancement Modules"[doc] categorised as "linguistic skills" and "professional skills" in an attempt to enhance the linguistic and non-linguistic competencies of interpreters respectively.

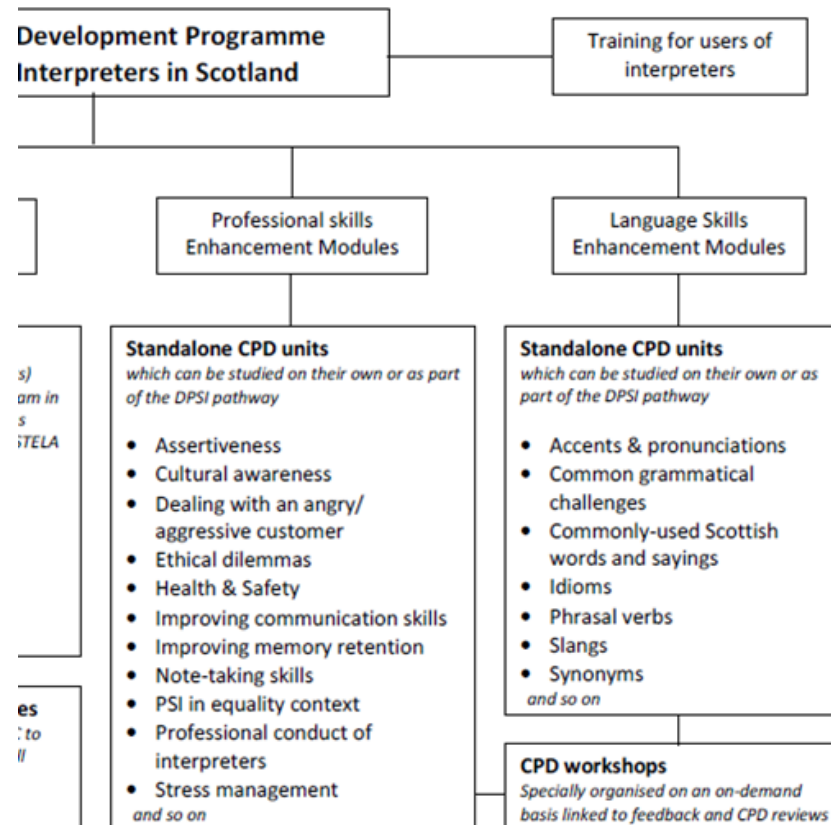


Figure 6.2: A Snapshot of the *Programme Structure* Developed by Insight Managers

This program highlights the challenges including from interpreting “commonly-used Scottish words”, “idioms” and “slang” to “health & safety” and “dealing with an angry/aggressive customer” (Figure 6.2). Managers are aware of the need to cultivate interpreters’ contextualised competence, i.e “the ability to anticipate possible challenges, analyse each situation on a case-by-case basis and make an informed decision based on the contextual factors”. [doc]

In the observations, discussions on what should be covered in the training also suggest how the knowledge of PSI is constructed through day-to-day professional work that goes beyond a simple mastery of bilingualism. For example, in a training planning meeting, the Training Officer pointed out:

One thing we need to share with them [interpreters] is how to speak to the judge if they can’t hear or they have something to report. How should you deal with the legal professionals, this is so important! I mean you go to court, you know the manner but you may not know how to behave. It can be stressful. [A-Mng-3]

This was immediately echoed by an interpreter frequently working in courts:

They [other agencies] don't really train interpreters in how to deal with court people. I didn't know the protocol. Nobody told me I should wait for the solicitor, because I was thinking I was booked by the court. And nobody would tell you the courtroom number is changed.”[A-Int-8]

At the end of the meeting, their discussions illuminate that what makes interpreters struggle most in their everyday practice is not a lack of vocabulary, but the problem of how the words are used in the local, socio-cultural and institutional contexts, and a set of behavioural conventions applied therein. As participants' remarks reflected in the field notes, be it welfare functionalities (“benefits would not work in most of the time in most countries”), educational systems (“when they talk about what they have studied in certain subject, I don't really know the equivalence for some special terms”) or court procedures (“where can I stand, how do I wait, why do I wait, who's the clerk, where can I find the client...”) [jnl], the understanding of these meta-systems of a particular society or culture constitutes the substance of the unarticulated, implicit and practical knowledge—the ‘tacit knowledge’ that is distinct from one's linguistic expertise. For the above reason, managers try to turn Insight into a kind of ‘think tank’ where individuals' prior experience and on-the-job knowledge can be stored and shared across the Insight community. As the Training Officer puts it, the most salient feature of Insight's training programme is “practical”:

I would like to get interpreters to write down their experiences—it doesn't matter in what languages, a list of other people's cases, even for people to read about these. And also dos and don'ts...that's the whole point about the system between us and some other agencies—we are developing this with REAL experience. [A-Mng-3]

The training sometimes takes the form of an informal apprenticeship, where Insight members mentor the trainee interpreters about what they can/cannot do in a given situation. In the case of handling emotional stress, for example, the director expressed her views of certain challenges to junior interpreters:

It's normal to feel bad or helpless—If someone doesn't have a positive outcome, say if somebody applies for a council house and he or she doesn't get it at the end, although it has nothing to do with you, you kind of find that you feel sorry for them...A lot of things going on in your brain, and you have to juggle all those things; you always under pressure. [A-Director]

More than simply an experience-sharing talk, the narrative above symbolises an organisational endorsement to decision-making in a similar situation. Setting expectations (“It’s normal to feel bad or helpless”) and showing empathy to the trainees (“you are always under pressure” [A-Mng]) shape their understanding of how to perform ‘correctly’. A group consensus is usually reached through the collective ‘knowing process’ led by the organisational authority. Besides, trainees are also encouraged by senior interpreters to grow their awareness of the institutional structures and staff functions. Experiences that are gained in practice are highly valued, such as:

I find it useful to find the department’s name in comparative systems so that people would understand you straight away. If you literally translate certain things they might not know what you mean. [A-Mng-3]

Apart from the kind of “senior-to-junior” and “one-to-many” experience-sharing methods, managers also regularly organise informal workshops for interpreters working in different languages to practise their skills and exchange insights on language-specific issues. Managers will participate in each group’s discussion to observe and comment, but each group is always led by practising interpreters. This is considered as “a reciprocal process” as “interpreters can meet their colleagues” [A-Mng-2], who would otherwise rarely ‘bump into each other’ and not be able to work towards DPSI qualifications in pairs—the concerns of the Director:

Some training institutions only take on language groups that have at least three people, but what about the language that doesn’t have three people available? So I want to have these for THEM, because it’s at least something. It’s not easy for people to find a script by themselves and a partner to practise for dialogue interpreting. [A-Director]

On the other hand, Insight is able to enlarge the knowledge contribution from more varieties of language combinations, and translate sub-group insights into organisational resources. Interpreters who contribute into the shared perspectives become co-producers of knowledge, each giving distinct understanding of the practice and altogether expanding the reservoir of organisationally-defined knowledge. Four tools extensively mobilised by Insight in this process (see Table 6.1) are identified: *podcasts* are straightforward as individual insight can be easily stored and repeatedly used by Insight to share with different audiences; *blended learning* changes the dynamics in the classroom and further engages with trainees; *collective writing* pulls together case study resources and gets

participants to reflect on their practices; and finally through *collaborative working* interpreters gain insight from public service professionals who will in turn become more aware of how to best work in the interpreted interaction.



Forms of co-production	Perceptions of Insight managers
<b>Podcasting</b>	I also plan to video record 5 minutes, like a very short file about people talking about their experiences, just make it more vivid. Yeah rather than you saying it, you let your peers share with you.
<b>Blended learning</b>	When we're talking about on-line, it's gonna be complemented by some face-to-face sessions, they're not just paper-based. For example, there are certain things you gonna need to have discussion and practice.
<b>Collective writing</b>	It's not just about having information; there should also be case studies from an interpreter's point of view. <u>They wrote stories, feelings and reflective notes. We just need to spend time to adapt or synthesise what they wrote.</u> You know any interpreter who's been in an appointment can do that, because these are actual experience. <u>We could all sit down and write some role play scripts for practice.</u>
<b>Collaborative working</b>	We can make some sessions alive by inviting somebody from the health sector to come and talk about working for them or having a social worker coming in to talk about interpreting in social work situations.

Table 6.1: Tools Extensively Mobilised by Insight to Build Organisational Knowledge Repertoire

Overall, Insight's training and development programmes are widely recognised by the interpreters interviewed, especially when it was compared to the dominant agencies':

If Insight starts to do a training course, I can see that there is something in it because they are interpreters themselves. But if Brown [the director of SG], I mean, he doesn't even get a f\*\*\*ing clue about this! He asked silly questions in a 'training course', like, what does 'writ' mean in German, what does 'writ' mean in Italian? [B-Int-6]

As can be seen underlined in Table 6.1, what impressed me most as an observer in the planning and delivery of Insight training is that, interpreters are valued as organisational assets in the process of co-producing knowledge. They actively participate in *giving to* the organisation their "stories, feelings and reflective notes", which feeds into the repertoire of organisational resources and thus forms the building blocks of the

knowledge structure that Insight is architecting for the profession [jnl]. The alternative aspect is the process in which the organisation *returns*. Through synthesising those individual cases and sharing stories (“We could all sit down and write some role play scripts for practice”[A-Director]) in the organised training sessions, managers are re-investing in their assets (interpreters) by pulling together the broken pieces of work experiences and converting them into a body of externalised knowledge to support their work.

### 6.3.2 *Itinerant Learning and Development*

It has been found that part of the technical work of Insight is done by building the organisation into an interpreter learning community and a knowledge exchange hub (6.3.1). An alternative institutional work of knowledge management is to motivate interpreters to become autonomous learners and channel organisational resources to support knowledge acquisition through practice. This involves recognising the fragmented nature of PSI knowledge and promoting learning and improvement through doing the job—the central claims in what Kunda and Barley (2004) termed “itinerant professionalism”.

Managers believe that to cultivate the contextualised competence, interpreters should be “proactive learners” and “responsible for their own professional development” [A-Mng-1]. This indicates the practice of itinerant professionalism that practitioners should rely on their own efforts to keep their knowledge and skills updated. Interview results show that interpreters are very familiar with this creed as it has been frequently advertised through early encounters with managers and via the training sessions they sit through [B-Int]. The Director explicitly expressed her expectation that “our interpreters should not be dummies”:

They are not just sitting there to be fed with information, they need to be proactive; we have already provided them with a lot of materials, but that is just a guide. They need to work beyond this minimum. [A-Director]

Insight managers also insisted that interpreters should be self-motivated and diligent when preparing for each assignment, as they highly value one’s professional commitment to the job and considers the pre-assignment study essential in the course of knowledge acquisition:

Another good way of increasing knowledge is to prepare for the assignments. If you don't prepare, you only get yourself complained really. You don't know

something you should've really known. If you go to a housing option appointment, and you ended up not knowing there is a bidding process in the council housing, then it is your own fault. [A-Director]

Noticeably, while preparation often hinges upon the information obtained from the clients through agencies, the team are aware that an exhaustive compilation of relevant information can be hard to provide simply due to the nature of the assignment. In the words of a manager to interpreters:

We try to give out as much information as possible, but sometimes there is a limit on how much we can get. What's going on in a GP appointment? The GP doesn't know what gonna come up from the patients. Then it goes back to your wider reading, knowing your body parts and general illness. [A-Mng-2]

The “wider reading” emphasised the commitments that interpreters will have to make in the pre/pro-assignment learning in order to keep themselves updated. Even with regular practice and reviews of encyclopaedic knowledge, new jargons and challenges can still appear at any minute and that requires interpreters to invent their own solutions on the spot. This resembles one of the salient features of itinerant professionalism—solo contractors often exercise their discretion to resolve a problem without ready-made solutions (Kunda and Barley 2004). For example, in their office chat over the meaning of “skirting” and “coving”, managers candidly admit the difficulties one might encounter and the ensuing solutions one might come up with:

X- Last time I just forgot the word skirtings,

Y- What? What is skirting?

X- The lines all around the wall, see that? And I knew it was, but I was like, my god! But it was the client knew it, so..., you just feel so bad ...

Y- I don't know this in Spanish! But you should say thank you (nodding the head), don't panic, there is nothing wrong with us not knowing the name.

Z- Well you know the thing on the top, what's that called? Along the walls, in the angle, between the ceiling and the wall, there is a thing. It's “coving”. That can come up as well, it's skirting board and coving.

Y- I didn't know that. Let me check... (using her phone), it's not even said in the digital dictionary. So you know, even if you get it you have to say it doesn't exist.

Z- It's a building term, building materials.

X-Or even worse like speaking to the client, 'Oh that thing, you don't need to know'! Haha...

Y- Or you point at it generally—that stuff on the walls... [A-Mng, author's emphasis]

Although speakers above might only chat together in a half-joking way, the conversation reveals the possible yet controversial responses that interpreters might give in real scenarios. The decision could be apologising for not knowing the word but being grateful for the interlocutors' understanding; it could be making an informed guess ("even if you get it you have to say it doesn't exist"); it could be suggesting to the clients that the term has intended private or insignificant nature ("Oh that thing, you don't need to know"); and it could also be using visual references to get the meaning across ("you point at it generally, that stuff on the walls"). Each strategy is plausible depending on specific situations, and interpreters have to gauge and judge based on the dynamics of the ongoing dialogue *in situ*. As reflected in the field notes, this propels manager to believe that it is through *doing the job* that interpreters develop their competencies. The day-to-day work contexts provide first-hand sources of knowledge and becomes the point of reference for practitioners to improvise solutions, making the highly unpredictable predictable [jnl]. Itinerant professionalism confirms this unique way in which contractors acquire knowledge. The following field notes recorded how interpreters identify themselves with the "itinerant experts":

Interpreter A came back to the office in a very low mood after her assignment. She grumbled to Interpreter B: "Damn it, no clients again!" A continued to explain that "something for two weeks like this" and she thought it was really bad because since last appointment she has done nothing so far. B immediately comforted her: "Well, some people will be happy with that, haha. I know you are not." A then complained, looking disappointedly, "but I am not practising, and this one was a good one, could last for 2 hours. I've prepared; I want to keep my crafts brushed up, you know." B confirmed and shared her thought: "Ya I know, quite a few our interpreters feel the same. They know they would get paid anyway, but they still feel they are useless and the time is wasted." [jnl]

Interpreter A felt disenchanted about having gone to an medical appointment without doing her job because the patient did not show up. Between the lines she expressed the

sense of anxiety that her skills are declining if she is not practising and the disappointment that she missed the opportunity to interpret for two hours. Both of their perception of the skill acquisition and maintenance process highlights their awareness of the interdependence between knowledge and practice in the PSI profession. This point of view gains strong support from both Insight and non-Insight interpreters across the field. When asking “Have you had opportunities to learn new skills?”, 90% of the answers are highlighted by key words such as “through working”, “practising”, “repeating in different jobs” and “preparing”. A typical answer from one of the senior interpreters is:

I have no idea of those organs in English. That’s why I must study and practise them. And that’s how I improve myself. You might learn from your first assignment about what you didn’t do well and next time you will improve because you don't want to lose your face! After many times of working in the same clinic, you will sort of know the basic routine. The more you do, the more you are sharpening your language. You know how things gonna go. [B-Int-15]

Naturally, agencies have the potential to become the knowledge regenerating centre through assigning workloads to interpreters and ‘bricolaging’ their expertise deriving from practice. This is where Insight approach fits in and reproduces the itinerant professionalism. In fact, it is quite an established practice in Insight to allocate work to novice interpreters to “test the waters”, as the director often emphasised, “you prepare as much as you can, but you need to do it to know how it works” [A-Director]. This is not to say that interpreters will be on their own and uncared for.

Before each assignment, the administrative team will brief trainee interpreters with contextualised information that can help to reduce the uncertainty of the interaction. Advice includes, for example, “if you don’t see the solicitor, the police guarding at the door of the courtroom is usually your man. He’s got a list of names to call” [A-Mng-2], or “the nurse may ask you to stay in the ward but make sure you wear the blue disposable gown outside, just next to handrail” [A-Mng-1]. In turn, interpreters find Insight colleagues extremely good at helping them to “learn the ropes of the job” [B-int-11]. They mostly feel that they are able to obtain suggestions that could not have come from elsewhere. In fact, the majority of the participants express their confusion at the procedural knowledge that comes to play in specific work settings. Yet such knowledge is “very hard to obtain from those who haven’t done the job” [B-Int-10]. Some participants convey their hesitation to call agencies with queries for fear of being labelled as incompetent or losing jobs: “I am a bit scared to tell them what I feel difficult about,

because they might be judgy of me and nothing gonna be resolved anyway.” [B-Int-9]

It is through training-on-the-job that Insight becomes the gatekeeper of the profession entry. Professional work itself has been seen as part of training resources with different level of difficulty; interpreters are thus expected to “build up the confidence” through accumulation of the itinerate knowledge. As a job provider, agencies are subsequently not only controlling access to the resources that interpreters have to rely on in order to have their skills updated, but are also contributing to the construction of the knowledge base of PSI through organising training and development activities and reflective practices.

### 6.3.3 Summary

This section examined the knowledge creation process in an organisational learning environment and its impact on professional knowledge acquisition. Insight managers propose an alternative knowledge framework built on individual’s experiential understanding which is directly derived from work practices. This is feasible because the work organisation has the resources, infrastructure and mediums facilitate the knowledge conversion processes (tacit-explicit). The technical work to institutionalise such a framework can be broken down into two aspects. Re-evaluating professional knowledge structure (6.3.1) focused on externalising tacit elements from the explicit professional knowledge and providing an organisational platform to enable knowledge sharing and collective learning. While this aspect mainly attends to how members reproduce professional knowledge at the organisational level and how the organisation becomes the centre of re-evaluating knowledge structure, the second aspect (6.3.2) elaborates on how knowledge is forged *outside* the organisation yet considerably influenced by Insight intervention, and how the contextualised competence of interpreters is cultivated in practice. Itinerant professionalism is identified as an intrinsic nature of knowledge acquisition both by freelance interpreters who ‘pick up’ practical knowledge from work and by managers who use on-the-job training mechanisms to familiarise novice interpreters with real work challenges.

### **|Boundary Work**

Paralleled with the technical work in the professional project is the boundary work that Insight managers undertake to tackle the jurisdictional competition interprofessionally and negotiate ethical codes intraprofessionally. This type of institutional work involves

managers' efforts in demarcating the professional boundary that represents status, autonomy and ownership of professional resources (Abbott 1988). Three major thematic actions are identified in that process: 6.4.1 Demarcating the professional sphere with organisational boundary; 6.4.2 Moulding work ethics of interpreters by organisational norms; and 6.4.3 Claiming representative power of the profession.

#### *6.4.1 Demarcating the Professional Sphere with Organisational Boundaries*

To distinguish between other occupational groups, a clear role boundary is needed for professional interpreters. The Insight team are dedicated to establishing such an independent status because the organisational field still abounds with a mixture of untrained and qualified interpreters. It is found that Managers often use the informal/formal-experience benchmark to vet the new applicants and shape their understanding of the professional boundary. For example, in an interview with a Burmese candidate, the Director attempts to explain what is “professional interpreting”:

You are not a professional interpreter; you are helping with parents and friends. When you are doing informal interpreting, the boundaries are not so clear. But when you do professional interpreting, the boundaries, what you should do and shouldn't do, are much clearer. [A-Director]

Here the difference between being a professional interpreter and being a tour guide lies in the rules that restrain one's behaviour and decisions at work. As noted in the observations, there is a tendency among managers to associate the ‘dos and don'ts’ that orchestrate the ways interpreters perform with the meaning of professionalism. Managers often meticulously institutionalise the rules across the organisation, meanwhile staying alert to the behaviours that violate those rules. For example, the job of an “advocate” is often exemplified to educate interpreters:

This lady appears in Spanish TV and persuades people to come over [to the UK] with her number. She claims to be an interpreter, but advises people how not to get jobs and live on the benefits. She holds that ‘what I'm doing in my free time is my choice; if I sit there filling in a form with somebody, that's my choice. But when I am in the job of interpreting, I am an interpreter! [A-Mng-3]

Such practice is perceived by managers as “crossing the line too much” [A-Mng]. The Director even condemns this person as “digging her own grave”:

She can no longer work as one [interpreter]. She can become an advocate for

Spanish people and charge for it, but not to pretend to be an interpreter and wants to be paid as an interpreter! [A-Director]

Her angry, frustrated tone drew my attention to the fact that interpreters are suffering from the fuzzy boundary between occupations and constantly shrouded in a sense of insecurity due to the invasion from amateurs [jnl]. Whilst the need to demarcate the territory is apparent, the critical link that decides the quality—the entry requirement—is often missing. Interviewees confirm that there remains a tacit rule in the market that ‘quantity supersedes quality’: agencies build reputations upon the mere fact of numerical data about the scale of provision they offer or have undertaken in the past. When Insight was approached by a larger agency with the opportunity of collaborative provision, the director commented:

He said he gonna use the old ones in their books. It’s not been updated for years. He doesn’t even know if they [the interpreters] have changed job or still stay there but, they won’t check...you know, these days no one would bother until the point we know we won the contract, that’s how procurement drives. [A-Director]

This alludes to a view that some agencies thrive on tendering for and securing procurement contracts. The lack of investment and interest in this profession is seen as rendering vetting an unused practice in such agencies, and ‘real’ interpreters (i.e. educated, capable and available) a precarious occupational group. To tackle that, managers also closely monitor untrained interpreters who have been working in the field for a long time. Once, a note was found to be attached to an interpreter contact, writing that “She works for XX [a partner agency] but they are not very happy about her”. The field notes recorded the following conversation on this issue [jnl]:

I asked the Director why put a note on this person, she explained to me that this person “gonna try very hard to please me.” She said she would send to this interpreter “more stuff to read”, I then realised this person must have been marked as one of those “suspicious” interpreters on the name roll. The director further told me that 20 years ago when she got started, “there was no such a profession called PSI”. There were people in the community who are bilingual and help people around and “their role sometimes got a bit muddled up”. She paused and pointed to the photo of the person, “So she was one of those that involves in community work and has been interpreting for 20 years. I think she



just has this old way of working; she can be more involved than she should really be.” I then asked her about this person’s assessment results. The Director said she doesn't think her test was like flying colours. “You know sometimes people get really bad habits. If you don't train them for the very start, they’ve just been left to do what they think. And sometimes it is not actually right. They’ve been doing it for so long, and you find it really difficult to change.”

The Director’s complaint points to, again, the blurred distinction between a community support worker and a professional interpreter. The past two decades of professionalisation somehow has not changed the ethnic bond between the interpreter and their community in the eye of the general public. As one Czech interpreter stated:

They think we are actually from the same minority communities. They see us first time as someone from ‘them’ and they don't understand we are independent. Even if you tell them you are impartial, they still tend to believe “Oh you are here for me, so you will help me.” [B-Int-2]

The issue of lack of peer recognition can also be confirmed by interpreters’ accounts [B-Int]. When interpreters were asked about “How do you feel other professionals perceive the status of interpreters?”, roughly 70% of them touched upon the problems that are framed as “not recognised”, “invisible” or “still ignored”. A typical answer is:

The police can’t really imagine that this is my profession, and my reply is always to make clear that this is not a good job, it is not student job, it is a profession, because I studied for it as long as a lawyer has studied for their career. [B-Int-6]

Managers seem to show no tolerance for “old way of working” characterised by “bad habits” and “too much involvement” [A-Director] in the ethnic communities. By watching the entry to the profession carefully, Insight reinforces its role as an institutional gate-keeper. Its construction of professionalism backgrounds the charitable and caring origin of the work, but prioritises the need to separate, to classify and to differentiate. One manager shares how she felt when the doctor refused to work with a private interpreter in the clinic [A-Mng-2]:

What happened last time when the patient was sent away, got refused treatment—that was the only time I feel something **positive** happened. I don't feel it’s good for the patient, but at least they need to understand there are

consequences to this action [the patient brings her private interpreter into the clinic interview, author's emphasis].

The field diary puts it this way: “while I appreciate that her point is to make PSI as visible as an independent profession, I did not feel very comfortable about the story itself, nor did I agree with the “positive” result as felt by the manager.” [jnl] “Sending the patient away” might have reasserted the professional authority in deciding how work should be done, but this does not come without a price. The real completion of the work—to meet the patients’ medical and psychological needs—has been essentially compromised.

#### 6.4.2 Moulding Work Ethics of Interpreters by Organisational Norms

The *collective* boundary that Insight demarcates interprofessionally (4.4.1) cannot hold without *individual* interpreters’ adherence to the code of conduct in their day-to-day work. Another way of enacting boundary work thus involves formulating organisational principles to govern interpreters’ work behaviours. This is typically revealed in managers’ ‘rule-based’ construal of interpreting ethics. The following section reports two components of ethical conduct that attract most attention from managers.

##### *“Maintain confidentiality at all times”*

Confidentiality is a key tenet in interpreters’ code of ethics. Aware that dealing with the service users in community settings can be challenging, managers cannot emphasise more to new entrants about the importance of “being discreet”:

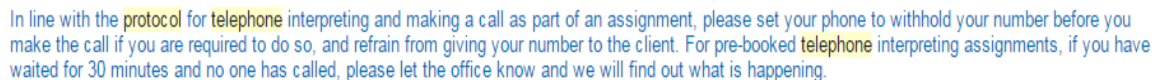
You need to be very discreet about these things, even if you think it would not do any harm to mention something, you are still breaching the code. There are communities very small, even the hints like nodding their heads or rolling their eyes, you are giving out information. [A-Director]

Attention has been drawn to some careless moves that might easily cause harm to people, including “nodding their heads” and “rolling their eyes”; failure to pay attention to those details are regarded as “breaching the code”[A-Mng-2]. Being able to maintain confidentiality is thus perceived as an inherent characteristic of professionalism by Insight. This is also related to the director’s own experience:

When I first came to Townsville in the late 1980s, people are keen to check on my family background before each interpreting assignment, especially “who are your parents”. Often, the initial question was “Oh, do you own a restaurant?” As soon as I said no, they are very happy about me. Because they feel they can

trust me. They think if you know everyone, you would just go and tell it. They don't understand confidentiality is one of the codes of conduct. [B-Director]

Her narration reflects the historical context when interpreting emerged along with the influx of immigrants. This in part explains the long-held desire of Insight managers to specify a set of rules for the professional conduct by leveraging the organisational template. Existing corporate policies regarding confidentiality include, for instance, a telephone protocol that reminds interpreters to set their mobile phone withheld when making a call prior to the appointment [doc]:

A screenshot of an email containing a telephone protocol. The text is as follows: "In line with the protocol for telephone interpreting and making a call as part of an assignment, please set your phone to withhold your number before you make the call if you are required to do so, and refrain from giving your number to the client. For pre-booked telephone interpreting assignments, if you have waited for 30 minutes and no one has called, please let the office know and we will find out what is happening." The words "protocol for telephone" and "telephone" are highlighted in yellow in the original image.

In line with the protocol for telephone interpreting and making a call as part of an assignment, please set your phone to withhold your number before you make the call if you are required to do so, and refrain from giving your number to the client. For pre-booked telephone interpreting assignments, if you have waited for 30 minutes and no one has called, please let the office know and we will find out what is happening.

Figure 6.3: A Screenshot of the Telephone Protocol Attached to Emails

Apart from signing a confidentiality agreement with interpreters, new entrants will be instructed to read thoroughly a separate “Code of Ethics Handbook” included in their induction packages [doc].

In practice, booking operators are told not to assign tasks to interpreters who might have prior contact with the client or the client’s network. In fact, Insight interpreters are discouraged to take jobs when they are friends of the client.

Although Insight has been honouring confidentiality via various rules, they are still struggling to provide sufficient job details for interpreters to prepare. As revealed by a manager:

Our clients tell us that they would like to share more details but they are also restricted by confidentiality. It takes time for them to understand our profession but we always ask them for more, or advise them at least [to] brief interpreters before the meeting. [A-Mng-1]

About this, interpreters have consensus that the key to reducing work uncertainty and performance errors lies in the amount and the quality of the information they have before the meeting [B-Int]. Interpreters seem to come to terms with the unpredictability of their assignments:

I guess that’s part of our job. I mean I can do whatever I can based on what I have at hand. If they are reluctant to share information, then they have to be responsible for my mistakes too. [B-Int-13]

The above quote seems to indicate that the interpreters' code of ethics, which includes an adherence to confidentiality just as other professionals have, does not seem to be widely recognised (and perhaps trusted) by the public sector professionals.

*“If someone hands you a red packet<sup>9</sup>, you can't really refuse it!”*

The second aspect of work ethics that Insight keeps a watchful eye on is the issue of impartiality. Similar to confidentiality measures, a home visit protocol is also compiled to prevent the interpreters from being left in an ethical dilemma:

In line with the protocol for home visits, please wait outside for the official to arrive and enter the premises together, i.e. do not go into the client's home yourself. When the assignment is finished, please leave with the official.

Figure 6.4: A Screenshot of the Home Visit Protocol Attached to Emails

However, not all interpreters are comfortable with this required practice. Concerns are sometimes raised when interpreters arrive earlier than the official at the relevant premise.

In one training session for example:

I have never managed to arrive at the same time with the health visitor... When I go into a dodgy area, because I don't want to arrive earlier, I take a slow walk. But when I'm waiting around either the doctor has arrived earlier or he is late I don't know. To be honest I feel a bit scared. I actually feel safer with the clients than standing outside. [A-Int-1]

As a participant there, I felt she made a valid point about the workplace safety issues especially when sessional workers are mostly alone (except with the officials) to do their assignments in an unfamiliar space. But inadvertently or not, this was not directly addressed by the director who only highlights the purpose is “to keep a professional distance”:

Because before someone went in with the family in the house, by the time the official arrived, they are already there having a cup of tea. The official didn't like that, and when the appointment finished, the interpreter stayed behind and finished the tea. Then we got a complaint. [A-Director]

From Insight's perspective, “keep[ing] a professional distance” is a crucial parameter to

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<sup>9</sup> In China and other East Asian countries, a monetary gift wrapped up inside a red packet or an envelope may be given on a special occasion such as a wedding, graduation or the birth of a baby. This quote is explained later on.

gauge the level of professionalism. Interpreters are required not to spend private moments with clients and always enter or exit from the premises together with the home visit officials. What managers seem to overlook here, however, is the lack of safety measures in place that might prevent interpreters from ‘behaving professionally’ in their required way. Similar confusion emerged in the interviews with interpreters in the second stage of data collection. None of them mentioned any training to assess the risks of the workplace has ever been provided by agencies, nor have they been informed of the potential dangers posed by particular clients and places. Although they agreed that the health and safety measures are inadequate, they were not sure who to consider responsible for that:

We are self-employed, so I guess we have to take care of ourselves. Besides, agencies are not necessarily reliable, if we are warned of danger, who gonna do their jobs? [B-Int-13]

Using “first person” is another protocol to avoid the perceived advocacy. The advantage, said by one manager, is to “stimulate more direct communication between the service user and service provider” and “allow you to remain detached and objective” [A-Mng-3]. More importantly, the Director believes that:

The more all interpreters are doing it this way, the more people know this is how to do it. The problem is when people give in, ‘Oh she just keeps using she’, people would continue to think that is the way to do it.[A-Director]

This is reflected in the field notes as “work-floor professionalism shaping process”[jnl], because the remarks revealed a commendable persistence in seeking changes on the ground through working with and educating the lay public and the public services staff. It also indicates managers’ intention to regulate a profession with little infrastructure in place—what is needed is a set of ground rules for interpreting practice. In this connection, the rule of neutrality has often been conveyed by Insight as “You are just there to interpret; remain non-judgemental” [A-Mng]. In a training session, it has been interpreted below by a tutor:

Sometimes you may well disagree with certain things, but your point doesn't matter, because whether you agree or disagree, it doesn't matter. [jnl]

On other occasions, however, the mechanistic, passive way of responding to the diverse situations looks problematic even to Insight managers. For example, the Director

acknowledged the difficulty in maintaining impartiality in real-life circumstances:

See this kind of code of conduct, you need to interpret it with caution. It is usually written quite vague, because they cannot possibly cover all the scenarios. If it starts mentioning them, there will be too many ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’, what if this happens or that, there will be different kinds of answers. [B-Director]

Such discrepancies suggest that managers are likely caught between implementing a standardised approach and promoting ethical judgement based on a case-by-case analysis. Thus when addressing different audiences, they adopt different rhetoric strategies to interpret the dilemmas. Between internal members, for example, the director appeared to be very open-minded about the extreme encounter she has experienced:

I had people come to me bringing food. Very difficult to tell them, ‘Sorry, I don’t want it.’ The worst one, when I said worst he is actually very nice, someone sent me a pack of pork dumplings and she wanted to see me eating it! A nightmare in a way, but it was very nice. [B-Director]

Yet field observations indicate that stories as such are rarely openly shared with trainee interpreters. Managers seem to refrain from discussing what had actually *happened* in those encounters other than pointing out what rules are to follow in a prescriptive way. Differentiated levels of neutrality are thus constructed and negotiated by Insight members. “Being impartial” has been redirected to novice interpreters as “keep[ing] a professional distance from the clients” [B-Mng], which some feel obliged to do but struggle in practice to obey:

“In my culture, when they hand you money, you can say no, but if someone hands you a red packet on some occasions, you can’t really refuse! It’s not bribery, it’s just showing gratitude. It’s very rude to decline. [A-Int-12]”

This indicates that some organisational rules might have become a mental burden for practitioners, resulting in ever-greater perplexity and cognitive processing efforts in actual work fields.

### 6.4.3 Claiming Representative Power of the Profession

The findings have so far shown how Insight’s organisational logic intersects with the key elements of professionalism—boundary (6.4.1) and ethics (6.4.2). This sub-section further introduces evidence of the impact produced by the ever-augmenting authority of management on work practices.

Each interpreter is given a company badge on which an ID photo and his or her name is placed below Insight's trademark. Before an assignment starts, interpreters are obliged to recite the "Self-Introduction" text at the back of the badge, which starts with: "My name is \_\_\_\_ from Insight" and proceeds with a succinct explanation of the role of interpreters and key interpreting protocols [doc]. The purpose of that, as explained by the Director, is to "make this as a procedure" because "it's important to establish the boundary at the beginning" [A-Director]. Such initiative formalises the briefing stage where each conversant is supposed to understand the respective position in the forthcoming communicative event.

A few interpreters naturally think this looks as if they were "representing the agencies that work for"[B-Int-6], which builds into Insight's strategy in constructing the professional identity since the trademark of Insight and interpreter's photo are visually presented to the public sector staff. This intention of the management has been explicitly stated on other occasions (e.g. the Director speaks to trainee interpreters):

I have to see all the candidates. I have to speak to them. That's why I know all of you and I will recognise you on the street if I see you. I just think it is important to know who is **representing** our organisation. [A-Director]

Making freelance interpreters feel the office 'homelike' is another mechanism to enact representation (see also 6.2.1). Managers often conduct "follow-up checking with new interpreters after first couple of assignments" to see how they feel and to "provide on-going support"[A-Mng-3]. They are aware that "this is possible only because all members working in the office are interpreters"[A-Director]. When something happens, "reporting any incidents ASAP to the office" becomes realistic and regular, which satisfies the need of interpreters who are generally lacking support from the institutional environment. For example, when interpreters were asked: "what to do if you come across some difficulty at work", a typical answer could be:

I don't think the agency is going to help you. They don't speak any other languages. XX's [an interpreting agency] owner is Pakistani, he hardly speaks English. [The Director] in Insight is an interpreter herself of course she is different. Most people who are running an agency don't know much about interpreting and they can't give any help in terms of terminology. I once phone Insight crying after an appointment. I know they would know that some people can't deal with those situations. [B-Int-15]

Given the unresolved debate on “who you can talk to” when interpreters leave a traumatised situation, Insight’s strategy of “sheltering interpreters” looks positive. But in another case where an Albanian interpreter asked about the possibility to confide in co-workers, the Director expressed doubts about the actual reliability of the collegiality:

Interpreter: Is it okay to open up to other colleagues or other team members, like interpreters within a team?

Director: Here in Insight, if you have a problem, you can talk to us in the office, me or other admin staff. I’m not sure about talking to other interpreters outwith the organisation on your own, although they are supposed to, well, everyone works for different agencies—the **‘team thing’ is quite loose**.

Since this dialogue occurred towards the end of the fieldwork, the Director’s answer did not entirely surprise me. Associated it with results reported in Identity work and Technical work, it is not difficult to infer that “the network of the PSI workforce becomes increasingly fragmented in the wake of procurement scheme” [jnl]. As I put it in the journal, professional ties are weakened because interpreters are more likely to be represented by multiple agencies rather than a cohesive occupational community. While Insight is originally working towards forging collectivism to beat the drum for interpreters, it is inevitably creating a divide between organisational insiders and outsiders—the making of the team automatically excludes those who do not ‘belong to’ the team. Through various organisational rules and mechanisms, Insight managers can purposively establish its own territory and assume the leadership over an emerging profession based on their hard-won organisational resources. The episode below extracted from the field notes illustrates an undisguised confrontation between interpreting professionals and some subpar contracted agencies: [jnl]

One morning in late June, only a manager with me were staying in the office. A middle-aged male interpreter walked in to hand over his job sheets. The manager immediately recognised him, Steve, a Punjabi-English interpreter. Unlike others who would shortly leave office after chat, Steve seemed to have something on his mind. After brief exchange with greetings, he started to ask something that he genuinely cared about:

Steve: You don't have the police one?

Manager: No, SG has got the contract.



Steve: Oh. humf, I don't work very much for them now, used to be the No.1 for them, but... not anymore. I don't care much.

Manager: Yeah, they don't like people to question them.

Steve: You won't believe that. I used to work for them a lot in high court, but last November I got a case in Town Martin; two accused, I was interpreting for one, and the other interpreter was also from SG. That one suddenly started to make a mess, and the accused was struggling to understand. So I raised this issue to the judge, but SG doesn't like it: 'Why you are objecting to my interpreter?' –that's how they reacted to me.

Manager: Oh, how does SG know that?

Steve: Because that case collapsed with my objection. Obviously I don't think I did anything wrong. It was when they [solicitors] started to present a list of evidence, the interpreter started making a mess, really a mess, not one or two mistakes, you know. What would you do in this situation?

Manager: Well, yeah...it's not often for me to speak up for SG. But, if I am in their position, I would like you to tell me first.

Steve: I understand your point, but my job is...

Manager: It's a difficult situation. I know.

Steve: So since then they don't like me, they don't call me anymore. But, who cares? Especially when you know you didn't do anything wrong, because if you are in my shoes you will do the same.

Manager: Yeah, well...[A-Mng-Int]

To carefully jot down Steve's story, I had to control my emotion on the spot to stay calm. I cannot rush to conclude that Steve made the best decision in court without actually being there, nor could I judge the narration itself to be true and complete. But as one of the very few knowledgeable witnesses who can understand the mistakes made in a different language, I believe, as reasserted by Steve, there should be nothing wrong to simply "blow the whistle and defend the justice" [jnl]. The consequence of doing that, however, truly reveals the problematic relationship between interpreters and certain contracted agencies. To the extent that the latter can abuse their growing power easily, interpreters can hardly make any independent judgement which is not in the interest of agencies. Noticeably, despite showing a general understanding of the incident, the Manager's attitude was rather

ambiguous. She did not completely consent to Steve's justification, and instead emphasised the 'reporting duty' of interpreters towards agencies. Later in the afternoon, that manager retold the story to a co-worker/interpreter in the office:

I don't think SG will stay happy with that...I suppose, if you put yourself in their shoes, you know, "you work for me, and he also works for me". If you think that person is bad, I would want you to tell ME first. Not to bypass and tell the whole world. But in the same breath, I would also like to think that no interpreter we send will be in that situation, because we test everyone to ensure that won't happen. [A-Mng-2]

From here the point of controversy was made clearer: the concerns with the organisational reputation. "Tell me first" remains a preferred option because the company's interest must be prioritised over almost anything else. Suffice it to say that managers' stance to some extent acquiesced SG's backlash against Steve. On a different occasion, the same incident was perceived differently by two Insight interpreters in the office [A-Int]:

A: That's incredible! What can he do? I mean the case is happening and of course you need to tell them. I find him a poor guy! I never want to put myself in that situation, it's absolutely awful. The bad interpreter is still working for SG, and they threw out the good one. It is so unfair.

B: Yes he said he was the No.1 interpreter for SG before this.

A: If SG does this to me, I will go to court and do something about it. You have nothing to lose anyway, tell the court they block your jobs. Because if I wait and never say anything, the other person might be prosecuted wrongly.

Although it is hard to predict how different interpreters will react in that difficult situation, this incident reveals consequential impact on justice, professionalism and interpreters themselves. As reflected in the field notes, "the forces between the organisation and the profession may become confrontational when interpreters have to make an either-or choice between 'lose the job' and 'adhere to the corporate ethics'"[jnl]. While professionalism requires interpreters to maintain integrity at work and exercise independent discretion, the employment organisation, on the other hand, preserves the decision-making authority and critically guards the almost exclusive access to work that requires professionalism. Insight is no exception to such competing logics. As indicated by the director, their solution is to "test everyone at the entry to ensure that won't happen from the start" [A-Director].

#### 6.4.4 Summary

This section focused on constructing the alternative yet equally essential trait of professionalism—boundary and ethics for PSI. It has addressed how Insight managers perform the boundary work in the professional sphere using various organisational infrastructures. This type of institutional work involved three generic themed orientations. The first one is primarily concerned with managers' perception of the undefined occupational boundary and its historical antecedents (6.4.1). Organisational standards that differentiate interpreters from 'nearby' professions such as advocate, community worker and tour guide are established and applied at service delivery level by Insight. Besides, managers paid special attention to shape the jurisdictional awareness of new entrants through strict screening procedure that is strongly welcomed by practitioners. The perspective then shifts from 'between' the professions to 'within' the profession: the second theme (6.4.2) attends to the organisational stance on the code of ethics in the actual work context. To enhance performance at the actual place of the interpreting assignment, Insight managers have designed a set of internal 'work rules'. These rules bear strong corporate traits in that they are not always constituted as standard parts of the code of practice but in many ways normalise interpreters' behavioural patterns at work. There are, however, still discrepancies between what the rules prescribe and how actions are performed in reality. Using organisational imperatives and resources to reinforce the role-boundary landscape is de facto making the commercial organisation a powerful representative of the emerging profession (6.4.3). Whenever the interests of the subpar agencies are threatened, they can weaken the autonomy that an occupational group strives for and subjugate it under various forms of control.

#### **Summary of the Chapter**

So far the analytical perspective has been directed at the institutional work enacted *within* the organisation. Three types of organisational initiatives are identified within the framework of a professional project underpinned by knowledge (6.3) and ethics (6.4) led by an interpreter-run organisation with a unique identity (6.2). The presentation of the internal human resources management system reveals that Insight is constructing a hybrid model that differentiates its approach from that of mainstream agencies. Within this relatively unexplored territory, managers are able to deploy their ideas experimentally and set up corporate rules to regulate service delivery in their preferred way. In so doing, they have not only restructured interpreters' conventional means of knowledge acquisition and exchange, but also prevented unchecked lay persons from entering into the profession

under the auspices of Insight logic. The next chapter will report the institutional work that is performed inter-organisationally. These types of institutional work often involve promulgating Insight's ethos to the buyers and consumers in the wider field and disseminating the intended professional order to effect field-level change. Attention will be given to interaction between Insight managers and the interpreters, clients and competitors outwith the organisation when actual interpreting assignments are delivered.

## Chapter 7 Inter-Organisational Work of Disseminating the Intended Professional Order

### |Introduction

To address the research question about the types of institutional work that Insight actors enact and how that is received by interpreters, Chapter Four presents the findings of mainly three dimensions of organisational activities dedicated to establishing the *intra-organisational* rule system. This Chapter, however, shifts the focus from the inward structuring onto the type of institutional work performed outwardly to influence the organisational field. Three themes are identified under the category of inter-organisational work for institutional change: 7.2 *Practice work* that focuses on the work-floor service delivery; 7.3 *Legitimacy work* on enlisting support of allies and antagonise opponents; and 7.4 *Enclosure work* on re-landscaping the professional order in the domain through creating a proto-institution.

### |Practice Work

This section describes managers settle into the core business routines to broker the deal with clients and interpreters. Defined as “actors’ efforts to affect the recognition and acceptance of sets of routines” (Zietsma and Lawrence 2010, p.193) the concept ‘practice work’ is adopted in this case to conceptualise the shared understanding and procedures of booking management that enable interpreting assignments to be carried out outwith the intermediary organisation. The process elucidates how managers incorporate the socio-organisational norms into interpreters’ code of conduct, as they engage with the wider group of institutional actors. Five episodes emerged from the data: 7.2.1 “Travel time matters”; 7.2.2 “Getting it right the first time”; 7.2.3 “A little coercion, doesn't hurt”; 7.2.4 “I will watch the child for you”; and 7.2.5 “Represent us in a responsible way”.

#### 7.2.1 “Travel Time Matters”

Travel time is the chief target for change. The recent shrinkage of public expenditure has meant that non-local interpreters who are hired (mainly due to the lack of localised language services) can no longer reasonably charge for travel time. Pressures from not only the buyer but also neighbouring professions compel interpreters to accept lower pay. Many agencies have tacitly agreed to price-cuts, resulting in widespread discontent among interpreters with these agencies. In Insight, tension around this issue arises on a

day-to-day operation, where deals and agreements are effected through constant bargaining and negotiating. For example, in an email request from a solicitor, a precondition on travel time was clearly raised:

I wondered whether you have any other Albanian interpreters who can attend to my client at this Cloudwill Ave address without incurring a travelling expense fee, as you are aware that LAB [Legal Aid Board] does not permit us to meet any travel time or travel expense in these circumstances. [email]

Aware of the difficulty, the operators immediately began calling around interpreters. When all the possibilities are exhausted, they informed the client that “only one interpreter is willing to come from up north, only if the job is 2-hour minimum” and “she [the interpreter] would need her train ticket reimbursed” [A-Mng-1]. The reply from the client was unexpectedly evasive. At first, they ‘hummed and hawed’; then they warned Insight that they “will need to get sanction from LAB to cover the interpreter's off-peak train ticket”; a couple of hours later they followed up with “it may be possible on the basis that there appears to be a scarcity of Albanian interpreters available” [email]. It was not until two days later that the go-ahead from the client was given at such late notice that the interpreter had only half a day to prepare for the assignment. Subsequently, travel time was thus not paid, but “fortunately travel expenses were reimbursed” [A-Mng-2]. As the Director explained,

This is one of those very rare occasions when LAB dropped and eventually let go. It must be because they can't source any Albanian speakers elsewhere. [A-Director]

According to Insight, LAB is among many legal professional bodies that use interpreting services, and it is certainly not alone in placing restrictions on interpreters' travel claims. The problem is not how much is reasonable but “why professionals of another field are able to call the shots at interpreters” [A-Mng-1]. Such institutional pressure bears down on interpreters, to the extent that it changes the way interpreting work is organised and undermines professionalism. Hard as it may try, Insight is not fully immune from this isomorphic force, especially in terms of job allocation. For instance, in the case below, one booking operator is speaking to an interpreter over the phone about an assignment:

We pay travel time, but do you drive? We think travel time matters because we don't want to flat three hours travel time expenses to our clients if we can avoid it. So I think the job in Balmore area would be nearer to you...

Based on the observational notes, at least two factors are taken into consideration when jobs are distributed: being (un)able to drive and the location of the interpreting encounter, which seems to be all down to travel costs. Admittedly, driving is a bonus skill for many service occupations nowadays, as complex remedial or caring activities are increasingly performed in the client's destination of choice and rather than in the service provider's office. However, when improving work efficiency is translated into financial burdens placed onto interpreters, the motives behind such rhetoric become suspicious. The 'manipulative clout' of the market logic is evident in the following discussion about a request for a Russian interpreter [A-Mng]:

A: The problem with the Russian one is that you have to be there so early, as XX [a potential available interpreter] doesn't drive, he would have to leave really really early. To use public transport is very hard for that time in the morning.

B: It won't make any sense, we won't make any money.

C: I'm not gonna go out of our way to send someone from up north. These people should realise we can't do it... If they want to go to SG, just go, cuz we can't afford that.

While it is possible that public transport may be completely unavailable in the above case, it is the perceived long travel time that prevents Insight members from taking the job further, judging from the conversation. The speakers appear to hold a strong sense of disappointment and frustration because the (quasi-) market logic, in whatever the guise, still favours the price-cutting competition and the rule "cheapest wins"[A-Director]. Should they accept the offer, the expenses would be either borne by the interpreters or by the company. At the end, "not going out of their way" is perhaps a practical trade-off to avoid infringing on interpreters' claims. This echoes the dilemma where costs can sometimes supersede other considerations for commercial organisations. On other occasions, driving ability becomes a 'criterion' even in the early selection process of trainees, as revealed in a conversation by two members:

A: So she's studying Health [option] but she failed the main part of the exam [DPSI], only got a letter of credit.

B: But she drives. That's great. And also she doesn't get a lot of jobs.

A: Yeah. That's a plus, because we then won't have only you who can drive.

[A-Mng]

The fact that the candidate can drive and has good availability seems to matter more than the skills evidenced by the qualifications. While interpreters are supposed to be well-versed in a range of settings, some are more familiar with one than others. For that reason professional interpreters are, ideally, required to pass different options of DPSI so as to work in different public service settings. In the actual booking management, much consideration is given to logistical factors in order to efficiently fulfil more clients' requests, thus an interpreter's level of competence and specialised areas can easily go unnoticed. This could happen especially when practical concerns such as mileage are juxtaposed with required skills, managerial priority is rarely given to the latter. The situation may be worse and evidently unpredictable when taking into account the obscurity of the languages, degree of urgency, availability of public officials, the gender of the interpreter, and public transport accessibility. All these variations propel Insight to set up an internal mechanism to monitor the claimed expenses. One manager revealed:

I mean how do we monitor the mileage? First we trust people to be honest, second, if anything looks suspicious... we check, and if it's inconsistent, we change it. People know this, you know, I don't tell them subsequently I will do that. Some of them ask but most of them don't, they don't even notice. [B-Mng-2]

Further observations show that the "check" managers perform actually refers to using Google Map to make an estimation of the distance. Similar instruction is also given in the training of new managerial members. In the words of one manager dealing with job sheets:

There are a few people who take the chance, you know, if it is not reasonable, you can adjust it. Say, this is a very long time, but Middlespring is out of Townsville [where Insight locates]... Hmm to be honest I think that's way too long to go to Middlespring... She does live quite far away though, yeah she needs to get a train and transfer.

Insight often prides itself on insisting on paying travel time to interpreters, which differentiates it from its competitors, yet it still has to find ways to curb some costs. As stated in the contract, "Insight reserves the right to only pay the amount indicated by travel time and expense"[doc]. The tactic to 'quietly' adjust the 'unreasonable amount' of travel time and its reliance on a semi-reliable measurement tool indicates the mindset



of cost management. Intensive client control and limited budget force Insight to ration the extant resources carefully.

To this policy, interpreters express dissatisfaction about the unexpectedly reduced travel pay: “I often end up spending more on waiting for the bus or stuck in traffic.” [B-Int-1] Some claimed that underestimation of the travel time would make them feel their work was underappreciated: “I wouldn’t have taken the job if I knew my travel is not properly paid. It took me three hours total on the way for only a 10-minute assignment.” [B-Int-3]

More interpreters, however, complained about the long distance of travel and the complexity of logistics that are habitually neglected by mainstream agencies:

It was a last minute job and I have no idea how to get there. But they were like pushing me out of my place and keep me posted of the directions. I ended up hopping from bus to train, to another bus, and then a ferry! [B-Int-7]

This can frequently cause fatigue and anxiety before the actual interpreting starts. In the words of a Somali interpreter:

I felt very tired after rushing to the receptionist, but no time to take a breath, because the doctor has already called in the patient, and I had to come along. I remember I couldn’t gather my attention on any words at the start, were literally blabbering on... [B-Int-14]

Almost all interpreters report that they have been contacted by an agency claiming the “70-mile rule”. It basically states that the buyer will not pay travel expenses for the journey under 70 miles one way. “Travel time is payable on all journeys exceeding 90 minutes each way.” [doc] About this, one interpreter vented:

For those who don’t drive, it means we can no longer do any jobs slightly further to the town. Because any travel time spent about an hour will not be interesting. Funny how they would still try to get me to Bedrock or Waterwell [two towns nearby Townsville]. I feel like a piece of reduced food in the supermarket nowadays, cutting the price to get sold. [B-Int-4]

### *7.2.2 “Getting It Right the First Time”*

Another type of threat to Insight’s quality claim comes from the fierce competition between agencies. Operational tactics are found to be shrewd enough to neutralise rivals’

attack and defend Insight's market place. Give-and-take, pushing boundaries, and even pulling strings are some of the routine practices used to win buyers.

Implemented in a strong sales culture, the booking management process is fast-paced and stressful. Since manual work is needed to aid the "semi-automatic processing system" [A-Mng], procedurisation is extensively promoted to drive business performance in a way that the competitive market requires. For example, to make sure the fastest response are provided to the clients, each booking operator is instructed to follow a set of what they term "predefined formula" to do the job, which can break down to four key steps:

1. Always secure an interpreter first;
2. Immediately inform the client to lock the offer;
3. Roll out a new job number and send it to the client with details of the interpreter
4. Send the job details to interpreters. [doc]

Although the chain of activities appears to be straightforward, each constitutive component may be complex and involve multiple practicalities in its own right. To secure an interpreter, one needs to know their availability and location before the request sends in, especially when it is short notice; to 'lock the offer', sufficient information must be obtained from the client so that suitable interpreter can be matched (ideally), provided the client has already been educated with what is crucial information in the first place. Since a large proportion of jobs sent to Insight are not from direct clients but intermediary agencies themselves, which might complicate and prolong the checking processes. In this sense, it is striking that the booking operation does not literally start from the first phone call or email but at least a day before the assignment to plan ahead or as far back as the first time that the agencies gets to know the interpreter. The large information whiteboard displayed on the wall illustrates this point. It can be observed from the board that information concerning regular interpreters' availability, home address, preferences and strengths are transparently noted and can be understood at a glance [jnl].

Managers warn that "interpreters can wait for the job details to come", but if the response to clients is slow, "they might say 'Oh it's too late' and got someone else to go" [A-Mng-2]. To avoid such error, each operator's response time per request is recorded and monitored. "This helps to analyse the quality of customer service and remind people to speed up", stated by the director. Besides 'Taylorising' the workflow, delivering efficiency is another key measure for Insight to stay abreast of the market. Insight establishes itself as "open-minded" and keen on "embracing changes" [web].

Proceduarisation and efficiency are perhaps reflected in and meanwhile strengthened by the idea of “getting it right the first time”, meaning that “[I]f things are done right then it becomes a template you are going to use later”[A-Director]. The Director admitted that she is “very into quality” and prefers to “be strict with people”. This in part explains how Insight interprets the link between quality management and the quality of interpreting, as manifested in the quote below:

I can't tiptoe around one person. I will try not to be that dramatic... but I am very demanding. All I want is for us to act in a way that we are seen as professional people, that we do the best job we can as interpreters, as an interpreting agency, as people who provide high level of customer services.[B-Director]

In the case where possibilities to cover the job seem to be exhausted, operators are still not allowed to decline any jobs at their discretion. There is a managerial ‘embargo’ on saying no to clients without the director’s permission.

I don't want you to make the decision, whether it can be declined or not, cuz you don't know if you know everyone [all the interpreters], you're not gonna know all the things you can do, what you can push sometimes, because it depends.[A-Director]

Management authority is thus centralised in the hands of a few individuals owing to their personal network and exclusive resources (e.g. knowing who can be ‘pushed’, discussed in 5.2.3), rather than distributed in a system of checks and balances. Members tend to feel very bad when they fail to fulfil the requests, which the Director considers as a positive implication of their identification with Insight. She motivates the team to “aim higher and care more”, celebrating each win with company-wide recognition:

Often at the beginning we only aim to make one [assignment request] out of four, then we end up managing three or four...It's too easy to just give up! [A-Director]

Surrounded and saturated by the morale-boosting organisational discourse, members of Insight spare no efforts in persuading clients to take the service on board. Tactics often used include suggesting the possibility of rescheduling to suit interpreters, negotiating for more response time, and in some circumstances, having managers drive interpreters to the workplace. A witty bargaining line is quoted below:

May I ask you don't ask another agency until I get back to you? The interpreter is going to a lot of trouble for us, and we can really do with the job to be honest, with it being such a quiet week [A-Director].

In contrast to the managers' "very-into-quality" claim [A-Mng] and a few preventative measures discussed, there found to be few quality assurance mechanisms in place to assess performance of interpreters. One item that remains mythical to many participants is the feedback they are instructed to collect from clients after each assignment is finished (Figure 7.1).

<b>██████████ To be completed by the Official at the requesting organisation (please use black ink)</b>	
I confirm that the above interpreter provided interpreting services to our organisation and service user today:	
Time started: _____	Time finished: _____
Signature: _____	Print name: _____
Overall satisfaction:	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback:	_____ _____

Figure 7.1: A Section of the Job Sheet of Insight

Observations show that managers only react to negative comments, as admitted by the Director:

Some of the things will be in an ideal world. You could have a development record for every single interpreter, see how, you know, the feedback is, and identify the training needs. It's too hard... If it's a bad comment, we will definitely follow up and it would be on the person's record. If it's an 'okay' or 'average', you just gonna take it as a 'good'. [A-Director]

However, the use of nonexpert judgement on interpreter performance invites suspicion in the managerial practice. Interpreters feel those remarks can be "unfair" and "unreliable", as revealed in a discussion on medical interpreting captured in the field notes:

B: I was in an appointment which was extremely difficult, a total nightmare. I think I did quite well, you know, and he [the medical staff] put me only a "good". I was thinking 'Oh my god, I could've just spanked you on the face!' What a hard work, believe me!

C: Some people don't have a clue what interpreting is about.

A: Some feedback may be unfair.

D: Absolutely. Like maybe you don't know a word for once, they would really put you down. 'You should've known everything'—but it's not like that. You ask for explanation and they should work with you.

C: They use the short-cuts. I remember the doctor said, she has B sth PP, then I said, ok, BCP? -No no, BPP...

D: Do you know what's the proper name for a slipped disk?

A: No, because slipped disk is what they use all the time.

D: But one doctor didn't. In the appointment he used the medical term, herniated disk. I have no idea of the term.

A: He is annoying. I have never experienced someone like that.

D: I am SORRY, you know, but He is awful! [A-Mng-Int]

This reflects the institutional difficulty that constrains the work of interpreters. The lack of understanding of interpreter's presence in communicative events prevent interpreters from working effectively. Moreover, agencies in general are short of reliable means to actually implement the quality control they claim, nor are they able to prepare new interpreters for the reoccurring challenges that others might have encountered in previous assignments. Obtaining feedback from clients seem to be more of a marketing strategy to impress customers than a way of monitoring interpreter performance.

### 7.2.3 "A Little Coercion doesn't Hurt"

Insight's high persistence in gratifying clients precisely reflects what they are in need of at the moment—a stable client base and an expanding market share. As managers desperately seek organisational legitimacy, interpreters are found increasingly exposed to the market force amplified by organisational authority. This section gathers a number of occasions when Insight members, under exterior pressure, 'forget' the importance of worker-job compatibility and turned 'pushy' on interpreters in order to make ends meet.

A snapshot of a chat among two members reveal the changing priority for matching interpreters with jobs:

A: Sophie works in college, and if she is not flexible, I mean if she can't do it, she won't budge. She is actually not the one going extra miles. If she has something on, she's not gonna change her dates for us.

B: I offered to three people and Wendy is the only one would try to change her plan, Marta and the other won't.

C: Marta is unbelievable.

A: Erika is there but she is baby-sitting. The thing is, Stafford Road is very easy for her, which is very close, but... Arghh, we've tried everything.

B: Erika drives, so she can **bring the kid** to the appointment...

D: And it might be because she doesn't want to.

B: Yeah, it's a bit complicated.

A: Sophie is in college now, try her again for the best of luck, because we are desperate.

D: I think she needs notice, for the last-minute appointment she always says no.

[A-Mng, author's emphasis]

This interaction indicates how managers' impression of different interpreters are negotiated and subsequently shape their booking choices. For example, Sophie is stereotyped as someone who "won't budge" and "always says no" for short-notice assignments, which stands in contrast with those who would "go the extra mile to meet our [Insight's] request" [A-Mng]. Erika is mentioned as a solution only if she could "bring the kid to the appointment" (suggested by Speaker B), which reflects their expectation of a 'loyal workforce' "literally sitting there waiting for our calls" [A-Director]. Indeed, it can be observed that Insight's trading of service is hugely affected by the fluctuating market demands. Their choice is largely limited by being the *secondary* supplier for many contracts, meaning they are only offered work assignments that a primary contractor cannot fulfil.

As most 'popular jobs' will go straight to the first-tier contractor, Insight are inevitably faced with what members call the "leftovers"— typically last-minute requests or at remote locations [A-Mng]. As a result, booking becomes a more exacting task as the chances of locating an available and qualified interpreter become smaller. Worse still, the 'law of the jungle' that applies in the market does not allow managers much time to hesitate: "Clients won't wait, and there are plenty of agencies will say 'yes' if we can't cover" [A-Mng-2].

Coincidentally or not, the majority of interpreters working for Insight are not employed on a full-time basis. College teacher, university student, baby-sitter and care-worker are all

their possible professional titles when they are not ‘working’ as an interpreter. This gives Insight the opportunity to leverage people’s flexibility without promising any job continuity. And because Insight does not recruit a large number of interpreters, a smaller team can be expected of being more loyal to the company. In the words of the Director:

If you give them a bit of more time, they can, will be able to sometimes ask people to change their own plans. Haha...but that’s sometimes how you get people to do things. [A-Director]

Managers are versed in ‘haggling with’ interpreters from time to time to cover the job. In some desperate situation, they can be surprisingly persistent in securing the available person:

I’m phoning you back just wondering if you can reconsider doing the job? Did you say you have to work five hours tomorrow? So I guess you could do it from 9 to 10, and then go to the interpreting appointment, and then go back to work until half past five? Haha... no?

...I’m gonna actually meeting your boss tomorrow morning, and I can ask her permission over the meeting... [A-Director]

Although it is not possible to track down how the interpreter reacted at the receiver end, the outcome of the persuasion was positive—the interpreter agreed to reschedule her work in order to do the job for Insight. Here it would be unfounded to assert that interpreters are ‘forced’ to take the job, as it was ultimately an individual choice. But what merits attention is the fact that availability becomes the singular criterion for booking irrespective of the ergonomic needs of the person to be sent. Besides, Insight managers seem to be able to reconfigure work resources to achieve sales targets by using manipulation tactics. In the Director’s terms, it is about “a little coercion doesn't hurt, and in the right direction”:

If you are mild with it, most people won't mind. I keep to a point to not to be pushy, but I am pushing [smile], you just need to know the boundary. Because I know everyone...also they see me as the boss, which is slightly different... You just have to know push a bit by what method. [B-Director]

She further explains that it would not always work but it might work well by evoking shame or guilt:

There are some people very dry, you can't push. ‘No, no, no’. That’s ok. This

is a slight manipulation because at the end of the day they just feel really bad. They will feel so bad that they would like to try. And also, hopefully people think they are part of the team? If they don't go, they are letting the team down. [B-Director]

Noticeably, this type of ideological influence is exercised legitimately. As managers emphasised that “they know every interpreter working for Insight” and treated them as “valuable assets” of the company [A-Mng], the groundwork laid for rapport-building and ‘team’ work development cannot be neglected. In a freelance market where one agency can invariably enlist more than 1000 interpreters across the country, not many enterprises would bother genuinely taking each individual under their wings. Managers tend to agree that the core of their work involves “learning the team”:

Not only their name, their language combinations, personal circumstances, availability, location, strengths... It's not good to phone them when they already told you they are in holiday, yeah? Then you learn people's habits.

In turn, the majority of the interpreters express positive identification with Insight, in the words of an Italian interpreter:

As I said I like working for Insight, I like them. And I don't work for them for the money... It is good for them because they at least know your qualities and what you are doing. Not like other agencies. They send you around. They don't really know about you [B-Int-1].

A few interpreters do feel a bit uncomfortable to accept the job, especially when the agents sound desperate. Some informants reveal that managers in Insight “can be a bit of pushy as well, but in a nice way” [B-Int-11]. Over half of the interviewees indicate that it is not always straightforward to say ‘no’ to certain agencies. One was concerned about losing work: “they would remember the times I decline the job and phone me less afterwards” [B-Int-9]. Others believe “some agencies would blacklist me if I don't do the job or ask them to pay more” [B-Int-4].

#### *7.2.4 “I will Watch the Child for You”*

Like other agencies, Insight considers it is essential for interpreters arrive punctually at the requested destination. But when incident of late arrival frequently occurs, the offender will be questioned and given written warning, quoted as below:

We have never had anyone who would have been well over an hour late for an



assignment. We had to run around like hens and chickens trying to cover the job. I want to establish whether it was a case of your timing being far too tight on this occasion...The hospital was not... happy with us [email, some parts omitted].

Field notes have recorded the exact moments when members “run around like hens and chickens” [jnl]: “Several rounds of calls came through from the client anxiously waiting for the ‘missing’ interpreter. As Mark gave no warning to Insight that he would be late, members naturally responded to the client that ‘he must be just around the corner and would appear in any minute’. After all, it was not their first time to deal with similar cases and they are convinced that if they apologise genuinely, people would understand. However, tension built up when they were told that Mark still had not showed up since last call at 40 minutes ago.

The hospital eventually decided to go ahead with the operation without the interpreter and filed a serious complaint against Insight. The director lost her temper with Mark. She shot his belated text an angry look, grumbling about his “irresponsible attitude” and “unprofessional behaviour”. The incident concluded with Mark’s apology afterwards. But the actual disciplinary measures were no more constructive than a “grievance email” asking for an explanation. Nothing substantial has been done to prevent a reoccurrence, apart from the director complaining that “it is very detrimental to Insight’s professional image” [A-Director]. One manager frankly admitted:

The situation doesn't allow us to do more, because we have a very small team, if one person is not available, you gonna have to ask the other person. Unless you make a decision, okay I will never use this person again, which happened before, but rarely. [A-Mng-2]

Even in extreme cases where the same interpreter is repeatedly late for the job, the decision to “consider stopping using someone” remains uncertain. In one incident, Magda was booked for an appointment at 2.30 pm but “she claimed that she’s never told where to go”. She only phoned back to the office at 2 pm to ask for the address, which angered one manager:

That’s just crazy! This is the third time... And if there are more people I am not gonna use her again, because she is just too much.[A-Director]

But after the initial dissatisfaction, managers still come to terms with a generous attitude

(“let’s not do it next time”), partly due to the huge demand for Polish interpreters. Knowing that “there is no win here, not good for us either”, the Director acknowledged “that is what we can do at this stage”. Insight eventually has to rely on giving some verbal warning which will “make her feel guilty, feel that she needs to take the responsibility, then she will not try again” [A-Director]. The interpreter Mark and Magda are only two of the many examples that manifest Insight’s attitude towards the obstruction to service quality and professionalism. Professionalism needs guided boundaries especially when the best practice of a nascent profession is yet to be taking root in everyday work realities. When practitioners are acting without the oversight of rules, it is perhaps time for organisational and managerial authority to intervene and check the freedom. As the Director argued:

Listen, in the code of conduct it writes be punctual, be responsible and be professional, what else can you say? You can’t hold their hands forever, if they cannot be responsible professionals, then we shouldn't be sending them. [A-Director]

But managers still keep “sending them and she keeps receiving jobs” because “we have no choice” [A-Mng-1]. Insight, like other agencies, has its vested interest in each job accomplished. The commercial returns based on that inevitably render managerial decision bounded by practical concerns. They are often caught between two stools—their heightened awareness to thwart bad practice from happening (‘being late’ in this example) and their incapacity to change what has happened. Insight must constantly squeeze a middle ground in the face of different demands of institutional forces with conflicting logic.

Occasionally, Insight receives emergency call-outs for medical interpreting assignments. To fulfil their promise of 24/7 customer service, members have to contact interpreters at night; for urgent requests, interpreters will be driven by managers to the hospital if taxi expense is not covered. Locating someone out-of-hours is not an easy task, especially past mid-night. As one manager reflected:

You have to be so apologetic, and then everyone is also so apologetic. I actually phoned Eva. But she was ill in bed, so couldn’t go. I just told her to go back to sleep. I phoned Avoro, no answer, but I think he might be still working. Then I got Rebecca who was prepared to go. But they don't drive, so I would’ve had to drive anyway. It’s quite far. [A-Mng-2]

This reveals that the policy of no payable travel expenses significantly reduces the incentives for interpreters to work irregular hours. Some agencies do not even offer differentiated rates for day and night shifts [B-Int]. This increases the difficulty in calling interpreters to work and the perceived responsibility that agencies assumes to enhance public service. To win clients and deliver the promise of being highly responsive, several key Insight members have to turn to “ambulance drivers” transporting interpreters to help with the front-line emergency.

The Director herself had quite a few experiences of being a ‘driver’. She recalled one case where she had to run errands for an interpreter:

It was a last-minute emergency. She phoned that she hasn’t got a babysitter, so she has to go to the hospital with the child. Then I said, ‘right, I will go now, and I will watch the child for you.’ What else can I do? She doesn’t have a car, and we can’t let her go in with a kid! ...The appointment was more than one hour, and I was sitting in car with the child, and the child woke up, hungry, thirsty and I was cold in the car. [A-Director]

Here, each single job is taken so seriously by Insight that managers are ready to do all they can to fulfil it, even if it means blurring the boundary between working and non-working life of interpreters. While watching the child is a rarer occurrence in agency practice, it illustrates that Insight is in its desperate attempt to prove its competency in meeting the contractual targets by delivering responsive and speedy service. The pursuit of professionalism is thus driven by achieving budgetary targets and fighting for the institutional recognition of its brand presence.

### *7.2.5 “Represent us in a Responsible Manner”*

Managers are concerned with how Insight interpreters dress at work. Interpreters are required to follow the bespoke dress code to “represent Insight in a responsible manner” [A-Mng-3]. In the words of the Director:

We are probably the only agency that insists on people’s dressing properly to do interpreting, because there are a lot of people out there thinking interpreting is someone just go there, you know, they don’t give us the respect...we want to change this. [A-Director]

Insight holds the view that employees’ work attire is linked to the professional image of a company and behaviour of a certain occupational group. It influences how the status

and the esteem of the group are framed by outsiders. Managers often compared this to other established professions that have unique uniforms to earmark their identity and differentiate them from the lay public. But the professional category of interpreters appears to be less noticeable. As reflected in the field notes, interpreters share the language, culture and perhaps the origin with the service users in their workplace, leaving them a less visible profession compared to the public service staff [jnl]. In this connection, the organisational dressing protocol defines the professionalism of interpreting by raising interpreters' awareness of image management in their day-to-day practice.

It is worth noting that managers' insistence on a dress code goes beyond the purpose of drawing professional boundaries. In the words of the Director:

We say personal hygiene is important. You cannot wear rip jeans or tights. We are trying to forge a professional image. We want to make sure the people sent out by us are presentable, not like just rolling out of the bed. It doesn't match with Insight's image. [A-Director]

The Director then disclosed some practitioners' undesirable habits and their inability to distinguish professional work and private life. There is therefore an ostensible expectation that interpreters should represent Insight in a responsible manner and pay attention to the impact of their behaviour on Insight's corporate image. By injecting *organisational* traits into *professional* activities and work, Insight paves the way for itself to become an organised, visionary and authoritative representative of the occupational community.

However, what stands in the way of observing this protocol is the fact that Insight cannot offer as many jobs as other mainstream agencies to interpreters. Once the Director frankly told a novice interpreter after his job interview:

I don't know how many jobs I can offer, so I don't want you to spend money on a pair of trousers. Because some people said I gonna buy myself a suit because I have to make sure Insight... I feel grateful people take it so seriously and that's what we need. [A-Director]

In reality, uncertainty remains as to whether Insight can secure more service contracts in the first place. Its limited legitimacy in the market renders the dress code ideal less operable and far from influential. It also indicates that good practice is hard to take effect when the commercial needs of a nascent organisation are unmet. In this sense, the

distinctiveness of Insight can gradually fade away and is reduced to a chunk of managerial rhetoric, hardly making any substantial difference to the reality of the PSI sector.

### *7.2.6 Summary*

Booking management is perhaps the most basic function of all interpreting agencies. Just as individual interpreters are paid per assignments, agencies are rewarded by meeting each booking request from client organisations. This section therefore sheds light on the *managed* interpreting activities at the heart of agency operations. The reported five episodes of institutional work are grounded in managers' experiences of the ongoing practices of 'brokering' with both interpreters and clients in order to make a deal. Core business routines reveal the managerial reinterpretation of professionalism and the organisational impact on the work practices of interpreters.

While managers resist the free-travel-time policy as they proactively negotiate with the clients, the choice of interpreter still largely depends on how much travel costs might occur and one's distance to the work venue. On top of that, Google-Map checks invite criticism as it does not fairly reflect interpreters' efforts and time dedicated to work, and there remains no consideration for the link between travel fatigue and work performance (7.2.1). Practice work is also characterised by standardisation and procedurisation, implemented by Insight to minimise the chance of missing any job offers and to provide highly efficient service. These organisational imperatives in this type of work fully incorporate the market logic in a sense that professionalism is predominantly framed as meeting commercial targets, assuring customer satisfaction and centralising managerial control. As a result, Insight's quality assurance claim seems to mainly assure the quality of buyers' experiences without necessarily assuring the quality of actual interpreting practice (7.2.2).

To secure a client, managers apply different tactics to engage with interpreters, even if "a little coercion" is needed now and then. This is mainly caused by Insight's disadvantageous position—at the lower end of the supply chain in the market. The ongoing efforts expended in team-building (see Identity work in 6.2) helps as more interpreters tend to identify with Insight. In turn they are more willing to accept the short-notice assignments for the sake of *helping* Insight. The consequence is often that interpreters feel "pushed" to the frontline even if the compatibility might be compromised (7.2.3). While Insight values punctuality a lot, managers are unable to practically inhibit poor work practice (e.g. being late) due to the functioning of business logic. In some

desperate situations, they are ready to turn an underpaid job (no payable travel time and expenses) into something of interest to interpreters again by becoming drivers for interpreters (7.2.4). Overall, the Practice work is found to heavily draw on the commercial side of the Insight logic. Such a logic fundamentally drives managers to remove the processual barriers in the service (7.2.2) and improves the professional image of individual interpreters (7.2.5), though each commitment made does come at a price.

## **Legitimacy Work**

This section focuses on the type of institutional work through which Insight disseminates new practices to key institutional actors in a bid to earn its recognition and enlist support to resist the dominant logic. It is defined as legitimacy work because of its organisational attempt at influencing external acceptance of its legitimate collective identity in the organisational field of PSI. As re-landscaping standards necessitates active participation of various stakeholders, Insight has proactively established partnership while strategically disrupting the perceived enemies in the way of *their* professional project. Three relevant themes emerged from the data: 7.3.1 Enrolling industrial partners in the new practice; 7.3.2 Devising work guidelines for public authorities; and 7.3.3 Managing perceived tensions arising from suspicious actors.

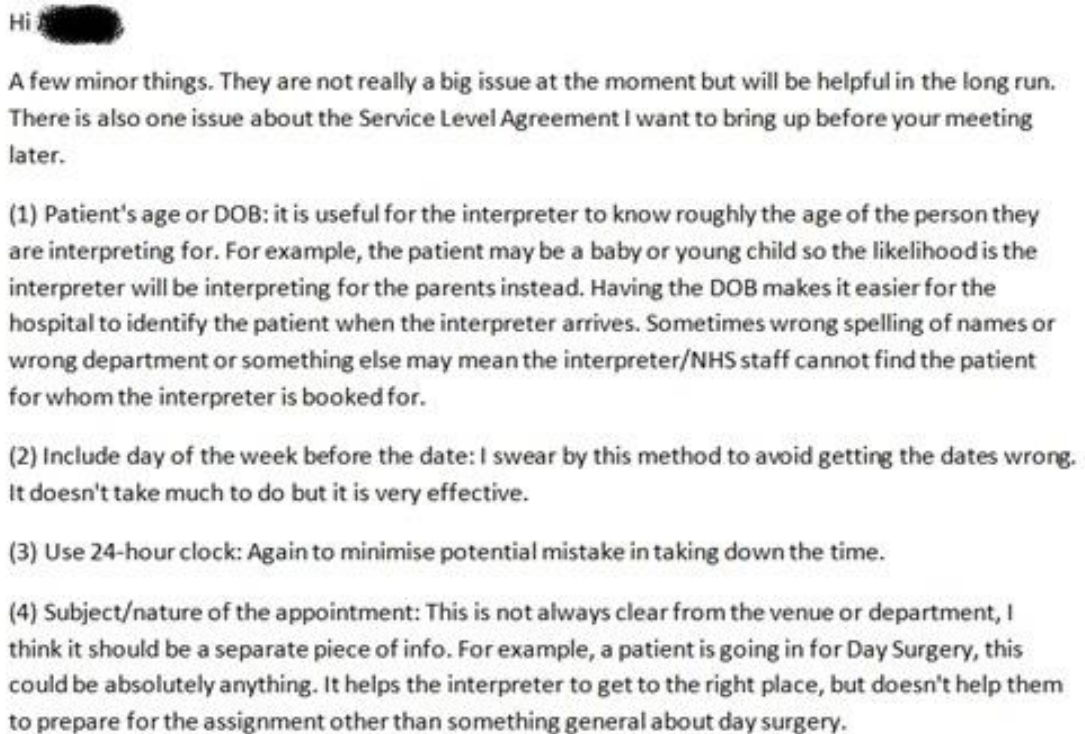
### *7.3.1 Enrolling Industrial Partners in the New Practice*

One of the key strategies for Insight to promulgate its claimed standard is through collaborative working, the “big feature of Insight” [doc]. Through contracting with local agencies, managers believe that they can “raise standards on a national scale” by “subscribing their partners to a common set of standards” [doc]. For the purpose of effective provision, its “preserved local service approach” is believed to enable optimal allocation of resources because “local companies tend to know the area, and the people best” [A-Director]. For the purpose of populating Insight standards, it works as well because Insight can easily spread out its influence starting from dispersive local nodes to the national network. In the words of the Director:

If we raise standards, it’s just us. We cannot address everything on our own. I want it to be the whole country. That’s why we work with partners. Some of them have already subscribed to our methods, and they request us to provide consultancy for devising assessment and training for them. [A-Director]

In doing so, Insight allows for sharing information and good practice through commercially viable plans. Their approach has been procured by several non-private

agencies and has penetrated into the daily practice of local interpreters. For example, one adjacent local city council has agreed to consult Insight for all their translation projects; two regional councils have been regularly requesting their support in recruiting interpreters and providing training. Apart from ‘selling out’ their expert package of interpreting management, managers also work directly with commercial agencies to internally modernise their way of organising work [doc]. In search of the documentary evidence that reflects their ‘expert insight’, an email written to the director of a local agency was found especially illuminating:



Hi [REDACTED]

A few minor things. They are not really a big issue at the moment but will be helpful in the long run. There is also one issue about the Service Level Agreement I want to bring up before your meeting later.

(1) Patient's age or DOB: it is useful for the interpreter to know roughly the age of the person they are interpreting for. For example, the patient may be a baby or young child so the likelihood is the interpreter will be interpreting for the parents instead. Having the DOB makes it easier for the hospital to identify the patient when the interpreter arrives. Sometimes wrong spelling of names or wrong department or something else may mean the interpreter/NHS staff cannot find the patient for whom the interpreter is booked for.

(2) Include day of the week before the date: I swear by this method to avoid getting the dates wrong. It doesn't take much to do but it is very effective.

(3) Use 24-hour clock: Again to minimise potential mistake in taking down the time.

(4) Subject/nature of the appointment: This is not always clear from the venue or department, I think it should be a separate piece of info. For example, a patient is going in for Day Surgery, this could be absolutely anything. It helps the interpreter to get to the right place, but doesn't help them to prepare for the assignment other than something general about day surgery.

Figure 7.2: Screenshot of an Email from the Documentary Data

Key points that are highlighted are the omissions of client's age, ambiguous instruction of time and place and unclear subject information. Such issues may appear to be trivial in the eyes of many booking operators, but matter substantially for interpreters' frontline performance. Take the Date of Birth as an example, many agencies take for granted that it is not essential. But this can be significant when the patient is a baby or young child as mentioned in the email.

Insight also readily learns from the delivery model of its neighbouring profession—sign language interpreting. Managers feel it is highly important to not only gain support from but also extend its reach to more mature sectors [doc]. Therefore, they seek opportunities to work with better-reputed or high-profile agencies. Talking with the manager from a

potential partner agency revealed the Director's construction of Insight as professional bellwether with real foresight:

The bottom line is how you are looking at how interpreting should be provided, you know, how we want to shape our interpreting profession. The more I look at you [BSL provision model], the more I found we have more in common than in differences. At the end of the day, we all want the same thing: what is expected by service users. But we are all business people; we need to look at how we can shape it so that it can be actually viable. [A-Director]

The key message of the remarks is the common ground shared by both parties—the vision of “shaping the interpreting profession”. As business enterprises, they are both seeking for a model that is professionally eligible and commercially viable. Noticeably, the substance of the quoted discourse is different from what is normally communicated to public service providers. With potential industrial partners, Insight is described as a responsible pioneer looking for an ally and shared business interest, but when it engages with the latter, it is often presented as an expert giving educative and remedial advice in how to work with interpreters. Such change of footing shows Insight is purposively using different strategies to recruit multiple groups of actors in their professional cause.

The above quote also indicates that the notion of “meeting the expectation of service users” has become a taken-for-granted criterion of professionalisation, or part of “[how to] shape the profession” in the Directors' words, which has been used as Insight's end of bargain to negotiate the consortium model. Professionalism, as a result, is fully incorporated into the business logic and construed as a toolkit to achieve commercial purposes. In the words of the Director,

If we are pursuing a particular thing, bearing in mind this is not for free. We cannot be out of pocket. We can offer to our partners to make money. [A-Director]

In this context, efforts made to establish the inter-professional network is about promoting best practice as much as about marketing Insight's corporate practice to wider stakeholders in the field, be they contracted agencies or institutional clients. This is possible mainly because of Insight's hybrid logic, and this is not to say that managers will indiscriminately partner with any organisations. In fact, they are very cautious about the work ethics and ethos of the potential co-operators. When the giant corporation BM approached Insight, the Director speaks the following:



It sounds like a “selling out”. The more we work with them, the less different we are from other agencies, you know. BM is now using really cheap and crap interpreters. How can we get a cut from it and pay our interpreters? Plus their business [telephone interpreting] is going to drive the interpreting price even further down. [A-Director]

Being able to distinguish enemy from ally seems to be one way to maintain Insight’s distinctive organisational identity. Another way is to obtain credentials from market-recognised quality schemes [doc]. So far, Insight is the holder of EFQM<sup>10</sup> award, a member of a national consortium for the translation, interpreting and associated professionals, and a member of a national professional association. Better still, Insight naturally appeals to the third sector buyers because they are part of the Social Enterprise [of the Region] (SER). All these influential symbols of quality enable it to reach out more actors in the institutional field despite its relatively new presence.

### *7.3.2 Devising and Populating Work Guidelines for Public Sector Clients*

Ultimately, successful professionalisation is to do with a recognised and respected social status enjoyed by the occupational group. This means that the process to improve interpreters’ status goes hand in hand with the institutional work of achieving organisational legitimacy. To put it differently, it is through publishing and implementing working guidelines for public services that Insight obtains endorsement to legitimise its agenda. Among the instances where Insight is consulted by client institutions (e.g. social work professionals, children’s reporters, police officers) who have limited knowledge of interpreter-mediated interactions, the single “milestone event” [A-Director] that marks Insight’s achievement is believed to be the design and the implementation of a collaborative model for interpreting (CMI) [doc] for national authorities.

This project was initiated by a national public institution in partnership with Insight and other relevant bodies across the region. Markedly, Insight has been commissioned to undertake the research and the writing of the CMI (see Table 5.1 for a summarised and modified version). As reflected in the field notes, “I was surprised by the fact that this ‘three-way interpreting model’ exploring the feasibility of collaborative working came out of an agency” [jnl]. What is more revealing, however, is how Insight in this official

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<sup>10</sup> An EU foundation strives for sustainable excellence by engaging organisations to learn. More information can be found at : <http://www.efqm.org/>

paper is jointly framed by the authors of the document as a key participant in the process of interpreting service provision (Insight was also the principal investigator of this project).

By virtue of the promulgation of CMI, the messages that Insight managers desire to deliver to their institutional clients and the public can be understood in three ways, based on the interviews with managers [B-Int]. Firstly, it reinforces that in every aspect of PSI practice that underscores the quality of interpreting, agencies (“ISP” in Table 5.1) play an indispensable role far beyond brokering a deal with public sector clients. Prior to practice, they are responsible for assessing competence of interpreters through robust recruitment procedures and rigorous languages test in simulated PSI contexts (“Assessing Competence”). In addition, agencies should not only provide induction and following sessions to support interpreters, but also educate both of the administrative personnel and the functioning practitioners in target institutions on interpreter work practices (“Induction and Training”).

Chapter 7 Inter-Organisational Work of Disseminating the Intended Professional Order

Assessing Competence	
Public Sector Bodies	ISP
Only engage with approved, competent interpreters (not to risk client's interest /unnecessary repeat visits. This also helps minimise wasting resources)	Recruitment and selection (uses robust procedures to select candidates ... to work or <b>be trained as interpreters</b> )
	Assessment on language competence (assesses language competence by evidence of qualifications where available, and/or <b>by language testing where qualifications are not available</b> )

Induction and Training	
Public Sector Bodies	ISP
	Induction (expectations, policies and <b>procedures, the contexts and settings</b> )
Training on how to work with interpreters: maximise effective communication with patients; how their participation influences the interpreting process and what to expect from a competent interpreter.	Training (the <b>role of the interpreter, ethics and boundaries</b> , interpreting skills and techniques, coping strategies, and how to deal with cultural inferences)
	Capacity building (provides access to training materials to increase <b>knowledge of institutional settings and domain-specific terminology</b> )
Training on how to book interpreters: have a clear understanding of local guidelines and procedures for booking interpreters;	Training for admin/support staff(the <b>complexity of the interpreting process</b> , the kind of difficulties and challenges interpreters may face)

Chapter 7 Inter-Organisational Work of Disseminating the Intended Professional Order

Practices	
Public Sector Bodies	ISP
Working with IPS	Working with Public sector bodies
Providing information so that the interpreter can make an informed decision on whether to accept it; Continuity of interpreter: assess whether having the same interpreter throughout will be beneficial.	Providing the most suitable interpreter (based on competence, subject knowledge, gender, experience and availability).
Respect for interpreters: Public sector staff respect interpreters as professional colleagues whose task is to facilitate effective communication as part of public service delivery.	Code of Conduct: has in place a Code of Conduct that <b>governs the conduct of their interpreters</b> , as well as <b>robust procedures</b> to deal with any breach
	Dealing with complaints (has robust, transparent and responsive procedures in place)

Support and CPD	
Public Sector Bodies	ISP
Public sector staff seek to provide as much information about the assignment as possible; A short briefing for the interpreter before the start of the consultation or treatment to aid effective communication.	Pre-assignment support (obtains as much information as possible)
Debriefing for interpreters: provide, whenever possible, a short debriefing for the interpreter after the interaction, especially following a stressful session.	Post-assignment support ( <b>debrief, support</b> for those engaged in a stressful assignment, concerns relating to the health and safety)
	Peer support: facilitates the development structures and provides opportunities for <b>sharing experience, learning from and supporting each other.</b>
Support for interpreters: work with their approved interpreting service provider(s) to provide access to additional support for interpreters	CPD opportunities (encourages and provides access to)

Monitoring and evaluation	
Public Sector Bodies	ISP
Feedback: seek feedback from consumers, practitioners and interpreters, to improve service quality and customer satisfaction.	Feedback (seeks feedback from public sector staff, interpreter, and to help improve service quality and customer satisfaction.
has in place robust and transparent local processes to monitor and evaluate the interpreting service they procure, using appropriate quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, and monitoring and evaluation tools.	has in place robust and transparent processes to monitor and evaluate the service they provide, using appropriate quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, and monitoring and evaluation tools)
	Structures and processes to support continuous improvement: uses performance evaluation results and feedback to plan and implement their continuous improvement initiatives, and keeps a record to chart progress and evidence outcomes.

Table 7.1: A Summary of CMI Proposed by Insight

Secondly, it emphasises the importance of collaborative working between public services and interpreting agencies (see shaded sections). In order to have NHS staff “only engage with approved competent interpreters”, ISP needs to have “robust procedures to select candidates”; in turn, for ISP to provide “the most suitable interpreter (based on competence, subject knowledge, gender, experience and availability)”, NHS staff should be supportive of briefing enough details of the appointment with the ISP so that interpreters can make an informed decision. Through reconnecting the areas that demand a shared responsibilities and ‘hand-in-glove’ working relationship, Insight manages to boost the otherwise less visible profile of professional ISPs.

Most importantly, Insight uses this publication as a means to embed its provision model into the wider institutional framework, thereby marketing its organising logic and receiving wider authoritative endorsement. The skeleton of the CMI paper bears a strong resemblance to the institutional work that Insight has engineered step by step thus far (see bolded text in Table 5.1). For example, in terms of “Assessing Competence” on the part of “ISP”, it states “uses robust procedures to select candidates ... to work or be trained as interpreters”. This matches exactly with what Insight *is doing* to socialise trainee interpreters (discussed in 4.1.3). Similarly, the proposal on “assess[ing] language ... where qualifications are not available” reflects Insight’s institutional work of designing an complementary testing system for obscure languages (will be discussed in 5.4.2). Other items such as “peer support”, training on “the role of the interpreter, ethics and boundaries” and the suggestion that “NHS staff have a consistent local approach to ... [request] an interpreter” are either ostensive or subtle representations of Insight’s current organisational practice.

In this context, the significance of CMI goes beyond a piece of descriptive document. It symbolises “a letter of authorisation” that normalises the overall functions of agencies and acknowledges especially Insight’s management approach in the shaping of PSI profession. In the Director’s term, “we’ve developed a national standard for health interpreting from our own organisation”. It is through this type of institutional work of resistance that Insight logic starts to feed into the rule systems of the PSI field. Managers are now in a more legitimate position to pitch it to other agencies, though the process of disseminating new practices is by no means smooth sailing. “Not all people would buy this idea”, said by one manager, “it is getting more and more difficult; no one wants to listen at the moment, their money is tight.” [A-Mng-3] In addition, some key actors are perceived to be “placing barriers” in the way of institutionalisation of Insight logic. This

requires managers' efforts to handle the conflicts of interests, as discussed in the section below.

### *7.3.3 Managing Perceived Tensions Arising from Suspicious Actors*

As Insight becomes increasingly involved in developing collaborative work with the public sector, their agenda starts to attract broader attention and sometimes invites critical appraisals. One thorny question often concerns managers is: how can Insight as an agency itself train and certify interpreters who are going to satisfy its own business needs? Managers hold that "universities should be asked to do monitoring" as they are externally eligible to "assess how the impact of the procurement contract on practice" [A-Mng]. But the reality is, "there is no such independent body for this profession at the moment" [A-Director]. In the follow-up interview, the Director recalled how she felt about the attitude of some university scholars towards the CMI draft when it was circulated about:

I think they were a bit surprised, when we first started to be sort of on the scene. And suddenly we are doing the CMI. I slightly sensed that they felt a bit offended, that we are untrusted. Well, they never openly criticise for what we're trying to do, but I do feel one of them thinks, "Oh, who are you to do this?" You know. But after the initial engagement I think they got respect for me. [B-Director]

This reveals the perceived difficulty when Insight 'made their debut' to gain legitimacy. As reflected in the field journal, the painful repercussion incurred by certain notorious agencies and the resulting damage to professional standards still prevail. The organisational field is infiltrated with fear and doubt as to whether any new or old actors could truly safeguard the professional territory and remain immune from the unethical practice [jnl]. Moreover, the intention of social enterprise is still foreign to some stakeholders. When agencies as a whole are still stereotyped to indiscriminately, even recklessly seek profit, Insight managers were not sure how much trust they can secure from the field actors. Shrouded in such suspicion, the Director confessed why she thought most academics fail to substantively address the issues concerned by practitioners:

They spent more time talking about how you can do it. They sound very negative, because they've been around for too long and couldn't see the potential for changes... When someone tries to do something, they said, 'Oh, but, but, this... but...' [A-Director]

In her remarks, university actors have been described as "negative" and "being around

for too long”, as if they are pessimists who are not able to see the new possibility of changes in the field. They appeared to have made more efforts in identifying the issues (“how you can do it”) but less on actually resolving the problems. She also mentioned later that “some people have been talking about it for years” and because “they are academics; all they do is talking about it” [A-Director]. This indicates managers’ suspicion in how much change researchers can bring about and their confidence in Insight’s bottom-up approach (4.1.1). On another occasion, the Director commented below:

Of course they know a lot about interpreting stuff, but I’m not sure that in the real world ... right, you say you do something, so you have to actually take it as truth, so this comes down to who writes the best essay. That’s what looks like. And if they write a good essay, you can’t question— Hmm, I don't think they actually do that— because it’s not their job.[A-Director]

It is worthwhile perhaps to compare managers’ attitude towards universities with their approach to the newly established professional body of PSI—GAIT<sup>11</sup>, as both are traditionally key institutional players in the PSI profession. Born at roughly the same time as Insight, GAIT was founded in 2009 in the wake of “the creation of a monopoly within the Criminal Justice sector by contracting out the provision of T&I services to a single supplier” [web]. Its main objective is to maintain the quality of PSI and protect the working conditions of interpreters by acting as an independent body and a “united voice for interpreters and translators in [the region] [web]”. Nevertheless, the similar missions shared by GAIT and Insight did not bond the two organisations well. Insight shows a rather unsupportive stance towards GAIT in various ways. A sense of distrust and hostility can be felt evidently. Managers believe that GAIT is a highly disorganised organisation, an entity “not even registered as a charity or any legal structure” [A-Mng-2]. The president of GAIT, Mary, has an axe to grind and “poorly represents this organisation” [A-Director]. In her meeting with Mary, the Director revealed a strong aversion to the way Mary behaved and the message she tried to get across:

She wanted us to endorse, like telling our interpreters ‘please join GAIT’ because if you do this it can give you so much good. Apart from that talk, she

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<sup>11</sup> A pseudonym of the local professional association of PSI



came totally unprepared. She can't tell what GAIT actually does, doesn't know how many people she's got, absolutely no plan about what they're going to do; she can't show me anything! [A-Director]

Later in the observation, the director more than once reminded other members that "GAIT is a stupid thing really" and "Mary is definitely a dangerous character" [A-Mng]. Such an uncommon repugnance aroused my curiosity to further explore how Insight enacted institutional work to disrupt this fledgling institution. The first clue came from a complaint letter against Insight by GAIT with the intent to denounce the misconduct of their "unqualified interpreters" in medical appointments. Mary reported that the interpreter Alex misunderstood "carbon" for "cardboard" ("carton" in Spanish) when he interpreted for an elderly lady, leading to a misdiagnosis for the lady and late discharge from the hospital [doc]. Insight opposes GAIT's "allegation of mistranslation" by highlighting the contextual factors:

The purpose was to...assess whether she showed symptoms of dementia or memory problems. The patient's speech was slurry and difficult to understand. Alex often had to double check and triple check what she was saying, because she would say random words that were unrelated to the question asked or were completely out of context. [email]

The second part of Insight's written statement attacks at the authority of GAIT to make such judgement:

As most people would understand, an assessment like this is never made based on one single thing, word or answer. Mary is not qualified in any way to make any judgement about a patient's condition or a doctor's diagnosis. Even if the patient did mean "carbon" but it came out as "carton", that in itself, did not mean the patient's condition is not "as serious as the doctor had assumed". [email]

Insight's reply was eloquently concluded by the Director's reiteration that the allegations made by Mary are "false and unsubstantiated". In fact, it is not the first time for GAIT to conduct the "sort of on-the-spot-check by sneaking into the clinic with the patients" [A-Mng-2]. According to the Director, whenever the patient is happy, Mary would sit in the corner to observe the interpreter's behaviour. While the ethics of such inspection conducted by GAIT warrants further investigation, this way of monitoring quality triggers tremendous discontent from many interpreters who later reported it back to relevant

agencies. As the Director recalled,

Over the past few years, there are probably hundreds, if not thousands of complaints filed by GAIT against interpreters. Most of these complaints are fabricated, and she is very clever, instead of herself making it, she asks the patients to do and make them sign. [A-Director]

For Insight members, it is GAIT's nonfeasance and the president's misuse of supervisory power that flare up the tit-for-tat confrontation between GAIT and agencies. GAIT's accusation of the perceived mistakes further prevented interpreters from developing faith in this nascent organisation. Moreover, managers often explicitly dissuade partner agencies from either working with GAIT or recommending their interpreters to register with GAIT, making it an isolated and unaccredited organisation [jnl]. Gradually, there emerged a common belief that there is "a conspiracy" involved in this game and Mary, with her own "ulterior motives", can by no means represent the PSI community. In the words of the Director,

Her heart is not in GAIT. Also the fact that she is doing all these to other interpreters including some of MY interpreters—how can they talk about ethics within an organisation that is supposed to be at the forefront to set the role model for these things! [A-Director]

GAIT is established as a non-profitable body in a sense that it is initiated, operated and led by senior interpreters, some of whom are working with different agencies and previous colleagues of Insight managers. Despite its all perceived good will to unite practitioners together to fight for their "right to speech" and to repel the threat of being "blacklisted under the agency regime" [web], this organisation is on the verge of collapse due to the lack of 'nuts and bolts' to fulfil its purpose. GAIT is not alone among the professional bodies that Insight develops dissatisfaction with. Managers also have issues with CioL, the recognised language assessment and awarding organisation for DPSI. A direct conversation between the CioL delegates and the Director took place in an information meeting on the PSI campaign. According to the field notes, the Director raised two questions to the representative speaker from CioL: "Why agencies are allowed to provide the training course for DPSI?" and "Who will scrutinise the quality of that course?" The answer was, to me as an interpreter participant, rather disappointing:

CioL's job is to make sure the DPSI test paper is competent and the testing procedure is fair to candidates. Agency is where people take the exam; we can't

guarantee the quality of the training in any form provided by anyone. [jnl]

The Director felt it was an irresponsible answer and not happy with the laissez-faire approach adopted by the leading professional association. This was later interpreted by the Director as “don't care”:

They don't care about whether you provide good or bad training; they only care about an appropriate accommodation for the exam! It really should be the educational institution to deliver this kind of things. They don't even want to know the quality of the course. They for some reason only said ‘it is not their business’. [A-Director]

Insight's experience with CioL and GAIT has been frequently quoted in managers' conversations with stakeholders to justify Insight's undertaking. For an emerging profession whose local professional body (GAIT) is limited by its uncredited history, whose certifying organisation (CioL) is far-fetched due to its reduced remit and whose Register (NRPSI) system is yet to be restored (“only four people on it in the region”[A-Mng]), Insight has managed to paint a professional landscape lacking essential infrastructure to prosper. The underlying message seems clear: had it not been for Insight or other forms of resistance initiated by interpreters from the bottom-up, the routes towards professionalisation could have headed to nowhere.

#### 7.3.4 Summary

This section attends to the dynamics between Insight and a group of significant institutional players in the field. These actors are distinctly categorised by managers into different camps. Located within the friend camp are primarily regional council agencies, third sector enterprises and reputed industrial leaders. Through actively establishing a mixture of partnership (5.2.1), sponsorship and clientship (5.2.2) with them, Insight is able to enrol these organisations in their rule system and thus promulgates new practice across the field. The institutional work of gaining legitimacy helps Insight to consolidate its marketplace and achieve official endorsement by enlisting support from like-minded, ‘into-quality’ actors, thereby paving the way for its transformation into a *de facto* proto-institution. While managers' attitude remains unclear about certain heavyweights such as universities and commercial conglomerates, they are quite determined to attack the perceived ‘foe’—the credentialing bodies and local professional associations (5.2.3). On the whole, managers are extending the Insight logic to the organisational field and reshaping the public perception of interpreting professionalism.

## **Enclosure work**

Enclosure work refers to the credentialing efforts that allow the occupational group, under the auspice of the state, to close the market entry from outsiders through a set of institutional strategies such as controlling supply of services, devising qualifications of vendors and overseeing the conduct of the insiders (Freidson 1986). This section thus focuses on how Insight members harness the procurement contract to sanction a professional order and reproduce social capital and new institutional orders within the PSI field. This type of institutional work is enacted to not only co-opt mainstream workforce into Insight's resources system but also to normalise the organisationally-defined hierarchy architected by Insight members. Two thematic activities emerge from the data: 7.4.1 Reshuffling the division of expertise; and 7.4.2 Testing and certifying national public service interpreters.

### *7.4.1 Reshuffling the Division of Expertise*

Interpreters working for Insight are internally filed into the two-tier system based on their qualifications and the results of the organisational assessments. Designed by Insight managers, the assessments aim to testify the linguistic and cultural competence of interpreters in various public sector settings [doc]. It functions as a grading system to restructure the complex background of the workforce. "It is compulsory to all Insight interpreters, including those who are qualified except perhaps in certain circumstances" [A-Director]. To be ranked in Level 2 (L2), candidates "must achieve 'very good' whereas Level 1 (L1) interpreters must meet the criteria of "good" [doc]. The major incentive for L2 interpreters is the raise of hourly rate [doc]. Of note, such internal benchmarks, in the long term, are not crafted to *supplement* the existing industry-wide threshold of DPSI or others alike, but to *prioritise* Insight's rule systems above all other institutionally sanctioned norms. This can be found in the sensegiving process of re-cataloguing in order to meet higher standards than what existing DPSI criteria require:

You need to provide me with evidence that you have done more than 120 hours of interpreting in a variety of settings, not only legal; because one type of setting is not enough. That's not a cross... Some people think if you have DPSI you are already in L2 but that's not the case. [A-Director]

Different from mainstream agencies that might require interpreters to have one area of specialty evidenced by DPSI, L2 interpreters in Insight are expected to have work experiences in a variety of settings on top of having the qualification [doc]. This indicates Insight's endeavour in replacing the prevalent yet problematic standard ("DPSI-Only")

with a holistic approach of categorising interpreters and ensuring quality [jnl]. Indeed, the current tendency to impose DPSI as a ‘must-have’ not only triggers protests from practitioners but also creates pressing problems for agencies to manage human resources:

Someone doesn’t have a DPSI, and I don't think she has the intention to do so, because she is very experienced, she’s got a PhD in Turkish and teaching in translation courses. So people like that, how can you ask for a DPSI? [A-Director]

The first problem occurring to the team is that the present system does not genuinely value practitioners who have university degrees in linguistics or other relevant language studies, as is quoted from one manager above. As reflected in the field journal, although the DPSI qualification emphasises the technical aspects of interpreting (e.g. terminologies, bilingualism), it is hard to convince that one’s cultural competence, ethical judgement and other analytical abilities can be sufficiently developed without other means of (higher) education [jnl]. Second, managers maintain that such a sweeping approach tends to downgrade the importance of hands-on experiences and overlooks the necessity to keep a track record of continuous working hours. In that sense, interpreters’ experiential knowledge and ongoing improvement cannot be properly monitored [A-Director]. Based on those drawbacks, managers are keen on developing a more “balanced approach” [doc], as shown in the discussion below:

A: I think it is fair to say someone who doesn't have the qualification but has been working in the field for more than 20 years, still looks more skilful than someone who is new with qualifications.

B: Also what if you only did one job over the past three years? If I only do occasional work, can I go around and claim I’m a very experienced interpreter?

C: For example, SG only pays £14 per hour for Jorge, because he doesn't have a DPSI. But a degree is more than a DPSI!

A: That’s why we need this balanced approach where you have to have a bit of everything in order to get the higher rate, to encourage people to do that. But I totally recognise that a new interpreter, who just has DPSI, has done most of jobs in the past three months and meets the hours’ requirement, doesn't mean she is a finished product. [jnl, author’s emphasis]

As debated by three senior managers, Insight’s rule setting process involves revoking the nonsensical terms in the procurement contract while using organisational policy to re-

measure “a bit of everything”. This approach considers working experience (“still looks more skilful”) and language degree (“more than a DPSI”) as more valuable than inconsistent practice (“only do occasionally”) and intensive working in a short period of time (not “a finished product”) [A-Mng]. Compared to the single solution of DPSI, Insight’s rule system appears to have a higher level of flexibility and comprehensiveness.

Under Insight’s tiered system, a new category can be generated as needed at the discretion of key organisational actors. As revealed by organisational members, in addition to the distinction between two levels, a sort of “pre-L1 category” is actually practised in their daily work [A-Mng-1]. This group of people “did not achieve ‘good’ or do they have sufficient work experiences, but they have shown a good command of language skills and endeavour to develop” [A-Director]. Subsequently, they are allowed to work as trainee interpreters under Insight’s supervision. “They would receive more support and opportunities to practise before they are reassessed”, said the Director. As a result, a unique space is thus spared out for this novice group who would otherwise be unrecognised in the broad institutionalised order. “Situated between the qualified/unqualified dichotomy, this new layer of ‘quasi-qualified’ interpreters will inevitably compete with the seasoned interpreters as a result of the reshuffling” [jnl].

Taken at face value, the criteria to “determine when one person can go from L1 to L2, or where they are when they enter Insight” seem to be very straightforward:

The four things in the desirable criteria are DPSI or equivalent qualification in interpreting and/or translation, knowledge of the professional ethics, knowledge of all the different PSI settings, and then 120 hours of interpreting experience. The first one is clear cut, the second one’s already covered in the handbook and the induction; the third and fourth is by doing. [A-Director]

However, in a discussion on the possibility of upgrading someone from L1 to L2, one manager voiced her hesitation:

Anna wants to move to L2, but she doesn’t do any work for us. She asked me how can she change the status quo, and I’m thinking you don’t work for us anyway, so I’m not in a hurry to answer you. If I’m very busy, I need to see what I need to do first, in a way, yeah? [A-Mng-3]

This reflects that the boundary between categories are yet to be defined rigorously, which are by and large subjected to managerial orientations. The decisions seem to take into account contingent factors whatever Insight deems important [jnl]. In Anna’s case, a

degree of 'loyalty' is expected apart from her proof of working hours and qualifications. In other words, the upward mobility is in a way more favourable to *pro-Insight* interpreters, and therefore the higher pay rate of L2 arguably appears to be a reward for the organisational loyalty as opposed to an absolute recognition for competence improvement. As reflected in the field journal, it is through constructing the sense of reciprocity that interpreters gradually become acknowledged by the organisational order.

Compared to Insight, the dominant agencies do not seem to bother the DPSI requirement. Instead, they leverage their legitimacy to maximise profits by sending lay persons to work, which remains the main concern for interpreters. A Spanish interpreter working in the office temporarily, lashed out at the unethical practice of SG and accused it of "purposefully lowering the standard":

When I started they paid me 14 [pounds], they phoned me like four times a week. And then I went to their office and told them you got wrong because I have my DPSI. After that they only called me once or twice a month! ...They ask you to get the Diploma and once you become a professional they don't give you work anymore. [A-Int]

In her case, the single qualification mandate is arguably a political trap to manipulate interpreters by the dominant agencies. Over three quarters of interviewees (interpreters) indicate that they do not feel they are offered more jobs after they have obtained DPSI Law. Instead, several of them echoed the Spanish interpreter's situation above. SG's abuse of power and Insight's innovative reform stand in sharp contrast in PSI provision. Supported by the majority of interpreters, the *Insight logic* lends itself to the promulgation of its reshuffled tiered system to the wider field.

#### 7.4.2 Testing and Certifying National Public Service Interpreters

Through re-cataloguing interpreters based on the organisationally-defined hierarchy, Insight gradually seeks to nullify the mandate of DPSI in practice and replace it with its own rule systems. A step closer to the establishment of a proto-institution is perhaps to build in more institutional functionalities so that all PSI workforce can be engineered under the rule system of Insight. Observations show that being the sole partner of the procurement contract holder gave Insight a unique chance (and certainly political pressure) to enact the enclosure, especially when the State has required that "the number of qualified interpreters should increase year on year" [doc]:

We are taking a very specific role in the tendering that is to help all our

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interpreters and our partners' interpreters to access CPD programs. There is a very specific thing in the tender about increasing the number of DPSI qualified interpreters year on year. If we don't reach this target, we will get punished financially. [A-Director]

The key to achieve this goal, in the words of the Director, was to “create certain testing and certifying mechanisms on a national scale” so that the sectoral workforce for Criminal Justice can be properly assessed and subsequently planned for further training [A-Director]. Built on the prior success in establishing the internal grading system, Insight is now able to call for interpreters without DPSI Law across the region to sit the test solely developed and monitored by Insight, as part of the required delivery arrangements. According to the plan, such an assessment is especially designed for (would-be) legal interpreters who are “on their way” to have DPSI law qualification yet lack of “formal testing before they started” [doc]. The Director explained Insight’s initiative to some managers:

Everyone will have Scottish Law eventually, but it gonna take time to achieve. There should be an interim period when existing people without can continue to work until they all get Insight interviewed. Then the **interim period** gonna end, where you cannot work unless either you got the legal DPSI or you have been Insight tested. After two years, you would have to re-sit the test if you haven't achieved your full DPSI by then. [A-Director, author's emphasis]

In the observational notes about managers' visions, three steps to institutionalise the *Insight Test* have been spelled out [jnl]. The first step is marked by Insight's face-to-face interviews with all interpreters who are currently working in legal context. The second step is when they enter into what Insight framed as “the interim period”, where non-DPSI interpreters are still entitled to work if they are certified by Insight through the *Insight Test*. The third step requires interpreters to be re-vetted and re-certified once *Insight certificate* expires in two years' time. This three-stage proposal, once carries out, is likely to enable Insight to equip with the basic functions of a nascent institution [jnl].

The notion of ‘interim period’, similar to the creative category of ‘trainee interpreter’ (discussed in 5.4.1), seems to again reveal the nature of the *Insight logic*. As reflected in the field journal, the two strategies both aim to establish *a middle ground* between the “free-entry” and the “DPSI-only-entry” to the profession, in order to mitigate the currently problematic “either-or” solution. They both reflect a belief that without entering



into the actual workplace and practising interpreting in real scenarios, interpreters are not competent enough even if they possess DPSI [jnl]. This becomes so entrenched in the managerial principles that Insight would wish it to be normalised in the broader institutional infrastructure outwith Insight. In the words of a manager:

At the moment, you are either DPSI qualified or not; people do not have choices, unless some start to work without anything. We want to introduce something that stops those practices. It's very difficult to make people study DPSI before they start to work. I mean it's hard and interpreting is about practising and about doing, so you need something before that or in-between that, in order to have both, basically. [B-Mng-2]

On the other hand, Insight's "in-between" eclecticism is conducive for consolidating its legitimacy and reaping commercial benefits. While mainstream agencies are keener on winning bigger contracts than raising standards, Insight is able to architect a unique niche that rival agencies cannot accomplish. Nevertheless, the 'self-certificate' solution is not a brand-new measure to demonstrate quality. Previous court contract holder SG also used this approach to set up their safety net, which is regarded by Insight managers as a pretext to dismiss DPSI qualified interpreters:

We demonstrate sort of beyond SG now, because they did this self-certificate thing, "Oh these people don't have DPSI, but these are the reasons why the person we send is fine". It is all made up stuff, you know, whatever they want really. I suspect the courts are not that stringent in checking all these self-certification. [A-Director]

What Insight has originally included in the tendering documents is what they called "the DPSI equivalence testing" [doc]. The rationale is to provide expediency for those who do not have DPSI Law ("there are languages that don't have that qualification") but still need to "demonstrate they have the skills to do so". For Insight, such a proposal also suits its own circumstances that it is currently "not going to be able to run the service if 'DPSI-Ony' is imposed" [A-Director]. Hence the immediate task is:

We gonna have to justify why we can send someone to a court case without DPSI Scottish Law. Then the mechanism we want to execute, and we think is very doable, is to develop an equivalent entry system. [A-Director]

In terms of the input of the test paper, according to one manager, it is "pretty much modelling on the DPSI exam", which has the "same format, same amount of stuff" [A-

Mng-3]. Insight determines the content, the length and the complexity of test based on the past papers. Built on its accumulative organisational resources and well-maintained network of competent linguists, managers are confident to draft a set of multi-lingual exam papers for the candidates working in various languages:

I think we can decide on a text, then I gonna ask our translator to translate into the other language, and then that would be the standardised tests, same to everyone. For the role plays, we write the scripts in English first, then we do the recording to save logistical trouble. [A-Director]

However, one thing cannot be emphasised more: the branding of Insight as an “independent and standard-setting organisation” [A-Director]. It was the managers’ intention to change their contractually secondary position in the tendering into a strategically pivotal party who can independently “oversee the quality”.

In the observations, managers were ‘racking brains’ to figure out how to make the testing system hallmarked with their corporate traits. They believe that “the paper must have a distinct name including both ‘Insight’ and ‘legal”, so that the organisation can be associated with “certifying legal interpreters” easily and beyond in a few years’ time [jnl]. Giving the test paper a logo was equally important to impress the recipients. Managers agreed on adopting the shape of a ‘rubber stamp’ as the exam logo, and they wanted this logo to symbolise the authority of Insight. For them, having this hard-won opportunity to be trusted as an “independent subcontractor is a significant step-forward, since no agency has ever been appointed to claim such an expert role” [A-Director]. However, they are also aware that their acts of resistance would make a difference only if this proto-institution could sustain beyond the terms of procurement contract. The Director emphatically talked about her ambition:

It’s going to be more than just say, “Oh, we run tests”; it’s going to be a fully branded, marketed team that people gonna recognise. My aim is by the end of the fourth year, Insight would become so recognised within the criminal justice system that whoever is the next timer, we will become indispensable. No matter who wins the bid, this will stay. [A-Director]

From here it can be noted that in order to deal with the momentariness of the contractual relationship between the State and the appointed agencies, Insight comes up with a vision to build itself into a recognised, independent standard-setting organisation. While contract holders have to be under review every four years, Insight might continue its

expert status throughout the game. In this sense, there is a hope of a new professional order created and maintained by *Insight logic* in the PSI field.

### 7.4.3 Summary

This section documents the process where Insight transforms itself from an ordinary business into a quasi-professional body that possesses the authority of credentialing and enacting field-level changes. Internally, managers overhaul the undesirable rating system by restructuring the workforce following *Insight logic* (5.3.1). Externally, they replicate the *Insight logic* in the broader field, using a set of institutional initiatives such as developing testing systems and interim qualifications to vet professional interpreters (5.3.2). This is possible partly because of their effort to spot the loopholes in the existing system that endanger the professional development, also partly thanks to their solid partnership with the state-appointed agencies. Managers' enclosure work is culminated in creating and maintaining such a proto-institution.

## **|Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter is dedicated to reporting on the types of 'outward-facing' institutional work that Insight's practitioners perform to influence the organisational field. *Practice work* shows how 'practical' and considered Insight can be in the actual trading business, which occasionally comes into conflict with the social aim and ethos the organisation claims for itself. Through its *legitimacy work*, Insight consolidates its market and achieves official endorsement by enlisting support from like-minded allies, thereby establishing itself as an insightful expert in the PSI industry. Lastly, *enclosure work* helps managers to promulgate their internal standard to the wider field, including developing national testing systems and interim qualifications to vet professional interpreters. As a result, Insight becomes a proto-institution that enjoys the authority to sanction new institutional orders and reproduce social capital within the PSI domain. The next chapter will reflect on the main findings of the research and what can be learnt from this case study in the light of the reviewed literature. In particular, the broader impact of the institutional work on interpreters, and why Insight as an interpreting service provider can chart the course of PSI professionalization will be discussed in detail.

## Chapter 8 Discussion

### **|Introduction**

This Chapter is structured based on the three research questions. The first research question intends to identify the types of institutional work that Insight managers perform in order to reshape the industrial practice. Section 6.2 therefore focuses on the significance of those acts in the professionalisation of PSI and why Insight as an agency can spur field-level changes when prior attempts produce limited effects.

The second research question looks into the details of the managerial forces that (re)construct the model of interpreting professionalism. To that end, a set of organisational imperatives for recruitment, work allocation, professional ethics and collaborative working are identified. The aim of the two following sections (6.3 and 6.4) are thus to trace the managerial edicts that shape the working practices of interpreters and conceptualise the key features of the new professionalism promoted by Insight managers.

The third research question attempts to explore the problematic work processes between agencies and interpreters and how interpreters respond to those work-related challenges. Section 6.5 therefore shifts the focus from Insight as the central site of PSI professionalisation to the working lives of freelance interpreters, and discusses the character and the importance of PSI as professional work and employment.

### **|Professionalising PSI through Institutional Work**

#### *8.2.1 Institutional Work as a Form of Resistance*

It has been pointed out earlier in this study that the few recorded acts of resistance against the procurement of PSI, labelled as ‘the campaign approach’ (discussed in 1.2.2)—tend to receive disproportionate attention from senior management and other relatively powerful actors. Although a fair proportion of campaigners are composed of practitioners themselves, the majority of those who *follow* their lead are ordinary interpreters who earn salaries by the number of jobs they are allocated and accomplish. The institutional work approach adopted by this thesis thus opens up a new dimension to document the realities of the local-level resistance and its outcomes. In contrast to a handful of representatives of respected associations entrusted to bargain directly with policy-makers, and to some privileged interpreters who can afford to boycott jobs until their claims are answered, the rank and file have to try every means to work and survive in the price-cutting market, not

least those who practise interpreting further away from the central campaigners. The notion of institutional work and its focus on the micro-actions of peripheral actors therefore sheds light on the institutional change introduced by frontline interpreters' day-to-day work. Special attention has been directed to individuals and groups who step out of their conventional role and challenge the existing institutional orders. It is the intent of this study to examine "the small worlds of institutional resistance" (Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca 2011, p.57) and highlights the importance of the motivations and purposes of the participants, so that the often overlooked episodes of mundane actions that over time progress to real institutional change can be captured and understood.

Institutional change has traditionally been associated with the "macrodynamics of the fields—the process through which large-scale social and economic changes occur" (ibid. p.52). These changes are more often induced by social elites and powerful entrepreneurs who are able to leverage the macro cultural control structures to challenge the prevailing archetype (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006). This thesis offers a counterview to that by presenting the evidence of the rise of a group of under-resourced actors and the fall of a supposedly influential professional association, albeit the weight is given to the former. In Marti and Mair's (2009, p.101) defence, even actors who "seemingly have no choice other than compliance, are also doing important institutional work". As revealed in 'identity work' (4.2), Insight managers did not start as wealthy, resourceful business elites. They were professional interpreters working for years in public services before the 'outsourcing scheme' came into effect. In search of the motives for founding Insight, it is apparent that managers identified themselves with the oppressed interpreters who felt they were "being cheated" by the then agencies and could not bear their stake "falling into the wrong hands of the capitalist company" (see 4.1.1). Their decision to make a breakthrough did not occur on the spur of the moment but was a result of long-held determination in waging this 'counterattack'. From here it can be argued that the devising of their own space constitutes the core of the managers' resistance against the dominant norms and values. To put it another way, Insight as a nascent organisation itself symbolises a somewhat distinct logic aiming at affecting the mainstream institutional order.

### *8.2.2 Making the Three Pillars of the Proto-Institution: Strategies and Challenges*

One might question, however, how an organisation can act against the very commercial principles it incorporates, and how Insight actors can induce change when their actions

and rationality are conditioned by the institutional structures within which they are embedded? These queries point to the well-known “paradox of embedded agency” (discussed in 2.5.1) and the process in which institutional changes take place as a result of the strategic actions of key actors. Based on the identified managerial activities, my current thesis contributes two key insights to this structure-agency debate by addressing the ‘how’ questions related to the case.

Firstly, Insight can initiate the institutional process because it is led by PSI professionals rather than businesspersons who are without interpreting expertise. This assertion is built on the findings of research that focus on linking institutional work with the sociology of the professions (e.g. Quack 2007, Currie et al. 2012). Scott (2008b, p.223) reconceptualises the role of professionals as “institutional agents” in society and argues that they are the “most influential, contemporary crafters of institutions”. This thesis extends his claim by detailing how managers craft the provisional institution typically through ‘technical work’. To play the part of the cultural-cognitive agents (ibid.), they organise reflective practice for interpreters and build Insight into a community of knowledge exchange through organisational toolkits. Inter-organisationally, they identify what constitute solutions to practical problems based on collective diagnosis of the malpractice and educate the clients to accept their expert insights. By harnessing exclusive knowledge and control of practice, they incrementally establish their cultural authority and shape institutional arrangements in their interests (e.g. membership system). Ultimately, they organise practitioners to interact, digest and transform their experiential observations of interpreter mediation into abstract frameworks and define the principles of knowledge that underpin good practice.

Interpreters as institutional agents also primarily rely on developing normative beliefs by prescribing what members of a group should (not) do. In Scott’s (2008b, p.225) terms, “[T]he internal, collegial controls exercised by professionals working as normative agents emphasize the exercise of evaluative, interpersonal controls in day-to-day practice”. Essentially, he is conveying that professionals do not only use rules to condition their decision-making but also exert normative influence on various publics in the area of their expertise. This thesis identifies the traces of normative frameworks in almost every ‘nook and cranny’ of Insight’s institutional agenda, where managers issue organisational principles for working practices, set benchmarks for professional entry and disseminate the perceived best practice across the field. As managers implement membership obligations to keep off amateur interpreters, they also confer upon the internal adherents

a sense of identity and purpose.

The results, however, shows that Insight managers share fewer traits of the regulative agents, despite the fact that they have never stopped pursuing regulation. Their participation in bidding for the national contract for service delivery exemplifies their efforts to secure the state's endorsement and the resulting exclusive access to the funding. This is consistent with the type of regulative control under which professionals are backed by the state to exercise a certain degree of coercive power (Scott 2001). In fact, managers have in part succeeded in preserving their regulatory power by being recognised as the sole legal interpreting training provider and securing monetary resources to carry out this undertaking.

Worth noting here are the different strategies and impact of the institutional work enacted by different professional groups. In this regard, it is useful to compare the current study to Currie and his colleagues' (Currie et al. 2012) work on how medical doctors, when threatened by the creation of new roles, maintain their professional dominance through institutional work (discussed in 2.5.3). In particular, the enacting of 'theorising' is deemed crucial in reshaping the decision of policy-makers. Doctors invoke concerns of 'risk' and relate it to patient safety and service quality, thus strengthening the legitimacy of existing governance rather than introducing changes. Meanwhile, their presence as "arbiters of risk" warrants their irreplaceability in terms of their specialised education and professional experience, which ultimately enables them to secure the delegation of the service rather than substitution of their labour. This in large measure aligns with the 'identity work' found in Insight. Managers first conceive of the social cause of PSI and then align it with the social mission of Insight (see 4.2.1). To foreground their distinct organisational identity, they redefine quality and standards through setting up threshold procedures, and frame themselves as the insightful frontrunner of the industry who "really knows the business". Of note, managers tend to present different or partial aspects of Insight to different audiences and prudently make allies with competitors based on the extent of shared values (see 5.3.1). The findings thus contribute to theory by arguing that the efficacy of institutional work is often language-based (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006) and affected by rhetorical framings. Discursive institutional work constitutes the building blocks of the institutional order that actors endeavour to create. It reveals actors' sense-making processes and how they might, strategically or implicitly, engage with the 'rhetorical deployment' to reinforce ideas or implement actions that serve their interests.

Another observation made from the model of medical professionalism is that elite actors tend to invent more positive responses to external pressures rather than merely resisting them (Currie et al. 2012). Their success primarily rests on their commanding social positions in the institutional field and the resulting resources at their discretion. However, this is not the case for interpreting professionals. As revealed in the findings, they stand little chance of actually reversing a policy decision as effectively and resolutely as medical doctors given their somewhat marginalised and relatively unrecognised status. Nor do interpreters have the heavyweight resources to co-opt neighbouring professions to restore prior arrangements. As such, it can be argued that their strategies of institutional work inevitably rely less on the “endogenous changes” generated from within the profession and more on the “exogenous changes” stemming largely from wider societal changes, with the rise of autonomous professional organisations being the key impetus (Scott 2008b, p.228-231). In the latter trend, business-oriented principles inject new dynamism into the organisation of professional activities and provides alternative models of professionalisation. This study identifies these possibilities in the PSI profession and contends that it is through market control and managerial mechanisms that Insight actors organise their acts of resistance against the malfunctioning operation in mainstream provision.

Although their pathway is necessarily less revolutionary and aggressive as compared to that of the powerful medical professionals, non-elite professionals at Insight equally demonstrate positive and novel responses to the surrounding institutional environment. Precisely because they are at the periphery of the institutional field and less embedded in existing institutions, the interpreter-turned-managers are not as constrained by a single predefined role but are able to reflectively seek cultural-cognitive, normative or coercive endorsements from a selected network of players (e.g. the state, interpreters, commercial agencies, non-profit agencies, hybrid organisations, public sector clients) and draw upon different sources of legitimacy to promote their practices. As prior scholarship tends to explore institutional work in a context where main actors are privileged professionals or incumbents of influential institutions (e.g. Currie et al. 2012, Quack 2007), this study thus contributes to theory by documenting the institutional process in which the main participants are less powerful actors shaping the professional practice through the mobilisation of different modes of agency (further discussion in 6.2.4).

The above argument explicitly relates the characteristic traits and competences of the institutional agents to the outcome of building a provisional institution, thereby making



the case for *why* Insight managers, not other actors or interpreters, are able to bring about institutional emergence in the PSI profession. Arguments related to *how* (the process and the means) they initiate these changes are to present below, with a focus on contextualising the antecedents of their choices.

### 8.2.3 Four Mechanisms to Effect Field-Level Changes

Although the two broad categories (Chapter Four and Five)—the intra-organisational and inter-organisational work—are thematically distinct from an analytical point of view, the everyday activities performed by Insight managers are by no means dichotomous. Instead, different types of institutional work blend and mutually enhance. This thesis identifies four sequential stages that Insight evolved through to their professional project, which is approximately in line with the model of field-level changes proposed by Suddaby and Viale (2011) (discussed in 2.5.3).

The first and foremost starting point is the exploration of a new intellectual and economic space. This is accomplished by a group of senior interpreters who founded Insight as their exclusive arena. Their enterprise, albeit small and nascent, offers the desirable freedom and relatively secure horizon to experiment with ideas. Even if Abbott (1988) points out that the professional project can occur either *externally* through acquiring an uncharted territory or *internally* through expanding knowledge repertoire. Insight actors are managing both: fencing out the unique area ('identity work') while simultaneously defining new practices ('technical work'), bringing to life the inherent linkage between the organisational identity formation and the shaping of professional knowledge in practice. Adopting a "non-agency approach", managers take advantage of the hybrid logic of the organisation and use it to cope with different sources pressures. In particular at the operational level, they frequently use Insight logic (discussed in 6.2.6) to mitigate the top-down interferences from public authorities. As argued by Ackroyd (1996), frontline professionals have a great say in the implementation phases of a change process due to their active involvement in translating policies into practice.

The next stage is when professionals leverage their inherent social capital to "populate the field with new actors" (Suddaby and Viale's 2011, p.430). This aspect is primarily revealed in the findings of 'boundary work' where Insight safeguards the threshold of entry by carefully shortlisting qualified candidates and socialising entrants into accepting Insight standards. Moreover, the organisationally-defined benchmark not only prevents both laymen and dissidents from working as interpreters, but also gives rise to new

categories of legitimate workforce. For instance, managers approve a tier of ‘trainee interpreters’ who are yet to pass the recognised qualification test but still eligible to practise PSI under Insight’s supervision (see 5.4.1). This indicates the possibility that the professional identity of interpreters is increasingly integrated with their emerging organisational identity, leading to the important play of the third mechanism—professionals formulate a new rule system that modifies the boundaries of the field. This process of forming a rule system is apparent in a set of institutional work subsumed under the interorganisational dimension (Chapter Five). It can be found that managers enthusiastically seek endorsement from robust business agents and enrol mature corporations of shared values into their operational network. In other cases, Insight consolidates its expert status by persuading major institutional players (e.g. court, NHS) to subscribe to their consultative service (see 5.3.2).

Last but not least, the enclosure work represents the fourth stage as professionals reproduce their social capital and register more interpreters in their collective action. This line of reasoning emphasises the professional’s unique sensitivity that guides them to manoeuvre within the social order in a given institutional field. Also known as ‘social skills’ (Fligstein 2001) or ‘political skills’ (Garud et al. 2002), these aptitudes are particularly evident in managers’ rhetoric and recategorisation strategies, as they eventually build Insight into a proto-institution with multiple functionalities of testing, authenticating and certifying practising interpreters across the nation. To some extent, Insight actors manage to confer a new social order in which traditional leaders of a profession (e.g. professional body, training institute) become unnecessary or substituted, whereas interpreting agencies are able to steer the professionalisation of PSI. Since the managerial activities of Insight are by and large identical to the sequential mechanism proposed by institutional theorists, it is safe to establish that Insight as an interpreting service provider becomes a key engine for institutional change. Suddaby and Viale (2011) argue that the fact that field-level changes are possible is because professionals are especially competent in “shifting sites of professional control to new contexts, new vehicles and new organisational fields” (ibid. p.436). This thesis advances their argument by specifying that the very “sites of professional control” are shifting from top-level public institutions to frontline service provision centres, with commercial agencies being one of them.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the success of the professional project is largely determined by the extent to which interpreters are (not) able to approach, affect and

affiliate with institutions that can support their agenda. To wit, this study provides an empirical example of the theoretical proposition that “professionalisation is intrinsically carried within institutionalisation” (ibid). It follows that Insight benefits from the reciprocal dynamics between the two processes—professionalisation and institutionalisation— as they are actively exchanging resources and obligations with external institutional agents and expanding their organisational remit (Johnson 1972; Larson 1977; MacDonald 1995). It has been elucidated thus far that the immediate relevance of these results to the two streams of studies—the sociology of professions and the institutional work—converge upon one integrated framework attending to the impacts and achievements of the ‘agentic’ professionals. Judging from their visionary schemes and elaborate actions, Insight managers live up to the “lords of the dance” (Scott 2008b, p.219)—professionals who can choreograph the re-landscaping of contemporary political and socioeconomic systems. While Insight’s accomplishments have reached out to the wider institutional field, it is important to note that managers are far from being affluent actors. On the contrary, the specifics of each identified episode add to the peculiarities of a less organised, under-resourced cluster of semi-professionals engaging in their protracted institutional work of resistance.

#### *8.2.4 Understanding Agency and Change in a Hybrid Organisation*

Unlike the wealthy curators (DiMaggio 1991) or the heavyweight legal practitioners (Dezalay and Garth 1998) who successfully uplift their social profile by transferring abundant resources to their newly established institutions—the public museum and the transnational arbitration organisation respectively, entrepreneurial interpreters have to explore the possibilities of affecting the existing structure relying on rudimental resources. In search of the motives for founding Insight, it is apparent that managers identify themselves with marginalised workers who felt they were being cheated by the dominant agencies and could not bear their stake “falling into the wrong hands of the capitalist company” (see 4.2.1). Interpreters’ battles may take different forms, but their resistance against the outsourcing scheme has never ceased. A handful of key informants thus blazed a new trail after several rounds of trial and error by setting up an agency that they see as “hope against all hope”[A-Mng]. Such reflexive accounts of informants are revealing because they demonstrate how actors are “thinking institutionally” (Hecllo 2008, p.102)—an appreciative perspective that allows them to be future-oriented and continuously strategic about challenging the conforming demands of the social order. A focus on actors’ “institutional biography” (Lawrence et al. 2011, p.55) not only foregrounds their capacity to reflect on their embeddedness in the institutions, but also

broadens the scope to document the instances beyond simply what is successful. More attention is then given to the context that complicates the choices of managers and how they look for ways to overcome the challenges.

In opposition to the classic professions, who can colonise an “open and uncontested space” (Suddaby and Viale 2011) for their social and economic activity, the rudimentary space squeezed out by Insight is by no means “uncontested” but rife with foreseen hardship and reconciliatory decisions. This study identifies three strands of pressures bearing down upon this organisation. The primary challenge to Insight, as to other welfare institutions, arises from the socio-political climate in the UK. The public expenditure is budgeted carefully by the government since economic austerity continues. Increasing levels of management have been introduced to public services since the 1980s because of the call for optimal use of resources and a spirit of competition in public sectors (Rhodes 2005). In this regard, the participation of Insight in the market naturally prioritises the market logic and control. As is shown in this case, the profitability and economic sustainability remain major concerns for managers, who have to endure the fierce competition and the increasingly intensified client control. A third barrier is rooted in the complicated system of PSI. The organisation of PSI provision necessitates active involvement of multiple public services (e.g. NHS, court, immigration services) as well as end-user groups comprising individuals of limited language proficiency and third sector associations. Agencies’ main roles are thus to act as a communication hub to link up clients with interpreters and ensure the quality of both management and interpreting practice. This requires the very corporate capacity and legitimacy that Insight is still essentially lacking.

Confronted with the above structural dilemmas, Insight managers are surprisingly resilient and creative. The hybridised organisational principles (further discuss in 6.2.6) enable them to respond flexibly to the changing context. In this connection, it is worthwhile to compare this study to that of Gawer and Philips’ (2013) enquiry into the institutional work taking place in Intel Corporation, a company far more established and mature than Insight (discussed in 2.5.2). Even if internal oppositions against the development of new products exists, the top management of Intel can mobilise organisational mechanisms to mitigate the tension among employees, such as setting up separate groups to accommodate divergent opinions and formalising “constructive confrontation” procedures to stimulate direct argumentation (as opposed to suppressing it). In the case of Insight, however, managers perform ‘identity work’ and ‘practice work’ in a different way. Due to their lack of social standing, managers rely heavily on framing

the bad practice of their rivals in order to contrast Insight's positive image and commitment into quality. Internal conflicts are managed in a centralised way to minimise the consumption of resources (e.g. 'dealing with the latecomer'). Because they are realistic about how much they can achieve with what they have at hand (e.g. 'using the Google Map'), they refer to different versions of identity vocabulary when they are unable to live up to one or another. They can also exert unobtrusive influence on interpreters (e.g. 'persuasion of accepting jobs') to promote specific practices and resort to tactics (e.g. "watch the child for you") that might seem simultaneously diplomatic and risky.

The ethnographic context located at the intersection of the profession, the organisation and the institution of the PSI work provides possibilities to disclose interpreters' struggles and strategies 'behind the scenes', thereby answering the need to "[ask] why and how rather than what and when" (Lawrence et al. 2011, p.57) in institutional studies. By explicitly accounting for the process in which managers use the organisational logic to resolve problems, this thesis offers a rare but crucial example of how the hybrid logic of the organisation is both shaped by, and dynamically affects the multiple logics in the institutional field. Such an inquiry is based on the assumption that institutional norms and values are often contradictory within the same field (e.g. Thornton and Ocasio 2008), but actors possess the 'episodic forms of power' (Clegg 1989; Lawrence 2008; Lawrence et al. 2001), also defined as relatively discrete strategic measures, to handle the contradictions (discussed in 2.5.1). What is striking is that Insight managers are especially skilled and tactful in incorporating the elements of seemingly antagonistic logics into a single organisational logic—the Insight Logic, as they navigate through competing demands in their day-to-day practice. It is through such micro-level attempts and actions of managers that institutional change is incrementally taking shape. The two sections below are dedicated to analysing the institutional field of PSI from the vantage point of logic pluralism and the significance of Insight logic in the professionalisation of PSI.

### *8.2.5 Conceptualising the Institutional Logics in the PSI Field*

Institutional scholars recognise that although each societal sector is characterised by one central logic that guides and shapes the behaviour of field participants, non-dominant logics co-exist and are battling with each other for supremacy (Scott 2008; Thornton 2004). Change takes place when the subordinate logic overtakes the incumbent and the field restructures in a new order (Hensman 2003). So what are the perceived institutional logics in the PSI field? Or to put it another way, how do Insight managers experience the

multiple logics reflected in the professional work of PSI? As discussed in 2.5.2, although the definitions of institutional logics are debatable, they all share a presupposition that the institutional context both frames actors' behaviours and creates possibility for change and agency. From an inter-institutional system point of view (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury 2012), it can be argued that the logics deployed in the medical care field (Scott et al. 2000) can also apply to the PSI domain, where the professional logic coexists and competes with the institutional logic of the state and the market. The state logic, ideally characterised by the Government with commanding power over professional knowledge, credentialism and the organisation of work (Goodrick and Reay 2011), plays its significant role since PSI is one of the welfare professions under its direct or indirect governance. The modern state bears every feature of a large bureaucracy that plans and controls the production of the goods and services (Freidson 2001). For instance, it is the state's resolve to recognise DPSI Law as the sole certificate for interpreters to practise in the legal domain (5.3.1) and standardise the service price and travel time (5.1.1). In terms of training provision, the state decides to give credit to agencies who can organise CPD for interpreters in their tendering. It can therefore be argued that the procurement scheme in effect subjects professional interpreters to the rules set by the state and symbolises an immediate acquisition of sovereignty over certain professions in the social welfare domain. The heads of the contracted agencies are but employees essentially 'hired' by the government to manage the PSI workforce. As reviewed in 2.4.3, outsourcing is a mechanism through which the neoliberalist governments attempt to establish hands-on entrepreneurial management that operated on a set of devolved relationships (Clarke and Newman 1993).

A trace of the market logic is also found to have visible traction in the PSI sector. According to Freidson (2001), market logic is characterised by free and unregulated competition. Credentials or education are not necessary for practitioners as the purchasing public alone would define the quality of the service based on their own judgement (discussed in 2.1.3). This thesis argues that the impact of the market logic reverberates through the PSI workforce and interpreting activities. On the one hand, the social missions claimed by the managers is overshadowed by the demands from the market that services must be priced (e.g. "Insight would not provide any training for free"), which triggers a suspicion that the business surplus has little to do with raising the professional standard (see 4.1.1). The free competition also necessitates a careful calculation of the operational cost for the nascent start-up, resulting in trade-offs on many

fronts of the quality assurance processes (e.g. follow up on assignments and supervision of new entrants, see 4.1.2). On the other hand, although Insight is one of the very few agencies that attends to interpreters' travel time issues, managers' decisions are, to a great extent, susceptible to the buying control of their clients. Public sector clients and neighbouring professions (e.g. Legal Aid) are experiencing, in equal measure, a budget crunch; each request for an increased fee would have to go through time-consuming bargaining often with very slim chances of success. The scarcity of the language might help, but there are still plenty of agencies in the 'tug of war' ready to slash costs regardless of the interests of interpreters. These external conditions pose challenges for Insight to fulfil its promise when it is struggling to make ends meet itself. As mentioned in section 5.1.1, primacy is likely to be given to the 'shortest distance' and 'quickest arrival' as opposed to the competence or speciality of the interpreter. The rule of the 'cheapest wins' is inherent in the market logic and seems to have the potential to weed out any qualified players in the game. This makes work economically unviable and leaves the buyers to call the shots.

While each of the two abovementioned logics plays its own part in shaping the way free-standing professionals (e.g. accountants, lawyers, engineers) organise their work, this thesis suggests that in the PSI field the distinction between the state logic and the market logic remains rather ambiguous. It is undeniable that the increasing pressure stemming from the free choice of clients limits the conditions that managers can offer to interpreters in many ways, however, the actual purchaser in this context is by no means the independent business entity or individuals. They are predominantly public sector institutions that form an integral part of the broader state-bureaucratic system. Such forces of competition are thus brought in essentially by policy-makers who are sponsoring interpreting services with the intention of tightening the control over this profession. Through working with (essentially patronising) agencies, the nation-state administrators can create a 'quasi-market' (Cutler and Waine 1997) where competitions for bounded resources are intensified and the autonomy of interpreters is undermined. This is in line with the values of NPM (discussed in 2.4.3) which viewed public organisations as overstaffed, inefficient and unresponsive to consumer needs. Outsourcing is therefore a preferred choice so as to remove their social welfare function and restrict the unchecked autonomy of public professionals.

Although the end users of limited language proficiency are repeatedly framed as the starting premise of Insight in its organisational discourse, managerial attentions are

largely directed to those who “pay the bill”, leaving the service end-users comparably detached from the actual service delivery process. This is revealed in the observation that Insight has rarely engaged with or obtained feedback from this group, as compared to their active alliance with public officials (see 5.3.2). Suffice it to say that the seemingly strong ‘market control’ influencing the PSI field is in fact one generated by the state rather than the market in a real sense. Acknowledging that PSI work is taking place under the dominance of state logic within a semi-market environment is pivotal as failure to do so would lead to a confusion of its status with other autonomous professions (Foster and Wilding 2000). Just as social work and nursing are the “offspring and the beneficiaries of welfare state policies’ (Wilding 1982, p.67), PSI is also by nature one of the welfare professions that relies on state patronage to achieve its occupational closure (if ever). It follows that interpreters have limited ‘regulative bargaining power’ to negotiate with the state for their independence. Since they have never had the opportunity to build themselves into a ‘status profession’ before, it is less likely they would have a chance in the current neoliberal climate, where ‘occupational professions’ (Elliott 1972; Noordegraaf 2007) is the norm and preferred by the modern welfare state (Clarke and Newman 1997).

Noticeably, resistance outwith Insight is still put up in a retaliatory manner against the state-market logic. Interpreters seeking for changes have consistently followed the professional logic—a type of control vis-à-vis managerial and market control. Such logic is featured by professionals’ collegial organisation, codified knowledge and shared identity (Parson 1954; Freidson 2001), as compared to that of the bureaucratic hierarchical system. Professional logic presupposes the central role of professional associations in organising professional work and exercising self-regulation. It enables professionals to exercise discretions based on their domestically-rated competence without being externally interfered with by the state or market criteria. Yet this thesis finds no equivalent organisation of this kind is functioning well in the local context of PSI. Although GAIT might be the one marking the culmination of interpreters’ resistance acts (e.g. being on strike, whistle-blowing, meetings, forums), the leaders of GAIT fail to convince practitioners that they have the capacity to lead. Their approach to professionalisation antagonises agencies and becomes the target of criticism. A lack of understanding of the intricacy in the agencies-government relationship renders this nascent organisation rather isolated and short-sighted in the battle. The demise of it perhaps suggests that the traditional pathway towards professionalisation led by



professional associations is no longer viable for contemporary newly-emerging occupations. What GAIT fails to grasp is perhaps what Insight very much prides itself upon: unlike GAIT that holds an unyielding, get-tough attitude against the privatisation scheme and lacks effective management policy, Insight managers are highly versatile and sociable in staging this comeback. Their key strategy to achieve a similar purpose is constructing a hybrid organisational logic.

Greenwood and Hinings (1993) perceive an organisation to be a set of systematic structures that embodies a single consistent interpretative scheme, which prescribes what an organisation should do and how it should accomplish it. Contextualising this interpretive scheme in an institutional field means that the reality of organisational logic coexists with and is affected by multiple institutional orders (Kraatz and Block 2008). This provides opportunity for Insight to work the variable configuration of logics to its own advantage. In fact, it can be argued that managers' institutional work of resistance essentially concentrates on architecting such logic. First of all, they purposefully embedded the pair of contradictions (the social and commercial arm of Insight) into one holistic interpretive scheme, i.e. the form of an organisational template. This is achieved through founding the hybrid organisation that can accommodate elements from divergent institutional logics (Battilana and Dorado 2010). In so doing, they deliberately turn Insight into an arena of controversy and ambiguity. Through the 'identity work' of sense-giving (e.g. 'attachment' and 'alignment' in 4.1.1), managers successfully inject the social trustee model of professionalism (discussed in 2.1.2) into the organisational ethos, yet at the same time run the business entity based on their marketable knowledge and skills.

Note that this is not to say the intrinsic contradictions are wiped out. Theories posit that as the degree of opposition between logics increases, hybrids face ever greater challenges (Besharov and Smith 2012). They might even endanger their legitimacy recognised by the key institutional referents due to the unbalanced efforts required to defy one or support the other. But this thesis lends greater support to the advantages of the hybrid. Its ability to provide convenient access to a wider collection of institutional templates allows managers to improvise solutions whenever necessary. Built on its network resources, Insight also stands a better chance to secure endorsements from high-profile institutions (Greenwood et al. 2011). It follows that logics to a large extent act as "cultural toolkits" (Tracey, Phillips and Jarvis 2011) by which actors can craft a combination of heterogeneous elements that are deemed fit for resolving immediate problems and

justifying practices (Pache and Santos 2013). Managers therefore take advantage of the flexibility that hybrid organisation can offer, and along the way have constructed a unique Insight logic to avoid being ‘split apart’ by the forces from competing logics.

### 8.2.6 *The Formation of the Insight Logic over Competing Logics*

Let us now unpack the Insight logic and detail how the combination of logics is actually accomplished in managers’ everyday institutional work. Built on the mixed elements drawn from the logic of interpreting professionalism and the logic of state-managerialism, the Insight logic is fabricated to ameliorate rather than antagonise, to pluralise rather than polarise, with its substance of seeking and securing a temporal middle ground between the two logics they embody. To fight against the prevailing practice that “anyone who happens to speak two languages can become an interpreter” [A-Director], managers come up with a social mission to ensure language barriers will not become the root cause for inequality; to ensure its economic sustainability as a business, it has to meet the demands of market imperatives. These two seemingly oppositional objectives are however not entirely irreconcilable under the Insight logic that managers improvised in response to the competing challenges (4.1.2) and in which they framed their priorities as “sort[ing] our own house *first*”. This underscores their need to gain authority and credibility *here and now* as a stepping stone to actualise the organisational vision *in the future*. This line of reasoning is also manifested in their participation in the contract-bidding process. To justify this course of action, being eligible to deliver the actual interpreting service has been conceived as a ‘rites of passage’ to reaching the government and further influence the policy. Recall the words of the director, “it takes time to fulfil it because we need to make money *first*”, and “if we want to win contracts, we have to do it (to provide training), so we’ve made the decision to go down that road” [A-Director]. This accords well with the strategy of “selective coupling” (Pache and Santos 2012, p.994) entailing purposefully enacting selected practices to address symbolic concerns. Specifically, this study provides instances where actors adhere to prescriptions from a given logic without violating the competing logic through inserting temporal and spatial dimensions so as to ease their confrontational objectives. It can be inferred that managers are apt at sizing up the overall situation and manipulating the norms provided by multiple logics to legitimise their decisions. Instead of fictionally promising a prescribed practice without actually doing it--the strategy of “decoupling” (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Bromley and Powell 2012), Insight is able to temporarily play down certain less relevant logic in a given moment and selectively report the relevant aspects of their identity claims that are conducive to resolving emergent conflicts.

Insight logic also underpins the ‘practice work’ and ‘enclosure work’ where managers coordinate the service delivery process and engage with institution players. In Insight’s internal tiered system of human resources, managers have deliberately created a separate category to accommodate the shortlisted interpreters who do not have the required certificate to work but pass Insight tests. Monitored closely by senior members, they are labelled as ‘trainee interpreters’ and deployed below the rank of the DPSI-qualified cohort but distinguished from the untrained/lay interpreters in the PSI field. Reasons for having this category include language obscurity and improper existing criteria as mentioned (5.3.1), but it is equally possible that Insight is in dire need of more available interpreters to sustain the business given the high number of short-notice requests passed on to them by master contractors. Regardless of the motives of this move, it re-sets the overall industrial credentials as Insight has convinced the master contracted agency of the necessity to allow a transition (or what they call “interim period”) for interpreters to obtain the DPSI certificate progressively. ‘Trainee interpreters’ are therefore repackaged as provisional workforce subject to the management and authorisation by Insight. As indicated in 5.3.2, this in many ways strengthens its professional leadership and expands its market influence. Most importantly, such practice brings to the surface the forging of Insight logic in moderating the often excessively ambitious and unrealistic goals of the profession (‘DPSI-only’), unpacking the abstract regulatory orientation or breaking down general guidelines to concrete steps. This logic allows Insight to constantly negotiate and fine-tune the meaning of a given practice until it becomes pragmatic and down-to-earth enough to implement. It is through crafting the localised structures and micro-plans that managers navigate through the three pairs of conflicting pressures this study identified: to combat the privatisation scheme whilst taking part in the procurement bidding process; to enhance the quality of interpreting and working conditions of interpreters whilst surviving the price-cutting competition in the disorderly market; to free interpreters from the state-market control whilst subjecting them to managerial-organisational control.

Insight logic is also a combined product of projective agency and practical-evaluative agency (discussed in 2.5.1). While the former allows Insight to plan prospective actions and prepare for future changes, the latter enables managers to exercise judgement in situ and cope with contingent situations (Battilana and D’Aunno 2009). Projective agency is found to be typically practised at the intra-organisational level for primarily rule-setting purposes. Here the internal system of norms and values is being installed with a view to enhance interpreters’ identification with Insight and to draw a boundary for professional

entry. As revealed in the findings, managers' "my way or highway" [A-Director] approach to screening interpreters fit for Insight and their socialisation strategies ensure that the opposing forces are unlikely to grow from within the organisation. Accordingly, the distinct identity of Insight can be argued to have already become an incumbent of institutional logics (Thornton and Ocasio 2008; Greenwood et al. 2010) that goes against the mainstream practice. The findings extend this thought by suggesting that, while freelancing experts tend to identify less with intermediary organisations than with their profession and the job itself, it is because of the projective agency about turning Insight into the centre of the professional community, which decidedly blurs the boundary between the profession and organisation, that enables the identity to evolve to a constituent of institutional orders. The freelancing workforce plays an important role in conferring legitimacy on network organisations. The fact that they are not bounded by a single company offers them the acute vision and awareness of who is doing better than others. Their pro-Insight attitude and the willingness to sacrifice self-interest for the Insight agenda are equally crucial for inducing field-level changes. This study thus contributes a more nuanced understanding of agency and efforts in institutional work (Lawrence et al. 2011). It highlights that ordinary participants who have no intention to lead or behave entrepreneurially are also doing important work. Their persistence in performing high quality mundane tasks may end up being part of the grand project of reconfiguring institutional order.

On the other hand, practical agency is particularly exercised when managers deal with inter-organisational relationships. They rely on exploring multiple connections and securing endorsements from even mutually competing actors, as they want to avoid being isolated in a peripheral structural position. This kind of interaction often requires actors to improvise solutions, and sometimes even at the expense of violating the rules they themselves formulate (e.g. inappropriate job allocations), in order to meet the demands of institutional referents here and now. This study thus contributes to theory by documenting the situated enactment of both projective and practical agency of Insight managers. It advances the current understanding of the embedded agency paradox by arguing that the competing logics that Insight embodies do not constrain managers' behaviours. The hybrid organisational logic generates an expanded repertoire of practices, which in return diversifies its modes of resistance against the field-level dominant logic. This study thus sheds new lights on the strategies of professionalisation of PSI. In the course of pursuing the monopoly of economic and knowledge spheres, PSI professionals

do not differ much from lawyers or engineers. But what essentially makes these institutional agents unique is perhaps that they rely on and constitute a sub-system of the welfare regime. Subsequently, dealing with the ‘parental authority’ (i.e. the state) necessitates the use of a set of multi-dimensional, flexible and unobtrusive tactics rather than a single, oversimplified solution. In a time when even classic professions, such as medical doctors (example discussed in 2.5.2), have to stand up against the state intervention and sectoral restructuring without knowing whether it would pay off, PSI professionals should prepare for a long-lasting act of resistance and “pick [the] battle worth fighting”[A-Director].

Hybrid organisations have an opportunity to carve out an alternative route towards professionalisation that other groups (campaign groups, professional bodies) do not possess, should they be well managed and led. Insight logic that ameliorates the clash of values inherent in the professional work gives scope to navigate through the existing logics. It is therefore important to understand how the social enterprise model paves the way for the successful construction of Insight logic. Defined as “a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested...in the community” (DTI 2002 p.7), social enterprises are not driven by the need to maximize profit for shareholders like private companies. Four key values of social entrepreneurship—1) enterprise, 2) competitiveness, 3) innovation and 4) social inclusion (ibid. p.8)—are found to be exemplified by Insight managers. Unlike public professions who are bound by a more risk-averse environment, managers in Insight dare to take risks. In return they embrace a more dynamic and adaptable approach to the multiple demands in the field. They are also comparatively competitive because of their expertise and insights in the industry. The fact that they are sub-contracted by the State as a national training provider attests to a strong reputation for effective service provision. The innovative feature of social enterprises is related to their ability to identify pragmatic solutions and deal with changes in a creative fashion. It can be found that Insight is adept at actively seeking changes or adapting swiftly to changes driven by external forces.

Most importantly, the value of social inclusion inherent to social enterprises enables Insight to include the interests of a wider range of stakeholders in their managerial arrangements. While mainstream agencies tend to focus on modernising booking system and computing infrastructure, Insight pays substantial attention to people rather than machines. In a procurement climate where interpreters are largely treated as numbers or cost, Insight offers them plenty of opportunities to access training and develop

intercultural and professional skills. Once valued as assets, interpreters constitute an enabling socioeconomic 'hub' that naturally facilitates inter-and intra-community exchanges. This is not only because they often have a strong bond with the local ethnic minority groups, but also because they are able to remove the language barriers standing in the way of social justice. This thesis therefore argues that the front-line social enterprise model is instrumental in combating social marginality and promoting social cohesion (see Spear 2006, Ridley-Duff and Bull 2011), especially through community-based mediation and intercultural capabilities building. Although the actual end-users of interpreting service are still relatively overlooked in Insight's current masterplan (mentioned in 5.3.2), the hybrid structure can be a welcome option for addressing a number of human and societal development issues that the private sector and government institutions fail to tackle.

It is crucial to equally acknowledge that the use of social enterprise framework is not a panacea for all problems. The findings reveal that the challenge for Insight has broadly centred on the enterprises' ongoing viability. This relates to how well the hybrid organisations can handle the risks of performance failure and improve their sustainability in the free market competition (DTI 2002). Noted that Insight does not have multiple sources of income as other third sector organisations do (e.g. donations, grants application). Its booking requests come largely from a single master vendor who would run the same interpreting business as Insight. Unable to generate a flow of alternative and sustainable trades renders Insight's future rather risky and unpredictable. The results also affirm the degree of reflexivity that hybrids have as they are stimulated by the contradictions within which they are embedded (Seo and Creed 2002). The very controversy that hybrids introduces brings about infinite possibilities, which fits surprisingly well with the ambiguous domains of public sectors.

Deconstructing the Insight logic is generative for grasping why it is essential for actors to have this unique template as their foundation, and how it can provide the infrastructure and interpretive scheme to guide their acts of resistance. This study is thus consistent with the current call to foreground the micro-actions and dynamics taking place behind the macro-level institutional process (Thornton et al. 2012) and contributes to the understanding of the impact of public procurement on the service provision in the institutional field of PSI.

## **|Translating Professional Knowledge into Organisational Resources**

### *8.3.1 The Tacit Knowledge of PSI*

Abbott (1988) argues that there are mainly two common ways that professionals advance their professional project. One is through *externally* acquiring an unexplored space, the significance of which has been addressed in the prior chapter. The alternative way that Insight managers have been simultaneously trying is *internally* reconstructing their knowledge repertoire. This is achieved mainly by performing ‘technical work’ (4.2), with the aim of theorising the perceived fragmented knowledge of interpreting, and translating it into organisational resources. Because this knowledge-restructuring initiative is put forward by Insight, the institutionalisation of such practice is found to bear strong ‘organisationalised characteristics’.

Early claims of sociology of the professions attend to the central role of knowledge in shaping the power and status of a profession. As the “core generating trait” (Halliday 1987, p.29) of traditional professions, the body of knowledge is distinctly characterised by abstraction and formalised principles (see 2.1.3). It is typically acquired through lengthy and exacting training in formal education, and in most cases such expertise is recognised by the state as a symbol of defined jurisdiction and identity. However, the results suggest that the interpreters under study do not seem to possess the will or the mechanism to replicate the knowledge model of medicine or law in this regard. Many seem to be uncertain about the generalisability of the knowledge and consider it so concrete and contextualised that it cannot be well learned without practising at real interpreting situations with on-the-job training. There is a common understanding that the decisions they arrive at in real life are dependent less upon theoretical principles but more upon the accumulated experience applied to the immediate challenge of the uncertain moments.

Perhaps *tacit knowledge* can best account for practitioners’ understanding of this phenomenon. According to Schön (1995), it is structured in a less specialised, less scientifically abstract and less formally rationalised manner, though such knowledge may incrementally develop towards theorisation. Associated with what is perceived by interpreters to be the major challenges at work (see quotes in 4.2.1, Figure 4.1), this study argues that, deviating from traditional professions that thrive on the knowledge model of technical rationality, the knowledge in PSI context is largely tacit and procedural. Since it does not work on the basis of regularities and certainties, a key feature of tacit knowledge acquisition is through “knowing in practice” (Schön 1991, p.1). This

corresponds to the central role of practical experience in professions that lack a codified knowledge bases (Tipton and Furmanek 2016).

To the extent that a formalised knowledge foundation is regarded as an essential criterion for classic professions, the tacit dimension of interpreting practice invariably introduces difficulties in defining such a ‘body of systemic theory’ (European Commission 2012, p.31). Interpreters are still expected to act upon the emerging variables and validate their decision-making *in situ*, albeit theorisation is key in providing expert discourse and metalanguage that enables the inter-professional dialogues to take place effectively (Hale 2005, p.18). Another factor that makes such knowledge hard to codify is perhaps its interactive and ‘absorbent’ nature. Clients that interpreters closely work with in public services are very often members of more-established professions built on time-honoured skills and theories. Their cognitive frameworks therefore continue to inform and diversify interpreting strategies (e.g. interpreters change interpreting modes or use non-verbal cues to convey meaning based on the source knowledge; see an example in 4.3.2, p.102) through the co-constructing of meaning (Turner 1995). Inevitably, specialised knowledge that appears to be declarative and utterable for those professionals might simultaneously be implicit and unknown for interpreters, which further complicates the communicative dynamics in a given interpreter-mediated event. Subsequently, it can be argued that the informants’ struggle over the mismatch between what is expected of them and the best outcome they can possibly achieve is not so much caused by the “little” assistance that theories can offer in practice (since the value of theory has traditionally been highlighted as a powerful tool for professionals facing unprecedented situations); rather, it is because too few of the theories have ever been externalised from the mass of tacit knowledge that characterises this practice profession (Dean 2015).

It is from here that Insight with its organisational impetus for theorisation plays its part. Theorising is defined as a process to develop a set of abstract categories, including “the naming of new concepts and practices so that they might become a part of the cognitive map of the field” (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). To do so the challenges of how to quantify and codify the body of PSI knowledge that varies in scenarios and participants comes into focus. Knowledge management scholars argue that organisations play a crucial role in articulating and amplifying the knowledge developed by individuals (Nonaka 2009). Their assertion is built on the distinction between tacit and explicit forms of knowledge along the continuum and the notion of knowledge conversion as a key process to expand knowledge beyond the singular to the plural (discussed in 2.4.2). From



the vantage point of organisational knowledge creation, this thesis argues that Insight, as a knowledge-based organisation, can extend the scope of PSI practice by facilitating knowledge exchange and cultivating reflective practice. A detailed discussion on such process is presented in the following section.

### *8.3.2 Extending the Scope for Professional Learning and Practice*

Insight as an interpreting agency contributes to the PSI knowledge and practice in four aspects. Firstly, it creates a rarely available platform to lead knowledge exchanges by gathering interpreters in regular group study activities. Interpreting is often viewed as “a lonely job” [B-Int] due to its freelancing mode and temporary workplaces. As reflected in the results, knowledge is fragmentally kept to individuals and there are relatively limited opportunities for practitioners to communicate experiences across the occupational group. To overcome the loosely-connected collegiality, Insight claim to be the ‘headquarters’ of the occupational community and facilitate the exchange of practice-based knowledge through meaningful interactions. As emphasised by Nonaka (2006), having a shared space for emerging relationships is essential because knowledge is created in context. To participate in such a space means “to become engaged in...dialogue, adapt to and shape practices, and simultaneously transcend one’s own limited perspective or boundaries” (ibid. p.1185). “Communities of interaction” (Nonaka and von Krogh 2009) consisting of a “self-organizing team” are thus established as a prerequisite for knowledge creation among the otherwise isolated individual interpreters. This need is also recognised by D’Hayer (2012) in interpreter education where formal PSI courses are not included in universities due to a lack of funding resources and unpredictable market needs (see also Hale 2007).

Furthermore, training modules are designed based on the demands of the actual work practice. Each topic for discussion is compiled by practitioners based on their authentic experience, which feeds into their self-designed Learning and Development Programme (Figure 4.2) as part of the CPD scheme. These activities are akin to what Nonaka (1994) referred to as “externalisation”, a dialogic process that galvanises the tacit/explicit knowledge conversion (discussed in 2.4.2). Unless it is amplified through social interaction, field-specific perspectives remain rather personal and partial. The success of the conversion is determined by evocative dialogue and what Morgan (1986, p.44) terms ‘requisite variety’—the internal variety of an evolving system must match the complexity of its environment. Such variety is manifested in the weekly learning group which is composed of core members who have over ten years of experiences and junior interpreters

who just start off. Factors such as the proportion of language combinations, the participants' age, gender and specialty are also taken into consideration. As for the evocative dialogue, managers are highly adept at presenting controversial topics and 'blindspot' information to trigger the debate. To illustrate in simple terms, participant A normally would not think twice about following the request of a solicitor when asked to interpret for an interview with detainees in a cell downstairs the courtroom before a hearing starts. Yet A might change his/her future decisions when B challenges that it is doubtful because perhaps they should not do it without permission from the judge since interpreters are hired by the court. If C illustrates similar situations in other work settings and D conceptualises such conduct as "improper delegation" [A-Int], an informed agreement might be reached and extended to the rest of the organisational members. The knowledge process spurred by participants' co-experiencing and co-articulating the problems paves the way for explicating knowledge and cultivating good practice. Interactive activities in the form of "senior-to-junior" or "one-to-many" lecturing, podcasting and blended learning (Table 4.1) enable the tacitness of knowledge to fade away as more personal insights are conveyed and externalised. As a result, experiences are classified, modelled and asserted, thereby reducing the ambiguities and transforming intuitive understanding into educated protocols. Theorisation is thus achieved as the situated practice is given a certain degree of rigour and "specification of abstract categories" (Greenwood et al. 2002, p.60).

Thirdly, the institutional work of 'educating' also contributes to expanding the scope of professional practice. This type of institutional work is defined as "educating actors in skills and knowledge necessary to support the new institution" (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006, p.227). It involves imparting the required skills and behaviours to interpreters as well as to the public service providers and partner agencies (5.2.1). With the former, informal apprenticeship is established and thematic workshops are organised by senior interpreters to address specific language and culture issues; for the latter, bespoke training sessions are developed to familiarise the clients with expected norms and challenges in the interpreter-mediated meetings. Most strikingly, insights gained from these events are re-packaged into learning materials used in their training series, which are then branded as Insight product regularly marketed and profitably sold to stakeholder institutions (see 5.2.1). These ongoing efforts, albeit enthused by the commercial logic, lead to an integration of different entities of explicit knowledge into some standardised form of structure or system (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). Standardisation is important because

crystallising explicit knowledge can cost field actors less effort to share when compared to tacit knowledge. It also accelerates the process of translating the experienced-based knowledge into exclusive organisational resources. Since organisational knowledge conversion can be considered as moving from the individual level to the broader networks (Swan et al. 1999), it can be argued that Insight is gathering strength from bridging the gap between theory and practice and move towards an ‘organisational closure’ of knowledge control.

Last but not least, Insight makes available its ‘self-generating’ knowledge system to its own interpreters via a membership system. Through developing an information database and enrolling interpreters to review their post-assignment experiences, the organisation provides their interpreters with self-study exercises to consolidate their acquired knowledge and encourage them to test it in practice. This showcases the merit of the organisational mechanism in facilitating members’ “internalisation process”, through which knowledge starts to lose some of its explicitness and “people move to act on the knowledge” (Nonaka and von Krogh 2009, p.643). While it is beyond the scope of this study to explore how well the subscribers have actually internalised (and thus applied) the frameworks proposed by Insight, the managers’ intentionality to cultivate their ‘contextualised competence’ (Svensson 2006) cannot be emphasised more, which is found missing in the too often oversimplified training provided by most of the agencies.

### *8.3.3 Organisations as Professional Communities for Knowledge Generation*

In general terms, Insight’s technical work in expanding the knowledge boundary from individual interpreters to the shared organisational community (and beyond) roughly captures the knowledge creation process proposed by organisation theorists. Interpreters bring their situated cognition and reflexivity (Risku 2002) to fields of “uncertainty, complexity, instability, uniqueness and value conflict” (Schön 1991, p.17), meaning that the knowledge is no longer easy to codify and generalise. Without dedicated efforts and plans to manage it, the tacit knowledge will not automatically be externalised and developed into schemes that guide future behaviours. Accordingly, this study provides novel revelations into the role of Insight and possibly other responsible agencies as a new form of ‘cultural scaffolding’ (Henderiks-Jansen 1996)—the tool and instruments to make sense of the knowledge—and community of practices (Lave and Wenger 1991) where complex work knowledge are stored, negotiated and recreated.

Notably, this kind of on-the-job training alone is not traditionally recognised as sufficient for most of the classic professions. Medical and legal trainees are required by authorities to have their graduate degrees prior to entering the workplace. The professional identity of those practitioners is normally shaped through a lengthy period of time in universities on top of the work placement learning. Yet accounts of interpreters suggest that opportunities as such are by and large missing in PSI. The lack of job prospects, educational resources and social status prevents practitioners from making further investment in this career. Consequently, while researchers critiqued the growing ‘proceduralisation’ in professional work (e.g. Banks 1998) and the shift from traditionally research-based education towards more competency-based, task-oriented training, these trends are nothing unexpected for interpreters, especially when many of them have not spent their formative years in formal specialised university education. In fact, the ‘organisationalness’ of their knowledge acquisition, or the workplace learning approach, has a unique effect in strengthening the occupational community. The core purpose of learning is then *becoming* a practitioner rather than learning about practice alone. By fostering a reflective dialogue between senior and junior interpreters, coaching and mentoring become possible and trainee interpreters are able to collate their ‘knowing in the midst of actions’ (Svensson 2006). This also helps to overcome a common barrier which is there is a lack of language-specific feedback given to trainees (D’Hayer 2012; Tipton and Furmanek 2016), since PSI courses are almost exclusively delivered in the societal language. Yet agencies manage a group of senior interpreters who are likely to give more reliable feedback on language use to novice interpreters. They can easily provide solutions to locating language partners that large educational institutions often struggle to coordinate. Every practitioners’ first-hand experiences gained from work can provide raw materials for the organisation to synthesise and theorise, ultimately benefiting themselves from the knowledge sharing process.

Finally, this study offers an organisational-managerial perspective on professional knowledge and identity formation that explains how the ‘technical work’ of Insight addresses the highly tacit and contextualised dimension of PSI practice and facilitates its conversion into externalised output. Aided by the organisational reproduction of evolving theories and practice, managers are able to integrate the institutional work of ‘theorising’ and ‘educating’ into the operation of professional work, thus building Insight itself into a trainer and framer of the interpreting profession. The findings highlight the importance of knowledge management by social organisations in transforming the way modern

workers work through centralising knowledge generation process and making it more accessible within the organisation as a working community, as opposed to the traditional approach of ‘blackboxing’ and mystification. As Reed points out, “organisations become the strategic social units for generating, storing and manipulating knowledge so as to secure the planned reproduction of social systems” (1996, p.73-574).

### **The Construction of Organisational Professionalism in Practice**

Apart from the ‘technical work’ focusing on theorising and recreating professional knowledge, this study also brings to the surface a set of other institutional work that is enacted achieving the other sub-goals included in their professional project. While each type of work exerts distinct impact on different aspects of interpreting practice, the piecing-together delineates the refined process of how Insight (re)construct the model of interpreting professionalism. This section is to discuss the significance of ‘identity work’ and ‘boundary work’ in shaping the role boundary and identity of professional interpreters.

#### *8.4.1 Professional Identity as a Target of Control*

First of all, it has been described as ‘identity work’ whereby candidates are strictly selected against a set of Insight standards before being socialised into the pre-defined roles and cultures (4.1.3). Interpreters are largely subject to the managerial order of “shape-up-or-ship-out”, in a sense that only those who equip with certain qualities (e.g. “the right attitude”, “open-minded”, “trainable”) can be deemed qualified for further assessment. This implies that interpreters will not only be assessed by their skills but also the extent to which one shares Insight’ value and ethos. Moreover, managers’ pursuit of a strong person-organisation fit suggests that Insight does not regard itself as a mere broker agency from the outset, nor does it rely much upon the broader freelance experts’ appreciation of their own roles; rather, managers manoeuvre the organisation's imperatives to shape interpreters’ behaviours. This affirms their on-going exercise of the episodic power (discussed in 2.5.1) in an attempt to problematise the current institutional practices and prevent amateur interpreters from entering into the profession. By moralising their criteria to the candidates using persuasive vocabularies, an image of Insight as an expert who has the authority to judge “right or wrong” is discursively constructed. Identity work can thus be perceived as a status building process for Insight to claim their leadership in the professionalisation of PSI. Such status is desirable, especially for less professionalised groups who are yet to obtain due recognition from the society. Alvesson (2001) found that the idea of elite social identity is pervasive in knowledge-intensive companies. It follows that with the growing social standing of

Insight, interpreters are likely to derive greater status from this organisation than from their emerging profession. Alternatively, it can be argued that the title of interpreter can be a professional profile as well as an organisationally-defined employment category. Their roles are 'incorporated' due to their strong emotional tie to the distinctiveness of Insight as a professional service company.

This strategy is important because it produces a direct impact upon the extant problematic division of PSI workforce reflected in interpreters' relationship with agencies. It is worthwhile to draw references from Marks and Scholarios (2007) to support this argument (discussed in 2.2.3). The authors found that the technical workers group who take on lower-end support roles tend to develop more dependency on the organisation, since it is through the organisation alone they can access regular work. Connecting this reasoning to Reeds' (1996) typology of modern expert work (see 2.4.2), this thesis argues that the division of labour in PSI based on entry qualifications set by agencies also exists. In the observations, qualified interpreters are found to possess less attachment to mainstream agencies since they are less dependent on the organisation to define their self-value or occupational identity, but this is not the case for *ad hoc* interpreters who have to rely on agencies to gain access to work (and 'just in time', agencies are in need of this large number to save costs and meet the demand). This study suggests that Insight managers attempt to reconfigure such division by nullifying this 'qualification-based' identification orientation. The new criterion they promote is to differentiate "newer generation" of interpreters from the "older breed" based on adherence to professional ethics and boundaries, unless the latter are "trainable" [A-Director]. This sort of identification requirement goes beyond the transactional relationship and aligns organisational ethos with professional aspiration. As argued by Kunda et al. (2002), once the job provider is viewed as a vehicle for skill building and continuous employment source, even the contingent workers who tend to be more attached to the profession might start to identify with the organisation. Setting aside whether Insight has approached ethical codes appropriately, such recruitment exercise involve acculturating new entrants with organisational 'characteristics' which in turn represents a forceful organisational intervention into the loosely-managed profession.

A closer look at why Insight tries to recharge the profession by reducing the number of amateur interpreters also reveals the process of identity regulation (Alvesson 2001, p. 10) as part of the organisational mission. As this group of interpreters are often described as "people get their roles muddled up" and "have bad habits" (see 4.4.2), those who do not

(existing members) are automatically compared and constantly monitored. By distancing itself from the sub-standard behaviours, Insight incrementally develops its superior identity and sets examples for new members to define themselves. This is associated with the notion of “normalization”, (ibid. p.880) as part of the “identity regulation” strategy commonly used by management. Drawing upon Foucault’s (1980) notion of ‘disciplinary power’, Alvesson (2001) adds that normalisation works through conscious search for perceived discrepancy between the norm and the behaviour, resulting in systematic or sporadic self-surveillance by individuals. Another aspect pertains to Insight identity is managers’ dedication to ‘team-building’. As described in 4.3.3, Insight develops different practices to enhance the sense of organisational belonging from interpreters, including providing psychological, emotional and intellectual support for their work. The aim is to make it the home and team base for freelancers and install membership system to divide organisational insiders from outsiders. Similar discourses can be understood as expressions of managerial interest in shaping employees’ inner worlds as well as prompts that can turn employees into “identity workers” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, p.622). As pointed out by Casey (1999), the family and team metaphors can offer to members the emotional satisfaction, which can help to offset the harm of individualism. Subsequently, control becomes an internalisation of discipline manifested in interpreters’ organisational identification and their commitment to work.

Connecting the substance of identity regulation backed up by rhetoric tactics and image management with the current professional context, this study adds to the debate on PSI professionalisation by suggesting that, with the organisational identity work penetrates into the forming of professional identity, it is likely that agencies modelling on PSFs (see 2.4.2) can enhance, rather than undermining the status and respect that interpreters strive for but struggle to achieve. Meanwhile, it should be noted that, since Insight does not always enrol interpreters with recognised qualifications, its symbolic status that member interpreters might derive from is already not built on traditional professionalism but on its claimed expert authority as loci for identification.

#### *8.4.2 Professional Jurisdictions as Sites of Power Play*

Insight managers enact boundary work (discussed in 2.4.1) to define the professional jurisdiction that embodies the collective status and exclusive resources (Abbott 1988) by using organisational thresholds. Whilst it is often carried out concurrently with identity work, this kind of institutional action plays a unique role in regulating the chaotic market that is short of a clear minimum benchmark for entry and of reliable professional control

(Witter-Merithew and Johnson 2004). The necessity of identifying the strategies of (sign language) interpreting professionals used to set and maintain boundaries have been discussed by Grbić (2010, 2014). Whilst her work provides insight into the macro-differentiation process between professionals and non-professionals eventually achieved through the founding of their professional association, this thesis offers a micro in-depth view of the classificatory acts led by a handful of interpreters through their routine work. The data illustrates that the exclusivity of the PSI territory is highly contested and subjected to ongoing and daily negotiation. It follows that boundary strategies are mainly deployed in two directions. Those are ‘organisational outsiders’ and ‘organisational insiders’.

Towards organisational outsiders, Insight has set up procedures to distinguish qualified interpreters from “advocates”, “community support workers”, interpreters “with old way of thinking”, and foreign language speakers with “informal experience” (see 4.4.1). It has been mentioned that managers do not simply decline occasional or accidental interpreters, rather, they engage with the Others (through job interview or training) in order to contrast how ‘professional’ they are and educate the Other about what to do to be ‘professional’. As argued by Gieryn (1983) and represented by Grbić (2010), the purpose of boundary work in professionalisation is essentially for constructing rhetorical divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’, between those who belong to the claimed jurisdiction and those who do not, either intra-professionally or inter-professionally.

Towards organisational insiders, boundary reinforcement is performed through invoking code of ethics and behavioural rules to minimise the possibilities of crossing a boundary. A couple of workplace protocols such as “home visits” and “telephone interpreting” in relation to confidentiality issues are identified (see 4.4.2). While they serve more as preventative measures than compulsive obligations, managers’ intention to standardise interpreters’ work practices are evident. However, this leads to a tendency to use rule-based discourse as opposed to the *teleological* approach to conceptualise what is ethical (Dean and Pollard 2013). The prescriptive, didactical instructions (e.g. “You are just there to interpret”) based on literal interpretations of the ethical codes (Baker and Maier 2011) often instigates the ‘conduit model’—a model that is continuously opposed by the participation model whereby interpreters are seen as visible and involved third participants in the interaction (Wadensjö 1998; Roy 2000). The conduit model also discourages interpreters from critically reflecting on their ethical decision making *in situ* and their accountability to other participants (Dean 2015). Prior studies revealed various



factors that result in interpreters' 'enactment' of neutrality (Tipton 2008) in the interaction (reviewed in 2.3.4), It can therefore be argued that the role model characterised by invisibility and 'value-free' continuously still prevails in practice. The machine-like figure of interpreters is much preferred by the focal organisation (and potentially other agencies who care) despite its limitations have been extensively discussed in the interpreting literature. What seems to be missing in the debate is that why the 'conduit model' can remain so entrenched and perhaps hands-on for many frontline operators.

This thesis attempts to offer a different explanation by suggesting that it is in part due to the lack of clear inter-professional boundary for interpreting practice and the innate paradox of professional *logic* and managerial *logic* (discussed in 6.2.5). One of the core competences of professionals in any domain is their ability to analyse an undefined situation and provide solutions involving minimal consequences of error. As discussed earlier on, service users rely on their knowledge to cope with complex environments, which often requires professionals to adapt to emerging conditions by adjusting their strategies. The resulting 'practical drift' (Snook 2000) necessarily implicates subjective judgement that may or may not conform to written procedures. It is this element of idiosyncratic discretion that simultaneously introduces the risk of slip-ups, depending on the outcomes of the treatment. To put it differently, professionals are trained to break the rules when they deem necessary. Organisations, on the other hand, work to reduce the unpredictability by establishing rules. Literature that attends to such perceived conflicts tends to stop here and asserts that since the core function of any organisation is to *manage*. This results in the confrontation between professionals and managers arguably inherent (discussed in 2.4.2). However, the data generated in the context of Insight and beyond indicates a quite different dynamic in this pair of logics. This thesis upholds that the organisational mechanisms of Insight constitute a practical treatment to the blurred boundary of PSI and the currently less organised profession. This can be in part attributed to the procurement logic that favours 'quantity' over 'quality'. It gives rise to the influx of commercial agencies that are born to bid for contracts and live on deskilling interpreting tasks. Professional power is accordingly devolved to these agencies that introduce a cohort of lay interpreters in an attempt to bring the price down and maximise the profit.

As the PSI field has yet to be populated with highly-skilled, ethically acute workforce, what should be prioritised is to set a baseline that is effective enough to prevent the potential rule-breaking behaviours from compromising the quality of interpreting practice

and the safety of the clients (e.g. patients, vulnerable groups). In this connection, the goal of the professionals—to pursue self-regulation, and that of Insight—is to construct the very infrastructure that this nascent profession is still lacking but are ultimately converging and mutually enhancing. It follows that autonomy is by all means a relational concept. Certain boundaries need to be established to ensure that autonomy can be rationally exercised. Subsequently, this thesis challenges the assumption that the logic of professionalism is continually in conflict with managerialism (see 2.4.2). It also explains why a unified, prescriptive approach that underpins the ‘conduit model’, albeit static and restricted, appears to be realistic and appealing to Insight. This is, however, not to say that managers will settle for this rule-based expediency. In fact, they are aware of some challenges arising from boundary disputes and feel struggling to account for them due to the lack of informed approaches. As revealed in the findings, the inconsistencies in the interpretation of the required roles do prevail in the organisational discourse (4.4.2). While managers are comfortable to discuss the moral dilemma between themselves, they are less open to make the cases explicitly to trainee interpreters. This shows that the organisational need to control the risks of variables and the pressure to maintain the norms repulse the “indeterminate and open-ended” features of professional work (Flynn 1999, p.35). The tendency affirms the suspicion raised by Laughlin (1991) that professionals as managers in public sectors do not automatically warrant the integrity of the professional work. Instead, they might be susceptible to the colonisation of managerial values and business ethos.

#### *8.4.3 (Hybrid) Professionalism as Discursive Resources*

The findings indicate that the backstage management of booking has a great effect on the work practices of interpreters at the coalface. Of particular interest are the discrepancies found between the professional ideal that underpins different types of institutional work and the sales-driven values manifested in those ‘brokering moments’. Despite the fact that the profile of each interpreter has been prepared according to levels and areas of competence, the booking priorities in reality are often subject to change as a result of environmental and financial constraints (see 5.2.1). While interpreters attribute their deteriorating working conditions to some unethical conducts of agencies, even Insight is still struggling to provide better solutions in practice; sometimes, due to its limited business capacity, the best they can offer is worse than their competitors (because they are required to deal with others’ “leftovers”, for example). This means that the traditional professionalism that insists on clear technical specialisation is encroached by the growing pressure of the market and cost control (Noordegraaf 2007). The compatibility between

interpreter and assignment (e.g. travel time, last-minute requests) is compromised in part because the welfare state explicitly asks for rationed services and shifting boundaries (Harrison 1999).

As reviewed in 2.1.2, the ‘functionalist approach’ to professionalisation has placed emphasis on the force of professionalism in stabilising the social process of democratic societies and balancing the power between capitalist economy and state-bureaucracy (Parson 1951). Professionals obtain trust from clients based on their expertise guaranteed by formal education and their altruistic orientation towards serving the public. However, this thesis suggests that professionalism as an important occupational value (Evetts 2013) has not been well-preserved in the actual service delivery process. In particular, there is a disproportionate amount of attention given to the public sector clients and little to the needs of limited language speakers. This can be shown in Insight’s bespoke job sheet where only the service providers are invited to comment on the interpreting work and no alternative way has been set up to collect the opinions of the actual service users (Figure 5.1). The fact that managers distance themselves from the language communities stands in sharp contrast with their enthusiasm to bond with the institutional clients. This overlaps with what Brint (1994) terms the ‘expert professionalism’ by which emerging professions mainly thrive on their motivation to target the market demands rather than having genuine interests in those who need the services. Managers are given clear benchmarks for measuring the success of interpreting work and background the social welfare nature of PSI work. This thesis thus suggests that a modern business approach that combines market logic, entrepreneurial leadership and customer loyalties is an *apropos* characterisation of Insight’s ‘organisational professionalism’. In the booking management at least, there is a tendency to use performance indicators and manipulation tactics to ensure work completion, resulting in pressures passed down to interpreters (e.g. “Insight is a bit pushy”). Accordingly, what comes with the ‘organisational professionalism’ is the requirement of a flexible workforce who can readily change priorities and be more sensitive to corporate budgetary concerns.

It is worth reiterating that the hybrid logic inherent in the organisational template has been drawn upon by managers to guide generally two streams of institutional work (as structured in both Chapter Four and Five). While the ‘practice work’, as discussed above, is primarily influenced by ‘commercialised professionalism’, it is undeniable that managers invoke more of the normative values that underpin a functionalist professionalism in the process of identity and boundary construction. There, professional

relations centring on collegiality, cooperation, mutual support and trust are largely promoted. One might then be convinced that this is a resurrection of the ‘service ethics’ or a promising attempt to replicate the elitist model (e.g. doctors, lawyers) of professionalisation. But a closer look at the realities of booking management can provide an alternative perspective. Managers’ motivation to shape professional identity and work practice might as well be interpreted as a means to exercise disciplinary control and that it “governs professional conduct at a distance” (Fournier 1999, p.280). In this sense, professionalism can be thought as an ideological appeal by which interpreters’ self-regulation is only conditional under Insight’s leadership. This can be seen in the examples where the concept of “team” is only strictly applied to ‘internal interpreters’ (4.4.3, also discussed in 6.4.1) and where organisational interest is expected to be prioritised when it clashes with professional values (4.4.3).

Noordegraaf (2007) made the observation that the trend towards the creation of hybridised professionalism is inevitable. This form of professionalism is not just about tightening managerial control over professional work, but also about “attempts to link work to organizational and outside realities” and “establishing socio-symbolic legitimacy in changing times” (p.780). This notion is highly applicable in the PSI domain where interpreting expertise constitutes one part of the larger socio-technical system comprising professionals of different sub-fields, policy-makers, service buyers and consumers. Service provision is highly contested as it is confronted with mounting demands with decreasing capacities. In this context, the hybrid version of professionalism is characterised by multiple, mutualistic types of control rather than the dominance of single logic. It is therefore the reflexive control—the “reflexive searches for a professional use of professionalism” (Evetts 2013)—that enables Insight managers to link the frontline practice, organisational missions and the realities outside Insight together. As can be seen in the managers’ “quality/professionalism” discourse (see 5.2.2), the concept of ‘quality’ is decidedly ambiguous in that the emphasis can be placed more on the pursuit of ‘quality management’ than the ‘quality’ of interpreting performance. It could be argued that the drive for the former does not necessarily enhances the latter. Specifically, the managerial approach to efficiency (e.g. fastest possible response to clients) by means of procedurisation and Taylorising the workflow (See 5.2.2) compels the booking operators to single-mindedly meet the organisational targets without much chance to comprehensively evaluate whether or not the available candidate is fit for a given assignment (presumably not much choice anyway).

Furthermore, whilst the centralisation of authority (“not to decline any request without superior permission”) makes Insight a responsive and resourceful agency, it also brings operators’ behaviours and decision making under strict monitoring, thus creating an outcome-based, sales-oriented culture. Members subsequently tend to pride themselves more on how much work has been allocated rather than how suitably the interpreters are matched to the jobs—attempts to resemble the business-like professionalism. This essentially competes with the ideal-typical public service ethos, but that is how present-day public services are provided. The ambiguous and controversial institutionalised loci require a new way of organising work that moderates drastic values. Such a new way allows managers to adopt a reflexive stance in order to question the taken-for-granted norms and understand how (contradictory) choices are made amid uncertainties. To quote Noordegraaf’s (2007, p.781) argument: “Hybrid professionalism professionalizes ways of becoming professional without ever really becoming professional.”

### **Profiling the Precarious Workforce**

Prior sections have addressed how practical forces in day-to-day managerial work can steer the course of professionalisation for interpreters and redefine the realities of professionalism in the neoliberal climate. While Insight managers have enacted different types of institutional work to resist the institutional change, the findings herein suggest that certain organisational level strategies have yet to translate into or even complicate the everyday practice of interpreting. Some work processes between agencies (including Insight) and interpreters remain rather problematic, preventing the latter from pursuing the ideal of “free agents” (Barley and Kunda 2004, p.46) and resulting in a reproduction of contingent labour. The rest of this chapter will therefore shift the focus from Insight as the central site of PSI professionalisation to the working lives of freelance interpreters and theorise their unique occupational identity.

#### *8.5.1 Marginalised Labour and the Managed Profession*

Insight has adopted different strategies to enhance the sense of organisational belonging from interpreters (see 4.3.3), including providing psychological, emotional and intellectual support for their work, as well as making Insight the home and team base for freelancers. It can be argued that their “non-agency” approach to interpreters greatly ‘humanises’ the way their work is organised. Interpreters do not normally earn the attention of agencies (either because they are not motivated or lack of expertise). Their social and collegial needs are largely unmet owing to the fragmented nature of the work. It thus widens the communicative gaps between individual interpreters and agencies,

which is bound to deepen the incompatible complexity in job allocation. However, the overall situation is less optimistic, as most of the contracted agencies do not have a human resources management mechanism in place. Driven by profits and convenience, a common practice is to simply recruit people who can speak two languages to varying degrees of competency without actually checking their qualifications. The disorganised entry arrangements produce knock-on effects on the booking management. Without an in-depth understanding of either the person being ‘matched’ or the work itself, agencies on the whole are still responding to the job demands in a rather shallow fashion.

In their day-to-day work, interpreters face similar working conditions to workers who are typically involved in precarious employment elsewhere (e.g. homecare workers). These factors include limited access to work, diminished freedom to refuse inappropriate tasks and ineffective communications (Quinlan and Bohle 2004). This leads to at least two major consequences. Firstly, the procedural knowledge produced in the process of doing interpreting jobs cannot be properly circulated and codified. The “network of practice” (Barley and Kunda 2004, p.271) that serves as the primary channel of information exchange for itinerant workers is interrupted because major agencies are not supportive of this matter. Secondly, interpreters hold a sense of distrust toward agencies, which are thought to control a pool of jobs but do not necessarily know how to allocate them effectively and efficiently. Interpreters’ suspicion and fear of ‘losing the job’ is thus likely to strain their occupational limits and concurrently intensify their anxiety and estrangement at work. The situation is worsened by dominant agencies operating under non-expert management with an inadequate understanding of the work tasks—a common source of disorder for contingent employment relationships (Kunda et al. 2002). Subsequently, Insight’s institutional work, which is characterised by vetting and support, greatly eases the ergonomic tensions that confuse interpreters in addition to the challenges presented by the technical delivery of actual services (Dong and Turner, forthcoming).

Furthermore, this thesis suggests that the lack of industry consensus on what and how much information should be shared prior to work poses various ergonomic challenges to interpreters. While this appears to be beyond the direct control of agencies, the quality of the information they co-produce with the client organisations shapes the professional efficacy of interpreters’ work. The absence of pre-assignment details prevents interpreters from conducting a full assessment of risks; additionally, it is unfeasible to predict the physical, cognitive and emotional difficulties arising from the varieties of work settings, be they hospitals, prisons or private homes. The sparse infrastructure for reporting

protection failures and managing interpreters' safety is reflective of the research on broader categories of agency workers and the precarious nature of their work (discussed in 2.2.4). It is apparent that interpreters have limited experience of formal and informal rules governing occupational safety issues on site. The presence of incompetent agencies separates channels of information and results in a more fragmented work process. This thesis thus contributes to the debate by documenting another vulnerable occupational group—public service interpreters, who work so closely with the service providers on the ground but are so isolated from the decision making behind the scenes. Surrounded by agencies' hyper market-oriented rhetoric, constructive suggestions based on the actual work experiences of interpreters that directly impact the work process design at the policy level are relatively non-existent. In the observations from this study, it is apparent that Insight's consultancy capacity benefits wider groups of interpreters. Certain problematic procedures (e.g. disregarding "patient's age or Date of Birth", Figure 5.2) that have been employed for years are brought to light owing to their collaborative working strategy with the stakeholders.

Previous research also reported that agency workers suffer from a number of health and safety hazards at work such as mental stress, volatile work pace, irregular working hours, low pay, problematic job locations and workplace disorganisation (Underhill and Quinlan 2011; Quinlan 2015). The findings confirm the presence of these factors in PSI service provision and identify issues that have not been discussed explicitly, including interpreters' conflicting identities and agencies' rule-based interpretation of ethics. The former creates a dilemma: to what extent should interpreters follow the behavioural rules set by agencies? Quite ostensibly, the trend of replacing individual judgement with the normalisation of good practice through devising behavioural protocols shows that the foundation of historical professional relationship—trust and respect—is fading away. One thing is for sure: their self-employed status is overshadowed by the power of agencies, so much so that they no longer treat agencies as their clients (Ozolins 2007; Dong and Napier 2016). In the example of "badge wearing" (4.4.3), interpreters abide by the rules of "wearing badges" as if they were *employed* by Insight and required to represent their *employers*. Unwittingly or not, this can arguably be a symbol of their declining independent status as solo practitioners and an endorsement of their amplifying organisational identities. Worse still, this is done at the expenses of exposing their names to the potentially threatening clients.

The problem of staying in an unsafe environment during a home visit assignment is also

serious (4.4.2). In order to keep their role *neutral*, interpreters have to think of the inhibitory rules of staying within the host's property despite the potential risk in the surrounding community. Such practices show that workplace disorganisation and poor procedural oversight (including inadequate training) increase the safety risks for interpreters working in unfamiliar premises not purpose-built as workplaces (Quinlan et al. 2015). This also results in a restrictive practice that circumscribes professional autonomy through standardisation. Imposing black-and-white behavioural rules does not help to relieve interpreters' decisional-making pressures at work. On the contrary, a *de-contextualising* approach limits interpreter's cognitive ability to think analytically and cope with the multifaceted challenges—the core constituent of any knowledge-based profession. Prior studies have critically evaluated the passive, oversimplified understanding of interpreting ethics in practice (Tate and Turner 1997; Dean 2015). This thesis adds to the debate by arguing that this is in part driven by the managerial zeal to standardise work procedures and tighten control over professionals' discretions. Organisational professionalism, as argued by Evetts, included “rational-legal forms of authority” and resorts to “externalized forms of regulation and ... performance review” (2013, p.787). Bearing in mind that the reason why Insight has drafted this rule is that it received a complaint from health visitors. It can be therefore argued that the professional work of interpreters is increasingly subjected to the instruments of audit and monitoring. This inevitably causes a diminution of interpreters' margin of manoeuvre and gives them less room to adjust their work activities according to personal conditions such as fatigue, anxiety or fear of the consequences of breaching the code of employment.

### 8.5.2 *The Practice of Blue-Collar Professionalism*

Throughout this thesis, the argument about why the functions and structures of Insight can advance the professional project of PSI cannot be made more explicit. The premise, however, has been that the organisation is managed by interpreters themselves (managers with interpreting expertise). Any front that Insight could make progress on indicates a possibility that other substandard agencies could make it worse, with the conflicts between the professional and organisational identity being one of the most challenging issues. In Steve's case (see 4.3.3), it is apparent that interpreters' occupational discretion has been phenomenally appropriated by some agencies. Interpreters are prohibited from taking any action that might make the agency 'look bad', even if dismissing a certain issue will undermine one's professionalism and the course of justice. Associating the consequence that Steve is “no longer used by this major agency”[B-Int] with the many occasions where interpreters feel hesitant about declining jobs or not getting paid on time,



this thesis casts doubt on the actual effect of senior-level professionalisation strategies on everyday work practices. It also questions whether interpreters are still counted as highly-skilled knowledge workers. As argued by Norström et al. (2012), the professionalisation of interpreting is suffering from worsening salary structures, low social status and poor employment support. The vicious competition between agencies drive down the pay and significantly depreciate the values of interpreters' contribution to public services.

If status can be broken down into core constituents such as theoretical knowledge, social esteem, independent discretion and pay rate, public service interpreters do not score highly on any of them. To outsiders, they are still among the privileged few who are able to work with well-educated professionals, perform in decent work environments and have access to the most private moments of people's life (cf. Metz 1981). They have the uncommon skills to mitigate crisis and deal with problems that others often might find threatening or traumatic. Because they are the only one in the interaction with a body of reliable knowledge on a given topic, they enjoy a certain degree of autonomy to make important decisions.

The report from the insiders, however, is a different story. Interpreters in this study found their position in the public sector system as well as the employment structure particularly awkward and peripheral. The recreation of "factory like conditions" (Oppenheimer 1973, pp.213–214) introduced by agencies makes their economic reward lag behind the requirements of the job. The new purchaser-provider divide requires them to live with managers who have the expertise to bid for the contracts (Harrison and Pollitt 1994), compete with colleagues to get the job and invest time and money to update their skills that might not be rewarded if they are not offered paid work. Moreover, interpreters have not been centrally involved in the consultation and planning stages before changes are implemented. Outsourcing contracts are often signed by agencies without the knowledge of interpreters, who then frequently fake the percentage of employable workforce on their books in order to win the contract (Norström 2012). The deteriorating conditions trigger the practice of "itinerant professionalism" (Barley and Kunda 2002, p.299), under which "work itself [becomes] a credentialing process". In this regard, interpreters resemble Barley and Kunda's description of the itinerant workforce who have to secure jobs through developing human capital (technical skills) and social capital (networking skills) in their own time (discussed in 2.2.3). Due to the scarcity of training support, it is the interpreters' full responsibility to look for resources that can help to improve skills and marketability. A reduction in pay also lowers the possibility to retain a highly-skilled

workforce and creates space for the influx of *ad hoc* interpreters. Most of the latter work on a part-time basis, and treat interpreting as a hobby rather than a serious career. The lack of long-term commitments and regular interest undermine the validity of the expertise and render the professional work even harder to organise.

Surprisingly still, interpreters like other public service professionals (e.g. nurses and school teachers) appreciate their unique opportunity for dedication to social equality and justice. In other words, PSI goes beyond simply a means of earning a living but a meaningful undertaking to make contributions to their community. Despite the vicissitudes of their working lives and all sources of demands in various workplaces, this thesis argues that interpreters mark their occupational identity with a form of “blue-collar professionalism” (Metz 1981, pp.57-81). Such underappreciated professionalism, though pursued with the public service ideal, life-long learning commitment and moral self-discipline, is characterised by little autonomy in decision-making, limited prospects for upward mobility and high risk of physical and emotional exhaustion. As argued by McCann et al. (2013) in their account of emergency ambulance workers, it is an unspoken type of professionalism that has been reproduced in everyday work practices, since higher-level professionalisation efforts have so far generated relatively little traction on grass-roots development. Blue-collar professionalism incorporates the principle of “institutionalised altruism” (Harrington and Turner 2000, p.8), documenting the consistent efforts made by interpreters to strive for a recognised status and safeguard the interests of service users whenever possible. Drawing upon the notion of ‘blue-collar’ work, however, does not oversimplify interpreting practice into a manual task that merely requires minimum intellectual efforts. Rather, it contrasts how they accomplish important work under the least favourable working conditions with, all too often, limited support. It also shows how they are involved in one of those most known jobs with the least visibility in society. Because of their participation behind the scenes of social life, and because often interpreters work alone in the host organisation, they are the only ones fully responsible for the performance at every unknown turn of the interaction. This arguably requires a higher level of ethical awareness when compared to even doctors or lawyers (they work mainly based in the institutions with their peers). It is this kind of *isolated integrity* that distinguishes PSI from other professional work and makes the role of interpreter all the more important in such encounters.

### 8.5.3 Towards an Alternative Route of PSI Professionalisation

All things considered, this thesis reiterates that the focal group under study is deploying

an alternative route towards PSI professionalisation. This approach initiated by Insight managers and followed by field actors (interpreters) deviates from the well-known model developed by Tseng (1992) and adopted by others (e.g. Mikkelson 1996; Roberts 1997) to describe PSI professionalisation. Even if Mikkelson (1996, p.77) claims that Tseng's model demonstrates the "typical pattern of a profession in its infancy", this study finds no empirical grounds for that. Whilst most features of the proposed new route have been discussed separately in prior sections, a diagnosis of why Tseng's model (Figure 2.3) is not applicable in the PSI field, in both the medium and long terms, is presented below.

Firstly, the current trajectory of PSI professionalisation does not seem to abide by the predictable sequential order as the model describes. The major discrepancy lies in the fact that the market disorder (Phase I) exists simultaneously with the certification and code of ethics made available by the professional association (Phase III). To wit, Phase II—the "consensus and commitment" stage is absent or less influential in reality, thus reducing the "sources of cohesion" normally supported by qualified practitioners and produced by the "training institutions". This is substantiated in the data—the workforce is still made up of a mixture of trained and lay interpreters with a blurred boundary of roles and responsibilities. In addition, the observations made herein were unlike the popularity of academic education in conference interpreting. That is, the "training institutions" are key to energizing the profession do not actually exist in the PSI field. There is no formal independent degree course provided at the university level in the region<sup>12</sup>, with very few integrating a semester-long PSI module in postgraduate interpreting programmes. The lack of institutional upkeep and quality control for PSI training results in the suspicions of stakeholders who are only willing to pay the lowest possible rate for interpreters, which in turn discourages them to seek further professional development (D'Hayer 2012). Such a vicious circle severely compromises the professionalisation and is in part accountable for the proliferation of subpar contracted language services.

According to Mikkelson (1996, p.77), it is based on the success in Phase II that practitioners "unite and form the 'professional association' to impose discipline and standardization". Under the leadership of the associations, interpreters work with educational institutions to consolidate the knowledge foundation. In Phase III, such

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<sup>12</sup> This does not apply to British Sign Language programme.

associations are supposed to develop working guidelines, entry criteria and client relationship in order to gain public recognition. Associations play a central role in ‘political persuasion’—bargaining with the state to legalise the licensure and achieve occupational closure (Phase IV). However, the results indicate that, in an odd way, the professional body (presumably “GAIT”, see 5.3.3) exists in the PSI field without essentially representing the practitioners who are not all united and have varied levels of competence in the first place. The professional associations at the national level gain little traction as they are too distant to understand local issues. In contrast, although the local professional body is indeed established by a handful of local interpreters, it lacks the trust and capacity to actually induce substantial changes. The recent high-level efforts to regulate the professions (discussed in 1.2.1) stands in contrast to the unglamorous realities of frontline interpreting, which symbolises a professionalisation process ‘from above rather than from within’ (Evetts 2011).

Concomitantly, the legitimacy of the professional associations—“the sine qua non of the professionalisation” (Mikkelson 1996, 2.3, para. 14) — has been constantly questioned and even criticised by Insight managers. This makes the third stage, where “the power and achievements of the association strengthen the commitment of members to the course they are pursuing” (Tseng 1992, p.48-49), almost impossible to take place. The critical function of the professional body cannot be emphasised more in Tseng’s model. It is expected to effectively project the collective image of the profession to both the public and the authorities by setting and implementing practice standards (Mikkelson 1996). It is from this point that this thesis argues the route towards professionalisation bifurcates. What Mikkelson (1996) fails to factor in is the possibility that commercial or hybrid organisations might well command or advance the professional project, since associations are not the only institutions capable of accomplishing the aforesaid tasks and functions. The omission of commercial agencies in the ‘professionalisation roadmap’ thus makes it a less reliable representation of the current challenges faced by interpreters. Furthermore, despite the impact of a procurement scheme upon the working practices of interpreters is evident, there is no mention of it in relation to the changes in the demand-supply relationship in the field. The need to reflect the division of labour due to the introduction of quasi-markets and agencies has been neglected in the ‘association-centred’ framework. This thesis therefore attempts to sketch an alternative model to capture the current changes from an *agency-centred* perspective (see Figure 6.1) to an *association-centred* perspective.

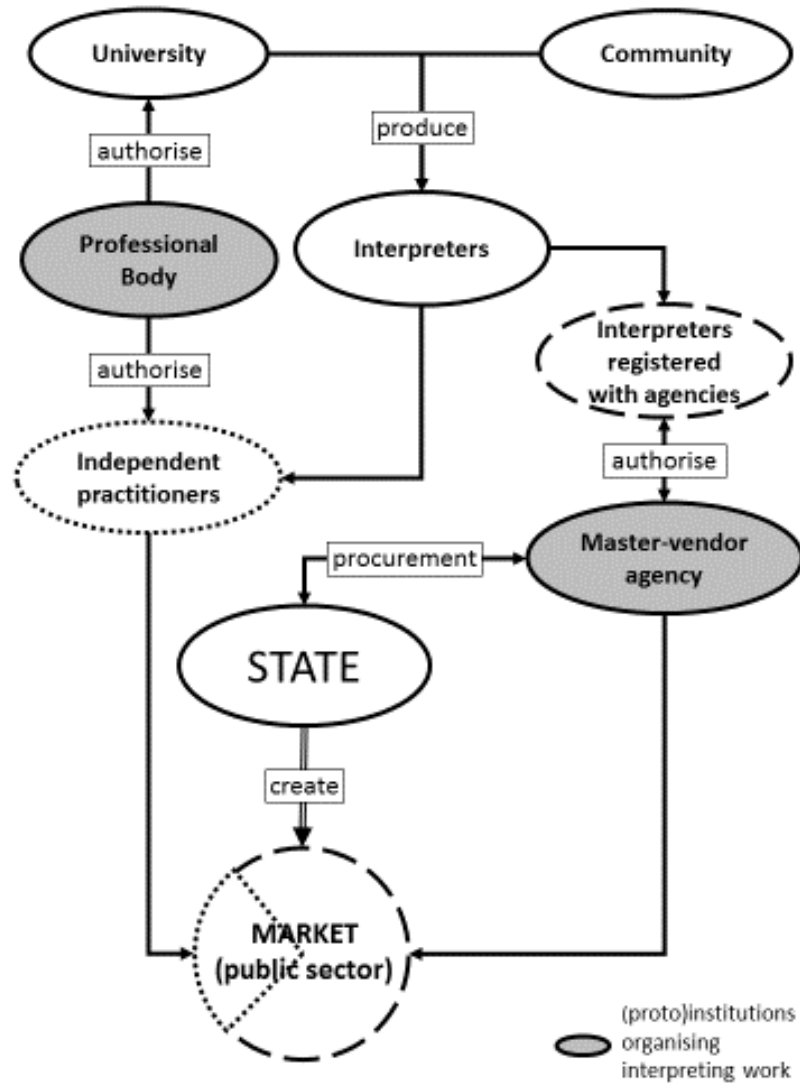


Figure 8.1: Institutional Actors-Framework in the PSI field

In this model, the group of interpreters relying on agencies to access jobs have been separated from independent practitioners who work directly with public sector clients. As the state mainly engages with the master-vendor agency based on their contractual agreement, a provisional market has been created and thus dominated by agency-registered interpreters. The professional body is put at a disadvantage as its previously exclusive authorisation of qualified interpreters has now been usurped by the contracted agencies. One might argue that interpreters have the choice to work with both direct clients and agencies, therefore dividing them by the source of the job appears to be problematic. However, given that the purpose of this framework is to reflect the actual division of labour in the industry, the point of departure is the single given work assignment rather than choice variations. In other words, the moment when an interpreter

accepts a job from an agency, s/he is no longer an independent practitioner for the given task. Worth underscoring here is that Tseng's model is indeed aware of the social environment in which an emerging profession exists. He warns that it would be difficult for a profession to emerge if other prestige professions are to oppose or interfere. Nevertheless, the argument stops there without exploring further how the powerless negotiate with the powerful to meet their development needs. Therefore, to the extent that this new framework foregrounds the structural status of agencies in relation to other institutional actors, it equally reveals the chance of Insight to influence governmental policy. Through the series of institutional work (in particular the boundary work and the enclosure work), Insight has built itself into a provisional institution and performed some major functions that traditionally fall within the confines of the professional bodies. To some extent, they can provide unique solutions that other elite organisations cannot due to the construction of the Insight logic and organisational professionalism.

Further to the above revelation is the argument that there are two levels of professional projects which are carried out simultaneously within the PSI field. One is the conventional top-down approach, where regulatory frameworks and guidelines are formulated by senior-level efforts to initiate changes, typically started by an agreement between policy makers and professional associations. As seen from the findings, their impact remains rather limited in terms of improving working conditions and reducing ergonomic barriers in the work processes with agencies. The other is the bottom-up approach led by Insight and other conscious interpreters who demand self-regulation over their work on a day-to-day basis. While the top-down approach is often touted as the standard pattern for an occupation to professionalise, this study justifies the existence and importance of the bottom-up approach and argues that the logic of organisational professionalism can provide a method to restore and reshape the increasingly fragmented knowledge of PSI. A key obstacle to interpreting professionalisation noted by Tseng (1992) is the absence of an exclusive body of knowledge to define the professional boundary. As is also shown in the results, this leads to the supposition that anyone who has any fluency in a foreign language can do the job of a professional interpreter. He further claimed that "only when clients have no clue on which to base their evaluation of the interpretation can interpretation evoke any sense of awe among clients" (pp. 70-74). This is consistent with the sociological claim that mainly by "black-boxing" the knowledge can a profession earn its status among the lay public. This point of view, however, has been shown by this thesis to be too narrow-minded and fixed in an age

where the mystique of knowledge of various subjects is by and large lessened as a result of digitalisation and interdisciplinary learning. The exclusivity/inclusivity dichotomy does not do justice to the intricacies and the number of linguistic and cultural challenges involved in the interpreted interaction *in situ*. Section 5.4 instead focuses on the tacit and explicit dimension of the unknown and discusses the importance of knowledge management as an effective way to translate the fragmented knowledge into organisational resources. The training arm of Insight reasserts the necessity of CPD provision to freelancers as their first contact point of knowledge repertoire, thus contributing to fostering collegiality and building the occupational/organisational community.

Finally, it is important to restate that the growing authority of agencies does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is fuelled by the dominant procurement logic in the field. The top-down contractual nature that is prevalent in the British public sector too often reproduces the blue-collar professionalism that defines the occupational identity of interpreters. It drives agencies to compete, to prioritise profit and to seek to monopolise service provision. Insight is not entirely immune from this pressure (see 5.1). As discussed earlier, smaller agencies are likely to be caught in a vicious cycle – insufficient capacity reduces their chances to be the “master vendor” (Hoque et al. 2011). As a result, they fall short of the financial resources necessary to maintain high quality standards. This perhaps accounts for the identified decisions made by Insight managers (e.g. travel time, last-minute requests) that sometimes tipped the scales in favour of minimising costs rather than maximising interpreter-assignment compatibility. The managerial imperatives (e.g. response-time monitoring and Google-Map checks) set in place can therefore be understood as ways to enhance workers’ performance, or more convincingly are a means of control over professional discretion, the effect of which hardly satisfies the ergonomic needs of interpreters.

### **|Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter discusses the significance of the institutional work done by Insight in the professionalisation of PSI and why this particular organisation may be able to spur field-level changes when previous attempts have produced limited effects. Key features of the organisational professionalism shaped by Insight managers were conceptualised and the outcome of promoting this approach was analysed. Attention was also given to the working lives of freelance interpreters, highlighting the character and the importance of PSI as professional work. The final chapter will present conclusions, beginning with a

*Chapter 8 Discussion*

review of outcomes in relation to the stated research aim and objectives, followed by reflections on the theoretical and empirical implications of the findings.



## Chapter 9 Conclusion

### **Review of Research Questions and Objectives**

The aim of this section is to discuss how the research objectives have been met and how each research question has been addressed (see Table 1.1). This study is situated in the context of British public service interpreting provision and focuses on the triadic and symbiotic nature of the constituents: the interpreter, the organisation (agencies) and the PSI profession at large (professional associations, educational institutions). Starting with the observation of the growing tension between interpreters and agencies in practice, the author attempts to grasp what has been going wrong when high-level efforts to regulate the professions result in limited effect at the level of everyday work. The overarching aim is, therefore, to account for the range of managerial activities undertaken by agencies (in the form of “institutional work”) and to understand its impact upon the working practices of interpreters and the professionalisation of PSI at large. To this end, a case study of the interpreting agency—Insight and the workforce it commands is conducted against the backdrop of the austerity-led contractualism across public services.

In order to answer the first research question—the types of institutional work that Insight managers perform to resist the mainstream practice of agencies, this thesis has identified three types of institutional work that focus on *intra*-organisational forces shaping interpreters’ professional identity (‘identity work’), professional knowledge (‘technical work’) and professional boundaries (‘boundary work’). It also classifies Insight’s efforts in managing frontline work practices (‘practice work’), building organisational legitimacy (‘legitimacy work’) and credentialisation (‘enclosure work’) into another three types of institutional work that form the substance of their *inter*-organisational activities. The current institutional logics in the organisational field of PSI have been outlined (6.2.5), which are then conceptualised as the targets of change when interpreter-managers seek to carry out their acts of resistance.

With regards to the second objective, three pairs of the competing pressure that managers are faced with are explored (4.2.2). They are recognised as the organisational mission to combat the privatisation scheme that conflicts with the commercial need to bid for service contracts; the efforts of improving interpreting standard and work conditions that are counteracted by the desperation to survive the price-cutting competition in a disorderly market; the aspiration to free interpreters from the state-market control and

simultaneously subject them to the managerial-organisational control. These strains are subsequently linked to managers' core coping strategy for dealing with the institutional pluralism, defined as the *Insight logic*. Such a unique organisational logic is discursively constructed drawing upon the flexibility and resources provided by a type of hybrid professionalism. In practice, it enables managers to navigate through the aforesaid multiple demands and legitimise their decisions by selectively coupling with norms that can best resolve immediate problems. The origin, features and functions of the *Insight logic* have also been charted, which are foregrounded through a detailed description of managers' everyday tasks and organisational discourses, thereby addressing the third objective of locating the actors' motivation and experiences.

The second research question looks for the ways Insight managers (re)construct the model of interpreting professionalism. Although the answer to that is in part relevant to the first enquiry, the question is explicitly concerned with how the professional work of PSI is organised and affected by the competence of agency managers. Therefore, this study has identified a number of organisational imperatives for recruitment, work allocation, professional ethics and collaborative working. While some of the measures in place have enhanced knowledge exchange and inter-professional communications, others were felt to have tightened managerial control above individual autonomy and reflective practice of interpreters (Objective 4). As for the fifth objective, this study has specifically examined the role of Insight modelling on PSF in facilitating the externalisation of tacit knowledge of PSI and translating that into organisational resources. The tacit and interdisciplinary nature of PSI practice has been analysed, along with a thorough account of the new knowledge framework proposed by managers, which is built on their unique access to the repertoire of experiential data deriving from work. This highlights the importance of on-the-job training and confirms the necessity of theorising and integrating the fragmented knowledge of PSI to be a distinguishable profession.

Based on the above findings, the sixth research objective represents an endeavour to conceptualise the emerging professionalism that underpins the formation of this nascent profession. The process of constructing *organisational professionalism* has been defined and analysed in relation to the purpose of each type of institutional work. Such professionalism allows organisational forces to evaluate interpreters' professional competences, to delineate the confined role boundaries and to architect the standard infrastructure for a nascent profession. The aim of such professionalism is in part to reach a compromised type of "bounded" self-regulation. In the institutionalisation of Insight

practice, the extant division of labour in PSI has been reconfigured in a way that lay interpreters are no longer able to thrive on providing low-fee service but subjected to Insight's scrutiny of competence and ethical judgement. While such attempts at professionalism integrate the function of the organisation with the ideal of the profession, the two are not always compatible. It is likely that professional autonomy is secondary to organisational edicts and that professionalism is no more than an ideological appeal. Through showcasing both the positive contribution and the suspicious intent of managerial interventions, the hybridised nature of such professionalism is emphasised as an outgrowth of the present-day operations of public services marked by ambiguities and uncertainties.

The third research question attends to how freelance interpreters perceive the institutional change enacted by agencies. To uncover the challenges in the work processes between interpreters and agencies (Objective 7), the findings show that, interpreters drew attention to, among other things, the lack of information provided for the assignment, lack of training and support, incompatible reward, the stress and anxiety arising from being found incompetent by the agency, safety hazards in the workplace and finally conflicting identities. Notably, a number of the identified ergonomic barriers are essentially created by agencies as a result of their rule-based interpretation of ethics or their alienation of interpreters from service planning stages. The consequences of the marginalisation are subsequently outlined and put in comparison with the goals of senior-level professionalisation, highlighting the limited systematic effect of the latter on frontline practices. The character of the professional work of PSI is summarised from an insider and outsider point of view, which is then linked to the overlooked progression of a professional project at the grassroots level. This evidence also justifies the feasibility of an alternative route of professionalisation led by hybrid organisations rather than by professional associations as a conventional model.

To address the second part of the question as to how interpreters respond to the perceived challenges, this thesis identifies the practice of *blue-collar professionalism* that forms their occupational identity. Interpreters are found to demonstrate exceptional resilience and adaptability when faced with the worsening working conditions. They still uphold the ideal of public services and assert their status, even if under-appreciated, through everyday work with other professionals. Attention has thus been given to the kind of stoic professionalism and isolated integrity they demonstrate at work. *Itinerant professionalism* has also been pointed out as a typical way to acquire knowledge and

update skills. Through this they are able respond to high demands of work quickly and deal with constantly changing priorities.

## **|Thesis Contributions**

### *9.2.1 Theoretical Contributions*

Through a detailed, embedded case study of Insight managers and associated interpreters, this thesis has developed interpreting professionalisation studies and the institutional work theory in the following ways.

Firstly, it draws upon a new theoretical perspective to account for the current professionalisation process of PSI. Previous studies predominantly apply the ‘power model’ or ‘trait model’ developed by the sociology of professions without giving sufficient attention to the broader literature on organisational institutionalism and knowledge-based work. This has in part resulted in a presupposition that PSI will follow the conventional route of professionalism as elitist professions have achieved (discussed in 6.5.3). Subsequently, Tseng’s (1992) model (Figure 2.3) based on the evolution of conference interpreting is frequently cited to instruct how PSI should professionalise, with a special emphasis on the role of professional association in promoting self-regulation. This thesis, however, critiques the ‘association-centred approach’ and the impracticability of copying this roadmap to chart the British PSI sector because it fails to acknowledge the commercial agencies as an important actor with considerable impact on the procurement scheme and the power dynamics amongst institutional actors. As such, this study proposes an alternative route towards professionalisation potentially led by agencies based on an analysis of the institutional logics and players (Figure 6.1). The core argument for this possibility is that agencies are increasingly becoming key stakeholders and social agents. Markedly, through the set of institutional work identified (in particular the boundary work and the enclosure work), the interpreting agency Insight has, to some extent replaced the role of the professional bodies and has become a localising arena for promoting the professional profile of PSI.

Secondly, built on the vital role of agencies in the ecosystem of PSI, this thesis suggests a dialectical view to understand the professional project of PSI. To wit, McCann and others’ (2013) proposition that there exist two levels of professionalisation strategies fits well with the current situation. The recent senior-level efforts to regulate the profession which features a proliferation of standards and regulations stand in contrast with the mundane realities of frontline work, which symbolises a professionalisation process

“from above” rather than “from within” (Evetts 2011, pp.407-408). A detailed investigation of agencies’ practice reveals why formal professionalisation mechanisms have so far generated relatively little traction. This study thus offers a novel analysis of this phenomenon by arguing that this is fundamentally down to the power of the front-line organisations that are centrally involved in interpreting practices. Among others, agencies are particularly pivotal in formulating the workplace order and managing ergonomic challenges through working with service providers. Yet the results show that *mainstream* agencies maintain an ambiguous role in advancing this cause, or even steering practising interpreters away from the broader social-technical systems of PSI.

At the local-level professionalisation process, the institutional work perspective opens up the possibilities to document the realities of the grassroots resistance and its outcome. Insight managers are *rank-and-file* interpreters who are less powerful, under-resourced actors compared to those elite representatives of influential professional bodies. However, their success in turning the agency into the centre of occupational community and the major arena of resistance shows the important but often overlooked efforts that lead to field-level changes. Current research thus goes beyond the ambitious tone of the outcome-oriented literature in institutional entrepreneurship (discussed in 2.5.1). Instead, it reveals the situated practice and quotidian efforts of the actors who, despite their limited legitimacy and authority, are equally capable of inducing changes. To interpreting studies, this means that multiple attempts apart from the ‘campaign approach’ to opposing the outsourcing scheme have been consistently made by interpreters ‘wearing different hats’ (e.g. trainer, teacher, professor, manager) through micro-actions. Just like other members of the emerging professions, interpreters are the institutional agents in society who influence and craft the contemporary institutions. Relatedly, this study also provides empirical evidence for the proposed sequential patterns (Suddaby and Viale 2011) that professionals follow to effect field-level changes (section 6.2.3).

Further to the role of those who craft institutional aspects of PSI is the novel observation that the professional project is largely advanced by actors’ active engagement with the established institutions. These institutions endorse managers’ agenda, which helps them to establish legitimacy in the field. Subsequently, this study presents an empirical example of the theoretical proposition that “professionalisation is intrinsically carried within institutionalisation” (ibid). The fact that Insight managers mobilise the three pillars of institutions (Scott 2008b) to construct the organisational logic prove their capability of controlling key organisations to gain the power, status and authority for extending

institutional influences. The conceptual framework of this thesis therefore contributes to the body of organisational studies (Faulconbridge and Muzio 2012; Muzio et al. 2011; Ramirez 2013; Kipping and Kirkpatrick 2013) that critique the conventional models of professionalisation which tend to either overlook the role of PSFs in such processes (Burrage et al. 1990) or regard professionals working in organisations as signs of deprofessionalisations (Barley and Tolbert 1991).

Next, this thesis theorises that the major institutional logics of the PSI field and pointed out the importance of recognising that market forces are not an independent logic in this sector. Prior studies tend to use *market disorder* to describe the unregulated competitions introduced by certain agencies, which begs the question of, to what extent does such a market actually exist? The distinction between the ‘ideal-typical market logic’ and ‘quasi-markets’ has been rarely touched upon in interpreting studies. The seemingly tightened ‘market control’ has been in fact one generated by the state rather than the market in a real sense. This is because it is the state that determines the creation of the provisional market conditions as a means to properly keep the profession under the governmental remit. PSI by nature forms part of the modern welfare state mechanisms and it is therefore a welfare profession. As such, the concept of autonomy is relational throughout and interpreters have to essentially rely on the state to grant its occupational closure (if ever). This again can be related to the previous point about why a model designed for conference interpreters should not be taken for granted when it is situated in the PSI context.

Moreover, the tacit dimension of interpreting knowledge has been explicitly contrasted with the traditional notion of the formalised, codifiable knowledge. Whilst sociologists have the claim that mainly by “black-boxing” the knowledge can a profession earn its status among the lay public, this study offers a counterview that the exclusivity/inclusivity dichotomy does not do justice to the degree of intricacy and the number of unknown challenges involved in the interpreted interaction, nor does it always apply to professions largely based on tacit knowledge. The findings suggest that since PSI practice deviates from classic professions that thrive on the knowledge model of technical rationality, there is an urgent need to accelerate knowledge conversion (from ‘tacit’ to ‘explicit’) within interpreting so that the fragmented, contextualised and interdisciplinary knowledge can be properly synthesised, theorised and communicated to a wider audience—members beyond single practitioners. Since agencies are the most relevant information interfaces connecting interpreters and a wide range of stakeholders, they can, if well managed,

facilitate a collaborative approaches to CPD and provide language-specific training resources in practice (Tipton and Furmanek 2016). This study thus echoes the call for creating more communities of practice by arguing that agencies modelling on PSF can act as a type of knowledge-generating community and can provide meaningful space for “horizontal learning” (Tynjälä 2008, p. 144) in institutional contexts.

In addition, this thesis adds a new perspective to the theoretical debate on the role of interpreter by suggesting that the ‘conduit model’ is still widely applied and it can be attributed to the backstage manipulation of certain agencies. In particular, the rule-based interpretation of codes of ethics largely restricts the discretion and choices that interpreters can have in the interaction. Imposed in the form of organisational imperatives, these ‘dos and don’ts’ do not encourage a reflective practice and sometimes even clash with professional values. This creates identity conflicts and further complicates ethical reasoning. Previous research (e.g. Tate and Turner 1997; Dean 2015) has critically evaluated the rule-based understanding of interpreting ethics in practice. This study advances the extant knowledge by offering an explanation that this trend is in part driven by the managerial zeal to standardise work procedures and tighten the control over professionals’ decision-making. These external forces inevitably reduce interpreters’ scope by adjusting their work activities according to personal conditions such as fatigue, anxiety or the fear of the consequences of breaching a code of employment. The observation of agencies’ expanding power in shaping professional identity and behaviours also provides insights into why agencies can hardly be perceived as interpreters’ “third client” (Ozolins 2007). This study therefore makes explicitly the link between management behind the scene and interpreter performance on the frontline.

Furthermore, this thesis draws upon concepts of professionalism and precarious employment to account for the emerging principle of organising work in the PSI sector. This then reveals character of the work and the extant division of labour. It follows that a modern business approach epitomised in *organisational professionalism* does not widely benefit the workforces in this sector. What comes as a result of such professionalism is the requirement of a flexible workforce who can readily change priorities and be more sensitive to corporate budgetary concerns. This further flexibilises interpreters and reduces their status to the equivalent of blue-collar workers. The sparse infrastructure for reporting protection failures and managing interpreters’ safety is reflective of the research on broader categories of agency workers and precarious work (Aronsson 1999; Quinlan, Mayhew and Bohle 2001). Here, the results provide evidence

of another vulnerable occupational group—public service interpreters—whose job is so closely performed with the other service providers but simultaneously so marginalised from the centre of the power. Surrounded by market-oriented managerial rhetoric, constructive suggestions from interpreters' practical experiences which could directly feed into the work process design at the policy level are largely non-existent.

Finally, this thesis advances understanding of how hybrid organisations are functioning in a professional context, thereby contributing to the identification of specific strategies devised by occupational groups to overcome daily obstacles associated with multifaceted nature. In particular, evidence against the conventional assumptions that hybrids are weak at coping with the incompatible institutional logics (Greenwood et al. 2011) is presented. The findings do not suggest that Insight's legitimacy is undermined by the pressures from their wide range of institutional referents ((D'Aunno, Sutton and Price 1991); rather, the hybridised logic equips managers with many strengths and resources to respond to different demands (Pache and Santos 2012). An original contribution of this study is the conceptualisation of the substance of such hybrid logic relative to the features of institutional environment. To wit, the non-aggressive, versatile and eclectic nature of the organisational logic as well as managers' agentic search for trade-offs and middle ground fit well with the domain features of public sector. Such a sector embodies equally ambiguous, uncertain and controversial institutional logics. This thesis thus affirms the degree of reflexivity that hybrids have as organisational residents are stimulated by the contradictions in which they are embedded (Seo and Creed 2002). It also provides explanation as to why the 'campaign approach' as a form of resistance has so far produced limited effect.

### *9.2.2 Empirical Contributions*

This thesis has made the following empirical contributions to interpreting studies. Firstly, it provides novel insights into the organisation of interpreting services in practice and open up the unexplored field of interpreting agencies as a fruitful research site. This resonates with the 'social turn' (Pöchhacker 2006) in interpreting studies by giving more weight to the broadest of the social contexts and to the key actors in shaping such changes. It follows that the socio-economic aspects of interpreting activity and the institutional formation of professional identity constitute important elements of interpreting studies. Influenced by the public sector reform and the emergence of austerity-led contractualism, this study draws researchers' attention to the interpreting agencies which have gone beyond the traditional role of information broker to a crucial institutional gatekeeper. It



can be inferred that the PSI profession is undergoing a dramatic transformation from a technical profession towards a *managed* profession, in which traditional values are increasingly merged with business principles and market tenets. In this context, professional competence is, to some extent, reassessed, redeveloped and reinforced by organisational standards. Professionalism, therefore, is epitomised in *organisational professionalism* that requires the extension of interpreters' roles and ethics to a broader variety of values. This presumably pushes interpreters to prioritise the needs of clientele and agencies over the interests of the professional community at the heart of the practice.

Secondly, this study brings to the fore an example of an agency' practice and it further documents the frontline realities of interpreting work management. Whilst this is not an entirely novel endeavour (colleagues in translation studies have already entered the workplace and reaped productive outcomes from work-process research) (e.g. Gouadec 2007; Kuznik and Verd 2010; Risku, Windhager and Apfelthaler 2013), agencies as 'virtual' workplaces of interpreters remain largely underexplored. Scant data has been gathered to account for interpreting as work and employment. Additionally, there is not much empirical evidence that serves to demystify the everyday practical forces that shape the dynamics of information brokering and work allocations *within* interpreting agencies. As shown in this study, this directly impinges upon interpreters' work-floor performance. This thesis thus contributes to interpreting practice by revealing an insider's view on the lesser known conflicts, struggles and complexity involved in service provision. Such business-level factors are less accessible to practitioners.

Thirdly, as a piece of *applied* research (Patton 2002), this study contributes to bridging the dialogue between interpreting researchers, practitioners and agencies managers. Through engaging with both interpreters and interpreter entrepreneurs (managers at *Insight*), this research gives voice to those otherwise disregarded and fosters the expression of their expectations and needs. Interpreters' concerns over their deteriorating working conditions, the lack of sense of collegiality isolated by agencies and largely unmet training needs have been foregrounded. As revealed in the findings, one major reason for interpreters having high identification with *Insight* is that it provides quality CPD as well as emotional, psychological support that are less available elsewhere. However, mainstream agencies are still found to be disinterested in all efforts to promote good practice. On the whole they are still responding to the job demands in a rather shallow fashion, and often without an in-depth understanding of either the practitioner supposedly being matched to the work or even to the work itself.

Moreover, this study empowers the organised acts of resistance to carry on. The observational fieldwork herein allowed the researcher to be a part of the institutional process and experience the everyday instances of opposition. Through working closely with the participants, a shared responsibility and commitment to ensuring the integrity of this study by accessing the interpreters' perceptions was prioritised and pursued. A partnership based on mutual trust and respect was evidenced between the researcher and the participants. As a result, the latter have been frequently alerted to consult the body of practice-based research output to inform their practice or managerial decision-making. The exchange of information and discussion of their concerns during the interviews also enabled them to recognise their own professional values. This proved useful as these practitioners define and assert control over their work practices.

Last but not least, this study unveils the practical, ordinary and critical nature of the interpreting work. Since few people know what interpreting entails and how interpreters work, this study acquaints the professionals of relevant fields (e.g. medicine, law, social work, education) with how such work is organised on a daily basis and why collaboration, empathy and shared responsibility are necessary for interpreters to do their job. The story of the operation of one interpreting company is simultaneously an intended portrayal of the ineffective professionalisation of PSI and the illegitimate asymmetry between the importance of interpreters' work and their less-regulated, poorly-paid and under-appreciated occupation. It is still an authentic proclamation of their on-going resistance against the unfair treatment and unyielding persistence of blue-collar professionalism.

### **Implications of the Study**

This study provides a couple of recommendations for policy and practice. Viewed from the provision model of Insight, there are cases where commercial pressures collide with professional discretion. Nevertheless, the tightened management on vetting and its "non-agency approach" by and large underpins an improved organisational design, which enables a better fit between interpreters and the specific work they are offered. The hybrid nature of Insight echoes the social mission of PSI and ensures management to be not only good at managing but also have interpreting expertise. As a result, this will to some extent make it distinct from purely profit-driven companies. The role of PSI in facilitating rather than impeding the social processes of resettlement and integration (Tipton 2012) should be recognised in practice as one of the core professional values and work ethics. Social injustice is in part rooted in the unequal access to public services caused by language barriers and interpreters significantly contribute to resolving these barriers (Norström et

al. 2011). This has been promoted by Insight to many practitioners and this has increasingly become the source of professional cohesion and identification. As a result, it in part explains why interpreters love their job despite often poor working conditions (e.g. Norström et al. 2012).

Judging from the results, hybrid organisations and the new model of interpreting professionalism might work as an alternative to private agencies in the delivery of PSI, yet on their own they are unlikely to stand out from a set of ‘ticking the boxes’ criteria set in the evaluation procedures. Interpreters-run agencies tend to be smaller in scale and are often lacking in the necessary track records of provision and financial resources. Therefore, a more balanced mechanism should be created to comprehensively assess the capacity and competence of bidding candidates rather than simply adhering to the ‘quantity over quality’ principle. Importantly, professional interpreters should be consulted in the procurement process. For a long time, they have been treated by mainstream agencies as ‘numbers only’ for contract-bidding purpose. Agencies which once enrolled an interpreter on their books can claim to retain this interpreter forever, since there is no third party to monitor or update the recruitment information. In other words, the provision capacity of agencies can be easily fabricated even if interpreters decide not to work for them anymore. This study thus intends to draw the attention of the buyers and warns that agencies do not always list interpreters who agree to be listed. One feasible solution can therefore be involving interpreters’ opinions in the bidding evaluation. Since interpreters often have to register with the winner of a contract, their participation in assessing agencies can ensure some terms and conditions include their participation and do not occur behind their back.

Following Ozolins’ (2007) suggestion, this thesis provides empirical grounds for the consideration of certifying language service providers as a means to monitor the service delivery. This could be one way to prevent some agencies from abusing their power or underhandedly deviating from the approach they have promised in the contract. Yet this cannot be fully realised without professional bodies’ active participation. The actual absence of a competent and approachable local professional body overseeing service provision creates structural difficulty for practitioners. As mentioned before, due to the lack of institutional support and infrastructure, hardly any constructive suggestions based on the actual ergonomic experiences of interpreters can directly feed into the work process design at the policy level. Their unchecked ‘gate-keeping’ authority is found to be the major obstacle to translating the high-level professionalisation regulations into changes

to frontline realities. Again as argued in this study, agencies like Insight have already participated in developing the “meta-level training” (Pöchhacker, 2004. p.189) and shown the potential to replace the association and chart the course of professionalisation for interpreters.

More collaboration between universities and PSI industrial training centres should be established. Although certain informal apprenticeship and mentoring are taking place in Insight and perhaps a few other agencies, there is a tendency for management to over-standardise the practice and apply rule-based interpretation to ethics, which seems to lag behind the state of art in academic research and detrimental to reflective practice. Some of the uniform instructions provided to trainees replicate the ‘conduit model’ and encourage interpreters to act mechanistically, which adds to the already limited scope of action that is expected of interpreters in the institutional context (Koskinen 2008). If the quality of the training provided by agencies cannot come up to a higher standard, novice interpreters can be misled by the organisationally-defined protocols. On the other hand, PSI programmes are often considered to be less viable and attractive by universities (D’Hayer 2012). Senior management has the valid concerns that the courses, if run, can hardly succeed due to the limited language-specific input and the fluctuating needs on the market. D’Hayer (ibid. para.31) questions that “How can training and education institutions justify paying a language specific PSI trainer dedicated to only one student, who in addition does not even have a partner to practice interpreting with?” This study offers the insight that this issue can be potentially addressed by integrating the expertise of academia and the language resources coordinated by agencies. More tailored modules can be co-developed and co-delivered by the two parties to meet different training needs and identify the quality-related issues in the formative stage of the provision model.

With regards to interpreting pedagogy, the need to immerse students in authentic work settings and familiarise them with the industrial demands and changes considerably challenge the legitimacy of universities (Hlavac and Orlando 2015). The shaping of professional identity and competences should not be limited to the imparting of technical skills and rules of the market; rather, it should incorporate the nurturing of a critical frame of mind that allows them to challenge the illegitimate, yet often taken-for-granted industrial norms, to assert their status in the inter-professional dialogues and to seek opportunities for institutional change. Prospective professionals should be aware of the presence of conflicting models of interpreting professionalism in the field and use the ‘transformative knowledge’ (Ruano 2015) to question the socio-political context of the

PSI system in which they are embedded. This again requires training institutions to network with language services and other industrial partners so that more work placement opportunities can be created. As such, educators need to reflect the changing nature of the profession in curriculum design and identify appropriate learning indicators that prepare students to be future institutional agents in society.

Finally, this thesis draws attention to agencies as inherently located in the current design of the PSI system comprising various organisational interfaces that intersect with interpreting practice. Given that the organisational regulations and managerial decisions can in many ways affect the quality of situated interpreting activities, it is contended that there is a need for research to extend the notion of the interpreting workplace beyond the space where communication-mediation tasks are performed, to where interpreting services are planned, organised and managed.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

This thesis focuses on the frontline realities of a specific agency with a group of freelance interpreters and thus cannot be generalised to all interpreting agencies. As pointed out in the prior discussions, PSI is a part of the state welfare system and the situation therefore is mainly society-specific. Similarly, the focal actors are managers with interpreting expertise who hold relatively peripheral positions in the institutional field of PSI. As such, their behavioural patterns are not generalisable to all agencies' management teams even in the same region. As a result, further research can explore different types of agencies (e.g. council, private companies) and compare their provision models with this third-sector organisation under study. Alternatively, there might be more interpreters as truly 'free agents' in some sectors than in others. Uncertainty remains as to whether interpreters are 'pushed' or 'pulled' into this sector, a factor often closely associated with the socio-economic status of the workforce. The extent of autonomous status enjoyed by an occupational group can be revealed through examining whether members are self-employed out of necessity, opportunity, lifestyle decision or occupational choice (Dawson, Henley and Latreille 2009). Despite the 'special traits' of this single case study, the results are likely to be applicable to many hybrid organisations operated members of different emerging professions or professionals working in the public sector, as well as to so many freelance interpreters working in the community settings across the globe.

As fieldwork unfolds in an authentic work context and the researcher is mainly dependent on handwritten notes to record the continuing interactions, the narrative can hardly go

without single distortion. Consciously or not, while observing what is going on in a given space, the researcher cannot stop the process of keeping some and disregarding other details. While exact facts and complete details are subject to personal interpretation, the data that has been collected is hopefully a reflection of true experiences. This thought gives rise to the possibilities of using quantitative methods to explore the work processes. With a larger sample of both interpreters and managers of various agencies, statistical analysis can be conducted to compare their perceptions of issues that have been explored in this study. Besides, beyond Insight, larger scale companies tend to have more advanced digitalised systems to process bookings and make interpreting arrangements. Are these (semi-) automatic, nonhuman objects suit the ergonomic needs of interpreters? A question such as this taps into the role of agencies as a key information interface and effects of technologies on interpreters' identity, autonomy and responsibility.

It has been argued in this thesis that there exists two levels of professional projects. While this study has focused on the frontline resistance of Insight managers through the perspective of institutional work, information about how senior-level professionalisation strategies are developed and decided remain unidentified. Case studies can therefore be conducted within professional associations or public sector departments to track down the perhaps conflicting agendas pursued by different actors taking on senior roles and compare the compatibility of their actions with lower-level initiatives. Further explorations following this direction will help to align the objectives and actions at multiple levels and coordinate the efforts of different stakeholders to induce institutional changes that are conducive to the advancing of PSI professionalisation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

1. To mark the different sets of data, “A-” refers to naturally-occurring data and “B-” to elicited data. See below.

Abbreviations	Full name	Meaning
<b>A-</b>	Dataset-A	Naturally-occurring data (e.g. observational notes)
<b>B-</b>	Dataset-B	Elicited data (e.g. interviews)
<b>Mng</b>	Manager	
<b>Int</b>	Interpreter	
<b>doc</b>	Documentary data	Non-digital archives, meeting minutes
<b>A-Mng</b>		Unspecified person, can be a collective opinion or for general description purpose.
<b>A-Int</b>		Unspecified person, can be interpreters drop by the Insight office but was not interviewed at the second stage of investigation, or trainee interpreters participated in the training organised by Insight.
<b>Mng-Int</b>		Direct dialogue between the manager and interpreter
<b>jnl</b>	Field notes+journals	
<b>web</b>	Website information	

2. The table below shows the pseudonyms of key organisations and their corresponding functions/roles in real life.

Pseudonym	Role
<b>HC</b>	A large corporation partnered with Insight; a large corporation that has recently won the contract to deliver court interpreting service across the region.
<b>GAIT</b>	A regional professional association of public service interpreters; founding members are senior interpreters who are mostly against HC’s practices.
<b>Insight</b>	A local interpreting service provider, contracted later by the regional court service department to work with HC—offer training to court interpreters across the region. It does not have other major responsibility (e.g. booking management) apart from training in this specific contract with courts but it holds other contracts.
<b>SG</b>	The first and the former contract holder for court interpreting service in the region; it later lost the contract to its successor SG.
<b>Brown</b>	SG’s director
<b>LAB</b>	Legal Aid board, the client of Insight
<b>BM</b>	A large corporation based in a different region from Insight’s.

## Appendix B

Direct quotes of Insight managers [A-Mng]

Barriers in the professional project	Organisational vision of Insight
<p>Lack of clear leadership, direction and action from Scottish Government Because translation and interpreting, rightly or wrongly, it's an unpopular topic, as it almost always brings up 'Why they [immigrants] don't go home'? That's why the SNP don't want to stir this up. They got other big agenda going on. If they start it, it gonna take a lot of resources, a lot of time to address it.</p>	<p>Assume leadership and define the standards for the profession We want to demonstrate that excellence can be achieved. I am not really interested in hearing how it cannot be done. It can be done if you have the will...and the structure that works...<u>We could've taken another route as an agency, but I don't think that's the road we should take.</u></p>
<p>Current economic and funding climate Change in market conditions and procurement strategies (favours larger companies): one of the government strategies to combat the economic recession is to use procurement to save money.</p>	<p>Influencing policy There are things we can do, but it's hard and takes time. Everything changes and becomes better, is almost impossible. <u>But I do believe we can do something, little by little, because otherwise I would just give up.</u></p>
<p>High profile blunders hitting headlines Cases thrown out of court give interpreters a bad name. I know two qualified interpreters and they would go to a court and get interrogated by the judge, because the judge thinks all interpreters are bad. So it is quite unfair to those who are qualified to do this kind of work.</p>	<p>Raising standards on a national scale If we raise standards, it is just us. I want it to be the whole Region. That's why we work with Partners...Not everyone has adopted but some of them subscribed to our methods, and they asked us to help with their language assessment and training.</p>
<p>Lack of motivation to gain recognised qualifications 1200 pounds to do a DPSI. Unless you do a language that you know one day you gonna earn back that money, it is very unlikely you gonna invest this amount of money when you know you not gonna get enough work to pay the cost. That's why the DPSI is churning out only interpreters whose languages are perceived in demand.</p>	<p>Provide training and financial support to interpreters The recognised qualification is something I set my heart on it at the very beginning of establishing Insight. I would like to see in a few years' time, we will be able to create a pot of money from our surplus, to subsidise people taking exams for recognised qualifications, like DPSI.</p>
<p>Lack of recognition of interpreters' crucial role in public service delivery In the UK there is no legal requirement or framework to set up what an interpreter should have in order to work as a PSI...The quality is patchy...You will find some irresponsible agencies send out people who have never been to court to court, they don't even speak English.</p>	<p>Consistently provide excellent service on the ground That's why I think agencies having a very important role in this, because <u>at least we need to be sure whom we send to appointments and we have to take steps to make sure they meet the criteria we set.</u> We want to drive change from the bottom up, because we are interpreters, if we don't stand up and say, well this is what it should be like, no one else will care.</p>