Intercultural im/politeness: influences on the way professional British Sign Language/English interpreters mediate im/polite language

Rachel Mapson

Queen Margaret University

1. Introduction

Cultural differences in the way people perceive im/politeness are particularly pertinent to professional interpreters, whose work involves interaction between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Interpreters therefore need to consider the potential for differences between sociopragmatic norms associated with each language, in order to gauge how best to reflect im/politeness. While language and behaviour perceived as appropriate generally go un-noticed or are registered in "background consciousness" (O'Driscoll 1996:1), utterances that are perceived to be impolite or inappropriate attract immediate attention (Kasper 1990, Ruhi 2008). Interpreters' mistakes may therefore significantly impact on interactional dynamics, potentially drawing unwanted attention towards the interpreter, the interpreting process, or to the originator of the utterance.

Study of interpreters provides a valuable insight into the way people evaluate im/politeness, as interpreters are simultaneously both recipient and speaker but are neither the originator of the message nor the intended recipient. Exploring interpreters' considerations when reflecting im/politeness can help illuminate some of the issues that are acknowledged to be hard to examine (Haugh 2013). Focusing on interpreters working between British Sign Language (BSL) and English, this chapter reports on a study designed to explore the influences on the way interpreters reflect im/politeness. Framing interpreting as *rapport management* (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2008) helps illuminate the complex interaction between the multiple context-specific influences and the cultural considerations involved.

2. Background
2.1. Liaison interpreting

"It has been the traditional and persistent view that interpreters should be transparent, invisible, passive, neutral, and detached." (Mason and Ren 2012:235). The conceptualisation of the interpreter as a passive conduit (Mason and Ren 2012) is still evident in signed language interpreter training programmes (Allsop and Leeson 2002) and "embedded" in the expectations of those interpreters' clients (Leeson and Foley-Cave 2007:63). However, conceptualising the interpreter as a neutral non-participant, contrasts sharply with the reality of interpreted interaction, and is out of synch with current interpreting research (Pöchhacker 2016).

There has been what is described as a *cultural* (Rudvin 2006) or *social turn* in interpreting studies (Pöchhacker 2008). The earlier post-positivist focus, predominantly on spoken-language conference interpreting, has evolved into adoption of a constructivist perspective. This shift manifests in studies that focus on active negotiation rather than "equivalence and norms" (Baker 2006: 33), and the dynamic relationship between context and text (House 2006). These studies illuminate the important role interpreters have in coordinating interaction as well as relaying information (Roy 1993, Wadensjö 1993, Sandrelli 2001). This is particularly the case in what is best described as *liaison* interpreting (Angermeyer 2005), which is the focus of this study. Liaison interpreting involves an interpreter working between two or more clients, or primary participants. The interpreting process is bi-directional, involving the interpreter relating messages between both languages involved and dealing with the different expectations of their monolingual clients (Angermeyer 2005). The utterances of one client, the *source message*, are interpreted into the *target message*, crafted by the interpreter for the recipient. To do this effectively interpreters employ a variety of strategies, or problem-solving techniques, which may be used consciously or unconsciously (Moser-Mercer 1997). The interpreter is actively involved in the interaction and requires a skillset that includes expertise in managing the dynamics of interpersonal interaction as well as the ability to transfer information from one language into another (Pöchhacker 2016).

Although spoken language interpreters usually relay information consecutively in liaison settings, signed language interpreters can use the affordance of contrasting language modalities to interpret simultaneously (Grbic and Pöllabauer 2006, Pöchhacker 2016). While this may help the flow and speed of communication it presents an additional challenge to signed language interpreters and necessitates instantaneous decision-making that has to be balanced against interpreters' finite cognitive capacity (Gile 1995, 2008, Leeson 2005). The effort, or *cognitive load* (Gile 1995, 2008) experienced by an interpreter depends on a variety of factors relating to how language is being used and their familiarity with the context. For this reason, Russell (2005) notes that signed language interpreters will often switch between consecutive and simultaneous modes, particularly in more challenging contexts.

2.2. British Sign Language

British Sign Language is not, as many people assume, a visual form of English but is an indigenous language that has evolved naturally with a distinct grammatical structure and vocabulary (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999). Like other signed languages it uses a visual and spatial modality which allows it to be produced very differently to spoken language, by exploiting the space in front of the torso and using the arms, hands, face and upper body. This enables multiple concepts to be produced simultaneously (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999), with the non-manual components of signed language playing a particularly important role in relation to linguistic im/politeness (Hoza 2007, Roush 2007, George 2011, Mapson 2014a).

Deaf[1] people who use signed language form linguistic minorities around the world. This includes the UK, where the dominant language is British English. The geographical co-existence of signed and spoken language results in regular language contact, which impacts on signed language use (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999, Burns et al. 2001). However, deaf people do not necessarily share the same cultural norms associated with the English-speaking population. In addition to contrasts in language and language modality, there are other factors involved. Firstly, unlike other linguistic minorities BSL

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[1] Throughout this chapter the word deaf is used to refer to people who communicate using a signed language.

is rarely transmitted from parent to child; over 90% of deaf people are born into non-deaf (hearing) families (Mitchell and Karchmer 2004). An understanding of the politeness generally acquired through parental correction and modelling (Snow et al. 1990, Blum-Kulka 1997) is therefore disrupted by the lack of vertical transmission. Secondly, literacy levels of deaf signed language users are poor in comparison with the non-deaf population, making lip-reading problematic and hindering access to written information (Conrad 1979, Powers et al. 1998, Grimes and Cameron 2005).

2.3. Im/politeness and rapport

Similar to the *cultural turn* in interpreting studies, there has been a "discursive turn" in politeness research (Haugh 2013: 52), moving from a focus on politeness as the use of linguistic forms selected by a speaker (Brown and Levinson 1987), to an understanding that it resides in the perceptions of the recipient (Mills 2003, Locher and Watts 2005). The context in which linguistic forms are used, and the evaluations of the recipient are therefore integral to what might be considered polite or otherwise. Throughout this chapter I use the term im/politeness as an umbrella term to encompass the entire polite/impolite continuum (Culpeper et al. 2010, Leech 2014) and to acknowledge that perceptions of one utterance may vary. An utterance may be evaluated differently in different situations, or by different people in the same situation (Kasper 1990, Haugh 2013). Haugh et al. (2013) develop this perspective by asserting that the evaluations made by individuals in an interaction are influenced by, and in turn influence, their participation in that interaction. Within interpreted interaction these influences and the process of evaluation become even more complex and multi-layered as messages are evaluated twice, once by the interpreter and again by the intended recipient.

Two concepts within the im/politeness literature immediately resonate with the activity of interpreting. Firstly, the concept of social networks (Watts 2003) that draws on Bourdieu's (1977*) theory of practice.* Latent networks are social structures created in previous interactions, while emergent networks are dynamic relationships created by participants during an interaction. Watts (2003) notes that relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986) can be used as a means of

appreciating how an utterance might be perceived, with individuals discerning the potential construal they consider most likely to be intended. Interpreters may be challenged to discern their clients' motivation around im/politeness depending on their familiarity with them. Thus, the concept of latent and emergent social networks forms a useful framework to explore interpreters' decision-making. The concepts have been related to the use of im/politeness in American Sign Language (Roush 2007) and to BSL/English interpreting in medical settings (Schofield and Mapson 2014).

The second framework that resonates with interpreting is rapport management theory (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2008), which Culpeper et al. (2010) describe as the most detailed framework for analysis of relationship negotiation. Rapport management is defined as "the management or mismanagement of relations between people" (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 96), something that is particularly pertinent to the work of interpreters. The theory draws on Goffman's (1967) concept of face as one of three inter-relating bases upon which people evaluate rapport, the others being interactional goals and societal rights and obligations. Spencer-Oatey (2005) suggests that interactional goals can be oriented towards tasks or relationships, so that managing rapport can be either a means to an end, or the main goal of the interaction. Societal rights and obligations may concern issues such as turn-taking, and relate to the role a speaker occupies within an interaction, or be context-specific to the environment in which the interaction is taking place.

The range of people with whom interpreters work, and the variety of environments they work in, suggest rapport management is a useful concept to be applied within interpreting research. This is because the framework focuses on the dynamic nature of interaction and the process of relating. People can make use of a variety of inter-relating elements to establish rapport, which can include both linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours, participation or lack thereof, and discourse structure and content (Spencer-Oatey 2005, 2008). In contrast to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), contextual variables that influence interaction are not limited to power, social distance and imposition, but also include the number of people present, their interactional roles and the type of activity they are engaged in. Spencer-Oatey (2008) recognises both power and social distance to be

more complex and nuanced than Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest, with further interacting influences involving role, the rights associated with that role, message content, length of acquaintance and frequency of contact.

Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) outline how key competencies for managing rapport effectively can be exercised before or during an interaction. This suggests that prior knowledge and familiarity between interlocutors can facilitate management of rapport, as reflected in Watts' (2003) discussion of the affordance of latent networks, and the concept of "relational histories" (Kádár and Haugh 2013: 64).

In some contexts im/politeness takes on conventionalised forms (Kadar and Haugh 2013) which can be adopted within specific communities of practice (Mills 2003). For example, in workplaces, small talk and humour are strategies used to promote rapport and address face sensitivities (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, Mullany 2004, 2006, House 2010, Spencer-Oatey 2013). This is particularly relevant to signed language interpreters as they frequently work with deaf employees within their workplaces (Dickinson 2014).

The way people evaluate im/politeness can be either tacit or explicit (Eelen 2001), but few studies focus on these interpersonal evaluations (Kádár and Haugh 2013). These authors suggest that evaluations of im/politeness are made in relation to the individual's scale of reference. This normative scale is shared with others from the same social group, resulting in the appropriate use of language generally going un-noticed (O'Driscoll 1996). However, in interpreted interactions problems can occur when the interpreter and their clients do not share the same frame of reference. Interpreters therefore comprise an interesting focus for study of the evaluative process.

2.4. Cross-cultural and intercultural research

The contrasting im/politeness strategies adopted by different languages (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) may present further challenge to interpreters. For example, languages may not share equivalents for politeness markers, such as the word "please" in English, or may use them very differently (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2005, Sato 2008, Ogiermann 2009). In some languages, such as British

English, formulaic expressions for im/politeness are common (House 1986, Pablos-Ortega 2010), but such phrases may lack equivalence in either form or function in others (Kasper 1990). The conventionalised phrases that play an important role within small talk can therefore become problematic in interpreter-mediated interaction where those conventions are not shared across languages (House 2010).

Conventionalised phrases are commonly associated with in/directness (Thomas 1983, Blum-Kulka 1987, House 2005, Ogiermann 2009), but studies indicate that different languages use in/directness for different purposes (Ruetenik 2013), and evaluate it in contrasting ways (Kasper 1990, Thomas 1995, Culpeper et al. 2010). Cultural contrast may also be evident in social indexing (Kasper 1990), with some cultures having expectations in the marking of differentiations of gender, age and social status (Matsumoto 1989, Pizziconi 2011).

Although studies indicate that face may be evaluated differently in Western and non-Western cultures (Ide 1989, Matsumoto 1989, Gu 1990, Nwoye 1992), there is a greater nuance to these differences than the Western/non-Western distinction allows (Culpeper et al. 2010). There can be a tendency for studies to reinforce inaccurate cultural stereotypes (Tanaka et al. 2008), failing to recognise subtle cultural differences (Aoki 2010) and intra-cultural variation (Hernandez-Flores 1999). This is evident in the association of a lack of indirectness with deaf culture in the USA (Mindess 2006), which is challenged by other studies that evidence how indirectness is conveyed through non-manual markers involving facial expression and the upper body (Ferreira Brito 1995, Roush 2007, Hoza 2007, 2008, George 2011, Mapson 2014a).

People might assume these cross-cultural contrasts to be resolved by the presence of an interpreter. However, pragmatic transfer, where first language (L1) norms leak into the use of a second or additional language (L2), is more likely to occur in unfamiliar contexts (Takahashi 2000). This is because bilinguals' linguistic competence may be context-specific (Grosjean 2014). Negative pragmatic transfer can impact particularly on rapport in situations where this is managed differently in L1 and L2, such as with the use of in/directness (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009) or small talk

(House 2010). These problems may be exacerbated if there is resistance to L2 sociopragmatic norms (Bardovi-Harlig 2001, Taguchi 2011) or a lack of awareness of them (Blum-Kulka 1997); issues that have been related to those signed language interpreters for whom signed language is their L2 (Roush 2007, Mapson 2015a). This is potentially a significant issue given that BSL is the L2 of approximately 90% of BSL/English interpreters (Mapson 2014b).

2.5. Interpreting im/politeness

Despite repeated criticism of the suitability of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory for cross-cultural study (Ide 1989, Gu 1990, Mills 2003, Spencer-Oatey 2008, Economidou-Kogetsidis 2010), it has been the foundation for much of the research into interpreting and im/politeness (Berk-Seligson 1990, Hatim and Mason 1997, Mason and Stewart 2001, Hoza 1999, Savvalidou 2011). However, more recently this literature has been supplemented by other studies that are framed by discursive and rapport management approaches (Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2003, Major 2013, Schofield and Mapson 2014, Radanovic Felberg 2016), the growing literature on impoliteness and rudeness (Gallez 2015, Mankauskienė 2015, Magnifico and Defrancq 2016), gender (Mason 2008 and Magnifico and Defrancq 2016) and honorifics (Nakane 2008). A focus on linguistic equivalence has dominated many studies, with a common theme being the tendency for interpreters to omit both polite and impolite language. Research suggests that the time constraints under which interpreters operate impacts on interpreters' decision-making (Leeson 2005, Hale 2007) and may result in interpreters tending to prioritise the exchange of information rather than reflecting affect (Hoza 1999, Angermeyer 2005, Hale 2007, Dickinson 2014, Albl-Mikasa et al. 2015).

Legal studies observe the toning down of speech acts in the OJ Simpson trial (Mason and Stewart 2001), and the prevalence for down-toning when interpreting for the defendant rather than the judiciary (Gallez 2005). One example provided by Mason and Stewart (2001) is the different illocutionary force between "I believe" uttered by a witness, and the interpretation of "I think". Down-toning has also been observed in the interpretation of political speeches (Savvalidou 2011), including those of Nigel Farage at the European Parliament (Magnifico and Defrancq 2016). One way

in which face-threatening acts (FTAs) are down-toned is through the addition of hedges, with evidence of the impact of these additions on legal proceedings (Berk-Seligson 1990, Hale 2004, Nakane 2008) and in healthcare interactions (Albl-Mikasa et al. 2015).

Another strategy interpreters use when dealing with FTAs is switching into use of third person (Murphy 2012, Cheung 2012, Radanovic Felberg 2016), a strategy that helps distance the interpreter from the source message (Bot and Wadensjö 2004, Angermeyer 2009, Van De Mieroop 2012), but which may be particularly influenced by power differentials between clients (Cheung 2012, Van De Meiroop 2012). However, use of the third person can lend clarity to the interpretation, making it clear to everyone where the FTA originates (Angermeyer 2009, Murphy 2012).

Research also indicates that interpreters typically omit the elements of discourse that concern rapport, and instead prioritise exchange of information. Studies evidence the omission of hedges and significant discourse markers in court proceedings (Hale 2004) and as well as the omission of politeness markers in court proceedings (Mason 2008). The latter study identifies a potential influence of gender, with male interpreters making omissions more frequently when their cognitive capacity was challenged or when the witness they were interpreting for was male. Gender differences were also observed in a corpus study of EU Parliamentary debates in which male interpreters were more likely to mitigate FTAs than their female counterparts (Magnifico and Defrancq 2016).

Development of rapport is particularly important within interpreted healthcare interactions, so interpreters need to place the same value on this aspect of the interaction as do the clinicians (Major 2013, Schofield and Mapson 2014). However, research suggests that interpreters omit clinicians' deliberate use of rapport-building strategies (Albl-Mikasa et al. 2015). Similarly, navigating sociopragmatic contrasts around small talk when rapport-building in business and employment contexts can challenge interpreters (Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2003). Interpreters may lack the necessary underpinning knowledge and familiarity with those involved to understand and convey the highly contextualised humour involved (Bristoll 2009, Dickinson 2014).

Interpreting has been described as an inherently face-threatening activity (Monacelli 2009), in which behavioural norms can be disrupted by the interpreter (Janzen and Shaffer 2008). This may manifest in a more controlled turn-taking (Hoza 2001) and greater self-consciousness among the participants (Schofield and Mapson 2014). Alexieva (2000) suggests that interpreters' identity characteristics may additionally influence interactional dynamics. Gender is a key influence given the predominance of women in the profession (Pöchhacker 2016), with women comprising over 80% of the BSL/English interpreters in the UK (Mapson 2014b). Other studies suggest that interpreters' involvement in latent networks with their clients can reduce the negative impact of their presence (Major 2013, Schofield and Mapson 2014).

In summary, research suggests that interpreting im/politeness is such a challenge to interpreters that the result may be a neutralising of language, reducing both FTAs and positive rapport-building strategies. Exploring the rationale behind interpreters' decisions around im/politeness may therefore be a useful step in helping interpreters address these challenges.

3. Method
3.1. Participants

Purposive selection of participants was informed by an earlier pilot study, which indicated the value of recruiting experienced practitioners. Therefore, The main study involved eight highly experienced BSL/English interpreters: all with a minimum of 10 years of professional experience, and seven having worked for more than 15 years. The researcher's identity as an interpreting practitioner assisted with the recruitment process and thus ensured that all participants knew one another and were comfortable interacting in their groups.

Two groups of participants were created: a group of interpreters for whom English was their first language (L1) and a group from deaf family backgrounds whose first language was BSL. This design was intended to facilitate identification of any issues that might emerge from their different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In each group there was a balance of male and female interpreters, and each participant selected their own pseudonym for use in the research, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant Groups

BSL as L1	English as L1
Henry	Angus
Jean	Emma
Maurice	Olly
Pippi	Vivienne

3.2. Data generation

Data were generated in three semi-structured discussions with each group. These took place over a six-month period. This method is commensurate with capturing the diversity of situations in which interpreters work, and recognised as useful for an exploratory study (Kasper 2008), identification of issues more difficult to observe (Bryman 2004) and for capturing the wide-ranging behaviours associated with im/politeness (Mills 2003).

Each group discussion was scheduled at the participants' convenience and lasted approximately two hours. Sessions were video recorded to facilitate transcription of the group dynamics, and to capture use of gesture and BSL. Participants were aware that the subject of the research was im/politeness and were given some prompt questions in advance. However, no further definition of im/politeness was provided, to avoid restricting their discussions. Participants were asked what they recognised as im/politeness in BSL, comparison of their acquisition of knowledge in L1 and L2, and their experiences of dealing with im/politeness in their work. Conversations were stimulated by viewing some short video clips of two deaf people making requests and apologies in BSL. These were based on some of the scenarios reported in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Hoza (2007).

Following three discussions with each group, an initial analysis was conducted and fed back to all participants, some in a composite group, and others individually via Skype. These feedback sessions generated further data for analysis. In total, data comprised approximately 16 hours of discussion, equating to 120,035 words of transcription.

3.3. Analysis

Data were analysed thematically; a method noted as useful in exploratory (Braun and Clark 2006) and experience-focused research (King and Horrocks 2010). Each discussion session was transcribed and analysed prior to the next session, making the coding and analysis an iterative process. This

supported triangulation of the data, both within and between the two participant groupings. Coding categorisations were either theory- or data-driven (Braun and Clark 2006) with some theory-driven codes based on earlier research on politeness features in BSL (Mapson 2014a). Initial coding included in vivo terms, those generated by participants (Charmaz 2006), where possible. This was facilitated by the insider knowledge provided by the researcher's dual identity as an interpreting professional. Analysis and reporting of the data has been mindful of issues around confidentiality, with names and other identifying details omitted and extracts selected carefully to preserve the anonymity of the participants and their clients.

Following the thematic network approach of Attride-Stirling (2001), and adopted by Spencer-Oatey (2013), mind-mapping software was used to create a visual representation of the connections between the thematic codes. Three global themes were identified from the analysis: recognition, influences and strategies. This chapter focusses predominantly on the second of these, as it is these influences that reveal how interpreters evaluate im/politeness.

4. Results

Although the two groups of interpreters had very different experiences of learning, or acquiring, understanding about im/politeness in their two working languages (see Mapson 2015 for details), there were no notable discrepancies between the two participant groups in relation to influences on their interpretation of im/politeness. Analysis of participants' discussion around the interpretation of im/politeness and the importance of rapport revealed seven main influences on interpreters' decision-making: the environment, consequence, sophistication, self-preservation, intention, visibility and the underpinning influence of familiarity. The diagrammatic model illustrated in Figure 1 shows six of the influences, surrounded by the underpinning influence of familiarity, which impacts on each of the other influences. The diagram reflects participants' comments, which highlight how these influences are dynamic, and intersect with one another, coalescing to form combinations specific to each interaction.

Figure 1: Influences on interpretation of im/politeness
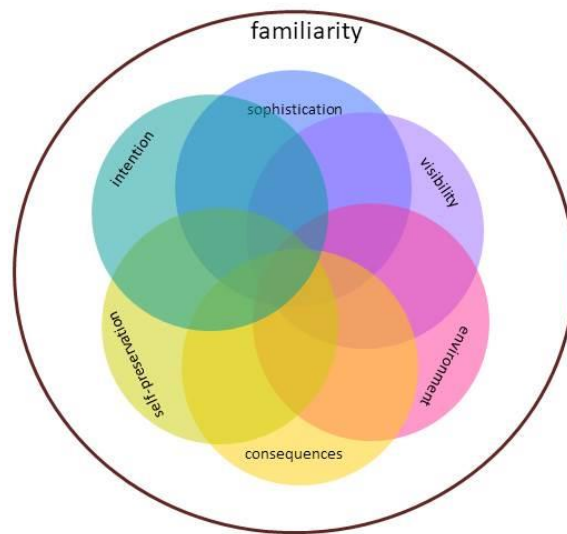
The seven influences were closely related to the strategies that the participants reported using to convey im/politeness. These strategies could be categorised into three types: reflecting, smoothing, and commenting. The most prevalent strategy reported was that of smoothing, which in turn could be distilled into four main techniques: adding, tempering, use of intonation, and switching into to the use of third person.

Each of the seven influences is now described in more detail,

4.1. The environment

The influence of the environment relates to the setting in which the interpreted interaction is taking place. There are always multiple options available to an interpreter when relaying one language into another, and data indicate that environmental norms and expectations inform interpreters' decision-making around im/politeness. The great diversity of environments in which BSL interpreters work is reflected in the data, with participants describing incidents that took place in care homes, GP surgeries, hospitals, police stations, court, prison, job interviews, various employment settings, disciplinary meetings, social work, the media, and when interpreting remotely using online technology. They described how some situations, such as court, have very clear expectations around behaviour and language use. Work in the fast-paced environment of the media industry, and when

working with trainee plumbers, were given as examples of situations where more directness could be anticipated. In other contexts, expectations around language use may be less explicit, but nonetheless present. Olly described how, in workplace contexts, there would always be "a policy at work around booking holiday" which would inform his interpretation of a request for annual leave. He reflected further that a request for time off next week would appear to be "at quite short notice" increasing the degree of imposition involved, and therefore influencing his phrasing of the request. Participants recognised that their personal evaluations of im/politeness might differ from those of the other people present, particularly in situations with which they were unfamiliar or uncomfortable. Data suggest this could result in reduced cultural adjustment around im/politeness, and a focus on information exchange rather than affect.

4.2. Consequence

The potential consequences of an interaction also influence interpreters' decision-making. These influences manifest at both micro and macro levels. On a micro level there may be consequences from each turn taken in the interaction, for example, the way a question is asked or answered. At a macro level it is evident that the influences of consequence and environment intersect. Interpreters work in some situations that have explicit and serious consequences such as in child protection cases and within the criminal justice system. This might, for example, reduce the cultural smoothing that interpreters reported undertaking frequently when reflecting im/politeness. Pippi provides an example of this when reflecting on a colleague's work with a male client involved with the police and social services.

(1) She reflects all of his vileness, because it is so important in what's happening in his life. Because if people didn't know how vile he was then they would make very different decisions about his family situation. (Pippi)

In other circumstances the participants were motivated to ensure that deaf people are reflected in a positive way, to reduce the inequality that typically exists for this population. They used im/politeness consciously to help address this. Olly connected this sensitivity with the dynamic nature of interpreting, commenting that he was conscious that deaf people "are inherently

discriminated against" which informed his judgements, while acknowledging that other interpreters might "just adopt it" as their cause.

Effective interpreting therefore involves dynamic decision-making that is responsive to the moment to moment changes within an interaction. This is also visible within the interpretation of individual utterances where consequences at the micro level also inform interpreters' actions. For example, a request for annual leave would be interpreted in a way most likely to elicit a positive response, although exactly how this might be articulated would vary depending on the workplace and people involved.

4.3. Sophistication

Participants described the contrasting decisions they may make when working with clients with differing levels of sophistication, often in relation to their experience of engaging in interpreted interaction. Interpreters work with a range of deaf clients, some operating as professionals within their workplaces, and others with very low levels of educational achievement and perhaps little experience or understanding of interpreted interaction. Participants reflected on the way that some deaf clients may evaluate face differently from non-deaf people, or may not consider it at all because of a lack of familiarity with "the rules". However, participants were quick to point out the wide variation within the deaf community, and that lack of awareness of societal norms is not exclusive to deaf people.

Data indicate that deaf clients' very differing levels of appreciation of English-speaking sociopragmatic norms and appropriate choice of register, impact on the im/politeness adjustments the interpreters make in their interpretations. Again, these adjustments are based on the interpreters' individual evaluations of what would be deemed appropriate in the context, with actions taken to help the deaf client blend in with the expectations of the environment. For example, Olly indicated that, with his client group, his interpretation was based more on environmental expectations than the source BSL message and "if there's going to be politeness stuff I'm definitely adding it because of the context." Similar problematic experiences concerned

expectations around turn-taking when interpreting with less sophisticated deaf clients. Angus recounted having to "get my plastering trowel out to smooth over the turn-taking" and perceiving the need to add politeness to mitigate for interruptions.

4.4. Intention

Participants described how they are influenced by what they perceive to be the intentions of the clients they are working with. The influence of intention is another that operates at both macro and micro levels. At a macro level, the intention, or goal, of an interaction frequently blends with the environment in which the interaction occurs. Participants mentioned legal and medical contexts as having clear interactional goals that facilitate their prediction of the motivations and intent of those involved.

Interpreters' evaluation of the intention of their clients is informed by their prior knowledge of them. Lack of prior knowledge can be partly compensated for when interpreters interact with their clients beforehand to find out what they want to achieve from the interaction. Maurice reflected on how "you can elicit information from the person", stating that "you can tune in to what their expectations are", and this is facilitated by interpreters' own rapport management with the clients. At a micro level, there is a close association with the influence of sophistication. Interpreters are constantly evaluating the intent behind each utterance they interpret. Participants discussed how contrasting sociopragmatic norms in English and BSL result in intention being conveyed very differently. Interpretations need to be informed by cultural appropriateness and may require considerable adjustment. Participants recognised that greater acknowledgement of a status differential is needed in British English than in BSL. When interpreting from BSL to English, Maurice talked about his overriding principle being to match what he considers a non-deaf person would say in the same situation. Emma described her motivation being "to bring those two people together to do what they need to do in the best possible way." This might include the need to "err on the side of caution" in a choice of interpretation until enough evidence of intentional impoliteness is acquired to think "no, that's bloody rude" and then opting to reflect that. However, participants accepted

that in some situations their evaluation of rudeness would be further influenced by the stress or emotion involved. In circumstances where stress rather than deliberate intention is involved, interpreters' tolerance of rudeness would be greater, as they appreciated how anxiety could lead individuals to become unintentionally face-threatening.

4.5. Self-preservation

Although interpreters are primarily concerned with the face needs of their clients, participants discussed how their own face needs sometimes influence their interpretation of im/politeness. Their individual feelings and need for self-preservation cannot always be supressed, and they may want to disassociate themselves from what is happening. This might be motivated by the intended recipient potentially misunderstanding who originated the message, leading to interpreters hedging or moderating a contribution that could be considered rude or impolite.

> (2) I think it's interesting, about that time when you feel you are being tarred with the same brush. How sophisticated is the hearing person's use of interpreters to understand that everything you're doing isn't you, to how much you think 'they might think it's me' so I'll hedge a bit or moderate it, and mediate. (Olly)

Mediation of rudeness might involve switching from the use of first person to third person to aid clarity for the hearing client.

> (3) If someone was complimenting someone else you'd give that straight. It's only if they wanted to call you a turd or something, you know, I don't want to be associated with that. It's about self-protection. Well, it *is* about self-protection, isn't it? (Maurice)

A more direct interpretation of perceived rudeness is likely to draw unwanted attention towards the interpreter and the interpreting process, and therefore detract on from the relationship and rapport between deaf and non-deaf clients. Therefore, the participants discussed the need for 'smoothing over', perhaps by using intonation and emphasis rather than shouting. They additionally highlighted the value of establishing their own positive rapport with all clients prior to the interpreted interaction, which could enhance clients' clarity about the likely originator of a rude remark.

4.6. Visibility

Data reflects how the extent to which clients can perceive their interlocutor's behaviours has significant influence on interpretation. On a macro level this relates to whether the clients can see

one another. Although in face-to-face interactions this is generally the case, interpreters sometimes engage in remote online interpreting where clients typically cannot see one another. Participants described how this invisibility affords a greater degree of latitude in the way they mediate between the two languages. This latitude is necessary in order to make a telephone call work effectively for both parties; the needs of a caller relying on visual communication are very different from the telephone etiquette and expectations of a non-deaf telephone caller. For example, silence at the end of the line may signal that the connection has been lost for one caller, while the deaf person has sight of the interpreter on screen and knows the call is in progress. Interpreters talked about using im/politeness deliberately to mediate between these differing expectations and to compensate for clients' inability to evaluate each other directly through visual cues.

> (4) I think face-to-face the hearing people can see the demeanour of the deaf person and therefore, the imperative to be polite is perhaps less so, and what's important is the information […] but on the telephone it's slightly different because they can't necessarily judge that. (Maurice)

Another macro-level influence is the degree to which interpreters' decisions are transparent to others. In part this relates to the size of the audience, but participants described how they felt their decision-making latitude was reduced when the audience includes English/BSL bilinguals, and particularly when they are fellow interpreters. This reduction in latitude in turn connects with visibility at the micro level, or how obvious the meaning of an utterance is to the other client/s. Participants indicated how this reduces their ability to smooth over the interaction when dealing with FTAs. Olly recalled one incident where the deaf person's contribution was "so far along the line of directness" that the interpreter's actions could "only pull it back to a certain point." In contrast Vivienne reflected on how she "smoothed the edges" when she perceived a client's rudeness during a meeting as "completely unnecessary". Her decision was influenced by the fact that "no one else had picked up" on the FTA in the source message and the intersecting influences of consequence and environment.

4.7. Familiarity

The final influence, familiarity, is crucial as it underpins all other influences. Interpreters' familiarity with environment in which they are working, the sophistication of the people they are working with, clients' intentions within the interaction, the potential consequences, the degree of visibility of their actions and any impact this might have on them as individuals, provides interpreters with crucial knowledge to inform their decisions around interpreting im/politeness. When this level of familiarity is lacking, data indicate that interpreters' decision-making is likely to be very different.

Participants described greater levels of familiarity, with both clients and context, as enhancing their ability to reflect their clients accurately and appropriately, as well as ability to monitor their output. The value of this knowledge became apparent when the participants were shown brief clips of requests and apologies in BSL and asked how they might interpret them. It was evident that identifying the subtleties of language use was intrinsically related to the need to know more about the individual, and to understand the context, and goals and relationships of those involved.

> (5) It gets quite hard to discern, I think, but particularly because they are only individual clips without context, without another person, without the before and after, without knowing people's status. I have to know those things, to know about how I would decide the level of requesting things. (Olly)

Participants described how their familiarity with clients and context help them both to evaluate what needs to happen and to inform their decision-making.

> (6) There's so much that comes with that package, and that message that you're getting in that moment, that you know about because of previous appointments and how that person is with life in general, that enables you to make that really quick decision. (Emma)

This in turn reduces the cognitive load on the interpreter.

> (7) I think it just makes our jobs easier […] knowing that you're doing something that's absolutely right rather than thinking about it all the time, or making those judgements all the time. That's the biggest difference to me. (Jean)

Data suggest that reducing the cognitive load on the interpreter frees up their capacity to focus on the relational work taking place between their clients, rather than focussing predominantly on the exchange of information.

5. Discussion

As other studies have indicated, discussion about politeness and positive rapport can challenge research participants (Wolfson 1989, Blum-Kulka 1997). In this study too, participants frequently framed discussion of politeness and positive rapport within the context of what was deemed impolite. However, participants' comments also reveal much about the extent to which rapport management is an important remit for interpreters.

The model derived from the data in this study, and presented in Figure 1, dissects the influences on interpretation in more detail than is illustrated in the three bases of rapport management theory (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2008). The study shows how the seven influences all impact on interpreters' evaluations and decision-making around managing rapport and the interpretation of im/politeness. However, the relationship between these influences mirrors the interconnections between the three bases of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2008). Intersections between influences are exemplified in evaluations based around the environment, intention and consequence. Although Mason and Stewart (2001) note the reduction in latitude for interpreters' decision-making in environments such as the courtroom, where behavioural expectations are highly prescribed, participants in this study recognised that this was partly compensated by the fact that everyone's motivations in that context tend to be clear. Previous legal studies have illustrated how interpretation of im/politeness can influence the outcomes of an interaction (Berk-Seligson 1990 and Nakane 2008). The present study provides an alternative perspective to this by evidencing that the likely consequences of an event influence the interpretation of im/politeness, and thus that consequence and interpretation may be reciprocal influences on each other. The data additionally reinforce the earlier literature, observing interpreters as active participants within the interaction (Roy 1993, Wadensjö 1993), with the ability to affect the conduct and outcome of an interaction

Context has been discussed as influencing and being influenced by interpreters' decisions in general (Wadensjö 1998, Napier 2006, Nilsson 2011, Major and Napier 2012,), so it may be unsurprising that environmental influences extend to judgements around im/politeness. The influence of the environment has obvious connections to two bases of rapport management theory, interactional

goals and societal rights and obligations (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2008). A micro-level example of environmental influence is the interpretation of the humour involved in small talk, which is potentially highly contextualised. Findings from this study resonate with earlier evidence of interpreters' omission of small talk (Bristoll 2009, Dickinson 2014) and a tendency to prioritise exchange of information (Angermeyer 2005, Hale 2007, Dickinson 2014, Albl-Mikasa et al. 2015). Data suggest this is particularly problematic for interpreters who are less familiar with the setting and the participants. Interpreters' focus on rapport, and their ability to smooth communication, is greatly facilitated by their familiarity with the context and the people within it. Data indicating how interpreters value the depth of knowledge generated by familiarity complement other studies, which suggest that deaf and hearing clients also value the benefits of familiarity (Major 2013, Schofield and Mapson 2014, Mapson and Major forthcoming).

Data suggest that the rapport management base of societal rights and obligations (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2008) may be evaluated differently within the deaf community, and this impacts on interpreters' decision-making when managing rapport between deaf and non-deaf clients. Interpreters related this to levels of sophistication, articulating the need to compensate for the lack of face-saving judgements made by their deaf clients. Their comments around the need to add politeness evidence further overlap between the influences of sophistication and environment. The English-speaking norms associated with specific situations such as courtroom etiquette, are not easily acquired by deaf people and may result in poor judgement in relation to the use of register. Discussion around this was frequently related to interpreting in workplaces, with interpreters aiming to help deaf employees blend in with the expectations of the setting. Participants indicated that status is less influential in BSL than in English, thus necessitating a degree of cultural filtration. This might entail making im/politeness more, or less, explicit in an interpretation (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009) and prioritising function over message form (House 1998). For example, when working from BSL into English, interpreters might elevate the formality and increase the indirectness of a request in order to elicit the desired response.

Evidence of interpreters distancing themselves from an undesirable source message through the use of third person is nothing new (Bot and Wadensjö 2004, Angermeyer 2009, Van De Mieroop 2012, Murphy 2012), but the further influence of language direction or power im/balance between clients (Cheung 2012, Van De Mieroop 2012) may be particularly pertinent when working with deaf clients. This study evidences how interpreters manage their own face needs as well as those of their clients and indicates that participants smooth and repackage im/politeness to fit with their own personal norms of behaviour. These in turn may be influenced by factors such as age and gender (Alexieva 2000). When interpreters voice something that sounds odd coming from them as individuals, it is more likely to draw the negative attention attracted by unexpected utterances (Kasper 1990, Ruhi 2008). The influence of sophistication is pertinent here, as clients who are less familiar with interpreted interaction may associate an interpretation with the interpreter rather than the originator of the message. Interpreters' use of third person to distance themselves from the message therefore forms an astute strategy for minimising their own intrusion in the interaction. By behaving in ways that help them blend in, and which others deem appropriate, interpreters can remain in the "background consciousness" (O'Driscoll 1996:1) of the others present.

The influence of self-preservation, and its intersection with the influence of sophistication, both resonate with the face-sensitivities base of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2008). Data illustrate how interpreters are simultaneously managing their own rapport with clients and managing rapport between those clients. Participants' comments suggest that the boundaries between concerns for their own personal face overlap with their professional concern for the face sensitivities of their clients, and that these are being constantly negotiated by the interpreter throughout the interaction. Data suggest that some actions that might be perceived as egocentric self-preservation by interpreters could also serve to prevent or minimise interruption to the relationship and flow of communication between their clients. Face sensitivities may interact with the influence of visibility. Spencer-Oatey (2008:36) recognises how face-management may be "number sensitive", relating to the size of the audience. This sensitivity is apparent in interpreters'

discussion about the transparency of their decisions to others. For them, this concerns the number of witnesses, but more importantly the identity of those witnesses, potentially reducing the latitude of interpretation options available.

Unusual or unexpected utterances require greater cognitive attention (Ruhi 2008), but interpreters' processing capacity is limited (Gile 1995, 2008, Leeson 2005). Therefore, when this cognitive load is combined with the time constraint demanded in simultaneous interpretation, it may reduce interpreters' focus on rapport management, potentially resulting in the reduction of im/politeness observed in other studies (Hatim and Mason 1997, Angermeyer 2005). The present study indicates how influence of familiarity is fundamental in underpinning interpreters' understanding of what is expected in a situation and the conventional forms of im/politeness likely to be used. Familiarity may ultimately result in a reduced cognitive load for the clients too, as interpreted utterances are more likely to mesh with their expectations. However, the influence of familiarity is broader than the concept of latent networks (Watts 2003), or relational histories (Kádár and Haugh 2013), because it extends beyond previous relationships between interlocutors, to an understanding of the situation and the responsibilities of those within it. When interpreting im/politeness, familiarity affords interpreters an understanding of what is contextually appropriate, which reduces the risk of negative pragmatic transfer highlighted by Takahashi (2000) and can be a protective factor, helping them to pre-empt problematic interaction or dialogue that could generate particular challenges for the interpreter. For example, it significantly enhances interpreters' ability to make sense of the rapport building small talk and humour used in workplace contexts (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, Mullany 2004, 2006, House 2010, Spencer-Oatey 2013).

6. Conclusion

Interpreters' discussions about how they reflect im/politeness provides insight into the complex evaluative processes and challenges involved in interpreter-mediated interaction, and as well as revealing some of the hidden thought processes involved more generally in the evaluation of im/politeness.

One notable issue with the data in this study is that participants were all experienced interpreting practitioners. Their level of experience is not reflective of the profession more generally, where the majority have under five years' post-registration experience (Mapson 2014b). Further study comparing the decision-making of novice and expert interpreters could therefore be valuable. It would also be useful to adopt a rapport management perspective to the examination of data generated in naturally occurring interpreted interaction. This would enable deeper exploration of how interpreters' evaluations are played out in their choice of language, and the way they shape the conversation.

The focus on interpretation as a dynamic process, rather than as a product, aligns with the conceptualisation of rapport management as being a process of relating rather than the resulting relationship (Spencer-Oatey 2013). Data indicate several dynamic and interacting influences on the way im/politeness is interpreted that coalesce differently in each interpreted interaction, and which are motivated by more than a consideration for of face alone. Participants discussed how they smooth and repackage im/politeness to fit with the expectations of those around them and the environment in which they are working. Even within a single interpreted interaction, none of the influences on interpreters' decision-making remains static. Interpreters' comments evidence their constant attention on to changes in the interactional dynamics, making revisions and refinements to their strategies accordingly. The model presented in Figure 1 attempts to capture the nuanced influences on interpreted interaction in more detail than the three bases of rapport management theory (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 205, 2008) allow.

Familiarity, which includes involvement in latent networks (Watts 2003), was found to be the underpinning influence on interpreters' evaluation of im/politeness. However, the challenge that lack of familiarity presents to interpreters may also be relevant to people in general, resulting in what might be perceived as poor judgements around im/politeness due to lack of familiarity with situational norms and expectations.

The data additionally dispel the historical perception of the interpreter as a conduit, by illuminating the complexity of interpreted interaction. Interpreters form their own relationships and understanding of clients, which then inform the way they reflect those clients in interaction. Their work involves both actively managing rapport between their clients and simultaneously manage their own face needs as professionals within the interaction.

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