School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies

Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics

Volume 21, 2013

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI

VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics

Volume 21, 2013

Edited by Paul Warren

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Editorial Note

With the move of the Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics to a primarily electronic format (through downloadable pdfs on the website of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University of Wellington), the decision was made to abandon the strict sequencing of volume numbers by year. Because of the lag between volumes, such sequencing would have resulted in the current volume (number 21 in the series) having the year date 2009, which is before many of the contributors to this volume started their studies in Linguistics.

So volume 21 has a 2013 year date, reflecting the year in which it appears. 2013 is also the year in which the Summer Scholarships held by Scott and Leggett were concluded and the year in which Honours projects by Finkle-Vern and Gilbert were submitted. These Scholarship and Honours projects have produced some insightful and fascinating results, and it is with pleasure that I am able to include reports from these projects in this volume. I am hugely indebted to Janet Holmes for her supervision of these projects and for her close reading of the reports prior to their submission to WWPL. 2013 is also the year in which Janet moved into retirement, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her in print for her outstanding academic leadership and generous friendship.

Paul Warren

October 2013

Learning the Ropes
Report on Summer Scholarship Research
2012-2013

Jessica Scott

Abstract

This report provides an account of a small summer research project aimed at testing out the data collection techniques and method of analysis to be used in a larger project to be undertaken by the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) team. The specific aim was to interview ten New Zealanders who had been seconded to work overseas and to identify common themes in their experience of working in a different workplace culture. Five themes were identified as sources of interesting variation, namely sociability, directness, hierarchy, efficiency, and New Zealanders as desirable employees. The report concludes with reflections on my experience as a researcher and identifies some possible future directions for further research.

1. Introduction

Learning the Ropes is the latest instalment in the research of the ongoing Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) team. Investigating how workers learn to fit in to a new workplace in terms of interaction patterns and sociopragmatic norms when they move to an overseas country, this phase builds on earlier research which examined how immigrants integrate into the culture of New Zealand workplaces. Results from *Learning the Ropes* will further develop our understanding of how and in what ways aspects of New Zealand workplace culture differ from features of workplace culture in other predominantly English-speaking countries.

The goals of the summer scholarship research were to interview ten New Zealanders who had been seconded to work in the United Kingdom within the last ten years, in order to identify common themes in their responses on the topic of distinctive aspects of workplace culture in the two countries.

2. Background

The first period of the summer scholarship involved background reading on cross-cultural communication and related issues relevant to the research. This reading was compiled in the form of an annotated bibliography.

Much of the research reviewed focused on participants from two quite different cultures, often in contexts involving two different languages. Blommaert (2010), for instance, analysed the use of a French word to name a shop in Japan to illustrate the connotative and symbolic powers of language, divorced from their meaning in the borrowed language. The language and cultural differences between New Zealand and the United Kingdom, however, are subtler. Whilst not specifically focusing on language, *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave and Wenger 1991) proved a very relevant reading for this research. Lave and Wenger draw broadly from different scenarios ranging from how new members of Alcoholics Anonymous learn the way in which meetings are conducted to how midwifery is passed down from mother to daughter in some African countries. The situations analysed by Lave and Wenger had obvious parallels with the situations faced by New Zealanders working in the UK and learning to fit in through observation and trial and error.

3. Methodology

1. The first step in planning the data collection involved devising a schedule of questions to be used in the semi-structured interviews. Meredith Marra provided guidance at this stage of the research. Approval for the proposed questions was next obtained from Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee. The next step involved finding suitable interviewees. The original intention was to record the experiences of secondees who had worked in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. However, in order to find enough participants, the parameters were expanded to include participants who had worked in a similar role in the two countries, but not necessarily seconded within the same organization.

2. On 10 December I attended the annual Language in the Workplace Roundtable discussion where each attendee reported briefly on their current research. This Roundtable provided a broader context for my research, as well as an opportunity to publicise the need for suitable interviewees. As a direct result of the discussion I was put in contact with three different people whom I subsequently interviewed. This was the beginning of the 'snowball' (aka 'friend of a friend' methodology) that I gradually built by asking each person I interviewed to suggest others.

3. In preparation for the interviews I discussed with Janet Holmes and Bernadette Vine some of the technical challenges and practical strategies involved in conducting interviews. I also undertook further reading in the area of interview techniques which warned me about factors to take into account. For example it is important to be aware that the location of an interview can have a strong effect on its dynamic, and it is also essential to leave 'space' in the discussion for the interviewee to talk. I learnt that with good preparation and practical experience with the recording equipment, conducting an interview could be a relaxed and indeed enjoyable experience.

4. Despite plans to interview several friends as 'practice' interviews, practical limitations meant I only managed to conduct one such interview. This interview was useful in making me aware of how important it was to learn my questions so that I did

not have to keep referring to the printed schedule – a procedure which made the interviewee self-conscious.   It was also useful to get frank feedback on my interviewing style. However, while this interview with someone I knew well was useful practice, it did not prepare me for the level of formality that I experienced when interviewing a stranger.

5. In order to explore the methodological effect of interviewing participants face-to-face vs. over the phone, I interviewed two of the ten participants by phone. This led me to appreciate how much easier it is to build rapport with an interviewee when one can see their body language, gauge feedback and adapt the questioning accordingly.

6. The next stage involved transcription. I was advised to first use a broad 'minutes-style' approach to transcribing the recorded interviews. However, I found the process of closely listening to and transcribing the interviews useful for picking up relevant information. As a result, I ended up transcribing most of the interviews more fully than was strictly necessary, and this proved to be very time-consuming.   However, the resulting transcriptions will be very valuable to the LWP project team.

4. Analysis and discussion

Four of the ten interviewees were lawyers, two were accountants, one was a University administrator, one was a project engineer, one worked in the film industry and one was a Financial Analyst. This range of occupations provided interesting evidence of variation between industries concerning the extent to which they are influenced by the 'national' culture of their location. For example, at least on the basis of my data set, it appears that the culture of a film industry workplace remains relatively similar regardless of its location, perhaps due to the particular demands of that industry, while other industries provide evidence of cultural variation across national boundaries.

Several recurring themes emerged from the analysis: (1) sociability and openness, (2) directness, (3) hierarchy and deference, (4) working efficiently and (5) New Zealanders as desirable employees. These are discussed in turn.

4.1.   Sociability and openness

Most of the New Zealanders interviewed commented on a difference in the degree of friendliness or sociability between workplace colleagues in New Zealand vs. the UK.

Lawyer Becky White[1] commented on how she found her English colleagues to be reserved on initially meeting them:

> Becky: …it just took people a long time to warm up you know… so I had this impression that everybody kind of kept to themselves and you know just sort of got on with their jobs and people weren't talking about their personal lives

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[1] All names used are pseudonyms

and things like that but it was really just because of that typical kind of English reserve that takes a while to break down and now probably my closest friend in London is one of my colleagues

Lawyer Jim Scott also commented on this:

Jim: it's not very collegial you know you don't work as teams on transactions

Lawyer John Gibson reflected that the larger number of work social activities in New Zealand means that he knows a greater number of people outside of his immediate team than compared to his Guernsey Island workplace

Interviewer: do you think that also means you know more people…outside your immediate team do you think that happened faster here

John: yeah I think it does actually I maybe it's a sad reflection on kiwis but we get to know people over a beer

4.2.   Directness

Some of the New Zealanders interviewed considered that people in the UK were less direct than New Zealanders and that they often left things implicit or under-stated.

Lawyer Jim Scott described how he believed people in his London workplace used a less direct way of speaking.

Jim: in our firm anyway we had lots of Oxbridge like people from Oxford and Cambridge and the way that they would speak it wasn't like words I'd never heard before but it was certainly a less direct or much more formal approach

This was echoed by Lawyer John Gibson who told an anecdote about being in an internal meeting. John was used to these being quite informal in New Zealand and discovered that there were different expectations of formality and appropriateness in the UK.

John: I was making a point cos like someone gave a silly example…and then put forward a hypothetical and I may have said something along the lines of well if that happened to me I'd be fucking pissed off or something…and everyone sort of stopped I was like OK good to note

4.3.   Hierarchy and Deference

Many of those interviewed noted a greater awareness of hierarchy in the UK than in New Zealand, and some commented that this was typically accompanied by more respectful and deferential speaking styles to superiors.

Mark Ross, a Project Engineer, commented on the greater sense of hierarchy in the English workplace.

> Mark: my company in particular has a very hierarchical nature … so even though we are on site we are still expected to wear a shirt and tie … which I don't think many other construction companies would be doing … but in reality if I'm on site I don't like the fact that we have to wear ties because it's a bit harder to relate with people sometimes if you're the man in the shirt and tie walking around site yeah

Becky White commented on expectations of deference to superiors.

> Becky: the great thing about being from New Zealand is nobody really expects that from you so you sort of sit outside that sort of hierarchy and people are generally more accepting of you being really assertive with your superiors or not being as formal or kind of deferential and I notice that all the time with [name] and me I mean when we go into [male name] my partner's office and he's like [laughs] coughing or something she will offer to go and get him a glass of water … and I would never dream of offering to do that

Graham Clark, an Accountant, believed that New Zealanders were more likely to respect others due to their achievements rather than who they knew or their background.

> Graham: people did place a bit more faith in people's titles or whatever rather than what they did and how well they did it

Making a related point, Jake Hodgson a Financial Analyst expressed the view that there was less segregation between workers of different status in the New Zealand workplace compared to England.

> Jake: I think some of the organisations I would have worked in had very clear management lines … and just physically you wouldn't mix with the next level of management whereas even in this place the CEO sits in the middle so he walks around you know who he is

However, it was also interesting that he considered this could be attributed to the size of the organisations as much as to cultural differences.

4.4.   Working efficiently

Another recurring theme was the perception of many participants that there was less pressure in England to work efficiently.

Accountant Graham Clark commented:

> Graham: there wasn't the same work pressures as there were here in terms of deadlines and getting things done being productive being efficient …

there's a lot of wasted time over there yeah I don't think it was as efficient as it needed to be I could have done the work I was doing in less time

The more relaxed workplace culture was also a surprise to university administrator Hannah Welsh.

Hannah: so there was a head of school who was quite inept and the academics … who all had their various sort of faults I suppose [laughs] but were just accepted you know oh this academic doesn't come in to work half the time that's just how he is this academic never gets their marking done and that's just how he is … it was very relaxed you know you could sort of turn up to work at sort of nine-ish and take an hour for lunch and leave at five and there was never any consideration you'd take any work home

However Hannah also noted that before she took up her current position she had worked in a different occupation, and this may have contributed to her awareness of different productivity expectations in different workplace contexts.

4.5.   *New Zealanders as desirable employees*

A number of interviewees commented on the fact that New Zealanders were generally regarded by overseas employers as hard-working employees.

Lawyer Becky White believed that the differences between New Zealand and English culture, as well as differences in the school systems and tertiary training, made New Zealanders particularly good lawyers.

Becky: but I think by and large from what I've seen over there the New Zealanders are much better critical thinkers much more able when it comes to legal discussions I mean there are many English associates who would absolutely shoot me for saying this but the New Zealanders are kind of able to argue things from first principles or just from sort of pure logic

Lawyer Jim Scott also talked about the amount of money and trouble large law firms would devote to recruiting New Zealanders to their company.

Interviewer: if they employed quite a few New Zealanders do you think they generally had a positive attitude about New Zealanders?

Jim: oh definitely

Lawyer John Gibson supported this view, stating that New Zealanders were perceived as desirable employees in the firm he had worked for.

John: I actually know my boss in [place] he says he has a habit of hiring kiwis rather than Australians cos he finds Australians too loud and brash

These themes provide interesting suggestions for further exploration of this topic.

5. Conclusions

Overall the summer scholarship research provided me with a valuable opportunity to undertake research with the Language in the Workplace team and to contribute to one of their current projects. Undertaking a literature review, conducting interviews and then transcribing and analysing the data were all valuable learning experiences.

The five themes identified in the reflective interviews of the ten participants will provide a useful starting point for further research in this project.

There is clearly plenty of scope for further research into the experiences of New Zealanders who have worked in the United Kingdom. The participants who had the most insightful and clear-cut ideas about the differences between the two countries' workplace cultures were still in employment in the United Kingdom and were interviewed while on holiday in New Zealand. This indicates that it is helpful if the participants' overseas experiences are relatively recent since this makes it more likely that they will be sensitive to salient differences.

Another possibility for future research is to focus on just one industry or occupation, for example lawyers, whose office-based work would be typical of many different types of occupation. This may also reduce some of the variables encountered in comparing experiences across different types of workplace.

Overall, then, my summer scholarship experience proved rewarding for me and very fruitful for the LWP Project.

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A day in the life of an eldercare worker
Report on Summer Scholarship Research: 2012-2013

Rachel Leggett

Abstract

This report provides an account of a small summer research project aimed at testing out "shadowing" as a method of data collection to complement recorded material collected in eldercare facilities by members of the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) team. Following a short literature review in which a number of themes are identified, the shadowing methodology used to follow caregivers in their everyday work is described. The results are discussed under two main headings, namely, baby talk and small talk. The report concludes with a discussion of possible future directions for further research and some reflections on my experience as a researcher.

1. Introduction

A day in the life of an eldercare worker is a project designed to contribute to research by the Language in the Workplace (LWP) team on the communication skills required by people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) who want to enter the workforce in New Zealand. The study focussed on the eldercare sector, an area of work that commonly employs immigrant workers, including refugees. Previous work in the healthcare sector has highlighted the importance of social talk, and people-orientated communication skills for people who care for residents, as well as for the residents themselves. This study therefore aimed to investigate these aspects of interaction in the eldercare sector in order to better describe the communication skills an eldercare worker needs. The results of the research indicated that relational talk and the development of social bonds with colleagues and residents are as important as technical and task-focussed communication in achieving effective workplace interaction.

2. Research context

The study began with a literature review of articles that focused on eldercare communication in a hospital or nursing home environment. I also examined articles that dealt with immigrant workers and the role that language plays when they try to enter the New Zealand workforce. Finally I looked at articles that dealt with the more technical aspects of the methodology, this meant finding information on why self-recordings are useful and how and why "shadowing" is used in social science research.

The relevant literature ranged from material on baby talk used to older people to articles on methodology. Identifying research which focussed on caregivers in eldercare homes proved challenging. Many articles examine the role of nurses in hospitals or present the perspective of the older people rather than the caregivers. Some focus on just one aspect of communication such as making requests or solving problems. Very few researchers seem to have investigated all the different aspects of communication required by a caregiver, and none of the research was based in New Zealand.

The major themes identified in the literature were as follows:

- the use of baby talk when addressing older people in a professional setting;
- the need for a caregiver to be able to communicate in a range of different situations from small talk to serious medical talk;
- better L2 learning opportunities for immigrant workers are beneficial to the immigrants themselves and also the country they have migrated to.

La Tourette and Meeks (2000) looked at the way *baby talk* or patronizing speech was perceived by older females, some of whom lived in nursing homes and some of whom did not. The participants were asked to view two videotaped vignettes that depicted a younger nurse giving an elder female a flu shot. One vignette had the nurse using patronizing speech throughout the interaction and one had the nurse switch to non-patronizing speech after the elder female spoke. Participants viewed the videos individually and were asked to rate the nurse on a scale on how respectful, nurturing, benevolent and competent they thought she was. Participants rated the non-patronizing vignette higher on all qualities and were generally more satisfied with the conversation compared to the patronizing vignette. The results of this article show that people are generally very aware of how they are being spoken to and have firm opinions about the respect they are entitled to.

On the other hand, there is research suggesting that *baby talk* can be used in a positive way when communicating with older residents in a healthcare environment. Researching *baby talk* in German nursing homes, Sachweh (1998) suggests that nurses or caregiver do not exclusively use *baby talk* based on their own set of preconceived notions of how one should speak to an older person, but rather that the people being addressed can influence how they are spoken to. However more research is needed to fully understand whether an addressee's age, sex, cognitive ability, and their willingness to communicate affect how they are spoken to, and whether caregivers use *baby talk* as a way to reassure or demonstrate solidarity with older people, in order to help them feel more comfortable in their environment.

Both Grainger (2004) and Bourgealt et al. (2010) mention that small talk, humour and banter are further skills that caregivers need to develop as part of their communicative repertoire. Communication with caregivers is often the only social interaction a resident in a care facility will experience for an entire day; consequently it is important for their well-being that the resident be engaged in a range of speech acts. As Bourgealt et al. comment, "Some older adults pointed out how informal communication between the care worker and themselves is important because older adults can get lonely" (2010: 114). Grainger's work focuses on how humour is used in the healthcare sector. She points out that while humour

is an important communication tool that helps to construct familiarity, there also needs to be more research into how this can be achieved without the controlling edge to playful banter which is sometimes evident.

Finally, one interesting article reported a relationship between learning the L2 language and mastering its nuances on the one hand and how much an immigrant worker could earn in their chosen profession. Berman, Lang and Siniver (2003) concluded that the better the L2 language is mastered the higher the immigrant's wages. Thus the immigrant workers were able to provide better for themselves and/or their families and this helped them to settle into their new society. Thus effective second language learning is vital not only for the immigrant workers, but also for the people they work with, and it is directly related to their quality of life.

3. Methodology

The *day in the life of an eldercare worker* is a qualitative study. The data used was gathered from caregivers at a local nursing home where a number of caregivers were asked to record themselves while they went about their normal daily routine. In addition, the caregivers were shadowed by me as researcher for periods of time, taking notes on non-verbal as well as verbal features of interaction.

The LWP project had previously persuaded some caregivers to record some of their interactions with residents. This is one effective way of overcoming the observer's paradox, since the investigator or observer is not present during the recordings and thus cannot have a direct influence on what is being observed (Holmes and Stubbe 2003, Schøning et al. 2009. However, one limitation of audio recordings is that they do not capture non-verbal aspects of communication. In order overcome this I undertook the task of shadowing a caregiver at one of the participating eldercare homes where self-recordings had been done.

During the shadowing process, I wore an audio recorder and followed caregivers around while they performed everyday tasks and interacted with the elderly residents living in the home. I also made notes about their spoken and non-verbal communication. Most of the time I was able to stay in the background and maintain a non-participant observer role, but if the carer or resident engaged in conversation with me I responded. One of the issues with shadowing is that the participants that you are shadowing are aware that you are there and are studying them and making notes. This is likely to affect what you observe as the participants may attempt to model the type of communication that they think you want to see which may not represent what they do when unobserved. However, as Waddington (2004) mentions, this issue is less problematic when the shadower and the people who are being shadowed form a bond. The familiarity and comfortableness established between the participants enables the shadowees to forget that they are being followed and they are more likely to act as they would when unobserved.

Conversations with the caregivers established that mornings were the optimum time to collect data, including shadowing, since after lunch it is normally very quiet with little interaction compared to in the mornings. The morning routine involved giving residents their breakfast, dealing with things that had happened during the night, showering the residents and getting them dressed for the day, followed by the morning tea round, and a

visit from the nurse who delivered medicine. Then at lunchtime the caregivers would help the residents to get to the dining room if necessary, and serve them lunch. For those residents who did not want to or could not go to the dining room the caregivers hand-delivered their lunch plates and, if necessary, would help to feed them. Grainger (1993) used a similar approach in recording her data, as she regarded these times as being important periods for building relationships between resident and caregiver.

I found the shadowing process to be somewhat stressful initially, as I was not entirely sure as to the amount of interaction I should engage in with the participants in the study. I did not want to appear rude or in any way jeopardise the relationship that had been previously built by the LWP team with the eldercare facility. I decided to base my shadowing on an "observer-as-participant" style of shadowing (Waddington: 2004) meaning I tried to remain an observer, in the background just listening unless I was asked directly to do something or I was engaged in conversation. After each shadowing block I found myself physically and mentally exhausted.

In total four caregivers were shadowed while they performed a range of daily tasks from delivering morning tea to helping residents bathe themselves. Each of the caregivers was from a different ethnic background, and one caregiver was from a non-English-speaking background. The shadowing always took place on the same wing of the nursing home. This meant the residents that caregivers interacted with stayed the same even when the caregivers changed. This had the advantage of minimising the amount of inconvenience to the residents and the caregivers. Moreover, the caregivers who worked on this wing had willingly agree to cooperate in the research and seemed comfortable with the idea of being shadowed. In addition, this approach made it possible for the LWP team to analyse how different caregivers interacted with the same residents. In total, over nine hours of data was recorded and from this data 42 interactions between resident and caregiver have been identified. These interactions range from very brief conversations to ones that last over 30 minutes. The data gathered has subsequently been transcribed and analysed by other members of the Language in the Workplace team (Marsden and Holmes fc).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. *Baby talk*

In the data that I analysed, I found a number of instances of baby talk used by the caregivers to the elderly residents. General characteristics of baby talk include shorter and less complex utterances, more repetition, imperatives and interrogatives, higher pitch with exaggerated intonation – making it sound low and slow or high and slow (Draper 2005: 273). Draper (2005) also mentions that *baby talk* also involves different types of non-verbal communication for example gaze – low levels of eye contact, proxemics – standing in someone's personal space or standing over a person who is seated or lying down, facial expression and posture and finally touch - touching of head, arms, shoulders and hand. Many of these features were identified in the data set, alongside features that are not typical parts of baby talk.

Features of baby talk that were evident in the caregiver's speech included the repetition of words, for example when one of the caregivers was showering a resident she said 'shampoo, shampoo, shampoo' and 'dry, dry, dry', talking about the task she was performing. The caregivers also tended to speak slower and louder with exaggerated intonation when talking to some of the residents, especially when requested to repeat a passage of speech.

Another feature not mentioned in Draper's definition of *baby talk,* was the use of endearments when addressing the residents: terms like 'my darling', 'beautiful' and 'love' were frequently used by the caregivers. Brown et al. (2002) identify the use of endearments, diminutive modifications of the resident's name, the assumption that it is acceptable to use the resident's first name and not their last name, as evidence of the caregivers over-accommodating towards resident and the level of language that they believe the resident has, and even the attitudes that the caregiver may hold about the resident.

One further feature of the caregivers' speech which could be considered patronising was the use of praise, often while a resident performed a normal everyday task. An example of this was when a resident lifted her arm while being bathed and the caregiver responded with 'that's good'.

Baby talk often carries negative connotations; as noted above, older people in nursing homes often experience it as patronizing. Research also suggests that baby talk reinforces society's idea that aging means a loss of power and status. Whether this is true for the residents in New Zealand nursing homes has yet to be investigated.

4.2.   Small talk

The New Zealand caregivers engaged in small talk with the residents and not just functional or medical talk. Sometimes the small talk would be about a topic in their surroundings, for example the history of a cardigan one of the residents was wearing, or how loud the lawnmower was. However the topic could also be something that was completely unrelated to their present surroundings: one caregiver asked a resident how his wife was and if she had been to see him lately and also if he had ever been to a regional event that had been held the previous weekend. As noted above, previous research suggests small talk is as important as more task-focussed talk, since these interactions between caregiver and resident may be the only ones the elderly resident experience in their day. The small talk can strengthen the bond between resident and caregiver creating higher solidarity, and this in turn may give the resident an increased feeling of self-worth, and a more positive perception of the institution they are living in.

4.3.   Non-verbal communication

The non-verbal communication that was observed is a topic that does not seem to be mentioned in previous studies; however it was a communication tool that was used by all of the caregivers in this study. Frequently hand gestures would be used in conjunction with a request or question. The caregivers consistently maintained eye contact while speaking with the residents, and it was not uncommon for the care givers to place a hand on the resident's

shoulder or arm or to hold their hand, particularly with residents who were not very responsive.

5. Implications for further research

This initial research provides a good base for further research into the presence of baby talk in nursing homes, the importance and use of non-verbal communication, and how vital the role of small talk is on the resident's perception of themselves and their surroundings. Researchers could then compare the outcomes of these studies with research in other societies and cultures to see which aspects of the communicative styles used by the caregivers are distinctive to New Zealand.

This kind of information is very valuable for materials designed to assist immigrants who wish to enter the New Zealand workforce. Interviews with caregivers and/or residents could provide further information about why certain styles of communicating are considered effective in particular situations.

6. Conclusion

A day in the life of an eldercare worker involves interacting with many different residents with varying communicative abilities. The caregiver needs to select a way of communicating that is clear, appropriate and concise, as well as conveying that they care about the resident – and all in a professional manner. The communication styles used by caregivers are complex. The analysis offered by the Language in the Workplace Project can contribute to a better understanding of the features of verbal and non-verbal communication which assist elderly residents and thus help with the task of providing appropriate learning material for those who wish to work in the eldercare sector.

I found this project and process of gathering the data extremely interesting. It was the first time that I had been involved in a serious linguistic research project and it was eye opening to see and understand how much work and preparation goes into a study even before data is gathered. I learned that if you have to rely on other people for aspects of your research then you must be prepared for it to take much longer than you expect; there will always be setbacks, and you must be the one who is flexible, as without the voluntary contributors there would be no data. I also realised that if you are to going to be a successful linguistic researcher then it is very important to have excellent people skills. It is crucial to have the ability to build relationships with people quickly; participants must feel they are able trust you so that they will be prepared to allow you to come back (and record more data if needed). This was an amazing experience because I was able to learn at first-hand how much work goes into the research side of a study, and I also learned that many studies are undertaken not just so they can be published and used as teaching articles for students studying linguistics, but because they are needed and useful for people in real life situations.

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Development of Sociolinguistic Competence in Children from a Montessori Preschool

Roseanna Finkle-Vern

Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of the acquisition and development of sociolinguistic abilities in young children, focussing in particular on children's use and interpretation of directive speech.   The focus of this small-scale study was a Montessori preschool classroom with the goal of investigating how the learning environment might influence children's development of sociolinguistic competence. A recorded interaction between a boy and a girl during class time was selected for closer examination, and directives were coded in terms of their explicitness. Both children were able to produce and comprehend explicit and implicit directives, with hints being the most frequent form of directive throughout the interaction. The analysis provided evidence that both had developed sufficient sociolinguistic proficiency to be able to select different and appropriate linguistic forms with different interlocutors, though the older of the two appeared to be the more proficient in the contexts observed.

1. Introduction

As children develop linguistic competence, they also develop sociolinguistic competence. By examining children's use of different linguistic forms according to interlocutor and context, we can learn how these sociolinguistic abilities develop. I conducted a small scale research project in which I looked specifically at children in a Montessori classroom in New Zealand. Montessori classrooms encourage children to be aware of themselves and their surroundings, and self-improve, so it seemed possible that Montessori might be very aware of subtle differences in language, and this knowledge might enhance their sociolinguistic development.

Children learn to vary their speech with different addressees, or to achieve different goals, by the age of two (Ainsworth-Vaughn, 1990; Foster, 1990; Paradis & Nicoladis, 2008). I was interested in investigating how the learning environment might influence children's development of sociolinguistic competence, and to this end I focussed on children's use and interpretation of directive speech.   By understanding how children acquire and develop their sociolinguistic skills, we may find ways to help those who are having difficulty in developing sociolinguistic competence. From many studies of adults and adolescents, we know a good deal about what a fully mature sociolinguistic skill set looks like, but as lamented by Ainsworth-Vaughn (1990) over twenty years ago, and more recently by O'Shannessy (2013), research on how these skills are developed by children are not nearly

as comprehensive. There is certainly very little research in this area in New Zealand. This study set out to address this gap in the research,

2. Literature Review

2.1. Directives

Directives can take many different forms; they vary according to factors such as the status of participants in the interaction, what the speaker wants, and how polite they want to be. Ervin-Tripp (1977) examined both adults' and children's directive usage and listed six different linguistic forms of directive, varying in the degree of explicitness depending on the sociolinguistic context, ranging from direct imperative as most explicit, to hint, the least explicit. These categories have been used In many studies of sociolinguistic competence in children (e.g. Ainsworth-Vaughn, 1990; Pedlow, 2001; Sealey, 1999; Spekman, 1895). By examining not only how children produce directives, but also how they respond to them, we can learn a good deal about their sociolinguistic competence. For example if the child does not change their speech when talking to different people, but is able to infer from a very implicit directive that they are being asked to do something, then this is evidence that they at least have comprehension skills in particular social contexts.

As mentioned above, by the age of two years old children appear to have productive knowledge of some sociolinguistic skills. For example, Foster (1990: 126) found that children as young as two years old tended to use different linguistic forms when asking something from their fathers, compared to the forms they used to their mothers. Ainsworth-Vaughn's (1990) study on directives found that children from about 2 years old used different directive forms with their parents than with an adult unfamiliar to the child. Paradis and Nicoladis (2008), while focused on bilingualism, concluded that even if a child was less dominant in one language, they would try to speak in that language when addressed in it, indicating that by two years of age the child was sensitive to their interlocutor's needs.

A range of factors have been found to influence the development of sociolinguistic abilities. Some of the more frequently researched of these are gender, age and SES (socio-economic status). When controlling gender in a study on power relationships in preschool children, Kyratzis, Marx and Reder Wade (2001: 423) found that "neither linguistic feature, assertiveness/deference or mitigation was used by these pre-schoolers to mark gender…", while Leaper (1991: 805), although he noted that the "female and male dyads were more similar than different", showed results with a medium to large effect size in difference between male and female speech. He found that when children interacted in same gender pairs, there were more *collaborative* speech acts between girls and *controlling* speech acts between boys (p. 806). Though boys and girls often seem to use different linguistic forms, they may not be using these to signal their gender identity but for other reasons such as sensitivity to power relations.

Age is a very relevant factor for children in the analysis of power relations. Moreover, the older a child, the more time they have had to develop their sociolinguistic skills. Ainsworth-Vaughn's (1990: 23) demonstrated that "the first syntactic switching appear[ing] soon after 2;0, simultaneous with or prior to the first appearance of the relevant syntactic structure".

Becker and Smenner (1986), who did a study looking at the politeness register of pre-schoolers, focused on gender, SES and listener status as variables. By looking at how many preschool children used *thank you*, they found that difference in SES showed significant results, with 18 percent of children from middle income families, and 34 percent of children from low income families using *thank you* without prompting.

Without the resources or time to control specifically for any of these potentially influencing factors satisfactorily, I took the Montessori classroom environment as the context for my qualitative research, while keeping in mind that any or all of the aforementioned factors could be influencing the children's speech.

2.2.   Social Constructionist approaches

In a study undertaken by Sealey (1999), children were found to be very aware of their position as a child and their consequent status in society, and this awareness influenced their language. Not only were they aware of their "childly status" (Sealey, 1999: 26), but they were in some cases able to use this to their own advantage. The child's choice of certain linguistic forms is a means of constructing their identity, and this identity will in turn be influencing the child's decision of what language to use. Thus a social constructionist viewpoint could be useful in studies of children's acquisition of sociolinguistic knowledge and ability. The identity of the child is something that is constantly changing as they come into contact with different people and situations, and as they attain more experience in enacting their identity through their actions and speech.

The way in which children encode a directive could thus be influenced by the way they perceive or want others to perceive their identity. Sealey's study involved eight to nine year old children; however her social constructionist viewpoint is just as valuable with preschool aged participants. Kyratzis (2007), for example found that preschool aged children not only had the ability to create play identities through make-believe, but were also able to use different registers when playing these roles. This indicates that by preschool age, children are aware that different people speak in different ways, and they are able to replicate these different registers productively. An earlier study by Kyratzis, Marx and Reder Wade (2001) also found that children's use of language, and directives in particular, enabled them to construct themselves as the leader of a group.

This earlier research supports my decision to adopt a social constructionist point of view in examining directive use in pre-schoolers' interaction. I was also interested in seeing how the Montessori method of teaching might influence children's developing sociolinguistic abilities. If the child's language use is influenced by the class environment, which is in turn influenced by Montessori teaching, then the identity of the child, analysed through language among other actions, is also likely to be affected by this. Ideally of course it would be useful to compare the Montessori classroom with other classrooms. However this was beyond the scope of this small study.

2.3. *Montessori Philosophy*

The Montessori way of teaching was developed by Maria Montessori. One very important principle is that the teachers are observers; they "[do] not talk very much, and [they do] not plan the activities for the children (Barnett, 1962: 73). This is illustrated by the following:

> The observation method is based on one foundation only - that children are permitted to express themselves freely, and thus reveal to us needs and aptitudes which remain hidden and repressed when there does not exist an environment which allows free scope for their spontaneous activity (Montessori, 1948: 63).

Montessori believed that the child should be the centre around which the education system should be based. She developed ways in which children could notice their own shortcomings and be able to then self-correct without an external factor, such as a teacher, giving them directions and thus minimising their autonomous growth. During the study, I noticed immediately that the environment was one in which the children were encouraged to think for themselves and problem-solve, rather than rely on an authoritative figure to direct them. The children were perfectly capable of doing this and when a problem arose which they had difficulties solving, such as a conflict, teachers would encourage them to think up solutions themselves rather than give them the answer. The children were almost completely in charge of their own movements, and yet they were taught in such a way that they were still respectful to others and for the most part did not disturb other children's learning.

The Montessori school is unquestionably an environment in which as stated by Barnett (1962: 72), children finish their time at the preschool able to "write and read in script (cursive style), name continents, diagram sentences, handle complicated number problems, and manage most of the routine housekeeping chores" (parentheses in original). Children have the abilities to learn all of this at an early age, provided they are initially shown the way to do so. This environment which allows children to improve all of these skills, while also learning to contribute to and be respectful of their community, is one in which I believe sociolinguistic skills thrive. Children are encouraged to empathise with others, allowing them to develop an awareness of their addressees. This empathy is clearly relevant for developing the child's awareness that with different people a different register may be appropriate.

3. Methodology

3.1. *Data collection*

I collected my data through initial ethnographic observation and then recording during class time in a Montessori preschool. Ethnographic observation is a good way of gaining an overall idea of the children's speech before recording, so as to understand which children would be good to obtain data from (O'Shannessy, 2013: 4). By observing the children before collecting data, I was able to integrate myself into the classroom, and thus reduce the effect of the "observer's paradox" (Labov, 1972). Also, I was able to understand more about how

the children interact and what kind of speech they usually use, and where to place the recording device in order to get the best recorded data.

From two full classroom days of observation, I gained an adequate understanding of the linguistic norms of the classroom in general. Next I took two full days in the classroom for recording, though I did not record the whole day. In total, about four hours' worth of recording was collected on each day. During recordings, I watched the children and took handwritten notes of as much of the visual context as possible. I recorded the children during free-play or class time to collect naturalistic data; I did not actively attempt to elicit speech from them or disturb them in any way from their activities.

Because directives arise naturally in most interactions, the ethnographic sociolinguistic study employed as the methodology, as in Sealey (1999) and Kyratzis (2007), is a viable way of obtaining quantitative data. I was able to collect a number of different directive forms from even one interaction between different children. O'Shannessy (2013: 10) specifically advises the use of a video camera during recording for the reason that non-verbal communication is prevalent in young children's speech, and many researchers have found video recordings very valuable in their studies (Ainsworth-Vaughn, 1990; Kyratzis, Marx & Reder Wade, 2001; Paradis & Nicoladis, 2008). However, due to practical restrictions and not wanting to disturb the children more than necessary, I opted to use a small recording device which could be subtly placed in the classroom without causing distraction. Written notes on context, gestures and other visual communication as the interactions took place were also taken.

Inevitably there were some methodological difficulties during the data collection process. I was in the preschool classroom during the children's learning time, and being a stranger to the students I was at first quite distracting. Although there were often observers in this classroom, and over time the children gradually became used to my presence and treated me as part of the community, due to time restraints I was not able to fully integrate myself into the class, and so some data may be influenced by their awareness of an observer in the classroom. I also was only able to do two days of recording sessions due once again to time restraints and other university and work commitments. Because of this, it was possible I might not have obtained any useable data at all, but I was very fortunate in this respect and managed to collect some very interesting data.

In a more extensive research project, I would allocate more time to both observation and data collection. After my first day of recording I was dismayed to listen back and find that most of the data was unusable because it was close to impossible to discern one group of children's voices from another. It was not until the second day of recording that I was given permission to move around the classroom with my recording device. I believe this freedom was partly due to the teachers also becoming used to my presence and beginning to feel that I understood and would be respectful of the classroom rules. I consider this evolution of a relationship with the teachers as being a very important factor in getting useful data and information, so possibly meeting the teachers before observation began, and giving them more time to prepare for a visitor in the classroom could improve my method of data collection. Overall more time spent in the classroom would certainly help reduce the effect of my presence for both teachers and students, as long as I remained as inconspicuous as possible and this is an important change I would make in my methodology.

3.2. *Method of analysis*

I coded the directives in each child's speech using Ervin-Tripp's (1977: 192-196) categories based on the degree of explicitness of directives forms. Context is always important and so I took account of the recipient's reaction, and considered whether in the interaction the directive elicited the desired effect. As some directives at the more implicit end of the scale were difficult to code, the reaction of the listener was very helpful in deducing what the listener perceived as the intention of the speaker.   Being present at the time, along with audio information recorded and written notes of gestures and other visual contextual information, also assisted with categorising directive utterances.

As with the method of data collection, I learned a good deal about difficulties in analysis, from doing this research. The main difficulty was coding implicit directives.   In order to assist, like Kyratzis, Marx and Reder Wade (2001: 392),   I asked another person to judge what might be classified as a directive. Where possible, I also asked one of the teachers in the classroom for comment, and they provided some very insightful information and opinions, as they are used to the children's speech and personalities, and also familiar with the Montessori method, which may have had an effect on how the children interacted with each other (cf. Sealey 1999, who listened to recordings with the children themselves, and asked for any clarification during these sessions).

4. Results

The data analysed in this pilot study was a nine minute recording of an interaction first between two preschool children, and which then involved two adults, myself and a teacher. The children, a male (pseudonymed Tamati) 3;0 year, and a female of 4;9 years (pseudonymed Angie), were working together initially, and then had a small conflict from which I was able to code different types of directives in terms of their implicitness.

I coded each directive from Angie and Tamati in the interaction, ignoring ones made by other participants such as the teacher or other children who made comments while passing by. Some directives were said more than once in one utterance, for what I assume to be emphatic reasons; I have counted these as only one directive. See table 1.

Table 1: Forms of directives by pre-school children

	Directives made by Angie	Directives made by Tamati	Total directives made
Direct imperative	2	0	2
Embedded imperative	0	1	1
Permission directive	0	0	0
Need/Desire statement	2	3	5
Question directive	1	0	1
Hint	4	2	6
Total directives	9	6	15

Table 1 indicates that of a total of fifteen directives, Angie produced nine while Tamati produced six. Angie also used four of the six different types of directive in Ervin-Tripp's classification system, while Tamati using only three. Tamati did not use any direct

imperatives, and used need statements most, while Angie used more hints overall. No permission directives produced, and classifying direct imperatives, embedded imperatives and permission directives as explicit directives, and the remaining as implicit, there are only three explicit and twelve implicit directives in the whole interaction.

5. Discussion

Perhaps surprisingly, in these children's interactions I identified a higher number of implicit directives than explicit directives. Direct imperatives, embedded imperatives, and permission imperatives clearly indicate to what the speaker wants done, and are classified as explicit directives. Need or desire statements, question directives, and hints, by contrast, require inferencing about what speaker wants done, and are thus classified as implicit directives. While very few direct imperatives were produced, there were many hints.

Hints are complex and require attention to context for their interpretation.   So, for example, a sentence such as *that one was mine* can be interpreted as a directive in context as illustrated in example 1.

> Example 1
> *Context*: Angie and Tamati are playing with picture cards together. Angie takes
>   one from Tamati's pile.
>
> Tamati: that one was mine
> Angie: but we're allowed to swap
> Tamati: no you snatched it

After Angie took the card, Tamati made a statement saying the card belonged to him. I classified this as a directive as my interpretation of Tamati's intent behind that utterance is to get Angie to return the card she took. It could be said that his implied meaning is "give that back". Her reply, a justification for why she took it is a way of refusing to comply with his directive, and his subsequent reaction addresses this refusal. Tamati does not agree with Angie saying she swapped cards, instead insisting she has snatched it. He refutes her justification indicating that he still wants the card back, and thus rendering her justification for refusing to comply with his first directive void. Other utterances from the same interaction are easier to code, with embedded directives such as "But Angie can you give me one?" being instantly identifiable from the linguistic form as a directive.

The absence of permission directives is likely to be due to permission directives needing the use of the word *may* in them. It is very rare to hear people nowadays using *may I* in normal speech, and instead the embedded imperative form *can I* seems to have displaced it. Angie was the one who led the activity, and also the conversation, as Tamati was happy talking to himself when Angie was not addressing him. This is a likely reason for why she produced more directives than Tamati during the interaction, and more direct imperatives, which were used for commanding his attention and movements in the activity. This may be attributed to Angie's higher status, by virtue of being older, which she enacts by using "assertive control acts" as described by Kyratzis, Marx and Reder Wade (2001).

As noted, hints were the most prevalent directives in the interaction, and though there could be some ambiguity in the coding for these, the responses support the interpretation

of these utterances as directives. This indicates that these young children have the ability to infer from very implicit directives that they are being asked to do something. This contrasts with Spekman and Roth (1984: 345) who found in their data of comprehension of directives that question directives and hints, the two most implicit forms were "complied with significantly less frequently than all other forms". This was interpreted as the children being unable to comprehend the directive in its implicit form, whereas in my data, there is evidence that the children did understand the directive force of the implicit forms. They show this by either complying, or giving a reason as to why they have not complied with the hint.

It is interesting to note that of the four hints produced by Angie, only one was directed at Tamati, the others being directed towards the teacher or myself. This supports the suggestion of Ervin-Tripp (1977) and others, that children master comprehension and production of implicit directives later than explicit directives. Tamati may not be able to infer from less explicit directives what is being asked of him. Angie has, in this case, accommodated to his abilities, suggesting that perhaps she is aware that Tamati needs to be addressed with more explicit directives. Her use of hints with older addressees suggests that she is aware that a hint is more likely to be interpreted by teachers in the way she intends, without her having to use an explicit, and what could be interpreted as a rude demand.

6. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the children I recorded were able to use and interpret implicit directives; indeed they used more implicit than explicit directives. The children's responses also suggest that they were competent in understanding the implicit directives used to them. The conversation did not lack coherence and each child seemed well aware of the other's intentions. Angie changed speech style according to addressee to a greater extent than Tamati, but with such a small sample, I cannot be sure of which factors account for this. She was older, which means she had had longer to learn different registers, and when to appropriately use them; but she had also been at the preschool for longer, so if the environment was influencing speech choices, she had had more time being influenced by this. It seems likely that all these factors play a part in her use of directives. Tamati, though he did not change registers to the extent that Angie did, still demonstrated difference in speech according to his addressee.   In conclusion, although it is difficult to gauge to what extent the children's sociolinguistic skills were influenced by the Montessori classroom context, there is no doubt that the children had developed impressive sociolinguistic abilities. Additional research in this field could provide more information concerning the specific influence of the learning context on sociolinguistic skill development in young children.

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Politeness in Young Children's Speech

Khadijeh Gharibi and Mortaza Yamini

Abstract

This study investigates whether politeness differs among preschoolers of different genders. To this end, naturally occurring conversations of 10 girls and 10 boys in the age range 4;6 to 5;6 were recorded in a kindergarten in Shiraz. Considerable difference was found between girls and boys in their use of mitigation forms. Based on the literature, it was predicted that girls would use more mitigation than boys in their speech, and this was confirmed. This result is discussed in relation to peer influence. Children usually differentiated their speech according to age and rank of the addressee. It was also predicted that children would use fewer expressions of politeness to their peers and more to their teachers and adults. The findings confirm that preschoolers use more mitigating devices when they talk to adults.

1. Introduction

Over the past 20 years, a growing number of studies have been carried out on the topic of politeness, and the topic is currently attracting great interest among scholars. Politeness is highly valued in everyday communication. Politeness is not a fixed phenomenon. There is conflict within all societies over the notion of politeness. Different languages have different forms and techniques to show politeness. According to Mills (2003), factors of gender, race, class, age, education and knowledge play a major role in the levels of appropriate linguistic behaviour within particular societies.

Differences between male and female speakers have been explored by linguists without arriving at any general agreement. Are women more polite than men? In response to this question, Holmes (1995) points out that it depends on our definition of politeness and whether or not we accept that the same norms of polite behaviour apply to men and women. Moreover, it also depends on other variables such as the social class, ethnicity and nationality of the men and women and on the context in which they are talking. Holmes (1995) argues that if we look at the evidence available in the sociolinguistic literature, the overall picture is that, in general, women's use of language appears to be more normatively polite than men's.

Another area to which researchers of politeness look with interest is the field of child language. Children's social use of language is a particularly rich area for studying linguistic differences between males and females. A large number of studies have been concerned with gender differences in children's linguistic behaviour. Ladegaard (2004) mentions that the overall conclusion of these studies is that girls' talk is generally seen as collaborative and

inclusive with a lot of mitigation. Boys' talk, on the other hand, is usually seen as controlling and assertive, with little or no mitigation.

The present study attempts to analyze some features of Persian politeness as used by preschoolers, and focuses on the mitigating politeness devices used in their language. It also aims to determine which standard politeness forms in Persian, such as *lotfan* (please), *merci* (thank you) and *bebakhshid* (sorry), are used by preschoolers. The present politeness research not only seems to indicate that children are politeness conscious in their speech, but it also investigates how they use it in their community before they enter school.

Bates (1976, as cited in Becker & Smenner, 1986) found preschoolers to be more indirect when addressing an adult than when addressing a peer. Preschoolers also address dominant, higher status peers with indirect requests, as they do adults (Ervin-Tripp, 1977). These findings demonstrate that preschoolers' use of politeness is affected by addressees' age and status. Accordingly, the present study also investigates the effects of these variables on politeness in children's language.

The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What are some of the features of Persian politeness as used by children?

2. Is there a difference between girls and boys in using politeness?

3. Do children use politeness more with adults than with their peers?

4. Is there any significant difference in boys' and girls' use of polite forms?

Politeness is one of the most important social skills. Children should acquire politeness formulas during their development. The pressure on children to speak politely usually starts early in their development. Therefore, their parents' awareness of this phenomenon helps them in teaching the use of politeness to their children. In addition, a child's polite behaviour is considered as a sign of the family's high social status. So, it is important for parents to teach their children the proper use of polite formulas.

Many aspects of Persian politeness should be studied and it seems that little attempt has been made to do so in Iran. Although some research on the topic of politeness in adults' speech has been carried out in Iran (Sahragard, 2000; Akbari, 2002; Nanbakhsh, 2011; Gharaghani, Eslami Rasekh, Dabaghi, Tohidian, 2011), politeness in children has not yet been studied.

The current study focuses on 'obliges' as a politeness phenomenon. In the present study, an oblige is an utterance that demands a response (a verbal reply or non-verbal behaviour) from the listener. This means that an oblige usually takes the form of a question (*What was your name, boy?*), a directive (*They all have to sit down*), a prohibition (*Don't take it*), or an imperative (*Sit down*). A less frequent category is the attentional device (*Look at me*). An oblige may be mitigated, i.e. softened, indirect, or it can appear in a more direct form, i.e. unmitigated. Thus, there were mitigated and unmitigated forms of imperatives, prohibitions, directives, questions, and attentional devices. The first author used the

framework proposed by Sachs (1987) and DeHart (1996) (both cited in Ladegaard, 2004) to code the data.

Leech (2007) uses the term pragmalinguistics to refer to study of the linguistic manifestations of politeness, including consideration of those linguistic forms which can intensify or soften the force of communicative acts. Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, takes account of the social or cultural aspects of politeness, and especially the influence of social context on perceptions of politeness. Some politeness researchers believe that a clear distinction should be maintained between politeness judgments based on form and those which take account of function in social context. Although I am aware that categories in the framework used in the current research mix form and function, I decided to base this particular study on the model provided by Ladegaard (2004), since my research goals and data collected through this study were similar to his.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

In order to investigate politeness in children's language and to consider relevant gender-related differences, 10 girls and 10 boys at pre-school age in a kindergarten were studied. They were 4;6 to 5;6 years old. Eight of them were the only child of their families. The kindergarten where the data for the present study were gathered is located in Shiraz. The reason for selecting these participants was that all of them were from families of the same social and financial status. The participant's parents were mostly physicians, lawyers and engineers. The children attended the kindergarten six days a week, four hours a day. They were engaged in various kinds of activities in their kindergarten. The children were in all-male or all-female classes some hours a day, but they were in mixed-sex situations one hour a day.

2.2. Procedure

The children were observed and recorded in their kindergarten for 15 days, while they were speaking and playing with each other and with their teacher. The researcher audio-taped the participants for two hours a day. The recording was done on an MP3 player. In addition to audio-taping, because the participants were speaking spontaneously and in overlapping turns, the researcher tried to systematically write down all identifiable utterances stated by each participant. This method helped the researcher to identify speakers during the transcription process.

The recorded dialogues were transcribed carefully through a number of stages. During the first stage, the researcher transcribed the recordings using some conventions for verbal and non-verbal behaviour which were relevant to the coding of obliges. As in English, intonation affects sentence meaning in Persian. According to Mahjani (2003), it is also used (again as in English) to show extra-linguistic attitudes such as surprise, impatience, sarcasm, etc. For the current analysis the codes M.I. and U.I. were used for mitigated and unmitigated intonation respectively. The major difference in the intonation patterns was a falling tune for M.I. and a rising tune for U.I. Ladegaard (2004) noted that participants' movements and other aspects

of their non-verbal behaviour can be useful in the interpretation of the exact meaning of particular utterances. Therefore, additional notations were used for non-verbal behaviour.

As already mentioned, one of the questions that will be answered in this study is: do children use more polite forms with adults than with their peers? In order to answer this question, the interactions between preschoolers and with their teacher were transcribed and analyzed separately. The transcripts then went through the process of codification.

As mentioned earlier, the coding system used in the present study was based on that suggested by Ladegaard (2004). Sachs' framework includes the notion of mitigated and unmitigated obliges. Mitigated and unmitigated forms in the present study were not found just by looking at the transcript alone, but they were explored by carefully studying audiotapes as well as the researcher's notes about the children's use of non-verbal cues. Ladegaard (2004) believes that in any coding process, there is a certain degree of subjective interpretation. For this reason and in order to enhance the reliability of the coding, the researcher sought the help of an assistant. The coding system was explained to her and she was asked to codify a proportion of the data. One hundred obliges were selected randomly and given to the assistant to be coded again. There was agreement in 96% of cases. Table 1 shows the different kinds of mitigated obliges and Table 2 shows the different kinds of unmitigated obliges.

Table 1: Different kinds and examples of mitigated obliges

	Mitigated obliges	English translation
Imperative	Befarmaaeed beshinid.	Sit down please.
Directive	Bebakhshid man bayad beram.	Excuse me I have to go.
Question	Mishe az man aks begirin?	Would you take my picture?
Attentional device	Nigaa che ghashange!	Look how beautiful it is!
Prohibition	Bebakhshidaa, nakkon!	Please don't do that!

Table 2: Different kinds and examples of unmitigated obliges

	Unmitigated obliges	English translation
Imperative	Bede dige goftam!	Give it to me, I said!
Directive	Hala mibini che kaaret mikonam!	Now see what I do to you!
Question	Mage nemifahmi?	Don't you understand?
Attentional device	*Nagu!* [U.I.]	Don't say that! [U.I.]
Prohibition	Bebin chi kaar kardi!	See what you've done!

2.3.   *Mitigating politeness devices in Persian*

One of the most common styles of politeness in requests in many languages is to use an indirect form. This is also possible in Persian. For example, you can use an indirect form such as 1 to make a request (i.e. for the door to be opened) rather than a direct approach as in 2. Indirect requests take grammatical forms such as a 'declarative' or 'interrogative' or question.

1. Cheghadr   havaa   garm-e
   How   weather hot-is!
   How hot the weather is!

2. Dar -o   baaz kon!
   Door -obj open!
   Open the door!

In Persian, it is common to achieve a polite style by changing the syntactic form of a sentence. Persian speakers use the interrogative form of a sentence, as in 3, instead of using an imperative, as in 4.

3. In   -o   be man midi?
   This -obj to me give
   Would you give this to me?

4. In   -o   be man bede!
   This -obj to me give
   Give this to me

In addition to question forms, they may use some hedges to be more polite, as in 5.

5. Mishe   in -o   be   man   bedi?
   Could you this -obj to   me   give?
   Could you give this to me?

Another way to be polite is to incorporate one of the common forms of politeness in Persian such as *khaahesh mikonam* ('please'), *bebakhshid* ('sorry') and *merci* ('thanks').

In many languages including Persian, the second-person plural pronoun is used to replace the second-person singular as a sign of respect and a form of politeness. It is usually used by those who are socially distant. In the present study, children mostly used second-person plural pronoun to show respect to their teachers.

As noted above, intonation is another common softening or mitigating device and it is used to make an utterance less threatening and more polite. It is possible to make a polite request just by using different intonation patterns. In the present study, mitigating intonation [M.I.] was used for softening voice and unmitigating intonation [U.I.] refers to the intonation used in unmitigated obliges.

An utterance may have different forms that can be scaled based on politeness. In the present study, obliges were ranked from very polite forms to very impolite ones on a scale from 1 to 8 by five native speakers of Persian. These listeners were selected randomly from postgraduate students at Shiraz University. They were asked to listen to eight sentences that were different in terms of mitigation. Different sentences were recorded with different intonation patterns that changed their level of politeness. They could listen to the recordings three times in order to be sure about their ranking. Table 3 gives examples of the

ranking, which proved useful in the codification process, since the researcher and the assistant had this table to refer to.

Table 3: Different obliges based on politeness

	Different obliges based on politeness [using second person plural or singular as indicated]	English translation
1	Mishe ino bedin be man? [plural]	Would you please give this to me?
2	*Ino midin be man?* [plural]	Do you give this to me?
3	Lotfan ino bedin be man [plural]	Give this to me please.
4	*Ino bedin be man.* [M.I.] [plural]	Give this to me.
5	*Ino bede be man.* [M.I.] [singular]	Give this to me.
6	*Ino bedin be man.* [U.I.] [plural]	Give this to me.
7	*Ino bede be man.* [U.I.] [singular]	Give this to me.
8	*Bede.* [singular]	Give this.

The use of hedges such as *mishe* in interrogatives increases the level of politeness of a mitigated interrogative. It seemed that for this reason, *Mishe ino be man bebedin?* ('Would you please give this to me?') occupies the first rank.

It is obvious that intonation is a variable in mitigation. Using mitigated intonation is more important variable in mitigation than pronouns in Persian. *Ino bede be man*, with M.I. and the singular pronoun is more polite than *Ino bedin be man,* with U.I. and the plural pronoun; although the verb form that is used is plural which is used to be more polite addressing an individual.

3. Results

In total, there were 1711 obliges, with mitigated directives being the most prominent category. Tables 4 and 5 give the distribution of mitigated and unmitigated obliges respectively, broken down into different categories and for boys and girls. As can be seen from the 'Total' columns in the two tables, mitigated directives are the most frequent obliges.

Table 4: Counts and percentages of mitigated obliges for boys and girls

Category	Boys	Girls	Total
Directives	377 (58.9%)	263 (41%)	640
Imperatives	72 (43.5%)	93 (56.3%)	165
Questions	174 (62.8%)	103 (37.1%)	277
Attentional devices	64 (59.2%)	44 (40.7%)	108
Prohibitions	15 (83.3%)	3 (16.6%)	18
Total	702 (58.1%)	506 (41.8%)	1208

Table 5: Counts and percentages of unmitigated obliges for boys and girls

Category	Boys	Girls	Total
Directives	196 (76.8%)	59 (23.1%)	255
Imperatives	56 (70%)	24 (30%)	80
Questions	20 (54%)	17 (45.9%)	37
Attentional devices	6 (37.5%)	10 (62.5%)	16
Prohibitions	25(45.4%)	30 (54.5%)	55
Total	303(68.3%)	140 (31.6%)	443

Some points are obvious from Tables 4 and 5. First, mitigated obliges were far more frequent than unmitigated obliges. Second, the difference in the number of obliges uttered by girls and boys was high. Although girls and boys were given equal opportunity and the recording times for both groups were equal, the male participants uttered more obliges. In fact this is because they talked more than the females.

Table 6: Mitigated and Unmitigated Obliges for Boys and Girls

	Boys	Girls
Mitigated obliges	702 (70%)	506 (78%)
Unmitigated obliges	303 (30%)	140 (22%)
Total	1005	646

A Chi-square test was performed using the totals for the two groups of subjects (see Table 6) to test for significant differences between boys' and girls' use of mitigation. It was expected that girls used a higher proportion of mitigation than boys in their speech. The results of Chi-square confirm this (χ^2=13.97, d.f.=1, p<0.001).

The present study intended to discover if children use more polite forms with adults than with their same age peers. In order to answer this question, numbers of mitigated and unmitigated obliges were calculated for boys and girls in interaction with their teacher and with their peers, and entered into another Chi-square test. Counts and percentages of mitigated obliges with peers and teacher are given in Table 7, with unmitigated obliges in Table 8.

Table 7: Counts of mitigated obliges for boys and girls when they talked to their peers and when they talked to adults

	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Peers	Adults	Peers	Adults	Peers	Adults
Directives	295	82	202	61	497	143
Imperatives	55	17	86	17	141	34
Questions	110	64	57	46	167	110
Attentional devices	40	24	25	19	65	43
Prohibitions	13	2	1	2	14	4
Total	513	189	361	145	874	334

Table 8: Counts of unmitigated obliges for boys and girls when they talked to their peers and when they talked to adults

	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Peers	Adults	Peers	Adults	Peers	Adults
Directives	177	19	36	23	213	42
Imperatives	51	5	23	1	74	6
Questions	15	5	17	1	32	6
Attentional devices	0	6	1	9	1	15
Prohibitions	24	1	30	0	54	1
Total	267	36	106	34	369	70

As the counts show, the numbers of unmitigated obliges with teacher is low. The analysis revealed significant differences in using mitigation in the participants' speech depending on whether they are talking to their peers or to their teacher (χ^2=23.196, d.f.=1, p<0.001). This suggests that preschoolers understand the importance of politeness and try to use more mitigating devices when they talk to adults.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study identified some differences in the use of mitigation by girls and boys. As has previously been found with a large number of studies on gender differences in children's politeness, the data presented in this study revealed that girls use a higher proportion of mitigated speech forms than boys.

Sachs (1987, as cited in Ladegaard, 2004) argues that the gender differences in the use of mitigation in her study might have three different, but not mutually exclusive sources. The first possible explanation is that children learn gender-appropriate behaviour by observing how adults talk to each other and to their children. In the present study, some of the participants used special utterances in their speech that are used by adults when talking about social problems, and it seems that these participants may be imitating their parents' way of speaking.

The second possible explanation is that boys and girls have been treated differently by their parents. Parents have different expectations of children of different genders. This is true in most families in Iran, and may be reflected in children's speech behaviours. For example, using an assertive unmitigated style is more acceptable for boys than girls.

The third possible explanation is that differences in boys' and girls' verbal behaviour may simply reflect other, more fundamental differences between sexes. Boys are usually more physically active than girls. Ladegaard (2004) argues that playing rough, boys are more likely to be involved in verbally aggressive talk. In the present study, boys had higher incidence levels of some unmitigated obliges and this fact may reflect the mentioned differences between genders.

Children usually differentiated their speech according to the age and rank of the addressee. It was expected that children would use fewer expressions of politeness to their peers and more to their teachers and adults, especially if the adult was a stranger. The findings

confirm this. This fact indicates that preschoolers seem to understand the importance of politeness and try to use more mitigating devices when they talk to adults.

The collected data rarely included polite forms. For example *Khaahesh mikonam* ('Please, you're welcome') was never seen in children's interactions. They rarely thank each other. Some of them use *dastet dard nakone* ('thank you') and *merci* to thank their peers or teachers. Children thank their teachers more than peers. Girls in this study use these polite forms more than boys.

Participants apologize to their peers and teachers by saying *bebakhshid* ('sorry'), but in some situations they did not use this marker to mitigate their obliges. They used it as an attentional device to attract the attention of peers and teacher, much as English speakers might use 'excuse me'.

Turning to the politeness marker *lotfan* ('please'), we find that the children in this study almost never used this word. There was just one case of this marker used in participants' mitigated obliges. In Persian, this word is only used in formal situations. It seemed that the subjects understand that this is a politeness device in very formal interactions. In addition, although the participants only occasionally say 'hello' to their peers when they see each other in the morning (and it is more likely for the girls to do this), they much more regularly greet their teachers in this way.

The mitigating device most commonly used by children in this study was mitigated intonation. The subjects usually use intonation in order to mitigate their obliges. Different utterances convey different degrees of politeness. For example, obliges with mitigating devices were less forceful than obliges without these devices and they are more polite.

Mitigating devices in the present study include verbal softening devices such as terms of endearment, familiar types of address, and various nonverbal markers of softening utterances. Girls in some cases used baby talk to mitigate their utterances. Mitigation markers are not always used to mitigate obliges. In some situations, children used them when they wanted to keep distance from their peers.

It should be concluded that various factors can affect the results of studies like the current one. For example, the children's family background may have an impact on their level of politeness. Thus, obtaining more information about participants' families can be useful in yielding more specific results.

Girls and boys speak differently in mixed- and same-sex interactions. They usually use more unmitigated and aggressive strategies when they are in mixed-sex interactions. Thus, another useful study would be to explore how children use politeness in mixed- and same-sex interactions.

The current study makes a first attempt at researching mitigating devices in Persian, but clearly further research is required. Mitigation in Persian is an area that needs to be much more thoroughly researched.

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Sign Language, Interpreters and Power

Jennifer Gilbert

Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of interpreter power and interpreter influence in interactions involving people from the Deaf community, an under-researched area in the interpreting process. Following a summary of the sparse international literature in the area, I describe a small New Zealand-based research project which examines Deaf and Sign Language interpreter views on the interpreter's role, and how interpreters empower or disempower Deaf people through their interpreting practice.

1. Introduction

I qualified as a New Zealand Sign Language (henceforth NZSL) interpreter in 2009. Sign Language interpreters spend years training to become qualified, learning the skills, language processes and ethics that are an integral part of interpreting. Qualified interpreters are encouraged to examine their own practice on a regular basis. However, my informal observations suggested that many Sign Language interpreters were not aware about the extent to which their role unavoidably involves the exercise of power in an interpreted situation.

The research project described in this paper examines the current situation for NZSL interpreters by addressing two research questions. The first question is *how do sign language interpreters use power?* The literature review examines international research around this question. The second question is *what are New Zealand interpreters and Deaf[1] people's views on interpreters and how they use power?* To address these questions, I gathered data through small focus groups of both Deaf and interpreters.

2. Literature survey

2.1. *Power*

Power and how it is exchanged in human relationships is a complex issue that has been explored by many authors. Fairclough (1989: 4) argues that all language interactions include a struggle for power and that 'language contributes to the domination of some people by

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[1] Deaf will be spelled with a capital 'D' in this article, as I am assuming that the Deaf people involved are culturally Deaf, and it is common to capitalise Deaf this way in this context.

others.' Examples of this are cross-cultural encounters, where the dominant culture is valued over the minority, in hierarchically based relationships such as doctor-patient interactions, and in differential access to information. Moreover, power is not stable and fixed, but dynamic: Fairclough (1989: 68) explains 'those who hold power at a particular moment have to constantly reassert their power, and those who do not hold power are always liable to make a bid for power.' As a linguistic and cultural minority, Deaf people are often subjected to having power imposed on them by the majority. Bearing this in mind, I turn to the literature on how interpreters are involved in such power relations.

2.2. Interpreting

The field of interpreting attracted research attention only in the mid-20th century. Before this time interpreting was not regarded as a profession, and was carried out by individuals who happened to know more than one language (Gaiba 1998). These individuals were often friends or relations of those they interpreted for, or sometimes fellow church members (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan 1996). One of the first instances of simultaneous interpreting by impartial interpreters was at the Nuremburg trials in the mid 1940's. At these trials trained interpreters worked between four languages, simultaneously interpreting into microphones so the recipient could hear the interpreted message directly (Gaiba 1998).

Sign Language interpreting took a slightly different route, as Signed Languages themselves were not recognised as legitimate languages until around the 1980's. From 1880 until the early 1980's Sign Languages were banned in schools worldwide and children were taught orally. Some Deaf people still signed with their families or in the playground at school. As early interpreters tended to be family members, they followed the 'helper' model, where an interpreter was not impartial and acted in a patronising manner. As the profession developed, and as Deaf people started to advocate for their rights, a model of interpreting began to evolve. In a complete reaction to the helper model, interpreters changed their way of working to the conduit model. In this model the interpreter is 100% impartial and is not involved in the interaction apart from the act of interpreting. This meant that the interpreter could take no responsibility for the outcome of the interaction. Around this time new ideas began to emerge about interpreters and their role.

2.3. Early literature on power and interpreters: 1980s

The first article in the field examined the concept of oppressors, the oppressed and the harm of the conduit model (Baker-Shenk 1985). This work was ground-breaking at the time, and Baker-Shenk's article is still used to educate trainee interpreters in New Zealand. She explains that Deaf people are part of an oppressed minority and that Sign Language interpreters belong to the hearing majority, and examines the tensions this dichotomy brings. She encourages interpreters to examine their own (usually unconscious) oppressive tendencies. While not explicitly discussing power, this is the first article of its kind to look at the actions and behaviour of interpreters in any depth.

In the 1980's interpreters turned from the helper model of working to the conduit model, and it was assumed that being fully impartial and unattached to the work would allow Deaf people to regain power. This seismic shift was probably needed to move away from the

helper model; however Baker-Shenk (1991) was one of the first to recognise that this new model was still disempowering. Baker-Shenk (1991: 120) argues that 'there is no "neutral" position with regards to power… you **do** have power and you use it all the time, for better or for worse and…we need to recognize our power and use it responsibly' (emphasis in the original). She notes that the simple fact that the interpreter is the only person who has access to both languages in the interaction gives them a great deal of power. She gives examples of how interpreters can ensure that Deaf people are empowered. The examples are in common usage for interpreters today, such as having the Deaf person(s) set up a room. Looking back, it seems that Baker-Shenk's early work helped the interpreting profession to move forward, and much of her work is now taught to interpreting students.

2.4.   *Later literature on power and interpreters: 1990s - 2006*

Following this early work, the literature started to develop Baker-Shenk's work, explaining why neither the helper model nor the conduit model were empowering for Deaf people. McIntire and Sanderson (1994) wrote at a time when the profession was starting to move on from the conduit model. Much like Baker-Shenk, McIntire and Sanderson (1994) argue that the conduit model is disempowering and that working under the 'communicative facilitator model,' means the Deaf person can empower themselves. In such a model an interpreter must be flexible in their role, aware of cross-cultural issues, and must not allow themselves to always defer to the hearing people, such as in a turn taking situation. They also show that whichever model the interpreter decided to work under, they still have power and they must be deliberate in choosing how they work.

After McIntire and Sanderson's work in 1994 I could not find any further literature on the subject until 2005. The literature from the mid 2000's looks at more subtle aspects of power and control in interpreting. Gone are the obvious examples such as deferring to hearing people in a turn taking situation, and in its place are more covert examples of power, such as not having a strong enough knowledge base on a topic area, or subtle biases the interpreter might hold (Janzen & Korpinski 2005). Mindess (2006) addresses the issue of rapidly changing models of working, which she says have left Deaf people confused as they can never be sure how an interpreter might act. One interpreter might abide strictly by the conduit model, the next might use the communicative facilitator model, and the inconsistency can be disempowering for Deaf people.

2.5.   *Recent literature on power and interpreters: 2012-*

The most recent literature on the topic can be found online on the popular Sign Language interpreting blog 'Street Leverage.' This blog is popular among interpreters worldwide and addresses modern issues within the profession. I found two pertinent blog posts, one by Aaron Brace (an interpreter) and one by Trudy Suggs (a Deaf consumer.) These two blog posts have the same approach as Baker-Shenk's earlier work - straight to the point about interpreter behaviour and unapologetic for it. The issues they address are subtler than the ones Baker-Shenk brought up over 25 years ago. Brace (2012) encourages interpreters to examine themselves for their Jekyll and Hyde tendencies. He argues that many interpreting practices are disempowering to Deaf people. Such practices can include a strong and vocal focus on getting preparation material, or an inflexible stance on pay rates or breaks. All

these examples are things that interpreters have been taught to expect, but in fact strictly adhering to and demanding certain provisions can disempower other participants, because acting in such a way makes the interpreter the most important person in the interaction.

Suggs (2012) gives examples of ways that interpreters disempower Deaf people on the job. One instance of this is when a miscommunication happens and interpreters often do not want to blame themselves and may blame the Deaf person. She exhorts interpreters to allow Deaf people to have as much control in a situation as they want. This would mean that interpreters have to be flexible and ready to change - for example if the Deaf person wants to be in charge of the room set up, they should do so, or if they prefer the interpreter to arrange the room, then the interpreter needs to be open to this too.

Both Brace's and Sugg's articles suggest a certain level of flexibility that is needed from interpreters. They indicate that strict, unthinking adherence to an interpreting model, or Code of Ethics may be disempowering for the Deaf people.

This short summary of the literature on the topic of interpreter power provides some relevant insights in relation to my first research question *how do Sign Language interpreters use power?* It is clear that over the last few decades interpreter behavior has changed, and the interpreting profession is now in a space where much more subtle demonstrations of power need to be addressed. I hope that the research discussed below will help interpreters begin to analyse their professional practices.

3. Research methodology: data collection

3.1. Rationale for focus groups

There are several ways I could have obtained views from interpreters and Deaf people. I could have conducted one-on-one interviews, held focus groups and/or created an online or paper questionnaire. An online questionnaire would have allowed me to receive a large number of responses and then quantify the answers, but it would need to have been presented in written English, which is often a second language for Deaf people. Because this method would have disadvantaged some Deaf people, it would in itself have been an act of disempowerment and it would be hypocritical to conduct my research in this way.

I decided to hold focus groups rather than one-on-one interviews because of time factors, and because focus groups are less formal and allow participants to share ideas with one another, thus allowing a conversation to develop more naturally.

3.2. Focus group participants

I conducted separate interpreter and Deaf focus groups, as I wanted both parties to feel able to be open and honest about their views. I was aware that if the group consisted of both interpreters and Deaf people, participants might be considerably more restrained with their comments.

I selected participants who lived in the Wellington region, and invited people whom I thought would have considered the power issue in depth. I approached around five Deaf people (through email) and found three who were able to attend a focus group. I approached three interpreters and all three were able and willing to be involved. Fortuitously, three turned out to be a good number to allow the conversation to flow, and to allow each participant time to consider and share their views.

I based the focus group questions around the findings from my literature review. Questions were centred on several areas of interpreter work: control, flexibility, motivation for work, interpreter role and power. The Deaf focus group was video recorded and the interpreter group was tape recorded for later transcription. Both focus groups provided around 1.5 hours of data.

4. Methods of analysis

4.1. Transcription

Before I could analyse the data I needed to transcribe it. I decided not to transcribe the tapes completely as this is very time intensive, and a full transcription was not needed since my analysis focussed on specific broad themes. Instead I performed a tape-based analysis as described by Bertrand, Brand & Ward (1992). Using this method I took abridged notes from the video and audiotapes and transcribed any valuable quotes. I had to interpret the NZSL from the video tape, and I did this as accurately as possible. If this study is repeated on a larger scale, I recommend another interpreter checks the translation for accuracy.

4.2. Analysis methods

I decided to analyse the data in two ways, using content theme analysis and basic discourse analysis. Content theme analysis allowed me to identify the overall themes in the data and the discourse analysis allowed me to focus on specific aspects of language use.

Content analysis is a method of examining qualitative data 'in a subjective but scientific manner' (Zhang & Wildemuth 2009:1) and is performed by identifying themes throughout the text and then interpreting what they mean. To find themes throughout the text, I printed the transcribed data and went through it identifying key themes. I then grouped all the data under the specific themes to get an overall feel for the issues raised.

There are many ways to perform discourse analysis, My approach entails critical discourse analysis, which has many layers but is overall concerned to identify how 'discursive practices are in the text' (McCarthy, Matthiesen & Slade, 2002:67). My analysis focusses on the lexical choices of the participants and considers how these choices reflect or conflict with the overall themes discussed. There are many ways that lexical choices can be analysed; in this paper I examine instances of emotive, empowering and distancing language within the text.

5. Results

5.1.   Content analysis

Several themes emerged in the discussion with the interpreter focus group. Here I focus on just two – *alignment* and *reputation*.

The interpreters were very aware of their status as hearing people and thus as outsiders to Deaf culture. Although part of the hearing majority, they nevertheless wanted to align themselves with Deaf people as much as possible to redress the perceived inequality. Melanie[2] said 'we (interpreters) can never be totally neutral and we're always hearing, which already puts us on the hearing side of the equation, but if we can balance that out a bit so that it's fairer, we should try to do that.' Melanie's words indicate that her thinking aligns with international authors such as Mindess (2006) and Baker-Shenk (1985, 1991) on the issue of interpreter neutrality, and that she is highly aware of rectifying the power imbalance that comes simply from the fact that interpreters are hearing. In a similar vein, Liz stated that she uses humour as an equaliser: 'I make jokes with people because I want to be equal. That for me is about power - I'm giving it away.' The interpreters are aware that in certain settings (such as university and court) it is inappropriate to align with the Deaf person; however overall they spoke of their attempt to balance out power issues by appearing neutral or aligning with the Deaf person whenever possible. A subtle example of alignment is that of seating. Melanie states 'You may be seen as having a loyalty with the [hearing] professional rather than the Deaf client just by where you choose to sit...it's a balance wanting to come off as professional, but at the same time wanting to show neutrality, leaning towards the side of the Deaf person if there is a doubt.' The literature reviewed above indicated that it was subtle acts from the interpreter that empowered or disempowered Deaf people, and it seems that these members of the interpreter group were aware of the subtle ways they enact power.

Another issue that arose from the interpreter focus group was that of *reputation*. All three participants were keenly aware of how their choices impacted both their own reputation and the reputation of the interpreting profession. Rebecca said that not receiving preparation material, and thus not interpreting at a fully competent level concerned her, because of how the Deaf clients might view her skill level. All three participants said they carefully select which jobs they will accept according to their skill level, as they realise a 'job gone wrong' could affect their reputation.

Interestingly, the interpreters seemed more concerned with how their actions might impact on the reputation of the profession than on themselves personally. They all agreed that it is important for interpreters to act in consistent ways with regards to their conduct, their working conditions and their pay, in order to be fair to other interpreters. For example, Melanie said that she used to charge a relatively low fee per hour, as interpreting was not her main income. However this led to Deaf clients requesting her over other full time interpreters because of her lower rate, and other interpreters asked her to raise her rate to the industry standard so they would not be disadvantaged. Melanie explained that it can be

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[2] Pseudonyms are used for all participants

hard for interpreters to argue for certain working conditions if some interpreters are happy to work for less pay or for longer hours. The three interpreters seemed very aware of issues around their own and the profession's reputation, and highly aware that an interpreter's conduct can affect an outsider's perspective of the whole profession.

Talk in the Deaf focus group also centred around *reputation*, and *relationships* were another theme for this group. In the case of reputation, the discussion centred not around the interpreter's reputation, but around how the interpreters' actions may affect the Deaf person's reputation in their workplace or in the community. This effect was not limited to the skill or competence of an interpreter, but also included their attire and their general demeanour. All three participants did not want the interpreter to act completely neutrally or in a detached manner. This shows that these Deaf professionals have moved on from the early conduit method of interpreting, a finding which reflects reports in the recent literature. In fact, June stated, 'If the interpreter is total neutral, then the other staff members might be put off by their behaviour.' Other examples were brought up where an interpreter's conduct could negatively affect the situation. The participants wanted interpreters who blended in with the situation. Interpreters are aware of this preference, as indicated by the interpreter Rebecca's comment: 'I change the way I dress and to a certain extent the way I behave to try and blend in.'

Apart from reputation, the main theme that came from the Deaf focus group was *relationship*. All three participants discussed the importance of the relationship between the interpreter and the Deaf client. They agreed that if a good professional relationship is established then both the interpreter and the Deaf person can feel comfortable being open about their needs in the interpreting situation. Sarah remarked that, 'I really think it's important to have a good relationship with the interpreter so you can address issues without being critical; you can have a chat about it.' Olivia noted that Deaf people should be open to hearing what they themselves may need to change, such as giving the interpreter more information about a job. She believed that a two way dialogue was key in the Deaf-interpreter relationship. While all three mentioned some issues related to interpreter competence and skill, overall they seemed to focus more on relational aspects of interpreting.

The importance of Deaf-interpreter relationships may explain why all three participants felt uncomfortable with having interpreters in personal situations (such as financial or medical settings.) While interpreters are bound by a Code of Ethics and keep all information confidential, none of the participants uses interpreters in these more sensitive situations, unless the information they are receiving is critical, instead relying on other methods of communication. This shows the juxtaposition between the interpreter's role as a neutral and impartial participants, on the one hand, and the human aspects of the interpreter-Deaf relationship on the other.

5.2.   Lexical analysis

The lexical analysis identified a very interesting contrast between the two focus groups. The Deaf participants tended to use emotive and relational language that was very outward

looking, whereas the interpreters' language was more inward focused, critically examining their role, and using a professionally oriented discourse.

Many relational words and phrases were used in the Deaf focus group such as: *relationship*, *dialogue*, *talk* and *share experiences*. This aligns with the overarching theme from the Deaf group that they value relationships with interpreters and see those relationships as key to a successful interaction. The Deaf group also used several emotive words to describe how interpreters actions made them feel, such as: *cringey*, *embarrassed*, *a bit strange* and *a bit annoyed*. Again, this aligns with their discussions around how an interpreter's actions and demeanour can reflect on them personally. Along with this relational and emotive language, the Deaf participants spoke in ways that gave them power in the relationship. They spoke of *using* the interpreter, of paying them and of expecting certain things from an interpreter. This very direct language gives an insight into their perceptions of the role of the interpreter. While the Deaf participants spoke of relationship, they also used language that indicated that they viewed the interpreter as providing a service for Deaf people, and that, as in any consumer/service relationship, the consumer has the ultimate power over certain aspects of the service provided. It is this tension between the professional relationship and the consumer relationship between Deaf people and interpreters that interpreters need to be constantly aware of. The Deaf group spoke of 'not crossing the line,' and this is a delicate balance for interpreters.

The interpreters used language that suggested potential conflict between themselves and hearing people. They spoke of loyalty to Deaf people, of *siding* with the Deaf person and of speaking up around issues (such as receiving preparation material) for *the client's access*. This language indicates that they align themselves with Deaf people, which was also supported throughout the content analysis. As the literature review suggested, it is impossible for interpreters to be neutral, and the interpreters in this group were aware of that. By aligning themselves with Deaf people, they are attempting to return power to Deaf people.

As mentioned, the interpreter group used very professional language and it is clear that they were all well versed in 'interpreter discourse.' When the interpreter group used emotive words they were directed inwards, a critique of their own work. Melanie said that interpreters can be *too rigid* around preparation materials and Rebecca stated that she has been in situations where the job has not gone well and she has blamed herself. It seems that using this professional language, the interpreters were able to critique their work without taking the criticism on as a personal insult. The professional language is somewhat distancing and seems to serve as a strategy that interpreters use to protect themselves. This is a key skill that interpreters (and other professionals) learn - the ability to separate the working self from personal self. Developing this skill makes it easier for an interpreter to receive criticism without becoming defensive or hurt.

6. Discussion

While linguistic skill and competence were mentioned by both groups, the analysis indicates that issues around attitude and relationship were much more pressing for the participants. Melanie summarised this sentiment saying:

Power is related to attitude. Sometimes Deaf people prefer interpreters, regardless of skill set, and they like to work with one person, that's all those subtle things. You can have a really skilled interpreter who people don't like working with, because they might overstep the mark, or be too friendly or be seen as too powerful. Then you might have someone who feels themselves they are not competent in certain settings, but keeps on being asked [to work] in those settings, because people feel that's someone who can blend in or can make people feel at ease.

It is important for interpreters to realise that while their skills and competence in a given situation are vital, these are not the only aspects of their work that are important. An interpreter's ability to be flexible, professional, to blend in, to be open to feedback, and to have a good attitude are significant aspects of their role. Interpreters must not only focus on their interpreting and language skills in their professional development and training, they must also devote time and effort to analysing the non-linguistic aspects of their practice.

It is clear that all the participants were aware of subtle power issues including those addressed in the international literature. However the Deaf participants emphasised the vital need for openness and honesty between interpreters and Deaf people. They lamented the fact that it is so hard for them to give feedback to an interpreter without an interpreter becoming defensive. They do not want to hurt the interpreter, but they want to be able to help the interpreter develop their skills. They agreed that giving feedback to interpreters (and interpreters to Deaf) needs to become a normal part of interpreting practice. The way to achieve this is through honest professional relationships, where both the Deaf people and interpreter take responsibility for the success of the interaction. NZSL interpreters need to systematically ask for and receive feedback, and accept feedback without feeling hurt or defensive. Interpreters also need to critically examining their own practice and seeking mentoring and advice from other interpreters or professionals on a regular basis.

7. Conclusion

The focus group discussions conducted in this study strongly aligned with the findings from the literature review. This is encouraging and indicates that the participants are very aware of subtle power issues related to interpreting. The interpreter groups revealed high awareness of the power they have in their role and were able to discuss ways they attempt to redress this power imbalance.

The Deaf groups were also aware of power issues, and indicated their desire for professional relationships with interpreters with systematic feedback as a natural part of the process. They drew attention to the fact that non-linguistic aspects of the interpreters' role are as important as the act of interpreting.

Postscript

I am a relative newcomer in this profession, and I feel honoured to be able to work as an interpreter and to be a part of the New Zealand Deaf community. Throughout this research I

have been constantly challenged to examine my own interpreting work, and although I have undertaken this research I am not claiming that I have overcome all the challenges that I present to interpreters.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the New Zealand Deaf community for allowing me to learn their language and become involved in their rich community, culture and heritage. I am grateful to all my Sign Language interpreter colleagues who continue to challenge and inspire me.

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