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Is there such a thing as summary interpreting? “Cross-linguistic formulation”, facilitation and mediation in French asylum proceedings

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Abstract.

This paper focuses on a case of systematic resort to consecutive summary interpretation in French Asylum courtroom proceedings and provides the first analysis of this controversial practice. Drawing on conversational analysis, it shows that summary interpreting is framed as a separate interaction between interpreter and asylum seeker, under the eye of a remote court. The interpreter performs (cross-linguistic) “formulations” of what precedes and what follows in the proceedings, and in so doing does not only render, gatekeep and facilitate the main elements of the source text, as usually found in dialogue interpreting, but endorses the role of an intercultural mediator.

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1. Introduction

Interpreter-mediated communication has been explored from different analytical and theoretical standpoints across disciplines. However, the practice of summary interpreting has hardly been the object of any scholarly analysis. Widely perceived in Interpreting circles as a practice performed by non-professionals and/or in contexts where (full) interpretation is not institutionally recognized or logistically feasible, summary interpreting has been normatively rejected by the profession and eschewed by scholars up to now. In a context of public services disinvestment through tenders, attrition of qualified staff, and pressure to deliver services quicker and with less resources, summary interpreting may be appealing to “external players” (interpreting third parties, policy makers, etc.). It is thus pressing to engage with actual performance of summary interpreting on the ground, explore the context within which it is arranged, and analyze its effects on talk-in-interaction.

Providing the first detailed analysis of summary interpreting, this paper examines its multimodal and collaborative achievement in the triadic exchange and its effects on meaning construction, particularly in terms of role expectations. Relying on ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (EM/CA), it draws on authentic video recordings of appeal asylum hearings at the French National Court of Asylum Right (*Cour Nationale du Droit d’Asile* in French, hereafter referred to under its French acronym CNDA). This is a particularly relevant case given the fact that the CNDA systematically resorts to summary interpreting at the beginning of the hearing (for the reading aloud of the report on the previous history of the case by the *rapporteur*); a practice enshrined by the French Code of Entry and Residence of Foreigner and the Right of Asylum. Furthermore, (summary) interpreting at the CNDA is performed in the consecutive mode, which stands as an exception among multilingual courtroom proceedings in France whereby (whispered) simultaneous interpreting is the most widespread practice. Last but not least, these interpreting arrangements have different effects on the interaction, particularly on turn-taking, turn-keeping and turn-giving, which are worth exploring from a conversational analysis point of view and in terms of power dynamics.

Building on previous studies of turn management and interpreter's agency in interpreter- and video-mediated CNDA hearings (Licoppe et al., 2018, Licoppe, 2020), this paper focuses on cases of remote interpreting, as the asylum appellant, together with the interpreter, are located in French overseas territories (here Cayenne, French Guiana) and the judiciary in the CNDA headquarters in mainland France (Vincennes, Paris region). While our findings are relevant for both remote and on-site interpreting, summary interpreting, coupled with physical distance, has an exacerbating effect on the language, cultural and power divide between the institution and its users.

After teasing out theoretical insights from Interpreting Studies and Pragmatics on summary interpreting (1), and contextualizing the study within a larger research project on interpreter- and video-mediated hearings at the CNDA (2), this paper delves into summary interpreting at the CNDA, from a macro-, meso- and micro-perspective. It first explores the legal, institutional and professional constraints that bring to bear on the norm of summary interpreting of the initial report in the asylum hearing (3). Problematizing its enactment at the micro-level, it then examines how interlocutors multimodally collaborate to identify the "source text" for the interpreter (4), and explores the agency exerted by interpreters in such a codified and normative communication environment, by focusing on how they render the report (5) and how they frame summary interpreting as a speech event in its own right (6). Finally, after streamlining the main insights of this first study of summary interpreting, the paper reflects on the effects of increased interpreter's agency from the perspective of professional development and access to justice.

1. Theoretical insights onto "summary interpreting" at the intersection between Pragmatics and Interpreting Studies

Summary interpreting refers to a communication practice in which the interpreter provides a condensed version of the source text in the target language, for many different reasons, ranging from a technical problem, a cognitive overload for the interpreter, time constraints on the target speech delivery, an institutional demand by the commissioner, to a socio-political strategy adopted by the interpreter. A combination of some of these factors has been found in the only available study on "summarized renditions", in the context of heads of state's interpreter-mediated political press conferences, from a narrative perspective (Liao and Pan, 2018). Beyond this study, summary interpreting has been largely overlooked, which is hardly surprising given its discredit in both professional and scholarly interpreting circles.

In a position paper on the matter, the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators in the US (NAJIT) considers that "summary interpreting" fails the standards of interpretation in legal settings, understood as 'a precise rendering of everything that is said in the target language', for by its very definition, summary interpreting 'implies condensing and necessarily omitting some of what is said' (NAJIT, 2005). Similarly, in the context of asylum proceedings, "summary interpreting" is deemed inappropriate and particularly dangerous, given the centrality of the credibility of the asylum seeker's statement (Stachl-Peier and Pöllabauer, 2017, p. 89). What transpires in that scarce literature is that "summary interpreting" is not considered as a 'mode of interpreting' – NAJIT states that it is not a legally approved 'mode of interpreting' as established by the Federal Statute which regulates interpreting in legal settings – but at best a problematic practice. Similarly, in community interpreting, summarization is considered as having 'a nasty reputation' and as 'a last resort whenever consecutive, simultaneous or whispering are not appropriate for emergencies, crises or situations when the speakers can't and won't pause' (Socarrás-Estrada, 2015, p. 166).

Summary interpreting at the CNDA thus disrupts the professional norm of full and accurate rendition. This paper undertakes to explore the effects of summary interpreting on in-talk interaction and addresses the ways in which summary interpreting, in this context, extend the facilitating and mediating tasks of the interpreter beyond the norm, and the effects of interpreters' agency on the interaction.

It has been recognized for some time that interpreters do not 'just' provide accurate renditions of stretches of talk in a target language, but also facilitate and mediate the triadic encounter (Angelelli, 2004, Wadensjö, 1998). As an umbrella term, 'mediation' may encompass a wide range of tasks that go beyond the "conduit" role, such as turn management (Roy, 2000), cultural brokering (Roat, 1999) or even advocacy in activist endeavors to redress injustices (Ibid., Baker, 2006, 2007, Boéri, 2008, Boéri and Delgado, 2021). In a narrower sense, "mediation" may refer to the profession of (inter)cultural mediators whose involvement in the communication encounter is due first and foremost to a cultural barrier (and not necessarily a language one) and whose 'focus is often to improve access to services, enhance service delivery quality and promote beneficial outcomes for service users, or simply to promote harmony among groups of a different cultural background' (García-Beyaert, 2015, p. 374).

This normative distinction between interpreter and intercultural mediator, is even more blurred in the case of summary interpreting. Indeed, unlike the requirement for accurate and exact renditions in simultaneous or consecutive interpreting, summary interpreting, as it is institutionally defined, 'officially' requires the interpreter to exert further discretion as she deletes, preserves, edits previous talk to an overhearing (but not understanding) user. Thus, the interpreter leans towards the kind of mediation which is normatively performed by intercultural mediators. Unconstrained discretion may lead to role confusion, 'uncertain expectations' and lack of 'trust' from clients (Skaaden, 2019, p. 710). However, since summary interpreting is performed only from the language of the court into the language of the asylum seeker, interpreter's discretion remains unheeded to the CNDA, meaning that preserving its trust may not be a central concern. The asylum seeker, on the other hand, may perceive the interpreter as an intercultural mediator but this does not necessarily lead to lack of trust. Beyond the internal benefit of professionalization, the interpreter's discretion can be examined from the standpoint of its contribution to 'equity', 'empathy' and 'empowerment' in the communication situation. This is what Baraldi refers to as 'dialogic mediation', which 'can promote new stories of cooperation through the *reflexive coordination* of different voices and narratives' (Baraldi 2012, p. 3; emphasis from the author).

A particularly useful theoretical prism to examine summary interpreting and the effects of interpreters' agency on the interaction is that of "formulations", defined in conversation analysis as a kind of practical action in which the speaker edits, summarizes or deletes parts of a previous turn while highlighting other parts of it (Heritage and Watson, 1979). They also constitute a sequential move, which strongly projects agreement from the recipient. They also do 'double duty' (Ibid., p. 152), enabling the speaker to combine interactional tasks with institutional ones (Van der Houwen and Sliedrecht, 2016, p. 57), such as summarizing, suggesting common ground, proposing solutions or working hypotheses, moving towards the closing of the topic or the interaction (Drew, 2002). Formulations are common in institutional settings (Antaki, 2008, Van der Houwen and Sliedrecht, 2016), and they play a crucial role in professional mediation in dispute resolution (Stokoe, 2013, Stokoe and Sikveland, 2016), in professional facilitation (Franco and Femø Nielsen, 2018, Franco and Greiffenhagen, 2018), and in addressing an overhearing audience in news interviews (Heritage, 1985). They are also

common in interpreter-mediated communication, particularly in dialogue interpreting (Baraldi, 2012), where they can be examined in terms of gatekeeping and facilitation work (Baraldi, 2018, 2019).

Formulations are particularly relevant to this paper, not only because summary interpreting condenses the information of the previous sequence but also because it gives cues to the interlocutors as regards what precedes and what is to come in the interaction. To distinguish the former from the latter, we will speak here of “substantive formulations” to describe renditions oriented to rendering the substantive aspects of a prior utterance (in standard consecutive interpreting) or stretch of talk (in summary interpreting), and of “reflexive formulations” to examine the interpreter’s framing of prior talk as a kind of speech event in its own right. Reflexive formulations consist of formulating some interactional event (a turn) as a feature of the unfolding interaction (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970, p. 350), as a kind of “glossing practice”, that is, as ‘the practice of saying-in-so-many-words-what-we-are-doing’ (Ibid., p. 352). Interested in the natural accountability of conversation, Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) note that interaction routinely proceeds without the need for such formulations and that when they occur, they are thus notable and remarkable. As we will see in our empirical case study, reflexive formulations happen systematically in summary interpreting, where they constitute a powerful mediating resource for the interpreter to facilitate the asylum seeker’s access to the ongoing activity, besides facilitating or gatekeeping via substantive formulations of prior turns.

2. Fieldwork, data and case-study

The research presented here is based on fieldwork carried out at the National Court of Appeal for Asylum Law (CNDA – *Cour Nationale du Droit d’Asile*), where proceedings almost systematically involve the use of interpreters. The initial drive for the study was the introduction of a video communication setup within these asylum hearings to allow for the hearing of asylum seekers located in French overseas territories (Mayotte, Réunion, Martinique), though it has yielded insights which are also valid for co-present hearings. We observed and video-recorded such video-mediated bilingual courtroom hearings over a year. This provided the primary material for our analysis, conducted in the framework of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (EM/CA). We used this 150-hour corpus (involving about 200 recorded cases) to gather secondary corpora pertaining to different interactional phenomena.

One such secondary corpus (including fourteen cases) involved specifically reports read aloud in French by the *rapporteur* at the beginning of each hearing and their subsequent “summary interpretation” into the language of the asylum seeker over the video link. We transcribed 12 cases in eight different languages, according to the conventions developed by Mondada (2001) to account for multimodal interactions, and worked with professional interpreters to ensure that the back-translation of foreign language utterances into the language of analysis would keep in mind the oral, interactional and multimodal nature of these distinctive episodes of courtroom proceedings. This provides an empirical basis for analyzing the sequential organization of “summary interpreting”, from the perspective of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (here after referred to as EM/CA), an approach which has already been applied to the study of interpreting practices (see for instance, Wadensjö, 1998, Licoppe and Verdier, 2013, Gavioli, 2014). The examples provided in this paper are extracted from video-mediated hearings with Spanish-speaking and French Creole-speaking appellant asylum seekers, located in Cayenne, the capital of French Guiana, and seating next to the interpreter.

In this study of summary interpreting in the CNDA, the micro-analysis of the hearing (interaction within a technological, judiciary and communication set-up) is undertaken with two complementary standpoints in mind: the macro-level (legal codes and institutional policies shaping the set-up and interaction) and the meso-level (state of the art in court-room interpreting around norms, ethics and standards of practice).

3. The initial report as a contested site for interpretation in the asylum hearing

French asylum appeal proceedings typically start with the reading aloud of the report on the previous history of the case by the *rapporteur* in charge of its preparation in writing. As a written genre, the report presents the asylum case as an accumulation of written texts (applications, interviews reports and judicial decisions), organized along a temporal axis which mirrors the actual chronology of the case as proceeded through the asylum adjudication system. Resting upon a recurrent four-part structure, it first reports on the initial application (date and content) at the first instance authority in France for asylum procedure the French, i.e. the Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA – *Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides*), then summarizes the interview, the rejection of the case by the OFPRA and its motives, and the appeal (*recours*, in French) to the CNDA as well as its invoked grounds. Finally, within what is referred to as the ‘synthesis’ or the ‘conclusions’, the report states the points which, on the basis of what precedes, should be discussed in the appeal hearing, according to the *rapporteur*’s analysis of the case.

For non-French speakers, article R733-25 of the CESEDA (Code of Entry and Residence of Foreigner and the Right of Asylum) establishes that: ‘the *main elements* of the report are translated to the appellant when s/he needs the assistance of an interpreter’ (our emphasis).¹ Although this is acknowledged as standard practice on the CNDA website,² a norm seems to have developed in the hearings to summarize the ‘conclusions’ of the report only, i.e. its fourth and final section.

For instance, in a case we have observed, a newly hired interpreter was seating next to the asylum appellant in the courtroom in Cayenne (French Guiana) and started to interpret simultaneously the reading of the report she was receiving through the video link from the courtroom in Vincennes (mainland France). Unfortunately she had forgotten to switch off her microphone, and the presiding judge immediately stopped her, urging her to ‘translate’ (sic) post hoc. She tried to protest, arguing that this was the way she was used to work when interpreting for other courts, but the judge ignored her and requested that she would be given pen and paper to translate only the ‘*synthèse*’ (synthesis), that is, ‘*les parties les plus importantes*’ (the most important parts) of the report. He was thus enforcing a special rule of the court, namely that the interpretation of the report should be based on its final synthesis. Strictly speaking, this means that the interpreter is not expected to summarize the report (summary interpreting) but to (fully) interpret the ‘synthesis’ of the report (interpreting a summary). As we shall see, however, in practice, the structure of the report may not be straightforward enough to maintain a clear-cut distinction between the two (section 4) and the interpreter pays attention to and select elements from the full report (section 5).

¹ Our translation from French: <http://www.cnda.fr/Demarches-et-procedures/L-audience>

² “This report mentions the elements which are to shed light onto the debate with no stance on the orientation of the decision. The main elements of the report are translated to the appellant by the interpreter”; our translation from French (Ibid).

The codification and normalization of summary interpreting stem from complex institutional and occupational constraints. Because asylum seekers may come from any part of the world, the court has to develop capacities for interpretation in any possible language. This is done through public tenders, but the position of the court is that the companies winning a contract (or several, as they are organized around ‘packages’ of languages) often provide interpreters with some form of training, with hardly any in simultaneous interpreting. Under these circumstances, the CNDA considers that resorting to simultaneous interpreting would introduce potential inequalities of treatment between asylum seekers, aware as they are that asylum seekers’ chances to get an interpreter with simultaneous skills are uneven. Notwithstanding the fact that consecutive interpreters are easier to find than simultaneous ones when covering multilingual needs in a context of relatively low professionalization level, the belief that the consecutive mode constitutes a guarantee of equality among asylum seekers is contradicted in practice, bearing in mind the complexities of summary interpreting and the uncertainties concerning how they may be addressed by interpreters (see sections 4-6).

Furthermore, reverting to consecutive interpreting puts additional strain on both the court and the interpreter. Indeed, consecutive interpreting doubles the time allocated to the report (several minutes for its reading in French, and about the same time for its interpretation into Spanish) while the CNDA is constantly pressured by the French government to process more cases, more quickly. Second, consecutive interpreting is not a suitable mode for procedural read-aloud speeches delivered quickly; an interpreting practice recognized as one of the most difficult and paradoxically demanded here in a context marked by lack of interpreters’ training and professional recognition.

It is within these constraints that summary (consecutive) interpreting was established at the CNDA. Nevertheless, this ‘solution’ carries other problems, and may need to be re-enacted in the courtroom itself, as shown above by the interpreter’s reluctance to switch interpreting mode. This kind of task (restituting an oralized text dealing with ‘precise procedures or a factual statement in the asylum interviews’ into another language) should be done, according to the UNHRC (1993), with the text at hand, and should be verbatim, e.g. word-for-word interpretation to allow the claimant to check on the accuracy of the report. However, UNHCR recommendation clashes with the harsh reality of institutional constraints and pressures from different professions and occupations. Indeed, the *rapporteurs* belong to a legal profession under significant attrition rate (they had been on strike before our observations), for several reasons: the precarity of their employment (they are hired under temporal contract), the downgrading of their working conditions (pressure to increase the case flow rate) and the societal pressure they are subject to (their mission revolves around summarizing and contextualizing the case, by synthesizing the political situation in the country of origin of the asylum seeker). Within these circumstances, they are especially sensitive about the publicity of their reports and the criticisms to which they may be exposed. They seem to have succeeded to maintain control over their reports which, so far, are exclusively made available to the judges, and especially not to interpreters and counsels. The latter only access the reports during their reading aloud by the *rapporteur*, and the asylum seeker, only through their summary interpretation. The unavailability of the text provides a restrictive frame for summary interpreting, for it has to be done on the spot, on the sole basis of what the interpreter hears in the courtroom. To limit the discretion of the interpreters in their summarizing, a norm has developed at the CNDA: the report closes with a final synthesis stating the main points to be discussed, and this “summary” is what is supposed to be interpreted.

This “solution” also reinforces the apparent and on the record effort of the institution to minimize the agency of interpreters, by reinforcing the need for an equality of treatment, which seems to preclude any form of individualization of the interpreter’s contribution. In spite of these constraints, interpreters cannot “not interpret” and always exert some form of agency (Pochhäcker, 2012), and contrary to the institution’s intention, “summary interpreting” increases the discretion of the interpreter in two distinctive ways.

First, the interpreter must recognize what constitutes the “conclusions” of the report, which as we shall see in section 4, is not as straightforward as it seems. She must also provide an interpretation of that summary of the report (and is encouraged to take notes to that effect). While the interpreter is in charge of re-enacting this pivotal moment in another language, she may edit, summarize, delete and preserve previous talk in the light of the overall report. Indeed, the history of the case not only guides the judges into relevant questions but also alerts the asylum seeker to the points she is to address. Thus, the interpreter is doing (substantive) “formulations” of the conclusions of the report, themselves a “formulation” of the overall report, itself a “formulation” of the history of the case. As we will see in section 5, this formulation work provides resources for the interpreter to mediate between the institutional bluntness of the judicial text in assessing the current state of the case and the asylum seeker’s affect-laden experiences.

Second, because of its “condensed” nature, the summary interpretation of the report is not done “just” as a rendition immediately following a prior turn (here, the reading of the report). It is framed as a distinctive speech event, with opening and closing sequences, and it enacts distinctive participation frames affiliating the interpreter and the asylum seeker. Such sequential work occasions “reflexive” formulations. Bearing in mind that formulations provide participants with understandings of what is going on, and what is to come, on the basis of what was (Clifton, 2009), they provide understandings of what was done in the reading of the report qua speech event, and about what to expect of the next phase of the hearing (i.e. in the interrogation sequence). In this light, the interpreter does not only mediate the content but also facilitates communication by prepping the asylum seeker for what should happen next. This coordination is constitutive of the summary interpreting situation, for much that it is unintended by the institution, and imperceptible to its representatives.

4. Identifying the source text: summary interpreting vs. summary report interpreting

Just after the opening of the hearing, the president gives the floor to the *rapporteur* to read her report. The reading takes between two to ten minutes, and is done at a fast pace with only a few glances away from the printed sheet of paper from which the reading is done. At the structural level, reports may vary considerably in the ways in which they make salient what the interpreter is supposed to do. Sometimes, the *rapporteur* makes it quite explicit:

Extract 1.

1. R. (1.5) pour ma part/ (1.0)
for my part
2. R. après instruction de la présente demande et sur la base
after instruction of the present demand and on the basis
3. des éléments actuellement à notre disposition/ (.) voici quelques
of the elements now at our disposal here are some
4. quelques observations que je souhaite formuler/
some observations that I wish to formulate
5. (.)* et qui devront dès lors euh* traduites pour le:
and which should therefore be er translated for the
6. *((lookss to cam)) *((looks to cam))

7. la re & quérante (.) afin d'éclairer la cour et
the asylum seeker so as to bring clarity to the court
8. INT. & ((looks up and nods))
9. R. et éclairer les débats de cette audience\
and bring clarity to the proceedings of this hearing
10. (1.0)

Here, after stating the motives for rejection at the OFPRA, the *rapporteur* marks a pause (line 1), and then separates what precedes (framed as the instruction of the whole case, line 2) from the observations which (he announces) will follow next (line 3-4). Some footing work signals the transition, as he states that he will now speak for himself (line 1). This contrasts with what he did before and which now retrospectively appears as an oral reference to texts written by others. He goes on urging the interpreter to translate these observations (lines 5-7). When he does so, he looks twice at the screen, thus highlighting the interpreter as the recipient of that instruction on the other side of the video link. And in fact, the interpreter acknowledges the injunction, hears this as a request, as he looks up from the sheet of paper on which he was taking notes and nods his agreement. It is relatively rare that the part to be interpreted is singled out so explicitly during the reading of the report.

In many cases, the boundaries between the different sections of the report (mainly instruction and observations) are blurred, as in extract 2, which takes place after the *rapporteur's* statement of the OFPRA rejection motives:

Extract 2.

1. (1.0)
2. R. elle pourra donc répondre à ces observations dans la mesure où elle
she shall therefore address these observations since she
3. ne le fait pas dans son recours\ (0.5) d'une manière générale
does not do it in her appeal file more generally
4. elle pourrait être invitée à revenir sur cette affaire
she could be invited to come back to this case
5. et les problèmes précis/ (.) rencontrés par son fils à cette époque\
and to the precise problems encountered by her son at that time
6. (1.0)

He mentions that the asylum seeker has the opportunity to clarify the points raised by the OFPRA, which she fails to do in the appeal file (lines 2-3). Then he moves on to the final conclusions, as marked, however implicitly, by the pivotal expression 'more generally' (line 3) and the indirect injunction to the judges (passive voice; line 4) to conduct the interview accordingly. So the interpreter is left with a difficult task, because she 'discovers' line 2 that the motives for rejection at the OFPRA will be the basis of the questions to be asked now to the asylum seeker, and that this injunction is as relevant for her to interpret as the apparent 'conclusions' she would genuinely expect to come next. Her rendition to the asylum appellant will therefore depend on a) whether she has identified the relevance of this piece of information, b) whether she has taken notes (which is not only expected when reaching the conclusions of the report), c) on her ability to process what the *rapporteur's* formulations leave implicit, and d) on the selection and reordering she will eventually be able to make of what, ideally and normatively, should have been two different parts of the report (with one not to be interpreted, and one to be interpreted).

This example also shows that some aspects of the asylum seeker's experience may be evoked in various ways at different points of the report. For instance, the threats experienced by the asylum seeker back home recur in all phases of the processing of the case and thus surface throughout the report, with various degrees of details, and their omnipresence is a measure of

their importance in the case. The ways in which such key topics are formulated in the conclusions of the report may not be completely intelligible in isolation. A deep understanding of what is stated in the conclusions requires paying attention to anaphoric ties, which the asylum seeker cannot do because of the language barrier. In this light, for her own understanding and for that of the asylum appellant, the interpreter cannot “just” interpret the final synthesis of the report but needs to process the entire report (her source text) to come up with a synthesis (her target text) which may not fully correspond to the “conclusions” of the report. Indeed, she needs to devise her own formulation by selecting items she identifies as relevant throughout the report to provide an intelligible rendition, whose accuracy and relevance will depend on the clarity of the report itself, her memory, her notes and her own perception of relevance. While the latter could be considered “summary interpreting” (in the sense that the summary is done by the interpreter rather than the *rapporteur*), the actual tasks performed by the interpreter (selective interpretation and reformulation of the report as a whole) lean towards that of an intercultural mediator, as we now turn to in the following section.

5. Focusing on “substantive formulations” of the report

The source text for the interpreter is a read-aloud report which is compact, couched in institutional-judicial language and laden with “non-ordinary” terms. Crucial points keep surfacing at each stage of the asylum process being reported and thus often appear before the conclusions. Let us consider, for example, the case of a mother of two, who left the Dominican Republic for French Guiana because she felt threatened by a violent husband. There are three recurrent topics in this report: a) that at each stage she wrote or said too little; b) that the nature of her relationship with her husband needs to be clarified; c) that references to the kind of support she sought (or could have sought) over there, should be provided. Regarding the brevity of the asylum seeker’s statements (a common ground for rejection), it is first mentioned at the very beginning of the report, when the reporter evokes the initial asylum request:

Extract 3a.

1. R. dans sa demande initiale particulièrement sommaire
in her particularly lacunar initial request
2. puisqu’elle ne fait que dix lignes (.) enregistrée par l’OFPRA
since it is only ten lines long (.) registered at the OFPRA

The initial request is negatively assessed as undetailed (line 1), which is justified by the reference to the limited extension in writing (line 2). After reporting on the claimed reasons for her escape from the Dominican Republic, the *rapporteur* reminds the motives for the rejection of the case at OFPRA:

Extract 3b. (continued)

1. R. le directeur général de l’OFPRA avait rejeté sa demande
the general director of OFPRA had rejected her request
2. au motif (.) je cite (.) l’intéressée a évoqué sa relation
on the ground I quote that the relevant party has mentioned her relationship
3. avec un violent de manière laconique et très peu personnalisée (.)
with a violent man in a laconic way and with very little personalization
4. qui plus est (.) ses dires sur la nature et le moment de ses violences
what is more (.) her claims regarding the nature and the time of his abuse
5. (1.0)
6. se sont avérés vagues\ à l’appui de son recours (.) particulièrement
have turned out to be vague to support her appeal particularly

7. sommaire également/ puisqu'il n'y a que sept lignes manuscrites (.)
lacunar too since there are only seven handwritten lines (.)
8. produites par l'intéressée et enregistré à la cour le 3 septembre
produced by the relevant party and registered at the court on September the 3rd

The motives of the rejection are given as a quote in direct speech ('I quote', line 2) from the OFPRA report. This attribution grants an authoritative status, an appearance of object and rigor to an utterance (Holt, 1996), which can be extended to written documents. This reflexive formulation of the OFPRA interview is imbricated with negative assessments (lines 6-7): the asylum seeker's statements are described as undetailed ('laconic'), as imprecise ('vague'), as impersonal ('very little personalization'). Since notifying that something which could have been done by the recipient is missing is a way of doing a complaint (Schegloff, 1988), the *rapporteur* is not only giving access to the verbatim motives for rejection but also makes it hearable as a reproach in the here-and-now, and in so doing, lays the ground for the ongoing hearing. This negative assessment is given continuity as the *rapporteur* moves on to the next phase of the process (and thus, the next part of the report). The appeal demand is described as 'particularly undetailed too', a negative assessment which is justified on the grounds, once again, of extension (line 7). The potential reproach is anaphorically tied to the previous ones through the connector 'too', and the reference to the number of lines, so that the vagueness and lack of details now seem to characterize the story told by the asylum seeker throughout the whole process.

The *rapporteur* then reaches the conclusions of the report, which are clearly signaled as the specific part to be interpreted (an aspect discussed in section 4, extract 1), and states the following:

Extract 3c. (Continued)

1. (1.0)
2. R. à titre liminaire il convient de souligner le caractère
as a preliminary point, the
3. particulièrement superficiel et lapidaire des éléments portés
particularly superficial and laconic character of the elements brought
4. à notre connaissance dans cette affaire (1) en effet
to our knowledge in this case [should be underlined]³ indeed
5. les déclarations écrites de l'intéressée devant l'OFPRA
the written statements of the relevant party at the OFPRA
6. comme devant la juridiction/ (.) sont demeurées particulièrement
as well as at the court have remained particularly
7. évasives et sommaires/ (.) et la brièveté de son entretien à l'OFPRA
evasive and lacunar and the brevity of her interview at OFPRA
8. de trente-cinq minutes à peine avec interprétariat/ (.) n'a guère
barely thirty five minutes long with the interpretation has not really
9. permis de glaner les précisions nécessaires\ (.) il sera dès lors
allowed to glean the required details it will thus be
10. indispensable d'inviter la requérante à se montrer précise
vital to invite the appellant to be precise
11. et circonstanciée (.) dans ses déclarations ce jour
and detailed in her statements today
12. lors de l'audience\ (1.0) en outre (0.5) les persécutions
during the hearing besides the persecutions
13. et craintes (1.0) alléguées par l'intéressée relevant strictement
and fears alleged by the interested party strictly falling
14. de la sphère privée et familiale (.) seuls les éléments apportés
within the private and family sphere only the elements brought
15. par la requérante elle-même pourront être exploités\

³ Due to syntax differences between English and French, this element from line 1 ("Il convient de souligner") was moved to line 4.

by the appellant herself are to be used

The *rapporteur* brings together the various negative assessments regarding the paucity of the asylum seeker's statements now framed as an insufficient basis for this hearing (lines 2-4). He justifies this assessment (and complaint) by mentioning first the evasiveness and brevity of her two written statements (request and appeal, lines 5-8) and to the short duration of the OFPRA interview. This tight bundle of negative assessments and complaints is then followed by the recommendation that the asylum seeker (referred to in third person) should provide precise and elaborate statements in the hearing to come (lines 15-17). The *rapporteur's* judgement of the case as a domestic one emphasizes the detrimental nature of the paucity of the statements (complaint) and strengthens the injunction to the asylum seeker to give details through a veiled threat of rejection. Indeed, implicitly, public violence (political, armed, racial, religious conflicts), whose claims can be the object of some verification, is set in contrast with domestic violence.

The following excerpt shows how these complaints and injunctions are rendered to the asylum seeker:

Extract 3d.

1. INT *aquí* el señor acaba de contar (.) la historia que le sucedió (.)
here the gentleman has just told the story which happened to you
2. *----* ((looks and points briefly to screen))
3. a usted allá/ (.) en el día de hoy ellos tienen muchas preguntas
to you there right now they have many questions
4. que hacerle porque eh: en un primero lugar eh ellos se dan cuenta
to ask you because er first er they realize
5. de que: la historia que usted contó es (.) muy cortita
that the story which you have told is a little short
6. e- el todo lo que usted escribió eh ellos señalaron
th- the whole of what you wrote er they pointed out
7. que (.) eh en la primera vez fueron diez líneas (.)
that er the first time it was ten lines long
8. cuando usted hizo la apelación fueron siete líneas/
when you made your appeal it was seven lines long
9. (.) entonces ellos se preguntan se preguntan por qué
so they wonder wonder why
10. con tantos problemas que usted tiene eh por qué
with all the problems that you have er why
11. la historia usted no la contó con más detalles (.)
you didn't tell the story with more details

The extension of the statements (number of lines) were not part of the conclusions of the report

(extract 3c) but constituted the starting point of the full report (3a). Admittedly, however, the written extension is a factual element surfacing throughout the report (extracts 3a and 3b) and even in the conclusion, although there the complaint was framed in terms of minutes of interview (extract 6c, line 8). In any case, this short excerpt shows that the interpreter does process the full report and enjoys agency to select the elements she deems important for the case and to adapt its form in the target language. Indeed, the interpreter transposes the institutional lingo and the highly formal, if not literary, evaluative language, used authoritatively to complain and enjoin ('sommaire', 'lacunaire', 'peu circonstancié', 'impersonnel'), into ordinary, empathic language, as attested to by the use of the euphemistic diminutive in Spanish to qualify the story as 'cortita' (little short). In his rendition (lines 9-11), the interpreter not only creates a distinctive participation frame which reinforces affiliation – "they-there" (as opposed to "us-here") wonder why you did not tell a longer story

– but also builds on such affiliating rendition to produce a positive assessment (or a legitimizing one) of her case (‘with all the problems that you had’).

This is nowhere to be found in the report and displays an implicit alignment with the veracity of her story of violence (hence a display of empathy), and works towards facilitating further elaboration. The interpreter thus produces an empathic display while at the same time gatekeeping with respect to potentially threatening messages, implicitly contained in the conclusion of the report. While such forms of mediation between the institutional character of the setting and the lay experience of some participants has been noted before (see for instance Hale, 2004), they are problematic in terms of transparency and accountability. Indeed, the interpreter is producing a narrative of her own in the name of the court, here the *rapporteur*, and not in her own name, as an intercultural mediator ought to do it (see García-Beyaert, 2015, p. 378). However, because of the agency interpreters need to exert to make the conclusions of the reports intelligible, the institutional demand for “summary interpreting” is particularly prone to gatekeeping and facilitation. Instead of providing a mere rendition of just the conclusions of the report, interpreters need to process the whole report to provide asylum seekers some kind of narrative arc for the key points raised. Indeed, asylum seekers arrive at the CNDA hearing aware that this is their last chance of obtaining asylum, and without prior knowledge of the report. The interpreter’s first turn is thus the first chance for them to be put in the complex picture. Since they do not have the right to a full interpretation of the beginning of the hearing and the read-aloud report, the interpreter’s empathic mediation (rather than an act of transferring threat) might be more effective in opening a productive participation frame for the appellant and obtaining a more detailed account of her story when she responds to the judiciary’s questions. In so doing, they become ‘agents and editors of new stories’, that is, ‘giving voice to participants’ stories and (re-)authoring the current story as a story of cooperation’ (Baraldi, 2012, p. 298).

In the next section, we examine how this affiliation of the interpreter with the asylum seeker in the summary interpreting performance occasions “reflexive” formulations.

6. The interpretation of the report as a speech event in its own right: focusing on reflexive formulations

Among the fourteen cases which we have selected, only one shows the interpreter complying with the demand of the court, by directly producing a list of questions/issues in the language of the appellant. In all other cases, interpreters bracket their rendition with opening sequences, often combining greeting and “reflexive formulations” of what has happened before. In so doing, interpreters frame the unfolding interpretation of the report as a distinct episode of talk with a beginning (6.1), an end (6.2), and enact a distinctive participation frame (6.3).

6.1. Opening the “summary” interpretation of the report

The “summary interpretation” of the conclusions of the report typically opens in the following way, at the transition between turns:

Extract 4.

1. R. c’est en l’état (.) que se présente (.) cette affaire\
this is is how this case stands
2. (2.5)
3. merci monsieur le rapporteur/ monsieur l’interprète/ c’est à vous\
thank you mister rapporteur mister interpreter the floor is yours
4. INT eh% merci

thank you

5. SEC %((produces a wide shot of the court in Paris))
6. INT ((torques and looks towards AS)) buenos dias
7. good morning
8. AS °buenos dias°
9. good morning
10. INT *aquí* el señor acaba de contar (.) la historia que le sucedió (.)
here the gentleman has just told the story which happened to you
11. *-----* ((looks and points briefly to screen))
12. a usted allá/ (.) en el día de hoy ellos tienen muchas preguntas
you there at this moment in time they have many questions
13. que hacerle porque eh: en un primero lugar eh ellos se dan cuenta
to ask you because first of all they realize
14. de que: la historia que usted contó es (.) muy cortita
that the story which you have told is really a little bit short

A conventional formula closes the report (line 1). A floor-giving sequence is then initiated by the presiding judge (lines 3-4). Interestingly, this step is skipped in the rest of the hearing, whereby interpreting is fully integrated in the sequential organization of the interrogation sequence between the judiciary/*rappporteur* and the asylum appellant. Here, by contrast, there is an “intermediary” turn to give the floor to the interpreter. Thus, the two distinct phases of the “conclusions of the report” and the “summary interpretation”, established in the Code of Entry in the CNDA, are here verbally and non-verbally enacted. It is also a way of enjoining participants (only the French speaking ones as this intermediary turn is not interpreted to but witnessed by the overhearing asylum seeker) to collaborate with the interpreter by suspending their own turn during what may come across as a rather long (because linguistically inaccessible) stretch of talk. Indeed, in initiating a floor-giving sequence, the judge displays his understanding of the summary interpreting as a specific sequence of talk, with a distinctive organization for turn-taking, and he enacts it as such.

Even though the (male) interpreter has already greeted the asylum seeker earlier when he was sitting down (first encounter in the room), he initiates another greeting sequence (lines 6-8). These multiple greetings (Licoppe, 2021) display the interpreter’s understanding that he will now interact with the asylum seeker in a distinct capacity, and in a different episode. The interpreter does directly translate the points raised in the conclusion of the report in the name of the *rappporteur*, but prefaces his rendition through “cross-linguistic reflexive formulations”, that is, by stating in the language of the addressee what has been going on so far. Such reflexive formulations, which gloss the report’s reading and prepares the recipient for its (summary) reproduction, are the site of characteristic deictic work on the part of interpreters. Here, he glosses the previous speech event as one in which a third person, a “he” (‘el señor’), was speaking about a “you” (the asylum seeker) (line 10). Then the interpreter states that ‘they’ (line 13) (the judges) have many questions to ask, implicitly to a second-person “you”. The framing of the court as a ‘they’ is reinforced by the fact that the secretary has moved the camera away from the *rappporteur* and framed the three judges (lines 4-5); a distinctive action which enacts relevant participation frames (Licoppe, 2015). The interpreter enacts an “I/you” participation frame, that is, an “I” (the interpreter) addressing a “you” (the appellant), as well as an “augmented” participation frame, across the video link, between “us” and “they”, contrasting both of them on the Cayenne side and the judiciary in the headquarters in mainland France who have just been made visible on screen.

This is also supported by his evolving body orientations. As he initiates the rendition, the interpreter produces a ‘torque’ (Schegloff, 1998) towards the asylum speaker, with all his upper body turned toward her, thus creating an ‘ecological huddle’ (Goffman, 1961, p. 17-18). Moreover, when he utters ‘aquí’ (here) as the first item of his inaugural, reflexive

formulation (line 10), he briefly turns, looks and points towards the screen, with the gesture accomplished so as to appear co-extensive to the lexical unit ‘aquí’. In this way the indexical ‘aquí’ enacts not only a temporal contrast (then-now), but also a spatial one, which reinforces the “us-they” opposition: “us here versus them there”. This juncture is also intercultural as he mediates the procedural, institutional jargon of the court by using lay language: ‘señor’ (line 10) instead of *rapporteur*. In so doing, the interpreter multimodally displays interesting forms of “recipient design”, whereby the two parties are constructed as asymmetrical in terms of linguistic capital.

The initial greeting sequence is not followed by a direct rendition but occasions the production of a reflexive formulation in which the interpreter provides a verbal formulation of what has gone on before (the reading of the report) qua speech event (lines 10-13), and which the asylum seeker is likely to have only eye-witnessed so far because of the language barrier and the lack of simultaneous interpretation. Reflexive formulations contribute to ratify both the interpreter and the asylum seeker as participants in an interaction conducted between them in the here and now, in front of a court framed as a remote collective of bystanders (them who have just talked over there), but which functions, however, as one single hearing through the artifice of the video link.

As highlighted above, camera motions, the interpreter’ pronominal work as well as body language in this prefatory work, shape relevant participation frames. Together, they contribute to the multimodal framing of the three judges as ‘distant’ spectators of the report’s summary interpretation, and of the interpreter as a facilitator in the exercise of bridging space, time, cultures and languages.

6.2 Closing the “summary interpretation” of the report

Similarly, interpreters do not give the floor back to the judges immediately after their rendition of the report’s conclusions. Instead, they initiate closing sequences which tend to involve reflexive formulations of what is expected to come next. These formulations combine sequential concerns (doing the closing of the current sequence) and facilitation work (informing and ‘prepping’ the asylum seeker for the interrogation sequence). This is evidenced in this extract from another case, with a female interpreter, after she has rendered the issues raised in the report:

Extract 5.

1. INT (.)
2. entonces ello:s todas las preguntas se las van a hacer
so they.. all the questions they will ask them to you
3. alrededor de eso\ (.) si es posible ser precisa y:
around this if it is posible to be precise and
4. con los detalles de las preguntas que les hacen\
with the details of the questions which they ask you
5. AS ((nodding))°OK°=
6. INT =vale/
7. okay
8. AS ((nods))
9. (0.5)
10. INT *euh:: merci madame la présidente
thank you mrs president
11. *((turns towards screen))
12. PRE merci monsieur l’interprète
thank you mr interpreter

The interpreter marks a pause and initiates an utterance with ‘*entonces*’ (so), which frames the previous utterance referred to through an anaphor (‘alrededor the esto’/around this) and projects a movement towards what is to come. What follows (lines 2-4) is an announcement of the content of an imminent speech episode (the kind of questions the judges will ask), ensued by a request for her to be more precise. This interactional dynamic is both backward-oriented (as a reflexive formulation of the gist of the conclusions), and forward-looking (as a reflexive formulation which works as an announcement of and a recommendation on the upcoming interrogation sequence). There is a potential ambiguity in ‘footing’ here. Retrospectively, the interpreter appears as speaking on behalf of the *rapporteur*, which does not invite or trigger a response from the asylum seeker. Prospectively, the interpreter may be heard as the potential author of the utterance, i.e. as an intercultural mediator in charge of prepping the asylum seeker for the interrogation sequence. Such a footing does elicit a response from the asylum seeker to the interpreter. Indeed, she nods and utters a token of agreement (line 5), showing her acknowledgement of the announcement/recommendation and, in so doing, of the mediating-facilitating role of the interpreter. Such an understanding also rests on the deictic framing of these sequences (the “I-you here”, talking about what “them-there” have done and will do, is at play in this extract as much as in the previous one). Note that the merging of the interlocutors of the other side of the video link into a “them-there” flattens the distinction between the *rapporteur* and the judges.

The possibility that the interpreter appears to act as a mediator-facilitator and that she may be heard as such is a constitutive, emergent feature of the multimodal organization of these “summary interpretations” episodes. As we shall see in the next section, this impacts on the appellant’s perception of the role of the interpreter.

6.3. Hearing the rendition of the report as response-relevant talk

The perception of the interpreter as a facilitator has significant consequences on the ways in which the asylum seeker is to treat the questions of the report. Consider this excerpt from a hearing in Cayenne (French Guiana) with a French Creole speaking asylum seeker:

Extract 6.

01. (1.3)
 02. PR merci pour ce rapport donc comme pour l'affaire précédente
thank for this report so as in the previous case
 03. (0.5)
 04. je vais vous demander de::: (.) traduire (.) merci
I will ask you to::: (.)translate (.) thank you
 05. (1.2)
 06. INT merci monsieur le président
thank you mister president
 07. hhhh donc euh yo rakonte istwa ke w te ekri a (0.3)
hhhh so e:r they have told the story that you had written
 08. euh: yo te rejte dosye w la paske ou pat ale nan (0.3) à l'OFPRA
they had rejected your case because you did not go to the OFPRA
 09. ou pat ale euh ou pat prezante kò w (0.3)
you did not go er you did not present yourself in person
 10. donc ou va pote plis eksplikasyon (0.4)
so you will give some more explanations
 11. INT [yo te bezwen] poze w kesyon «paske
they wanted to ask you questions because
 12. AS [juste]
 «int «hand gesture



13. INT Ɂnon m ap jus m ap jus di w kisa madame nan di dakò
 no I am just telling you what the lady just said
 Ɂint Ɂturns head



14. AS wi
 yes
 15. INT mmm (0.6) donc yo: ou te di yo
 mmm so you had told them

After the reading of the report, the judge acts as a chair, and gives the floor to the interpreter, with an instruction to ‘translate’ (lines 2-4). The interpreter thanks the judge (line 6), and then engages in the same kind of prefatory and deictic work discussed in 6.1 and 6.2. She opens interpreting with a reflexive formulation of the reading of the report as a speech event (line 7). She even attributes what has been said to a collective third person ‘they’, rather than to a “he” (the *rapporteur*), thus enacting an “us/them” divide, like in extract 5. This deictic work frames the questions as relevant both to the *rapporteur* (who has just read them) and to the judges (which will ask them again). In so doing, the interpreter incorporates both the past and the future of the judicial proceedings into the summary rendition.

After this preface, the interpreter moves on to the report per se, by stating the motive for the rejection at OFPRA. She does this with three successive clausal utterances referring to the fact that the asylum seeker did not come to the OFPRA interview, with shifting deictic stances: the first explicitly involves indirect reported speech (line 8), the second reformulates the motive for rejection (line 9), and the last one announces that related questions will be asked (line 10). The utterance in line 9 is interesting because of the way it is designed (the use of ‘you’ and the possibility of the utterance to be direct speech). It appears as a factual assertion generated by the interpreter on the asylum seeker’s personal experience (her absence at OFPRA). ‘Epistemics-in-action’ have shown that assertions designed so that the speaker may appear as less knowledgeable than the recipient may be understood and treated as questions (Heritage, 2012). So, in terms of ‘footing’ (Goffman, 1981), if the asylum seeker perceives the interpreter, not just as the “animator”, but as the “author” of such an assertion, and the reproach as ‘generated’ rather than ‘transferred’ by the interpreter (see García-Beyaert, 2015, p. 378), she may treat it as a question addressed to her here and now by the interpreter by trying to respond to her. And indeed, the asylum seeker takes the floor and starts talking (line 12), overlapping with the interpreter who goes on with her summary rendition of the report. The interpreter then does a blocking gesture with her hand and utters a ‘no’, which aims to

stop the asylum seeker's talk and marks it as inadequate. She then provides an account, i.e. a reflexive formulation of what she has just done, aiming to remind the asylum seeker that she was "just" reporting on what the *rapporteur* had said (line 13). The interpreter thus shows her understanding that the source of the confusion lies in the fact that the asylum seeker has not perceived that what she was saying was reported speech.

The opening and closing of "summary interpretation" frame the report to the appellant as a speech event in its own right. Unlike the rest of the proceedings, interpreting is separated from the reading of the report, not only by physical distance but also by verbal and non-verbal language in distinctive sequences: floor-giving to the interpreter, exchange of greetings between the chairing judge and interpreter, reflexive formulation of what has been going on so far, announcement of what is to happen next (a kind of "reflexive prospective formulation"). The use of deictic resources construct a distinctive participation frame of an "us-here", whereby "I" am talking to "you", under the eyes of "them-their", about what "he-there" (who read the report) and/or "them-there" (*rapporteur* and judges) have said and will ask you. This participation frame blurs the boundary between treating the interpreter as speaking on behalf of the *rapporteur* (which elicits listening) and the interpreter as generating her own assertions or assessments (which elicits a response in the here and now from the asylum seeker).

Conclusion

Integrating insights from Pragmatics and Interpreting Studies, this paper has examined the effects of the institutional enactment of a legal norm of "summary interpreting" on bilingual, video-mediated asylum appeal hearing. We have observed that the demand to restrict summary interpretation to the conclusions of the initial, read-aloud report, paradoxically occasioned different types of agentive interpreting performance.

Going beyond their stringent institutional mandate, interpreters often pay attention to the whole report to provide some kind of narrative arc to both process and revert its conclusions to the asylum seeker. Such "substantive" formulations of the report also contribute to mediate between the institution and its users, as well as between their respective language and concerns. We analyzed an instance in which the interpreter transformed a threatening injunction to elaborate further, into an empathic injunction showing alignment with the asylum seeker's story. Thus, for much that the institutional policy of summary interpreting seems to preclude this leeway, the complexities of its enactment in the video-mediated and bilingual courtroom demand interpreters to exercise discretion in identifying and rendering the relevant elements of a contentious source text.

A second unintended consequence of the mandate for summary interpreting in this setting, stems from the institution's neglect of sequential concerns. Our data shows that interpreters do not launch into directly adjacent renditions of the report (as expected in consecutive interpreting), but that there seems to be a need for interpreters to frame summary interpreting as a distinctive speech event. Typical sequential work involves a signaling of the source text by the *rapporteur*, a floor-giving sequence initiated by the judge *qua* chair, a greeting sequence between interpreter and asylum seeker (often done as a "second greeting"), and a preface sequence initiated by the interpreter.

Furthermore, because the interpreter is not telling a story, but providing a rendition of an extensive stretch of talk done before, her prefaces to and closings of her rendition take a specific form. They are designed as “reflexive formulations” of what has been done so far, i.e. of the reading aloud of the report as a speech event (retrospective), or as formulations of what kind of speech event is about to happen (prospective). As such, they also involve significant deictic work, which multimodally enacts a particular participation frame, in which “I” (the interpreter) tell “you” (the asylum seeker), here and now, what “them” (the court), over there, have been saying then about “you” and what “you” should expect and do next. This contrasts with the prevailing integration of the interpreter’s turns found in bilingual courts integration and the subsequent absence of deictic transposition. The sequential organization of the hearing, the physical positioning of participants on both sides of the video link, the post hoc summary of the report, accrue towards discarding the paralleling of the deictic organization of the report’s reading, with a “I” (the interpreter, endorsing the voice of the rapporteur) telling them (the judges) to interrogate her (the asylum seeker) on these aspects of the case.

The enactment of such a participation framework, combined to the kind of reflexive formulations found in prefaces and closings, frames the interpreter as an intercultural mediator, who formulates to the asylum seeker what has been going on, and preps her for what is to come. Our point is that this facilitation and mediation work seems to be enabled by sequential concerns which are sensitive to the particulars of the situation: it is the first time the interpreter addresses the asylum seeker ‘officially’ as the interpreter, thus prompting greeting sequences at that juncture; the interpreter needs to exert discretion beyond rendering “just” the conclusions of the report, thus reflexively formulating what precedes as an episode of activity in its own right; the local ecology of the interpreter sitting next to the asylum seeker and away from the court, thus reinforcing an ‘us’-‘they’ participation framework, etc. This accounts for the paradoxical observation that while the interpreter’s official mandate in our case seems to call for a minimization of her discretion, for a faithful next turn rendition of the conclusions of the report, the summary interpretation is done quite differently, in a way in which the interpreter seems to act as an intercultural mediator producing her own narrative of the previous turn. In this light, the kind of discretion the interpreter exercises, does not rest upon reconciling norms departure and ‘clients’ trust (Skaaden, 2019), it is also an endogenous feature of the interpreting situation itself.

This suggests that ‘summary interpreting’ is an elusive notion, moving along a spectrum between two poles, according to the particulars of the situation: as a kind of (very) long consecutive interpreting and as a next turn rendition, with a minimum of discretion over what to summarize from the report, and how to summarize it, on the one hand, or as a kind of intercultural mediation, facilitating and condensing a previous episode of activity involving opening and closing work, and reflexive formulations, with a generous discretion. The interest of our case study lies in the way in which the institutional mandate leans towards the former, while it is actually done as the latter.

The agency afforded by summary interpreting sequences, shaped both by legal norms and institutional policies and at the same time, by sequential concerns and ecological configurations, may be detrimental to the three parties in different ways: the interpreter whose undefined role puts their professional recognition in jeopardy (see Boéri, 2015, Skaaden, 2019), the institution which is unaware of appellants’ uneven access to the conclusions of the report, the appellant asylum seeker who may be misled regarding the authorship of the utterances and what to expect from her in the interaction. However, the imperfect interpreting situation can also be productive of good outcomes, such as ‘new forms of participation,

sensitivity and empowerment' (Baraldi, 2012: 323): in our setting this takes the form of facilitation work stemming from the management of sequential concerns, such as the framing of the summary interpretation of the report as a distinctive speech event. In an asylum appeal hearing, whose adversity and power asymmetries are exacerbated by multiple barriers (physical, linguistic, cultural, etc.) and by the very policy of summary interpreting, interpreters should be afforded the necessary leeway to mitigate harm and maximize relevant, fruitful responses from the asylum seeker; a leeway which interpreters in our case seem to enjoy and of which the institution is unaware. Thus, the micro-analysis of what the interpreter actually does needs to be examined not only from a top-down perspective (i.e. exploring how generic rules and policies regarding summary interpreting may be operationalized on the ground) but also from a bottom-up perspective (i.e. how situated rendition practices may mitigate the harm caused by problematic interpreting policies, on the most vulnerable parties). Our observations may apply beyond courtroom interaction. There is thus a need for more ethnographically-minded studies of how summary interpreting may be organized and performed across settings.

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