UNDERSTANDING DISCOURSE MARKERS
IN INTERPRETER-MEDIATED
POLICE INTERVIEWS

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For foreign-language interviewees

Waiting to be heard

And police interpreters

Making their voice (not always) heard
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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this thesis, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is entirely my own work, that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Aspects of the Introduction and chapters 1 and 6 were published in two articles (Gallai, 2012, 2013), which I have included in the References. The amount of work published is less than 10% of this thesis submission.
In this work I shall refer to the speaker (or author) as ‘he’ and the hearer (or reader) as ‘she’. I shall also distinguish: (a) interpreting or to interpret (lower case), which indicates the activity of an interpreter; and (b) Interpretation or to Interpret (upper case), which denotes the meta-representation of speaker’s thoughts recovered by a hearer. Lastly, all names, dates and locations in the transcripts are fictitious and do not relate in any way to any real events. Any resemblance is purely coincidental.
ABSTRACT

Despite the growing prevalence of interpreter-mediated police interviews, this area remains widely under-researched as the focus of research on legal interpreting has been the discourse of the courtroom. Scholars have challenged the myth of literalism and demonstrated interpreters’ lack of awareness of pragmatic aspects of language. Working with Goffman’s (1981) participation framework and Sperber & Wilson’s (1995) relevance-theoretic approach to pragmatics, this study builds on previous work on the use of discourse markers (DMs) by interpreters (e.g. Berk-Seligson, 1990; Hale, 1999, 2004) in order to investigate whether interpreters’ treatment of DMs effectively promotes or hinders direct contact between the parties. In particular, its aim is to show how interpreters convey implicatures triggered by a DM in the original utterance in order to match the intention of the speaker, analysing the impact that resulting “shifts in footing” (Wadensjö, 1998) may have on the different stages of the enhanced cognitive interview.

My data consists of five police interviews involving four NRPSI-registered interpreters, two language combinations (English-Italian and Portuguese-Italian), and both suspects and a vulnerable victim. Findings show that not only are DMs often omitted, but they are also added in renditions of utterances which do not contain corresponding expressions. While some of these added DMs can be attributable to the interpreter, others must be treated as being attributed to the original speaker in the sense that they give rise to an interpretation of that speaker’s thoughts and thought processes. I show that in a relevance-theoretic framework such additions can be shown to be compatible with the requirement of an invisible non-participating interpreter set by Codes of Practice.

Since the effectiveness of interrogation is affected by the extent to which interpreters and officers have an understanding of interpreters’ practice in this area, my research suggests the need for a more nuanced conceptualisation of Codes of Practice and extensive training for interpreters and interviewers in sociological and pragmatic aspects of interpreted encounters.

Key words: discourse marker; relevance; Goffman; police interpreting; legal interpreting; interpreter training; interrogative interviewing; European Union legislation.