Ethical implications in situations where the language of interpretation shifts: The AUSIT Code of Ethics.

Jim Hlavac
Monash University
Jim.hlavac@monash.edu

Abstract. In bilingual or diglossic situations, shifting or switching between languages can be a common phenomenon amongst groups or individuals. In interpreting situations, a shift in the constellation of languages, i.e. from language *a* and language *x* to language *a* and language *y,* is perhaps not so common. It can only occur in interactions between multilingual clients and multilingual interpreters, typically when clients wish to shift to their dominant language and interpreters also have proficiency in this language. Twenty Australian-based interpreters, out of a sample of sixty, reported engaging in shifting in the course of interpreting. Responses to hypothetical shifts in the language of interpretation are discussed, in which interpreter informants provide acceptability judgements of courses of action and justifications for accepting – or refusing to accept – a shift in the language of interpretation. Ethical considerations relevant to interpreters in these situations are discussed and the AUSIT Code of Ethics is examined to see which guidelines relate to this phenomenon.

Keywords: ethics, AUSIT Code of Ethics, shifting, multilingualism, code-switching, proficiency, dominance

1. Introduction

Moving between languages is axiomatic to interpreting. Moving between languages is also commonplace for bi- or multilingual individuals and groups. In Interpreting Studies the prototypical model of the interpreting situation is that of two parties speaking monolingual varieties of two different languages, with the interpreter functioning as a linguistic intermediary. This seems to disregard the profile of many interpreters who have proficiency and accreditation in more than two languages. Multilingualism (i.e. the use of three or more languages) may find its way into interpreting situations that are usually perceived as being bilingual. This paper examines a situational intersection of multilingualism, interpreting and ethics. A negotiated shift in the language of interpretation and perceived ethical implications for interpreters as reported by them is examined and then related to the AUSIT Code of Ethics (hereafter: AUSIT CoE).

Within the literature on shifting languages or code-switching, attention typically focuses on features that are thought to account for why a change in language occurs, such as change of interlocutor, topic, mode of communication or discourse-conversational features such as asides, emphasis or reiteration. The type of code-switching or language shifting that is the focus of this paper is motivated by different reasons. It usually derives from a self-perceived level of proficiency and to a lesser extent the perceived level of proficiency of the interpreter, based on whatever information is available to a client about that interpreter. Language shifting also assumes that clients normally wish to speak the language variety in which they have greater proficiency, in the interpreting situations that they find themselves in.

Most bi- and multilinguals have a sense of which language/s they are more highly proficient or 'dominant' in. Notwithstanding the persistent myth that bi- or multilinguals can or should be multiple monolinguals in the same person (cf. Grosjean, 2008) or the idealised notion of 'equilingualism' as an

attainable goal, bi- and multilinguals are usually able to specify which language/s they are dominant in, taking into account the situation, topic or interlocutor. This is related to the contexts in which each language was acquired or is regularly used. A detailed discussion of linguistic dominance goes beyond the focus of this paper (see Genesee et al. 1995; McNamara, 1997). This paper relates 'dominance' to the linguistic performance of an individual based on his/her own declaration or on the evaluation of a language specialist. This latter point is of course problematic but axiomatic to *all* interpreting situations. As language specialists who are required to recognise and comprehend varying dialects, registers, genres and pragmatic patterns, interpreters make automatic and involuntary judgements about other interlocutors' proficiency levels as well as suppositions about which languages they are likely to know.

The second feature which may determine the likelihood of shifting is a client's (and to a lesser extent an interpreter's) re-negotiation of personal, ethnic, educational and socio-economic attributes, which may be initiated by the client as a direct request, or which may be signalled through "inferences" (Mason, 2006, p.363). The term "take-up" is also used for interpreters in the "sense [that]… they make of others' talk and how they respond to it" (Mason, 2006, p.365). While these processes usually relate to discourse-internal and content features of text, the inferences can also relate to other attributes, such as ethnic allegiance, educational level or previous place of residence, all of them possible predictors of the preferred language variety.

A client's re-negotiation or re-positioning of key attributes indexed through linguistic forms is largely based on 'linguistic monitoring'. Some studies of interpreting interactions in which the proficiency level of either client or interpreter is examined (e.g. Müller, 1989; Pym, 1999; Davidson, 2002; Baker, 2006) point to an overt level of 'linguistic monitoring'. 'Monitoring' here refers to activation of receptive, i.e. listening, skills which focus not only on the referential content of a text but on the linguistic forms that a speaker employs to convey such text. Within such text there may be overt, metalinguistic features that indicate the speaker's consciousness of forms chosen, such as side-comments, retrieval difficulties, hedges, filled pauses and so on. While linguistic monitoring and assessments of proficiency level are key notions in the fields of second language acquisition and language testing, they rarely figure in studies of mediated interactions or interpreting. The present paper seeks to address the specific issue of desired or negotiated one-way shifts in the language of interpretation.

My interest in clients who change their selected choice of language is based on my own interpreting experience and my observation of other interpreters.

This paper has eight main sections. Section 2 briefly describes some examples of shifting that I have been a part of or that I have witnessed amongst interpreter colleagues. Section 3 outlines ethical considerations relevant to a discussion on shifting in general. In section 4, I present the method and details of data collection which was gained through a sample of sixty interpreters. Further, I present examples and circumstances of shifting reported amongst a sample of sixty interpreters. This is followed in section 6 by responses from the same sample of interpreters to hypothetical scenarios presented to them. Lastly, interpreter informants' responses are collated and I re-visit the AUSIT CoE and examine relevant sections and contextualise and apply them to the phenomenon of shifting.

2. Examples involving shifts in the language of interpretation

I am an Australian-based interpreter with accreditation as a Croatian-English and German-English interpreter. I have experience as a freelance interpreter and translator in Croatia, Austria and Germany. I have also worked as an ESL instructor in Australia and have been both teacher and interpreter for large numbers of Croatian-speaking students who have settled in Melbourne. Most of these students had left their country of birth in 1991 and 1992 and had spent five to ten years in Germany or Austria, and had acquired proficiency in German.

Chronologically, the first language of these students was Croatian. In terms of proficiency, many of them reported that German had become their dominant language. Interactions, both in the classroom and interpreted ones, would often begin in Croatian but students often shifted to German, in which they "felt more at home". I also usually shifted to German after they had done so. This type of shifting by students from language x to language y is motivated by their self-reported dominance in language y and by knowing that the interpreter was also proficient in that language.

In other educational situations where interpreting services were provided for recently-arrived migrants, I have witnessed shifting from Ukrainian, via a compromise variety, Surzhyk, to Russian. In another situation I witnessed some Assyrian-speaking clients abandon en masse their Assyrian-English interpreter to hear the interpretation of an Arabic-English interpreter colleague. In the second instance, the client's dominant language was Russian. In the third instance, due to language shift already occurring amongst Assyrians in Iraq, Arabic was becoming the dominant language amongst younger, tertiary-educated and urban Iraqi Assyrians.

In all three of these examples, the shift was initiated by the clients, for their own benefit, through a direct request, a re-selection of interpreter and language where two or more were available, or a compromise variety. The desired shifts appear as the preferred choice of the client.

There need not be a synonymous or axiomatic relationship between a person's (chronologically) first language, ethnicity, citizenship, place of residence and their dominant language. Table 1 presents profiles of three other clients known to the author in which a bi-cultural background or previous migration have led to a preference for a specific language for interpreting purposes.

Table 1. Demographic and linguistic profiles of some bi- and multilingual clients

Ethnicity	Chinese	Ashkali	Lebanese/Arab
Citizenship	Indonesian	Serbian	Lebanese
Place/s of residence	Indonesia	Kosovo, Germany	Lebanon
First language/s	Hakka, Indonesian	Albanian, Serbian	Arabic, French
Dominant language/s	Indonesian	German	Arabic/French
Preferred language for interpreting	Indonesian	German	French

Allocation of interpreting services is frequently initiated not by clients but by government services, healthcare providers and educational institutions that determine the choice of language based on information about a client's citizenship, country of origin or ethnicity (cf. Chesher et al., 2003, p. 282),

and not necessarily on the client's preferred language. Further, some clients select a non-dominant language, often due to their own notions of identity which may not encompass linguistic dominance. Sometimes, due to a sense of duty or loyalty as nationals of a particular country, they select that country's national language. Some clients may specify a non-dominant language, as they do not believe that interpreting services are available in their dominant language. Due to legal and privacy restrictions it is hard to systematically gather data on people's linguistic biographies, documentation of their 'declared' first language (and other languages) and the actual T&I services provided to them or sought by them. As an interpreter and as an ESL teacher working in programs that provide interpreting services for newly-arrived adult students, I have witnessed dozens of instances of 'mismatched' interpreting services such as those described above.

3. Ethical considerations

Guidelines that set out desirable standards of conduct have been part of the formalisation and professionalisation of the interpreting profession. Mikkelson (2000/2001, p.49) even notes that a formal code of conduct distinguishes a profession from an occupation. Of course, ethical, i.e. moral assumptions or principles about human behaviour are axiomatic to interpreting situations as they are to all forms of human interaction. In the last ten years, focus on ethical considerations and the categorisation of types of behaviour as desirable, neutral or undesirable for interpreters has reflected a formalisation of ethics within Interpreting Studies research and training. Legal, medical and sign language interpreting were amongst the first to formally address moral dilemmas and ethical considerations (e.g. Morris, 1995; Kaufert and Putsch, 1997; Mikkelson, 2000/2001; Chun et al., 2002; Leneham and Napier, 2003). Now, all branches including not only community and conference interpreting but also talk show (Katan and Straniero-Sergio, 2001) emergency relief (Bulut and Kurultay, 2001) and military interpreting (Monacelli and Punzo, 2001) now engage in discussions on codes of conduct. Some (e.g. Rudvin, 2007, pp.48, 55) are cautious about the need and validity to mandate particular types of behaviour and whether such behaviours can be universal or inevitably remain culturally-specific. Many of these discussions follow general debates in the social sciences about characteristics of universalist versus particularist cultural settings and the norms of interpreter behaviour that hold in either group (Tompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2002; Rudvin, 2007). Nonetheless, codes of conduct are now a characteristic attribute of professional associations that seek to provide sets of principles informing their members' behaviour. Questions on ethics and professional conduct are also a compulsory part of testing for accreditation in Australia.

   In Australia the AUSIT CoE, redeveloped and revised in 1999, is the guiding code for practitioners in Australia, superseding the nine codes (e.g. Queensland Association of Translators and Interpreters: Code of Ethics; The Western Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters: Code of Ethics) that had existed in different states in Australia or for particular state departments (NAATI, 1989). A comprehensive description and analysis of the AUSIT CoE is provided by Hale (2007, pp.101-136) with discussion of comparable codes from other countries. Contemporary research in Interpreting Studies in Australia now frequently includes reference to the AUSIT CoE (e.g. Glass and Dixon, 2007); one recent study tests awareness of the code, not only amongst practitioners but also their clients and third parties (Dragoje and Ellam, 2007). The AUSIT CoE contains eight main

sections: professional conduct, confidentiality, competence, impartiality, accuracy, employment, professional development and professional solidarity. The AUSIT CoE is re-visited in section 8 where relevant parts of the code are examined in relation to shifting.

4. Methodology and informants

Informants who are accredited, recognised and/or practising interpreters were sought to examine the frequency of shifting. Potential informants were contacted through the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT), a professional association of interpreters and translators, and through a training session conducted by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) in Melbourne.[1] The total number of potential informants invited to participate through AUSIT's electronic newsflashes was approximately 1000. Participation was voluntary and consisted of the completion of an anonymous electronic or paper questionnaire. Sixty-seven responses were obtained. Seven participants were excluded from the final sample due to incomplete or missing data. The sample thus consists of responses from sixty informants. Responses were collected in August and September 2008.[2]

All sixty informants are Australian-based, at least tri-lingual and forty-four of them possess formal accreditation or recognition. Interpreters with two languages only, English and one other language, were not included in the sample. Thus, the sample and the number of reported instances of shifting cannot be considered representative of the experiences of interpreters in general. However, a sample size of sixty multilingual interpreters does allow for some generalisation about the likely experiences of this (large) sub-group and gives some indication of the frequency or incidence of shifting in this sub-group.

Non-personal information was elicited about the settings in which informants acquired their languages. Informants were invited to report on whether they had ever experienced a situation in which a client had shifted the language of interpretation or had sought to do this. Those who had experienced this were asked to provide details of the languages in question and the situation. Further, the second and main part of the questionnaire consisted of descriptions of hypothetical situations involving shifts in a language of interpretation. All informants, regardless of whether they had experienced a shift of language in an interpreting situation or not, were invited to provide judgements of acceptability in hypothetical situations. Comments were invited and provided by many. Summaries of comments are provided after the responses for each hypothetical situation.

The data presented below is collected from interpreters only. The study does not include data from clients, agencies or others. Thus, discussion of shifting is based on responses from one party only and includes the reported but not self-reported circumstances and motivations of clients.

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5. Incidence of shifting amongst the informant sample

Twenty (33%) of the sixty informants reported experiencing shifts in the language of interpretation while working as interpreters. They fell into seven categories, depending on the status of the languages involved or on the motivation for shifting and the direction of the shift. Patterns of shift are summarised below in Table 2.

Table 2: Type and details of shifting recorded amongst informants

Pattern of shifting: languages involved, directions or motivations	Number
Language of country of previous migration → Language of country of birth Spanish → Italian Oromo → Somali Spanish (→ Italian) → Sicilian Japanese → Mandarin German → Hungarian	5
National language → Regional language[3] Mandarin → Cantonese Mandarin → Shanghainese Urdu → Punjabi Amharic → Oromo Urdu → Pushto	5
Minority language [3] → National language Karen → Burmese Karen → Thai Nuer → (Sudanese) Arabic	3
National language 1 → National language 2 Dari → Pushto Croatian → Bosnian Bosnian → Croatian	3
National language → Minority language Indonesian → Hokkien Serbian → Hungarian	2
Language of country of birth → Language of country of previous migration Dinka → Swahili	1
Desire to avoid contact with interpreter from L1 community French → Arabic → French	1

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[3] The terms 'regional' and 'minority' refer to languages that do not have an official status as national languages of an independent political state. 'Regional languages' are those languages with an official status in a specified area of a state whose speakers usually co-identify ethnically with the (majority) national ethnicity. Examples of regional languages are Galician in Spain, Sicilian in Italy or Shanghainese in China. 'Minority languages' are those languages whose speakers usually do not co-identify ethnically with their nation state's (majority) national ethnicity and who are usually domiciled in a specific area of a national state. Examples of minority languages are 'indigenous' languages such as Sorbian in Germany or Cantonese in Vietnam and also recently transposed 'immigrant' languages such as Arabic in France or Berber in The Netherlands (cf. Arzoz 2008). The status of the same language can differ from state to state. For example, Pushto is a regional language in Pakistan but one of the two national languages in Afghanistan.

The reported number of instances of shifting presented above in Table 2 reflects those instances of shifting experienced by twenty of the sixty informants. A full presentation of informants' experiences and circumstances of shifts in the language of interpretation is provided in Hlavac (2010). In regard to the person who initiated shifts presented in Table 2 above, twelve of the twenty examples presented above were shifts that were initiated by the client, in all cases for the client's own benefit. In five cases it is not clear who initiated the shift or whether it was negotiated and enacted jointly by both parties. In three instances, interpreters took the initiative of offering or suggesting a shift to the client which, in all cases, was accepted. Informants' responses indicate that shifting is usually initiated by the client, and invariably meant to be of benefit to the client. The following section contains informants' responses to hypothetical situations involving the possibility of shifting.

6. Ethical considerations about interpreter behaviour in relation to shifts in the language of interpretation

Shifting occurs among 33% of informants and, as section 5 above reports, the interpreters themselves usually shift to accede to a client's preferences. In this section, I examine how interpreters judge situations, their role and its obligations and how these are negotiated with other parties. This section presents informants' responses to hypothetical situations in order to examine the following: client-initiated vs. interpreter-initiated shifts; shifting for the client's benefit vs. the interpreter's benefit; the interpreter's judgements of the client's proficiency vs. client's judgements of the interpreter's proficiency; the need to inform or gain permission from other party. Responses in this section are from all sixty informants, not only from the twenty informants who reported experiencing shifting. The experiences of the twenty informants who had experienced shifting are likely to influence their responses to the hypothetical situations presented below. However, their responses to hypothetical situations need not be reflective of how they responded in real-life situations and their responses are not otherwise distinguished from those of the other forty informants.

Informants were asked to grade the interpreter's behaviour in the hypothetical situations as acceptable, borderline or not acceptable. Some informants did not choose any response and gave no verbal answer. Summaries of informants' comments are provided following the statistical break-up of responses to each question.

In the questions below, language *x* is the language in which interpreter and client commence communication. Language *y* is the language into which they may shift. Language *x* may be a client's L1, L2, 'native' or 'non-native' language, 'mother' or 'adopted' tongue. The same constellation may apply to language *y* and to the interpreter for whom languages *x* and *y* may be a working language (whether active or only passive). The only characteristic that distinguishes *x* from *y* is the (client's) self-reported or (interpreter's) assumed dominance.

6.1 Informant judgements about the ethical status of various types of shifts
6.1.1 Client-initiated, for client's benefit
Question 1. The client is speaking language *x* and the interpreter is interpreting from and into language *x*. The client says: "You also speak

language *y*. I'll talk to you in *y* because it's easier for me." Both client and interpreter shift to language *y*.

Acceptable: 35 Borderline: 7 Not acceptable: 10 No answer: 8

Responses above show that informants consider it acceptable for both a client and an interpreter to shift languages where this is initiated by the client and the client will benefit from the shift, i.e. will be able to communicate more easily. Responses which consider this acceptable refer to the need to facilitate communication and the importance of flexibility. Those who consider this example borderline cite the need to consult the other party, while those who consider it unacceptable give (in)consistency of performance as a reason.

Question 2. The client says: "You also speak language *y*. I'll talk to you in *y* because it's easier for me." You as the interpreter do not switch to language *y* and continue to speak language *x*.

Acceptable: 19 Borderline: 10 Not acceptable: 23 No answer: 8

The responses above to question 2 are evenly distributed. Roughly the same number of informants deem it acceptable and not acceptable for the interpreter to refuse a client's request to shift. Most informants in the former group cite the primacy of facilitating communication between client and interpreter as justification, and it appears that many interpreters believe clients appreciate or expect a proactive and accommodating approach that includes openness to shifting. These kinds of responses are also recorded by Rudvin (2007, p.66) who reports that an "independent, impartial or even detached approach to an interaction involving a fellow member of the same speech community is, for many users or clients, divergent to behavioural patterns that they typically expect from them [interpreters]". Borderline responses refer to concerns over the lack of preparation or practice. Those claiming that it is acceptable not to shift, cite doubts about proficiency and/or a lack of accreditation.

6.1.2 Client-initiated, for interpreter's benefit
Question 3. The client says: "You also speak language *y*. If it's easier for you we can speak *y*." Both client and interpreter switch to language *y*.

Acceptable: 25 Borderline: 10 Not acceptable: 13 No answer: 12

Responses to this question are comparable to those given in the previous section. Question 3 refers to a situation in which a client offers to shift for the interpreter's benefit. It is seldom that clients or others offer to change a constellation for an interpreter's benefit. Interpreters do not expect this either.
The primacy of ease of communication, even if the interpreter is the primary beneficiary, appears to motivate most informants' responses about the acceptability of this alternative. Responses which consider this borderline or unacceptable voice concern that the client should be the primary beneficiary.

Question 4. The client says: "You also speak language *y*. If it's easier for you we can speak *y*". You as the interpreter do not switch to language *y*, but remain speaking language *x*.

Acceptable: 28 Borderline: 11 Not acceptable: 10 No answer: 11

Informants' responses to question 4 above show that most consider it acceptable to refuse a client's offer to shift, when this is for the interpreter's benefit. Twenty-eight responses of acceptance appear to represent a divergent position from the twenty-five responses of acceptance to question 3. This need not be the case. Both courses of action appear to be acceptable to many respondents.

Familiar arguments are put forward that expand on these responses above. The 'safer' option of staying in the booked language contrasts with many interpreters' sense of duty to suit clients' wishes. One informant pointed out that declining to shift to language *y* would be unusual if the interpreter had divulged that s/he speaks *y*. This is reminiscent of the notion of consistency or uniformity of performance. Borderline comments repeat the concern about a lack of preparation while responses which view this as unacceptable posit that a refusal to shift when invited to do so is offensive in terms of a client's cultural expectations.

6.1.3 Interpreter-initiated, for client's benefit
Question 5. The client is having problems expressing him/herself in language *x*. You say to the client, "Feel free to speak language *y* if you want. I also speak it".

Acceptable: 36 Borderline: 5 Not acceptable: 9 No answer: 10

Informants' responses show that a majority consider this course of action to be acceptable.

The responses which list this behaviour as acceptable cite facilitation of communication, to the client's benefit. Borderline responses again refer to this as dependent on the other party's knowledge and approval. Responses that consider this unacceptable reject the status of the interpreter as an adjudicator of the client's proficiency in language *x*. An interpreter-initiated offer to shift languages carries with it an implicit evaluation of the client's greater ease in language *y*. As language specialists who are required to readily recognise and comprehend varying dialects, registers, genres and pragmatic patterns, interpreters make judgements about the linguistic repertoires of other interlocutors as an automatic and involuntary process. Although they are not requested or obliged to do so, they are still well-placed to make suggestions such as that in question 3.

Nonetheless, in the context of community interpreting, judgements about proficiency can have wider consequences: clients may not appreciate an offer which casts doubt on their language skills in language *x* (cf. Luoma, 2004). Interpreters are themselves rightfully sensitive to others' judgements of their own proficiency level and ability to interpret successfully. And yet the circumstance that "the relationship between client and interpreter extends beyond the interpreting situation" (Gentile et al. 1996, p.32) means that interpreters may feel compelled to offer suggestions, where such suggestions "facilitate rather than hinder communication" (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.3). But are such suggestions demonstrations of "power or influence over clients" (AUSIT, CoE, 1998, p.1), against which the same code warns? This is further investigated in the following question.

6.1.4 Interpreter-initiated, for client's benefit (based on interpreter's judgement of client's proficiency)
Question 6. The client is having problems expressing him/herself in language *x*. You say to the client, "I can see that you are having problems speaking *x*. Why don't we switch to language *y*."

Acceptable: 28 Borderline: 10 Not acceptable: 11 No answer: 11

Question 5 above contained an offer. Question 6 above is a suggestion or even a recommendation. While question 5 does not contain an obvious face-threat, question 6 could, depending on how it is conveyed, threaten the client with a loss of face. As presented in question 6, such a recommendation is still seen by most informants as acceptable. Pragmatism appears to be their main explanation while those who do not support this view cite its tactlessness and the potential negative effect on client–interpreter relations.

6.2 Attitudes towards informing and obtaining permission to shift from other parties

Question 7. When a situation occurs where an interpreter could change from language *x* to language *y*, should the interpreter first inform the other party?

Yes: 31 Maybe: 5 No: 1 No answer: 24

Question 7 is a leading question and unsurprisingly, most informants believe that the other party should be informed and their permission sought:

> It is likely that in many situations where shifting could occur interpreters would already have conveyed this, through interpretation, to the third party, relating to them what clients have stated. This reminds us that, particularly in legal settings, all utterances produced by interlocutors, are interpreted. In community interpreting, there can be many situations when client and interpreter are alone and conversation is dyadic and where this type of exchange occurs without the presence of the third party (Gentile et al. 1996, pp.32-33).

7. Conclusions and implications

The judgements about the acceptability of shifting the language of interpretation described above indicate that, by and large, shifting is a condoned practice where the accompanying conditions of accreditation and awareness of shift by other parties are given. Unsurprisingly, it is generally judged acceptable for clients to initiate a shift in the language of interpretation and for interpreters to follow their lead. It is generally less acceptable for interpreters to refrain from shifting to another language where this shift is to the benefit of the client. At the same time, it is also acceptable for interpreters not to shift where a client appears to do this for the interpreter's benefit rather than his/her own.

Surprisingly, client-initiated shifting for the interpreter's benefit meets with widespread approval, as does an interpreter's refusal to shift in these circumstances. Offering to shift for a client's benefit is acceptable to a clear majority of informants. At the same time, a relative majority of informants, twenty-eight out of sixty, believe that a stronger inducement, namely a recommendation to shift, is also acceptable.

Informants' justifications for shifting to take place are based primarily on the desire to facilitate communication between themselves and their clients and to seek optimal conditions for the interpreting interaction to take place. The ethos of being flexible and the ability to respond to unexpected situations are mentioned repeatedly in many informants' responses.

The main justification given for a refusal to shift is a lack of obligation on the part of the interpreter. Fear of a lack of preparedness or practice in another language is also listed as justification, in line with ethical guidelines which recommend that practitioners decline work that is beyond their level of competence. Further, some maintain that personal information including proficiency and accreditation in other languages should not be divulged.

The hypothetical situations presented above to informants do not contain information that may be present, and of relevance, in real interpreting situations that informants have found themselves in or are likely to. For example, the hypothetical situations contain no reference to any specific language, no formal diagnosis of proficiency levels, no reference to the status of languages in clients' homelands or elsewhere and there is no information about the relationships between declared ethnicity, citizenship, nationality or religion and language use. These factors co-determine whether clients or interpreters are likely to shift and the means through which this is negotiated.

Examples of overt justifications (questions 1 and 2), offers (questions 3, 4 and 5) and a recommendation (question 6) reflect how these speech acts are performed in Australian English. These are appropriate speech acts in an interpreting situation for a speaker of Australian English. However, these same speech acts may be inappropriate for the same functions to be performed in other languages. The pragmatic and politeness norms of other languages may require different formulations and different choices of responses for the functions of justifying, offering or recommending. Face-saving strategies and offer-response conventions may mean that in some cases a client (or interpreter) is unable to provide an unambiguous response in the following turn. Cultural and pragmatic norms co-determine conversational parameters and how individual acts within these parameters are enacted (Bowe and Martin, 2007). Examples of informants' individual comments are presented and discussed in Hlavac (2010, pp.201-209). These examples reveal interpreters' and clients' cues, negotiation strategies and the language choice outcomes but not (translations of) the actual linguistic forms that were used to enact these. A detailed, ethnographical investigation into individual client's situations goes beyond the scope of this paper which seeks to present responses quantitatively and to re-visit relevant sections of the AUSIT CoE, contained in the following section.

8. Proposed guidelines for shifting

Like many guidelines, the AUSIT CoE seeks to be both brief and prescriptive and to articulate in clear words desirable or undesirable forms of conduct. Below is a list of excerpts from the AUSIT CoE which are relevant to situations in which the possibility of shifting is likely to or does occur. Excerpts are given in the chronological order of expected interactions and guidelines are presented that pertain to shifting. Following each excerpt I attempt to interpret the intention of the guidelines and apply them to the possible occurrence of shifting. These interpretations and applications of the AUSIT CoE are my own and have not been drawn on the basis of discussion with AUSIT members or with those AUSIT office-bearers who were responsible for the code's composition and publication in 1998.

8.1 Initial contact

> **5. ACCURACY**
> c) Clear Transmission
> ii. A short general conversation with clients prior to an assignment may be necessary to ensure interpreter and clients clearly understand each other's speech. (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.3)

Confirmation from all parties should be gained that the language pair for which interpreting services were booked is the language pair that all parties wish to use. After establishing for whom interpretation is to be performed, initial contact is the opportunity for the interpreter to 'acclimatise' him- or herself to other interlocutors.

Initially, an interpreter should wait for a client to inform the interpreter of alternate language preferences or to suggest a different language if the language booked for is not their dominant language. However, an interpreter can consider initiating such a shift where effective communication is jeopardised.

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1. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (extra notes)

To determine the appropriateness or otherwise of a proposed course of action, consider whether or not it might impede or jeopardise effective communication. (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.8)

The phase of all parties introducing themselves to each other and ascertaining their roles to each other is instrumental in the notion of a "contract" (Tebble, 1999, p.185) or formal understanding of the aims, purposes and logistics of the interpreting interaction. If non-dominant competence of a client in the booked language becomes apparent this is the point in the interaction at which a requested or offered shift should occur.

8.2 Initiating a shift to another language

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1. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
a) Standards of Conduct and Decorum
iv. It is the responsibility of interpreters and translators to ensure that the conditions under which they work facilitate rather than hinder communication.
b) Honesty, Integrity and Dignity
iii. Interpreters and translators shall not exercise power or influence over their clients. (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.3)

Sub-section 1. a) iv. above within the section on professional conduct states that interpreters have a "responsibility" to facilitate communication. This suggests that if a client wishes to shift languages to be able to communicate in a less hindered way, the interpreter has a responsibility to accommodate to this where s/he is able to.

Sub-section 1. b) iii. above warns against exercising power or influence over clients. A *recommendation* to choose a different language to speak is an example of an interpreter exercising influence over a client. Therefore, where a shift is a possibility, it should be initiated by the client for the client's benefit or it should be initiated by the interpreter as an *offer* to the client for the client's benefit.

8.3 Proficiency and accreditation

> **3. COMPETENCE**
> a) Qualifications and Accreditation
> i. Interpreters and translators shall accept only interpreting and translation assignments which they are competent to perform.
> iii. Interpreters and translators shall clearly specify to their clients the NAATI level and direction in the languages for which they are accredited or recognised. (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.4)

The sub-section above advises that an interpreter may shift if s/he is able to competently perform in the other language and only if s/he has accreditation or recognition at the same level (or higher) than that level required for the interpreting interaction s/he was assigned to.

> **3. COMPETENCE**
> b) Level of Expertise
> In the course of an assignment, if it becomes apparent to interpreters and translators that expertise beyond their competence is required, they shall inform the clients immediately and offer to withdraw from the assignment. (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.4)

It is incumbent on interpreters, regardless of which language they are working in, to inform others of proficiency or other limitations and to offer to withdraw. If an interpreter is aware of a lack of proficiency in the language to which s/he and the client have already shifted, s/he should request to return to the original choice of language for which the interpreting interaction was assigned.

8.4 Mid-assignment shifting

> **5. ACCURACY**
> b) Uncertainties in Transmission and Comprehension
> ii. If anything is unclear, interpreters and translators shall ask for repetition, rephrasing or explanation. (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.5)

The above recommendation sanctions enquiry where characteristics of a client's language indicate that it is not his/her dominant one. An offer to shift may be made where the prerequisites of competency and accreditation pertain.

> **5. ACCURACY**
> a) Truth and Completeness
> i. In order to ensure the same access to all that is said by all parties involved in a meeting, interpreters shall relay accurately and completely everything that is said. (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.5)

Where this is not already interpreted, the other party must be informed of proposed shift and acknowledgement gained.

8.5 Responsibility to other parties /agencies

> **ENCROACHMENT**
> Interpreters should guard against encroaching on the work of co-members.
> (AUSIT CoE, 1998, p.1)

Where a shift of language has taken place, the interpreter should subsequently inform the relevant agency or contracting body of the language used for interpretation. It is possible that if an interpreting interaction had been booked for the language into which both client and interpreter shifted and not for the language for which it was originally booked then that booked interaction may have been awarded to another interpreter for various reasons (i.e. level of experience, area of expertise, higher level of accreditation). Practitioners should otherwise inform relevant contracting bodies if they anticipate that an interpreting interaction is likely to be conducted in a language different from which it is booked.

Acknowledgement

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