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Communication in Persons with Acquired Speech Impairment: The Role of Family as Language Brokers

More than 170 million people in the world have some kind of speech impairment. The lack of professional interpreters in this domain causes their families to need to learn new communicative strategies to interact with them and assist them as interpreters. The aim of this paper is to analyze the role of these non-professional interpreters for adults with a speech impairment caused by an acquired brain injury. Data come from 13 qualitative interviews and participant observations of 7 persons with acquired brain injury and their families during 18 months. The paper shows the communicative and multimodal strategies these ad-hoc interpreters use to understand the person with impaired speech and the strategies such persons use to make themselves understandable. It also shows how meaning is negotiated and jointly constructed, the power dynamics that emerge from interpreting practices and the impact this has on the speech-impaired persons' agency. [agency, communication, family interpreters, power, speech impairment]

According to the US National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders, 6 to 8 million people of the total population of the United States (328.2 million people) have some kind of speech impairment. If we extrapolate that to the world population (7.9 billion people, according to the United Nations Worldometer), it comes out that about more than 170 million people in the world suffer some kind of speech impairment.¹ Such millions of people may need assistance in order to effectively communicate that may range from assistive devices (Engelke 2013) to interpreting usually in charge of family members and caretakers. These caretakers end up working as ad-hoc interpreters and mediators of their relatives with speech impairment. This is due to the fact that currently public services do not offer professionals who can help people with speech impairment to deal with their everyday life communicative practices. This can be explained by the fact that each individual has his/her own patterns of speech impairment, so there is not a common standard language to all individuals that could be learned, as it would happen with a particular language or with sign languages. Accordingly, family members and caretakers become not only non-professional interpreters for the persons with speech impairment, but also mediators, to the point of acting as language brokers (Faulstich Orellana 2009; Antonini 2010).

The aim of this paper is to analyze the communicative strategies taking place in these ad-hoc interpreting practices for adults with a speech impairment caused by an

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acquired brain injury. It aims at exploring the communicative problems these family interpreters have to face when understanding and interpreting and the strategies they use to cope with such problems, as well as the linguistic, non-linguistic, and multimodal strategies that speech-impaired people use to make themselves understandable. The people with speech impairment in this study are competent speakers who cannot effectively talk due to their acquired brain injury, but they communicate by other means (Goodwin 2008), understand what other people say to them and also what their interpreters render. Precisely because of this, they may not fully agree with what their interpreters render, how they do it or they may want to add further information. When that happens, there is a distinctive stage in which meaning is jointly constructed and negotiated that we are aiming to study here. The ultimate objective is to explore the power dynamics that emerge from such communicative practices and the role these ad-hoc interpreters play in promoting or diminishing the agency of speech-impaired people.

The data for this ethnographic study come from participant observation for eighteen months and thirteen in depth interviews with seven participants with speech impairment produced by acquired brain injury and their families.

This study is at the intersection of two main theoretical perspectives. On the other hand, it relies on the quite recent research area on language brokering, particularly focusing on the research coming from sociology and anthropology that looks at the role of family members as interpreters (Leanza and Boivin 2010, Zendeled et al., 2018). On the other hand, it builds on the accumulated knowledge of the studies of communication and discourse production in aphasia and, in particular, on those that study how people with aphasia co-construct meaning in communication through mechanisms such as turn-taking, repair strategies, or collaborative referencing (Goodwin 2003, 2007, 2008). This study contributes with a linguistic and anthropological understanding of the role of a group of ad-hoc interpreters by focusing on the main communicative challenges they need to face and the multimodal strategies they use while interpreting for people with speech impairment. We also want to make a social contribution with the discussion of the key role these family interpreters can play in empowering and enhancing the agency of speech-impaired people while interpreting for them.

Accordingly, these two theoretical perspectives are discussed in the following section. After that, there is a description of the methods we have used to both collect and analyze the data. The analysis comes next by focusing on the three different stages of the interpreting process (understanding, interpreting and negotiating) and on the role of these ad-hoc interpreters in managing power and agency. It finally concludes with a detailed discussion of the main contributions of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

We should start by saying that we fully share with Roy & Metzger (2014) the view that sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological approaches and methodologies having a focus on both language and social interaction are the most valuable way to analyze interpreting practices, precisely because interpreting involves a complex assembling of language and social behavior. Therefore, this paper is situated at the intersection of two different theoretical frameworks in which we are aiming to contribute: on the one hand, informal translation and family interpreting studies in particular; and, on the other hand, communicative processes and specific challenges for communication in families with a member with speech impairment, relying on the accumulated knowledge of the studies of Goodwin on communication in a person with aphasia.

The form of interpreting this paper explores is framed within the quite recent literature on language brokering which usually deals with intercultural non-

professional interpreters and second-generation children who work as language brokers of their non-native parents.

The traditional role of translator and interpreter in Translation studies has been challenged nowadays by the complexity of real-life situations in which an increasing number of non-professionals translate and interpret in a wide range of situations and contexts. Non-professional interpreting is understood in the literature as the act of interpreting by individuals who do not have training in linguistic mediation and usually work for free. Considering the growing number of situations in which this activity takes place, non-professional interpreting has started to be considered by some scholars as a distinctive phenomenon worth to study (Antonini, Cirillo and Rossato 2017; Evrin and Meyer 2016; Pérez-Gonzalez and Susam-Sarajeva 2012). Accordingly, there is a great number of studies that show that non-professional translators get involved in the translation of websites, social networks, blogs (McDonough 2011; O'Hagan 2011; Pérez-González 2010; Susam-Sarajeva 2010; Zuckerman 2008) and news (Salzberg 2008) and interpreting in situations of humanitarian crisis (Bulut and Kurultay 2001) and conflict (Baker 2010), as well as interpreting, culture and language brokering in different community settings (Antonini 2010; Dorner and Orellana 2007; Edwards and Temple 2005; Faulstich Orellana, 2009; Hall and Sham 2007).

According to Pérez-Gonzalez and Susam-Sarajeva (2012) non-professional mediators fill the gap left by the retrenchment of the state as the default provider of mediation services, at a time when the funds required to facilitate social integration are becoming depleted by global economic austerity. In our study, apart from the economic limitations, there is a lack of professional experts able to learn the particular communicative impairments of each person in order to accurately serve as an interpreter. Therefore, family members need to learn the new communicative strategies of their speech-impaired relatives to be able to help them communicate and serve, not only as interpreters, but also as language brokers. In this sense, family members in our study need to deal both with language and context as we will see, thus becoming what literature has labeled as language brokers (Antonini 2010, 2016; Faulstich Orellana 2009, 2017).

Apart from the previous, from a more sociological and anthropological approach, there are a number of studies that deal with the role of family members as ad-hoc interpreters for patients with a different language and/or cultural background when they relate to the health care system, which could be helpful to frame our study. In particular, literature from this research area has focused mainly on three main themes. The first one has to do with the understanding of the different interpreter's roles and specifically with the skills and behaviors associated with being an interpreter (Ho 2008; Meyer and Pawlack 2010; Rosenberg and Seller 2008). The second trend involves the assessment of the difficulties and challenges of being an interpreter with a special interest on the Trust-Control-Power dynamics triangle (Greenhalgh and Robb 2006; MacFarlane et al. 2009; Zendeled et al., 2018). The last one deals mostly with communication and the communicative strategies used by interpreters (Farini 2008; Leanza et al. 2010). This study contributes particularly to the two last research lines, since it sheds light on the communicative strategies these ad-hoc interpreters use to understand the person with impaired speech and the strategies that speech-impaired people use to make themselves understandable. It also provides an understanding of the problems they both have to face while interpreting and the communicative strategies both co-participants use to cope with such problems. It finally revisits the trust-control-power dynamics by looking at the power dynamics going on during these interpreting practices and the key role these family interpreters play in enhancing or diminishing the agency of speech-impaired people when interpreting.

Further to this, most interest in the aforementioned research areas focus on sometimes descriptive, sometimes non-normative studies that deal with child language brokering or mediators. To our knowledge, however, there is no specific literature concerning the role of family as interpreters for people with acquired

speech impairment. Therefore, this paper also contributes with the study of a completely unexplored group of family interpreters.

It also relies on the studies carried out by Goodwin on the communication of a person with aphasia. Even if our participants suffer from a different condition (dysarthria), we consider that the participation framework (Goffman 1981) as revisited by Goodwin (2003, 2007, 2008) provides a relevant basis for the analysis of the communicative strategies and challenges we want to explore in this paper.

Goffman (1981) shows how people use multiple frameworks to make sense of events and bring them to the conversational event by contributing to what Goffman refers to as a participation framework. Within this framework is the foundation for Goffman's notion of footing, which is defined as "the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (1981, 128). Within a conversation, participants may shift footings as they change their alignments with each other, based on a number of contextual and linguistic strategies.

Goodwin (2007) revisits Goffman's deconstruction of the speakers' roles as divided into principal, author and animator. Accordingly, the speech-impaired person would be the principal, and our ad-hoc interpreters would be the animators. His analysis shows how the impaired speaker can occupy the role of author, despite being able to articulate only three words, by means of actively using the speech of others, his body and other contextual, multimodal and indexical strategies. He also points out the need to bring in the simultaneous actions and roles of the hearer to fully understand the interaction going on and particularly in reported speech. Apart from Goodwin's most prominent studies in brain damage and communication (2003, 2004, 2008), there are some relevant studies on aphasic discourse analysis (Anward 2003; Laakso 2003; Merlino 2018; Oelschlaeger 1999; Perkins, 1995) and aphasic conversation analysis (Wilkinson 2015). It is outside the scope of this paper to reflect on such work due to space restrictions, but the main conclusions of such studies have been inspiring for articulating our analysis, namely the notions of collaborative participation and repair, which will be explained in the analysis section.

It is important to remark that, apart from Goodwin's studies, most literature has focused on the communicative strategies used by the speech-impaired person. Nevertheless, our study extends the scope by focusing on the strategies used by the animators: the family ad-hoc interpreters, which has been far less explored in literature. It finally contributes both academically and socially by rising awareness of the communicative challenges these persons have to face and the strategies they use to cope with them, which could also be useful for interpreting (whether professional or non-professional) studies, and for the studies on communication in families with a speech-impaired member.

Methods

Data for this ethnographic study were collected and video-recorded through eighteen months; observation of seven participants with speech impairment and their families and thirteen in depth interviews with the participants and their usual interpreters were carried out. Participants were selected by approaching different associations in the city of Barcelona that work with disabled people. By having interviews with the coordinators of these associations, they put us in contact with possible participants that could fit in the profile we were interested in. In particular, we were looking for participants older than 18 years who have suffered a brain injury in their adult life and had dysarthria² as a consequence of it. Their speech could be from moderately to severely impaired, but their cognitive capacities should be in good shape, so that they can understand what other people say to them.³ We met and interviewed a number of possible participants and we ended up selecting seven of them that fit in with the profile and were willing to get involved in our study.

We aimed to do two in-depth interviews with each of them: one at the beginning of the study and another one at the end. The interview was divided in three main parts: one part included multiple choice questions addressed to participants with speech impairment in which we were offering them different sentences and asked them to show to what extent they agreed with them. Since most of our participants were not able to utter complex linguistic structures, offering them the possibility to acknowledge their degree of agreement with different statements was the most straightforward way of getting the information from them. In the second part of the interview, there were open questions addressed mainly to the family members. The third part included open questions for both participants and their families that they could co-answer.

Regarding observations, our aim was to observe and video-record our participants and their families in five different contexts. The first one was at the beginning of our study in a place chosen by the participants and their families, usually their own home. The second one was intending to observe the participant on a weekday, and the third one during the weekend. The fourth one was to observe the participant interacting with other people, further than their usual interpreters. In the last one, we wanted to observe our participants doing an activity that could be either attending a physical therapy session, going for a coffee, having dinner, or taking an excursion. In this way, the idea was to collect data of our participants while doing their daily activities at different moments of their life and seeing them interact with different people. But we found out that some participants felt more comfortable with us observing and then invited us for more observations (that we always accepted) and this is why with some of our participants we did more observations than with others.

It was intended to spend with them from two to six hours in each observation. Such a flexible margin in time was due to the fact that sometimes we found our participants tired or not in the mood for long sessions and some other times we found them very active and willing to spend time with us. Therefore, depending on how they felt in each of our sessions we adapted our stay with them from minimum two to a maximum of six hours. On average, the time spent with each participant in each observation was three hours. In particular, Table 1 shows the specific information about each of the participants of our study.

As we can see, all our participants are males, while all the family interpreters are all females. This was not a purposeful decision. On the contrary, we found out that in the associations we got in contact with there were more males that suffered from a brain injury than females and that frequently the usual caretakers of such males were females, either mothers or sentimental partners. We used pseudonyms for the participants and their families to preserve their anonymity. The study went through the Ethics Committee of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. All the associations, participants, family and all the people observed were informed of the objectives and conditions of the study and they all signed the necessary informed consent forms.

Table 1
Information about participants, his usual interpreters and number of sessions

Participant	Age at the time of the study	Usual interpreter	Number of Interviews	Number of participant observations
Alan	21	His mother	2	5
Eduard	41	His mother	2	9
Fernando	33	His aunt	2	5
Jaime	46	His wife	2	5
Manel	44	His mother	2	9
Roc	36	His mother/his partner	2	8
Santiago ⁴	64	His wife	1	2

Data were selectively transcribed using Jefferson's Transcription System (see Appendix 1) and coded by identifying the communicative strategies these family interpreters use to understand the person with impaired speech and the multimodal communicative strategies that speech-impaired people use to make themselves understandable. In particular, we focused on the communicative challenges, limitations and advantages families find while interpreting their relatives and how meaning is negotiated and jointly constructed. Codes were proposed and discussed by the research team members, they were applied by one of the research members of the team and later on checked and validated by a different member. Such an analysis allowed us to understand the power dynamics going on depending on the strategies these interpreters use while interpreting for speech-impaired people and the impact that may have on their agency.

Analysis

Interpreting is rendering a spoken or signed message into another spoken or signed language, preserving the register and meaning of the source language content. Usually, this process is divided into two main stages: understanding and interpreting. But in the case of family interpreters for persons with a severe speech impairment, there is a very distinctive and unique third stage: the one that involves the negotiation of meaning. This negotiation is due to the fact that the persons that are interpreted are competent speakers who cannot actually talk fluently, but fully understand the communicative interaction in which they are involved, as well as what their interpreters are saying. This language and communicative awareness of the renditions provided by the interpreters allow the primary speaker to co-construct, negotiate or even challenge the meanings rendered by the interpreter. The present analysis sheds light on the different problems both co-participants need to face in the three different stages of the interpreting process and the communicative strategies they use to overcome such problems. Such an analysis allows us to later explore the role these ad-hoc interpreters play in enhancing or diminishing the agency of the speech-impaired persons.

Understanding Stage

In order to produce an accurate rendition, the interpreter is required to previously fully understand the source speech. Arumí (2012) points out that one of the main problems interpreters have to face in this stage is the lack of full understanding of the source speech they need to render. In our case, since the primary speaker's speech is severely damaged, the interpreter needs to make a greater effort in order to fully understand what has to be interpreted. Moreover, this effort goes beyond his/her competence as a speaker, because our interpreters need to rely on many extralinguistic aspects, such as knowing personally the primary speaker or being familiar with his/her immediate context and experiences and the kind of sounds s/he can articulate to be able to fully comprehend what is to be communicated. Further to this, if there are some external distortion factors, such as background noise or hurry, understanding can be even more difficult. Accordingly, they need to activate a number of verbal and non-verbal strategies to be able to figure out what the primary speaker means, as Fernando's aunt explains in the following interview:

Extract 1 [Fernando, his aunt and researcher. Interview. October, 2019]

- 1 RES: Y qué hacéis cuando no os entendéis?
And what do you when you don't understand each other?
- 2 AUNT:

- Pues eso (.) empezamos a ver (.) qué quieres decirnos con la a con la b
 (2) también m: frases muy largas no te dice (.) no?
*So (.) we start to see (.) what do you want to tell us? With the ((letter))
 a (.) with the b (2) Also m: he would not tell you very long sentences (.)
 wouldn't he?*
- 3 RES: Claro
Of course.
- 4 AUNT: Entonces pues intentamos sonsacarle
So (.) we try (.) we try to worm it
- 5 FER: #A u a (.) a u aua u a a a#
- 6 AUNT: Sí (.) con el abecedario (2) Con la letra que empieza
Yes (.) with the alphabet (2) With the letter ((the word)) starts
- 7 ((Fernando opens his eyes widely))
- 8 AUNT: Con los ojitos (.) Cuando a veces dice que le duele algo que no se
 siente bien (.) y a veces nosotros le decimos la frase y decimos (.)
 si o no?
Y él nos abre y nos cierra los ojos (.) eh?
*With his eyes(.) when he says he is in pain or is not feeling well (.) and
 sometimes we say the sentence and we ask him (.) is it that or not? And he
 opens or closes his eyes (.) ((looking at Fernando)) right?*
- 9 ((Fernando opens and closes his eyes and nods))

As we can see, Fernando is not only following the conversation, but also guiding his aunt through his prosody and gestures, without articulating one word, so that she explains the strategies they use in the understanding stage. In line 5 he articulates a number of vowels that his aunt seems to understand as “the alphabet”, since she confirms what he is saying when she starts her rendition in line 6 with a “yes”. After that, Fernando opens his eyes widely to remind his aunt that the eyes are another mechanism they use. Finally, when his aunt refers to the way he uses his eyes to agree or disagree with what the others are saying in line 8, we can see he is following the conversation when he shows the researcher what his aunt is explaining. Accordingly, Fernando is here participating as a primary speaker, or author in Goodwin’s (2007, 2008) terms, and his aunt is the animator who interprets what Fernando means to say. Fernando’s mobility is practically non-existent and hence he is not able to write, which considerably reduces his communication skills.

All the other participants of our study were able to write and we have observed that the strategies they use to make themselves understandable are multimodal and can range from asking the primary speakers to write keywords in a tablet/mobile or just using a piece of paper with the alphabet, requesting them to use their body language (through their hands, eyes or face) to convey the message, or posing yes-no questions to help delimit it. In addition, they may need to ask the primary speakers to repeat what they mean, as we can see in this example of Eduard with his brother:

Extract 2 [Eduard and his brother. Observation. June, 2018]

- 1 BRO: Quina activitat tenim els divendres?
What activity do we have on Friday?
- 2 EDU: #Pi ci a.#
- 3 BRO: Piscina (2) Molt bé.
Swimming pool (2) Very good.
- 4 EDU: #Xi tuxe.#
- 5 BRO: Tens què?
do you have what?
- 6 EDU: #Tuxe.#

- 7 BRO: No ho he entés això (.) perdona (3) Torna-m'ho a repetir.
I have not understood that (.) I'm sorry (3) Repeat again.
- 8 EDU: #Tui te.#
- 9 BRO: No ho he entés (2) A veure (2) a:m diga-m'ho més a poc a poc.
No I don't understand (2) let's see (2) a.m. say it again but slower.
- 10 EDU: #tuse#
- 11 BRO: Dutxa (2) vale (.) todo junto (.) es el día del agua (.) no?
Shower (2) ok (.) all together (.) It's the day full of water, isn't it?
- 12 EDU: #Sh:i#
yes

We can see here that Eduard needs to repeat four times what he means for his brother to understand. The use of these repetition strategies has an impact on the flow of the conversation, since a considerable amount of extra time is invested at this stage, which somehow slows down the path of communication. This required extra effort shapes and limits the kind of communicative situations in which the speech-impaired people are likely to be involved. Accordingly, in cases of severe impairment, communication has to do with (and in some cases is limited to) the basic needs of the person, such as feeling hunger, tiredness, or pain. And more complex or abstract topics, such as, for example, talking about emotions or frustrations occur far less often.

On the interpreters' part, what all our family interpreters seem to agree with is that the key for their understanding is the existence of a context they can relate to, as it helps them guess what the primary speaker is saying. In particular, the primary speaker and the interpreter build upon shared experiences to co-create meaning, as Alan's mother explains:

Extract 3 [Alan, his mother and researcher. Interview June, 2019]

- 1 RES: Hi ha situacions que et costen més de fer aquest aquesta activitat de mediadora o d'interpret? O en general ho fas sense problemes?
Are there any situations in which it is harder for you to do this activity of mediator or interpreter? Or do you generally do it with no problems?
- 2 MOM: Aviam (.) sí (.) ara de moment sí (.) però això no deixa que arribarà el moment que ell si està depèn amb quin ambient li passa algo(.) llavors igual em perdré(.) però el dia a dia com és una cosa conjunta lu que li pasa més o menys ho puc interpretar. Però això no avisa que és lu que et dic que igual marxa una setmana de colònies i em vol explicar algu i diré (.) qué me está diciendo?
Let's see (.) yes (.) for the moment yes (.) but that does not mean that there may be a point in which he is in a particular place and something happens to him (.) I may get lost (.) but our everyday life is a joint thing we share together and I can more or less guess what is happening to him (.) but it may happen that as I told you he may go out for a week and he may want to explain something to me and I would say (.) what is he saying?

Whereas in other forms of interpreting it is important to have knowledge of the situational context and the interpreter does not need to personally know the primary speaker in order to interpret for him/her, in this form of interpreting sharing personal experiences and context becomes crucial for the interpreter to elucidate what the primary speaker wants to communicate. In line with this, all our informants admit that when something is said out of context, they may not understand the intended message, even to the point that they sometimes would need to assume that it is not going to be comprehended, which may lead to some kind of frustration: their own frustration for not being able to identify what the other person is saying, and the

frustration of this person when s/he wants to communicate something and this is not understood. In this sense, their activity transcends the mere interpreting, since they also act as mediators that deal not only with communicative issues, but also with the management of emotions, as we will see below in extracts 5 and 6.

Interpreting Stage

Family interpreters in the present study mostly produce what Wadensjö (1998) labels as *expanded renditions* and *non-renditions*, based on the situational, contextual, and personal knowledge they have of the person they are interpreting. As already stated above, most times severe speech-impaired people just say one word, or do one gesture that their family and caretakers expand into full meaning phrases, sentences, and eventually full discourse, as we can see in the following example:

Extract 4 [Roc, his mother and researcher. Interview. July, 2019]

- 1 RES: Para que cosas utilizas el ordenador?
What do you use the computer for?
- 2 ROC: Todo
Everything
- 3 MOM: Para todo ((riendo))
for everything ((laughing))
- 4 RES: Todo (.) todo no? (((risa))
For everything (.) everything(.) right? ((laughing))
- 5 MOM: Todo (.) todo.
For everything (.) everything
- 6 RES: Y tablet y móvil también?
and the tablet and the mobile too?
- 7 ROC: M:: ((asiente))
M:: ((nods))
- 8 MOM: Para buscar autobuses (.) para escribir a los amigos (.) para ver películas (.) para buscar direcciones (.) comprar billetes de avión (.) gestionar sus cuentas bancarias. Todo.
To look for buses (.) to write to his friends (.) to watch films (.) to look for addresses (.) to buy plane tickets (.) to manage his bank accounts (.) for everything.
- 9 RES: Para todo
For everything

What Roc's mother is interpreting here is not just based on what Roc says, but on her personal knowledge and shared experiences she has with him. However, we can see that Roc's answer in line 2 ("everything") to the question posed by the researcher is linguistically understandable. However, considering the pragmatic point of view, Roc's mother understands that there is an expectation on the researcher's part of a more expanded answer, and this is why she renders a more specific answer of the different things Roc does with his computer in line 8. In this case, Roc's mother is going beyond her role as interpreter and is acting as a mediator, since she is interceding based on her perception of the contextual expectations required by the communicative situation.

In professional interpreting expanded renditions and non-renditions might not be the most recommended practice, according to the interpreter's Ethic Codes, but these forms of rendition occur frequently in the case of interpreting people with severe speech impairment. Consequently, context plays a key role and the lack of it can cause misunderstandings and misinterpreting practices. Similarly, if the primary speaker suddenly says something that is not connected to the immediate situational

or communicative context, our interpreters may have to face further challenges to both understand and interpret what has been said.

It seems obvious that this personal knowledge our interpreters have about the primary speaker provides them with a privileged access to understand what is been communicated by them. However, this access may also create a sense of entitlement to decide what is relevant and needs to be rendered and what is not (and hence is ignored), and even to determine what is socially acceptable or should be somehow censured, or at least mitigated, when it is rendered. Therefore, they do not only interpret the message, but, in some cases, they also select what is said, what is not said and they modulate discourse according to their own criteria, as Alan's mother explains in the following extract:

Extract 5 [Alan, his mother, and researcher. Interview. June, 2019]

- 1 MOM: Però de vegades si que m'ha passat que ja clar, comença a fer gestos de ((que algú és)) gay o:: no sé què a llavors en pren algo ((d'alcohol)) i li faig per sota que callis ((risa))
But it has sometimes happened that he starts making gestures of ((meaning that someone is)) gay or:: I don't know that then someone has drunk ((alcohol)) and I whisper him to shut up ((laughing))
- 2 ((Researcher and Alan are laughing))
- 3 MOM: O directament dic (.) no: no vol dir res perquè clar
Or directly I say (.) no: he doesn't want to say anything because of course
- 4 RES: Clar
Of course
- 5 MOM: Però sí (2) sí que m'ha passat.
but yes (2) it has happened to me.

As in the case of Alan, in many occasions, one of the consequences of the brain damage is that the person might be more uninhibited and may express things that are not socially appropriate. In other words, their communicative competence (Hymes 1972, 281) to decide whether something is appropriate in a given context might be altered by the effects of the brain damage. Therefore, the family and caretakers when interpreting may feel they need to decide what they consider appropriate or inappropriate in a particular context. But this decision depends on each person's criteria, which might be arguable by another person. In this sense, depending on the person who is interpreting, some *not so appropriate* messages might or might not be finally rendered. Accordingly, we could say that it is a subjective interpreting in which the interpreter has the power to decide what to interpret and how to do it. This is completely different from what the professional interpreter's Ethic codes might propose, since they tend to recommend impartiality and objectivity in renditions on the interpreter's part. However, in our case, since our interpreters are family of the primary speakers, they might be especially sensitive to care for the social image the primary speaker projects. Consequently, with the intention to help, our interpreters would interpose their own criteria when deciding what is appropriate and what is not.

Negotiating and Reconstructing Meaning Stage

As we have said, in most situations, our primary speakers fully understand what other people say to them and what is more, they fully understand what their interpreters are saying, precisely because they are competent speakers. And this communicative competence leads to a stage that is not as common in other types of interpreting: a stage in which the interpreted meaning might be negotiated, challenged, and eventually reconstructed by the primary speaker.

In particular, our competent primary speakers sometimes feel their relatives do not exactly interpret what they want to say, as Eduard states:

Extract 6 [Eduard, his mother and researcher. Interview. May, 2019]

- 1 RES: Sents que diuen exactament el que vol vuldries dir?
Do you feel that they ((your parents)) say exactly what you would like to say?
- 2 EDU: No
No
- 3 RES: No (.) per què no?
No(.) why not?
- 4 EDU: #A ai que tu pi ci.#
- 5 MOM: El que jo vull dir
((translating)) What I want to say
- 6 EDU: #Si. No tin pa.#
- 7 MOM: No sempre.
Not always.
- 8 EDU: Si
Yes
- 9 MOM: No sempre (2) interpretem
Not always (2) we interpret it
- 10 EDU: #Si (2) Bi#
- 11 MOM: No sempre ho interpretem bé.
Not always we interpret it well
- 12 RES: Clar (.) perquè potser tu vols dir una cosa: i tú ho diries d'una manera i ells no diuen exactament com tú ho havries dit (.) no?
Ok (.) because you may want to say something and you would say it in one way and they don't say it exactly as you would have said it (.) right?
- 13 MOM: Això pasa (2) Això pasa a vegades
That happens (2) that sometimes happens
- 14 RES: Això vols dir?
Is that what you mean?
- 15 EDU: Sí (.) m:és o menys
Yes (.) more or less
- 16 RES: Més o menys (.) més o menys (2) O no sé (.) tu dius una cosa (.) no?
I ells intenten dir-ho d'una manera (.) però sents que no és exactament això el que vols dir (2) és això?
More or less (.) more or less (.) or I don't know (.) you say one thing (.) right? And they try to say it in a way but (.) you feel that this is not exactly what you meant (.) is it that?
- 17 EDU: Sí
Yes
- 18 MOM: I a vegades es posa nerviós (2) I s'enfada amb nosaltres (.) no?
And sometimes he gets nervous (2) and gets mad at us (.) don't you?
- 19 RES: De vegades t'enfades?
Do you sometimes get mad?
- 20 EDU: Sí
Yes

We can see in example 6 that, in order to understand why Eduard feels he is not always interpreted as he would like to, the researcher tries to formulate two different questions and checks with Eduard if what she is saying is what he feels. The first option is connected to the how (they may say what he wants to say, but not in the

way he would have said it). The second option is connected to the what (they do not say exactly what he means). By using the strategy of offering different options and checking Eduard's reactions toward them, we can find out that Eduard feels that his usual interpreters (his parents in this case) do not always interpret what he would like them to interpret and that sometimes causes him to get annoyed with them. Similarly, more than 80% of our participants declared to have felt the same that Eduard is stating in this example.

Precisely, because the primary speakers in most cases fully understand what other people say to them, as well as what their interpreters render, they may disagree with the way the rendition is articulated or they may want to add further details. When that happens, they use a number of strategies to negotiate the meaning. This involves calling the attention of their interpreters, by either touching them, clicking their fingers, making some kind of noise, or shaking their heads, on the one hand, and then trying to show where they disagree, on the other hand. In this moment of negotiation, the interpreter focuses his/her efforts in trying to understand what his/her relative is trying to spell out. In this stage, thus, the interpreter does not usually render what the primary speaker is saying, but rather focuses on understanding, first, and then on trying to solve the conflict by conveying the message in the way the primary speaker considers accurate, as we can see in the following example:

Extract 7 [Alan, his mother and researcher. Observation. April, 2018]

- 1 ALN: No
No ((he smacks his lips and clicks his fingers with the left hand to call his mother's attention. Then he points to his back. He clicks his fingers again with the left hand and points to his back again))
- 2 MOM: què?
What
((Alan points to his back again))
- 3 MOM: Ah (.) la cadira també que té una cadira ara perquè (3)
perquè abans el posavem dret per la dutxa i ara no (.) l'assento i es dutxa ell (.) jo li poso i pot rentarse els peus i tot
Ah (.) the chair as well ((he is saying)) that he has a chair now because (3) because before we made him stand in the shower and now not anymore(.) I make him sit(.) I put him there and he can even wash his feet
- 4 RES: Ah molt bé ↑
Ah That's great ↑
- 5 MOM: Miro de que sigui el més autònom possible (.) dintre de que m: costa molt de que una persona pugui ser autònom
I try to make him be as autonomous as possible (.) considering that m: it is hard for a person to be autonomous
- 6 ALN: No
No ((He touches his forehead with his hand))
- 7 RES: Ya
I see
- 8 ALN: No
No
- 9 MOM: És...
It's ((addressing the researcher))
- 10 ALN: No
No ((his face shows that he is a bit upset. He moves his left hand))
- 11 MOM: És més fàcil
((To the researcher)) it's easier

- 12 ALN: No
No ((clicking his fingers))
- 13 MOM: Què
((turning to Alan)) what
- 14 ((Alan moves his left hand and points up with his forefinger))
- 15 MOM: No han trucat (.) ja:
((To Alan)) they have not called yet (.) yeah
- 16 ALN: No
No ((Frustrated. He says no with his forefinger and points to his back))
- 17 MOM: Ah clar (3) la cadira va molt bé per quan t'operin
Ah of course (3) the chair will work very well when you get your surgery
- 18 ((Alan nods and smiles))

In line 3 Alan's mother interprets through Alan's gestures that he wants to tell the researcher that he has got a chair that he uses in the shower. Then, she proceeds informing the researcher that it is very useful because he can have a shower on his own. In line 5 the mother changes the topic because she is acting now as an interpreter, but is also taking part in the conversation and adding her own contributions. This dual role of both interpreter and primary speaker makes that Alan feels that what he wanted to say has not been fully conveyed by his mother (that is talking to the researcher). Therefore, he keeps saying 'no' for four times and finally clicks his fingers to call his mother's attention. When she turns to him, he uses gestures to effectively communicate the message he wants to be rendered. In this way the meaning is co-constructed when they both start telling the story, negotiated when Alan tries to add further information, and finally re-constructed when Alan's mother utters what he wanted to say.

In the same way the primary speakers have their own strategies to try to avoid the frustration of not being successfully interpreted, our interpreters have as well their own strategies to prevent this from happening. Some of these strategies involve trying to make the primary speaker explain what s/he wants to say without being interpreted, or asking the primary speaker if the rendition was accurate once it has been produced, as the following excerpt shows:

Extract 8 [Santiago, his wife, and researcher. Observation. May, 2018]

- 1 RES: segona activitat què és?
What's second activity?
- 2 WIFE: Que ho expliques tu?
Do you want to explain it? ((looking at Santiago))
- 3 ((Santiago laughs while looking at his wife))
- 4 WIFE: Jo? que el poden cridar en qualsevol moment
((laughing)) me? ((It means)) that they can call him up at any time
- 5 RES: Eh (.) a per si hi ha alguna cosa?
Eh (.) if something happens?
- 6 WIFE: Eh (.) si (.) per si hi ha alguna cosa (3) Es esto? lo he dicho bien?
Eh (.) if something happens yes ((turning to Santiago)) Is it that? Have I said it right?
- 7 ((Santiago looks at the researcher and moves his right hand up and down to call his attention and starts writing in his notebook))
- 8 WIFE: No
- 9 RES: Cincuenta y cinco
((reading)) fifty-five

- 10 WIFE: Als cinquanta-cinc.
At *fifty-five*.
- 11 RES: cincuenta y cinco años activo
fifty-five years working?
- 12 WIFE: No (.) amb cinquanta-cinc anys et passen
No (.) when you are fifty-five (.) they pass you to the
- 13 RES: =A la segona activitat
=To the second activity
- 14 WIFE: Sí
Yes
- 15 ((Santiago nods))

In this example Santiago's wife is explaining to the researcher that Santiago is a policeman but his current work situation is defined as *second activity*. When the researcher asks what this is, Santiago's wife first asks him if he wants to explain it (line 2). In this case, Santiago does not utter anything, but his wife answers the question based on her knowledge about the issue they are talking about. Once she has said what this is, she asks Santiago for confirmation that what she has said is right. Further to this, Santiago wants to add further information to what his wife has said, and this is why he uses his notebook. In line 12, his wife, based on the previous and contextual knowledge she has, expands on what her husband has written to make sense of it for the researcher. Accordingly, by giving the choice to primary speakers to explain on their own what they want to say, our interpreters are providing them with agency to decide if they want to try or if they prefer to be interpreted right away. In doing so, the interpreters are showing they trust the speech-impaired people's ability to express what they want to say. In addition to this, by asking them for confirmation of the information rendered, our interpreters leave room for our primary speakers to reflect on what they have said and to be able to add further information, reformulate it or even co-narrate it. In other words, they are empowering them. In our next section, we will further explore the key role of these interpreters in empowering speech-impaired people and promoting or impeding their agency.

Power Dynamics, Trust and Agency

The power our interpreters have to lead the conversation is quite obvious, as the following example of Manel, his sister and his mother (his usual interpreter) shows:

Extract 9 [Manel, his sister and his mother. Observation. July, 2018)

- 1 SIS: Doncs això si ja està eliminat ja la roja qui vols que guanyi tu Rússia?
*So now that the red one ((Spanish football team)) has been eliminated
who do you want to be the winners? Russia?*
- 2 ((Manel open his mouth to try to say something))
- 3 MOM: Croàcia
Croatia
- 4 ((Manel nods))
- 5 SIS: El mundial vols que guanyi Croàcia Des de quan?
Do you want Croatia to win the World Cup? Since when?
- 6 ((Manel nods))
- 7 MOM: [Des de que li]
[Since he]
- 8 SIS: [Des de que vas anar a Croàcia (.) no te digo?]
[Since you went to Croatia (.) am I right?]
- 9 ((Manel laughs and nods))

- 10 SIS: Anda que
My goodness
- 11 MOM: =Home no que li agrada perquè hi ha el Raki
=Well he likes it because there is Rakitic
- 12 ((Manel nods))
- 13 MOM: Juguen molt bé.
They play very well.
- 14 ((Manel nods))
- 15 MOM: A que juguen molt bé
Is not right that they play very well?
- 16 ((Manel nods))

As we can see in this example, the ones leading the conversation are Manel's sister and mother. Manel's severe speech impairment limits his ability to participate mostly with nods, laughter and smiles. Furthermore, Manel's usual interpreter has also here a dual role as both interpreter and participant, since she wants to make her own contributions to the conversation. This is not usually the case in other forms of interpreting, where interpreters should adhere to what the primary speaker is saying, and do not make their own contributions. This dual role creates a dynamic of power inequality, since the speech-impaired person cannot fully contribute to the conversation in the same terms the people with full speech capacities do. Accordingly, the power to lead the communication and to decide what to talk about is on Manel's mother and sister's hands. Consequently, our interpreters have a unique opportunity to understand what the primary speaker would like to say, but this gives them power to lead, monitor and coordinate interaction, according to their own criteria.

However, there are moves and interactions that may reinforce this power inequality and some others that may help to balance the power between the speech-impaired person and his/her interpreter. For example, in extract 9, we see that Manel is continuously asked by his mother and sister to express his opinion, even if it is only by agreeing or disagreeing with what has been said. Therefore, he is encouraged to actively participate in the conversation and given the opportunity to disagree, which eventually empowers him.

In line 1, we can see that when there is not a yes/no question addressed to Manel that needs further explanations, his mother tends to directly answer for him, without letting him try to answer. It seems obvious that Manel's mother is not purposefully trying to impose herself, nor trying to commit any kind of power abuse. On the contrary, she is trying to help him communicate when she knows the answer to the question and, most importantly, knows he will have difficulties communicating what has been asked. This example is just one of the many we have found in our study in which when trying to help, our interpreters sometimes diminish the agency of the primary speakers. In other words, while trying to be helpful, they are also increasing the degree of dependence the speech-impaired person has on his/her interpreter.

By contrast, we have observed that if our interpreters trust the capacities of the speech-impaired people, this has an impact on their communicative intention. If interpreters allow them to try to say what they mean, there is an increase in the number of utterances the speech-impaired people produce, which, apart from empowering them, may have good therapeutic effects. Accordingly, the communicative intention does not depend only on the primary speakers, but also on the trust their interpreters and interlocutors have on them, which ultimately shapes their agency.

There are a number of ways of offering help in a less paternalistic way in which trusting the capacities of the speech-impaired persons plays a key role to both empower them and favor their agency. One of the most important ways consists in giving the opportunity for speech-impaired persons to try to communicate on their own what they want to say and offering help only if necessary, as we can see in the

following example in which the researcher is doing participant observation with Roc and his partner. In this particular moment, the researcher asks Roc about the health of Fabián, Roc's caretaker, who has recently suffered an accident:

Extract 10 [Roc, his partner and researcher. Observation. July, 2018]

- 1 RES: Qué tal está Fabián
How is Fabián?
- 2 ROC: M::
- 3 RES: Bien
Well?
- 4 ((Roc shakes his head no and looks down))
- 5 RES: No?
- 6 ROC: #Se pale (.) ou se pale#
- 7 ((Roc's partner nods))
- 8 RES: Ou?
- 9 ROC: #Ou se male#
- 10 RES: Aún se...
He still?
- 11 ROC: #male#
- 12 ((Roc looks at his partner asking for help))
- 13 ((The researcher looks at Roc's partner too))
- 14 ((Roc's partner looks at Roc and nods))
- 15 PAR: Sí (2) Aún se marea
Yes (2) He is still feeling dizzy
- 16 RES: Aún se marea
((turning to Roc)) is he still feeling dizzy?
- 17 ((Roc nods))

In this example, there are a number of moves that promote the agency of Roc. Firstly, when Roc's partner nods in line 4, we can see that she fully understands what Roc means the first time he says that his caretaker is feeling dizzy. But she does not translate and just nods to give him the opportunity to say what he wants to say on his own. Secondly, the researcher does not understand what Roc means, but instead of asking for the help of the partner to translate for him, he tries to make Roc repeat the sentence, by repairing what he has said (line 10). By doing so, both the partner and the researcher are trusting Roc and constructing him as a competent speaker who is able to communicate effectively. In other words, they are empowering him and promoting his agency and, at the same time, encouraging him to improve his communicative skills. And it is only when, after trying three times, Roc asks for help by looking at his partner that she translates. Thirdly, when she translates in line 15, she does it by showing agreement with Roc's words, rather than actually translating what he is saying. This move creates a more interactive communicative situation in which the rendition is naturally included as part of the talk. Finally, the researcher comes back to Roc to check the information Roc's partner has translated. By doing this, he is not only checking that the information is correct, but he is also coming back to the person he was originally talking to, to bring him back into the conversation and also to give him the opportunity to (dis)agree or add any other information related to the topic.

Another way of empowering and promoting the agency of speech-impaired people is by inviting them to co-narrate particular events. That can be done by either letting the person speak and just add further information when necessary, or in cases when the speech is severely damaged it can be done by making guiding questions that make them be involved in the conversation and co-narrate by just answering to the questions, as we can see in the following example of an observation with Jaime, his daughter and his wife:

Extract 11[Jaime, his daughter, his wife and researcher. Observation. June, 2018]

- 1 DAU: Tienes sueños (.) papa
do you have dreams (.) dad?
- 2 ((Jaime nods))
- 3 DAU: Y te acuerdas
And do you remember them?
- 4 ((Jaime shakes his head no))
- 5 DAU: No te acuerdas de nada?
Don't you remember anything?
- 6 ((Jaime shakes his head no))
- 7 DAU: Si (.) a veces te despiertas con un sueño y te piensas
Yes (.) you sometimes wake up with a dream and you think
- 8 JAI: #Ve a# ((=true))
- 9 DAU: Sí (.) que es verdad
Yes (.) that it's true
- 10 ((Jaime laughs))
- 11 DAU: No (.) no te rías ↑ que a mí también me pasa ↑ Sí (.) el otro día se
despertó y dijo que tenía que ir a un juicio (2) pero estaba obsesionado
No(.) don't laugh ↑ that also happens to me ↑ Yes (.) the other day he
woke up and said he had to go to a trial (2)but he was obsessed
- 12 ((Jaime laughs))
- 13 DAU: Te acuerdas de quién era el juicio
Do you remember who the trial was for?
- 14 ((Jaime takes the tablet and writes the name of a fiction TV character))
- 15 WIFE: qué es de la tele (.) eh?
((laughing)) *What? he is from TV (.) right?*
- 16 DAU: Si (.) es de la tele
((laughing)) *yes(.) he is from TV*
- 17 ((Jaime laughs too))
- 18 DAU: Eso es (.) papa ↑
that's it (.) dad ↑

In this example, we can see that Jaime's daughter is trying to co-narrate with her father a humorous story in which Jaime mixed a dream, with a TV character and reality. By making questions to him, she manages at the beginning that he just confirms or denies what she is saying. However, in line 8, he understands what she is trying to explain and beats his daughter to it by saying "true" (meaning that he thought the dream was true). And finally, he writes the name of the fiction TV character in his tablet, which is the funniest part of the story. Accordingly, by making the right questions, Jaime is able to co-narrate the story with his daughter, which again strengthens his agency.

To conclude, we could say that the degree of agency is to a great extent connected to the degree of disability. However, disability in the case of people with brain damage is not a standstill state, but it evolves with time, and people can improve their capacities in terms of mobility, coordination, and speech. It seems obvious that the more these capacities evolve, the more agency they should have. Consequently, family interpreters play a key role in enhancing or diminishing their agency as their capacities increase. And, precisely, because they have this dual role in which they are both interpreters and relatives of the speech-impaired persons, they do not only care about translating for them (as a professional interpreter would do), but they also care about the well-being and the capacities of the person. Therefore, they struggle to find a balance between assisting and enhancing the agency of speech-impaired people, while interpreting for them.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to explore the key role of family interpreters for people with acquired speech impairment by focusing on the distinctive characteristics of this kind of interpreting practices in each of the stages and the power dynamics that emerge from the process.

Accordingly, we have seen that context and personal shared experiences between the primary speakers and their interpreters play a key role for both understanding what the primary speaker says and for interpreting it. In professional interpreting it is also necessary to consider context in order to produce accurate renditions (Baker 2006; House 2006; Inghilleri 2003). However, in the kind of interpreting this paper has looked at, context becomes an almost *sine qua non* condition for our interpreters to comprehend the utterances by the primary speakers and to be able to expand their talk when they only utter a few words. That is so much the case that if the interpreters cannot rely on the specific context or on the shared personal experiences the speech-impaired person is referring to, it may result in a lack of understanding on the interpreter's part or in an impossibility to produce an accurate rendition. The latter might happen in cases when the interpreter is able to understand what the primary speaker says, but without the relevant context is not able to make sense of it and produce an expanded rendition that accounts for the speech-impaired person's intended message. This is why when the context is not evident for the interpreters, they use several strategies like asking yes/no questions, or relying on multimodal strategies such as making the primary speakers write, or point with their eyes or fingers, or articulate particular gestures to be able to elicit the context of the utterance produced by speech-impaired persons.

We have also claimed that the speech-impaired persons in this study are competent speakers who cannot effectively talk, but they mostly understand what other people say to them and what their interpreters render. This produces a distinctive stage of negotiation of meaning within the interpreting process and we have discussed the strategies primary speakers use when they want to negotiate the meanings rendered by their interpreters, and how meaning is finally jointly constructed between both co-participants.

Finally, we have discussed the power dynamics that emerge from this kind of interpreting practice. In this study, the notion of power is revisited as a dynamic that needs to be balanced, because it has a direct impact on the speech-impaired persons' agency. Particularly, because family interpreters play a key role in enhancing or diminishing their agency, depending on the kind of strategies they use to interpret for them. Specifically, we have seen that the strategies that enhance the speech-impaired persons' agency include leaving them the opportunity to try and say what they want to say (instead of producing a straightforward rendition), asking them guided questions to help them co-narrate, allowing time for the persons to be able to repeat as many times as necessary their utterance, and giving them the opportunity to agree or disagree with the rendition produced by their interpreters. Consequently, by trusting the speech-impaired person's capacities, the interpreters are constructing these persons as competent speakers and that plays a key role in their agency and their will to talk on their own. Professional or non-professional interpreters in other settings are obviously not required to train their primary speaker to become a competent speaker on his/her own. But in our study, because interpreters are both interpreters and relatives of the person they are translating for, they struggle to find a balance between assisting them in communication and enhancing their agency.

This paper is a first approximation to a study of an unexplored group of family interpreters which is quite numerous in the world to be neglected. This paper opens up a new and necessary research path that contributes to the area of linguistic anthropology, family interpreting, and, in particular, to communication in families with a speech-impaired member. Furthermore, a more in-depth analysis of the

strategies used by these family interpreters could also be useful for professional interpreting training.

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Notes

1. To the best of our knowledge, there is not a database that collects the number of people that have some kind of speech impairment in the world. This is why we have calculated an approximative extrapolation to present the scope of the problem, so that the reader is aware of the approximate number of people that might need help to effectively communicate.
2. Dysarthria is a motor speech disorder resulting from neurological injury of the motor component of the motor–speech system and is characterized by poor articulation of phonemes.
3. This is a micro-study entitled ‘Social Inclusion and the Impact of Voiceitt on Identity and Talk in Persons with Acquired Brain Injury’ within a wider Horizon 2020 project (H2020-SMEINST-2-2016-2017) that involves the creation of a talk-assistance technology (Voiceitt) for people with speech impairment. This is why in order to make it work participants should have their cognitive capacities in good shape.
4. Santiago quitted the study at an early stage because he suffered a depression. Consequently, we have considerably less data from him.

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Appendix

Jefferson's transcription system. Symbols used:

SYMBOL	DEFINITION
Roman font	TCU in original language
Italics font	TCU translated into English
[word]	Overlapping talk
[word]	
=	End of one sentence and beginning of next with no gap/pause in between
(.)	Brief interval
(2)	Time (in absolute seconds) between end of a word and beginning of next.
(())	contain analyst comments or descriptions
#word#	Approximate transcription of the sounds uttered by speech-impaired persons
↑	Rise in intonation
?	Sharp rising intonation