Interpersonal Power: A Social Psychological Perspective

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Abstract
Interpreters are essential in facilitating communication between people who speak different languages in a variety of settings. However, social psychology research has paid little attention to their role in shaping interpersonal power dynamics. The present paper aims at examining the interpreter's role in interpersonal power in intercultural interaction from the social psychological perspective in accordance with French's (1956, pp.183-184) and Raven's (1965) typologies of the six bases of social power as well as Raven's (1992, as cited in Raven, 2008) Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence. The researcher found that interpreters can have different types of power that can greatly influence their role in intercultural interactions. They can exercise five types of power: expert, referent, legitimate, reward, and coercive. It seems that the only type of power which they do not ideally exercise is the informational. It is also worth noting that the interpreter may exercise these types of power simultaneously. This means that exercising one type of power does not exclude the remaining types of power. By using the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence, interpreters can address power imbalance, use appropriate power strategies, evaluate their effectiveness, and learn from past experiences to improve future interpreting. The importance of ethical conduct and cultural sensitivity in interpreting cannot be overstated as improper use of power can impede communication and decision-making.

Keywords:
bases of social power, influence, Power/ Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence, typologies of social power

Introduction

In today's globalized society, intercultural communication and understanding are becoming more and more crucial. Interpreters play a crucial role in facilitating communication between people who speak different languages and have diverse cultural backgrounds. They can, therefore, influence the dynamics of communication to some extent. It is crucial to consider the influence they have in cross-cultural relations and the impact this has on the interaction's result by evaluating the power dynamics in these settings.

Although the power of the interpreter is a crucial topic in intercultural interaction, it has not been given due attention form the practical point of view. Recent research (Orlando, 2016) on the training of interpreters in the 21century has not even mentioned the concept, or the concept of power is treated as a general term mentioned through the lens of antonymy: powerful/powerless (See, for example, Erasmus, 2000; Garber, 2000; Morris, 2000). Nevertheless, the concept has been researched from the theoretical point of view, notably social anthropology adopting Christian Krohn-Hansen and Halvard Vike's perspective (Fiva, 2006),

Michel Foucault's perspective (Leanza, 2008; Mason & Ren, 2012; Ruo-nan, 2018), and the Practice Theory's perspective (a conceptual framework within the social sciences, especially anthropology and sociology) (Giustini, 2023). The social psychological angle, however, has remained unresearched. The typologies adopted for investigating the interpreter's role in interpersonal power in this paper are French's (1956, p.183-184) and Raven's (1965) typologies of the six bases of social power as well as Raven's (1992, as cited in Raven, 2008) Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence, which are without a doubt one of the most popular and widely accepted conceptualizations of social power (Elias, 2008).

What is power?

Following the field-theoretical conception of power, the psychologist, French (1956, p. 183) sees power as "the maximum force which A can induce on B minus the maximum resisting force which B can mobilize in the opposite direction." Power is then expressed as the difference between induced force and resistance. Raven (1965, p. 371), on the other hand, defines power as "*potential* influence ---or, conversely, influence is *kinetic* power" and social influence as "change in person's cognition, attitude, or behavior, which has its origin in another a person or group." Defining power as potential influence makes it a variable rather than an all-or-none relationship. It is perfectly conceivable that power relation may be asymmetrical, i.e., the influencing agent (A) and the influencee (B) have unequal power over one another, but may or may not change B's cognition, attitude, or behavior; or symmetrical, i.e., A and B depends on the enduring relationship between A and B.

Types of Power

French (1956, pp. 183- 184) recognized five bases of interpersonal power, each of which gives rise to one type of power.

1. Attraction power: It is based on B's liking for A.
2. Expert Power: It is based on B's perception that A is superior in terms of knowledge or information.
3. Reward Power: It is based on A's ability to mediate rewards for B.
4. Coercive Power: It is based on A's ability to mediate punishments for B.
5. Legitimate Power: It is based on B's belief that A has a right to prescribe his behavior or opinion.

Raven (1965), however, identified six rather than five types of power, classified according to the source of influence. Four of Raven's types of power are the same as those listed above: expert, reward, coercive, and legitimate. The other two are referent and informational. Though attraction power is not assigned a separate classification in Raven's typology, it can be seen as partially realized in referent influence that occurs when B uses A, whether A is an individual or a group, as a "frame of reference" against which they evaluate such aspects of themselves as opinion, attitudes behaviors, and abilities (p. 374). Informational influence, on the other hand, stems from the content of the communication, not the nature of A. It helps to establish new cognitive elements and new relationship for B (p. 372).

It is worth noting that referent influence finds partial expression in Simmel's (1950, p. 145-162) discussion of the sociological significance of the triad which a dyadic relationship for the purpose of mediation. The triad may function as a non-partisan if they are not actually concerned with the contrasting interests and opinions, or if they are equally concerned with both. But they may also act as "tertius gaudens" if they use their relatively superior position for their own purposes. Talking in terms of referent influence, the non-partisan either takes none of the conflicting parties as a reference group if they are neutral or takes both parties as

reference groups if they are equally participating in the interests in conflict. The "tertius gaudens," on the other hand, identify themselves with the one of the conflicting parties and disassociate themselves form the other. The party which they support may be described as serving as a positive reference group for them, whereas the party which they oppose may be viewed as serving as a negative reference group for them. Of course, we should keep in mind that identifying oneself with one of the conflicting parties may not be done willingly all the time, as for example when one is intimidated and so identifies with one of the parties unwillingly.

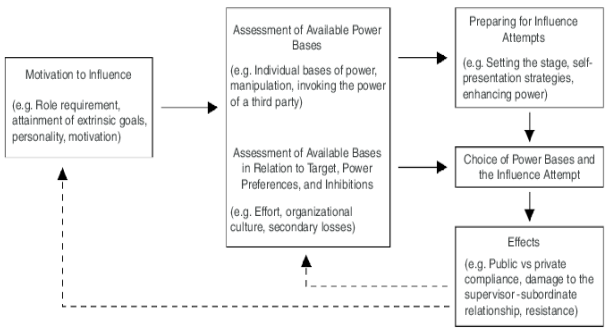
Following Raven (1965, p. 376), influence may be positive or negative depending on whether its effects are in conformity with or opposite to the wishes and intentions of the influencing agent. Raven also identifies secondary influence which occurs when exercising one type of power creates the conditions that give rise to another type of power (p. 376).

Raven (1965, p. 371-375) further examined the stability of changes that result from social influence by grouping the six types of power into three classes, making clear the consequence of the power process in social interaction beyond the more induction of change. He maintained that such changes involve dependence on the influencing agent. Coercion and reward are public-dependent in that they are mediated by the influencing agent and require continuous surveillance on their part to monitor the influencee's responses. Expertness, reference, and legitimacy are private-dependent in that they are mediated by the influencing agent but require no continuous surveillance on their part. Information, however, is independent. The induced change which is brought about by informational influence is internalized by the influence and its continuance becomes independent of the agent.

Based on decades of research, Raven (1992, as cited in Elias, 2008, p. 274) realized that social power was far more complicated than a powerholder using one or more forms of power to persuade a target to do what they want. He consequently created the *Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence* to provide a theoretical viewpoint on several variables that, taken together, influence the type of social influence a person will attempt to exert over another person. According to Raven (2008, p. 180-181), the model starts with an analysis of the motivation for influence and the use of power. It then looks at the variables that influence the choice of a power strategy, the preparatory tools for implementing the bases of power, the way a power strategy is used, the effective changes or lack of changes in the target of influence, the aftereffects, and the readjustment of the agent's perceptions and choices of future strategies.

Figure 1.

The power interaction model (Raven, 1992 and Raven, 1993, as cited in Elias, 2008, p. 274).



Previous Studies on the Role of the Interpreter in Interpersonal Power

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the only scholar who dealt with the role of the interpreter in interpersonal power form the social psychological perspective is Brislin (1976) maintained that French's (1956, p. 183-184) five types of interpersonal power are all applicable to the role of the interpreter. The interpreter may be recruited by someone who likes them as persons; thus, giving rise to attraction power. The interpreter also exercises expert power. Their special language skills are needed by monolinguals wanting to communicate with other persons who speak different languages. They can further exercise reward or coercive power if they skillfully convey the wishes of one person to another or else fails to do so. Doing a poor job of interpretation my lead to unpleasant feelings and diplomatic problems. The interpreter may also be called upon to exercise legitimate power by making suggestions on cross-cultural matters.

The Role of the Interpreter in Interpersonal Power Revisited

Important as they are, Brislin's (1976) views can still be enriched if Raven's (1965) framework and Raven's (1992, as cited in Raven, 2008) model, which are more developed than French's (1956) five bases of interpersonal power, are adopted and if the variables involved in the situation of interpreting are taken into consideration.

Interpreter, as bilinguals and biculturals with exceptional language skills, are usually recruited to help individuals belonging to different cultural milieus and speaking different language to communicate with one another. Ideally then, interpreters have superior knowledge and skills, and it is this superior which gives rise to expert power (See Brislin, 1976, p. 29). This expert power may expand the role of the interpreter and grant them legitimate power in the intercultural setting. Wu et al. (2006), for example, demonstrated that using interpreter knowledge to train doctors on basic Spanish language concepts and to familiarize them with some educational practices and care techniques of Latin-American parents significantly increases those parents' satisfaction with consultations (See also Leanza, 2008). This legitimacy should be exercised with utmost care lease it should lead to undesirable consequences because the interpreter may overpower himself/herself. A German designer was invited to China for an Industrial Design Conference. During a private talk with the designer, the interpreter discovered that the designer is available on weekends. When the president of the China Industrial Design Association inquired about the designer's availability for a weekend dinner meeting, the interpreter responded "Yes" without translating the query to the designer, presuming the designer's availability. Later, when the president requested a dinner reservation, the designer explained that he was not available on Sunday. The interpreter apologized for the miscommunication, admitting his error in assuming the designer's timetable without confirmation (Ruo-nan, 2018, 260).

But sometimes, the source language (SL) speaker might recruit an interpreter even though they are proficient in the target language (TL), for example, in a legal setting. This could be because they are unsure of their capacity to comprehend difficult legal concepts and terminology in the TL, or because they want to be sure that they are expressing their ideas and intentions to the court clearly. In this case, the interpreter may become apprehensive lest the SL speaker should check on his performance. Consequently, the interpreter's originally private-dependent influence turns into public-dependent influence that requires continuous surveillance. This type of influence may even create the conditions for another type of influence, i.e., the interpreter may take the SL speaker as a frame of reference against which they evaluate their performance. Thus, the interpreter turns into both an influencing agent and an influencee at the same time. At any rate, in such situations, the interpreter should strike a

balance between both roles: the influencing agent and the influencee, lest the latter should override the former and affect their self-confidence and performance.

The interpreters sometimes choose, for one reason or another, to assume the role of the "tertius gaudens," identifying themselves with one of the two parties for their own purposes which are more likely to be in line with the party they support. When President Carter visited Poland in 1977, a Polish government interpreter was brought in. He rendered the President's sympathetic reference to dissident Polish journalists "who wanted to attend but not permitted" as "journalists who wanted to come but couldn't" (Eisiminger, 1989, p. 47). It is often stressed that interpreters should be impartial. Impartiality and integrity in rendering the speaker's utterances are an essential part of the certification requirements established for interpreters working for language minorities in the courts (Pousada, 1979; Longely, 1984; Edwards, 1995). The ability of interpreters to carry out their duties successfully and morally can be ensured with the aid of training, certification, and professional standards.

Acting as a "tertus gaudens" may not be done willingly. The interpreter may be intimidated and so forced to side with the powerful. Fiva (2006, p. 43) reported a case where the interpreter had sided with the police in a dispute between the defendants and the police regarding a translation issue. They believed the Norwegian term "stikk" [beat it/run away] was incorrect and that the right rendition should have been "dra" [leave]. The court then instructed the two interpreters assigned to this case to come to the witness stand one at a time and speak on this topic. First, Milan testified, saying, "of course, one can always discuss how to translate various words in context, but I have no objection to the translation that was done of this recording." The other interpreter was then summoned and stated, "I concur with my colleague." As a result, nothing came of it, and the defendants came across as suspicious, given the emphasis on "stikk." Everyone there would recall the defendants on the phone talking about getting out of the country quickly "stikk," not in a leisurely holiday mode "dra."

The interpreter may be granted the right to intervene to clear misunderstanding resulting from differences in intercultural communication patterns (Brislin, 1976, p. 29-30). The interpreter, as bilingual and a bicultural, can exercise legitimate power to help both parties establish a better understanding of each other. Once a scholarly Belgium journalist wanted to know the difference between the procedures of the American against the interstate Commerce Commission and the federal Trade Commission. Officials of both agencies did their best to explain the difference, but the visitor did not understand. After clearing his statement with the officials concerned, the interpreter intervened and presented this explanation:

> In this country we believe that certain business fields are inherently monopolistic, because of the very nature of the business itself. Railroads are a good example. On the country there are other business situations, as in manufacturing, which may be assumed competitive, again because of the nature of the business concerned. In the first case there is a presumption of monopoly and, in consequence, enterprises wishing to take certain steps, such as merges, are required by law to assume the burden of proving to the agency concerned that such steps are not against the public interest. In the second case there is an assumption of free competition, and in consequence, it is the agency concerned which is required to prove that given practices go against law (Glenn, 1958, p.92).

The visitor was satisfied with this explanation. The interpreter managed to cast facts in a structure which is more in line with the French culture rather the American culture. The former makes explanations based on preliminary statement of abstract theory and principle, whereas the latter based on concrete specific description (ibid.). Another case in point is that of a Japanese journalist who visited Al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad after the Gulf crisis. She was particularly anxious to know how student managed to pursue their studies. The students told the visitor that they were resolved to make a new start. She responded to the

student's optimistic views with a polite lack of understanding. In fact, what the visitor meant was how the student managed to pay the fees of the University. At this point, the interpreter (the researcher herself) decided to intervene and explained to the visitor: "Students simply do not have to pay fees because education in Iraq is free." The visitor found this explanation clear and satisfactory.

However, it should be noted that interpreters are not always granted the right to intervene to inform partners in intercultural contact on the dissimilarities between the respective cultures which may affect the intended goal. In an interesting survey conducted among three different Polish professional groups, viz., persons dealing in humanities, in science and technology; and diplomats who attended international conferences as speakers or listeners, or participated in negotiations, it has been found that the speakers, the most liberal among which are humanities group, allowed the interpreter to intrude to add explanation. The listeners, however, opposed the idea and preferred the ghost role of the interpreter to the active role, i.e., the intruder role (Kopczynski, 1994, p. 192-196).

The interpreter can further mediate rewards or punishments to the SL speaker if they render their utterances skillfully or else fails to do so (Brislin, 1976, p. 29). In fact, it is better to view both reward and coercive power as a by-product of expert power on the one hand, and referent power on the other. If the interpreter is competent enough, they will be able to convey the SL speaker's wishes skillfully; thus, mediating reward to them. Otherwise, they will mediate punishments. A Henan school invited a German designer to lead a workshop. When asked about the class schedule, the school principal, with passion and respect, advised that the designer arrange it to his own schedule. This remark empowered the designer, who decided on class timings unilaterally, causing unhappiness among teachers and students. Over a farewell dinner, the school's principal suggested that the designer set class times for future seminars. The designer wondered why the school did not express their wishes sooner. The interpreter explained that what the school principal said in the beginning was only to show respect to the designer. By ignoring the school's passionate background, the interpreter caused confusion and irritation (Ruo-nan, 2018, p. 262).

If, on the other hand, the interpreter takes the SL speaker as a positive reference group for them, they will aspire to mediate rewards to them. Otherwise, punishments will be mediated. The interpreter can also use their legitimate power to mediate rewards or punishments. Helping the powerless is an example of the interpreter's obligation to help those who cannot help themselves. Consider the following statements made by court interpreters (Fiva, 2006, p. 37, see also Hale, 2008, p. 102): "Sometimes I twist the words just a little so that what he says sounds reasonable, I mean, they already have so much going in their disfavor.", "I wish I could explain to them how it works here, because they get in so much trouble with how they react toward child welfare services." However, Raven (1965, p. 373) stated that the objective ability of the influencing agent to mediate these two types of influence is not important, but the "potential rewards and punishments as perceived by the influencee." Now, the question which may be raised in this regard is: Can the SL speakers perceive the potential rewards and punishments as mediated by the interpreter? The interpreter is hired in the first place to help persons who speak different languages to communicate with one another and so overcome the language barrier. To answer this question then can say that the SL speaker confides in the interpreter's competence, integrity, care, and good sense. But this should not be taken to mean that consequences of misinterpretation biased rendition or carelessness always pass unnoticed because the SL speaker does not know the TL. The reaction of the TL listener (s), the interpreter's colleagues or the bilinguals attending the meeting to the interpreter's rendition does help to bring such instances to the fore. Once, during an American-Russian discussion on freedom of association, a Russian delegate said in Russian: "There's a dead dog hidden there" which simply meant: "That's where the shoe pinches." The Russian-English

interpreter thought that it would be more vivid to render the Russian's utterance into: "There's a nigger in the wood pile;" forgetting that the head of American delegate, the Under-Secretary of State for Labour, was a coloured man --- a diplomatic incident occurred! (Glemet, 1958, p. 122).

As is already seen, the interpreters exercise five types of power: expert, referent, legitimate, reward, and coercive. It seems that the only type of power which they do not *ideally* exercise is the informational. They are not responsible for the content of communication because they are the mediators not the "meaners" (Ahmad, 1995). But if they change that content, intentionally or unintentionally, they will be responsible for informational influence. For example, in Oslo courthouse, a judge asked the interpreter not to interpret everything to the defendant but give a summary of the most important information only (Fiva, 2006, p. 89-90).

Finally, it is worth noting that the interpreter may exercise these types of power simultaneously. This means that exercising one type of power does not exclude the remaining types of power.

Perceiving the role of the interpreter in terms of the wider view provided by the Power/ Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence, gives a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex nature of interpersonal power dynamics in social interactions as far as interpreting is concerned.

The model emphasizes the significance of considering not only the six bases of power but also the motivations behind influence and the use of power. When it comes to the interpreter's role in interpersonal power, particularly in contexts like legal, medical, and educational settings, interpreters are frequently in a unique position to negotiate power disparities between people who speak different languages. The communication and decision-making process can therefore be greatly impacted by their motivation and power-use strategy.

The model also emphasizes the use of preparatory devices for the deployment of power bases. In the case of interpreting, this could entail building rapport, outlining expectations, and making sure that everyone is aware of the interpreter's duties. These devices can lessen the possibility of power misuse and encourage more fair dialogue.

The model then examines the elements that affect the selection of a power approach. These can include things like cultural differences, power imbalances between parties, and the interpreter's own professional standards and ethical principles when interpreting.

The model considers how a power strategy is employed and its impact on the target of influence. This includes assessing the effectiveness of the interpreting process, identifying any communication barriers or misunderstandings, and evaluating if the interpreter's use of power has helped or hindered communication.

The model also stresses the importance of reflecting on the aftereffects and readjustment of the agent's perceptions and choices of future strategies. For interpreters, this may mean reflecting on their use of power and how it affects communication and decision-making and making changes for future interpreting situations. Stone (2018, p. 181-182), for example, warns against the unintended consequence of the court interpreters' control over a witness or attorney. This control is evident in the interpreters requesting the witnesses to repeat their answers which may lead to the altering of the answer and consequently corrupting the original testimonies, or interrupting an attorney which may affect the latter's credibility in the court setting.

Conclusions

In this paper, the role of the interpreter in power relations has been examined within Raven's (1965) typology of power which identifies six types of power: expert, referent, legitimate,

reward, coercive and informational, and further groups these into three classes according to stability of the change resulting from social influence: expertness, reference, legitimacy are private-dependent; reward and coercion are public-dependent; and information is independent. The typology is more developed than French's (1956) which identifies five types of power only: attraction, expert, reward, coercive, and legitimate, and does not go beyond the mere induction of change.

Applying Raven's (1965) typology of power to the interpreter's role, the researcher has arrived at the following major findings which can considerably develop Brislin's (1976) original treatment of the interpreter's role in interpersonal power:

1. The interpreter's expert power may expand the role of the interpreter in the process of intercultural interaction and grant them accordingly legitimate power.
2. The interpreter's expert power, which is primarily private-dependent, may under certain conditions, turn into public dependent. It may even develop into referent power. Operating together, both types of power may turn the interpreter into an influencing agent and an influencee.
3. The interpreter's referent power may take the form of negative influence regarding the SL speaker; turning the interpreter into a "tertius gaudens" who uses his/her relatively superior position for his/her own purposes, or simply because he/she is forced to do so.
4. The interpreter's legitimate power may not always be granted.
5. The interpreter's reward power and coercive power are better viewed as a by-product of expert power, referent power, and legitimate power, respectively.
6. The interpreter cannot exercise informational power because he/she is not the "meaner" but the mediator. They can, however, affect the SL speaker's informational influence if they, intentionally or unintentionally, change the original content.

These findings clearly indicate that the interpreter may exercise these types of power simultaneously. This means that exercising one type of power does not exclude the remaining types of power.

Moreover, using the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence to understand the interpreter's role helps acknowledge the intricate power dynamics during interpreting. Interpreters can address power imbalances, use preparatory tools, choose appropriate power strategies, evaluate their effectiveness, and learn from past experiences to improve future interpreting. Improper use of power can impede communication and decision-making, highlighting the significance of ethical conduct and cultural sensitivity in interpreting.

Implications for the Training of Novice Interpreters

The implications of examining the interpreter's role in interpersonal power in intercultural interaction from the social psychological perspective in accordance with French's (1956, p.183-184) and Raven's (1965) typologies of the six bases of social power as well as Raven's (1992, as cited in Raven, 2008) Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence) for the training of novice interpreters can be envisioned as follows:

Power dynamics can have an impact on intercultural encounters. It is critical to train interpreters to recognize power dynamics because it allows them to better comprehend the context of their interpreting jobs and the possible effect of power on communication.

Intercultural encounters are frequently distinguished by differences in cultural conventions, values, and communication methods. Interpreters must be culturally attentive and mindful of any power differentials that may occur as a result of cultural differences. The focus of training should be on acquiring the capacity to traverse these cultural variations while remaining neutral and unbiased.

Interpreters are essential in maintaining good communication between people speaking various languages. Understanding power dynamics can assist interpreters in managing conversation flow while minimizing the influence of power disparities on communication. This entails developing techniques to guarantee that all sides' voices are heard and that the interpreter does not unintentionally perpetuate or magnify power differentials.

When interpreters are aware of power dynamics, they can take efforts to empower those who may be at a disadvantage owing to poor language competency or unfamiliarity with the dominant culture. Techniques for amplifying the voices of marginalized or less powerful individuals and ensuring that their opinions are appropriately communicated can be included in training.

Power dynamics can provide interpreters with ethical quandaries. Training should include ethical standards as well as best practices for dealing with circumstances in which interpreters have access to sensitive or confidential material. Even in the face of power disparities, interpreters must retain professionalism and ethical standards.

Understanding power dynamics is critical since interpreters are frequently involved in situations involving negotiations or disagreements. Training interpreters in mediation and negotiating skills can assist them in efficiently managing these circumstances, ensuring that power disparities do not impede dispute resolution or effective decision-making.

During encounters, power dynamics might change. Interpreters must be skilled at detecting shifts in power relations and adapting their technique accordingly. For example, a person who begins the conversation as an expert (expert power) may lose credibility during the talk, resulting in a shift in power dynamics.

Different power structures can have an impact on the tone and intent of communication. Even when power dynamics are at play, an interpreter must properly portray not only the words but also the underlying tone, mood, and intentions of the speakers. The necessity of retaining subtlety and context should be emphasized throughout training.

Finally, adding power dynamics analysis within novice interpreters' training utilizing social psychological frameworks might strengthen their awareness of power dynamics in intercultural encounters. It gives them the knowledge and skills they need to manage complicated power relations, improve communication, and encourage ethical and successful interpreting practices.

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