The identity of the professional interpreter
How students construct the identity of the professional interpreter in an Italian higher education institution

Runcieman, Alan James

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The identity of the professional interpreter

How students construct the identity of the professional interpreter in an Italian higher education institution

Alan James Runcieman

A thesis submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

September 2015
Author’s Declaration

This is to certify that:

1. this thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy;
2. due acknowledgement has been made in the thesis to all other material used;
3. this thesis does not exceed the word length for the degree;
4. no part of this work has been used for the award of another degree;
5. this thesis meet’s the University of London’s Human Ethics committee (HREC) requirements for research conduct.

Name: Alan James Runcieman

Signature:

Date:
Dedication

To Annie

Without whom none of this would have been possible.

I miss you.
Acknowledgements

To Simon, who supported me so much throughout these years and helped me realise this PhD. I know Annie would be so proud of him.

... 

To Sarah, for calling me every day and urging me on, even though she wasn’t quite sure exactly what I was doing.

... 

To Joanne, who I hope one day will enjoy the pleasure and pain of doing her own PhD.

... 

To Eva, for her deep love, patience and understanding.

... 

To my supervisors, Simon Coffey and Constant Leung, who guided me. Especially to Constant who gave me invaluable advice in the Auberge.
Abstract

The identity of the professional interpreter

How students construct the identity of the professional interpreter in an Italian higher education institution

Although professional interpreters are increasingly important in today’s world, helping minority language speakers in other nations in their pursuit of basic human rights, there has not as yet been any substantial empirical research into the institutions that train them. This research therefore aimed to fill this gap by carrying out narrative research, from an ethnographic perspective, to provide emic insights into how students construct the professional interpreter’s identity over the period of their first year in the institution.

The research drew on small story narrative research, which analyses small, often fragmentary, co-constructed narratives as they emerge in situated talk. The analytical frame adopted was narrative positioning analysis, which analyses narratives on three levels: the level of the actual narrative told, the level of the tellers in the moment of the telling, and the level of wider Discourses that shape the first two levels.

Narrative positioning is concerned with how narrators position themselves and others, as well as the characters in the narratives they tell, towards the social world. This positioning is then analysed to draw conclusions about the Discourses that shape their perceptions of the social world, providing insights into how they construct their social identities.

By drawing on ethnographic data about the institution, certain Discourses were identified as being important in shaping student identities as they emerged in the narratives told. Furthermore, these Discourses provided insights into how the identity
of the professional interpreter was constructed, and how students related their own identities to that construction, as well as the resources they perceived as being necessary to become interpreters.

The research then aimed at identifying those Discourses that played an important role in shaping the image of the professional interpreter’s identity and how students navigated them in their first year in the institution. My analysis was ultimately directed at critiquing those Discourses, in order to make suggestions as to how the institution might better train students to become future interpreters.
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Chapter one

Introduction and background to the research

This research took place, at Bologna University’s ‘Advanced school for interpreters and translators in modern languages’, in Italy (henceforth Sslmit).

Over the period of their first academic year (October 2012 – July 2013), I interviewed five student participants, in individual and group sessions, in order to trace their changing perceptions of both the institution and their individual progress towards becoming professionals in the field of interpreting, a goal they had clearly expressed in the volunteer stage of the research (see chapter three, section 3.2).

The data collected in these interviews was analysed through a small story approach to narrative research, taken from an ethnographic perspective (see chapter two, for a detailed account of both). However, before I describe my theoretical approach, I first give some background information relevant to the reasons behind engaging in this research, as well as an introduction to the field of interpreting and interpreting studies and its relevance to me as a researcher.

In the first part of the following chapter, I describe the role professional interpreters play in today’s society (section 1.1), the gap in empirical research into their professional training and my approach to addressing that gap (section 1.1.2), as well as how I approached the research (section 1.1.3), and the research questions I posed (section 1.2). I then go on to look specifically at the institution where the research was carried out (section 1.3).

In the second part of the chapter, I give the historical background to the development of interpreting studies (section 1.4), I outline the growth of community interpreting and compare and contrast it to conference interpreting (section 1.4.1), and I examine the complex role of the community interpreter (section 1.4.2). I also look at the
changing theoretical and methodological developments in approaches to both interpreting and translation over the last fifty years (section 1.5).

In the last part of the chapter, I provide some autobiographical background about the reasons why I became interested in this area of research (sections 1.6 – 1.6.1) and my own personal views, and how they may have impacted on the research carried out (section 1.6.2).

1.1 The role of the professional interpreter

Professional interpreters play an important role in society today,

... (helping) the institutions of multilingual societies to function.. (by supporting) immigrant communities in courts, hospitals, police and immigration services. Properly trained, interpreters thus contribute to safeguarding human and democratic rights.

(European Commission report, 2006: 8)

Professionally trained interpreters are important therefore in helping language minority inhabitants in other nations overcome barriers of communication in the pursuit of basic human rights (healthcare, education etc.). Moreover, the right of these minority groups to speak their own languages is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human rights, evidenced in Article 2.1, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10th December, 1948, and which states

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.’

(Cited on The United Nations website¹, my emphasis)

Nowadays, given the diffuse nature of world migration since the early 1990’s, and a globalization which has ‘altered the face of social, cultural and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world’ (Blommaert & Rampton 2011:1),

...the provision of interpreters becomes a legal obligation on the part of all societies, (and) by extension, the right to communication via interpreters becomes a basic human right, as the right to language...’

(Angelelli, 2012: 255)

Despite the important role that interpreters play in contemporary societies however, the academic community has given little weight to date on researching interpreter institutions in higher education (see section 1.1.2, below), whose aim it is to train students in the profession. The present research therefore aims to fill this gap by engaging in qualitative research into one such institution.

1.1.2 Background to the research focus

Important changes have occurred in interpreting studies in Italy (and in other countries) over the last few decades, both in education and research, which have had important repercussions for my own research and the questions I posed (see section 1.2). I now go on to outline these in detail and their ramifications for this research.

The first change regards the institutions’ curricula (particularly with regard to first-cycle degrees2). Today’s students are no longer a-priori ‘early bilinguals’3, uniquely concerned with learning a set of interpreting skills as in the past (Zannirato, 2008), but rather students still in the process of acquiring their target languages, principally in the ‘confines’ of the institution (Rosiers et al, 2011). The ramifications of this are that first-cycle degrees, such as the one under investigation in this research, place a heightened emphasis on language learning as part of their curricula, something that emerged through Discourses in the institution. Discourses are ‘socially accepted

2 A first cycle degree refers to the standard three-year degree (equivalent to a bachelor degree). Second cycle degrees refer to post-graduate degrees.
3 Defined as individuals who acquire two languages in the early stages of their development.
associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting and interacting’ (Gee, 1999: 17), (see section 2.10 for a detailed explanation of the concept). These Discourses were seen as having a significant influence on interpreter-student identities (see chapters 4 and 5, for an analysis of the data relevant to this).

The second change regards research in interpreting studies. In recent years, research in the field of interpreting has been looking more and more towards the social (emphasising human interaction), drawing on sociolinguistics, feminist studies, sociology, and social theory among others for deeper understandings about the processes in interpreted communication events (henceforth ICE⁴), (Angelelli, 2006). However, this focus on the social dimension has been primarily concerned with professional practice in the field, and not on the institutions that are responsible for training interpreters. For example, a major journal in the field of interpreting and translation studies, Translation and Interpreting studies (John Benjamins), has focused on the interpreter’s social role and identity, but principally in the ICE (i.e. court interpreting, medical interpreting etc.), and nothing of note on the same processes on interpreter-students in training institutions.

Although much has been written in the field of interpreter training, ‘empirical research is arguably still in its infancy’ (Kelly and Martin, 2009), and the empirical research that has been carried out has been principally focused on ICE’s and the lessons that can be learnt from experiences in the field for training in the institution (see Routledge’s The Interpreter and Translator Trainer, Special issue: 2014, vol 8:3). Furthermore, part of the reason for an absence of empirical research on the institution is ‘due to the fact that interpreter research has focused too intently on the cognitive mechanics of the process...’ (Kelly and Martin, 2009: 299, drawing from Pöchhacker) and little on the socio-cultural processes effecting students’ development.

The ramification of this then in my own research, was to take an ethnographic perspective (see section 2.18), to explore students’ lives in the institution in their first

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⁴ I use this term to refer to any event where an interpreter is interpreting between interlocutors with different languages.
year from a social and cultural perspective, as they navigated institutional Discourses in an attempt to become experts in the field of interpreting.

I now give a brief summary of my research approach in this study (which I develop in chapter two).

1.1.3 Summary of Research approach

My research drew on small story narrative research (see chapter two, sections 2.7 - 2.8) to investigate a group of students as they negotiated institutional Discourses in their first year. From a theoretical perspective I took narrative to be an epistemology (see section 2.2), a way of knowing about the world and ‘a mode of thought, communication, and apprehension of reality’ (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012: 15).

For the analysis of my narrative data I adopted the analytical framework of narrative positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997, 2003, 2004; De Fina, 2013; Georgakopoulou, 2000; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, Georgakopoulou, 2013) to examine the turn by turn construction of narratives as they emerge between interlocutors in situated dialogue, and the wider Discourses they draw on (see section 2.13, for a more detailed explanation of this analytical approach).

As previously stated, as I was interested in how my participants constructed their social world through their narratives and how they positioned themselves and others in it, I chose to take an ethnographic perspective in the research (see section 2.18), drawing on ethnographic data beyond the narrative episodes analysed (i.e. based on observations in the field, see Appendix B) to investigate the wider community of interpreter-students (see section 2.14, for a detailed explanation of how this approach was applied theoretically).

1.2 Research questions

In my research, I posed the following questions:
1. Over the period of their first academic year, how do interpreter-students perceive and negotiate Discourses in the institution, and how do these Discourses affect their constructions of the identity of a professional interpreter and the resources to become one?

2. How do these Discourses also shape their identities as interpreter-students and affect their stated future goals?

I now give an overview of the institution where the research was carried out, and then go on to give some historical background to the field of interpreting as an academic subject.

1.3 The institution

‘The Advanced School for Translators and Interpreters in Modern Languages’ (Sslmit’), at the University of Bologna’s Forli campus in Italy, was founded as a department in 1989. It was the first to be established by the University of Bologna in Romagna (the area South of the regional capital, Bologna, and part of the Emilia-Romagna region), part of a multi-campus project which has since seen further expansion into the main towns in the region; Ravenna, Imola, Cesena and Rimini. It is also one of only two institutions in Italy to be accredited by the ‘Conference Internationale d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes’ (CIUTI)\(^5\), and holds a high reputation for excellence both nationally and internationally. Competition is high for a place on the undergraduate degree course at Sslmit. In 2012 there were 1,140 applications with a maximum quota of only 182 places, and over 10 percent were second time applicants\(^7\).

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\(^5\) Since 2013 the department’s name has been changed to ‘The Department of Interpreters and Translators (D.I.T)

\(^6\) CIUTI was established in 1995 and requires members’ teaching staff to introduce professional experience and provide training that is relevant for the profession.

\(^7\) Faculty statistics, part of a departmental report published on the department website (2014) http://corsi.unibo.it/Laurea/MediazioneLinguisticaInterculturale/Pagine/default.aspx
Sslmit offers both first-cycle and second-cycle degrees in interpreting and translation. The first-cycle degree is termed ‘Mediazione Linguitistica Interculturale’ (Intercultural Linguistic Mediation), and offers modules in both interpreting and translation, where the interpreting modules focus specifically on community interpreting (see section 1.4.1, below), and the second-cycle degree specialises in either translation or interpreting, specifically conference interpreting (Ibid).

Italian universities offer a wide range of first-cycle degrees in interpreting and translation, approximately 31 degrees in 29 universities throughout the country.\(^8\) This is in contrast to the UK for example which offers considerably less at a first-cycle level (around 15)\(^9\) and the majority at a second-cycle degree level (notably MPhil and MA’s). Also notable, among Italian first-cycle universities, is a minimum requisite of 2 foreign languages, including Italian (for non-Italian citizens), whereas most UK universities only require one foreign language.

Students who apply for the first-cycle degree at Sslmit are expected to be proficient in a modern European language which is not their own –English, French, Spanish or German– at approximately B2 level (according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). There is a written entrance test for each language (and Italian if the student is not a native speaker) held between the first and second weeks of September with a subsequent selection of the highest scoring students for the entrance numbers allowed. Subsequent to gaining entrance to the department, students are required to choose a second and third language for their undergraduate studies. The second language must be one of the European languages listed above (with the additional possibility of Russian and Chinese\(^{10}\)) and the third any of the following: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Finnish, Portuguese, Russian, Bulgarian or Slovakian.

In line with the guidelines developed to improve and promote transparency among European institutions of higher education, the institution’s website\(^{11}\) states that it

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\(^8\) As listed on the Italian Ministry of Education’s site, http://offf.miur.it/pubblico.php/ricerca/show_form/p/miur
\(^9\) See the Complete University Guide at http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/
\(^{10}\) Chinese was only a third language option until 2012.
\(^{11}\) See http://corsi.unibo.it/Laurea/MediazioneLinguisticaInterculturale/Pagine/Presentazione.aspx.
follows the ‘Dublin Descriptors’\textsuperscript{12} in defining the learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve after completing their first-cycle degree (namely in relation to, ‘Knowledge and understanding’, ‘Applying knowledge and understanding’, ‘Making judgements’, ‘Communication skills’ and ‘Learning skills’). Under the heading ‘Knowledge and understanding’, Sslmit specifies that its students are expected to have acquired a C1 level in two foreign languages and a ‘livello intermedio’ (an intermediate level, usually associated with a B1 level) in a third.

Furthermore, the institution states that with regards to ‘Applying knowledge and understanding’ the graduate:

- is able to express themselves fluently and spontaneously in two foreign languages, and with relative fluency and spontaneity, in a third foreign language;
- is able to apply the skills and knowledge gained in the field of intercultural and interlingual mediation between the Italian and at least three foreign languages;
- knows how to produce written texts in Italian and in 3 foreign languages.

(Translated by myself from the institution’s web-page\textsuperscript{13}, p3)

I refer to these requisites further on in my research, in particular in my data analysis (see chapter 5, section 5.2.5).

With regards to the actual curricula\textsuperscript{14}, all first year students are obliged to take a module in both ‘Italian literature’ and ‘Italian language and linguistics’, as well as two ‘language and mediation’ modules in their first and second languages of study, (translating between those languages and Italian). They then have a choice between

\textsuperscript{12} Presented in 2003 and adopted in 2005 as the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

\textsuperscript{13} http://corsi.unibo.it/Laurea/MediazioneLinguisticaInterculturale/Pagine/Presentazione.aspx.

\textsuperscript{14} See the following web page for a detailed description of curricula: http://corsi.unibo.it/Laurea/MediazioneLinguisticaInterculturale/Pagine/PianiDidattici.aspx?CodCorso=8059&AnnoAccademico=2015&Orientamento=000&Indirizzo=000&Progressivo=4
three modules in three areas of study, ‘literature’ (specific to their first language of study), ‘European history’, and what is termed as ‘intercultural and gender studies’. Modules in students’ third language of study begin in their second year but introductory courses are available in their first year.

The actual content of course curricula is decided between the relevant teacher and his/her head of department, however detailed course plans are not made public (making an analysis of that content extremely difficult in this research), and teachers are only obliged to publish the general contents of their courses on the departmental website. These are often very broad and general descriptions, as the following example from a first year course in ‘language mediation’ shows15.

Course contents
The *Mediazione* module will be divided into two parts: Part 1: rephrasing from Italian into Italian, English into English, English into Italian and Italian into English; exercises based on various materials regarding cultural aspects of English-speaking countries and vocabulary related to specific topics (as described in Part 2); Part 2: simulations of interpreter-mediated exchanges between English native speakers and Italian native speakers in daily contexts (at the airport, at the restaurant, etc.) and analysis/discussion of verbal and nonverbal behaviour, and language registers.

(See Chapter 5, section 5.4.4, where I refer to this course content in relation to my data analysis.)

In the more general context of how the institution presents itself to prospective students, SsImit positions itself as being one of the top institutions in Italian higher education with respect to training professional interpreters. In a promotional video on the internet the ‘preside’, the school’s director, clearly states that

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Sslmit is a centre of national and international excellence, and as such its entrance requirements are extremely stringent.

(Translated by me from Italian)\textsuperscript{16}

Students who manage to enter the institution therefore are clearly positioned as being exceptional in some way, having passed the institution’s stringent entrance requirements and being part of a centre which is both nationally and internationally recognised for its excellence. Web 2.0\textsuperscript{17} platforms for social media suggest that this image of the School is pervasive. An on-line forum dedicated to Sslmit has requests for information about the institution from prospective students, which suggest that it is generally perceived as being nationally renowned,

Is it true that they are actually the best Italian schools to prepare you in interpretation and translation?

(Translated by me from Italian)\textsuperscript{18}

A Facebook page, set up by the institution itself, advertises preparatory courses aimed at helping students prepare for the entrance exam which suggests that the exam is generally positioned as being notably difficult, requiring study and training to pass.

pre-course SIMULATIONS SSLMIT 2013

The student organization "Student Point " is organizing the 5th edition of the preparatory courses and simulations for the admission test to the three-year degree for aspirants to SSLMIT in Forlì. The pre-courses are free and are supported and organized by students of the faculty.

(Translated by me from Italian)\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9M0m5hxUdCk
\textsuperscript{17} Web 2.0 describes World Wide Web sites that emphasise user-generated content, usability, and interoperability.
\textsuperscript{18} http://forum.studenti.it/lingue/974774-sslmit-forla-2012-pareri-consigli.html
\textsuperscript{19} https://www.facebook.com/events/485924764825785

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A group of Sslmit students on the popular website ‘Tumbler’, calling themselves ‘Sslmitians’, post regular, comic and self-deprecating portraits of the typical Sslmit student. In one such post the writer describes the first days of a new student in the following way,

Freshmen generally move in herds, and their look can be said to be halfway between the bold, having got in, and frightened, because indeed they got in.

(Translated by me from Italian)²⁰

Gaining entrance to Sslmit is positioned as being a cause for celebration but also of trepidation, echoing the school director when he describes the entrance requirements as being stringent due to the school having a national and international reputation for excellence. The self-defined ‘Sslmitian’, appears to express his pride in passing the entrance requirements, but also the pressure to perform to corresponding high standards of excellence.

1.3.1 A sketch of a student’s first week in the institution: Orientation.

Having passed the entrance exam, students’ initial experiences are outlined here to provide a rough ethnographic snapshot of their first week.

When students arrive at the institution they are provided with a guide to the institution’s organisation and services, entitled “Campus of Forli. User instructions” (see appendix C). This guide identifies the figure of the ‘Degree Programme Secretariat’ (Ibid: 9) whose role is to ‘provide for help and assistance in the compiling of… (a student’s) study plan and for the assessment of the prerequisites’ (Ibid). The guide also identifies the figure of the ‘tutor’ who ‘work(s) with the degree programme secretariats and deal(s) with the activities of support to the services addressed to

²⁰ http://sslmittiani.tumblr.com
students’ (Ibid) providing information and advice at specific times during the week (in
timetabled receiving hours).

In their first two days in the institution (in the first week of October) students are
introduced to these figures in a general introductory series of talks\(^\text{21}\). Moreover, on the
first day they are given a welcome speech from the director of the institution as well as
the director of the first cycle degree, which lasts approximately one hour. After which
there are presentations of the various language departments and a general outline of
their syllabuses for the first academic year, which also continues on the morning of the
second day. Courses then begin approximately four days later, in the second week of
October, and finish around mid December. The average student’s day starts at 9am and
finishes at 7pm, with on average two hours break in between.

I now go on to talk about the historical background of interpreting, and the
development of the field of interpreting studies as an academic discipline.

1.4 Historical background to interpreting studies

The diversity of languages has, throughout history, created the need for
methods of communication between speakers of different languages.
Interpreting – the oral transfer of messages between speakers of different
languages – is thus one of the oldest of human activities, and the role of the
interpreter is arguably one of the oldest of the professions

\[(\text{Gentile et al, 1996: 5})\]

Interpreters have been around since ancient times. The Egyptians, Greeks and Romans
all made reference to their use at some time or another (Ibid). However, the
identifiable figure of the interpreter was only visible in certain settings, usually in
high-level international encounters, such as meetings between rulers, delegations to
other countries, and in more recent times, in the 19\(^{th}\) century, as part of the spread of

colonialism throughout the world. Interpreters however, were not seen as professional figures with a specific set of skills and expertise until the 20th Century (Baigorri-Jalón: 2014).

The first specific role of the *professional* interpreter emerged through the need for international interpreting in the 20th century, and in particular in the context of international conferences and meetings. The *conference interpreter* then was the first clearly recognised professional figure in the field of interpreting (Baigorri, 2015). Interpreters were increasingly employed after the First World War with the development of international relations, in particular in the League of Nations. However, the most important advances came in the wake of the Second World War, at the Nuremberg war crimes trials. In these trials, instigated to investigate Nazi atrocities, new technology allowed experiments with *simultaneous interpreting* (translating people’s talk in real time by shadowing their utterances directly), where interpreters sat in soundproof booths and relayed the courtroom talk through earphones. Before this, interpreters worked mainly in *consecutive interpreting* (where speakers had to pause after a period of speech to allow the interpreter to relay it in the other language). With the advent of this technology then, and the increased use of simultaneous interpreting, conference interpreters became firmly established and grew exponentially, particularly in organisations such as the United Nations (Gentile et al, 1996).

The figure of the *community interpreter* (or dialogue or liaison interpreter as he/she is also referred to) emerged under quite different circumstances. Increased international business contacts and mass migration, particularly to America, but also to many other countries after the Second World War, meant that interpreters were required to mediate between increasingly diverse communities. For migrants this often meant communicating from minority languages to the dominant language of the host nation.

As community interpreting forms the basis of interpreting courses in the first cycle degree at Ssmit22, conference interpreting only being studied at a post-graduate level,

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22 All interpreting courses are based around interpreting in the community, in hotels, restaurants, hospitals, courts of law etc.
I look at some of the differences between the two in the next section where I explain the growth of the former in particular over the last twenty years.

The different role that community interpreters play in interpreting is further investigated in section 1.4.2, as it evokes different (and often competing) Discourses about the identity of the professional interpreter, which also emerged in my research data (see chapter five).

1.4.1 The growth in Interpreting studies: Community and conference interpreting.

The interpreting and translation disciplines have seen an exponential growth in the last twenty years, and

…there has been a proliferation of specialized translating and interpreting courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. These courses, which attract thousands of students, are mainly orientated to training future professional commercial translators and interpreters and serve as highly valued entry-level qualifications for the translation and interpreting professions.

(Munday, 2001: 6)

This proliferation of specialised translating and interpreting courses can be seen in part as a consequence of further major geographic displacements of individuals over this period (as after the Second World War, see section 1.4), but also due to the pursuit of better education, commerce, trade, and intermarriage (among others). These geographic displacements meant that individuals often found themselves in new countries where they did not speak the language and where, as part of a linguistic minority, they required interpreting and translation services for many of their daily activities, for example in relation to health, education and legal services. In such circumstances the need for interpreters in community interpreting was, and still is, particularly elevated.
Community interpreters work, as the name suggests, in varied community settings, such as in hospitals, government agencies, schools, court houses, police stations and immigration offices. They can work simultaneously or consecutively (see section 1.4), and are required at times to carry out sight translations (often of forms and documents). Community interpreting is considerably different from conference interpreting however, as the following factors show:

- the physical proximity of interpreter and clients. Community interpreters are often physically present, unlike conference interpreters who work at a distance, in booths;
- an information gap between the clients. Community interpreters are often concerned with sharing information between people from different language communities, and not translating long stretches of monological speech as conference interpreters are often required to do;
- a likely status differential between clients. Community interpreters often have to work with people with different socio-economic, cultural and educational resources;
- working as an individual and not as part of a team. Conference interpreters often work in 30-minute shifts, exchanging places with colleagues over the whole interpreting event.

(Elaborated from Gentile et al, 1996: 18)

The role of the community interpreter therefore is considerably different from that of the conference interpreter. I look more closely at the former in the next section.

### 1.4.2 The complex role of the community interpreter

The role of the community interpreter is not straight forward, merely interpreting between the source and target language. As emerges in the different factors listed in

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23 Reading and subsequently translating written material from one language to another
24 The source language refers to the initial language (often the interpreter’s native language) and the target language refers to the different language it is translated into.

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section 1.4.1, community interpreters often have to work across deep cultural divides as well as differences between educational and socio-economic levels, where power differentials between the interlocutors (and the interpreter him/herself) can be quite salient (Angelelli, 2006). Interpreters may not even belong to one of the *speech communities* they are working with (groups of people who share understandings and expectations about how language should be used, Gumperz, 1964), and be potentially unaware of social and cultural customs and traditions that their interlocutors expect to be respected. Moreover, interpreters have to bring a knowledge of the community’s functioning to their interpreting, a community to which they may also not necessarily belong (i.e. a police interrogation or a discussion between a teacher and a mother about an underachieving pupil).

When considering the role of the community interpreter, two contrasting *Discourses* (see section 2.10) emerge, regarding the identity of the professional interpreter. One Discourse considers how an individual’s ‘self’ is intricately linked to the ICE (Angelelli, 2012). In this Discourse, in institutional encounters, interpreters (as all interlocutors)

> bring their own set of beliefs, attitudes and deeply held views on interpersonal factors, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, (where) all of these beliefs, attitudes and personal views are enacted…

(Ibid: 245)

and in a development of the Discourse, ‘through the self the interpreter exercises agency and power, which materialize through different behaviours that alter the outcomes of the ICE’ (Ibid). This Discourse has emerged is much research which has investigated the figure of the community interpreter (i.e. Metzger, 1999; Wadensjô, 1998; and particularly in the field of health care, Angelelli, 2004; Bolden, 2000; Cambridge, 1999; Davidson, 2001, as well as in courtrooms, Mikkelson, 2008). This research has positioned the interpreter as an ‘engaged interpreter, a visible player, and a participant interlocutor’ (Angelelli, 2012: 253) in contrast to another Discourse which positions the interpreter as a ‘ghost’ (Gambal, 1998), more invisible than
visible, and/or a ‘conduit’ (Reddy, 1979), for channelling language between interlocutors (heightening the role of his/her cognitive and linguistic skills).

All of these considerations complicate a didactic approach to teaching community interpreting in interpreting institutions which it has been suggested (see section 1.1.2) might focus more on cognitive and linguistic skills and not take social and interpersonal relations, cross-cultural communication and the role the interpreter plays in the ICE into account, a criticism levelled by some academics and experts in the field. Angelelli (2012) for example sees the teaching and testing of interpreters as being too focused on information processing tasks (memory, analytical skills), language proficiency, specific terminology and knowledge of ethics, whereas questions of the interpreters ‘visibility’ and ‘agency’ are rarely assessed.

These two Discourses, and the different ways they construct the identity of the professional interpreter, emerged in the research data, and were influential in how my participants evaluated the resources to become interpreters (see chapters 5 and 6 of my data analysis).

I now turn to look more generally at the changes in theoretical and methodological approaches to interpreting and translation in the academy over the last 30 years. My intention is to give a picture in very broad strokes of the important developments in the field in general.

1.5 Theoretical and methodological developments in the field of interpreting and translation

The interpreting and translation disciplines have seen a series of turns in their history, particularly in the 1990s (Hornby, 2006). The first was a ‘methodological turn’ (Ibid), with a call from within the academy for increased empirical studies in the form of case studies, and the second was from without, with the ‘breathtaking developments in technology and in the globalization process, which together radically changed the job profiles of translators… and, in part, of interpreters too.’ (Ibid: 115). In interpreting in
particular, advanced technology has led to the formation of new fields in simultaneous interpreting (media interpreting and videoconferencing) and through globalization, and increased migration, there have been major increases in what has come to be known as *dialogue interpreting* (another term for community interpreting, see section 1.4) with the increased importance of professionals in cross community interpreting in places such as hospitals and courts of law (Ibid).

Theoretical approaches to interpreting and translation have also seen major shifts and turns, in particular ‘a social turn’ (see section 1.1.2). However, I will not go into an in-depth analysis here, as it is not a central concern of my research, but I will make reference to one or two key theories and theorists.

Principally in translation studies (but also in interpreting as well), Eugene Nida’s highly influential work in the 1960s (Nida, 1964) attempted to bring the field(s) into the ‘scientific era’, borrowing theoretical concepts and terminology from semantics and pragmatics. In his work Nidia attempted to

> …move away from the old idea that an orthographic word has a fixed meaning and towards a functional definition of meaning in which a word acquires meaning through its context and can produce various responses according to culture.  

(Munday, 2001: 39)

In what he termed as ‘dynamic equivalence’, Nida brought *the audience* into the translator/interpreter frame, arguing that a translated text should not be concerned with a word-for-word equivalence but rather with re-creating the same effect on its target audience, as it would have on its source audience. The ensuing debate ‘as to how a text could possibly have the same effect and elicit the same response in two different cultures and times’ (Ibid: 43), continued well into the 1990s and beyond.

Most recently, we have also seen a ‘narrative turn’ (Baker, 2006), which has brought interpreters and translators front stage, raising, among other issues, moral debates

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25 The source audience refers to people whose language is the same as the original text, and the target audience refers to people whose language is the same as the language of the translation.
about their responsibility for the promulgation of ideologies and discourses, in particular ‘master narratives’ (see section 2.10), such as ‘the war on terror’, and their role in influencing international opinion and government policy in the context of international conflict (Ibid).

1.6 An ethnographic perspective on the researcher

Research that takes an ethnographic perspective cannot leave out the role the researcher plays in the research (see chapter two, section 2.15). In the final part of this chapter therefore, I present myself as the researcher. I provide some brief autobiographical information about how I became interested in this research (section 1.6.1), as well as some of my personal views on language and learning which may have influenced my approach to interpreting the data (section 1.6.2).

1.6.1 The researcher: biographical background

I have been teaching English on the three-year degree course at SSLMIT since 2007 and was an English language tutor from 2010 to 2013, responsible for helping students with their language learning difficulties. In my role as a language tutor I had the opportunity of talking to students about their experiences in the institution and became increasingly interested in how they perceived themselves as progressing in their studies to become interpreters, their worries and preoccupations and the goals they were setting themselves. This led me to want to investigate the community of interpreter-students in the department, in order to gain insights into how it was being shaped by their institutional experiences.

As an English language teacher in the institution, I have always been aware of learner difficulties and the potential reasons for those difficulties, informed by knowledge in the field of language acquisition and holding a particular set of views on it. My views then were always liable to influence my approach to my participants in the research. It was not my intention however to foreground this in my research, to intentionally look for examples to buttress theories, but instead to attempt to stand back and, perhaps, be
surprised. An underlining epistemological position from an ethnographic perspective is to attempt to work from experience in the field towards theory and knowledge and not vice-versa (however difficult –potentially impossible- that may be in actual practice). Having said that, I need to state my position about some of the issues regarding language teaching and learning that specifically loomed large in my mind. Although I present them here, they are intended simply to give a picture of my own personal thoughts and views as I engaged in my research.

1.6.2 The researcher: Personal views on language teaching and learning

I have been strongly influenced by the development over the past twenty years of language learning in relation to its socio-cultural context, extending beyond the notion of the student as a recipient of pedagogy, and throwing a critical light on past teaching practices, and their underlying assumptions about the language learner (Norton: 1995, 2000, 2006; Pavlenko & Blackledge: 2004; Pavlenko: 2006; Kramsch: 2009). I share these criticisms, which are levelled at teaching methods that take a decontextualized and reified view of the learner, depicting him/her as a passive container of information. From this perspective language is seen as being an objective body of knowledge, which is ‘transmitted’ from teacher to student (Kramsch: 2009). What has been seen as lacking in this account, and I concord with, is viewing the learner as a social learner, evolving out of a particular socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-educational environment, and learning in a situated context. From this perspective the learner is seen as constructing a personal world, an identity, by constantly reproducing, negotiating, and contesting meaning in relation to the ideological structures and discourses of the social and institutional world they interpret around them, together with the interpersonal relations that also shape and form them. In this respect I share an interest in the learner’s wishes, desires, emotions, imagined futures and willingness or ability to invest in language, which has become a research paradigm (Norton: 1995, 2000, 2006; Pavlenko: 2006; Kramsch: 2009). Although this position is part of my approach as an English language teacher, in my own ethnographic approach to the research I attempted to background it, and not to enter that research with a pre-conceived idea of what I expected to see (a form of list-ticking). It serves here as a
sensitizing vehicle to what relevancies I might have deduced from my narrative data, as I looked at the interpreters community as a whole, where success or failure at language learning (or its appraisal by the institution and its members) seemed to play a significant role in shaping an individual’s image of themselves as a future professional in the field (see chapter five, section 5.2.5).

In the next chapter I give a literature review and describe my theoretical approach in the research.
Chapter Two

Literature review and theoretical approach

2.1 Introduction: Narrative and Ethnography

My research adopts a narrative analytical approach, to investigate a group of students in the department for interpreters and translators at the University of Bologna in Italy (SsLmit), as they navigate their first year in the institution. I approach this narrative research from an ethnographic perspective (section 2.18), seeing this as a potential means for acquiring an *emic*, insider view (see section 2.15), into how my participants interact with an institution which to date has seen little empirical research (see chapter one, section 1.2).

In this chapter, I begin with my epistemological stance towards narrative (section 2.2), how my research is positioned in relation to narrative study traditions (section 2.3) and how narrative is defined in this context (section 2.4). In section 2.5, I describe how narrative research has been applied in the social sciences to date, and go on to talk about the emergence of the *new narrative turn* and the development of *small story* research, which is the research approach I adopted (sections 2.6 – 2.8). In sections 2.9 – 2.10, I define the central taxonomies and underpinning concepts in the thesis (in particular with regard to *narrative and story, identity and self* and *Discourse*). In sections 2.11 to 2.11.1, I expound on how a Bakhtinian theoretical approach to language, with its emphasis on *dialogism*, can frame narrated life experiences not simply as a recounting of past (and/or future hypothetical) events but also as a present sense making activity, open to change and variability. In section 2.12, I introduce Bourdieusian theory, in particular the triad of ‘Habitus’, ‘Field’ and ‘Capital’, to explore reasons for potential continuities in narratives over time. I then present my analytical frame, *narrative positioning analysis* (section 2.13) and describe the role that *indexicality* can play in that analysis (section 2.13.1). In the final part of the
chapter, I outline the potential advantages of an ethnographic approach to narrative research (section 2.14 - 2.16), exploring criticisms of ethnography and arguments in its defence (sections 2.17 – 2.17.2), and clarify my own ‘ethnographic perspective’ in the research (section 2.18). In section 2.19, I give a concluding summary.

2.2 Narrative as an epistemology

My approach to narrative in the research is aligned with researchers who take narrative to be an epistemology, a way of knowing about the world, and ‘a mode of thought, communication, and apprehension of reality’ (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012: 15). This approach sees narratives as a way by which people make sense of their lives, and how narratives are an essential means for (re)constructing and interpreting experiences (Bruner, 1986, 1991, 1995; Sarbin, 1986; Sommers and Gibson, 1994). From this perspective,

(n)arrative becomes much more than a set of techniques and tools for collecting and analysing data. It becomes a particular way of constructing knowledge requiring a particular commitment and even a bias from the researcher in addition to a political stance.

(De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012: 19)

An epistemological approach to narrative is not however shared by all those researchers who use narrative analysis in their research. Some researchers may carry out narrative-eliciting interviews as part of larger studies for example, without displaying a specific orientation to narrative per se.

Asking research participants to tell their stories of experience can be attractive to qualitative researchers, but treating these stories as non-narrative textual data (i.e. regular qualitative data) or as supplementary material for experimental findings does not make their research projects narrative. Narrative methods ... therefore, may be employed more or less in a particular study, which itself will more or less embody a narrative epistemology...

(Rugen, 2012: 8)
In this research then I make a ‘particular commitment’ to narrative as an epistemology. In relation to this, I maintain that all narratives are part of a culturally generated view of the world, formed by the tropes and potential story-lines that a culture has developed to interpret experience, limiting (but not dictating) the narratives that an individual can and cannot tell to represent that experience. From this perspective, narratives can be seen as providing some purchase on how an individual or group constructs their view of the world and their place in it, and how researchers can learn about individuals’ meaning making processes.

Moreover, in my research I approach this meaning-making process from the perspective of two sides of the same coin. On one side, narratives are seen as representing something of an individual’s sense of place in the world over time, in the potential consistencies in the form and content of the stories they tell about that world and how they position themselves and others in it. On the other side, narratives are told in discursive interaction and therefore are subject to potential shifts and changes in the contingent, synchronic moment of their telling. From both these perspectives something of an individual’s social identity (see sections 2.9.2 and 2.13) evolves in the tension between continuity and change, between what has been socially and culturally inculcated and sedimented over time, and what occurs in the everyday unpredictable experience of human interaction (Holland et al., 1998).

In order to accommodate this position, with regard to the potential of narratives both to sustain continuities and yet still be open to change, I drew on Bourdieusian and Bakhtinian theories, which I explicate and contextualise in relation to narrative in sections 2.11 – 2.12).

In the following section, I introduce two principle research traditions in narrative studies (narrative inquiry and narrative analysis) and position my own research within these traditions.

2.3 Narrative inquiry and narrative analysis: breaking down barriers in research traditions
Narrative research has tended to look at narratives from two perspectives: the content of the narrative and the form the narrative takes. The content of a narrative refers to what it is about, what is narrated, why, when and by whom? Research that is concerned principally with answering these questions, with addressing the content of people’s experiences and their reflections on those experiences through narrative, is often referred to as narrative inquiry (Bell, 2002; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Rugen, 2012). This approach particularly favours what is often referred to as big story accounts (see section 2.7), narratives that ‘entail a significant measure of reflection on either an event or an experience, a significant portion of a life, or the whole of it’ (Freeman, 2006: 131). Narrative inquirers are concerned with what a narrative can tell them about a person’s experiences, how they represent past experiences, and how they interpret those experiences in their telling.

A focus on the actual language deployed in the telling of a narrative, how that language emerges in its turn by turn account, and how the participants involved (teller(s), addressees) interact and co-construct narratives, is an approach often referred to as narrative analysis (Georgakopoulou: 2006). Although this approach does not negate the importance of content, it is focused principally on the form in which a narrative evolves in situated talk.

Narrative inquiry is mainly concerned with what a narrative might reveal about the teller’s projected identity (see section 2.9.2, for an exploration of the concepts of identity and self in the field of narrative studies), being interpreted by what they choose to put in and leave out of their stories. Whereas, narrative analysis is more concerned with the situated, constructive narrative act itself, and the way that form and discourse are interrelated in the moment-by-moment creation of self.

Recent research has seen increasing attempts to break down the barriers between these two analytic approaches to narrative, to bring content and form closer together in narrative studies. This has been viewed by some researchers (Georgakopoulou, 2006), as being due to the increasing importance of questions of identity in the social sciences, which has led researchers to become increasingly concerned with the who and what, as well as the how, of narrative in human interactive communication (Ibid).
Pavlenko (2007) and Reissman (2007) both propose combining content and a structural analysis of form, as a means of enhancing the quality of narrative research, a way of giving deeper insights than a content only approach would provide. Research along these lines can be seen particularly in the work of Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, and their development and employment of narrative positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). This analytic approach to narrative data attempts to break down the barriers between narrative analysis and narrative inquiry, between seeing narratives as situated talk-in-interaction, with a narrow focus on the here and now of those interactions, to a consideration of the wider socio-cultural world from which these narratives emerge, and the Discourses that play a part in shaping them (see section 2.10 for a definition of Discourse).

In my own study I chose to adopt narrative positioning analysis as my analytical frame, to join with this research (see section 2.13 for detailed description of the theory). Narrative positioning analysis has been increasingly employed by narrative researchers to explore the connections between a person’s more localised sense of self, as it emerges in situated talk-in-interaction, and their wider social identities which emerge over time in relation to wider social discourses (De Fina, 2013; Georgakopoulou, 2013).

2.4 Defining what narrative is

Definitions of what a narrative is are as varied as the disciplines that have adopted it as a research method (see section 2.5). What counts as narrative in literary studies for example is quite different from what counts as narrative in the fields of psychology, sociology and education, among others. The variances in these disciplines’ histories, and philosophic underpinnings, makes defining exactly what a narrative is then a complex and difficult task as it ‘resists straight forward and agreed upon definitions and conceptualisations’ (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012:1). In the following, I give my definition of narrative for the purposes of this research, (in section 2.9.1, I also
explore the taxonomies of *narrative* and *story*, and their conceptual underpinnings, explaining why I chose to use the former as opposed to the latter).

In my research I was interested specifically in oral narratives, in particular those narratives that emerge in situated conversation. Narratives in this context can come in different forms, a narrative can be taken to be a *life narrative*, a narrative which encompasses a whole life or part of a life (albeit always a selected representation of that life), sometimes referred to as a *big story* (Bamberg, 2006; Freeman, 2003, 2006). Equally, a narrative can be a relatively short episode in a stretch of dialogue, emerging briefly in the flow of conversation between interlocutors, often referred to as a *small story* (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007). In sections 2.7 – 2.8, I look more carefully at the concepts of big and small stories, and how my research is positioned in relation to them.

As defining exactly what a narrative is is not clear-cut then, I left my definition intentionally broad, adopting Toolan’s (2001) minimal requisite that it is

> a recounting of things spatiotemporally distant: here’s a present teller, seemingly close to the addressee (reader or listener), and there at a distance is the tale or the topic

(Ibid: 1)

In this definition (elaborated from Rugen, 2012), the narrator is seen as recounting events or experiences that are distant spatially (in another place), and/or temporally (in another time, which might be past, future or hypothetical future for example). The interrelationship between the narrator, the addressee(s) and the narrative are variable. The narrator might be closely engaged with the addressee(s) (i.e. recounting shared experiences), instancing a narrative which develops in a fragmentary manner, being potentially challenged, interrupted and/or commented on by others. Or the narrator might be less engaged with the addressee(s), holding the floor for a long turn, or a series of sustained turns, constructing a long, sustained narrative (i.e. recounting personal, unshared experiences), thus distancing him/herself more from the addressee(s).
As my approach to narrative studies is linked to recent developments in its use in the social sciences, I briefly give some historical background (section 2.5), and then go on to introduce some of the relevancies of the new narrative turn (sections 2.6 – 2.8) that have influenced my research.

### 2.5 Narrative in the social sciences: Past and present

Narratives have been used as an analytical tool and a method for investigating human experience since the 19th century (Spector-Mersel, 2010). The preferred genre of psychoanalysis was the case study, which used individuals’ stories to gain insights into the workings of their minds. In the 1920s and 1930s sociologists from the Chicago School used biographies to understand the daily life of particular urban communities (Ibid) and anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922) used narratives (principally stories of his own experiences) to portray different cultures (e.g. the Trobriand islanders).

After the Second World War the dominance of the positivist paradigm made biographical methods seem unscientific and even amateurish (Denzin, 1989). Positivism applies scientific methodology to examine social and psychological phenomenon, refusing to go beyond empirical evidence and the causal or statistical relationship between variables. It was not until the 1970s, with increasing criticism of this positivist approach, with its reliance on quantitative methods as being the only way to represent the world, that the ‘interpretive turn’ (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987) came about, and opened the doors to narrative research again, in what became known as its first turn in the social sciences.

Exactly when and how this turn emerged is hard to pinpoint,

> (h)owever, although the exact historical origins are not clearly definable, it nevertheless is commonly agreed upon that over the course of the last 40 years or so a seemingly unbounded wave of narrative theorizing has emerged.

> (Bamberg, 2007: 1)
The initial pioneers in narrative research in the social sciences were strongly represented in psychology, in particular by Jerome Bruner and Theodore Sarbin in the 1980s (Josselson & Lieblich, 2009: 195). Bruner (1986), drawing in part from Vygotsky (1978), saw that “human mental activity depends for its full expression upon being linked to a ‘cultural tool kit’ (Bruner, 1986: 11). He saw participation in the ‘cultural world’ (Ibid), as being essential in constructing a human psychology, and narrative as a cultural tool which formed one of the two principle cognitive modes for interpreting the world (the other being the more scientific paradigntic mode).

Sarbin, the founder of narrative psychology (Josselson & Lieblich, 2009), saw narrative as the 'root metaphor' (Sarbin, 1986; drawing on Pepper, 1942) for examining and interpreting human action, proposing narrative as the way human beings 'think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures' (Sarbin, 1986: 19).

Werstch (1985, 1998), another psychologist, placed the 'cultural tool' (or ‘mediational means’ as he often referred to it) at the centre of his research into individual and wider societal change, maintaining that 'a new cultural tool frees us from earlier limitations of perspective … (but also) introduces new ones of its own' (Ibid: 39). In his analysis of 'collective remembering' (Wertsch, 2002) he analysed how shared narrative texts 'are produced by the state, the media, and so forth, and how they are consumed, or used, by individuals and groups’ (Ibid: 6).

Although narrative analysis had strong origins in psychology, literary criticism also played a significant role, particularly in the work of Bakhtin (which I look at in more detail in sections 2.11 - 2.11.2). Since these early pioneers however, narrative analysis has emerged in many diverse disciplines, such as history, law, communication studies, linguistics, medicine, psychology, cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology, to mention only a few. Many research traditions too, have employed narrative analysis, such as ethnography and ethnomethodology, literary interpretation, hermeneutics, and sociolinguistics (Sarbin, 1986). In all of its uses and applications, across so many disciplines and through so many methodological and theoretical lenses, narrative has
sometimes been seen as coming ‘to mean anything and everything’ (Riessman and Speedy, 2007: 428), (see section 2.6, for my approach to narrative). Consequently, ‘The state of the art’ in narrative today (Bamberg, 2006, 2007, 2010) has begun to redefine its 'core' (Ibid) more and more, the ontological and epistemological concepts, which are considered central to narrative research, as well as the theoretical and methodological approaches. The (re-)examination of all of these has led to the emergence of a ‘new narrative turn’ (Bamberg, 2007; Georgakopoulou, 2006), which I outline in the next section.

2.6 The New narrative turn – an introduction.

In the last decade some central areas of research appear to be emerging as part of a 'new narrative turn' (Bamberg, 2007; Georgakopoulou, 2006). Smith (2007) attempts to summarise some of the 'recurring broad views' (Ibid) with regard to the ontological and epistemological concepts at the heart of this research, whilst acknowledging that they are far from being exhaustive:

(1)To begin with, narratives can be effective in social and individual transformation... (2) narratives are important in the process of constructing selves and identities...people understand themselves as selves through the stories they tell and the stories they feel part of... (3) whilst narratives are personal they are also social. They are thoroughly shaped, but not determined by socio-cultural conventions about the language. The context, setting, audience, the particular situated purpose of a story, tellability, and the narrative resources available to tellers frame what might be said and how it can be narrated. (4) Narratives are done in social interactions... narrative is also a form of social interaction...(5) People do things with narratives and they have important social functions, such as having moral force and accomplishing social status. Thus, stories do things in relation to others. Yet people cannot truly predict what another person does with them. Stories compete for attention and are always out of control since they allow multiple perspectives.
My own research collocates primarily with point two, in that I take the position that the narratives elicited from my participants can provide insights into the continuities and changes in their interpreter-student identities (see sections 2.9.2 and 2.13), how Discourses in the institution shape those identities (see section 2.10), and how my participants construct the identity of the professional interpreter. In this context, narrative research is potentially helpful in highlighting how some individuals appear to perceive the figure of the professional interpreter as being incompatible with their own perception of themselves, and in some cases abandoning the pursuit of becoming one in the course of their first year in the institution.

The point that narratives are done in social interactions and that they are a form of social interaction (point 4), is integral to a major shift in narrative research in the new narrative turn, a shift that questions what actually constitutes a narrative. This has led to the emergence of small story research (Bamberg, 2007; Georgakopoulou, 2006), which I have adopted as my own analytical focus and which I go on to describe in more detail in the following sections of this chapter (2.7 - 2.8). Firstly, I turn to look at some of the principal differences between small story research, and the earlier and more established tradition of big story research, (see section 2.7, below), I then go on to describe how my own data were considered as being more suitable to a small story approach (section 2.8).

2.7 Big story and small story research: Narratives as finished texts or discursive products

Recent research has begun to look at narratives from a different perspective from that of the past. In the past the emphasis was on what have come to be called big stories (Freeman, 2006; Bamberg, 2006), sometimes referred to as life stories; being reflexive, structured stories which concentrate on past events, often unshared by the listener (e.g. an interviewer), in that they portray life experiences that are extraneous to the listener’s own experiences, and are often elicited with the purpose of exploring
those experiences. Furthermore, big stories are often considered to be well-formed stories, with beginnings, middles and ends, and have been approached analytically as finished texts (Labov, 1972, 1981; Labov and Waletzky, 1967), (see chapter 3, section 3.8, for a more detailed contextualisation of the Labovian model in relation to the research).

In the last decade however, we have seen the emergence of small stories (Bamberg, 2007; Georgakopoulou, 2006), a development that is central to the new narrative turn. Small stories are seen as those stories which emerge in the contingent moment of talk-in-interaction (often co-constructed with others, who have shared knowledge and experience), and defined as the fragmentary, fleeting and contingent ‘tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell’ (Georgakopoulou, 2006: 123). Being often far more fragmentary, these small stories are still however in the process of being defined for analytical purposes, as they rarely correspond to the canons of prototypical narrative (i.e. big stories). For this reason my own definition of a narrative was left intentionally broad (see section 2.4). Small stories then are not treated as finished texts (with beginnings, middles and ends), but rather as ‘emergent discursive products that are subject to adjustments and negotiations, as they are always embedded in social practices’ (De Fina, 2013: 155).

My own approach to the analysis of narratives in my data drew on Bamberg and Georgakopoulou’s work on small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) (see section 2.7). This entailed a closer consideration of the narrative in relation to the interlocutors present at its telling, and the interrelationship between what is told and the context of its telling (with whom, where and how), (see sections 2.3 and 2.4).

This approach to an analysis of narrative shows how narrators deploy a number of strategies (i.e. setting a scene, describing characters, and the use of reported speech), which position them in relation both to the episode they are relating (henceforth, the narrative event) as well as to the situated context in which they are telling the narrative (henceforth, the narrative-telling event). From this perspective narratives can also be seen as situated, co-constructed performances (Bauman, 1986), where narrators are
aware (to a greater or lesser extent) of how their narratives have an influence on their audience, and vice-versa. In sum, narratives framed as performances in interactive talk are not seen as finished texts therefore, although they may refer to past events they also inform us of how social identities are being managed in the co-constructed present of their telling, as well as about their potential future orientations.

Rather than focusing specifically on the types of narrative told, with regard to their specific spacio-temporal positioning, being potentially about past events, future and/or hypothetical events, my focus was on how narratives are used as resources for identity work in the situated moment of their telling. Small stories in this context are less about narratives that are unified, coherent and rehearsed then. They are emergent in situated talk, and are not so much about reflections about distant events but rather reflections in the here and now of their telling, drawing on what has passed, what is happening, and what will or might happen in the future. Indeed

... the past informs and shapes the future in ways that foreground the intertextual links of stories making them part of an interactional trajectory, showing up their natural histories as events that can be transposed from one context to another across time and space (Silverstein & Urban, 1996).

(Georgakopoulou, 2007: 150)

This is a view of identities as being jointly co-constructed in interaction; negotiated, contested, ratified, revised and refashioned as opposed to being portable objects that are easily isolatable.

In the new narrative turn, big stories have been increasingly questioned as being abstracted from day-to-day existence, examples of ‘life on holiday’ (Freeman, 2006; Bamberg, 2006), in the sense that they are not part of everyday language activity, rare in frequency, and almost a luxury of self-reflection (Ibid). Small stories however are seen as being part of people’s everyday language work, as they engage in sense making activities (Bamberg, 2006). Big story research has by no means been abandoned however, as by their reflexive nature, big stories can be considered to have
‘revelatory power’ in their ‘…capacity to yield insight and understanding, of the sort that cannot occur in the immediacy of the present moment and the small stories that issue from it’ (Freeman, 2006: 134).

I now go on to explain why I decided to approach my research from a small story and not a big story perspective in relation to the data I collected.

2.8 The choice between big and small story approaches in the research

My research was based principally on interviews carried out with my participants over the period of their first academic year in the institution, both individually and in groups (see chapter three for a detailed account of the research methodology). My initial intention was to elicit both big and small stories, big in the one-to-one interviews with my participants about their life experiences, and (at least potentially I thought) small, in their group interviews, which I carried out to share and compare their experiences in the institution. What emerged in the research however was a much less clearer line between the two (see my field notes, appendix B: 722). In my one-to-one interviews my participants told their ‘life stories’, but these stories were shorter than I imagined they would be, being described in broad strokes to arrive quickly at their experiences in the institution, focusing more on what was going on in their lives at that moment in Sslmit. When analysing the data the majority of their talk in these one-to-one interviews then consisted of short narratives, snap-shots and vignettes, about their personal experiences in Sslmit.

If the narratives that emerged in my one-to-one interviews could not be classed as big stories, the narratives that emerged in the group narratives were equally difficult to classify as being small. Although they often conformed to small story data (often being fragmentary tellings of shared events), contextually they were potentially at odds with early research in the field of small story research. Georgakopoulou’s initial work on small story analysis (Georgakopoulou, 2000) used recordings of adolescent Greek girls in bars and cafes as its data, which contextualised small stories as examples of ‘overhearing’ natural talk-in-interaction (Ibid), and not what emerges in
researcher led interviews. However, Bamberg (1997) and Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) have drawn on interview data as the source of some of their work on small story research, and particularly on the development of Narrative Positioning analysis. Moreover, Georgakopoulou’s, and De Fina’s recent work (2013), draw on interview data as part of their small story research. I therefore considered the data in my research as falling within the small story type but also potentially expanding its stricter sense. Although it emerges out of contingent, interactive discourse (talk-in-interaction), it is the product of a researcher (me), attempting to contextualise the setting for his participants, i.e. *talk about the institution (in the institution)*. This type of story is by no means new however, as self-help groups for example, are often subject to a form of shared story telling based around a particular issue or set of issues in individuals’ lives (i.e. Alcoholics Anonymous).

2.9 (Re)defining terms in the new narrative turn - Introduction

Aside from the big-small story approach to narrative research, the *new narrative turn* has also been increasingly concerned with (re)defining some of the central taxonomies of narrative research (and the conceptual meanings that underpin them), which at times have been questioned by academics as being lacking in consistency or clarity of meaning. For example, what do we mean by *narratives* and *stories* (Linde, 1993; Wierzbicka, 2010), which often appear to be used interchangeably in the literature. Also, what is the difference between *identity* and *self* (or *sense of self*), which has emerged as a central concern in small story research (Bamberg, 2011), and which is central to my own research as previously highlighted (see section 2.3). In the following sections I explore these taxonomies and their conceptual underpinning, and how I contextualise them in my own research.

2.9.1 Narratives, histories and stories

Wierzbicka (2010) makes the claim that the word *story* is an 'anglo' concept (Ibid), which is not translatable into other languages, although I suggest that such a vast claim
be narrowed to *most European languages*, as a knowledge of all the world’s languages is perhaps too great a claim to make.

Roughly speaking, story can be seen as an alternative to (1) history, (2) tale, (3) life (someone's life) and (4) experience (someone's experience)

(Ibid: 15)

Indeed, in many European languages (particularly of Latin origin) *story*, Wierzbicka argues, is often synonymous with *history*. ‘Anglo story’ however,

suggests a well-defined shape and a kind of internal logic of (well-chosen) events. (it) suggests something. many people want to hear or to read (as it were, 'a good story'), whereas “a history” does not.

(Ibid: 158)

Story, I also note, may have connotations of something that is untrue, or a *version of the truth*, where people can believe one person’s story of events above another’s (something that Wierzbicka does not mention). However, an aspect that is of importance for narrative research from an ‘anglo’ perspective (i.e. a thesis in English), is Wierzbicka’s concept of *story* suggests something that forms a coherent whole, with a beginning a middle and an end (a finished text, see section 2.7). In this sense, the whole concept of ‘small story’ research is notably something of a misnomer, as what is actually researched are not stories as defined here (coherent whole narratives with beginnings, middles and ends) but rather fragmentary and at times unfinished narratives (Ibid), which are approached as being discursive products rather than finished texts (Ibid). In fact, small story research does not refer to *stories* in its actual analysis of data, preferring to use terms such as ‘narrative episode’ (Georgakopoulou, 2013).

Further developing the concept of *story* as a finished text, Wierzbicka (drawing from Ong, 1982), sees ‘modern anglo culture’, in contrast to most other European cultures, as 'chirographic' (writing-based as opposed to oral). This interiorization of writing has deep consequences in her opinion for ways of thinking, and Wierzbicka views the ubiquitous word *story* as emblematic of this in that it carries with it a 'reference to
reading (and therefore, implicitly, writing)', (Wierzbicka, 2010: 176). In this sense *story*, Wierzbicka claims, has semantic affiliations with a written text, and by extension a finished text with a beginning a middle and an end. Indeed, Bamberg (sharing a similar view of the concept of *story*) proposes 'narration' for the object of small story research

...in contrast to narrative or story, in order to emphasize the activity of narrating, and to de-emphasize the final product of a text. The activity of narrating.. (is).. firmly grounded in “talk” (discourse), but as “embodied talk” that is analysable as multi modal engagement.

(Bamberg, 2011: 17)

From this perspective, the choice from among these taxonomies (*story, narrative or narration*) can be intricately linked to the epistemological and ontological perspectives in research orientation and methodology. In my own research I chose to use *narrative*, in part because it is in more common usage and has clearer associations with ‘narrative research’ in general, but I used it in Bamberg’s sense of an open-ended activity, and not as a finished text (see section 2.7, where I clarify my approach to narratives as unfinished texts).

2.9.2 Identity and self in narrative research

Another important area of taxonomic (and conceptual) debate is between the concepts of *identity* and *self* (or *sense of self*), again so prevalent in narrative literature (Georgakopoulou, 2006).

Bamberg (2011) approaches the debate not from an attempt to define the features and functions of the two concepts but in relation to three challenges, ‘dilemmatic spaces’ (Ibid), that human beings need to navigate.

They consist of: (i) a successful diachronic navigation between constancy and change, (ii) the establishment of a synchronic connection between sameness and difference (between self and other), and (iii) the management
of agency between the double-arrow of a person-to-world versus a world-to-person direction of fit.

(Ibid: 3)

In Bamberg’s opinion all three of these ‘dilemmatic spaces’ are intricately related to both identity and self but the concepts differ in relation to how they are prioritized:

It is argued that identity takes off from the continuity/change dilemma, and from here ventures into issues of uniqueness (self/other differentiation) and agency. In contrast, notions of self and sense of self start from the self/other and agency differentiation and from here can filter into diachronicity of continuity and change.’

(Ibid: 6)

With regards to research, the emphasis on diachronicity in questions of identity (foregrounding change and continuity over time, as Bamberg highlights here) have made researchers’ claims about a person’s identity based on close up textual/interactional analysis of their situated speech, ‘suspect’ (Rampton, 2007). Questions of identity therefore have been seen as having more to do with a second order analysis (Ibid), where the researcher gathers together multiple, inter-related data over time in an attempt to draw assumptions about an individual’s social identity, their identity in relation to how they align themselves towards the wider social world around them (Georgakopoulou, 2013), (see sections 2.13 and 2.13.1, for an explanation of how the concept of social identity is defined in relation to narrative positioning analysis).

Self, or sense of self, on the other hand (foregrounding sameness and difference in the moment of speech), is a term for describing what emerges in situated, interactive talk. Self/sense of self, centres on how a person appears to be expressing themselves in relation to others in an instance of situated talk. Here the researcher is still interested in how individuals orientate towards the social world around them, but without attempting to draw any wider conclusions beyond the situated moment (see section 2.13.1 on indexicality).
In my research therefore I use the terms identity and self (or sense of self) relative to the distinctions described here.

### 2.10 Defining Discourse

Small story research in the new narrative turn, is increasingly concerned with connecting small, localised narratives to wider discourses in society, seeing this as an essential part of trying to investigate an individual’s social identity (De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2006; Bamberg, De Fina & Schiffrin, 2007, 2011; Georgakopoulou, 2013; De Fina, 2013).

The term *discourse* with a small d is often taken to mean ‘connected stretches of language that make sense, like conversation…’ (Gee, 1996: 127), whereas *Discourse* with a capital D is often characterised as a wider framework, to do with ‘.ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities.’ (Ibid.). *Discourses* are also ‘socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting and interacting’ (Gee, 1999: 17). Related terms to Discourse (with a capital D) are numerous among various disciplines: *Cultural models* (Holland & Skinner, 1987), *Interpretive repertoires* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), and *Master narratives* (Lyotard, 1984) to name a few, but in line with small story research I chose to use Gee’s term Discourse, which is ubiquitous in the literature.

Discourses with a capital D have often been criticised for their tendency to be seen as sets of organised propositions in people’s minds, imposed by powerful entities (De Fina, 2013) instead of, as Blommaert describes them, ‘materially mediated ideational phenomena’ (Blommaert, 2005: 164, quoted in De Fina, 2013), which requires something more to understand them, an ‘attention to the material, political, and institutional environments in which they operate’ (Ibid.), as well as to how they are reproduced and imposed.
In my research, I analysed my interview data, and my ethnographic observations (my field notes, see appendix B), both in and outside the interview process therefore, to explore those underlining Discourses that appeared to be reiterative in my participants’ talk. These Discourses emerged from a variety of sources. For example, how my participants’ discussed teacher talk, and how they described the institution and their lives within it (i.e. in relation to their peers, and their shared or unshared goals). Some Discourses appeared to be linked to the institution’s representation of itself on-line (through its web pages on the university website), where institutionally stated objectives about student development were mirrored in the research data (see chapters five and six).

Although I was principally interested in Gee’s capital D ‘Discourses’ in my research, I also became aware of smaller discourses that emerged in my data, and which appeared to be connected to more localised assertions by authoritative figures in the institution, such as teachers (see chapter five for an example of this in my data). These forms of discourse were not clearly tied to big D Discourses however, but appeared to be products of a more personal and idiosyncratic nature. They were not merely stretches of language that made sense (Gee’s small ‘d’), but appeared to be more significant, positioning my participants with regard to the identity of the professional interpreter and the resources required to become one. I therefore allowed for a form of discourse in my research that came mid-way between capital and small d discourses, a discourse which was defined as

… connected sets of statements, concepts, terms and expressions, which constitute a way of talking about or writing about a particular issue, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that issue.

(Watson, 1994: 113)

In section 2.12, I look at these forms of discourse in relation to Bourdieusian theory, in particular the concept of capital (Bourdieu, 1977).

I now turn to look at one of the central concepts that underpin my approach to narrative, and in particular small story narratives, that human linguistic interaction is
‘dialogical’ (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981). I begin by describing what I mean by dialogical (section 2.11), before describing its relevancy to my narrative approach in this research (section 2.11.2).

2.11 A dialogical approach to human interaction

Narratives are told in human interaction (see section 2.6), being susceptible to modification and change by the very contingent nature of their telling, and the narrator is continually influenced by where and when that story is told, and with whom (see section 2.3). This led me to take a ‘dialogical’ approach to narrative in the research (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981; Holquist, 1990), which sees all language (narrative included) as being in a continuous dialogue between the words we are given, inhabited by the meanings of others, and our attempts to give them our own meanings.

…there are no “neutral” words and forms – words and forms that belong to “no one”; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents…all words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour…language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes “one’s own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.

(Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981: 293-294)

The word then, as Bakhtin describes it, is half someone else’s, only becoming one’s own when one ‘populates it with his own intention, his own accent’ adapting it to his own ‘semantic and expressive intention’ (Ibid). For Bakhtin then there is a continuous dialogue between the words we are given, shot through with others’ meanings, and our attempts to give them our own meaning. How this relates specifically to narrative is the subject of the next section (2.11.1).
2.11.1 Bakhtinian theory and its relevancy to narrative

As humans engage in interactive dialogue they draw on narrative forms which are socio-culturally embedded, and which are sourced from a shared cultural repertoire of tropes and potential storylines (see section 2.2). When personal experiences are related as narratives they often do so as unusual variations from standard plot(s), culturally codified, ‘canonical’ forms that are in some way ‘breached’ (Bruner, 1991), without which they risk the audience’s potential question, ‘so what?’ (Ibid), questioning the whole purpose of the narrative in the first place. In this way narratives draw from culturally formed structures but also, from a Bakhtinian perspective, are capable of ‘dialoguing’ with alternative perspectives to make sense of new experiences. As Brockmeier says (2009),

(t)elling stories is an advanced mode of communicating and negotiating meanings, but it is also an advanced mode of creating novel meanings. The constructions of narrative not only use established cultural patterns and models but also tackle experiences, ideas, and feelings that break with them and go beyond the common ground.

(Ibid: 227)

From this perspective, the individual is authoring not only his/her ‘words’ but also the ‘stories’ that make sense of human experience. The space in which this occurs creates the potential for new interpretations of that experience, and hence new perspectives for the interlocutor, and in particular for the author him/herself. Narratives thus, may seek to highlight variations from standard plots and rebalance cultural understandings of how the world should be understood (Bruner, 1991) but also in their dialogical relation to the other (i.e. interlocutor) may provide alternative perspectives.

Narratives cannot be separated from the context in which they are told, they exist in a specific time and space, and are co-constructed between the teller and the listener(s) in the moment of their telling. They are not simple retellings of a past, pre-existing life but enactments of the self before others, helping to define and redefine who we are in the actual situated moment of their telling (Wortham, 2000, 2001). Narratives nearly always have some social purpose, they may be told to increase social cohesion, to
entertain or inform, but they also manage the impressions we make on our audience, influencing their conduct towards us. In this sense they can be viewed as ‘performances’ (Goffman, 1959), (see section 2.16), drawing in part on past performances to reinforce an image of ourselves, which attempts to convince our audiences (and us) of who we are over time. However, our narratives are also open to new and different interpretations and improvisations as they are acted out ‘front stage’ (Goffman, 1959), under the public eye. In the contingent moment in which the narrative emerges in talk then, the narrator is not only reproducing an image of him/herself but also exploring different selves (positioning them in relation to his/her interlocutor), perhaps affirming past ones, but also potentially casting themselves in new ones, drawing from their experiences, ideas and feelings to potentially create novel meanings.

Bakhtin’s dialogism also ‘pictures social and cultural activity as a manifold phenomenon, of a variety shaped by the juxtaposition of incommensurate voices’ (Holland et al, 1998: 238). As ‘our habitual identities bump up against each other’ (Ibid) in everyday social life, these multiple voices play in a space, in Bakhtin’s terms the space of the author, and it is in that space that there is the potential for shifts in our ways of interpreting ourselves. Voice in narrative is particularly salient when narrators are reporting the speech of their characters. The way that narrators voice their characters (the way that they report what they said in the narrative event) is a means of positioning those characters in the social world, and by extension positioning the narrators themselves in relation to that world. In my own research I paid particular attention to the manner in which narrators voiced their characters then, both lexically and prosodically, seeing it as a means of understanding how they were positioning themselves towards the world of the institution and their own place in it. This positioning however was not seen as being fixed but rather in flux, providing perspectives on how their projected selves were shifting in relation to the narratives that were being told (where, when and with whom).

This approach to narratives aligns with Bamberg’s own view of what an analysis of narrative should do, tackling
..the pressing overarching dilemmas that the storytellers themselves are faced with (involving) issues of continuity, i.e. having a stable sense of self over time, in the face of change; issues of uniqueness and conformity, that is, whether it is possible to consider oneself as unique in the face of being the same as every other person; and issues of agency, the extent to which a teller is at liberty to create positions for themselves as opposed to being constrained by how others position him or her (Bamberg, 2010: 112).

(Georgakopoulou, 2013: 92)

If Bakhtinian dialogism goes some way to explaining the potential for human beings to negotiate their social identities through language practices in the form of narration, (re-)positioning themselves and being (re-)positioned in the contingent moment of their narrative telling, then Bourdieusian theory (1977, 1985, 1986) provides a framework for understanding the forces that sustain continuities in social identities over time. Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘Habitus’, ‘Field’, and ‘Capital’ (Ibid) attempt to explain how social power is reproduced across society and down through generations, maintaining continuities in social identities and resisting change. I now go on to explicate Bourdieusian theory and its relevancy for narrative in my research.

### 2.12 Bourdieusian theory and narrative

In Bourdieu’s theory people are born into, and act in, a particular set of ‘Fields’, socio-culturally defined groups or communities, where each is described as

...a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy.

(Bourdieu, 1993: 162)

These fields then (such as ‘the literary field’ or ‘the academic field’) have their own ‘specific laws of functioning’ (Ibid: 163) that create and shape our sense of place and being in the world, our ‘Habitus’ as Bourdieu calls it. According to Bourdieu, by coming into contact with, and living in and through these fields for the duration of our lives, we are continually moulding that habitus.
Every field is seen as having varying amounts of ‘Capital’, by this Bourdieu refers not only to ‘economic capital’ (financial resources) but also ‘symbolic capital’, such as ‘social capital’, (e.g. accumulated prestige and social status), and ‘cultural capital’ (cultural acquisitions such as knowledge and skills, particularly exemplified by qualifications). Depending on the types and amount of capital that an individual possesses and in which field they find themselves, they are at an advantage or disadvantage, and in the latter case open to what Bourdieu calls ‘symbolic violence’, a form of socially generated prejudice that places the individual in a less powerful position, one where he or she is subjugated by others with greater amounts of capital (Bourdieu, 1977). For Bourdieu all the individuals who ‘play the game’ must actually believe in the game; through processes of socio-cultural inculcation they come to interiorise the ‘rules’, which become a sort of ‘sens pratique’ (a practical sense) for them. The very existence of ‘Fields’ indeed, Bourdieu maintains, are dependent on the individual’s unquestioning belief and ‘investment’ in the game. By this, the structure of fields (and corresponding habituses) are reproduced over time, being rarely questioned by the individual.

With regards to my research the concept of field might be loosely defined as professional interpreter training in a higher education institution (Sslmit). In my interviews, participants regularly referred to the institution by name, positioning it as a nationally renowned interpreting school among Italian universities (see data in chapters 5-8, and my field notes, appendix B). This positioning could also be seen as giving the institution a high degree of ‘symbolic capital’ (accumulated prestige and social status in the Italian higher education system), and the students who managed to gain entrance to it (again evidenced in the data, chapters 5-8, and field notes), elevated ‘cultural capital’ (their potential acquisition of knowledge and skills in the interpreting field, and a nationally recognised qualification). My main focus in the research however, was with the various forms of capital assigned by my participants to the institution and the teachers, and the way in which that capital emerged in their narratives, affecting their projected identities as future professional interpreters and creating consistencies in the type of narratives told. The positioning of some teachers as being ‘top interpreters’ for example (with heightened levels of symbolic capital) appeared to make those teachers’ discourses about the nature of the interpreting job
(see section 2.10), and the resources to become one, recurrent in my participants’ narratives, emerging at times as a source of anxiety and self-doubt (the effect perhaps of a form of ‘symbolic violence’), (see chapter 5 for examples of this in the data).

Although Bourdieu makes no links himself, habitus could be interpreted as being intricately associated with a person’s identity, their sense of place and being in the world. The expression of this, I argue, might be identified in the way that people narrate their experiences over time, particularly in the consistencies in those narrations within a specific field. Although I avoid making any broad claims in my research, the habituses of my participants entering the field of interpreting studies appeared to be influenced by teacher discourses (see chapter 5), specifically where teachers were assigned heightened levels of capital in the interpreting profession. The potential correlation between narrative and habitus has already been proposed by Smith (2007) who, drawing on Freeman (2006), McAdams (2006) and Taylor’s (2006) common theoretical position, proposes that a life may be an aggregated construction of past constructions sedimented over time, and that one’s habitus might ‘give rise to certain types of story at certain moments in time and space?’ (Smith, 2007: 395). I consider this in more detail in the concluding chapter of the thesis (chapter 10).

I now turn to my central analytical frame in this research, narrative positioning analysis, giving a brief description of its development and how it was used in the research to explore student identities in relation to becoming interpreters in the institution.

2.13 Narrative Positioning analysis

As mentioned previously (section 2.1), my analytical frame in the research was based on narrative positioning analysis, which draws principally on Davies and Harre’s positioning theory (1990). In this section I look specifically at how positioning theory developed and how it was adopted and adapted to narrative research, particularly in relation to exploring an individual’s social identity (see section 2.9.2).
Positioning was defined by Davies & Harre (Ibid) as ‘the discursive production of a diversity of selves’ (Ibid: 47), an approach to the identity paradigm which can be seen as aligning itself with social-constructivist approaches (De Fina, 2013), where identities are not seen as constructs of the mind but rather as part of on-going discursive processes in social interaction (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2008).

Davies & Harre argued that every utterance that a person makes in a conversation creates a social relationship among the participants, whereby the speaker takes up a certain position and offers others a position or positions from which to respond. This positioning was seen as being ‘in contrast to the linguistic tradition in which ‘syntax’, ‘semantics’ and ‘pragmatics’ are used in a way that implies an abstract realm of causally potent entities shaping actual speech’ (Davies & Harre, 1990: 43). In particular, Davies & Harre took issue with a static interpretation of ‘role’ in human interaction, the concept that humans inhabit and express themselves through a range of ‘fixed’ roles in their lives (e.g. husband, father, teacher, etc.), emphasizing instead the dynamic aspect of encounters where individuals are continually shifting position in relation to their interlocutors in different contexts.

Individuals therefore are dynamically, (re)creating and negotiating alignments with the social world in the emergent sequentiality of discourse, which tells their interlocutors something about their social identities, how they are positioning themselves in relation to ways of being in the social world (and how they are positioning their interlocutors as well).

Criticisms of Davies and Harré’s model however, have highlighted its dependence on the suggestion that ‘positions automatically come with attached world-views and philosophies’ (De Fina, 2013: 41), as well as the fact that the authors based their analysis on made-up examples of narratives (‘story-lines’ as they called them) which ‘presented a view of discourse as basically a succession of speech acts’ (Ibid).

One of the first researchers to apply positioning specifically to narrative research was Bamberg (1997), who addressed these criticisms by opening positions up to more than
fixed world-views and philosophies, as well as basing his research on actual talk-in-interaction instead of on contrived story-lines. Bamberg adopted and adapted positioning in narrative analysis to extend its principal use beyond an analysis of the language of ‘how people attend to one another in interactional settings’ (Ibid: 336), drawing from Davies and Harré’s model, to consider more traditional narrative analysis (i.e. Labov & Waletzky) ‘of what the language is referentially “about”, namely sequentially ordered (past) events and their evaluations’ (Ibid), (See chapter three, section 3.8 - 3.8.3 for a more detailed explanation and methodological considerations for the research).

Although Bamberg’s initial research was concerned with issues of human agency (1997), (as was the initial concern of Davies and Harré), it later developed to consider issues of ‘identity’ (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Further elaborations and interpretations of positioning analysis in narrative research have also focused specifically on questions of identity (Bamberg, De Fina & Schriffin, 2011: Deppermann, 2007; Wortham, 2000, 2001: Georgakopoulou 2013; De Fina, 2013), and in response to the criticisms of Davies and Harré’s model have underscored:

a. the locus where positioning needs to be studied is interaction where people display local understandings of positions…. ;
b. positioning is a reciprocal and dialogical process so that individuals not only take but also attribute positions and negotiate them in emergent ways;
c. the relations between local processes and more global processes are very complex and cannot be seen as straightforward determination of macro to micro social structures of action and cognition.

(De Fina, 2013: 41-42)

Narrative positioning analysis, analyses narratives on three levels: the first is the actual talk, the talk-in-interaction (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008), how the narrative emerges in turn by turn talk and how the characters are positioned in relation to each other in the ‘narrative event’; the second is concerned with the actual telling, how the participants interact and co-construct the narrative in the ‘narrative-telling event’; and
the third looks to how the first two levels come together in relation to wider socio-cultural contexts and Discourses circulating in society.

The three-level approach to narrative analysis however, is not to be taken as three separate and distinct forms of analysis but rather as a unified, melded analytical process, three conceptual moves in an interrelated approach. The positioning that occurs in the way that the narrative characters are portrayed, the settings they are placed in, their described actions and the speech that is assigned them, is intricately linked to the positioning of the tellers in the interactive moment. How narratives are ratified or challenged in that moment reveals the Discourses that are circulating in the socio-cultural world of the participants, influencing the final product of the narrative itself and its tellability, what actually gets told, what is allowed to be told and what is silenced.

In the analysis therefore I look at how the narrative develops as a flow of situated discourse in a narrative event, adopting a form of classic discourse analysis (level one, according to Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008). I then analyse how that discourse is maintained, interrupted, challenged and/or ratified by the participants in the narrative-telling event, how the narrative is co-produced consequently, and the reasons why this might occur (level two, Ibid). Both these conceptual approaches to analysis reveal the influence of larger Discourses (Gee’s capital ‘D’ Discourses), ways of framing and describing the cultural world of my participants and the potent forces that come into play in shaping that world (level three, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008). The Discourses that emerge in narratives are therefore negotiated, accepted or refuted by the tellers, and these processes suggest alternative competing Discourses that seek to shape the emerging narrative as it is co-constructed. In this respect a level two analysis makes the overall analysis the most distinctive level from a relatively straightforward discourse analysis, as it seeks to understand why the flow of discourse emerges as it does, and what forces may be in play in shaping that discourse, thus bridging the micro and the macro levels of analysis.

In the final level of analysis, I also trace relevant positioning across the entire data, and draw on ethnographic observations in the field, to draw wider relevancies about how
my participants are constructing the institution and the role of the professional interpreter in relation to these wider Discourses (drawing on De Fina, 2013).

Recent work (Georgakopoulou, 2013; De Fina, 2013), has focused more on the third level of positioning; the level where the situated positioning of characters in the narrative-event (level one) and the interlocutors in the narrative-telling event (level two) are considered in relation to wider Discourses in the socio-cultural world, the level which Bamberg and Georgakopoulou describe as the ‘who am I?’ level of analysis (Georgakopoulou, 2013).

This recent work attempts to address two interconnected and yet separate issues: the on-going debate in positioning approaches to narrative analysis ‘regarding the ways in which we can analytically tap into aspects of a teller’s self that can be seen as stable and continuous’ (Georgakopoulou, 2013: 89); and finding a middle ground between talk-in-interaction approaches to identity which ‘centre exclusively on participant orientations at a local level and approaches that regard identity as basically determined by macro social processes’ (De Fina, 2013: 40).

Indeed, in both these approaches to narrative positioning analysis (Georgakopoulou 2013; De Fina, 2013) there is a central focus on how to establish the relevance of Discourses to positioning at a local and individual level. In their work on this, the authors have proposed analysing data over time for instances of ‘iterativity’ (e.g. repeated types of story-lines), (Georgakopoulou 2013), and for ‘patterns’ (tendencies in the way issues are viewed and dealt with by individuals), (De Fina, 2013), as well as drawing on ethnographic approaches to build a better understanding of the communities being studied.

In my research, I adopted De Fina’s approach (2013) in attempting to establish how local positioning moves may be developed beyond the individual, local level, to consider the more general relevancies of Discourses, by looking at ‘patterns’. Patterns
…point to the existence of collective representations and inventories, which in turn can be related to wider social processes such as economical and cultural struggles.

(De Fina, 2013: 45)

Patterns of Discourses across narrative data then affirm their relevancy both to individuals and wider communities beyond their localised, potentially one-off sourcing in situated talk. Getting at these Discourses requires the analyst to work from the bottom up, from talk-in-interaction towards the powerful Discourses that shape them and not vice-versa. In sum,

At one level, a close examination of talk can illustrate participants’ stance towards ideologically laden categories and constructs through the analysis of discursive phenomena such as open referential categories, exploitation of indexicality, repetition, emphasis, logical reasoning to accomplish locally relevant actions and to convey images of themselves. But, (...) the nature and relevance of ideologies and Discourses to local positioning moves may also be established beyond the individual and local level by looking at patterns.

(Ibid.)

In addition to patterns however, key to De Fina’s (and Georgakopoulou’s) argument of how interpretive constructs can be supported at this level, is the inclusion of ethnographic data, data which (De Fina argues) allows the analyst not only to understand what is going on between the participants at a local level but also connects that local level to the wider community and the socio-cultural world that shapes it. In section 2.14 I talk in detail about ethnographic approaches to narrative research and my own approach in my research. In the following section (section 2.13.1) I firstly look at how indexicality was used in the research to look at the first and second levels of analysis in positioning theory, my participants’ local positioning moves in relation to expressing their selves in relation to the world in situated talk.

2.13.1 Indexicality in narrative positioning analysis

In order to focus on the local construction of self in the interactive moment, I drew on Silverstein’s concept of ‘indexicality’ (1976). The concept of ‘indexicality’, addresses
the need people have to show how they are aligning with the wider social world in their situated talk, as well as their need and ability to create new sets of alignments.

(Indexicality) can point to pre-existing social meaning, but the use of an indexical can also create social meaning. (For example, choosing to use the more elevated-sounding Greek plural “indices” rather than the English style plural “indexes” may be a way of claiming a certain kind of well-educated, perhaps somewhat pretentious, social identity, not just a way of showing that you already have this identity).

(Johnstone, 2009: 133)

Through many linguistic (and non-linguistic) forms, from ‘units as small as sounds to much more articulated constructs such as styles’ (De Fina, 2013: 42), indexicality is a semiotic process that associates the individual with specific identities that are socially recognisable.

… phonological and morphological structures are widely used to key speakers’ social status, role, affect, and epistemological perspective. Text structures such as repetition, reformulation, code-switching, and various sequential units are also linguistic resources for indexing such local contextual dimensions.

(Ochs, 1990: 292)

Indexicality, as it is used here, refers to selves from a social constructionist perspective (see section 2.13) in that it does not assume that they are fixed and stable. It refers to the way individuals show their social alignments in the situated moment, and how they identify themselves in that moment with particular social groups and the wider social world in general.

In relation to narratives and narrative tellings for example, indexicality can show how individuals speak with certain ‘voices’ in their narratives and in how they frame those narratives (see section 2.11.2), which index some social position and align them with a particular social group (Wortham, 2001). These voices can be indexed both lexically and/or prosodically, however they are also viewed as not being representative of any fixed notion of an individual’s identity due to the dialogical nature of all human communication (see sections 2.11-2.11.1), which means that
(t)he voice does speak from some position, but it does so in the midst of an ongoing process of self-definition. The social position represented by a voice changes as it enters dialogue with other voices. So a voice represents not just a static social role, but a “whole person” … who speaks from some position but is not fully defined by that position.

(Wortham, 2001: 39)

The analysis of these positionings over time, both in the narrative event and the narrative-telling event in diverse narratives, can lead to ‘patterns’ of positioning (see section 2.14) which might be considered as being more stable and continuous, allowing us to make tentative identity claims for the narrative-tellers (Ibid). Connecting these identities to wider Discourses however requires recourse to ethnographic data, the subject of the next section (2.14), (see chapter three, section 3.8.3, for how indexicality was applied methodologically in the data analysis).

2.14 Outlining an ethnographic approach to narrative research – Introduction.

Ethnography involves a prolonged period of engagement with, and observation of, the practices of members of a community, in order to gain insights into the semiotic resources they use and how these are deployed. In this way the analyst can investigate what is going on in a particular community beyond the specific interaction of his/her individual participants,

…to discover which categories and processes have a more general significance (beyond the local context) through the analysis of semiotic patterns. In the case of story-telling and identity, for example, repetition of story-telling roles, actions, positions and other elements across story-tellers and stories points to the possibility of significance beyond the level of particular interactions.

(De Fina, 2013: 46)

By using narrative positioning analysis as an analytic tool, in particular level three analysis with its concern for an individual’s positioning towards wider Discourses (see section 2.13), the analyst can identify common, recurring patterns of stances between
individuals in a community, to draw conclusions about collective positioning processes (Ibid) but

(at the same time, understanding what these Discourses are (their contents, semantics, values attached, etc.), involves having access to ethnographic data and knowledge.

(Ibid)

My approach to ethnography in this research does not correspond to a full ethnographic study however, but rather to a particular ethnographic perspective (section 2.18), intended to draw out the meaning of localised narratives into the wider practices of the student community.

In the following sections of this chapter I look at the field of ethnography briefly (section 2.15) and ethnography’s relation to the language sciences (section 2.16). I then consider some of the criticisms levelled against it as an academic discipline and the counter arguments in its favour (section 2.17 – 2.17.2) before outlining my own ethnographic perspective in the research, and how it aligns with other similar research.

### 2.15 Ethnography

Contemporary ethnography is quite distinct from the language sciences (i.e. discourse analysis and conversation analysis, among others) in its *emic* approach (see below) to researching cultural groups over a relatively long period of time (often a year, or even more). It requires the ethnographer to immerse him/herself in the other culture (see below) and gain epistemic insights by various means or ethnographic tools (i.e. participant observation, taking extensive field notes and open or semi-structured interviews among others) to seek to engage with that culture and acquire deep understandings about its participants, their environment, practices and processes.
Defining what culture actually means has always been a complex and thorny issue, especially across disciplines (Baldwin et al., 2006). However, here I adopt Bloome (2012) in defining it as

…a set of shared and learned standards (expectations) for acting, feeling, believing, using language, and valuing...(and) a set of shared and situated models of how the world works and how things mean.

(Ibid: 10)

Culture underpins the way that individuals attempt to frame the world then, but this does not mean that they are cultural dupes however, as ‘it is always a mistake to equate the resources of a language, culture or society with those of its members’ (Blommaert & Dong, 2010: 2), nobody after all is a perfect member of their culture or society. Rather, people do aspects of their culture in their everyday lives, displaying through situated social interaction, how they share common views about how to interpret experience. It is this emphasise on doing culture that led Street (Street, 1993; Heath and Street, 2008) to argue that instead of a noun, culture should rather be treated as a verb, as it is not a fixed entity but part of continually emergent social processes.

As individuals do not conform completely to cultural models, ethnography is concerned with describing ‘the sometimes chaotic, contradictory, polymorph character of human behaviour in concrete settings’ (Blommaert, 2007). In particular it seeks to examine the everyday, cultural life of a social group, to understand what is happening and what it means to that social group from an emic (insider) perspective rather than from an etic (outsider) perspective. Although the emphasis is always on an emic approach, there are no clear demarcation lines between the two however, as

…it is difficult to imagine any ethnographic statement that is not a blend of these. A statement would almost always contain some assumptions about perceptions or intent on the part of group members, but it would also be constructed by the ethnographer in terms of his own professional context and goals.

(Agar, 1996: 293)
Despite this blurring of boundaries (also described in Headland et al, 1990) ethnography is principally concerned with generating ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973) of human behaviour, the forms of behaviour that individuals display that make them identifiable as members of a particular culture, and a means of making that behaviour understandable in some way to an outsider.

Furthermore, ethnography is inductive, moving from empirical data towards theory and not vice versa (a deductive approach). This means that ethnography slowly builds a picture through case studies (using what is usually referred to as the case method) to arrive at theoretical models. These theoretical models may already exist in the ethnographer’s mind but he/she does not approach the data in an attempt to make it fit the model(s), but rather the other way round,

A good case study, therefore, enables the analyst to establish theoretically valid connections between events and phenomena, which previously were ineluctable. From this point of view, the search for a "typical" case for analytical exposition is ‘likely to be less fruitful than a ‘telling case’.

(Mitchell, 1984: 239)

This process limits an approach based on a simple pre-set line of inquiry, and involves the ethnographer in a close relationship with the people under research, a process that Hymes describes as ‘democratic’ (1980: 89), and one that can alter the perceptions of both researcher and participant by its end (Ibid) (see chapter three, section 3.9.2, for an account of this process with regards to interviewing practices).

2.16 Ethnography: Language and context

From a language point of view, ethnography has sometimes been seen as a technique for describing the social and cultural ‘context’ in which language emerges. Blommaert & Dong (2010) argue however that such an approach separates language from context, whereby one might claim that ‘..the study of talk is a matter for linguistics, conversation analysis or discourse analysis, (and) the study of context is a matter for ethnography’ (Ibid: 4). Blommaert & Dong maintain that as ethnography has its
origins in anthropology its basic architecture already contains ontologies and epistemologies that are situated within that larger tradition. Citing Hymes (1964b) they make the point that ‘it is anthropology’s task to coordinate knowledge about language from the viewpoint of man’ (cited in Blommaert & Dong, 2010: 6, original emphasis). Consequently,

This means that language is approached as something that has a certain relevance to man [and woman, this author], and man in anthropology is seen as a creature whose existence is narrowly linked, conditioned or determined by society, community, the group, culture…. questions about language take the shape of questions of how language works and operates for, with and by humans-as-social-beings.

(Ibid: 7)

In ethnography then language can be seen as being deeply situated in the social and cultural practices of the individual and the group. Furthermore, language can also be seen as being ‘performed’ by people in a social environment (Goffman, 1959) and thus it is a process evolving over time and not a static product, revealing as it emerges the underlying web of power relations as well as social, cultural, political and emotional investments on the part of the speaker.

2.17 Criticisms of ethnography – Introduction

Ethnography has its supporters as well as its detractors. In the following sections therefore I highlight some of the major criticisms and counter arguments in ethnographically orientated research with regard to ontological and epistemological concerns (section 2.17.1), and theoretical and methodological ones (section 2.17.2), clarifying my own approach.

2.17.1 Criticisms of ethnography: Ontological and epistemological concerns

With regards to ontological and epistemological questions, criticisms have been levelled at ethnography from within the discipline. In his provocatively entitled series
of essays ‘What’s wrong with ethnography?’, Hammersley (1992) brings the long debate in the social sciences over positivist and post-structuralist approaches to research into the field of ethnography, calling them alternatively ‘naïve realism’ and ‘relativism’. Hammersley raises the criticism that ethnographers themselves adopt positions that undermine their own research, by either taking extreme realism positions that assume a reality that is clear cut and easily accessible, or relativist ones that question the description of any ‘reality’. In attempting to address this, Hammersley adopts a realism approach, but one that is framed as being more tentative, more ‘subtle’ (see below). Drawing on Roy Bhaskar’s critical realism (1975), he argues that

We can maintain a belief in the existence of phenomena independent of our claims about them, and in their knowability, without assuming that we can have unmediated contact with them and therefore that we can know with certainty whether our knowledge of them is valid or invalid. The most promising strategy for resolving the problem … is to adopt a more subtle form of realism.

(Hammersley, 1992: 50. My emphasis)

Hammersley introduces this ‘subtle realism’ then as a concept that attempts to bridge the gap between the realist and relativist camps. ‘Subtle realism’ takes the realist position that there is a social reality out there, independent of an individual’s knowledge of it, but it guards against a simplistic view that we can have ‘unmediated contact’ with that reality. Hammersley urges ethnographers to seek for that reality but he sensitizes them to the ever-present ‘relativist’ position that we must continually interpret reality and that our interpretations are always open to mistakes and misunderstandings. Hammersley uses this more ‘aware’ realism to attempt to steer a path through and potentially beyond the ambivalence in ethnography, although the debate has by no means been settled (see Banfield 2004 for a critique). I approached my own research from the same perspective as Hammersley, a ‘subtle realism’ approach, maintaining a belief that there is a social reality out there but that it can only ever be examined in a mediated way, which is always open to mistakes in interpretation. Consequently, I make no claims in this thesis that I have uncovered the truth of how my participants perceive the institution and their place in it, but through
2.17.2 Criticisms of ethnography: Theoretical and methodological concerns

Criticisms of ethnography from a theoretical and methodological approach have centred on some of the following arguments:

1. Ethnographic research is not precise enough in its numerical specifications, using adverbs such as ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ and this lack of quantification leaves it open to the accusation of being impressionistic.
2. Ethnographers often concentrate on only a small number of samples which have little value as they are not generalizable;
3. As ethnography does not follow a well-designed and explicit procedure it is not ‘replicable’, a key feature of scientific enquiry.

(Paraphrased from Hammersley, 1993)

Hammersley again has tried to answer these in the following way:

1. Ethnography does not reject quantification and some research does use it. Where differences are large and obvious they may be reported in imprecise ways without loss.
2. Studying small samples is a trade-off between cases in depth or in breadth where ethnography is usually more concerned with the former. This is different from survey research, which does the reverse. Sacrificing depth can lead to researchers losing information and missing key features of the cases they are studying. Moreover, one may study a small selection of cases that are said to be representative of a population, which is assumed to be structured similarly in key dimensions.
3. Replication is not always possible in natural science and therefore it is not the only way that scientists assess one another’s work. Moreover, no two ‘social
events’ are ever identical. Therefore, Ethnography’s lack of replicability does not invalidate the validity of its findings.

(Paraphrased from Hammersley, 1993)

As ethnography seeks an emic (insider) understanding of a cultural group from an etic (outsider) position, the researcher (usually coming from the latter) is always open to the criticism that he/she can only ever have a partial understanding of the world he/she attempts to portray and that even that is heavily influenced by his/her own cultural world perspective. Whilst this is rarely ever wholly refuted, the ethnographer does have an instrument at his/her disposition to close the gap so to speak, and that is ‘reflexivity’. In chapter three (section 3.10.2), I describe what ‘reflexivity’ means and its importance in my research into the cultural world of the student-interpreter in Sslmit, a world of which I am part (as an English teacher and tutor in the institution) but also separate from (standing on the other side of the fence from the student, with his/her cultural understandings of the world and institutional processes).

I now turn to describe my ethnographic perspective in the research.

2.18 An ethnographic study and an ethnographic perspective

In line with the central points made about ethnographic studies in section 2.15, a comprehensive ethnography involves

... the framing, conceptualizing, conducting, interpreting, writing, and reporting associated with a broad, in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group.

(Green & Bloome, 1997: 183)

However, research can also engage with ethnography without adopting such a comprehensive approach, by taking an ethnographic perspective, by which
we mean that it is possible to take a more focused approach (i.e. do less than a comprehensive ethnography) to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group.

(Ibid: 183)

Research in the field of education that takes an ethnographic perspective (a more focused approach in studying particular aspects of a group’s everyday life and cultural practices), has already been highlighted as being important by Heath and Street (2008) in their concern with how it might provide greater understandings about

1. Individuals striving to become experts in something
2. Groups in identity-making
3. Institutions of formal education

(Ibid: 5)

Aligning with this, I saw an ethnographic perspective in narrative studies, centring on these particular aspects of my participants’ lives (i.e. striving to become professional interpreters, and exploring their identities in this context and the wider context of the institution), as drawing their narratives on these issues out of localised interaction, connecting them to wider Discourses, and portraying a more detailed picture of the student community.

Adopting this approach then, although my research was primarily concerned with narrative accounts of my participants’ lives in the institution I also drew on ethnographic data outside those narratives, based on field notes of other interactions and observations, and my own personal experiences based on seven years working and interacting with students in the institution. This understanding aided me in sensitising myself to particular narrative accounts relevant to how my participants were orientating towards their future professional careers as interpreters, and how these were evidenced in their narratives of everyday life and practices in the institution.

2.19 Conclusions

In conclusion, my research sort to answer the following questions (see section 1.2):
1. Over the period of their first academic year, how do interpreter-students perceive and negotiate Discourses in the institution, and how do these Discourses affect their constructions of the identity of a professional interpreter and the resources to become one?

2. How do these Discourses also shape their identities as interpreter-students and affect their stated future goals?

In order to address these questions, I engaged with narrative research, seeing narrative from an epistemological perspective as ‘a mode of thought, communication, and apprehension of reality’ (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012: 15), (see section 2.2). My analytical frame was based on narrative positioning analysis (see section 2.13), which explores narrative data on three levels: the inextricability of the two events present in any narrative episode, the narrative event (level one) and the narrative-telling event (level two), and how the tellers position themselves in these two events in relation to wider Discourses in the socio-cultural world (level three). These three levels of positioning were seen as offering ‘a tangible and easy to operationalize analytic apparatus for linking local telling roles with larger social identities’ (Georgakopoulou, 2013: 91).

However, in order to identify which categories and processes had significance beyond the local context of situated narratives an analysis of semiotic ‘patterns’ was required across the data (see section 2.14). This involved focusing on localised displays of identity through an analysis of indexicality in both the narrative event and the narrative-telling event (see section 2.13.1), and ‘the repetition of story-telling roles, actions, positions and other elements across story-tellers and stories’ (De Fina, 2013: 46). Moreover, to understand what Discourses were relevant to my participants, ‘their contents, semantics, values added, etc.’ (Ibid), ethnographic data was drawn on when considered relevant (see section 2.15).

I now go on to look at the methodologies that were adopted in carrying out this research.
Chapter Three
Research methodology

3.1. Introduction

In the following chapter I to present my research plan (section 3.2), introducing my participants and providing a brief biographical background (sections 3.3). I then outline my ethnographic methodology (section 3.4), and go on to give an overview of how ethnographic perspectives on education have relevancy to my own approach (sections 3.5 – 3.5.3). In section 3.6, I show how the narrative research data were collected and organised before the analytical process began. In section 3.7, I describe my initial analytical procedures with regard to the content and form the narratives took, and in sections 3.8 – 3.9.3 I detail how narrative positioning analysis was developed and applied in the research. In the final sections of the chapter (3.10 – 3.10.3) I highlight some of the problems I experienced in approaching the interview process and the ways in which I attempted to resolve those problems.

3.2 Research plan, timeline and itinerary

I proposed the research project to students entering the institution with English as their principal language of study at the beginning of the academic year in 2012; this took place in the classroom during their first week of term (8/10/2012 - 12/10/2012)\(^{26}\). After a general introduction to the research, and a specification that it required participants who were intending to become interpreters, information sheets and consent forms were distributed to those students who had shown an interest, giving detailed information about the project (described as investigating their changing views towards their studies over the period of their first year, with a view to suggesting changes in the institution’s curricula), guarantees of anonymity, and the option to withdraw from the research at any point if so desired. Students wishing to participate

\(^{26}\) First year students were divided into two classes by the institution.
were given a maximum of 48 hours to decide whether or not they wanted to be part of the research and communicate this to me via e-mail.

Initially, I had 15 positive responses and organised a one hour recorded interview with each student as part of the initial research. Five of these however informed me at a later date that they were no longer interested. Overall then, I interviewed 10 students, and these interviews were also directed at ascertaining each individual candidate’s suitability for the whole research project, part of a further selection process to choose a smaller cohort for group interviews. The individual interviews took place between the 3-14th, December 2012

The criteria for suitability was based principally on how interested my prospective candidates appeared to be to participate in the research, and whether or not they might work well in a group dynamic (in relation to the group interviews I planned to carry out after the individual interviews). I decided to exclude those students who appeared to be more passive in the interview situation (i.e. only speaking when I elicited information and/or giving principally succinct, direct answers to my questions), or overly active (not listening to my questions carefully or being excessively loud and/or opinionated), which might have limited talk in group interviews. For the same reason, I also excluded those students who were more taciturn, and/or evidently intimidated by my presence, potentially due to my position on the teaching staff, (see appendix B, my field notes, for my thoughts and views on the individual research candidates, pages 724-730). As I wanted to keep the group session relatively small, to allow interaction between all its members, I finally selected five participants to continue to the group interview stage, and communicated this to them via e-mail

I use the term ‘group interview’ in the research as I wanted to emphasise the participants’ co-constructed role in its dynamic, and their control over what they wanted to talk about. The term ‘Focus group’ suggests a specific itinerary on the researcher’s behalf which was not in line with my ethnographic approach to interviewing (see section 3.9.2). However, in relation to ‘focus group’ perspectives on

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27 Times and dates that best suited their individual availability were established via e-mail.
28 This communication took place in the week from the 22nd-26th October, 2012.
the types of interview that can be carried out, I contextualise my cohort as a ‘minigroup’ (Greenbaum, 1998: 2) which ‘generally contains 4 to 6 persons’ (Ibid). This allowed for each member of the group to talk for extended periods of time, something that a ‘Full group’ interview (Ibid) would not have allowed for. Full groups normally involve ‘8 to 10 persons’ (Ibid) where interviews often last around 90 minutes (as mine did), allowing individuals on average only 9 to 10 minutes of potential talk. As my aim was to give as much time as possible for my participants to express their thoughts and views, a ‘minigroup’ was seen as being more preferable. Moreover, small groups allow for a greater amount of interactive processes and co-constructed meaning (Wilkinson, 1998), an essential part of my research (see section 2.13).

From an ethnographic perspective (which was adopted in this research, see section 2.14) the researcher is particularly interested in exploring what is going on between the participants in a particular community, both in the local interactive moment and over time. The typical ethnographic ‘case study’ therefore is not concerned primarily with multiple interviews with different groups of people, to identify perhaps wider quantitative patterns in variable data, but rather with the developments that occur within individual groups of people in a specific cultural community. For this reason, my research did not adopt a typical focus group approach which might have sought to interview two or more groups over time, focusing instead on the interrelationships between individuals in one group as they navigated their first year in the institution. This was also an integral part of why I chose to work specifically with first year students, as their early development in the institution was seen as being their most formative period, coming as they did from Italian secondary schools, and being exposed to the Discourses and practices of the institution for the first time.

Another important decision was the choice of language with which to conduct the interviews. The eventual decision to carry them out through the medium of English was influenced by the presence of a non-native Italian speaker in the group (Rosa, see chapter 3, section 3.3), whose self-evaluated level of Italian was described as being far inferior to the other participants’ level in English, limiting her ability to interact with the group and to express her thoughts and views. Moreover, as the participants’ first
language of study in the institution was English it was thought that it might not be out of place to make English the established language of communication. Indeed, when the issue of how the interviews were to be conducted was raised, where I suggested a choice between Italian and English, all the participants expressed a wish to speak English, perhaps as a means of continuing to practice and potentially improve their language skills in the group setting.

On reflection, the group choice of speaking in English to describe their experiences in an Italian institution positioned me and them in two different ways in the interviews (as emerged and observed in the data, see chapters 5-8). At times I was positioned as a language teacher, and the group as language students, this emerged when I was asked by various participants to correct their language, or translate an Italian word or term into English for them. At other times I was positioned as a foreign researcher who needed aspects of Italian culture and Italian institutions explained to me, shifting the power relations relative to who was directing the interview. My identification by the group as a native speaker of English, and perhaps therefore as a representative of English culture, may also have influenced the participants’ evident need to explain their own culture to me.

Returning to the actual research project, after the first interview session was completed, an initial analysis was carried out by myself in an attempt to identify any salient and commonly shared themes (see chapter 4 for a summary of this analysis). These became a partial focus for me in the second session of interviews, and sometimes were re-introduced by myself to elicit further thought and comment (see section 3.9.2, regarding ethnographic interview techniques). At the end of the data-gathering period (the end of June 2013) I began the long process of writing up transcripts of the interviews.

The following is a graphic representation of the timeline for the various stages of the research involving the participants:
Table 1. Research timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8-12th Oct 2012</th>
<th>3-14th Dec 2012</th>
<th>21st Feb 2013</th>
<th>6-16th May 2013</th>
<th>19th June 2013</th>
<th>July - Sept 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research proposal made to students</td>
<td>First interview session</td>
<td>First workshop session</td>
<td>Second interview session</td>
<td>Second workshop session</td>
<td>Transcripts written up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table (table 2), summarises how interviews were conducted, the participants present, dates, initiation times, durations and location. The location gives details of the number of seats per classroom, as a rough approximation of classroom size, as well as its general position in the building (floor/facing road or internal courtyard).

Table 2. Interview sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Start time</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Location (Name/description)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First one-to-one interview</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>03/12/2012</td>
<td>11 am</td>
<td>00:18:17</td>
<td>Aula D3/ 30 seats, 3rd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>03/12/2012</td>
<td>13.30 pm</td>
<td>00:15:50</td>
<td>Aula E2/ 24 seats, 2nd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>05/12/2012</td>
<td>9.30 am</td>
<td>00:19:13</td>
<td>Aula 1/ 40 seats, ground floor, facing internal courtyard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>10/12/2012</td>
<td>16.30 pm</td>
<td>00:19:42</td>
<td>Aula D3/ 30 seats, 3rd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>14/12/2012</td>
<td>15.00 pm</td>
<td>00:21:14</td>
<td>Aula E2/ 24 seats, 2nd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First workshop</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I now go on to introduce the participants (section 3.3) and give a brief biographical history (section 3.3.1), which was based on my ethnographic field notes (see appendix B) and information that emerged in the interview sessions.

### 3.3 The participants - Introduction

The following is a list of the participants in the research, together with their gender, age, as well as their first, second and third languages of study. Apart from one student from Iran (Rosa) all the participants were Italian and came from diverse regions in Italy, ranging from the far North of the country to the South.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>21/12/2013</td>
<td>16.30 pm</td>
<td>01:18:20</td>
<td>Aula D3/ 30 seats, 3rd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Second one-to-one interview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>06/03/2013</td>
<td>11.00 am</td>
<td>00:58:02</td>
<td>Aula D3/ 30 seats, 3rd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>08/03/2013</td>
<td>14.30 pm</td>
<td>01:10:47</td>
<td>Aula E2/ 24 seats, 2nd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>10/03/2013</td>
<td>12.30 pm</td>
<td>00:50:00</td>
<td>Aula E2/ 24 seats, 2nd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>13/03/2013</td>
<td>18.00 pm</td>
<td>00:52:40</td>
<td>Aula D3/ 30 seats, 3rd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>16/03/2013</td>
<td>11.30 pm</td>
<td>01:26:50</td>
<td>Aula D2/ 24 seats, 2nd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Second workshop**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>19/06/2013</td>
<td>12.30 pm</td>
<td>01:05:21</td>
<td>Aula D3/ 30 seats, 3rd floor, facing road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT NAMES (pseudonyms)</th>
<th>GENDER (M=MALE, F=FEMALE)</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>FIRST LANGUAGE STUDIED</th>
<th>SECOND LANGUAGE STUDIED</th>
<th>THIRD LANGUAGE STUDIED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>Slovak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa (Iranian)²⁹</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.1 The participants: Brief biographical outline

Maria had already tried, unsuccessfully, to enter Ssmit, subsequently taking a year out to travel around the world with her boyfriend. On her return she had applied to both Ssmit and Trieste University, and although she had failed to get into Trieste she was successful on her second attempt at Ssmit.

Matteo was the oldest of the participants, having already completed a degree in oriental languages at ‘la Sapienza’ university in Rome (first language, Japanese). He had come to Ssmit with only one European language (English) and was concerned that he would have to learn a second language from a beginner level, which might place him at a disadvantage, as most of his peers had good second languages as well.

Federico was at Medical school previously, but had decided that he was not suited to the profession after his first year and applied to Ssmit, being successful on his first application. He thought his English was ‘all right’ but he wanted to learn other languages that were very different from it, choosing Russian and Slovak.

²⁹ Rosa subsequently changed her third language to Arabic in her second term.
Silvia had worked in tourism for a few years and had tried unsuccessively on two separate occasions to enter Sslmit. On her third attempt (in 2012) she had finally succeeded. She was very excited to have made it into the institution but worried that all the other students would be better than her.

Rosa had come to Italy from Iran when she was 18. Although she had initially thought of studying languages at Sslmit she was unimpressed by the town (Forli) which she described as being too quiet, preferring instead to transfer to another faculty in Rimini (a lively costal town). After one year in Rimini however she became more aware of Sslmit’s reputation as a school of excellence for languages, interpreting and translation and decided to apply. She was successful on her first application. Rosa was initially worried about the amount of study that was required in Sslmit and missed her time in Rimini a little.

3.4 Ethnographic methodologies in the research: Field notes

Although my research was principally based on narrative research, I adopted an ethnographic perspective, less than a full ethnographic study (see chapter two, section 2.18), drawing on my seven-year experience in the institution (both as a teacher and student tutor), as well as taking field notes of my observations and interactions with my participants both inside and outside the interview context. In this section I describe how my field notes were made (see appendix B for a full transcript), and how they were relevant to the research. In the following sections (3.5 – 3.5.3) I go on to contextualise the type of ethnographic perspective I adopted in relation to research into education, and how that had an influence on my methodological approach in my own research.

I began my field notes in the week commencing the 8th October 2012, the week when I introduced the research project to my potential cohort (see section 3.2). Initially, these notes recorded my thoughts and observations on the class reaction to the proposal and encounters with individual students after the proposal, in the institution as well as in the streets and cafes outside. Further field notes were made after each of my initial
interviews (Ibid), as well as after subsequent chance encounters with both those
students I had selected and those I had not. The remaining field notes were written
after each interview session (both individual and group) and further encounters with
my participants both on and off campus.

Based on Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (1997), my field notes were organised in the
following manner:

1. The date, time and place of observation
2. Recorded facts, details of what occurred at the site
3. Personal responses to the fact of recording field notes, thoughts and
   impressions
4. Attention to specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations
5. Questions about the people or behaviour at the site for further investigation
6. Page numbers to keep all observations in chronological order.

When possible I jotted down words or phrases in a notebook while at the field site
(any place where I was interacting with students), in order to remember potentially
salient things when I was writing up my full notes. I also described as much as I could
remember about the occasion, the physical location (i.e. in a side street, in front of the
campus doors, at a café, etc.) and the sequence of events (i.e. was I approached or did I
approach the person).

The role of field notes in research that takes an ethnographic perspective, is to allow
the researcher to make a set of observations, at different times and places, that offer
the possibility of establishing

contextual connections (“this is an effect of that”, “this belongs to the same
category as that”, “this can only be understood in relation to that”…)

(Blommaert & Dong, 2010:31)

These connections can serve to enrich the research process by relating them to the
research questions posed, or other questions that may have arisen in other situations,
specifically interviews with participants, and what they said in those contexts. Field notes can also help to focus researchers’ observations in subsequent occasions as well as making them reflect on their own role in their encounters with their participants, how comfortable or uncomfortable they felt and the possible influences they had on what was said and done.

3.5 An ethnographic perspective on educational practices

My ethnographic perspective was aligned with other research carried out in educational institutions (see section 2.18) to explore similar areas of interest as those raised by my research questions (see section 1.2), namely:

1. Individuals striving to become experts in something
2. Groups in identity-making
3. Institutions of formal education

(Heath and Street 2008: 5)

In the following sections (3.5.1 – 3.5.3) I outline how each of these areas was approached in my research and the methodological choices I made based on these.

3.5.1 An ethnographic perspective: Individuals striving to become experts in institutions of formal education

In line with this ethnographic perspective in my research, I specifically chose those students who expressed a preference for becoming future experts in interpreting, and not translation (see section 3.2). The institution’s syllabus for the three-year undergraduate degree provides compulsory courses in both interpreting and translation, and students graduate in what is generically termed ‘cultural mediation’. Hence, the institution does not give preference to either of the disciplines (interpreting or translation), and courses on both run parallel throughout the three-year period.
However, post-graduate studies require the student to choose one of either of these professional trajectories (see chapter one, section 1.3 about the institution). In my research, as I had specifically requested volunteers who wanted to become interpreters, I explored this initial preference for interpreting over translation, examining their thoughts and reasons for such a choice and how they developed in the group dynamic of like-minded individuals (fellow participants) over the period of their first year in the institution.

3.5.2 An ethnographic perspective: Groups in identity-making in institutions of formal education

Drawing from Green and Bloome (1997) and Bloome (2012), I took the position that an ethnographic perspective that centres on education and classroom experiences (my own approach) is particularly centred on investigating how students construct, negotiate and share meaning (with all its contradictions and complexities), and how they construct that meaning in relation to classroom processes over time. The co-constructed narratives that my participants told about those classroom processes (in the workshop interviews) were approached as a group means of constructing their own interpreter-student identities, as well as the identity of the professional interpreter. In order to facilitate this process participant numbers were intentionally kept small as more than five would have potentially meant that the voices of some students might have been absent from the interaction.

3.5.3 An ethnographic perspective: The classroom

Although narratives about what happened in the classroom and its effects on my participants, was part of my ethnographic perspective in the research, it was not limited to that confine alone. Classrooms can be seen as being physically separate from the rest of everyday life, however they are also social and cultural spaces which are continually connecting with the wider social and cultural world of the individual (Street, 1984; 1995). I therefore took the position (drawing also from scholars such as
Heath, 2012) that how students engage with what they experience in the classroom is intricately linked to their lives outside the classroom (in the institution and in their private lives) and vice-versa; a student’s sense of self, competence and worth, is formed by the interaction between the two, what they bring into the classroom and what they take away from it (Bloome, 2012).

Overall, I adopted Bloome’s view that ethnographic perspectives on the classroom

...(contribute) to re-conceptualising what a classroom is and what happens there: it illuminates a subset of a society’s socialization and enculturation efforts; it articulates the relationship of dominant social, cultural, and linguistic groups to non-dominant groups; it generates new directions in curricula and instruction that address long-standing inequities; and it challenges extant educational theories of learning and knowledge.

(Ibid: 7)

Seen from this perspective an ethnographic approach to the classroom would appear to have a lot in common with critical social science approaches, being concerned with the dominant and non-dominant groups in society, corresponding inequalities, and criticising the ideologies and socio-political discourses that subjugate individuals. However, as Bloome points out (Ibid), because of its principally emic perspective (its concern with the insider’s interpretation of events) classroom ethnographic perspectives do not foreground critical theories about societal structure and inequitable power relations when analysing class life, but rather acknowledge and describe them when they become salient in the lives of the participants under research. Drawing from Street (2003), Bloome describes an ethnography that centres on the classroom as being a form of critical ethnography with a small c rather than capital C. The small c indicates that whilst an ethnographic perspective on the classroom may gain insights from critical perspectives it does not adopt them a priori but only when they may provide insights into understanding the human condition in and through the classroom.

Another important aspect of an ethnographic perspective on the classroom is that, unlike much educational research, it is not concerned with classroom ‘moral dualisms’ (Bloome, 2012: 12), a concern with separating classroom practices into ‘good’ and
‘bad’ categories regarding theories of what is academically desirable from a pedagogic perspective. Thus, it does not seek to answer questions such as: is the academic learning/teaching ‘good’ or ‘bad’; are the academic materials ‘sufficient’ or ‘insufficient’ and are students ‘more’ or ‘less’ motivated (Ibid). This form of ethnography is rather more concerned with studying complex human activities and relationships in their fullness and the shifts and changes in the students’ relation to the institution (with its various ideologies and discourses) through a holistic lens. It seeks to understand the processes that are going on in the particular cultural and educational environment and how and why students behave as they do in relation to that environment. Thus, a classroom ethnographic perspective does not enter the research arena with a specific list of things to investigate but rather probes the data it accumulates for recurring themes that might throw light on cultural patterns and models of behaviour.

Drawing from this then, although language learning for example may have been a central concern for my participants, I was not concerned with analysing the reasons for success or failure in that process (the dualism of good or bad language teaching and/or learning), but rather on the effect it had on their developing understandings of what it meant to become experts in their chosen field, interpreting. From this perspective I engaged with issues of language teaching methodology and ideology but only in relation to how these affected the students’ changing sense of self, as expressed through their narratives of their positioning of themselves as potential future interpreters. I therefore chose to remain outside the scope of debates on language acquisition, deciding to focus instead on investigating the interpreter community from an ethnographic point of view, the dynamics between the individual, the group and the institution as they emerged through all my data.

3.6 Overview of the narrative research data

Turning to the interview data itself and the analysis of the narratives that emerged from it, transcripts of all the interviews were written up drawing on the Jefferson system (1984), which identified the duration of pauses in speech, lengthened syllables,
variations in intonation patterns, heightened word stress, latching and overlapping, among others. The following represents the key for the symbols used across all the transcripts (see appendix A for the transcripts themselves):

( . )  micro pause  <0.5 sec
( .. )  brief pause <0.5 sec   >1.0 sec
( … )  pause >1.0 sec <1.5 sec
(2.0)  longer pause in seconds
:  lengthened syllables
::  more lengthened syllables
((  ))  transcriber’s comments
(xx)  uncertain passages of script (quantity of x suggests amount of text inaudible)
  ?  raising intonation
  yes  heightened stress
YES  (Capital letters) Significantly heightened stress
  =  latching (no pause between turn taking)
  -  cut-off of prior word (e.g. th- think)
[  beginning of overlap (overlap ends at end of line where represented)
/  rising intonation
\  falling intonation
Γ  rising and sustained intonation
?  rising intonation signaling a question

When presenting the transcripts in the data analysis phase of the research (see chapters 5-8) I identified each extract in the following manner:

(Group interview 1. Recording times, 54.05 – 57.00. See appendix A: p.63, lines 1686 - 1735)

This information specified the interview session from which the extract was taken using a numerical system, where ‘1’ signified a first session interview, and ‘2’ a second session interview, i.e. Rosa 1 (first interview) and Rosa 2 (second interview). ‘Recording times’ identified the start and finish times in the recorded interview where
the extract emerged, although these were not given for very short extracts that were not the principal part of the analysis. ‘Appendix A’, referred to the written transcripts (represented in the appendices) where the extract occurred, with the initial page number where the extract began, and the specific line numbers. When presenting the extract in the analysis chapters, the original line numbers were replaced with a numerical system commencing with 1, to simplify the process of identifying the relevant part of the narrative under analysis, which might be complicated when referring to numbers in the thousands (i.e. line 1689). Very short extracts were not numbered, unless there was a specific analysis carried out of linguistic elements in the extract.

Regarding the research phase, after all the original transcripts had been written up, I listened and read repeatedly for instances of narrative episodes in the data, moments in the data which corresponded to Toolan’s definition of a narrative episode (2001) as being a recounting of ‘things spatiotemporally distant: here’s a present teller, seemingly close to the addressee (reader or listener), and there at a distance is the tale or the topic’ (Ibid:1), (See chapter two, section 2.4 for a discussion of this).

The following show the number of narrative episodes in relation to interview time across the data (overall time taken for the narratives identified), where an episode ranged from anything from ten seconds to ten minutes:

First session interviews

Table 4. Number of narrative episodes in first session of data and duration of episodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview time (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
<th>Narrative episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>00:21:14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>00:19:13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>00:15:50</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>00:18:17</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>00:19:42</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>01:18:20</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second session interviews

*Table 5. Number of narrative episodes in second session of data and duration of episodes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview time (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
<th>Narrative episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>00:50:00</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>00:58:02</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>01:26:50</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>00:52:40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>01:10:47</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>01:05:21</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General summary

*Table 6. General summary of narrative episodes in all data and duration of episodes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of narrative episodes</th>
<th>384</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>09:16:16 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over a period of many months, I gradually coded these narrative episodes by analysing their content, eventually arriving at recurrent themes that were salient to my research questions (see chapter one, section 1.2). I also analysed my field notes (see appendix B) to see if the same themes (or other potentially relevant themes) emerged in data outside the interviews. I report a summary of the central themes and sub-themes identified in these narrative episodes in chapter four.

I now go on to describe how the content and form of narratives were analysed.
3.7 Analysing narrative content and form

With regard to the analysis of content and form in the narratives, I drew from Lieblich et al (1998), navigating between ‘categorical’ and ‘holistic’ approaches to content and form (Ibid), and refraining from privileging one approach over another. A wholly categorical approach would consist in dividing all the narratives into parts or individual words which the researcher then categorises. Whereas, a wholly holistic approach would analyse the narrative in its entirety, interpreting sections of the text in relation to other parts of the narrative.

Lieblich et al suggest a matrix of four ‘cells’ that serve as more subtle and enriched modes for analysing narratives, rather than taking exclusively one-sided holistic or categorical approaches,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOLISTIC – CONTENT</th>
<th>HOLISTIC – FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORICAL – CONTENT</td>
<td>CATEGORICAL – FORM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ibid: 13)

In Lieblich et al, the ‘holistic-content’ mode of analysis focuses on the content of the story as a whole, and when separate sections of the story are analysed they are done so in relation to the content of the entire narrative. The ‘holistic-form’ mode however, looks at the plot or structure of the narrative, centring specifically on whether it is portrayed as a comedy, tragedy or satire for example. It also looks for ‘turning points’ that might help throw light on the overall development of the narrative.

Lieblich et al ‘s ‘categorical-content’ approach breaks the text into relatively small units of content, and subjects them to descriptive or statistical treatment. It looks at the particular themes that evolve in those units and gathers them into categories or groups. In this respect the categorical-content cell is most often associated with content analysis, the classical method for narrative research in the fields of psychology,
sociology, and education (Reissman: 1993). The ‘categorical-form’ mode on the other hand centres on particular stylistic or linguistic characteristics of defined units in the narrative which are gathered and quantified, the kind of metaphors the narrator uses or how frequent the passive or active voice is used for example. As such, the emphasis is considered to be on thought processes instead of contents.

The four analytic cells are useful tools for taking quite distinctive perspectives on narrative analysis, but as Liblich et al make clear:

Each of the four modes of analysis is related to certain types of research questions, requires different types of texts, and is more appropriate for certain sample sizes.

(Lieblich et al: 1998: 14)

As my own research involved working with small stories, often fragmentary and unfinished stories (see chapter two, section 2.7), I chose to work with those cells that allowed for an analysis that did not treat narratives as finished texts (i.e. by excluding a holistic-form approach). My analysis alternated between holistic and categorical content as well as categorical form, depending on the specific type of narrative being analysed (i.e. narratives consisting of a few clauses, narratives co-constructed in a fragmentary manner by two or more participants, or extended narratives, often told by one participant, which were more rounded). I now describe how these modes of analysis were carried out.

Holistic-content

1. The narrative was listened to and read through several times until a pattern emerged, in the form of foci.
2. My initial overall impressions were written down, considering unusual features such as contradictions, unfinished descriptions, episodes or issues that seemed to disturb the narrator or produce disharmony.
3. The specific foci of contents or themes were outlined. Omissions of parts of the story or only brief references to a subject were taken to indicate a potential focal point.

4. The different themes were colour coded to aid easy identification.

5. Each theme was followed throughout the story and my conclusions noted, paying attention to where themes first appeared and ended, the transition between themes and the content of each one.

6. Themes identified in one narrative episode were looked for in other narrative episodes throughout the data, looking for patterns and potential consistencies beyond the individual episode.

(Adapted from Lieblich et al, 1998: 62-63)

Categorical-content

1. Based on my research questions all the relevant parts of the narrative text were extracted to form a subtext.

2. Definition of the content categories. These were themes or perspectives that could be found across the subtext and which provided a means for classifying its units. They could be found in words, sentences, or groups of sentences. Analysis consisted in sifting through the subtext, identifying categories, subcategories and suggesting additional categories.

3. Sorting the material into categories. Here separate sentences and utterances were assigned to relevant categories. These may have been from a single narrative or from different narratives as the learners were interviewed on different occasions.

4. Drawing conclusions from the results. The contents from each category were used descriptively to formulate a picture of the content universe in certain groups. Hypothesis were made and tested at this stage.

(Adapted from Lieblich et al, 1998: 112-114)
Categorical-form (analysis of emotional experience).

My approach to this form of analysis was to assess to what extent the narrative of a speaker was emotionally charged. Conclusions were drawn from the linguistic features of the story. The assumption was that events evoke emotions ‘..and their coping mechanisms are reflected in the linguistic features of their discourse’ (Ibid:155).

1. Any ‘difficult episodes’ were highlighted (e.g. painful learning events, tensions in the classroom, difficult relations with peers or teachers), attending to the actual occurrence of these rather than the participant’s own evaluation of them. Where relevant a detailed transcription was written including, length of silences, intonations, emphasis and so on. Here, I used a transcript approach based on Conversation Analysis (Sacks: 1995).

2. Any direct emotive appeals to me as the interviewer, for agreement or understanding were highlighted and any related rhetorical questions or comments (e.g. ‘what can you do against that’ or ‘you know what I mean’).

3. Notes on any of the following in the text were made:
   a. **Adverbials** such as *suddenly* which could indicated how expected or unexpected an event was;
   b. **Mental verbs** such as *I thought, I understood*, which could show to what extent an event was conscious and undergoing mental processing;
   c. **Denotations of time and place** which may have been an attempt by the narrator to distance themselves from an event or bring it closer;
   d. **Past, present, or future forms of verbs and transitions between them**, this might have indicated how the speaker identified with the events being related;
   e. **Transitions between first-person, second-person, and third-person** were seen as potentially having been a sign of a split between the speaker’s self and the experiencing self due to difficulty in talking about an event again;
   f. **Passive and active forms of verbs** which might have indicated the speaker’s perception of agency;
g. Intensifiers such as *really* or *very*, and deintensifiers such as *maybe* or *like*, raising questions about how the magnitude of certain experiences could be considered consistent with the markers used;

h. Breaking the causal and chronological progression of events, regressions, digressions, leaps in time, or silences may have been indicative of attempts to avoid relating certain ‘difficult episodes’ in part or wholly;

i. Repetition of parts of the discourse (syllables, words, sentences, ideas) could have revealed how a subject experienced an emotional charge in relation to a particular episode or event;

(Adapted from Lieblich et al, 1998: 156-157)

After identifying the central themes and sub-themes that traversed the narratives (see chapter 4 for a summary of these and a description of the stage by stage analytical process), I selected those narratives that appeared to be addressing my research questions specifically, I then proceeded to analyse them through the lens of narrative positioning.

I now go on to describe the important methodological developments in the narrative positioning analytical approach (sections 3.8 – 3.8.2) and how they were eventually applied in my own research (section 3.8.3).

### 3.8 Narrative positioning analysis – Introduction.

Bamberg’s (1997) initial interest in how narratives provide a window onto human experience grew out of his reading of Labov and Waletzky’s approach (Labov, 1972, 1981; Labov & Waletzky, 1967), which he describes as being on two levels. The first more simplistic reading was to treat narratives as representations of past experiences and their meanings as being both in the past and in the ‘present’. The second, more indirect reading, sees narratives as representations that intervene between the actual
experience and the narrative. Bamberg describes these two approaches as being concerned with their points of departure and ultimate aims. The first approach focuses on what was said and how it was said, and then works towards why it was said. The second approach however focuses on how it was performed, centring on what narrative means as an act of instantiation to the teller and what they aim to achieve in the act of narrating.

Bamberg’s interpretation of Labov & Waletzky’s analytical approach saw their work as placing an emphasis on form over function, as it was concerned initially with the identification of sequential ‘narrative clauses’, corresponding to the sequence of narrative events, and then to ‘free clauses’ which were seen as giving insights into the narrator’s evaluative stance. This approach Bamberg argued made the sequence of temporal events of the narrative an ‘objective’ basis on which to assess the more subjective criteria for an evaluative appraisal of their meaning. Bamberg’s own stance was to adopt Labov and Waletzky’s original approach but to place more emphasis on a functionist orientation

... treating temporality as one among many other performance features that all ultimately are in the service of discursive purposes and the formations of local identities.

(Bamberg, 1997: 336)

Bamberg’s concern with how narratives might give insights into ‘the formations of local identities’ led him to build a theory of narrative analysis based on Davies and Harré’s ‘positioning theory’ (1990).

Although positioning theory was not developed specifically for narrative analysis Bamberg drew on Davies and Harré’s definition (1990) of it as a discursive practice

...whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and intersubjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines


Bamberg’s principal interest in positioning theory was its concern with how people positioned themselves in relation to one another in conversations thus producing one
another, as well as themselves, situationally as ‘social beings’. Bamberg’s *narrative positioning analysis* sought to bring positioning, which was principally concerned with how people attend to each other in interactional settings, together with Labov and Waletzky’s interest in what the language was referentially about, in essence the sequentially ordered events of narratives and their evaluations.

3.8.1 **Historical development of narrative positioning analysis**

Bamberg’s first formulation of narrative positioning analysis adopted three levels of analysis which were focused on analysing representations of agency, and how they emerged in the narrative event and interacted with the situated context of its telling (see chapter two, section 2.13):

1. How are characters positioned in relation to one another within reported events?
2. How does the speaker position him-or herself to the audience?
3. How do narrators position themselves to themselves?

(Bamberg, 1997: 337)

Level one was concerned with analysing characters within the narrative event and their depiction as protagonists and antagonists, or perpetrators and victims. The principle focus was on the linguistic means of marking their agency, for example

‘(a) the agent who is in control while the action is inflicted on the other; or (b) as the central character who is helplessly at the mercy of outside (quasi “natural”) forces or who is rewarded by luck, fate, or personal qualities (such as bravery, nobility, or simply “character”)’

(Ibid: 337)

Level two sought ‘to analyse the linguistic means that are characteristic for the particular discourse mode ... being employed’ (Ibid). Its main concern was identifying whether the narrator attempted to make excuses for his/her actions and attribute blame to others.
Finally, level three looked at how the language was employed to make claims about what the narrator held to be true beyond the conversational situation. This maintained that the linguistic devices employed were more than about content and the interlocutor. Bamberg maintained that

(i)n constructing the content and one’s audience in terms of role participants, the narrator transcends the question of: “How do I want to be understood by you, the audience?” and constructs a (local) answer to the question: “Who am I?”

(Ibid)

Bamberg however clarified this answer to the question ‘who am I?’ as being localised to the context of its telling, and thus a project of limited range.

In sum, Bamberg related his use of positioning analysis to a broader interpretation of narrative from Labov & Waletzky’s, where

the discursive situation and the discursive purpose are as central as the semantic (temporal) organisation of the narrative. In this sense, the analysis of positioning is an attempt to unite the pragmatics of narrating with the linguistic (structural) analysis…”

(Ibid:341)

3.8.2 Identity in narrative positioning analysis

In their joint paper, Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (2008) developed narrative positioning analysis from their own individual work in relation to ‘small story’ analysis (Bamberg, 1997, 2004; Georgakopoulou 2000), to look at questions of identity work.

Bamberg & Georgakopoulou define their work as being

(i)n line with a general shift toward narratives as tools of interpretation (De Fina et al. 2006), we are interested in the social actions/functions that narratives perform in the lives of people: how people actually use stories in everyday, mundane situations in order to create (and perpetuate) a sense of who they are.
Bamberg & Georgakopoulou’s model of positioning affords the possibility of viewing identity constructions as two-fold, analysing how the referential world is constructed with characters in space and time, and how it functions in relation to interactive engagement. In this sense, ‘how the referential world is constructed points to how the teller wants to be understood, what sense of self they index’ (Ibid: 380).

In their analysis, Bamberg & Georgakopoulou adopted three levels of (interrelated) positioning:

1) how characters are positioned within the story
2) how the speaker/narrator positions himself
   (and is positioned) within the interactive situation
3) how the speaker/narrator positions a sense of self/identity with regard to
dominant discourses or master narratives

Point three in Bamberg & Georgakopoulou’s positioning analysis differed from Bamberg’s original (How do narrators position themselves to themselves?) in that it sought to draw the local into the wider arena of socio-cultural influences on representations of the self.

Bamberg & Georgakopoulou’s conclusions in their research were that their participants’ narratives were notable for their ‘inconsistencies, contradictions (and) moments of trouble and tension’ (Ibid: 392) as they navigated ‘different versions of selfhood in local contexts’ (Ibid). The relation between dominant Discourses and master narratives, and these ‘local contexts’ with their small stories, contrasted with ‘long-standing privileging of coherence by narrative approaches’ (Ibid). Small story analysis through the lens of narrative positioning analysis sought therefore to legitimise contradictory and competing positions as a central, hitherto neglected dimension of identity work through narrative.
In Bamberg & Georgakopoulou’s research, *identity* was taken as a social positioning of self and other. As previously stated (Chapter 2, section 2.9.2) this concept of identity draws on a social-constructivist approach to identity (Benwell & Stokes, 2006; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2008) where identities are not envisaged as possessions (which individuals own) but rather as fluid constructions in talk-in-interaction, being complex, multiple, at times contradictory, and hybrid (Blackledge & Creese, 2009; Weldon, 2004). Social-constructivist orientations pay close attention to situated examples of language in use and the study of how they are interactively displayed.

### 3.8.3 How Narrative Positioning analysis is applied in the research

Drawing on Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (Bamberg, 1997; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) and De Fina’s recent work (2013), I adopted narrative positioning analysis to gain specific insights into how my participants used narratives to position themselves in relation to Discourses relating to their student-interpreter identities and the projected identity of the professional interpreter, in the context of the institution (see chapters 5-8 for an analysis of these Discourses).

In my methodological approach I drew from Bamberg and Georgakopoulou’s three level analysis as well as De Fina’s extended work (2013), to constitute my own levels (albeit closely related). These levels are firstly broadly defined and then explained in greater detail (drawing from De Fina, 2013).

**Level 1: Positioning of characters in the narrative event**

a. Where is the narrative situated and how does it develop?

b. How are the characters portrayed and relationally positioned?
Level 2: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

a. How was the narrative occasioned in the surrounding talk and why was it told?

b. How do the participants position themselves in the interactive telling and how does the narrative develop in that interaction?

Level 3: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

a. How do levels one and two relate to individual stances towards Discourses?

b. How are these stances common to other positioning across the whole data, which might suggest collective positioning processes in relation to certain Discourses?

*Level one* focuses on the narrative event, principally on the setting, developing action and the characters portrayed, analysing in particular: the types of actions attributed to the protagonists; the motives attributed to the protagonists for these actions; and the characteristics attributed to the protagonists and other narrative figures.

*Level two* focuses on the narrative-telling event. Firstly it looks at how the narrative is embedded in the surrounding talk, how the narrative was occasioned and with what objectives? It then looks at how the interlocutors align themselves in the actual narration: how they co-construct the narrative, challenging and/or ratifying the others’ telling by (re)positioning the characters, as well as how they use reported speech (when introduced) in support of this positioning.

In both level one and two analyses, careful attention is paid to how the characters in the narrative event and their narrators in the narrative-telling event deploy indexicals to position themselves and others in relation to the social world and thereby claim or assign certain social identities (see section 2.13.1). Attention was paid here to how ‘… phonological and morphological structures are widely used to key speakers’ social
status, role, affect, and epistemological perspective’ (Ochs, 1990: 292) as well as how structures such as repetition, reformulation and code-switching can ‘index local contextual dimensions’ (Ibid). Moreover, specific attention was given to how characters were voiced in the narrative-telling event, both lexically and prosodically, which can show how the narrators index some social position by aligning the characters with a particular social group (Wortham, 2001).

*Level three* brings levels one and two together in relation to how the participants’ position themselves in relation to wider Discourses. The relevancies of these Discourses are highlighted by looking for patterns in other narratives in the data, and in ethnographic data outside the interview, to introduce a discussion about the wider implications of these narratives beyond their local context. This is the level then in which the social identity of the individual is identifiable (beyond the localised positioning of indexicality), the point where the question ‘who am I?’ is answered (Georgakopoulou, 2013).

### 3.9 Concerns with interviewing in qualitative research- Introduction

In the following sections I look at some general methodological concerns in interviewing through a post-modernist perspective (section 3.9.1), technical aspects of data collection from an ethnographic perspective and the role of reflexivity (section 3.9.2), and the consequent practical issues of managing an interview (section 3.9.3).

#### 3.9.1 Methodological concerns in interviewing from a post-modernist perspective.

A difficulty in narrative research (as in qualitative research in general) is that it

…differs significantly from its positivistic counterpart in its underlying assumptions that there is neither a single, absolute truth in human reality nor one correct reading or interpretation of a text….

(Lieblich *et al*, 1998: 2)
From a more philosophic perspective the whole process of trying to understand our existence is temporally and spatially complicated,

It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition that it must be lived forwards. And if one thinks over that proposition it becomes more and more evident that life can never really be understood in time simply because at no particular moment can I find the necessary resting place from which to understand it—backwards.

(Brockmeier, 2000: 51-52, summarizing Kierkegaard)

The same can be said of the narrator in the act of telling their narrative, as of Kierkegaard’s philosopher. He/she must contend with the problem that ‘subjects do not hold still for their portraits’ (Clifford, 1986), even if they are seemingly self-portraits. Indeed, as an individual is telling the narrative of their experiences they are also changing it by the very fact of the different where, when, why and with whom of its telling, giving rise to new interpretations even as one recounts it (Atkinson, 1990). Prior (2011) shows how the active representation of the self can vary even in the same narrative when told at different times in a life. Through second language interviews with an immigrant to Canada he shows how the same narrative can serve different purposes at different times in relation to rationality, morality and truth in its collaborative construction with the interviewer.

That interviews are collaborative constructions highlights how the researcher (the ‘to whom’) must also contend with his/her active participation in the form that narratives take (Mishler, 1991; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). One of the most salient differences from a positivist approach to interviewing (see chapter two, section 2.5, for a definition of positivism), is the recasting of the researcher as an active agent in the interview process. Miller (2011), in her fine-grained analysis of three interviews with a Chinese-born immigrant to America, shows how the interviewer can project an ‘imagined subject’ on the interviewee and contribute to producing certain
interpretations of their accounts, (in this case, of discrimination). I return to the subject of the active role played by the interviewer in section 3.9.2.

Moreover, researchers need to be sensitised to how they present narratives in their *finished* form (i.e. the printed version in a thesis). What we as researchers see might be akin to a photograph, a snapshot in a particular period of time, but how we chose to portray that image is dependent on the lenses, angles, film, and the developmental processes of the darkroom we use (Mishler, 1991). The decisions about the way we transcribe narratives are theory driven (Ochs, 1979; Swann, 2010) and located in Discourses (i.e. feminist, post-colonialist, and so on), as are our readings of the data collated and analysed.

Meaning is always ambiguous, arising out of a process of interaction among people: the narrator, the listener, the analyst, and the reader of what is produced. Consequently, a narrative is not meant to be interpreted as a true objective account of someone’s life, an account of the facts (Reissman, 1993), it is rather more a ‘cubist portrait’ (my words) which presents many reflected and refracted angles of perspective on a subject and consequently the portrayer of that subject. The researcher therefore is not aiming to produce a ‘true’ representation (see chapter two, section 2.17.1, for my ethnographic approach to ‘subtle realism’), but rather one that can be deemed ‘trustworthy’ (Atkinson, 1990: 134), by placing him/herself in the picture as well.

The above mentioned concerns about the interviewing process are related to a post-modernist perspective, which in its strongest form questions any overarching concept of *reality* (a monolithic structure), directing us instead to see society as fragmented elements in a continuous flux. Post-modernism would have us look at these fragmented everyday events in their own right rather than try to patch them together into some paradigmatic whole (Silverman, 1993, 2004). In this research, although I agree with many of the conceptual positions that underpin a post-modernist perspective, I align myself with Hammersley (1992) in arguing that ‘we can maintain a belief in the existence of phenomena independent of our claims about them’ (Ibid: 50) and join with Foley (2002) in being a little bit *realist* and a little bit *post-structuralist*. 
(see section 2.17.1), part of a ‘new tortured reflection… cobbl(ing) together allegedly contradictory perspectives (Ibid: 486).

3.9.2 An ethnographic approach to interviewing: The researcher and reflexivity

One of the central tenets of an ethnographic approach to interviewing is allowing the subject to talk about their world in their terms.

If I were to try and put my finger on the single most serious shortcoming relating to the use of interviews in the social sciences, it would certainly be the commonsensical, unreflective manner in which most analyses of interview data are collected.

(Briggs, 1986: 102)

From this ethnographic perspective, Briggs sensitizes researchers to the dangers of ‘communicative hegemony’ (Ibid), where they may impose their own discourse on the participant and produce hidden filters that limit our ability to hear. In the interview the researcher may use words or terms that the participant did not say, for example, the researcher might ask for clarification when a participant is talking about the reasons for learning a language by asking the question ‘why do you want to invest in this language?’ If the participant has not uttered the word ‘invest’ the researcher may be introducing a concept that changes the participant’s perspective; he/she may view the interviewer as wanting to know about future jobs, their financial incentives to learn, and so on.

Furthermore, the researcher should always be aware of the social dynamics of the interview (dominant and subordinate power relations between everyone involved, as well as the researcher’s own personal politics which may come into play consciously or unconsciously, see chapter one, section 1.6.2). From a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault, 1976) ‘discourses’ of difference are at the centre of structures of inequality, they produce them but they can also resist them as well. When interviewing a particular group we might also be contributing to establishing it as a group, as
something *other* and *different*, which can be managed and controlled. In this sense, by trying to tackle inequality, researchers can actually be contributing to it by giving only certain voices and representations to the objects they are researching.

The effect of positivism (see section 2.5) on the social sciences (and one which is still felt today) has been an attempt to divorce the researcher from the researched in order to collect *uncontaminated* data. This presumes that it is possible for a researcher to be a neutral vessel of cultural experience, however it fails to acknowledge that all researchers are social beings and are thus part of the social world they study. From this perspective one cannot deny that we rely on our socio-culturally given *common sense* knowledge of *our* world when we come into contact with *other* socio-cultural worlds, and that we cannot help affecting and being affected by that contact. In essence, we cannot step outside the social world in order to study it.

*Reflexivity* is the continuous attempt on the part of researchers to monitor what they bring to their field of study and how they interact with what they find there. It is based on the recognition that researchers’ orientations are shaped by their socio-cultural background and ideologies, among other things. Reflexivity refutes the image of researchers as inhabitants of some autonomous realm, but rather as people who are firmly situated in their social world. They are affected by social processes, personal characteristics, and their own particular biographies, as well as the very academic field they inhabit and the way it regulates what is and is not relevant to research (Bourdieu, 1992).

Even though a researcher’s data is constructed under such complex conditions, Hammersley argues (1993) that this does not mean that their findings automatically imply that they are not representative of social phenomena. To do so would imply that

… the only true form of representation would involve the world imprinting its characteristics on our senses, a highly implausible account of the process of perception…

(Ibid: 18)
Reflexivity requires us to recognise that research is an active process

... in which accounts of the world are produced through selective observation and theoretical interpretation of what is seen, through asking particular questions, and interpreting what is said in reply.

(Ibid)

Hammersely suggests that we reject a standardization of the social character of research, to avoid trying to become a ‘fly on the wall’ or a ‘full participant’, as though we had stepped completely into the realm under observation instead of always having one foot in the realm where we began (see chapter two, section 2.15, on emic and etic perspectives).

Reflexivity is much more than an ethnographic tool, however it is an integral part of how all human beings interpret life experiences, part of how they acquire knowledge about the self in relation to society. In this sense we are all ethnographers (Hymes, 1964a).

G.H Mead (1962), drawing from semiotics (the science of signs, principally linguistic), posits the existence of a personal ‘I’ and a social ‘me’, where the former is in continual dialogue with the latter in a process of detachment and evaluation. Drawing on Mead’s theory Ryan (1977) says ‘in order to know itself at all, to constitute itself as an object for itself, the self must be absent from itself, outside itself’ (Ryan, 1977: 697. Cited in Babcock, 1980: 1). It is in this ‘mirror-like’ state then that the individual is ‘conscious of being self-conscious of himself as an other’ (Babcock, 1980: 1). ‘Reflexiveness’ for Mead, in Babcock’s view, is the ability of the individual to turn back his/her experience upon him/herself and

(b) y virtue of this reflexive capacity (he/she) is able to understand and adjust to the social process, to modify his (her) future behaviour, and to modify the social process itself.

(Ibid: 2)

Returning to reflexivity as an ethnographic tool, Foley (2002) advocates a reflexivity that ‘holds dichotomies like science-humanities/art in a useful tension.’ (Ibid: 486),
attempting to use autobiographical experiences, ‘ordinary’ language, metaphor, irony and satire as well as the rather more ‘flat, colorless, denotative language of science’ (Ibid: 487). Foley tacks between post-structuralist and scientific realist perspectives, not being entirely convinced by one or the other.

Drawing from Foley (and Hammersley), I too took a similar position in my emic-centred research, a position that rejects the ‘god-trick’ (Haraway, 1988) of attempting to abstract oneself from one’s subjects, and which requires researchers instead to

…speak as mere mortals from various historical, culture-bound standpoints; (as) we must still make limited, historically situated knowledge claims.

(Foley, 2002: 487)

3.9.3 The interview guide: Organising the interview space and framing interview questions

A central aspect of an ethnographic perspective on interviewing is the orientation towards more open and less structured interviews. In structured interviews the researcher has an interview schedule with set questions, often in a set order. This does not mean that the ethnographic interview is completely unstructured however, where ‘anything goes’. Rather, the ethnographic interviewer’s questions are shaped by the topics that the interviewee brings up and with the language the interviewee uses to express them (see section 3.10.2). Moreover, whereas an initial interview may be far ranging, subsequent interviews with the same participant will be more focused on those issues that emerged previously.

My overall orientation as an interviewer was based principally on Spradely’s ‘The Ethnographic Interview’ (1979), (although Wengraf’s narrative approach (2001) makes similar points). In the interview I attempted to ‘start from ignorance’, resisting as much as possible the temptation to appear knowledgeable, and to carry out the interview with as few assumptions as possible about the participants and on how they saw their lives. This of course is a very difficult task, particularly in situations where
the interviewee is aware of shared knowledge with the interviewer, but it served as a general orientating approach. I also attempted to start without hypotheses, taking the position that the interviewer should not go into an interview with a clear idea of what they expect to get out of it. This entailed avoiding bringing a set of pre-prepared questions that I wanted answers to (see above), again, a complex and difficult thing to do given my role in the institution and my knowledge and experience in the field (see chapter 1, section 1.6.1). It was my aim to encourage the participant to describe and narrate rather than evaluate, i.e. avoiding as much as possible questions like ‘what do you think of..?’ or ‘what’s your opinion of..?’ and to attempt to learn by building up a picture from the participants’ own language, trying to avoid introducing language that is not their own (see section 3.9.2). Also, I intended to limit my questions as much as possible. This is a major part of an ethnographic approach to interviewing, allowing the participant to speak and develop their own thoughts and ideas as much as possible (Ibid).

The following represents my interview guide, outlining the seating arrangements (with relative reasoning for the choices made), as well as the nature of the questions asked with regard to the underlining objectives.

Group interviews were organized to create a comfortable atmosphere conducive to discussion, by arranging seating in a circle without a central table (see figure 1, below).

… circular seating enables all group members to face each other, which is crucial for establishing the interactive group dynamics that are central to a focus group discussion. Vaughn et al (1996) state that group members are most likely to communicate with those seated directly across from them… If participants are seated as in a classroom set-up with all the group members facing forwards, then there is an expectation for the moderator to provide information to the group rather than for participants to interact in a discussion.

(Hennink, 2007: 162)
Individual one-to-one interviews were similarly conducted with out a central table and seats positioned at a small, obtuse angle to create a neutral focal space, to avoid a potentially confrontational dynamic, which might have suggested an interrogation rather than a conversation (see figure 2).

As chairs were equipped with a fold-away table the recording device was always placed on my own table$^{30}$.

*Figure 1.* Layout of interview room for group interviews.

---

$^{30}$ This was an Apple ipad, with cover, which was placed under a book so as not to attract too much attention from the participants.
In the first session of one-to-one interviews, the following statement (derived from Lieblich et al, 1998) was read to all participants before starting the interview:

People sometimes see their lives as books. I would like you to think about your life now as if you were writing a book about it with regard to language learning. Think about the chapters in this book and their relevancy for you.

(Ibid: 25)

This statement was intended to stimulate the participants to take a narrative approach in relating their experiences (as suggested by Lieblich et al, Ibid). It also aimed to stimulate the students to recount their lives prior to entering the institution, and to contextualise this new stage in their educational lives in relation to the past. However, apart from an initial elicitation concerning their choice of ‘chapters’, I refrained from any further mention of their lives in relation to ‘books’ unless they reintroduced the metaphor themselves.
Apart from this initial framing of the first one-to-one interviews, I aimed at allowing the interviews to be driven by the participants’ own direction of thoughts without overtly influencing them, an ethnographic approach. This approach was maintained throughout all the subsequent interviews, which began with a broad request to recount their experiences in the institution. Again, in line with ethnographic methods, salient themes that had emerged in the first session of interviews were actively re-introduced in the second session to elicit further comments and thoughts.

In the following table (Table 7), I present my principal aims and strategies (drawing from Whyte, 1984) with regard to how I conducted the interviews.

**Table 7. Interview conduct**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIM</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>EXAMPLES FROM DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Inviting and encouraging the participant to continue their line of thought. | Back channeling using words, phrases and sounds, such as ‘hmm’, ‘I see’, ‘right’, ‘that’s interesting’, as well as gestures, such as a nod of the head. | Matteo: I will be able to get into the laurea magistrale ((specialization post-grad degree))  
Alan: right  
Matteo: yeah  
Alan: hmm  
Matteo: but I have to improve a lot | Alan: you said that yo- you ‘want to help Italy?’ Did I understand correctly? | Maria: because there was this confliction between them (..) these conflicts between them  
Alan: can can you give me an example of (.) | Matteo: I just take the the good things out of it (.)  
Alan: hmm (.) but there a:re negative things then. | Alan: right and you talked last time you talked a lot about this sort of competitive nature of the classroom (.) how did that occur this this term? |
3.10 Conclusions

My methodological framework sought to explore my participants’ trajectories towards becoming expert professional interpreters by attempting to explore their narratives in the context of the wider socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-educational ideologies and discourses present in their chosen field.

Taking an ethnographic approach the data was continually interpreted and re-interpreted, informing each stage of my research. For example my initial interpretations of the research data guided my focus in the subsequent workshops and also guided my interests in the other interviews. Thus, the research methodology was never static and prescriptive, but complex and cyclical in its building of meaning and its sensitivity to developments along the research trajectory.

In the following chapter I identify central themes running through the data and in the subsequent chapters (chapters 5, 6 and 7) I present my data and analysis, (applying the methodology expounded in this chapter) and the interpretive conclusions I drew from it.
Chapter Four

Thematic codification of the research data

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline how I carried out my analysis of the data, describing how I arrived at the central themes that I identified in my research, and the broader categories I developed to encapsulate them.

Initially, I listened repeatedly to all the recordings of my interviews, together with the transcripts of those recordings, to identify all the narrative episodes that emerged (see section 2.4 for a definition of a narrative episode, and section 3.6 for a general quantitative summary). The length of narratives varied from a few clauses (i.e. a vignette), to more extended forms (i.e. describing an experience(s) in detail). When narratives were more extended, I applied a holistic-content analysis (see section 3.7), examining the foci of the contents and themes, and colour coding the latter. I then looked for patterns and potential consistencies beyond the individual episode throughout the data (in all the narrative episodes), paying attention to where themes first appeared and ended, the transition between themes and the content of each one. At this stage of the analysis I was not focusing specifically on answering my initial research questions but rather attempting to obtain a general overview of my participants’ accounts of their experiences, and possibly considering variations on my original questions. In conjunction with this analysis, I also examined my field notes (see appendix B), to see if I could find episodes of encounters with my participants which might have some bearing on the themes I had identified in the interview data, or themes that had not emerged in that data but seemed salient.

In my second stage of analysis, I turned specifically to my research questions (which remained the same as initially posited, see chapter one, section 1.2), applying a
categorical-content analysis (see section 3.7), sifting through the content and themes that had emerged initially, for data that appeared to conform to a subtext (ibid) related to the following:

- the identity of the professional interpreter
- the resources required to become a professional interpreter
- student experiences in the institution (i.e. with peers and institutional representatives, such as teachers).

I then attempted to define the content categories, drawing on those themes that appeared specifically related to the subtext.

In selecting the themes that were particularly relevant to my research questions, I also took into consideration the emotive content in the narrative episodes from which they emerged, suggesting a greater degree of engagement and potential significance to my participants. In this analysis I applied a categorical-form analysis (see section 3.7), focusing on emotive language to explore them in greater depth.

4.2 Main themes in the data - Introduction

The main themes and sub-themes that emerged from my narrative analysis and my analysis of my field notes, were the following:

- the interpreter is a language expert;
- only students who speak like native-speakers can become interpreters;
  - there is not enough time to become like native-speakers in the three-year degree;
  - to become like native speakers, students need to live abroad for long periods of time;
- Sslmit students are the best language students because they are in the best institution in Italy;
Sslmit students are always under pressure to study more
Sslmit students study all the time and have no time to relax;
Sslmit students are highly competitive in the classroom, more than any other students in any other institution;

- competitiveness helps improve language learning;
- competitiveness creates a bad working environment in the classroom;
- competitiveness prepares students for their future careers;

- the relation between teachers and students in Sslmit is very different from other Italian higher education institutions.
  - teachers have too much power over students
  - teachers do not respect student’s rights
  - teachers do not treat students as mature students
  - teachers are sometimes unprofessional

Considering the contexts in which these themes emerged, I indentified four main categories of talk, where all the themes emerged:

- teacher talk about the professional interpreter
- talk about language learning
- talk about the character of the interpreter-student in the institution
- talk about teacher-student relations

In the following sections I give an overview of each category and how I began to perceive them in my initial analysis as being relevant to some of the major themes I identified.

4.2.1 Teacher talk about the professional interpreter

Teacher talk about professional interpreters emerged quite frequently in the first group interview when Matteo initiated a narrative about a teacher telling the class that interpreters required ‘talent’ in order to become professionals, and that the life of the
interpreter was one dominated by ‘stress’. Matteo’s comments on this episode displayed an uneasiness about the concept of ‘talent’ in particular, which was taken up by the other participants for an extended stretch of dialogue. This narrative then sensitised me to the relevance that my participants appeared to be giving to teacher talk about the resources required to become a professional interpreter and the projected identity of that professional figure.

My second session of interviews saw more narrative episodes about teacher talk in relation to this, and the potential influence that this talk was having on my participants’ own projected identities as possible future interpreters. In some cases this teacher talk was taken as inspirational (i.e. in Maria’s narratives, see chapter 5) but in others it appeared to have the opposite effect, apparently making some participants question any possibility of acquiring the identity of a professional interpreter and even provoking declarative statements that they no longer wished to be interpreters (i.e. Rosa and Silvia, chapter 5).

4.2.2 Talk about language learning

In the first group interview talk about language learning emerged quite frequently through narratives related to my participants’ concerns about not attaining an ‘interpreter level’ (a participant’s term, see chapter 6) of linguistic competency by their third year (the end of the degree programme). The emphasis in these narratives appeared to be on the need for elevated linguistic ability (sometimes expressed as being ‘perfect’ in a language, see chapter 6 again) as an essential resource for becoming professional interpreters, and a general concern that this was an ever-diminishing prospect in relation to the time available in the three-year degree.

The second session of interviews presented some narratives about participants reconciling themselves to lower linguistic competencies and in some cases a change in focus to other sets of resources (i.e. cultural knowledge) however, the majority of participants still maintained that a high ‘native speaker’ like level was essential and appeared disheartened by the difficulty (or seeming impossibility) of its attainment (i.e. Rosa, see chapter 6).
4.2.3 Talk about the character of the interpreter-student in the institution

In my first one-to-one interview with Rosa, she introduced a narrative about coming from another faculty to Sslmit (see section 3.3.1 for a brief biography) and realising that all the students were ‘nerds’, positioning Sslmit students as always studying, with little to no time for ‘fun’. In her second one-to-one interview Rosa introduced another narrative about how she too had become a ‘nerd’, and relating this to the institution, ‘it’s Sslmit so: I was expecting that’ (see chapter 7 for an in depth analysis). These narratives sensitized me to other narratives that were related to the projected, collective identity of the Sslmit student in the context of the institution. Other narratives positioned the institution as requiring it’s students to be the ‘best’ which seemed to be strongly connected to the participants’ construction of the ‘typical Sslmit student’ as always having to study to meet high status goals of performance.

The nature of competitiveness among the students also emerged when talking about Sslmit students. This emerged quite unexpectedly for me in the first one-to-one and group interviews where participants initiated narratives about experiences of competitiveness among their peers in the classroom. These narratives emerged after general questions from me about the ‘atmosphere’ in the class or broadly framed requests for their experiences in the class in the first term. As a teacher and tutor I was perhaps focused more on teaching and learning practices going into the research (see chapter one, section 1.6.2), and how they might be perceived by my participants. However, it was a surprise for me to hear narratives of rivalry and competition among the students, and the effect this had upon their experience both in and outside the classroom. The relevance of this inter-student competitiveness as a form of resource became a central focus for the participants in the first group interview, being described diversely as a good thing, when linked to improving linguistic competency (spurring students to learn more by wanting to perform better in the class in front of their fellow peers and the teacher), and preparing students for the competition of the workplace, but it was also seen as being negative by some, in causing rivalries and resentment among the student population and a general ‘bad atmosphere’.
Competitiveness in relation to the institution was also flagged as being ‘normal’ or to be expected considering the ‘nature’ of the type of student who wished to study there and the high demands of the institution itself.

The second session of interviews presented narratives showing shifts in positioning by my participants though, in some cases elevating the negative aspect but in others seeing it as diminishing due to increased friendship networks and the demands of actual interpreting studies (beginning in the second term only) which were variously described as requiring more collaboration among the students.

### 4.2.4 Talk about teacher-student relations in the institution

Quantitatively, narratives about teacher-student relations were very elevated across the data (see section 4.3 below).

My participants made many references to the smaller teacher-student ratio in Sslmit in comparison with other Italian higher education institutions, which in interviews in the first session were portrayed as being positive for better teacher-student relations (creating a greater sense of community), as well as an improved potential for learning more.

Narrative episodes in the final group interview were predominantly concerned with questions of professionalism and unprofessionalism, as well as issues of maturity and immaturity in how teachers positioned the participants as adult learners or not (see chapter eight), allowing them autonomy in their studies, or adopting paternal-like rigour in checking their progress at every stage.

In the following section I give a brief quantitative overview of the instances of narrative episodes related to these broad categories and their related themes.
4.3 Summary of quantitative data

1. Teacher talk about the professional interpreter.

Session one interviews

Table 8. Number of narrative episodes in first session of data and duration of episodes: Teacher talk about the professional interpreter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to teacher talk about the professional interpreter</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:05:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Session two interviews

Table 9. Number of narrative episodes in second session of data and duration of episodes: Teacher talk about the professional interpreter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to teacher talk about the professional interpreter</th>
<th>Time of narrative (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:02:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:04:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:03:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:00:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:05:35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General summary across all data

Table 10. General summary of narrative episodes in all data and duration of episodes: Teacher talk about the professional interpreter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of narrative episodes</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>00:21:39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Talk about language learning

Session one interviews

Table 11. Number of narrative episodes in first session of data and duration of episodes: Talk about language learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to talk about language learning</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:00:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>00:15:22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Session two interviews

Table 12. Number of narrative episodes in second session of data and duration of episodes: Talk about language learning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to talk about language learning</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:03:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:04:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>00:06:01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:01:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:01:11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General summary across all data:**

*Table 13. General summary of narrative episodes in all data and duration of episodes: Talk about language learning.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of narrative episodes</th>
<th>33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>00:31:17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **The Sslmit student**

Session one interviews related specifically to the sub-themes:

- All study and no time to relax.
- Institutional pressure to be the best.

*Table 14. Number of narrative episodes in first session of data and duration of episodes: Talk about study and pressure to be the best.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to participants’ representations of the typical Sslmit student, related to issues of study and pressure to be the best</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Session two interviews related specifically to the sub-themes:

- All study and no time to relax.
- Institutional pressure to be the best.

Table 15. Number of narrative episodes in second session of data and duration of episodes: Talk about study and pressure to be the best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to participants’ representations of the typical Sllmit student, related to issues of study and pressure to be the best</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:01:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>00:01:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>00:02:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:00:22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Session one interviews specifically related to the sub-theme of competitiveness among students.

Table 16. Number of narrative episodes in first session of data and duration of episodes: Talk about student competitiveness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to talk about student competitiveness</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:05:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:03:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>00:05:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>00:07:28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Session two interviews specifically related to the sub-theme of competition

Table 17. Number of narrative episodes in second session of data and duration of episodes: Talk about student competitiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to talk about student competitiveness</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:01:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>00:04:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:09:46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:01:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:02:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General summary across all data:

Table 18. General summary of narrative episodes in all data and duration of episodes: Student talk about study, pressure to be the best, and competitiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of narrative episodes</th>
<th>65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>00:58:29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Talk about Teacher-student relations in the institution.

Session one interviews

*Table 19. Number of narrative episodes in first session of data and duration of episodes: Talk about teacher – Student relations.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to teacher-student relations</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:02:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:00:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:00:31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>00:14:07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Session 2 interviews

*Table 20. Number of narrative episodes in second session of data and duration of episodes: Talk about Teacher – Student relations.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Narrative episodes relevant to teacher-student relations</th>
<th>Time of narrative(s) (Hours/minutes/seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>00:18:46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>00:10:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:05:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>00:26:18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General summary across all data:

Table 21. General summary of narrative episodes in all data and duration of episodes: Talk about teacher-Student relations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of narrative episodes</th>
<th>43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>01:11:21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following chapters (5-8) I analysis narratives from each category identified in this chapter, using narrative positioning analysis to draw connections between local narrative episodes and wider Discourses relevant to my participants’ construction of their own identities as students in the institution and the identity of the professional interpreter.
Chapter Five

Data analysis

5.1 The salience of teacher talk - Introduction

In the following chapter I look at how teacher talk was related to Discourses that affected my participants’ constructions of the identity of a professional interpreter, and the resources necessary to become one. The participants’ narratives provide insights into how they positioned themselves and others in relation to these Discourses, through their depiction of scenes, characters and reported speech in the narrative event (the narrative told) as well as in their positioning of themselves and others in the narrative-telling event itself (the moment of the narrative’s telling), affirming, ratifying or contesting that positioning. This positioning shows how they evaluated the identity and resources proposed by those Discourses present in their teachers’ talk and the effect those Discourses appeared to have on their student identities and their projected identities as potential professionals in the field.

5.2 Narrative on interpreting as stress and talent

I begin with a narrative episode that emerged in the first group interview, where Matteo introduces the figure of Moscato, a teacher of interpreting between German and Italian. One reason for selecting this narrative was due to a prevalence of talk about this same teacher on other occasions across the data (the first occurring here), and another reason was the reaction of the participants to the narrative, which caused extended discussion.

Moscato’s professional interpreting career had emerged in subsequent talk (both in one-to-one interviews and group interviews) where her work with important public figures such the Pope, Berlusconi (the then Italian prime minister) and Angel Merkel (the present German Chancellor) appeared to have a significant effect on some of the participants, in particular Matteo (who introduced her here in his narrative), giving a
certain elevated status to her assertions about the identity of the professional interpreter and the resources required to become one.

First I give a transcript of the interview episode in which this narrative emerged and then go on to analyse it through the lens of narrative positioning analysis.

1 Matteo: (. ) yes cos i: (. ) I really want to become an interpreter
2 cos i:: m:: (. ) I like the this job I:: (. ) well I::
3 (. ) I attended the classes of elena moscato the interpreter: (. )
4 the italian interpreter and well er: m: she: (. ) she: gave us her
5 her feedback about the interpreter experience (. ) er:: there’s a lot
6 of stress a lot of m: (2.0) a lot of stress lot m: and
7 Rosa: she’s kinda negative to be honest = ((general laughter))
8 Matteo: =yes
9 Rosa: about it
10 Matteo: yes yes yes
11 Rosa: about the interpreting (. ) ‘all the time she’s saying (. ) I actually
12 want to ask her like if she regrets her choice ((laughter))
13 because she’s always saying that ’it’s so: much stre:ss it’s so
14 mu::ch ((high pitched intonation, whining tone))
15 [you won’t have any
16 Maria: [(it’s just for the competition)
17 Rosa: other life if you’re interpreting
18 Fed: [(xxxxxxxx)
19 Rosa: if you want to become [an interpreter:
20 Maria: [(xx
21 Rosa: and it’s kinda negative
22 Alan: yes
23 Matteo: yes she talked about talent (.)
24 Rosa: mm
25 Alan: ah:
26 Matteo: ah: (. ) yes (. ) she said erm: if you want to (.) if you want to
27 be an interpreter you have to (. ) well you need talent
28 Alan: uh hu
29 Silvia: ok I’m ou:t ((laughs, general laughter))
30 Matteo: =and we said oh my god do i have talent or not (.) and::d cos she
just said well you have to know the language you have to
know the the grammar the: the word the vocabulary (.) all these
things but (.) there’s a: (.) a: percent m:: needed to be an interpreter
(.) then well you have to you need talent to do that to do that
job (.) a::nd well the:: the classroom the: the other students were
all (.) all scared cos they just
said well do we have talent or not (.) and but she said well if
you’re here at the Sslmit you have talent ((matter of fact tone))
39 Alan: hmm
40 (.). and so: (.). I don’t know what what does she mean with talent
41 or not (.) but well

(Group 1 interview. Recording times, 54.05 – 57.00. See appendix A: p.450, lines 1456 - 1509)

I now analyse the narrative as described in chapter three (section 3.8.3), applying the three analytical levels. In this first example I restate the aims of each level (for clarity), although in subsequent analysis I do not.

5.2.1 Level 1: Positioning of characters in the narrative event.

a. Where is the narrative situated and how does it develop?
b. How are the characters portrayed and relationally positioned?

As previously stated (see section 3.8.3), Level one focuses on the narrative event, principally on the setting, developing action and the characters portrayed, analysing in particular: the types of actions attributed to the protagonists; the motives attributed to the protagonists for these actions; and the characteristics attributed to the protagonists and other narrative characters.
Matteo initiates the narrative by introducing the character of Moscato, and how she talked to the class (and him, as a member of the class) about the ‘interpreter experience’ (line 5). Although Moscato is evidently a teacher in the institution, (Matteo says that he attended her ‘classes’ in line 3, which positions her as a teacher), she is indexed by him in the narrative as ‘the interpreter’ (line 3), positioning her as a professional in the field of interpreting. Matteo’s summary of Moscato’s ‘feed back’ (line 5) about interpreting, positions her as providing valid and informed information about the identity of the interpreter, which he summarizes as being one dominated by stress, as seen in lines 5 and 6, reinforced by the repetition of ‘lot’ and ‘stress’ and the heightened emphasis on the word ‘stress’ itself.

5 .... there’s a lot
6 of stress a lot of m: (2.0) a lot of stress lot m:

Matteo does not report Moscato’s speech when he makes this assertion but appears to make a statement of his own personal conviction, that ‘there’s a lot of stress’ in interpreting, as though he has come to an understanding and acceptance of this through his listening to Moscato’s ‘feed back’ on the experience of interpreting.

Rosa comes in on the next turn (line 7), presenting herself as a character in the same narrative as well, and present in the scene that Matteo has introduced. Although Matteo has introduced the teacher as a valid commentator on the identity of the professional interpreter, Rosa focuses instead on the teacher’s own personality in her turn, describing Moscato as being ‘kinda negative’ (line 7), indexicalising the teacher therefore as one of those people in the social world who is ‘kinda negative’ as opposed to ‘kinda positive’. Encouraged by group laughter, and Matteo’s affirmation of this (his repetition of ‘yes’ in rapid succession in line 10), Rosa goes on to use reported direct speech to further position the teacher as being excessively negative (lines 11-15).

The high pitched ‘whining-like’ tone with which Rosa introduces Moscato’s reported speech, ‘it’s so: much stre::ss it’s so mu::ch’ (lines 13-14), and the heavily stressed
and lengthened vowels in ‘so:’, ‘stre::ss’ and ‘mu::ch’, is a prosodic mode of positioning the teacher as ‘continually’ lamenting the interpreter’s life, marked lexically as well, by the frequency adverb ‘always’ in ‘always saying’ (line 13). Prosodic and lexical choices in reported speech are a means of characterising a person’s speech and ‘limiting the kind of voice that the character might have’ (Wortham, 2001:73), (see section 2.11.2, on the use of reported voices in relation to narrative positioning). Unlike Matteo, Rosa does not introduce the concept that interpreting is stressing as though it were her own personal conviction, but rather as the teacher’s own personal lament in the class, one that she mimics in appears to be a tragicomic manner.

Rosa’s positioning of Moscato as being overly negative is then used to position the teacher as having possibly chosen the wrong career

11 about the interpreting (. ) ‘all the time she’s saying (. ) I actually
12 want to ask her like if she regrets her choice ((laughter))

This serves to undermine further Moscato’s claims about the identity of the professional interpreter, as Rosa suggests that the actual profession is not suited to her. Rosa continues by reporting another thing that Moscato told the class, that ‘you won’t have any other life if you are interpreting’ (lines 15-17), making a final comment of her own that such a statement is ‘kinda negative’, thereby re-enforcing her initial assertion (line 7) and further suggesting that the teacher is potentially exaggerating the demands of the job to the class. Maria’s comment ‘it’s just for the competition’ (line 16), which comes in the middle of Rosa’s talk, might appear inexplicable if it were not for an ethnographic note. Based on my field notes from talk outside the research interviews (see appendix B, page 739), the participants had talked about teachers as being potential competitors for the jobs they might be applying for after finishing their studies. In this context, Maria appears to be positioning Moscato as attempting to dissuade students from becoming interpreters in order to reduce possible future competition in the interpreting market. Maria is therefore ratifying Rosa’s positioning of Moscato as exaggerating the negative aspects of the job.
After Rosa’s final comment about Moscato being ‘kinda negative’ (line 21), Matteo takes up the next turn with the sentence substitute ‘yes’ (line 23). At first this appears to be a confirmation of what Rosa has said about the teacher, but it actually serves as the initiation of a cue for a change in subject.

Matteo’s ‘yes’ actually communicates closure on Rosa’s talk about the teacher’s personality and a shift back to what the teacher said in the classroom, signalled by his introduction to her reported speech, ‘she talked about’ (line 23). Through this reported speech (lines 26-27) Matteo describes the teacher as telling the students that they need ‘talent’ to become interpreters, affirming the importance of talent through repetition of the phrase ‘if you want’ (two sequential incidences) in relation to being an interpreter, and the use of ‘have to’ and ‘need’ adjacently preceding ‘talent’. The falling intonation on the final word, talent, also suggests finality, as though there were no room for debate.

By reporting the teacher’s speech in this lexical and prosodic manner Matteo is re-positioning the teacher as a valid informant again about the identity of the interpreter, foregrounding ‘talent’ as potentially being an important part of this identity.

Matteo then reports a question, in relation to the teacher’s reported assertion about needing talent, which he narrates as being posed by himself and the other students in the classroom scene,

```
30 and we said oh my god (. ) do i have talent or not
```

/ \\
Matteo introduces the other students as a collective character in the story event, describing them all as asking this same question in unison, ‘do I have talent’, and therefore positioning them all as sharing the same doubts.

Directly after reporting the students’ question about talent, Matteo goes on to report Moscato’s following speech

31 you have to know the language you have to
32 know the the grammar the: the word the vocabulary (.) all these
33 things

The repetition of ‘you have to know’ (lines 31-33) in relation to language, grammar and vocabulary suggests a form of check-list of imperative essentials for anyone wishing to claim an interpreter identity, almost an incontestable fact.

After this list, Matteo then repeats the teacher’s reported speech about the need for talent again, using the same verbs as before (have to, need), in the same order, reinforcing its importance (line 34). The collective character of the whole class is then described as being ‘scared’ (line 36), and repeating the same question to themselves as before (lines 35-36),

35 the other students were all
36 (.) all scared cos they just
37 said well do we have talent or not

The possibility of not having talent in order to claim an interpreter identity is represented by Matteo as a collective emotive response from the class, presented as though it were a chorus of generally shared preoccupation. This appears to position all the students, him included, as being decidedly uncomfortable with the concept, and seemingly questioning if anyone can in actual fact lay claim to it.
Moscato’s continued reported speech however is introduced by Matteo as a response to the students’ question of whether they have talent or not, suggesting that anyone who has made it into the institution must have talent (lines 37-38),

37 (. ) and but she said well if
38 you’re here at the Sslmit you have talent ((matter of fact tone))

Moscato’s reported speech is presented as the teacher’s apparent attempt at a resolution of the problem of talent, however Matteo’s own final comment (lines 40 - 41) makes it clear that he was not satisfied by her response and is still dubious about what she means by the concept.

40 and so: (. ) I don’t know what does she mean with talent
41 or not

The use of the present tense here brings the problem from the past narrative event into the present narrative-telling event, the here and now of it’s telling, and reinforces it as being an on-going, unresolved preoccupation for Matteo.

I now move on to level two analysis, looking specifically at the narrative-telling event, again I summarize the analytic focus before commencing the analysis itself.

5.2.2 Level 2: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

a. How was the narrative occasioned in the surrounding talk and why was it told?

Level two focuses on the narrative-telling event. Firstly it looks at how the narrative emerges in the surrounding talk, how the narrative is occasioned and with what objectives? It then looks at how the interlocutors align themselves in the actual narration: how they co-construct the narrative, challenging and/or ratifying the others’ telling by (re)positioning the characters, as well as how they use reported speech (when introduced) in support of this positioning.
Matteo’s narrative emerges in talk about wanting to become an interpreter, coming as it does after his affirmation, ‘I really want to become an interpreter’ (line 1).

In terms of the interactional positioning of the interlocutors in the telling, Matteo positions the group and the researcher as accepting the teacher’s classroom talk on the identity of the professional interpreter (indicated by his own assertive statement that ‘there is a lot of stress’). Rosa however is unwilling to ratify Matteo’s claim, by choosing instead to undermine the teacher’s validity by positioning Moscato as being a negative character for the group and exaggerating the negative aspects of the job. This is ratified by Maria who contextualises it as Moscato’s attempt to dissuade students from entering the profession, removing them from being competitors in the job market. Rosa’s non-ratification is enforced by her use of reported direct speech where she mimics the teacher ‘whining’ (communicated prosodically) about the stress in her job, and telling the students that they will have no free time if they pursue the same career. Rosa positions herself and the group then as not sharing the teacher’s negatively orientated character, and therefore as being distrustful of her negative comments about the subsequent interpreter identity she describes. The suggestion appears to be that the group cannot trust the teacher, as her character is too negative.

Matteo refuses this positioning however, by foregrounding the importance of Moscato’s comments again, reinforcing her validity as an informant for the group, and backgrounding Rosa’s characterisation of the teacher’s character as being potentially irrelevant and inconsequential to them.

When Matteo reports the teacher’s introduction of the concept of ‘talent’ in the narrative however, there appears to be an alignment with Silvia and the interview group’s negative reaction. This is indicated by Silvia’s comment, ‘ok I’m out’ (when talent is first mentioned in line 26), suggesting that she does not think of herself as having talent and therefore as not having the resources to be an interpreter, and the general group laughter that follows, which can be interpreted as general ratification of the same position by the other participants. Although Matteo positions the group as ratifying ‘stress’ as being part of the interpreter’s professional identity, his description
of the characters in the narrative as being ‘scared’ on hearing the teacher suggesting that having talent is important as well, problematizes it. Matteo’s final self-directed question in the present tense (line 40), positions himself as seeing ‘talent’ as a potential impediment for his becoming an interpreter and by extension for all present, both in the narrative and the narrative-telling event

40  so: (.) I don’t know what does she mean with talent
41  or not

I now move on to the third and final level of analysis.

5.2.3 Level 3: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

a. How do levels one and two relate to individual stances towards Discourses?
b. How are these stances common to other positioning across the whole data, which might suggest collective positioning processes in relation to certain Discourses?

Level three brings levels one and two together in relation to how the participants’ position themselves in relation to wider Discourses. The relevancies of these Discourses are highlighted by looking for patterns in other narratives in the data, and in ethnographic data from outside the interview, to introduce a discussion about the wider implications of these narratives beyond their local context (see section 2.13).

Towards its end, Matteo’s narrative introduces a Discourse, Gee’s capital D discourse (see section 2.10).

30  Matteo: and we said oh my god  do i have talent or not (.) an:::d  cos she
31  just said well (.) you have to know the language you have to
32  know the the grammar the: the word the vocabulary (.) all these
things but there’s a: (. ) a percent m:: needed to be an interpreter

( . ) then well you have to you need talent to do that to do that

job (. )

What is notable here is that Matteo’s reported speech foregrounds Moscato’s talk about ‘talent’ (line 30) and backgrounds issues of having ‘to know’ lexico-grammatical aspects of the language in order to become an interpreter (lines 31-33), positioning the latter as something that is taken for granted by the teacher and the students. Matteo and the students’ reported question ‘do I have talent or not’ (line 30) assumes primary importance, coming after the dramatically reported class reaction in the narrative event, ‘oh my god’ (line 30), at the beginning of the turn. His introduction of the teacher’s reported speech in the following part of the narrative indicates that Matteo is positioning her as expecting the students in the narrative event (and the participants in the narrative-telling event) to see what follows as being taken for granted. The adverb just in ‘she just said’ (lines 30-31), signals that students should take it as understood by Moscato that they ‘..have to know the language … have to know the grammar the: word the vocabulary’ (lines 31-32). This reported speech comes in a list-like form, where each element is preceded by the modal verb of obligation ‘you have to’ in rapid succession. The expectation that students know what appears here to be everything about a language (suggested by the definite article, ‘the language’) can be interpreted as a potential Discourse then.

This Discourse appears to focus solely on the interpreter’s need to have heightened linguistic competence however (grammar and lexis), with no mention of other forms of competence, such as social and cultural understandings in relation to what language means in different socio-cultural contexts. Moscato’s de facto list of things that students need to know (‘the language..the grammar..the vocabulary’) is backgrounded by Matteo, making it appear an almost ‘it goes without saying’ comment. However, what is notable here is the focus on what can be termed as ‘cognitive and linguistic skills’ (see chapter 1, section 1.4.2). The Discourse that appears almost to slip in under the lines here, and to be accepted by the participants (suggested by its not being challenged), is that a student-interpreter has to focus on language proficiency principally, a Discourse which is notable for the absence to any reference to
interpersonal and cross-cultural skills, positioning the interpreter-student more as an invisible conduit for language exchanges, instead of an agential interlocutor in the interpreting process (Ibid).

I now go on to underline the relevancy of this Discourse in my research by giving other examples of its presence across the data, which can be seen as being more than local, and part of wider ‘patterns’ (De Fina, 2013), (see section 2.13).

5.2.4 The interpreter as a ‘language expert’

Other examples of this Discourse appear among the participants in the first group interview. The examples given below can be considered as narratives in that they project the hypothetical character of each participant as though they had already assumed, or are in the process of attempting to assume, the future identity of the professional interpreter.

In the same group interview, when Matteo expresses a concern about his language learning he complains that he makes too many mistakes, and that his German in particular is ‘a mess’. When in the interview I asked him to explain what he meant by this he responded

1 Matteo: (3.0) er::: well cos I think that at the end of the of the:: of the university at the end of the ssmit i: I just have to speak (2.0) per- perfectly (. ) er but I have to speak a perfect language (. ) first language and second language cos we won’t become I think we won’t become to become interpreters or translators and so em: ( . ) I:: I want to become an interpreter and I think that you just need a proficiency that is (. ) eh quite amazing one near to a mother tongue level

(Group 1 interview: recording times, 00:29:21 – 00:30:02 mins. See appendix A: p.428, lines 724 – 734)
Here, Matteo appears to be drawing on the same Discourse that emerged in his narrative about Moscato (see section 5.2.3) as he is evidently equating language learning, being able to ‘speak a perfect language’ (line 3), (i.e. being a language expert), with becoming an interpreter. Failure to reach perfection in a language is treated as being synonymous with failing to become an interpreter, as without attaining that level ‘we won’t become … interpreters’ (lines 4 - 5). Matteo finishes his turn by comparing that level to being ‘near to a mother tongue level’ (line 7), introducing a goal which is akin to being a near ‘native speaker’ (I focus more specifically on language learning in relation to native speaker models in chapter 6).

Also, in the same group interview, Maria talks about having to be perfect in the language, ‘at least the grammar’. When pressed by me to explain what she means by perfect, she replies

1 Maria: I mean that I can perfectly understand and perfectly speak even with ()
2 
3 couple of mistakes that’s fine but I have to be able to perfectly
4 understand whatever they’re saying…

(Group 1 interview: recording times, 00:30:49 – 00:30:00, See appendix A: p.429, lines 755 – 759)

Maria allows for a ‘couple of mistakes’ (line 2) in her spoken language but insists on being able ‘to perfectly understand whatever they are saying’ (lines 2-3), placing more emphasis on the ‘perfect’ passive reception of language whilst allowing for a little less than perfect active production of it in her speech. As with Matteo, Maria positions the identity of the interpreter as being akin to being a language expert, an ability to understand everything said and a near perfect ability to speak a language.

In his second one-to-one interview Matteo introduces another narrative about Moscato, concerning his being away for the entire second year on an Erasmus programme in Germany and being worried that he will miss all his mediation classes.
Immediately after reporting his question to Moscato

well a year without mediation erm how can I become an interpreter?

(Matteo 2 interview. See appendix A: p.524, lines 356-358)

Matteo then reports Moscato’s comment and gives his own reaction to it.

1 a:nd the professor moscato said (.) no just don’t worry (.) you the first thing
2 is to go er: just go to germany learn learn german and then I can teach you
3 the the well she said I can teach you the techniques in an hour (..) but the
4 most important thing the most important thing is to learn the (.) the language
5 and so: but (..) I think that (.) in my opinion there’s a world behind the
6 language

(Matteo 2 interview. Recording times, 00:22:47 – 00:23:32. See appendix A: p. 549, lines 358 – 368)

As in the narrative in the first group interview (see sections 5.2 - 5.2.9), the teacher is reported as directly reintroducing the Discourse that the most important thing an interpreter needs to know is ‘the language’ (line 4), whilst backgrounding other aspects, which are described as ‘techniques’ that can be learnt in ‘an hour’ (line 3). Matteo appears to challenge this assertion here however (in contrast to his narrative in the first group interview) by stating that there is more to becoming an interpreter than just the language, as ‘there is a world behind the language’ (lines 5-6). I look more closely at all these narratives in chapter 6, where I look specifically at the importance of language as a resource for my participants.

5.2.5 The Discourse of the interpreter as a language expert

Having established the relevancy of the Discourse of the interpreter as a language expert (see section 5.2.3) beyond one single local interaction, appearing in other
interactions across the data, I now turn to connect it to the wider world of the institution, which requires drawing on ethnographic detail.

As stated in chapter one (section 1.2), the institution broadly aligns itself with the ‘Dublin Descriptors’\textsuperscript{32} in describing the learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve after completing the first cycle degree (namely in relation to, ‘Knowledge and understanding’, ‘Applying knowledge and understanding’, ‘Making judgements’, ‘Communication skills’ and ‘Learning skills’).

Under ‘knowledge and understanding’ the learning outcome is described as ‘linguistic - cultural’, where culture is given a second place position. Moreover, the actual description of the outcomes is predominantly language learning orientated, occurring first in the list of expected outcomes, i.e. knowing at least three languages well, the first two being at a C1 level within the European framework, and a third at ‘intermediate level’ with ‘relevant culture reference’; where culture appears almost of secondary importance.

‘Applying knowledge and understanding’ is also distinctly language based, where the student is described as being expected to

- … express themselves fluently and spontaneously in two foreign languages, and with relative fluency and spontaneity, in a third foreign language;
- Is able to apply the skills and knowledge gained in the field of intercultural and interlingual mediation between the Italian and at least three foreign languages;

(Translated by myself from the institution’s web-page\textsuperscript{33}, p3)

The emphasis here is on students’ ‘fluency’ and ‘spontaneity’ in their languages, and any cultural dimensions are seemingly secondary, mentioned in the second expected

\textsuperscript{32} Presented in 2003 and adopted in 2005 as the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

\textsuperscript{33} http://corsi.unibo.it/Laurea/MediazioneLinguisticaInterculturale/Pagine/Presentazione.aspx.
outcome as applying ‘skills and knowledge gained in the field of intercultural and interlingual mediation’.

In addition to the literature presented on the department’s website I would also like to introduce myself as an ethnographic informant, having been a teacher working in the institution for over seven years. From an ethnographic perspective the researcher’s own interaction with the community under study is always considered legitimate and relevant to research (see chapter two, section 2.15).

In extensive conversations with teachers of interpreting in the institution over my seven years in the department, I have observed a general bias towards judging students’ performances in the class based on the precise use of lexico-grammatical aspects of the language, with little to no emphasis on communicative competence. Furthermore, working with students in one-to-one sessions in the capacity of an *English language tutor* (a position I held from 2011-2013, see chapter one, section 1.6.1) I have observed a distinctly lexis and grammar orientated focus in the way students talk about and judge their own performances in interpreting classes.

### 5.2.6 The interpreter as an individual with ‘talent’: Wider implications

Returning to Matteo’s narrative again (see section 5.2), although the Discourse of interpreters having to know all ‘the language’ (to be language experts), is not challenged by either Matteo or the group, Moscato’s assertion that students need to have ‘talent’ in order to become interpreters is. The questioning of the need for talent occurs repeatedly in the subsequent 2,000 words of dialogue in the first group interview (with 50 occurrences of the noun ‘talent’ and/or adjective ‘talented’). A potential reason for the group being uncomfortable with the concept is that from a modern, Western, sociocultural perspective talent is usually attributed to people and not claimed by one’s self. Furthermore, it is usually assumed that people are born with talent, and that it is innate and cannot be acquired.
The participants challenge the teacher’s assertion then (following on from Matteo’s narrative), offering alternatives, principally *hard work and/or study* as substitute resources for becoming interpreters.

Silvia: no I think you:: if you’ve got talent your lucky but (.) well you can achieve your goal even if you don’t have it because you are studying hard …

(Group 1 interview. See appendix A: p. 454, lines 1589-1592)

Federico: oh yes yes I think what I have achieved I have achieved because I did a lot together it’s not because I’m talented I hope because it was I studied hard and I practice…

(Group 1 interview. See appendix A: 454, lines 1606-1610)

Maria: it’s not talent it’s hard work

(Group 1 interview. See appendix A: p.456, line 1665)

In the group one interview (again following Matteo’s narrative), Maria introduces the entrance exam to the institution to support her own counter discourse to talent. Being unsuccessful in her first attempt to get in, she comments

…what does it mean last year I wasn’t talented and this year I am? It doesn’t it doesn’t so I didn’t like the word talent

(Grupo 1 interview. See appendix A: p.455, lines 1645 -1646)

Her final comment that she didn’t like the word talent, at first appears to be a reference to Matteo’s narrative (a reference to Moscato’s talk about students needing talent), however as Maria continues it becomes clear that she is referring to something else, initiating her own narrative about her first day in the institution
Maria: …i mean it was good to feel that way the first day you’re finally here you got it you did it you’ve been able to get here and the (test) and (. everything (. you did it

Alan:  hm hm

Maria: that’s great (.) but I don’t think the word talent was what I was expecting (.)

Alan:  wh- what word would you use?

Maria: (.) I would use (.) err: (…) congratulation (.) you did it (.) now keep on it it’s not like you get in so you’re an interpreter no way (.)

(Group 1 interview. Recording times: 01:01:41 – 01:02:16. See appendix A: p.455, lines 1648 – 1660)

As the interviewer, I was not entirely sure at first who the characters were and what the exact setting was (beyond ‘the first day’ in the institution). What emerged in a continuation of the narrative however was that Maria was describing the opening day speech given to new students on the first day in Ssmit.

Maria: so:: talent wasn’t the word I was I wanted I wanted to hear (.) absolutely not

Silvia: i’m i’m not saying that you are talented if you get get in I’m saying that (.)

[there are people

Maria: [it’s not what you saying

it’s what we: were welcomed with (.) they said ohh you’re the more talented one ((gushing tone)) the best of the best you’re the la crème delle crème

(Group 1 interview. Recording times 01:03:15 – 01:03:40. See appendix A: p.457, lines 1690 – 1700)

Maria’s narrative connects Moscato’s assertion about interpreters needing talent to the wider institution, and appears to embed it in a larger Discourse in general, that higher education (hence forth HE) institutions position students’ to expect professional success, by implying that it is somehow axiomatic to their gaining entrance to them.

Maria appears to pick up on Moscato’s reported speech in Matteo’s narrative, that students can assume that they have talent by the fact that they have gained entrance to
the institution (‘if you’re here at the sslmit you have talent’, lines 37-38), and seems to invoke a Discourse that being called talented is only one element of a general attempt on the part of the institution (or its representatives) to position students as being ‘the best of the best.. la crème delle crème’. Maria’s reported speech of the opening day introduction might be seen as being exaggerated, as it seems unlikely that the speaker said this in such a manner, notable also by the ‘gushing’ prosodic overlay with which it is said. Indeed, by voicing it in the manner in which she does Maria appears to be criticising a more general ‘selling’ point that she perceived in the opening day speech, which elevates the department’s standing in the academic community by suggesting that only the best students get in and succeed in their chosen paths. A point she takes as suggesting that the students are already well on their way to their future professions, and which she refutes (‘it’s not like you get in so you’re an interpreter no way’).

Silvia, in her first one-to-one interview also makes reference to the opening day speech where, although she does not mention talent, she reports the institution’s representatives as greeting the new students with similar praise. The effect of this is described by Silvia at putting a lot of pressure on her to perform.

Silvia: m:: not qu:ite I mean the first day we were here (.). ah: in aula magna
Alan. hm
Silvia: they told us you’re the best (.). because you just (.). entered the be:st school in italy for example I was like oh my god ((intake of breath with half laugh)) a lot of pressure

(Silvia 1 interview. Recording times: 00:07:12 – 00:07:33. See appendix A: p. 397, lines 189-196)

Although not specifically referring to talent, Silvia’s narrative has resonances with Maria’s, suggesting again the larger Discourse, that some HE institutions position their students as being the best by reason of their getting in, and ‘promote’ their own academic reputation consequently.
When I asked Silvia if she knew she was entering an ‘important’ institution and if so why she reacted as she did to the opening day speech, she replied that she knew it was important and that was why she had chosen it, but

1 Silvia: a::h I mean the outside world is n- not like (..) you imagine it you plan
2 it so: (.) it can surprise you even if you know it (.) if you know the truth
3 or whatever they say (..) it’s surprising but it's for me it’s a positive
4 surprise because it’s ok I i knew it so: (.) ok
5 Alan: h hm
6 Silvia: just facing it and trying to: (.) to handle it ((small laugh))

(Silvia 1 interview. Recording time 00:08:06 – 00:08:28. See appendix A: p.398, lines 212 – 220)

Silvia’s talk here positions the opening day speech as having a considerable impact on her. Whilst in one way she appears to be trying to normalise what was said as something she expected, at the same time she expresses it as a surprise, which has become a challenge for her. Her repetition of her ‘knowing’ ‘the truth’ beforehand (lines 2-4), that it was an important institution, is contrasted with her repetition of being ‘surprised’, and having to ‘face’ it and ‘handle it’ (lines 3-6), to face and handle the pressure of being considered the best. The opening day speech is also positioned as an initiation into another ‘world’, as she says at the beginning ‘I mean the outside world is n- not like you imagine it’ (line 1), which suggests that she is being introduced into the Discourse of being the best from day one, with all the implications that may have on her having to perform beyond her expectations.

In Matteo’s second one-to-one interview he recounts a narrative, which also has some relevancy here, in which the Erasmus requisites for attending a German university are set at a high level of linguistic competence by the institutional co-ordinator. Matteo says that students of German are expected to have a ‘B1 level’ (European framework of reference) in order to apply, when Matteo himself is still only a beginner. When he relates his argument with the co-ordinator over this, that there is still time for him to improve before the Erasmus programme begins in the second term, the latter is reported as saying
it’s not possible because our reputation is high and we can’t send beginners to german(y)

(Matteo 2 interview. See appendix A: p.576, lines 1258 - 1260)

Matteo’s reported speech therefore positions the co-ordinator as prizing the institution’s international ‘reputation’ above Matteo’s individual linguistic needs, treating that reputation as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986) in the academic market and as outweighing any single student’s needs (see chapter two, section 2.12, for a detailed description of Bourdieusian theory).

5.2.7 Higher Education and neoliberal Discourses

The Discourse that emerges through the data previously explored34 (sections 5.2 - 5.2.3) can perhaps be seen from the perspective of neoliberal Discourses in HE. This is principally seen as the ‘marketization’ of HE where

(t)he restructuring of higher education (HE) according to neoliberal market principles has constructed the student consumer as a social category, thereby altering the nature, purpose and values of HE…

(Naidoo & Williams, 2014: 1)

This reconceptualisation of students as consumers first became prominent in the United States in the 1970s where changes in government financial aid policies, along with a rise in tuition fees, meant students became investors in education, being the main source of university funding (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997. Cited in Naidoo & Williams, Ibid). Similar trends have been documented in Great Britain (Gewirtz & Cribb 2013) and in Australia, where Craig (2014) notes that

…much of the literature concerning higher education suggests that the nature of the typical institution is changing to a model resembling a corporate and

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34 Also evidenced in the field as well. See appendix B (field notes), p. 739 (socializing after the first group interview).
socially accountable structure, and with it, the role of the academic and faculty is also evolving.

(Ibid: 295)

This ideological shift has meant that

…today we question whether concepts such as ‘student’ and ‘teacher’ are appropriate in the postmodern age. Do we have students, or are they customers, clients, stakeholders, constituents, or (indeed) products? Do faculty members profess, or do they manage, coordinate, or facilitate learning?

(Birnbaum, 2000. Cited in Craig, Ibid)

The University of Bologna also appears to be following suit in this marketization process in HE, as evidenced on its website. When talking about the university’s ‘identity’ the site states

The identity of the Alma Mater Studiorum-University of Bologna can be defined as the set of values characterising the institution, its unique historical heritage, the products and services it delivers generally in the fields of learning, research and culture.

(http://www.unibo.it35, my emphasis)

Using the language of economics then, learning and research are described as ‘products and services’, and in other documents, such as the university’s ‘strategic plan’, students are referred to as ‘stakeholders’ 36.

Furthermore, the university has introduced ‘a growing number of consumer levers to

35 http://www.unibo.it/en/university/who-we-are/image-identity-brand

enhance student choice’ (Naidoo & Williams, 2014: 3), in particular performance indicators such as student satisfaction surveys. These surveys are then used as ‘marketing tools’ (Ibid) to entice prospective students to ‘invest’ their future professional prospects in the university. Sslmit’s website for example describes the majority of its students in the three-year degree (88.7% in 2013) as showing an elevated degree of satisfaction with their courses and

83.5% of these declared that they would be happy to reapply for the same degree... and 72.7% were overall satisfied with their degree in interpreting.

(Translated by myself from the Sslmit website37)

Seen from the perspective of this Discourse then Matteo’s initial narrative (sections 5.2 – 5.2.3), and other participant narratives specifically linked to the opening day speech (section 5.2.4), appear to be part of a wider university positioning of them as privileged consumers of important ‘products and services’. The university’s own prestige and value on the academic market is framed as a guarantee of future professional success, as the student-interpreters who managed to pass its entrance exam have already being identified as ‘the most talented’ among their peers, or as Maria describes it ‘the best of the best…la crème de la crème’.

5.2.8 The interpreter as a person living a life of ‘stress’.

Moscato’s claim, introduced through Matteo’s narrative, that an interpreter’s professional life is principally one of ‘stress’, is recurrent in many of the other participants’ narratives in the data (which I present in this section). Matteo’s positioning of himself in relation to this claim is therefore reflected in other narrative episodes.

Although Rosa challenges the claim made by Moscato in Matteo’s narrative, by positioning Moscato’s social character as being excessively negative (see sections 5.2 - 5.2.3), in her second one-to-one interview she appears to invoke it herself. Rosa tells me that she no longer wants to work as a top interpreter (working for institutions such as the UN), and when I ask her why she responds in the following manner.

1 Rosa: ah I don’t know I mean (...) to work in the UN is not possible and I
2 don’t even want to I mean it’s lots of stress I don’t want to have a
3 life that too much stressful so (.) I’m like (.) I mean (.).I don- I right
4 now I don’t have any idea what I’d like do to but (.). I know only
5 something with languages I would like to do that but not not
6 something really stressful (...)
7 Alan: so why did you change your mind?
8 Rosa: er all- maybe because also of the things that our german teacher said
9 about it being so: stressful so: (.) em (.) I don’t want to have a live a
10 life like that so (...)  

(Rosa 2 interview. Recording time, 00:17:48 – 00:018:30. See appendix A: p. 594, lines 492 - 509)

Rosa introduces a future, hypothetical narrative about working at the UN, where

1 … to work in the UN is not possible and I
2 don’t even want to I mean it’s lots of stress

Her character in this narrative is described as not wanting to work at the UN as ‘it’s a lot of stress’, using a declarative sentence (echoing Matteo’s in the group interview) and thereby aligning herself with him.

When I ask Rosa why she has changed her mind about becoming an interpreter she reintroduces the character of Moscato (referred to as ‘the German teacher’, line 8) and positions the teacher as being responsible for the change (‘because also the things that our german teacher said about it being so: stressful’). Rosa’s use of reported speech recalls her earlier co-constructed narrative with Matteo, where the teacher is described
as telling the students that interpreting is ‘so: stressful’. However, if in the previous narrative this reported speech was used to undermine the teacher’s claim (positioned as being endemic of a generally negative social character), here it appears to be re-enforcing it as true.

In the narrative-telling event I position myself as an institutional representative, requesting that Rosa explain her decision now, not to become a top interpreter (which she had expressed in her previous one-to-one interview). The question might also be seen as accusing Rosa of taking a new position that is contradictory and inconsistent with her earlier positioning. Rosa’s response then is to introduce the institutional character of the teacher, the ‘german teacher’ (Moscato), positioning her as the reason for Rosa’s change of mind and her talk about interpreting being stressful. Rosa’s final statement positions her (unlike Matteo), as not being the type to ‘live a life like that’ (lines 9-10).

In Silvia’s second one-to-one interview she tells me that she is no longer sure if she wants to be an interpreter as well. I ask her what has made her change her mind, highlighting her previous talk (in her first one-to-one interview) about it being ‘a dream’ of hers. Silvia talks about all the new people she has met over the first term who have been influential in her thinking about alternative possibilities to becoming an interpreter. When I suggest that her life appears to have become more ‘complicated’ she responds in the following way

1 Alan: [it sounds like
2 life has become more complicated (. ) am I wrong in interpreting that?
3 Silvia: well complicated err to become an interpreter is quite complicated (. ) so: to:
4 to be thinking about reaching that goal (. ) ah I think that (. ) err leaves a lot of
5 erm stress (. ) er but if you think about life er (. ) one step (. ) er (. ) at a time (. ) I
6 think you: you enjoy more ((laughs))

(Silvia 2 interview. Recording time: 00:31:47 – 00:32:22. See appendix A: p 640, lines 631 - 640)
My suggestion that ‘life’ has become more complicated for Silvia (lines 1-2) is affirmed by her and directed specifically at her becoming an interpreter (line 3). Silvia introduces a future, hypothetical narrative where she appears to position herself as an interpreter, and is therefore in a position to comment on how getting to that point is ‘quite complicated’ (line 3). She then goes on to describe the thought of ‘reaching that goal’ as leaving ‘a lot of stress’ (lines 4-5). Silvia positions herself in the narrative-telling event as wanting to ‘enjoy’ herself more (line 6), and to avoid the ‘stress’ of thinking about becoming an interpreter. This is presented as her need to concentrate on the present and to take life ‘one step at a time’ (line 5), (see chapter 6, section 6.6, for a development of this theme).

My comment, ‘it sounds like life has become more complicated’, positions Silvia as being confused about what she wants to do in life. Silvia’s affirmation that ‘to become an interpreter is quite complicated’ challenges that positioning by taking a position of authority, informing me that she knows what it takes to be an interpreter, and equating the complexity in her life with the nature of the studies she has undertaken. Silvia further strengthens her decision not to become an interpreter anymore, by positioning her character as being fully aware of the difficulties, and taking a philosophic stance about life in general (e.g. taking life as it comes means for a better more enjoyable life).

The claim that the interpreter’s life is principally one of stress is invoked by Silvia, but it has also expanded its boundaries to include the process of studying to become one as well.

In his second one-to-one interview Matteo also appears to have expanded the claim to the nature of his studies.

1 Matteo: (3.0) hm: yes something has changed er (4.0) because i: have seen that studying to become an interpreter ah: brings you (a lot of) stress but I’m just doing my best a:nd (.) I’m in the right place so: (3.0) I’m just taking it easy a:n- (3.0) and that’s it I’m: (...) my my passion is the same (.) i: (.) I spend many hours studying an- (…) and so I’m I’m quite relaxed
In a similar way to Silvia then, Matteo does not appear to be focused so much on the future goal of becoming an interpreter now, but on ‘just taking it easy’ (line 3), (similar to Silvia’s taking it ‘one step at a time’). Both Silvia and Matteo express an interest in focusing on their present studies, as the actual ‘study’ to become interpreters is seen as stressful in its self, regardless of the actual end job of being an interpreter.

As with Silvia, Matteo has shifted the focus of Moscato’s claim, that being an interpreter is stressful, to studying to become an interpreter is stressful. Their shared response to this variation on the claim (introduced by them and not by myself or Moscato) is to concentrate on the present and not the future.

5.2.9 The influence of teachers’ personal discourses on students

Moscato’s claim that the life of an interpreter is one of stress is, I argue, a form of Discourse, but one that is unlike the other Discourses that emerge in Matteo’s narrative in that it appears to be more subjective and tied to one specific teacher’s position. An interpreter’s life might have been framed in many other ways other than one of stress (i.e. ‘challenging’ or ‘stimulating’, when engaging with people from many different walks of life, with so many different views of the world).

As stated in chapter two (section 2.10) I allowed in my research for a form of discourse that came mid-way between capital and small d discourses (Gee, 1994, 1999) a discourse which is defined as

..connected sets of statements, concepts, terms and expressions, which constitute a way of talking about or writing about a particular issue, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that issue.

(Watson, 1994: 113)
However, the question arises as to why Moscato’s discourse had such an evident effect on some of my participants, in framing the way they understood the interpreter’s life as being one of stress. A way of understanding this seems to lie in how the participants positioned her as an interpreter.

One potential reason why Moscato appears so frequently in the data, specifically in Matteo’s, but also to a lesser extent in Rosa’s, is potentially due to her professional career as an interpreter. A career she is often described as talking about with the students in the classroom.

In her second one-to-one interview Rosa appears to have been dissuaded from becoming an interpreter because of the stress it entails. This acceptance of the teacher’s discourse that interpreting is stressful is reinforced by the list of important people Moscato has interpreted for and the stories she tells the class about her experiences, interpreting for important figures in the social world.

Rosa: yeah like working for (. ) like (. ) really important people it could be like she always says that she had interpreted also for the pope for the er Burlusconi and people like that that’s one of the reason that when she tells us stories she’s always (this thing like) yeah I was so stressed because of that and I don’t want to have that kind of responsibility (…) I’d rather like work in some company (..)

(Rosa 2 interview. Recording time, 00:18:42 – 00:19:13. See appendix A: p.595, lines 515 - 527)

The list of important people that Moscato has interpreted for (i.e. the Pope and Burlusconi) enforces her right to comment on the interpreting experience and to enforce her discourse that interpreting is full of stress on her students. Although Rosa resists this discourse initially (in Matteo’s first group narrative, see sections 5.2 – 5.2.3) towards the end of her first term (in her second one-to-one interview) she appears to accept it as fact and influential on her questioning her goal of becoming an interpreter.
Matteo also highlights Moscato’s importance for him, telling me in his second one-to-one interview that he had actually ‘researched’ her before coming to the institution and that she was part of the reason he chose SSLMIT in the first place.

1 …I did my: my research (.) at home on my own and well I found that she’s
2 one of the of the best german interpreters here in here in italy since she works
3 for the the: erm:: presidente del consiglio (.) the prime minister (.) here (in the
4 world) (.) it’s a job that you cannot get if you are not one of the best
5 interpreters (.) I think but (.)

(Matteo 2 interview. Recording time: 00:27:43 – 00:28:13. See appendix A: p.552, lines 441-449)

Like Rosa, Matteo mentions Moscato’s interpreting for the Italian Prime Minister, ‘il presidente del consiglio’ (Burlusconi), a fact that he sees as making her ‘one of the best interpreters’ as it is ‘a job that you cannot get’ if you are not so (lines 4-5).

The effect of Moscato’s discourse on the participants’ view of the professional interpreter’s life appears to be partially dependent on her impressive list of clients. From a Bourdieusian perspective (1993) she has ‘symbolic capital’ (see section 2.12), in particular ‘cultural capital’ within the institution (i.e. cultural acquisitions such as knowledge and skills particularly exemplified by qualifications) and ‘social capital’ (i.e. accumulated prestige and social status) in the field of professional interpreting. This capital may be an important reason why her discourse has substance and weight for some of my participants. I turn to look more closely at Bourdieu in chapter 9, and how symbolic capital may explain the power of smaller (non-capital D) discourses to shape my participants’ views of the professional interpreter.

5.3 Conclusions

Through Matteo’s narrative of Moscato’s classroom talk in the first group interview, we see how the professional interpreter is portrayed as a ‘language expert’, an individual with ‘talent’ and an individual whose life is dominated by ‘stress’. This
interpreter identity can be linked to wider Discourses in the institution (see sections 5.2.4 – 5.2.7), which can be seen as having importance for all the participants across the research data.

Moscato’s claim that an interpreter needs to know ‘the language’ foremost, is a Discourse which foregrounds language skills, and backgrounds cultural knowledge and interpersonal skills, positioning the interpreter as a conduit for language and not as an engaged and agentive individual operating in a socio-cultural context. This Discourse is evidenced beyond the teacher’s talk however, being present in the institution’s literature and its presentation of its courses to the public (see section 5.2.5). Furthermore, it is a Discourse that goes unchallenged by Matteo and the other participants and emerges in other narratives across the data (see section 5.2.4). It is only in Matteo’s second interview that he finally appears to challenge it when he refuses to ratify Moscato’s claim that learning German is the most important thing and that everything else can be taught in ‘an hour’ (‘in my opinion there’s a world behind the language’, as he says).

Moscato’s other reported claim in Matteo’s narrative, that interpreter’s need ‘talent’, can be seen as part of a wider Discourse promoted by the institution, that underlie neoliberal approaches to higher education (see section 5.2.7). Moscato’s assertion that her students undoubtedly have talent as they have managed to enter Sslmit promotes the institution as a guarantor of future professional success and as a provider of ‘products and services’, which are highly valued in the educational market. This Discourse can be seen again in the institution’s literature (Ibid) and emerges through other participant narratives (notably, Silvia and Maria’s narrative about the opening day speech and Matteo’s narrative about his Erasmus application, section 5.2.6).

Moscato’s claim, that the life of the interpreter is one of ‘stress’, appears to be a more localised and subjective discourse, which is given significance in the participants’ perception of the identity of the professional interpreter by the ‘symbolic capital’ the teacher has (notably her list of important clients, as listed by both Rosa and Matteo). Although this discourse seems to be subjective (based on the teacher’s personal experience) it nevertheless has far reaching consequences for the career trajectories of
some of the participants. Both Rosa and Sara’s narratives in the second term make direct reference to the discourse of an interpreter’s life as being one of stress, and appear to reject that career path in part due to its perceived, negative portrayal of the interpreter identity.

I now turn to another narrative from the second group interview, which presents more teacher talk about the professional interpreter, drawing on a different set of Discourses.

5.4 Narrative of Interpreters and staying calm and being in control

In the second group interview, I asked the group what skills they thought were important for an interpreter and what their teachers had said that may have influenced their view. In response to this, Maria initiated a narrative about a teacher (Sabatelli) who had shaped her view of the identity of the interpreter. I will firstly present the extract in full and then analyse it through the lens of narrative positioning analysis.

1 Maria: I think professor sabatelli was one of the best one (.) in
2 talking about the interpreter profession because she (.)
3 everytime we were going mediation in class and we’re
4 talking with in front of other people she was always saying
5 ok you have the control of the situation so: just remember to
6 keep calm you’re not you do not have to erm (.) like erm
7 beg for mercy if you don’t remember one thing it is your
8 job they’re talking too fast or they are talking too much so
9 just keep calm this is your job this is your moment (.) and
10 she was always saying remember not to cross your arms
11 because it’s not nice to present (.) yourself and
12 do not dress in erm (.) in an unproper way just remember
13 to be always polite a:nd (.) oh she was always saying
14 keep your voice loud because we all have to hear you this
15 is (.).keep your voice loud because we all have to hear you this
is (.) like your voice this is your instrument to work (.) and so I
think she was one of the best to remember us all what we are
doing here (.) apart from the apart from those who wants to be a
translator (.) but for interpreter she was really doing a great job
(.) I think (.)
Alan: (.) everybody else? (8.0) is that practical that that
explanation you’re in control and so on do
[do you
Maria: [yeah
she was always saying it to everybody whilst doing mediation
Alan: but did you have any experiences then that sort of with other (.)
teachers that perhaps (.) contradicted that position or:
Maria: er no but she was the first one to actually tell us
Fed: [(xxxxx) ((Federico talks in background)
Silvia: [she highlighted it very often=
Maria: =no not the only one but she was
((federico continues talking in background))
Silvia: she highlighted it she reminded very often [and
((Maria talks in background))
Alan: [rosa
Silvia: when we were at the exams well we’ve seen I think all of us
seen that (.) it was the proper way to do (..) an exam like that (.)
Alan: hm m
Silvia: so yeah you can be anxious but you have not to show it so: be
calm (.). relax (.). understand what they’re telling you and then you
have to have the control of the situation so
Alan: did that help you in the exam then or in the mediation exams
Silvia: hm (.). well I think yes it depends on (.). each and every one
experiences so (.). in my experience yes
Fed: actually I thought (.). I think I was really lucky in the (.).
dialogue I had (.). it was also the first one they were doing I was
the third person they were (or even the second) so they were
probably very calm and (.). but it was- it sound to me that it
was easier than the (.) the one we done in class (..)

Maria: well all of [my exams

Fed: [I had

Maria: have been like that

((background talk))

Alan: sorry they’ve all being easier?

Maria: yeah (.) than what I expected (…)

(Group 2 interview. Recording time 00:14:43 – 00:18:14. See appendix A: p.679, lines 450 – 541)

5.4.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

In this narrative, the scene is described as the ‘mediation class’ where the main protagonist is identified as ‘Professor Sabatelli’ and all the students (including Maria) are represented as a collective whole, receiving feedback from the teacher to their interpreting exercises in the class. Maria voices Sabatelli’s advice as being consistent over time, by introducing the teacher’s reported speech with the frequency adverb ‘always’ (‘she was always saying’, line 4), and proceeds to list the teacher’s advice (represented here in bullet points):

• ‘you have the control of the situation’ (line 5)
• ‘remember to keep calm’ (lines 5-6)
• ‘you do not have to like beg for mercy’ (lines 6-7)
• ‘if you don’t remember one thing it is your job they’re talking too fast or they are talking too much’ (lines 7-8)
• ‘just keep calm this is your job this is your moment’ (line 9)
• ‘remember not to cross your arms because it’s not nice to present (.) yourself” (lines 10-11)
• ‘do not dress in erm in an unproper way’ (line 12)
• ‘remember to be always polite’ (lines 12-13)
Maria’s reported speech is characterised by the use of imperative verb forms (i.e. remember, keep) as well as statements in the present simple tense emphasising the advice as being general and true (i.e. this is your job this is your moment). Maria therefore positions the teacher as being informed and in control of all the facts by giving direct, clear instructions to the students. The advice appears to be directed at the student-interpreter in relation to what their goals should be if they wish to assume the identity of the professional interpreter. It therefore positions interpreter-students as having identities that are potentially lacking in the attributes described. The repetition of the verb ‘remember’ suggests that students ‘forget’ to do the things the teacher is saying; forgetting to keep calm, forgetting not to cross their arms and forgetting to be polite. The advice also positions the figure of the interpreter (the implied aim for interpreter-students) as having a visible, physical presence, and an agentive role in the interpreting event. The visibility of the interpreter is highlighted by the teacher’s description of how he/she is physically perceived (i.e. their dress, body postures and voice) and their agentive role is highlighted by how their behaviour is suggested as having a potentially negative effect on the interpreting event (i.e. they need to have control of the situation, keep calm and be polite). The emphasis in the teacher’s advice then is not centred on the interpreter’s language but on the character they project to their interlocutors when engaged in the interpreting event.

Maria follows the teacher’s reported speech with her own comment (lines 16-20),

16 … and so I
17 think she was one of the best to remember us all what we are
18 doing here (.) apart from the apart from those who wants to be a
19 translator (.) but for interpreter she was really doing a great job
20 (.) I think (.)

Maria positions the teacher as being ‘one of the best’ (line 17) in giving good advice to those students (herself included) aspiring to become interpreters. Her use of the plural
pronoun in ‘to remember us all’ (line 17) positions the whole class as ratifying this. In this way Maria also positions herself as an evaluative judge of what advice is salient and valid for all interpreter-students, suggesting by her choice of verb, ‘remember’ (remind), that the students’ already knew what the advice would be before the teacher even spoke.

When I ask the group if they had had other advice that might have contradicted Sabatelli’s, Silvia ratifies Maria’s claim that it was the best by echoing Maria’s earlier positioning of the group as being continually reminded that it was

33 she highlighted it she reminded very often

Silvia then changes the scene of the narrative to the course examination where she positions the group as ratifying the efficacy of Sabatelli’s advice in that context

36 when we were at the exams well we’ve seen I think all of us
37 seen that (.) it was the proper way to do (..) an exam like that

This change of scene shifts the focus from the professional interpreter to the interpreter-student, studying in the institution and needing to pass exams in order to further their academic careers. Silvia’s reported speech positions Sabatelli’s advice as being relevant to students wishing to pass the interpreting exam, and succeed in the institution, by controlling aspects of their identities that might affect their chances of success.

39 Silvia: so yeah you can be anxious but you have not to show it so: be calm (.) relax (.) understand what they’re telling you and then you
40 have to have the control of the situation
41

The interpreter-student’s projected identity in the exam is aligned with the identity Sabatelli advocates for the professional interpreter, being calm and showing that you are in control. Silvia’s talk about hiding anxiety however appears to be a personal reflection on her own identity and the difficulties she has to adapting to the required
interpreter-student identity. As with Maria, the emphasis is on the visible and agentive character portrayed and not on the use of language, which is advice directed at the student-interpreter now attempting to pass his/her exams, and not on their future lives as professional interpreters.

When I ask the group if this advice was helpful for all of them, Silvia intervenes first to specify that it was helpful for her but that it was dependent on each student’s personal experiences (presumably in the exam). This appears to position the students as experiencing exams in different ways, indicating perhaps their different identities (i.e. being more or less anxious). Federico shifts the focus to the actual material in the exam (having an easier dialogue to interpret from), removing the significance of Sabatelli’s advice in the outcome by introducing luck. He also shifts the emphasis on the interpreter-student’s need to remain clam, to his/her need to have a teacher that is calm in the examination, positioning teachers as becoming increasingly the opposite as the exam proceeds.

5.4.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

Maria introduces the narrative in response to my initial question to all the participants, regarding what teachers had said to make them change their understandings about ‘what it means to be an interpreter’.

After Maria has introduced her narrative about Sabatelli, my subsequent invitation to the other participants in the group to contest or refuse to ratify the teacher’s advice (by suggesting that there may be other potentially conflicting teacher advice) positions Maria as not speaking for the whole group.

Maria responds by describing Sabatelli as being the ‘first teacher’ (line 28) to have given the group the advice, thereby suggesting that there were others, which she subsequently confirms in her next turn (line 31). The intimation that the advice was in actual fact general (coming from more than one source), re-asserts her positioning of
Sabatelli as a valid informant and Maria as a valid judge of the importance of the advice for the group.

Silvia ratifies Maria’s positioning of Sabatelli but extends this to include the group’s experiences in the interpreting examination. Silvia positions the group as ratifying the efficacy of the teacher’s advice in that context as well, indexed by the subject pronoun ‘we’ in

36 …well we’ve seen I think all of us
37 seen that (.) it was the proper way to do (.) an exam like that

Silvia conflates the exam with the classroom interpreting experience, seeing the advice as being relevant to both situations and positioning the group participants as interpreter-students requiring advice to pass exams just as much as to become future professional interpreters.

When I ask the group if the advice did in actual fact help them in the exam, I ratify Silvia’s positioning of them as students in need of help. Silvia immediately takes the next turn (line 43), shifting from depicting the group as a collective whole, with shared experiences of the exam, to individuals with different experiences, where the teacher’s advice was not uniformly helpful. In the subsequent turn (line 45) Federico ratifies this positioning of the group as having varying experiences, by presenting his own exam success as a matter of luck, and thereby challenging the significance of Sabatelli’s advice for the group as interpreter students in general.

5.4.3 Level 3 analysis: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

Maria’s narrative introduces a Discourse (through her reported speech of Sabatelli’s advice to the class) that interpreters are visible and agentive in the interpreting event (see chapter one, section 1.4.2). Visible in that they are presented as physically interacting with their interlocutors in a social space, in both a visual and audial way. This emerges through Sabatelli’s advice to the students not to cross their arms in an interpreting event, not to dress improperly, and to keep their voices loud and clear (as
they are ‘your instrument to work’). Sabatelli also portrays the interpreter as being agentive, meaning actively engaged in the interpreting process as an individual with the potential to alter the interpreting outcome through their choices of how to communicate between the different parties. This is highlighted by Sabatelli’s advice to the would-be interpreter to remember to have ‘control of the situation’, to ‘keep calm’ and to always be ‘polite’. The teacher’s reported speech that interpreters should not ‘beg for mercy’, also underlines the importance of actively avoiding passive positioning and reinforces the concept of being in control and directing the interlocutors from a position of power.

Silvia’s own comments about the advice, directed towards a successful exam result, sees the same agentive Discourse ratified (as the focus is on the interpreter-student staying calm and being in control). The consistent reiteration of this Discourse by the teacher in the class is suggested by both participants’ use of high frequency adverbs and phrases in their reported speech. Maria says that ‘every time’ they went to mediation classes

4  … she was always saying
5  ok you have the control of the situation so: just remember to
6  keep calm

Silvia repeats the phrase ‘very often’ in her comment on the advice, ‘she highlighted it very often’ (line 30) and ‘she reminded very often’ (line 33). The consistent repetition of this advice (suggesting many mediation classes) suggests that the students were often perhaps doing the opposite (demonstrating that they were in fact not in control and not calm for example). The Discourse has evident weight and importance for Maria as well as for Silvia (albeit, in relation to the exams). However, Federico eventually refuses to ratify its general efficacy, by portraying the exam results ultimately as depending ‘on each and every one’s experiences’ and being ‘lucky’.

Although Maria only seems to invoke this Discourse in the final group interview (at the end of the research period), and only when the participants are directly requested to comment on teacher Discourses by myself, there are examples in her prior, second
one-to-one interview, that the Discourse is present in her talk about the identity of the interpreter. At one point she talks about the need for an interpreter not to be ‘shy’ and ‘not to be afraid to look the person in the eye’ going on to say

1 because maybe you know that you’re the focus point in everything
2 (..) so everything (.) is (.) ruled by you

(Maria 2 interview. See appendix A: p.500, lines 949 -951)

Her comment that the interpreter is the ‘focus point in everything’ (line 1) and that ‘everything is ruled’ (line 2) by the interpreter has clear links to the same Discourse in the group two interview described here (sections 5.4 -5.4.3 above).

Further on in the Maria’s prior second one-to-one interview, when she is discussing the level of language proficiency required to be an interpreter she says

1 …you can be an interpreter even though you don’t know the language
2 perfectly if you don’t understand a word you can ask (.) because you have
3 the power you have (.) the control of the situation (.) yeah

(Maria 2 interview. See appendix A: p.509, lines 1272 – 1277)

In this extract we see a clear word-for-word reference to the Discourse in the second group interview, interpreters are visible and agentive as they can ask when they don’t know a word, and because they have the power and are in ‘control of the situation’ (line 3). Moreover, Maria’s positioning of the interpreter as not needing to speak the language perfectly, contrasts with her earlier assertion in the first group interview session (see section 5.2.4) where the interpreter is described as needing to perfectly understand and perfectly speak a language (except for ‘one or two errors’). This repositioning by Maria might be seen as having been influenced by the teacher’s Discourse which places more emphasis on human interaction than linguistic competence (see chapter 6, section 6.4.1, for further analysis of this repositioning in relation to native speaker models).
5.4.4 The Discourse of the interpreter as being agentive and visible

The Discourse that interpreters should be agentive and visible in the interpreting event is raised in Maria’s narrative in the second group interview then and ratified by Silvia (although she shifts the focus to student-interpreters in the interpreting examination). Although the other participants do not challenge it (their silence implying an implicit acceptance) it is not picked up on or elaborated on in any other talk throughout the research data. This suggests that whilst the Discourse appears to have relevancy for Maria, evidenced in her prior talk as well (her second one-to-one interview, see section 5.4.3), it has had little influence on the other participants’ view of the interpreter identity.

As there are only a few examples of this Discourse (of the interpreter as a visible and agentive entity), it is notable precisely because of its general absence in the data, suggesting a more dominant Discourse is pervasive, of the interpreter as a language expert (see section 5.2.4), dependent foremost on his/her cognitive and linguistic skills (see section 1.4.2).

When looking at the literature that is available to students in the institution, the emphasis for aspiring interpreters coming into the department for the first time appears to be principally based on language acquisition (see section 5.2.5). The required resources for becoming a successful interpreter beyond this however are very unclear, and almost no reference is made anywhere to the actual role the interpreter plays in the interpreting event. Students consequently, would appear to be very dependent on the interpreter-teacher’s portrayal of that role in the classroom. This is further borne out by a lack of institutional guidance on the curriculum being taught in the first cycle degree, as testifiable by my own experiences in the institution, with complete autonomy being given to the teacher to organise his/her courses. No course plans are required, and teachers are only obliged to publish the contents of their courses on the departmental website, but these are often very broad and general descriptions with
little to no reference to interpreting theory or the role of the interpreter, as the following example from a first year course description shows:

Course contents

The *Mediazione* module will be divided into two parts: Part 1: rephrasing from Italian into Italian, English into English, English into Italian and Italian into English; exercises based on various materials regarding cultural aspects of English-speaking countries and vocabulary related to specific topics (as described in Part 2); Part 2: simulations of interpreter-mediated exchanges between English native speakers and Italian native speakers in daily contexts (at the airport, at the restaurant, etc.) and analysis/discussion of verbal and nonverbal behaviour, and language registers.

What is particularly significant in this course description is apart from a cursory reference to ‘cultural aspects’ and ‘nonverbal behaviour’, the emphasis appears to be on language. Interpreter-students are expected to engage in ‘rephrasing’ between languages (Italian and English), and carry out simulations of interpreting between English and Italian ‘native speakers’ (see chapter 6 for a consideration of native speaker models in the institution).

The Discourse invoked in Maria’s narrative (section 5.4) is linked to debates in the academy about how much interpreters’ identities/selves play a part in the *interpreted communicative event* (ICE). This Discourse maintains that ‘through the self the interpreter exercises agency and power, which materialize through different behaviours that alter the outcomes of the ICE’ (Angelelli, 2012: 245). It is a Discourse which sees the interpreter as a visible, interactive agent, and contrasts with Discourses that position the interpreter as a ‘ghost’ (Gambal, 1998), an almost invisible player whose presence should be negligible in the ICE, or a ‘conduit’ (Reddy, 1979), a

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channeller of languages, (see chapter one, section 1.4.2 for a discussion of these Discourses in relation to community interpreting).

5.5 Conclusions

What emerges from the narratives analysed in this chapter is how the participants position themselves in relation to teacher Discourses about the identity of the professional interpreter. Matteo and Marta’s narratives present very different images of interpreters. In Matteo’s narrative (section 5.2) the emphasis appears to be on the interpreter as a language expert, foregrounding linguistic and cognitive skills and backgrounding cultural and interpersonal skills. The emphasis on these language skills appears to be shared by many of the participants, as exemplified by other individual and group narratives across the data (see section 5.2.4). Marta’s narrative however introduces the image of the interpreter as being much more engaged with his/her interlocutors in terms of physical presence (appearance, gestures, voice) and active engagement (controlling, staying calm, being polite). The Discourse that emerges in Marta’s narrative then is that an interpreter is visible and agentive whereas in Matteo’s he/she appears to be much more invisible and non-agentive, more of a conduit of language than a human physical presence. Although the other participants appear to ratify the Discourse in Marta’s narrative, the absence of it elsewhere in the data suggests that is not of primary importance to them. In chapter 6, I shall be looking more closely at the specific role of languages in my participants’ construction of the professional interpreter’s identity.

Another Discourse, which emerged from Matteo’s narrative, was the way in which the institution appears to position itself in the ‘education market’, part of neoliberal Discourses, which identify a growing marketization in higher education (see section 5.2.7). Moscato’s talk about Salmit students having ‘talent’ by reason of them gaining entrance to the institution was reinforced by opening day narratives (Marta and Sara, section 5.2.6) of students being told they were the best because they had been accepted by the institution (implicitly implying that it is the best). This Discourse was shown to cause tensions among the participants in that it implied an assured career path to
becoming interpreters, and an unstated expectation that SSLmit students should always perform as though they were the best (an undefined benchmark).

Finally, Matteo’s narrative also showed how a teacher with high amounts of ‘symbolic capital’ might introduce their own personal and individual discourses into the classroom quite successfully. Moscato’s discourse that interpreting is stressing was seen to have detrimental effects on some of the participants’ perceptions of the professional interpreter identity, causing them to question whether that career was in actual fact the one they wished to pursue (e.g. Rosa and Sara).

As mentioned previously, in the next chapter I go on to consider the role of language more closely (particularly in relation to native speaker models), and how it emerges through my participants’ narratives on the resources required to become successful professional interpreters.
Chapter 6

Data analysis

6.1 The interpreter and the native speaker - Introduction

In the following chapter I will look at the specific role that language plays as a resource in the participants’ perceptions of a professional interpreter’s identity.

The participants’ focus on language skills as being paramount to becoming interpreters was briefly explored in chapter 5 (sections 5.2.4 – 5.2.5), but in this chapter I develop this focus to examine the concept of the interpreter as a figure with a ‘native speaker’ command of the languages he/she is interpreting between. In this chapter then I analyse narratives that appear to show how my participants struggle with the ‘native speaker model’ (see section 6.4.3 for a description of native speaker models in language teaching and learning) in relation to their own identities as interpreter-students, and how they affirm, challenge or refute such models over the period of their first year in the institution. Some of the examples from the data I cited in chapter 5 (in sections 5.2.4, and 5.4.3), re-emerge in this analysis (see section 6.4.1) but with a different perspective, specifically on the ‘level’ of language expressed by the participants as being required in order to be able to claim an interpreter identity.

6.2 Narrative on becoming as good as native speakers: The ‘Rutland’ narrative

In the following sections (6.2 – 6.4) I analyse a narrative that emerged in the first group interview and re-emerged further on in the same interview. To begin with I look at its first appearance through the lens of narrative positioning analysis, at levels one and two (sections 6.2.1 - 6.2.2). I then turn to its reoccurrence, to apply the same analysis again (sections 6.3 – 6.3.2). The second narrative is however complicated, in that there is also an embedded narrative present within it (defined as a narrative that
changes scene, characters and action but is somehow made relevant to the narrative it emerges in). I therefore analyse this embedded narrative separately (sections 6.3.2.1 – 6.3.2.2), again applying a level one and two analysis, before moving to a third level analysis (section 6.4) which draws all the narratives together in an examination of the common Discourses at work.

In the first group interview Rosa positions herself as being more disadvantaged than the other students, in that her native language (Persian) makes it particularly difficult to become an interpreter in an Italian institution, where Italian is taken to be the native language of the majority of students and all interpreting courses are from Italian into another language and vice-versa.

In the same interview, Silvia refuses to ratify Rosa’s positioning of herself as being disadvantaged, by claiming that non-native students can learn to speak as well, if not better, than native speaker Italians. She introduces the character of the English professor, Rutland, as an example of someone who ‘speaks Italian better than us’.

In the interview I pick up on Silvia’s assertion that Rutland knows her language better than herself, requesting a specific episode as an example. The following extract (lines 1 – 33, below) shows her response, where she introduces a narrative of her experiences in the first class with the teacher, which is then developed and co-constructed together with the other participants. I firstly present the whole transcript and then go on to analyse it using narrative positioning analysis (sections 6.2.1 – 6.2.2).

1 Alan: can I just ask you when you said that he knows your language better than you (.) can you give me a specific episode where
2 Silvia: well first lesson he was [using
3 Fed: [but did we have one?
4 Silvia: yeah (( both laugh)) (.) well the only lesson sorry (.) ok the fir- the
5 only and first lesson we had with him a:: he was speaking and we’re
6 like oh my:: [go:d ((tone of amazement))
7 Maria: [he said
8 something like [erm:
10 Silvia: [em:: (.) u:: ((Italian pronunciation of letter))
11 Maria: utilizando in quest’ er:: utilizando in un determinato contesto per poter
12 rendere tali ((Italian phrase))
13 Silvia: hm ye- yeah
14 ((Federico laughs))
15 Maria: which was something like=
16 Silvia: =phew ((sound associated with something that impresses))
17 Maria: I understand I never use (..) I use tizio e cosa e:: ((Lower register Italian words))
18 Silvia: exactly (..)
19 ((general laughter))
20 he he speaks in a proper way
21 Maria: yeah
22 Silvia: as it should be (..) for a- an interpreter it should be that way but we don’t
23 Maria: and he’s a [translator
24 Fed: [why don’t you think
25 we talk we talk better I mean I hope I talk better than the: and and I hope
26 (xxxxxxxxxxxxx) a normal er: you know er::: (..) m: a builder from erm::: (.)
27 Silvia: I’m not at [exeter
28 Fed: [exeter
29 I hope I have a better English than a a m: with a more norma:l grammar
30 Silvia: (well i)
31 Fed: than a normal people in England (..) [because
32 Silvia: [well probably it’s because
33 Fed: because we studied

(Group 1 interview. Recording times: 00:44:38 – 00:46:01. See appendix A: p.440, lines 1141 - 1187)
6.2.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Analysing this narrative through the lens of narrative positioning, we see that Silvia introduces the scene as the ‘first lesson’ with Rutland (line 3). This is briefly challenged by Federico, who questions if it was in actual fact a lesson, before Silvia continues with her narrative. Silvia introduces all the students as a collective character in the scene, indexed by the use of the subject pronoun ‘we’ (‘the first lesson we had with him’, line 6). Through reported speech she then positions the students as being very impressed at Rutland’s Italian, ‘we’re like oh my:: god’ (lines 6-7), represented prosodically by a tone of amazement.

Maria takes up the next turn (line 8), as a character in the same scene. She ratifies Silvia’s positioning of the group as being impressed by the teacher’s Italian, by reporting the actual words Rutland said in Italian to the class (lines 11-12). Maria’s use of reported speech positions Rutland as speaking Italian better than she does, indexed by her giving apparently little social status to the Italian words she would normally use instead (‘I use tizio e cosa’, line 17). The general group laughter that follows this (line 19), suggests that the other participants are aligning with Maria’s positioning of Rutland’s Italian as being better than their own. Silvia then takes the next turn, further positioning Rutland as speaking Italian ‘in a proper way’ (line 20), and as ‘it should be’ for an interpreter (line 22). She then positions all the students (apparently including her fellow participants in the interview) as not doing the same (‘but we don’t’, line 22). This positions all her fellow students then (both in the narrative event and the narrative-telling event) as not conforming to the language requisites of an interpreter.

Maria and Silvia’s co-constructed narrative of Rutland’s performance in Italian positions him as a model for students’ aspiring to become interpreters. He is portrayed as speaking even better than native-speaker Italians do (i.e. Maria and Silvia), and for Silvia this is presented as a goal that should be shared by everyone in their own foreign language learning, anyone that is who wishes to become an interpreter.
Federico comes in on the next turn (line 24) to interrupt the narrative however, challenging how Maria and Silvia have positioned Rutland, by refusing to accept that students do not speak as well as him in their own foreign languages, ‘why don’t you think we talk better’ (lines 24-25). Federico’s talk is not about his own native Italian (which he may or may not accept as being better than Rutland’s) but his English (the language he is learning to become an interpreter). This is implicit by his reference to speaking better than a native speaking English ‘builder’ (line 26) and /or ‘normal people in England’ (line 31), as he describes them. Federico is therefore positioning Rutland as speaking Italian better than normal Italians but claiming the same status for himself in English, as he too speaks English better than normal English people.

6.2.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

Centring on the positioning going on in the narrative-telling event, we see both Silvia and Maria’s joint narrative as positioning the group as aspiring to a native-like level (see section 6.4.3) if they want to become interpreters, epitomised by the character of Rutland. Their description of Rutland however positions him as being exceptional (indexed by their prosodic signals of amazement at his Italian, lines 7 and 16), and how the group should speak their own foreign languages but are unable to do so (evidenced by Silvia’s comment, ‘it should be that way but we don’t’, line 22). When Maria further attempts to position Rutland as an exceptional example for the group, saying that he is not even a teacher of interpreting but translation (suggesting that he does not even require such high levels of spoken Italian for the profession he teaches), Federico comes in to challenge this.

Federico ratifies their positioning of the group as aspiring to a native-like, or even better than native-like level, by normalising it. He maintains that people who study languages are expected to speak them better than native speakers who do not, describing his own English as being better than the English of native speakers who have not studied it as he has (line 33), at least those from implicitly suggested working class backgrounds, as indexed by his choice of ‘builders’ as an example (which also appears in turn to index low levels of education). This normalisation can be seen as an
attempt by Federico to re-position Rutland as unexceptional, but in doing so Federico positions the group, along with Silvia and Maria, as expecting to attain very high native-like levels of linguistic competence through their studies.

The narrative of Rutland’s first lesson re-emerges further on in the interview (see section 6.3, below) which I now go on to analyse at a first and second level again, before looking at the wider Discourses that emerge through both narratives in section 6.4.

6.3 Second occurrence of the Rutland narrative.

In the stretch of dialogue following the first narrative about Rutland (see section 6.2), the participants engage in a discussion about their own native Italian and the communication problems they experience at times based on lexis derived from non-standard usage (described as ‘dialect’ by the participants). Drawing from this discussion I asked the group

is that why you find you found professor rutland so impressive?

(Group 1 interview. See appendix A: p.421, lines 1330 – 1331)

suggesting that the participants had found the teacher’s Italian so impressive because he used a more standard form perhaps. Federico’s reaction to this question is to affirm Rutland’s Italian as being ‘really good’, but adding that he is not particularly impressed by it as

he’s teaching in italy I don’t see why he shouldn’t

(Ibid: lines 1337 - 1338)

Federico refuses again then to ratify Silvia and Maria’s earlier positioning of Rutland as being exceptional, but shifts his earlier focus from people who ‘study language’ to
people who live and work in the country where that language is spoken. Federico continues to attempt to *normalise* the character of Rutland then by maintaining that he should speak Italian well as he teaches in Italy, as indeed all teachers teaching in Italy ‘should talk a good Italian’.

I then invited Matteo (who had not spoken for some time) to say something. The following is a transcript of the dialogue, which I will go on to analyse through the lens of Narrative positioning (specifically levels one and two).

1 Alan: so m- matteo
2 Matteo: bu- but even erm: he’s erm: pronunciation (. ) is perfect
3 Silvia: ah
4 Maria: yeah he doesn’t even have an accent
5 Matteo: yes
6 Silvia: well a little [bit bu-
7 Matteo: [he doesn’t have an
8 english accent
9 (two or three voices overlapping))
10 I couldn’t say he was an an english teacher I thoug- thought he was he was (..)
11 ital and not an english teacher (. ) and it was amazing (. ) and I: think
12 if just not a method of grammar cos I’m: well erm: (..) you know this
13 is my second bachelor degree and I have a friend of mine erm: who studied
14 with me at the university of rome (. ) em: well she has the highest level
15 possible of japanese proficiency (. ) she’s amazing and she has been in japan
16 for er: three years and she just told me that well (.)
17 if you want to learn a language
18 (. ) just that well if you want to learn a language just go to the country
19 and forget your grammar
20 Silvia: hm
21 Matteo: just forget your grammar
22 Maria: yeah
23 Matteo: live there and then you will be: (. ) proficent in that language (..)
24 and I think it’s amazing it’s just not a matter of grammar
it’s not a matter it’s I think it’s a matter of use of the language

Silvia: [yeah but even the grammar

Matteo: [(xxxxx)

Silvia: [because

Alan: [could I just ask

(.) you said when you were at rutland’s lesson

Matteo: hm m

Alan: and th- then you thought he was italian

Matteo: yes

Alan: can you tell me (. ) how that episode developed? (…)

Fed: heh talk in english ((general laughter))

Matteo: er::: no: well ((silvia talks in background)) he said just a few things that

well (. ) then the pronunciation of those few words well could er:

well I said ok he’s English [but

Maria: [ehm

Alan: sorry

Maria: I’d said [that

Alan: [can I just

Maria: he could have been foreign not english yeah I was

[th- there’s (something weird)

Matteo: [yes foreign

Maria: but I wouldn’t be able to say where he comes from

Fed: if we didn’t know he was an english teacher

Maria: yeah

((overlap of voices))

Alan: but I’m not quite following how it worked how this thing developed

I mean he spoke so good so well

Silvia: well he started speaking in italian

Alan: right

Silvia: and we we’re like (. ) wo:w because it was a really good italian

Alan: yah

Silvia: we expect to er I don’t know we expect a: (. ) I don’t (. )

a good italian I I don’t say a bad italian but not that good
I mean it’s more than a native speaker (..) because I

don’t speak like that ((small laugh)) even [the pronunciation

[he’s]

[he’s teaching us mediation

[(small laugh)]

[the pronunciation

Fed: teaching us mediation

[he’s teaching us=

Maria: [=xxx]=

Fed: =to talk like we don- we don’t have any i- italian accent

why shouldn’t we expect him to have the same

((overlapping talk with maria))

Silvia: I wasn’t expecting that (. ) oh come on

Maria: he’s teaching translation

Silvia: (1.0) yes (come on)

Fed: still ((laughs)) (. ) no I think it’s we have a lot of good teachers

an- and I think the English ones a: are:: the one who are (.)

and it’s come back to russia I think it’s a th- the one who

are pushing more to er: (..) know italian for example and I

it’s what I look for in my erm studying er:

Silvia: well I didn’t expect that right

Fed: [my development

Silvia: [I didn’t expect that right

Fed: because I want to be like that

Silvia: ok

Fed: that’s why [I: (xxx)

Silvia: [me too

I’m not saying that

Alan: how did you feel and think looking back to matteo

you started this how did you feel and

think when you heard his italian (..) personally

Matteo: (..) I want to be like him ((general laughter))

in Japanese in english in german yes cos i:

(. ) I really want to become an interpreter (. ) cos i:: m:: (.)

I like the this job I:: (.)

(Group 1 interview. Recording time: 00:50:22 – 00:54:14. See appendix A: p.446,
6.3.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

In the narrative event, the scene of the first lesson with Rutland is re-introduced by Matteo, and the entire narrative is taken up by a complex positioning and re-positioning of Rutland’s accent in comparison to an Italian native speaker.

Matteo initially positions the character of Rutland as having ‘perfect’ Italian pronunciation (line 2), so much so that he couldn’t tell that he was an ‘English’ teacher but thought he was Italian instead (lines 10-11). Maria ratifies this positioning when she says he didn’t ‘even have an accent’ (line 4), presumably an English accent, although Silvia challenges this positioning partially by suggesting that he had a ‘little accent’ (line 6).

Matteo then introduces another narrative, an embedded narrative (see section 6.2 for a definition), which I shall return to in a separate analysis later (see sections 6.3.2.1 – 6.3.2.2).

Interrupting this embedded narrative (line 29) I draw Matteo back to the Rutland narrative by asking him to tell me about the classroom experience again, when he thought the teacher was Italian. On returning to the narrative however Matteo appears to contradict his earlier positioning of the teacher when he says ‘well I said ok he’s english’ (lines 38), re-positioning Rutland now as having less than perfect Italian pronunciation.

Maria does not ratify the change in Matteo’s positioning of Rutland’s Italian however, as sounding English, but shifts from her previous position (‘he doesn’t have an accent’) to describing it as ‘foreign not English’ (line 43), which Matteo then agrees with (line 45). Maria goes on to qualify this assertion by describing it as an accent she ‘…wouldn’t be able to say where he comes from’ (line 46), which Federico in turn
agrees with, although with the added caveat ‘if we didn’t know he was an english teacher’ (line 47).

After I ask the group for further clarification about Rutland’s accent, Silvia re-establishes the initial classroom scene in which Rutland first spoke (line 52). She positions the whole class again as being amazed on hearing Rutland speak for the first time, indexed by her use of the reported word ‘wow’ (line 54), with a prosodic overlay indicating something unexpected, and echoing her earlier reported class reaction, ‘oh my god’, in the first narrative (section 6.2, line 7). Silvia positions herself and the class as expecting ‘a good Italian’ from the teacher but ‘not that good’ (line 57), going on (again as in the first narrative) to re-affirm Rutland’s Italian as being

58 more than a native speaker (..) because I
59 don’t speak like that

Silvia positions herself therefore as a ‘native speaker’ and Rutland as speaking better than her.

In terms of the narrative event then, there is a complex series of positionings and repositionings of Rutland’s Italian accent in the same classroom scene as described in the first narrative (section 6.2). The participants’ focus therefore has shifted from grammar and lexis to pronunciation. I now look at the positioning among the participants in the narrative-telling event.

6.3.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

Matteo’s narrative emerges from talk about the students’ use of dialect, where I re-introduce the earlier narrative about Rutland by suggesting that their amazement at his performance in Italian was due to a more standard usage of the language. I position Matteo as a potential narrator then by referring to the earlier narrative and inviting him to talk. Matteo accepts this positioning by initiating the narrative, but shifts the earlier focus on Rutland’s lexis and grammar to his ‘perfect’ pronunciation, suggesting the
latter as being more important for the group (line 2). This is ratified by Maria who affirms that ‘he doesn’t even have an accent’ (line 4), and by Silvia, although tentatively, by describing Rutland as having a little accent (line 6).

Matteo then introduces another, embedded narrative (which I will analyse in the following sections, 6.3.2.1- 6.3.2.2), after which I position myself as a teacher and the participants as students, exercising my institutional power and position as a teacher to decide what is relevant to the group discussion. I invite Matteo to return to his earlier narrative by recalling Matteo’s earlier affirmation that Rutland sounded Italian (lines 30–32).

Matteo’s attempt to alter his initial positioning of Rutland as speaking with a perfect Italian accent, suggesting now that it was identifiably English, is met with resistance by the other participants. Rosa, Maria and Federico are not willing to undermine the elevated status of Rutland’s native-speaker accomplishments, showing evident appreciation for his accent by way of its being ‘unplaceable’ (or at least not English in origin), if not perfectly Italian.

Silvia also challenges Matteo’s positioning further, re-positioning Rutland not just as a perfect Italian speaker but actually as being ‘more than a native speaker’ (line 58), even better than herself. Federico challenges this reaffirmation of Rutland as being linguistically exceptional yet again (as in the first narrative). Federico attempts to normalise Rutland by positioning him as expecting students to speak English without an Italian accent, and the group consequently as accepting the same from him in Italian (lines 60-65). Maria challenges Federico however by positioning Rutland as not being interested in oral production, as he is a ‘translator’ not an interpreter (line 68). Federico’s reaction to this seems to come almost as a final confession of a hidden goal to be like Rutland, ‘because I want to be like him’ (line 78).

Federico’s attempt to explain his resistance to elevating Rutland as a model for the group appears in the following phrase ‘that’s why i…’ (line 80), but this is cut short by Silvia’s own alignment with him as she states that she also wants to be like Rutland,
‘me too’ (line 81). When I return to Matteo to elicit his thoughts and feelings on hearing Rutland again, he too aligns with Federico and Silvia when he says

86  I want to be like him ((general laughter))
87  in Japanese in english in german yes cos i:
88  (.) I really want to become an interpreter

Federico, Silvia and Matteo thus position Rutland as a model for the group if they want to become interpreters, but at the same time suggest that achieving such a goal is far from easy as Rutland is positioned as being exceptional.

I now turn to analyse Matteo’s embedded narrative (lines 12 – 25), again through analysis at levels one and two (see sections 6.3.2.1 – 6.3.2.2). I then turn finally to a level three analysis, which draws the narratives together in relation to other narratives across the whole data, and to wider Discourses (see section 6.4).

6.3.2.1 Matteo’s embedded narrative - Level 1 analysis

As previously stated (section 6.2), I take an embedded narrative to be a narrative within a narrative, where there is a change of setting, characters and action, but it is somehow relative and connected to the other.

In Matteo’s embedded narrative, the scene is described as the university of Rome where Matteo studied Oriental languages for his first degree, (see chapter 3, section 3.3.1 for a brief biographical outline) and the character he introduces is described as ‘a friend of mine’ (line 13), whose level of Japanese is positioned as being at ‘the highest level possible’ (lines 14-15). As with the character of Rutland (see section 6.2), Matteo’s friend is also described as being ‘amazing’ (line 15), referring it seems to her command of the Japanese language. Matteo then gives some background information about his friend, highlighting in particular her three-year period living in Japan (lines 15-16), and introduces her reported speech
if you want to learn a language
(.) just that well if you want to learn a language just go to the country
and forget your grammar

The reported speech serves to position his friend as a valid informant about how to achieve the ‘highest level possible’ (lines 14-15) in a foreign language, which is presented as living in the country of origin and forgetting your grammar. Matteo’s use of the zero conditional (the use of present tenses in both clauses) presents his friend’s advice as factual and a general truth.

6.3.2.2 Matteo’s embedded narrative - Level 2 analysis

The narrative is embedded in another narrative, which is about Rutland’s perfect pronunciation in Italian. Matteo introduces the embedded narrative after an affirmation that speaking like Rutland is ‘not a method of grammar’ (line 12), making the narrative relative in this context. He positions the group as ratifying this statement, as his friend’s advice to him in the narrative event (lines 17-19) is followed by his own statement (using the same imperative forms of the verbs as in the reported speech, ‘forget’ and ‘live’) which seems to be addressed to everyone present in the narrative-telling event,

21 just forget your grammar…
…
23 live there and then you will be: (. ) proficient in that language

Silvia and Maria in fact appear to see this as being directed at them, as they both engage with the statement. Maria ratifies Matteo’s positioning of his friend as giving good and relevant advice to the group by her affirmative ‘yeah’ (line 22), and Silvia appears to do the same although signalling some doubts by qualifying her own affirmative ‘yeah’ (line 26) with ‘but even the grammar’, which suggests that she wants to say something more in relation to grammar, although this is not allowed to develop due to Matteo’s interruption (line 27). The purpose of Matteo’s narrative then
seems to be an extolment to study abroad if students want to have an ‘amazing’ level of language, which also positions the institution as not being capable of helping students fulfil that goal. Matteo therefore appears to position the group as not expecting to reach a native-like level while they are studying in the institution, an assertion that seems to be collectively acknowledged by the other participants.

Interrupting Matteo’s embedded narrative, I draw Matteo back to his earlier narrative about Rutland. On returning to his first impression again however, Matteo appears to contradict his earlier comment when he says ‘well I said ok he’s english’ (line 38). Why Matteo decides to do this might be due to Federico’s comment before he responds

35 Fed: heh talk in english ((general laughter))

Federico’s imperative ‘talk in english’ is directed at Matteo, although he has been speaking in English throughout the interview. Federico appears to be positioning Matteo’s English as not being very good, not at the level of Rutland’s Italian, and reinforcing Federico’s earlier point that the participant’s need to spend time in a native speaker country (working and/or studying there) in order to be that good. He may also be reacting to Matteo’s narrative which claims that in order to speak a language perfectly one must live in the country, something which Matteo himself has not done. Matteo’s reaction to this appears to be to position himself therefore as a native speaking Italian who can identify non-native speakers, as good as they may be (i.e. Rutland).

Having analysed all the narratives until now using levels one and two, I now go on to a level three analysis (section 6.4 below), connecting them to wider Discourses about native-speaker models in relation to becoming an interpreter, and then look at similar patterns across all my data (section 6.4.1). In section 6.4.2 I look at how such Discourses emerge specifically in the institution, and then to wider issues of native speaker models in language teaching and learning in general (section 6.4.3).
6.4 Level 3 analysis: The native speaker Discourse in the Rutland narratives

What appears to emerge in the narratives about Rutland is a Discourse that speaking like a ‘native’ is what is required in order to become an interpreter. In the first narrative, Silvia describes Rutland’s Italian as ‘how an interpreter should speak’ (section 6.2, see transcript, line 22) and positions the group as aspiring to this as ‘it should be that way but we don’t’ (Ibid). In the second narrative Silvia positions Rutland as speaking Italian even better ‘than a native speaker’ (section 6.3, see transcript, line 58), furthering her earlier suggestion that the group should talk as he does, and suggesting a native-like model as the group’s ultimate goal.

The two main narratives about Rutland focus on two aspects of native speaker speech. The first narrative centres on Rutland’s grammar and lexis, highlighted by Maria’s reported speech of his talk in class, contrasting it to her own. Whereas Rutland is positioned as using a very literary form of Italian (with higher social status) Maria positions herself as using a much more prosaic form of the language, ‘I use tizio e cosa’ (section 6.2, see transcript, line 17). The second narrative focuses principally on native-like pronunciation, where the participants debate how difficult it was to identify Rutland as English by his accent in Italian. This difficulty seems to raise Rutland’s standing among the group, evidenced by Matteo and Maria’s comments, which are delivered with evident appreciation, ‘he’s pronunciation is perfect’, ‘he didn’t even have an accent’ (section 6.3, see transcript, lines 2 and 4, respectively). Matteo’s embedded narrative shifts the focus from learning a language to a native-like level in the institution, to the country where it is spoken, maintaining the native-like language goal for the group but positioning it as not being attainable within the institution itself.

In sum, the Discourse that emerges then from these narratives is that native-like levels in a language are interpreter levels. Attaining such levels within the institution however is questioned by some of the participants, causing tension in the group. Federico and Matteo both position students as needing to go abroad in order to reach those levels. Federico’s attempt to normalise Rutland’s accomplishments in Italian is based on studying the language (as emerges in the first narrative) but also living and working in the country where the language is spoken (a development of his argument,
that emerges in the second narrative). In his embedded narrative, Matteo is even more direct in advocating living abroad, students are positioned as needing to forget grammar and just ‘live there and then you will be proficient in that language’ (line 23), a positioning that the group appears to accept by not challenging it. This assertion, that students need to forget their grammar and live in the country, questions the possibility of the group of ever reaching their native-like goal within the classrooms of the institution, placing it outside the walls of formal education and in the real world.

The native-like benchmark for linguistic competence in order to become an interpreter can be seen across the data, albeit with changes in the participants’ positioning towards it. I now go on to give more examples.

6.4.1 (Re)positioning towards native-like models of speech across the data

Going back to an earlier stage in the first group interview (before the Rutland narratives) we see the Discourse of native speaker levels being interpreter levels emerging in the participants’ talk. Some extracts have already been given as examples of the Discourse of interpreters are language experts (Chapter 5, section 5.2.4), but I re-analyse them here from the perspective of the native-speaker Discourse.

Matteo brings up the issue of fluency and speaking skills, complaining that he is still making too many mistakes in both his English and German. When I ask him what he means by this, he responds in the following way

1 Matteo: er::: well cos I think that at the end of the of the:: of the university at the end of the sslmit i: I just have to speak (2.0) per- perfectly (.) er but I have to speak a perfect language (.) first language and second language cos we won’t I think we won’t become to become interpreters or translators and so em: (.) I:: I want to become an interpreter and I think that you just need a proficiency that is (.) eh quite amazing one near to a mother tongue level
In Matteo’s narrative, he introduces his character as someone in a future hypothetical story event, set at the end of his studies at Ssmit (‘at the end of the university at the end of the ssmrit’, lines 1-2). He describes his character (and the other students, indexed by the use of the plural pronoun ‘we’ in ‘we won’t…’, line 4) as having to speak ‘perfectly’ (line 2) both in his first and second languages (line 3) or he won’t become an interpreter.

Matteo then returns to the narrative-telling event, where he affirms that he wants to become an interpreter (‘I want to become an interpreter’, line 5). He positions himself and the group as doubting that they can become interpreters however, unless they reach an ‘amazing’ level ‘near to a mother tongue level’ (line 6).

The Discourse of attaining native speaker proficiency in order to become an interpreter emerges here too then, but it is also framed by the limitations of time, as Matteo sees this linguistic attainment framed within the three-year degree cycle, the time it takes to get to the ‘end of ssmit’ (line 2), (see section 6.6 for an analysis of the issue of time in participant narratives).

A little further on, still in the first group interview (but before the Rutland narratives again), I ask Maria what she thinks about the idea of an interpreter being perfect in a language. She responds in the following manner

1 Maria: (. ) it does have at least the grammar (. )
2 Alan: hm: wh what do we mean by perfect?
3 Maria: I mean that I can perfectly understand and perfectly speak even
   with (. ) couple of mistakes that’s fine but I have to be able to
4
5 perfectly understand whatever they’re saying
At first Maria, like Matteo, affirms the need for perfection but qualifies it as being ‘at least the grammar’ (line 1). When I ask her what she means by ‘perfect’ (line 2), Maria introduces a future hypothetical narrative as well, where her character is an interpreter who ‘can perfectly understand and perfectly speak even with (.) couple of mistakes’ (line 4), changing the emphasis from grammar to the need to ‘perfectly understand’ and ‘perfectly speak’. To *Perfectly understand* however is repeated again in the same turn (lines 3 and 5), suggesting that it is in actual fact the most important think for Maria.

The continuation of Maria’s turn sees a further development of her character in her future hypothetical narrative of being an interpreter with another shift in emphasis, making no further reference to grammar, but to the importance of accent

1 Maria: I prefer not to feel my Italian accent when I am speaking in English or when I am speaking in Russian (.) because (.) it wouldn’t be a proper failure but (.) it wouldn’t be a great work

(See appendix A: p.429, lines 769 - 774)

As in the first narrative about Rutland (section 6.2), which follows on from this, Maria sees not having an Italian accent as being important when speaking another language, having an Italian accent is described as not being a ‘proper failure’ (lines 2-3), but not being part of a ‘great work’ (line 3), (a great interpreting job, presumably).

In Maria’s second interview, towards the end of her first academic year, I ask her again if she still thinks that interpreters need to be almost perfect in the languages they are studying. Maria’s response shows a shift in position however (see section 5.4.3), as she expresses a realisation that a native-like goal may not be attainable or even necessary.
Maria: =ah I’m not really sure of that of it now I think it’s just em: (..) (greed)
that is talking
Alan: sorry
Maria: greed
Alan: gree::d
Maria: yeah (. ) I’d lo:ve to have a perfect accent and to be able to switch
between different accents (. ) and to be able to: (..) use a language a
foreign language the way I use mine
Alan: hm m
Maria: so switching and changing and going from (..) one meaning to another
(.) that would be great but I don’t think it’s (. ) that neces- necessary to
be a perfect interpreter you can be an interpreter even though you don’t
know the language perfectly …

(Maria 2 interview. Recording time: 00:51:54 – 00:52:35. See appendix A:
p.534, lines 1255 – 1273)

Maria describes her initial aim of learning a language ‘perfectly’ as being a
consequence of her ‘greed’ (line 4), where greed suggests wanting more than one
actually requires or is able to acquire. The native speaker aspiration expressed in her
first group interview is no longer evident, she does not use modal verbs of obligation,
such as have to as before, but rather says I’d love (line 6), suggesting that it would be
desirable but not necessary for her. Maria’s emphasis on the importance of not having
an Italian accent has also become less essential from her first group interview, where it
was described by her as almost being a sign of ‘failure’ as an interpreter. By the end of
her first year then Maria seems to have repositioned herself towards the native speaker
Discourse, where ‘you can be an interpreter even though you don’t know the language
perfectly’ (lines 12-13).

In his first group interview, Federico, like Maria, also places emphasis on
‘understanding’ his foreign language (Russian) ‘perfectly’, but unlike Matteo he does
not see speaking it to the level of perfection as being attainable in three years.
Fed: but my expectation is from Russian to Italian as an interpreter or in- in- interpr-
as a translator or whatever so yes I that’s what I focus on for perfection I
want to understand perfectly and m: of course if I have studied for five years
and then I don’t know how many later Russia I go to Russia…

(Group 1 interview. Recording times: 00:32:24 – 00:32:51. See appendix A: p.430, lines 794 – 802)

Federico also introduces his future hypothetical character as an interpreter, describing himself as interpreting from Russian to Italian with an emphasis on understanding perfectly (line 3), a passive rather than an active form of interpreting. A further projection of his interpreter character then ensues, suggesting a more active form of interpreting, into Russian, but only after a period longer than his three year degree, ‘if I have studied for five years’ (line 3), suggesting after his first three-year degree and a second two-year post-graduate degree, together with a period spent in the country, ‘later Russia’ (line 4).

The emphasis on the native-speaker goal is evident again but also in relation to the question of the time necessary to learn the language (as Matteo highlights). The issue of time in fact is recurrent throughout the data. I will turn to look at this in more detail in sections 6.6 – 6.9.

6.4.2 Language level goals set by the institution

The native speaker Discourse can be seen as emerging out of the institution’s emphasis on students acquiring higher ‘language levels’ throughout their academic careers.

Returning to Slmit’s description of what a graduate is supposed to have acquired by the end of their 3-year degree (see chapter 1, section 1.5), high linguistic competence is foregrounded and cultural competence is backgrounded (see chapter 5, section
5.2.5). In the institution’s description of a student’s final ‘knowledge and understanding’ their first and second languages are described as being at a C1 level (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), one level below ‘proficiency’ (the highest level allowed and close to a ‘native speaker’ competence). Furthermore, with regards to ‘applying knowledge and understanding’ the student is expected

- to be able to express themselves fluently and spontaneously in two foreign languages, and with relative fluency and spontaneity, in a third foreign language;

Considering that the entrance level for the institution is placed at B2 for their first language and all other languages are optional, with no specified level or entrance test, theoretically the students could choose a language that they have no prior knowledge of (as Matteo did by choosing German as his second language, see chapter 3, section 3.3). The institution’s expectation that students attain a C1 level from a potential beginner A1 level in a second language, as well as B1 in their third foreign language (often a language that students have had no exposure to, e.g. Arabic and Chinese) appears to be very challenging indeed. This might explain why the participants appear to express a concern about their abilities of becoming interpreters by the end of their third year when contextualised as being near ‘proficient’ in their languages (see sections 6.6 – 6.9, below).

6.4.3 Competing Discourses on the Native-speaker model in language teaching and learning

The narratives that emerged in the data can be contextualised in a wider debate concerning the Discourse that idealised native speaker (NS) models are still used in language teaching and learning, and that they still hold a powerful position of influence (Cook, 1999; Davies, 1995, 2003; Jenkins, 2000, 2007, 2009; Jenkins & Leung, 2013; Kachru, 1994; Leung, Harris & Rampton: 1997; Rampton, 1990).
One counter argument to their use is that the processes taking place in the world with regard to the ever increasing use of English as a form of inter/intranational communication, questions the authority of the ‘inner circle’ (Kachru, 1985), the so-called native speakers, to dictate the form English takes in the ‘Expanding Circle’ (Ibid), speakers of English as a second or other language. Scholars who have aligned themselves with this position, have turned their attention to studying the plurality of Englishes around the globe, ‘World Englishes’ (WE), to legitimize the variety of those Englishes (Kachru, 1985, 1990, 1991, 2005; Jenkins, 2003; Bolton, 2004, 2006; Canagarajah, 2006, 2007, 2009), as well as considering how English is evolving as a global language, where its future form will be dictated more by the ‘expanding’ and not the ‘inner’ circle, ‘English as a Lingua Franca’ (ELF) (Jenkins, 2000, 2007; Jenkins and Seidlhofer, 2003).

In the context of education, applied linguistics has been seen as a supporter of the native speaker Discourse, drawing as it often does on the figure of the idealized native speaker for its development of models, norms and goals, both for teaching and/or testing languages (Davies, 1995). This benchmark has been seen as resting on the assumption that it is ‘common sense’ that native speakers ‘have a special control over a language, insider knowledge (and) are models we appeal to for the ‘truth’ about the language’ (Ibid: 1). This image of the native speaker has also been described as being founded on the concept that individuals inherit a specific language by being born into a particular social group, and that that inheritance gives specific rights to them for claiming that they speak it well (Rampton, 1990). It also draws on the precept of, ‘one country, one language, one mother tongue’ (Ibid: 97), a precept that is increasingly questionable when mass migration and the establishment of many culturally and linguistically diverse communities is by now a fact of everyday life in most European countries.

Furthermore, this image of the ‘native speaker’ has also been challenged as being sociolinguistically inaccurate, as it is wrong…

…to think of people belonging to only one social group, once and for all (as)… (p)eople participate in many groups (the family, the peer group, and groups
defined by class, region, age, ethnicity, gender etc.): membership changes over
time and so does language. Being born into one group does not mean that you
automatically speak its language well – many native speakers of English can’t
write or tell stories, while many non-native speakers can. Nobody’s functional
command is total: users of a language are more proficient in some areas than
other. And most countries are multilingual: from an early age children
normally encounter two or more languages. Yet despite the criticisms, the
terms native speaker and mother tongue remain in circulation…

(Ibid: 98)

In TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) in the British context
for example, criticisms have been made of its not

(taking) account of social and demographic changes which pose troubling
questions about the ways in which TESOL pedagogy classifies and
conceptualises the large numbers of bilingual learners who are the children and
grandchildren of the migrants of the 1950’s, 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s

(Leung, Harris & Rampton: 1997: 3)

These historic, social and demographic changes challenge underlining assumptions
‘that there is an abstracted notion of an idealized native speaker of English from which
ethic and linguistic minorities are automatically excluded’ (Ibid: 3), and that minority
language bilinguals speak those languages exclusively at home and ‘only learn
English’ at school. In this context the Discourse that native speaker models are
desirable is also challenged, in that it does not reflect the reality of modern,
contemporary states today.

Also, remaining within the ‘native speaker’ Discourse, although there are strong
arguments to move away from such models (as stated above) ‘there is considerable
resistance from many quarters, and this is particularly so in the case of accent’
(Jenkins, 2009: 10). One of these quarters is perhaps curiously the actual non-native
speaker (NNS) community of language teachers themselves. In Jenkins’ research for
example (Ibid) when over 360 English teachers, mainly NNSs of English from 12
Expanding Circle countries, were asked to appraise different English accents, a
notable elevated status was given to Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA) ‘native speaker’ accents\textsuperscript{39}.

6.5 Conclusions

Narratives from the data appear to show the influence of the ‘native speaker’ Discourse on the participants’ projected identities as professional interpreters, particularly in their first terms. Silvia positions herself in relation to Rutland as aspiring to the same level of perfection, a level she maintains that interpreters ‘should be’ at. Matteo describes himself as being amazed by Rutland and states, as do Federico and Silvia, that he wants ‘to be like him’. In earlier talk Matteo also states that he needs ‘to speak a perfect language’ and Maria too says she needs ‘to perfectly understand and perfectly speak’ (although she re-positions herself in the second term interview as expecting less).

With regard to accent in the second narrative about Rutland (section 6.3), Matteo positions Rutland’s native-like accent as being ‘amazing’, and much of the talk about Rutland’s accent in the same narrative seems to prize a native-like voice above all others. Maria states in another episode that having an Italian accent in English would make any interpreting job she did, not ‘a great work’.

Moreover, Matteo’s embedded narrative about needing to go abroad in order to speak like Rutland positions the interpreter-student as requiring ‘native speaker’ exposure in order to become as good as Rutland. This seemingly draws then on the related native speaker Discourse of \textit{one country, one language, one mother tongue} as well as questioning the possibility of students ever attaining such goals within the institution itself.

\textsuperscript{39} In Jenkin’s research the respondents overwhelmingly placed NS English accents as being the ‘best’, with first best going to UK accents (classified by Jenkins as RP), and second to US accents (which she described as GA).
An important aspect that emerged from many of the narratives as well was the issue of time, and the limitations that that meant for attaining native-like levels (‘interpreter levels’) within the three-year degree. I go on to look at this issue in the following narratives I analyse (sections 6.6 – 6.9).

6.6 Acquiring an ‘interpreter level’ and the limitations of time: Matteo’s narrative

The role of the native speaker model in the participants’ perception of the professional interpreter (section 6.4), was further complicated by the participants’ changing view of what language learning actually meant in the field of interpreting, based on a growing awareness that there was more language to be learnt (particularly the technical lexis in diverse fields). This was contrasted with what it had meant before attending the institution, and was complicated by the participants’ preoccupation with the time they had to realise their linguistic goals in order to become interpreters (in particular, a focus on the three years of the degree course). I examine these areas through narrative positioning analysis.

In the second group interview Matteo describes how his concept of language learning has changed since he began studying to become an interpreter.

1 Matteo: yeah m: well I I love foreign languages I: want to become to:
2 become an interpreter (.) and I just know that it’s (.) m: more
3 difficult than I imagined (.) before (.)
4 Alan: why?
5 Matteo: (..) ah because erm (4.0) even though you: you think that you know
6 a a foreign language for example the: the English language (..)
7 when it when it comes to interpreting (..) it’s complete different
8 thing (.) a:nd I just can’t can’t speak at all (..) it’s: (2.0) you need
9 a (.) a: (..) a thorough knowledge of the language to manage the
10 situation (2.0) that’s it
I examine this brief narrative through positioning analysis.

6.6.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Matteo introduces his narrative with two statements, ‘I love foreign languages’, ‘I: want to become to become an interpreter’ (lines 1-2. This introduces his present character in the context of the interview, and positions him as determined to realise his goal of becoming an interpreter. However, the last statement ‘I just know that it’s more difficult than I imagined before’ (lines 2-3), introduces his past self (indexed by the past simple form ‘imagined’) which is positioned as not knowing what he now knows about how difficult it is to actually become an interpreter. There are two characters then, Matteo’s self in the institution and his former pre-institutional self, before coming to Sslmit. The sequence of initial statements contextualises ‘foreign languages’ (line 1) as primary in relation to being an interpreter and suggests that they are relative to how difficult it is to become one.

In his next turn, Matteo’s choice of the impersonal ‘you’ form, in ‘you think you know a foreign language’ (lines 5-6), indexes all the students in the institution (himself included) and positions them all as sharing the same belief before entering Sslmit. Matteo’s former pre-institutional character is positioned as being uninformed in thinking he knew English well enough to become an interpreter, but his institutional character (talking in the interview) is positioned as being able to make informed statements now, that ‘when it comes to interpreting (...) it’s complete different thing’ (lines 7-8). Matteo’s subsequent assertion that he ‘just can’t can’t speak at all’ (with the emphatic repetition of ‘can’t’) positions his institutional character as being distinctly uneasy with this newly acquired knowledge. This is signalled by an exaggerated claim that he can’t speak at all, something which is clearly untrue as entrance requirements for Sslmit are set at a B2 level (see chapter one) and Matteo’s
performance in English throughout the interview suggests everything to the contrary. Matteo’s final statement clarifies what he means about the language being different (lines 7-8) as he positions the interpreter-student (himself and everyone, indexed again by the impersonal ‘you’) as requiring more ‘knowledge’ (‘a thorough knowledge’, line 9) about the language, in order ‘to manage the situation’ (lines 9-10), (presumably the interpreting event in the classroom, or potentially any interpreting event).

6.6.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative is embedded in talk about Silvia’s expressed doubts about wanting to become a professional interpreter any more. In my talk, I introduced the concept of ‘passion’ for language learning, which emerged in her previous one-to-one interview, and suggest that that passion might be in some way diminished, drawing a parallel between passion for languages and passion to become an interpreter. When I ask the group about their passion Matteo states that his passion is the same, but in a flat, monotone voice, suggesting the opposite. I then challenge him by saying that he doesn’t ‘sound very enthusiastic’, positioning him as not telling the group the truth. In reaction to this challenge, Matteo introduces the narrative (lines 1-10 above) positioning his perceived lack of knowledge about ‘the language’ as a reason for his apparent lack of enthusiasm.

In the narrative-telling event my question ‘why?’ (line 4) challenges Matteo again. I position myself as being sceptical of Matteo’s claim that language learning is more difficult for interpreter-students. Matteo’s long pause (4 seconds) suggests that he is evaluating the best way to ratify his initial claim. His choice of the impersonal ‘you’ form, in ‘you think that you know a foreign language’ (lines 5-6), shifts the focus from himself as having personal problems, (noticeable by the use of the first person pronoun ‘I’ before, lines 2-3), to a widening of the problem to all students of interpreting. Matteo’s return to the use of ‘I’ subsequently, in ‘I just can’t can’t speak at all’ (line 8), positions him as being subject to pressures that are common to ‘all’ students and not only being his own personal problem.
Before looking at this narrative in relation to wider Discourses (section 6.9) I present another two narratives (sections 6.7–6.8.2), which appear to be related to Matteo’s (analysing them at levels one and two). My final observations on potential Discourses draw on all three narratives then.

6.7 Acquiring an ‘interpreter level’ and the limitations of time: Rosa’s narrative

In her second one-to-one interview Rosa also tells me how she has begun to see language learning differently as well, and how she has changed her language learning objectives since coming to the institution.

1 Rosa:  erm for example at first before coming to this university I was trying to like learn same time 3 4 languages but I wasn’t studying it as I’m studying now like every subject you have to know everything like doing mediations and (.) like studying it like this goo:od I was like just studying to be able to talk to people normal saying hello normal things and then erm here (.)
2  erm like more than 3 languages so: difficult cos (.) it’s just you don’t have ti:me (.) I’m always having problem with time ((small laugh)) (..) it takes a lot of time like to know a language like to be able to do a mediation cos you have to know like all the wor:ds and (.) so (..) I got to know that (xx) will need a lot of time a lot of work a lot of time (.)
3 Alan: right so in the individual mediation situations (.) to learn the (.) vocabulary (.) is it mainly vocabulary we’re talking about or:  
4 grammar or
5 Rosa:  yeah everything but yeah also vocabulary

(Rosa 2 interview. Recording time: 00:35:45 – 00:37:04. See appendix A: p.607, lines 940 -969)
6.7.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

As Matteo before, Rosa introduces two characters in this narrative. The first character is Rosa’s pre-institutional self in the past (‘before coming to this university’, line 1), trying to learn 3 to 4 languages (line 2), and the other character is Rosa’s institutional self in the interview (indexed by the use of the present continuous tense, ‘I’m studying now’, line 3), trying to learn those languages in the institution in order to become an interpreter. Rosa’s former pre-institutional character is positioned as being unaware of how language learning is different for an interpreter-student. Her character is described as learning how to say ‘normal things’ (line 6), (i.e. saying hello), whereas her other institutional character is positioned as having to learn ‘every subject’, and ‘know everything’ (line 4), in order to do ‘mediations’, to be an interpreter. The positioning of her institutional character as realising that language learning for an interpreter is more complex and difficult, highlights Rosa’s preoccupation with not having enough time,

7 … it’s just you
8 don’t have time (.) I’m always having problem with time
9 ((small laugh)) (.) it takes a lot of time like to know a language
10 like to be able to do a mediation

The contrasting use of the impersonal ‘you’ form and the personal ‘I’ form position Rosa (like Matteo) as being subject to pressures that affect all the students. The use of ‘you’ in ‘you don’t have time’ positions all the students as having to deal with the pressures of time to learn more language than was previously expected, whereas the use of ‘I’ in ‘I’m always having problem with time’ positions Rosa’s own character as experiencing this personally, albeit in the same way as the wider student population does. Rosa’s repetition of the word ‘time’ in the subsequent stretch of speech also places heightened emphasis on its restriction to her reaching a satisfactory level of linguistic performance

11 … need a lot
12 of time a lot of work a lot of time (.)
6.7.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative is embedded in talk about Rosa’s expressed uncertainty about becoming an interpreter, due to the presence of ‘bilinguals’ (as she refers to them) in the class, whom she positions as knowing languages much better than she does. I remind her that her earlier talk about becoming an interpreter was described as her ‘dream’ in the first interview, positioning her as lacking resolve and determination. Rosa refuses to ratify that positioning by claiming that although she is ‘studying a lot … the result is… not as I expecting’. When I challenge her again by asking her how she has come to that conclusion about her language development, Rosa initiates the narrative (lines 1-16 above).

Before the narrative I positioned Rosa as not being capable of judging her own actual linguistic level (or the level she needs to attain in the institution). The narrative she introduces in response, presents Rosa’s two selves as two characters, pre-institutional and institutional, positioning the latter as having acquired a deeper understanding of what language learning means for a student-interpreter (and myself as interviewer, as not). She then positions me as ratifying her institutional character’s insight into the increased complexities of language learning for aspiring interpreters, as well as inviting me to share her preoccupations about the limitations of time to do so. I ratify her positioning by showing agreement and requesting information about specific language problem areas (vocabulary or grammar) that might be the source of her problem. Rosa responds by identifying ‘everything’ as a problem, reinforcing her institutional character’s positioning as not learning enough and not having enough time to do so.

6.8 Acquiring an ‘interpreter level’ and the limitations of time: Maria’s narrative

In the first group interview Maria also appears to be concerned with the issue of time in relation to reaching certain language goals. The focus is not on her own personal language goals, but on what she thinks the teachers expect of her implicitly.
Maria: the first semester was quite good but not good enough for what they are expecting from us (.) because if we have to reach an interpreter level for the third year (. ) we’re way late and we’ve done a lot like we didn’t stop for a moment ( . ) we we hadn’t time to catch our breath but it’s not enough ( . ) and this year I think it was the first year that we only had forty hours of grammar instead of sixty and so: sh- she was really good but I think that if we had had the boscolo from the first semester we would be half of it

Fed: I don’t think [(xx)

Maria: [half the number yeah because she is really strict we’re going this way so you’re doing 25 exercise for next week ( . ) that’s it ( . ) ok? So you have to come here and you have to know everything you’ve done ( .. ) up to yesterday ( . ) so:. ( . ) it’s great it’s a great language and it’s really nice to do it and you have to focus a lot but it comes natural after a while

Alan: hmm

Maria: but we should have started earlier and ( . ) in a stronger way ( . ) so:

Alan: hmm

Maria: it’s good I’m happy with what we did but ( . ) we should have started with boscolo

(Group 1 interview. Recording time: 00:19:12 – 00:20:24. See appendix A: p.420, Lines 461 – 493)

6.8.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Maria introduces the scene as ‘the first semester’ Russian classes where the Russian teachers (indexed by the plural pronoun ‘they’, line 1) are positioned as expecting the students ‘to reach an interpreter level for the third year’, (lines 2-3), (something which Matteo also expects although he makes no reference to teacher expectations, see section 6.6). Maria’s criticism of the semester, ‘quite good but not good enough’ (line
1), introduces her own character in the present interview context, summarising and appraising the overall development of the students, and in doing so positioning herself as an expert in the language learning development required to reach an ‘interpreter level’ goal. This positioning of herself as an expert allows her to comment further that the students (and Maria herself, indexed by the pronoun ‘we’) are ‘way late’ (line 3) and that not enough grammar was included in the first course (‘we only had forty hours of grammar instead of sixty’, line 6). Maria then introduces the character of one specific Russian teacher, Boscolo, whom she positions as being much better than the rest at reaching interpreter level goals, again positioning herself as an expert able to critically judge the professional abilities of the teacher. Maria positions the teacher as being ‘really strict’ (line 11), using reported speech to voice her as authoritarian through the use of modal verbs of obligation in her instructions to the class, ‘So you have to come here and you have to know everything you’ve done’ (lines 12-13).

Maria’s commentary serves to continue to position herself as an expert and the strict teaching method as the best method, it also positions the other students as being in need of such strict approaches as the suggestion is that they will not be capable of reaching the level required without clear guidance and commands from the teacher.

6.8.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative is embedded in talk about the participants’ second language learning and a request by me to talk about their experiences.

In response to my request, Maria positions herself as an informant for both myself, and the group, on experiences in Russian classes. She also positions herself as an expert on the institution’s language objectives, which are to bring students to the level of ‘an interpreter’, and the teachers’ performances in attaining that goal. When Maria says ‘we’re way late’ (line 3), the third person plural pronoun ‘we’ suggests that she is referencing all the ‘students of Russian’ but it can also be seen as positioning all the participants present as being included in her comments about their second languages. She positions them then as all being potentially behind schedule to reach ‘an
interpreter level’. Federico’s attempt to interrupt (potentially to challenge, by his use of the negative phrase ‘I don’t think) is silenced and Maria continues by introducing the Russian teacher’s reported speech as though it were her own, directed at the group, positioning them as requiring ‘strict’ teachers and urging them to keep up with every demand made on them to learn. Maria’s identification with the teacher is further strengthened by her affirmation that ‘we should have started earlier and (.) in a stronger way’ (line 17), favouring the approach voiced in Boscolo’s previous reported speech, as well as her own final expression of conviction that ‘we should have started with boscolo’ (lines 19-20).

I now look at how these narratives seem to be related to wider Discourses in my level three analysis.

6.9 Level 3 analysis

Maria, Rosa and Matteo, all position students as requiring a much higher level of language than they have at present if they wish to become interpreters. The Discourse that appears to be present in all these narratives seems to invoke the ‘native speaker’ Discourse again, as previously discussed (see section 6.4.3), whereby those language levels required to become an interpreter are positioned as being at a much higher level than the participants perceive they have. Matteo’s statement that he wants to become an interpreter is immediately followed by positioning his language learning as not being at the level required. Although not explicitly stated there is an implicit reference to the limitations of time in order to achieve the relevant level, present in the sense of urgency he communicates to acquire more language (see section 6.6). Rosa makes explicit references to time in relation to reaching the right ‘interpreter’ level, ‘it takes a lot of time like to know a language like to be able to do a mediation’ (see section 6.7), and Maria positions her teachers as being responsible for reaching ‘an interpreter level by the third year’, a clear reference to the limitations of time in relation to the three year degree (see section 6.8).
The importance of time, which emerged in these narratives, appears to be connected to how the participants perceived themselves as having to be interpreters by the end of their third year, and the perception that interpreter levels of language are native speaker levels. Looking more generally at the research, there were no instances in the data where the participants made reference to clear guidelines about the language levels they were expected to attain over the course of their degree. Moreover, the institution appeared to position them as being the ‘most talented’ and ‘the best’ in the field of language learning from the very beginning of their academic careers, which seemed to place high expectations on their language performance in general (see section 5.2.6). The unstated ‘native speaker’ Discourse then (made more relevant by its not being evidently challenged or clarified by the institution or its representatives, i.e. teachers) appears to have encouraged native speaker models as being the language goal for prospective interpreters within the three-year degree (i.e. as shown in the Rutland narratives, sections 6.2 – 6.4).

The apparent perception that participants have, that they should be *interpreters* at the end of their three-year degree, is perhaps suggested by the original name of the institution itself, Sslmit (Advanced School for Interpreters and Translators in Modern Languages) as well as its newer title D.I.T (department for *interpreters and translators*). These names might well lead one to expect students to be interpreters by the end of their degrees. However, the actual title of students’ first cycle degree in the institution is ‘Laurea in Mediazione Linguistica Interculturale’, a ‘degree in intercultural linguistic mediation’, emphasising that students are considered to be mediators (a more generic term) rather than professional interpreters. In fact, it is only after the post-graduate, specialisation degree, that students receive any recognition by the institution as being actual interpreters, as the title of this degree suggests, ‘laurea magistrale in Interpretazione’ (specialized degree in interpreting). In this respect, the onus on achieving native-like language skills in order to claim the identity of an interpreter can be seen as being based on a false assumption, a further erroneous Discourse (which appears to go unchallenged by the participants) that students are de facto interpreters after three years.
The perceived complexity of language learning in relation to native speaker models of attainment, and the inhibitions of time in achieving linguistic goals to become interpreters, appears to have led some of the participants to focus on their present language studies much more, as emerged in their second interviews. I now turn to look at these interviews from this perspective.

6.10 Narratives focusing on present language goals and not on becoming interpreters

In Silvia’s second interview she begins to show signs of not wanting to become an interpreter any more (as highlighted in chapter 5). When I ask her about her goals she responds in the following way

1 Silvia: yeah because I mean my goal is to know those languages (.) right  
2 Alan: right  
3 Silvia: so I’m studying to know those languages (.) and that’s (.) for sure  
4 ((small laugh))  
5 then we’ll see if I (.) (I don’t know if) am becoming an interpreter or not  
6 Alan: right  
7 Silvia: I it’s a way to ah:: to reach (.) my f::irst goal but since I’m not sure  
8 what is going to be my: next goal or if it’s gonna be the same (.) ah:  
9 I’m just working day by day to to reach it and then if there’s erm a a  
10 path to choose I will choose then I don’t care now ((laughs))

(Silvia 2 interview. Recording time: 01:08:45 - 01:09:31. See appendix A: p.664, lines 1415 - 1429)

Silvia expresses her primary goal as being to learn languages. The manner in which she expresses this is through clear statements of intention followed by affirming words and phrases, ‘right’ and ‘that’s for sure’ (lines 1 and 2), positioning me as questioning

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40 This also emerged in my observations in the field. See appendix B, p. 745 (socialising after the second group interview).
her resolve and thereby asserting her intentions to me. This is expressed as her ‘first goal’ (line 7) but her ‘next goal’ (line 8), potentially becoming an interpreter, is unsure. Silvia finishes her last turn by focusing on the present, she is working towards the goal of learning languages ‘day by day’ (line 9) and ‘if there’s a path to choose’ (lines 9-10) she will decide when it comes, but for now she doesn’t appear to care.

When I ask Matteo about the future, towards the end of his second one-to-one interview, he replies

er: I just don’t think about the future (.) so much (.)

(Matteo 2 interview. See appendix A: p.570, lines 1061 - 1062)

When I then go on to suggest that his ‘passion’ to become an interpreter (clearly stated in his first one-to-one interview) might not be ‘central at the moment’ in his life (see section 6.6), he affirms that it is

1 …but now I’m (..) I’m here in the in the Sslmit and I’m I think I’m
2 I’m just on the right path and so I’m more (…) er: (.) not at ease (.)
3 but er: I’m more confident

(Matteo 2 interview. See appendix A: p.571, lines 1087 – 1091)

The same metaphor of being on the ‘right path’ emerges in his talk as in Silvia’s, clearly linked to his being in Sslmit (and perhaps suggesting that he trusts the institution to take him in the right direction).

I pursue this focus on the present by asking Matteo if his apparent confidence of being ‘on the right path’ (line 2) might be due to professor Moscato’s statement (see chapter 5) that getting into Sslmit meant that students would eventually be interpreters. Matteo replies

1 …. hm: yes something has changed er (4.0) because i: have seen
2 that studying to become an interpreter ah: brings you a lot of stress
3 (.) but I’m just doing my best a:nd I’m in the right place so: (3.0)
I’m just taking it easy (3.0) and that’s it I’m: (...) my my passion is the same (.) i: (...) I spend many hours studying an- (...) and so I’m just quite I’m quite relaxed


Like Silvia, Matteo expresses a clear intention to focus on the present. In this last turn, the reason he gives for not thinking about the future is the stress of studying to become an interpreter, which might be linked to his own high language learning expectations and the difficulty of achieving them. By focusing on the present, ‘taking it easy’ (line 4) and not thinking too far ahead, Matteo seems to focus principally on being ‘in the right place’ (line 3).

Rosa too when asked about her aspirations for the future in her second one-to-one interview says

I have no I idea ((laughs)) because I I don’t know I’m just studying until I graduate and then maybe I have to think about it more but (..)
I know I like language I know I like interpreting (.) translation no

(Rosa 2 interview. See appendix A: p.609, lines 980 - 986)

Rosa describes herself as ‘just studying until I graduate’ (lines 1-2), as do Silvia and Matteo, and like them as well she does not want to think about the future beyond that as she has ‘no idea’ (line 1).

6.11 Conclusions

All the participants’ first one-to-one interviews expressed the clear goal of becoming interpreters at the end of their studies. However, by their second one-to-one interviews, towards the end of their first academic year, significant changes in this
positioning have taken place. The effect of the native speaker Discourse and the limited time scale perceived to acquire such a level, an ‘interpreter level’ (with the implicit assumption that students are interpreters after three years), sees a shift among the participants from long-term interpreter objectives to short-term language goals. Also, the participants’ apparent increasing awareness that the language they thought they knew is in actual fact much more complicated in interpreting situations (further complicating the native speaker Discourse), adds to this pressure to learn more language than they initially imagined necessary.
Chapter 7

Data analysis

7.1. Interpreter-students in the institution – Introduction

In this chapter I look at the relationships between students and their peers in the context of the institution, as they emerged in both the one-to-one and group interviews over their first academic year. Through narrative positioning analysis I focus particularly on those narratives that were concerned principally with these relationships, and how these narratives give insights into the participants’ changing identities within the institution.

7.2 Students are ‘Nerds’, the relationship between work and play: Rosa’s narrative

In her first interview, I ask Rosa for her comments about the ‘classroom atmosphere’ since starting her first year. The following is a transcript of her response, which I go on to analyse through the lens of narrative positioning.

1 Alan: yeah and what about your colleagues I mean what sort of (.)
2 atmosphere is there in the classroom since you’ve arrived?
3 Rosa: m::: I think it’s good like (.) everybody is like (.) nerd like all the
4 time studying it’s like
5 Alan: ner:d
6 Rosa: yeah ((laughs)) ((both laugh))
7 Alan: what do you [mean by
8 Rosa: [wasn’t expecting
9 that ((laughs))
10 Alan: yeah?
11 Rosa: yeah I I don’t know I thought like it’s a university here because also
like last year in rimini it was really different and university because I also went to the university there but it was completely dif- different like the atmosphere everything

Alan: how?

Rosa: m::: everybody was thinking about partying not studying

((small laugh))

Alan: yeah ((joins laughter))

Rosa: and I was in a group of erasmus people [so: like

Alan: [hm

Rosa: everybody was like the goal was to have fun but to pass the exams and like learn stuff (..)

Alan: and so what’s different here n ner:ds you say I mean (. ) d- you can

you be more more precise?

Rosa: e:rm everybody is like studies like (.) comes to the university till about 5 and then goes to study till (.) 12 or something everybody is like stud- like only studying (..) nothing else

Alan: everybody?

Rosa: e:rm everybody that I have got to know recently like in this month yeah ((small laugh))

(Rosa 1 interview. Recording time: 00:07:41 – 00:09:05. See appendix A: p.382, lines 194 - 235)

7.2.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Rosa’s narrative is set in the Sslmit classroom (contextualised by my initial question, ‘what sort of atmosphere is there in the classroom’, lines 1-2), where the atmosphere is described as ‘good’, but all the students are positioned as ‘nerds’ (which Rosa clarifies as meaning that they are always studying, lines 3-4). The word nerd has relatively negative semantic prosody but this contrasts with her general description of the classroom atmosphere as being ‘good’, positioning herself therefore as accepting the strong study/work ethic as positive. However, Rosa also positions herself as somehow
standing apart from the other students, as her description of ‘everybody’ as being ‘like (a) nerd’ (line 3) seems to exclude her (i.e. she might have said ‘we are all nerds’, using the plural pronoun *we* to include herself in the description). Rosa positions herself as though she were an outside observer discovering something that she ‘wasn’t expecting’ (line 8), and this becomes more evident as the narrative develops.

Rosa then changes the scene, from the classroom to Sslmit as an institution (which she refers to as the ‘university here’, line 11), comparing Sslmit to another university campus at Rimini where she studied previously (see chapter 3, section 3.3.1 for a brief biography). Rosa positions Sslmit as being ‘completely different’ (line 13) from Rimini, where ‘everybody was thinking about partying not studying’ (line 16). She then positions herself as being part of ‘a group of erasmus people’ in Rimini (line 19), (foreign exchange students), where ‘everybody has the goal to have fun’ as well, but also ‘to pass the exams and … learn stuff’ (lines 21-22). Rosa therefore positions herself as someone who likes to have fun but who is also interested in the practical aspect of university, of studying and passing exams. This positioning reinforces a separation between her character and that of all the other Sslmit students.

In the last part of the narrative, when I ask Rosa to explain what she means by calling the Sslmit students ‘nerds’, she returns to her initial definition of them as always studying, studying all day long ‘till 12’ at night (line 26), and ‘only studying (..) nothing else’ (line 27). The repetition of ‘study’ (lines 25-27) serves to reinforce the continuity and uninterrupted nature of the Sslmit students’ life, devoted to study and only to study.

In this narrative then, Rosa positions herself as an outsider with regard to her fellow students in Sslmit. They are all positioned as being ‘nerds’, only studying, whereas Rosa studies and passes exams, as well as having fun (engaging in other activities other than study).
7.2.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

Rosa’s narrative emerges from talk about her experiences at Sslmit since arriving, and is a specific response to my inquiry about those experiences with her ‘colleagues’ and the ‘atmosphere’ in the classroom (lines 1-2).

In the narrative-telling event she positions herself as my informant, positioning me as a willing participant in her humorous characterisation of the class as all being ‘nerds’, signalled by her laughter (line 6), and ratified by myself by my joining in with that laughter. This positioning serves to align me too with wider assumptions that life must be more than just studying.

When Rosa describes her previous experience in Rimini, and how all the students were only interested in partying, she positions herself as being part of this world, but she also positions herself as being interested in study, by identifying herself with a subgroup of ‘Erasmus’ students which do both. Rosa’s portrayal of herself as a person who likes to have fun (i.e. ‘party’, as she describes the students at Rimini as doing) is tempered by a need to be seen as a serious student as well. In this respect she appears to position me not as an outside researcher, but as a teacher in the institution (someone who might not approve of students not studying), and herself as a responsible student. Rosa projects an identity of someone who wants to have fun then, but who also knows that she has to study and pass exams.

Before going on to a level three analysis (considering issues of Discourse), I turn to analyse a continuation of this theme in Rosa’s second one-to-one interview at the end of her first academic year. Again, I present the transcript of the narrative and then analyse it using narrative positioning.

7.3 ‘I’m a nerd now’: Rosa’s second narrative

In Rosa’s second interview, I ask her if the classroom atmosphere has changed over the period since our previous encounter.
1 Rosa: … I think maybe now that only that everybody is
2 only studying but (..) it’s it’s Sslmit so: I was expecting that
3 ((small laugh))
4 Alan: cos you said that when you came here first you (..) you
5 thought that the students here they were as you said ner:ds
6 Rosa: ((laughs)) well now that I have became another nerd so
7 ((laughs)) maybe I am getting along better
8 Alan: yeah?
9 Rosa: yeah th- (..) yeah they kinda study a lot but once a day once
10 a week also go out and have fun so (.) I think that the erm
11 (.) atmosphere here like the students is really nice it’s really
12 good (.) everybody like tries to help each other out and if
13 you ask somebody help they help you it’s not like it’s not a
14 bad er competition (2.0)

(Rosa 2 interview. Recording time: 00:05:13-00:06:07. See appendix A: p.584, lines 142 -165)

7.3.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the story event

Rosa positions the character of the Sslmit student as unchanged from her first interview, repeating her earlier comment from that interview that ‘everybody’s only studying’ (lines 1-2). However, in this second narrative Rosa positions her own character as having changed since then. She describes herself as ‘expecting’ (line 2) Sslmit students to be studying all the time, in contrast to her first interview where she said she ‘wasn’t expecting that’. Rosa therefore positions herself as someone who has learnt what it means to be a Sslmit student. The expectation that this would happen, that all students would eventually be only studying all the time, is presented as being part of a normal process in the institution. This is evidenced by her comment, ‘it’s Sslmit so:’ (line 2), where ‘so’ is followed by a pause and not a qualifying phrase,
suggesting a shared understanding between us about the *nature* of Sslmit, an understanding that does not need to be clarified.

When I remind Rosa of her comment in her first interview, that the students were all nerds, she no longer positions herself as being different from them, but rather as being one of them now, ‘well now that I have became another nerd’ (line 6). This apparent acceptance of being a nerd is presented as a reason for her ‘getting on better now’ (line 7), presumably with the other students, with whom she now shares the same approach to study. However, she also introduces a change in the other students at this point, describing them (and herself) as having ‘fun’ once a week (lines 9-10). This ‘fun’ appears to be a cause for an improvement in the classroom atmosphere where ‘everybody... tries to help each other out’ (line 12).

Rosa’s positioning of herself as being an outsider in the first interview has shifted to her being more of an insider, although this is not a complete transformation, as the other students are still referred to using the third person plural, ‘they’ (‘they kinda study a lot’, line 9), and not the first person plural ‘we’ (a pronoun which would signify her inclusion). Rosa portrays her character therefore as having adapted to the ‘nerd-like’ work ethic of the institution, but not as having entirely accepted it as her own.

### 7.3.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative emerges from talk about Rosa’s progression in her studies in Italian and how she feels she is improving, elicited by my request that she talk about the classroom ‘atmosphere’ again, contextualising it as something we have already talked about.

In the narrative-telling event, Rosa positions herself as an experienced student in the institution who ‘was expecting’ everybody to be ‘only studying’ as ‘it’s Sslmit’ (line 2), positioning me as a member of the institution who will ratify her *knowledge of how things are*, in particular that Sslmit students are *naturally* going to be studying all the time as it’s the *nature* of the institution.
In the interview, I position Rosa as potentially being a ‘nerd’ herself, by reminding her of how she described the students at Sslmit in her first interview (lines 4-5). Rosa appears to ratify that positioning by stating that she too has become ‘a nerd’ (line 6), and attributing this to her ‘getting along better’ with the other students.

In her last turn, Rosa positions herself as an informant on the students’ life both inside and outside the classroom, describing the students as having ‘fun’ once a week (in contrast to her initial positioning of them as only studying, at the beginning) and having a good atmosphere in the classroom where everyone helps each other. This positions me as a teacher who is interested in the students’ life but also as ratifying the connection between ‘fun’ and a more productive classroom environment.

7.3.3 Level 3 analysis: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

Rosa’s projected identity as a student, changes from her first interview where she positions herself as being different from the other students in Sslmit, placing ‘having fun’ before study, to one where she puts study first and fun as secondary (i.e. only once a week). This change is attributed to the nature of the institution itself, positioning it as being agentive in forming students in this way. The emphasis on students always studying in the institution appears to connect to narratives that position the institution as expecting its students to be the best (see section 5.2.6), due to its own self-promotion as the best institution for training interpreters in the Italian higher education system. This seems to draw from neo-liberal Discourses again then (see section 5.2.7) which describe marketization processes in higher education. Sslmit’s prestige and value on the academic market is framed as a guarantee of future professional success and attracts a particular type of ‘privileged customer’, students who are ‘the best of the best…la crème de la crème’ (see Maria’s narrative in section 5.2.6) and who are required to perform accordingly throughout their academic career. Rosa appears to be suggesting this by her comment ‘it’s Sslmit so:’ where the final ‘so’ introduces a causal argument that she feels does not even need to be stated, that
students who manage to get in to Ssllmit are expected to study all the time to maintain high standards associated with institution itself.\textsuperscript{41}

I now turn to look at other data to support this interpretation of Rosa’s positioning in her narratives.

7.4 The relationship between work and play: Silvia’s narrative

In the first group interview, I asked the participants about their workload in the institution. Silvia commented, ‘workload well I don’t think it’s (.) that much if you can organise yourself’, and proceeded to talk about how students need to plan their studies more carefully. However, not far into her turn, when she was talking about students wasting time, she appears to react to an indistinguishable comment from Rosa, by saying

1  ok sorry ah: I’m saying that there’s [not only sslmit we have whole life ok?  2  ((small laughter)) there are plenty of thing we can do and sometimes we just 3  have to rest too I don’t know to go and have fu:n because there are a lot of 4  [pressure on us

(Group 1 interview, Silvia. See appendix A: p.426, lines 655 - 661)

The loud, sustained, high pitched tone which overlays this stretch of talk suggests a note of exasperation, coming almost as an outburst from Silvia. Silvia is talking to the group, positioning them as living only for Ssllmit (‘there’s not only Ssllmit’, line 1), which suggests only for study as it contrasts with the sentence ‘we just have to rest too I don’t know to go and have fu:n’ (lines 2-3). Similar to Rosa’s narrative then Ssllmit is positioned as continually requiring students to work and study (recalling Rosa’s comment that all the students in Ssllmit are ‘nerds’).

\textsuperscript{41} See appendix B, p. 744 for observations in the field relevant to this Discourse (a conversation with Matteo).
In this extract Silvia portrays herself as a critic of the other participants’ inability to relax and have fun in Sslmit, as well as a caring advisor warning them about the dangers to their health (i.e. the dangers of having a lot of pressure on them and not resting). Silvia however, does not talk as though she were outside the group, as her use of plural, subjective and objective pronouns show in ‘we just have to rest’ (lines 2-3) and ‘there are a lot of pressure on us’ (lines 3-4). She positions herself as sharing the group’s pressures, but also as someone who sees the dangers that they cannot. As with Rosa, Silvia appears to invoke the Discourse then that the institution imposes pressure for high performance on its students (‘there are a lot of pressure on us’), which emerges in general dispositions towards study that limit their pursuit of ‘fun’ and their ability to ‘rest’.

A potential interpretation of the type of pressure Silvia is referring to emerges in an earlier one-to-one interview (as previously examined, see section 5.2.6) in her narrative about her first day in the institution and the welcome speech to the new students.

1  .. they told us you’re the best (...) because you just entered the best school in
2   italy for example I was like oh my god ((intake of breath with half laugh)) a
3   lot of pressure…

(Silvia 1 interview. See appendix A: p.397, lines 192 – 196)

Silvia’s narrative about her first day positions the authorities of Sslmit (indexed by the pronoun ‘they’, line 1), as expecting their students to be the best already, before even commencing their studies, and that that places enormous pressure on the students to perform as such, right from the very beginning of those studies.

7.4.1 The relationship between work and play: Maria’s narrative

In her first group interview, Maria also relates a narrative about the opening day speech given by representatives of Sslmit (see section 5.2.6 for a detailed analysis)
1. it’s what we were welcomed with (.) they said ohh you are the more
talented one ((gushing)) the best of the best you’re la crème delle crème

(Group 1 interview, Maria. See appendix A: p.457, lines 1697 - 1700)

This extract shows how Maria, like Silvia, is uncomfortable with how the institution positions the new students as already being the best, ‘the more talented one ((gushing)) the best of the best you’re la crème delle crème’ (lines 1-2) as she reports it. The opening day speech which Silvia describes as putting pressure on her to perform is described by Maria as ignoring the ‘hard work’ that students had to put in to enter the institution and the work they still have to do to succeed in becoming interpreters.

In an earlier exchange on the same episode I ask Maria what she would have liked to have heard instead at the opening day speech, to which Maria replies

    I would use (.) err: (...) congratulation (.) you did it (.) now keep on it
    it’s not like you get in so you’re an interpreter no way (.)

(Group 1 interview, Maria. See appendix A: p.456, lines 1657 - 1660)

Through imagined reported speech Maria voices the authorities as giving a speech which serves as a counter-discourse to what they are actually reported to have said, (i.e. ‘you are the best of the best’). Rather than being the best Maria proposes they give their congratulations and urge the students to begin what is suggested as being a long road ahead. Maria appears to sustain the argument that by being called the best at the very beginning of their university careers, students are encouraged to think of themselves already as being interpreters, something she strongly challenges.
7.5 Conclusions

In Rosa’s first narrative she introduces the concept that all her fellow peers in Sslomit are ‘nerds’, in that they are always studying. By her second interview in the second term, she identifies herself as being a nerd too, and describes the cause for this as being the institution itself, suggesting that it makes students that way.

Silvia’s initial narrative (section 7.4) identifies the institution as dominating her fellow students’ lives, where they invest all their time in work and study, and very little to rest and ‘fun’. Unlike Rosa’s narrative, Silvia’s narrative positions Sslomit as being too dominant in student lives (‘there’s not only sslomit we have whole life ok’, line 1), where the institution is presented almost as a threat to the students’ well-being. In the narrative-telling event, Silvia appears to feel that it is necessary to remind her fellow participants that ‘we just have to rest too’ (lines 2-3), as though this is something they had forgotten how to do.

Silvia and Maria’s opening day narratives both portray the institution’s representatives as positioning them as being the ‘best’ students in Italy, setting a high benchmark and set of expectations right from the very beginning of their academic careers. Silvia’s opening day narrative (section 7.4) conveys a sense of surprise and preoccupation about this accolade, and a feeling perhaps of having to perform beyond her abilities. Maria’s narrative of the same event however (section 7.4.1), adopts an angry tone, as the title of being the ‘best’ negates the hard work she feels that all the students have already put in to enter the institution, as well as the hard work they still need to keep up in order to become interpreters. In both narratives, there is the suggestion that hard work is encouraged by the institution (although not necessarily acknowledged all the time, as suggested by Maria), reinforced by its position in the education market which it appears to promote by claiming to have the ‘best’ students. The neoliberal Discourse then of a marketization of higher education, which first emerged in Matteo’s narrative about students having ‘talent’ (see chapter 5, section 5.2), seems to be operative here too. The participants’ narratives describe their lives in the institution as being dominated by hard work and study, which is projected as being part of the identity of

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42 See my field notes (appendix B, p. 744 and p.745) for similar observations in the field (a conversation with Matteo and a group conversation).
the Sslmit student, an identity which is enforced by the institution’s positioning of itself as being the best and having the best students accordingly.

I now turn to examine a theme that emerged very frequently among my participants when talking about their peers in the institution, competitiveness.

7.6 Students and competitiveness in the institution - Introduction

In their first one-to-one interviews, all the participants talked about the heightened levels of competition among the students at Sslmit, positioning Sslmit as a place where competition was to be expected.

In his first one-to-one interview, Matteo talks about the difference between his first degree in oriental languages at Rome University (see chapter 3, section 3.3.1 for a brief biography) and his experiences in Sslmit. At Rome

what was important was the was just to pass the exam get a bachelor degree and and that’s it..

(Matteo 1 interview. See appendix A: p.373, lines 230 – 233)

At Sslmit however,

well you just don’t have to study for the classes…
I just try to: to do more (.) cos I feel that there’s a lot of com- there’s a great competition

(Matteo 1 interview. See appendix A: p.373, lines 234 – 238)

Matteo introduces ‘competition’ as something that is quite distinctive to Sslmit then, and to the students that frequent it, in contrast to his experiences in Rome.
Silvia, in her first interview talks about knowing, previous to entering Sslmit, that the institution has always been associated with competition.

Sslmit is has always been a competition place th-
they told me that but I can kind of agree with them

(Silvia 1 interview. See appendix A: p.396, lines 144 – 146)

This association between Sslmit and competition also emerged in a narrative in the first group interview which I present now, going on to analysis it through the lens of narrative positioning in the narrative event (level one) and the narrative-telling event (level two), and finally coming to consider the wider influence of Discourses (level three).

7.7 Narratives of competitivy - The first group interview

In this extract, I look at how a narrative episode is jointly constructed about the participants’ experiences of competition in the classroom.

Approximately 8 minutes into the first group interview, the following exchange occurs (see below). Maria has been talking about her first practical interpreting experience in the classroom, where she had been called to the front of the class to interpret between an Italian and an English teacher (who are both reading from a pre-prepared dialogue in their respective languages):

1 Maria: … but it was just nice it was (.) erm:: emotional because (.) it’s not
2 just you and two people so you know that the other people do and say
3 about what you’re saying so (.) if you make (any) mistakes they
4 understand and they say maybe they say ahh well I might have said it in
5 another way (.) or as soon as you talk other things come up through your
6 mind and you say oh: (that) was (the) word but that’s fine an::d it’s just
7 (.) good
8 Alan:  hm
9 Maria:  it feels good
10 Alan:  what’s the general feeling in the classroom do you think I mean what
11          sort of atmosphere do you get from your colleagues? is th- is there a
12          lot of support there?
13 Silvia: Ah:: there’s competition but there’s also support (.) yes (.) they tell you
14          in a calm way it’s not the wa:y it’s this way ((imitates another student
15          whispering with a condescending tone)) ((laughter)) or they might say
16 ((makes sound with lips suggesting a brush-off remark)) that was that was wrong (.)
17          you can’t say it that wa:y (.) but it’s: there’s a happy atmosphere
18 Maria:  relaxed
19 Silvia: [relaxed yeah
20 Alan:   [yeah everybody
21 feels that?
22 Alan:   is it [is it relaxed
23 Rosa:   [(yeah I think so)
24 Alan:  yeah?
25 Silvia: excited also [we are all
26 Alan:   [hmm
27 Silvia: motivated as I said
28 Alan:  yeah
29 Silvia: an:d (2.0) I don’t know what to say ((small laugh))
30 ((Researcher looks at Federico))
31 Fed:  yes I told you that I feel a a weird ah:: degree of competition (and) er
32          erm high self esteem (.) an::d the:n (..) again it’s it’s not for me I’m
33          not judging anyone (.) erm: I just sometimes feel it’s (.) weird it’s it’s
34          nothing I do so I don’t really understand it (.) bu:: m:: (..) yes it feels a
35          little bit exaggerated and it’s most times (.) justified it’s people who
36          really know what they are saying but you always have a way to of
37          sometimes you just don’t really need to say it ((small laugh)) to to
38          show that you (.). knew better an::d a:::: there’s always a:: (.). a way to
39          say and not to say as a in a mocking or a:: (.). presumptuous way (.)
40          and it’s not that the general thing they’re not saying you’re a just a bag
of (3.0) not quite nice ((laughter)) eh: no it’s (good) people and it’s very there’s a good thing yes and (xxx) exciting erm:: it’s (.') erm (don’t know) maybe you don’t speak of this at [the beginning
Silvia: [well the: there is competition but it’s all about how you feel about it (.') how you take it because I: do I really feel close to the others (.') there are people who I like more than others but I I’m happy with the atmosphere with the people because before entering here they told me oh sslmit oh my god no you don’t have to do that ((whispered awed voice)) well I like it oh competition too much competition ((repeated whispered awed voice)) but I I don’t feel that way I I’m very happy to be here an:d so: (.') yes there is competition but it’s all about how you take it so (.') it’s not if you don’t take it as a personal thing you you’re happy with it
Alan: how does everybody else feel about competition? The same or different?
Rosa: Yeah kinda the same (.') there is competition but it’s not a bad competition I think (.') cos like everybody helps each other it’s not like I don’t know I think it’s good (.')
Alan: Matteo (.')
Matteo: well I:: I think that competitiveness erm: helps you improve (.') because well I think the sslmit prepares you er: to:: to do work that you will meet after the university
Alan: hmm
Matteo: and so:: (…) you: here at the sslmit you’re trained (.') an::d I think it’s a:: a good thing (.') bu::t I just don’t like the the atmosphere in the classroom so much cos you:: are always I or at least I think you’re quite always judged by the others cos mm:: not not not everyone not not all the students in the in the classroom but (.') well you always meet someone who who thinks he’s better than you or: or so an:d but (.') it’s not er:: I think it’s not a good thing but it helps me improve (.') and so I just take the the good things out of it (.)
7.7.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

The narrative is set in an interpreting lesson in the classroom. The characters in Maria’s narrative are herself, as the main protagonist, ‘two people’ (line 2), who are the teachers carrying out the interpreting exercise, and ‘the other people’ (line 2), the other students present in the scene.

Maria describes the interpreting event as being ‘emotional’ (line 1), positioning the other students (indexed by the plural subject pronoun ‘they’, line 3) as being potential critics when she makes mistakes in her interpreting between the two languages (‘they understand’, lines 3-4). Interestingly, the two teachers are not positioned as being important in the scene, the focus is on Maria and her peers.

Through the use of reported speech Maria positions the students as being polite and helpful, as indexed by the use of the modal auxiliary verb ‘might’ in her reporting of their comments on her interpreting,

4 … ah well I might have said it in
5 another way

This perhaps represents a shift in scene to outside the classroom, after the interpreting exercise, as it would seem that the other students would not be commenting extensively on her performance in the classroom.

In the interpreting exercise Maria describes, she positions herself as being focused more on her own performance rather than on the other students (and teachers, who are not even mentioned). She positions herself as being unaffected by the other characters in the classroom then, calmly considering alternative language forms to correct her
own mistakes during the event itself, as though she were in a quiet meditative space rather than in the heat and pressure of the classroom interpreting exercise,

5 other things come up through your
6 mind and you say oh: that was the word but that’s fine

Maria describes her thoughts on her own language usage as almost emerging slowly during the interpreting exercise. For example, words are not described as popping into her mind or flashing before her, but rather they ‘come up’ through her mind (lines 5-6), allowing her time to reflect on possible mistakes (‘oh that was the word’) and yet not see those mistakes as a source of anxiety (‘but that’s fine’). Maria positions herself therefore as being agentive and autonomous, not needing the other students (or teachers) to improve her performance, as well as being in control and not subject to panicking as she interprets in front of the class.

After my question to the group about what sort of atmosphere there is in the classroom, and whether students get support from their peers (lines 10-12), Silvia introduces ‘competition’ into the talk. The use of the contrastive conjunction ‘but’, in ‘there’s competition but there’s also support’ (line 13), initially suggests that competition is being contrasted to support, however Silvia goes on through reported speech to position her peers’ competitiveness as actually supporting learning processes (lines 13-17). This reported speech might be seen as coming from the same scene that Maria has introduced, the interpreting lesson, but it could equally be seen as developing and broadening that scene to all the students’ classroom experiences in general.

Through her use of reported speech Silvia positions the students as being less helpful and supportive than Maria has done, suggesting that they are presumptuous (‘it’s not that way it’s this way’, reported with a tone of condescension, line 14) and/or arrogantly dismissive (‘that’s wrong’, reported with a tone of disregard, line 16). However, Silvia does not wholly challenge Maria’s positive positioning, describing the atmosphere as being nevertheless ‘happy’ (line 17).
Maria’s following turn sees her describing the atmosphere as also being ‘relaxed’ (line 18), an adjective which summarises her own previous description of her classroom interpreting experience, and which is immediately ratified by Sara, ‘yeah relaxed’ (line 23).

My suggestion that the group might not ratify Maria and Silvia’s positioning of the students, as being generally positive in the interpreting class (‘yeah everybody feels that?’ lines 20-21), elicits a hesitant ratification by Rosa (‘yeah I think so’, line 23). Silvia then comes in to further ratify her initial positioning with more positive adjectives, describing students as being ‘excited’ (line 25) and ‘motivated’ (line 27). Both Maria and Silvia therefore jointly construct classes as being competitive in a positive way, and their own characters as being relaxed and happy in relation to competition in general.

Federico however, challenges this positive portrayal of competition in the class (lines 31-43). He describes competition as being ‘weird’ (line 33) and ‘exaggerated’ (line 35), and unsuited to his character, ‘it’s not for me’ (line 32). Although he describes class comments as being mostly ‘justified’ (line 35), positioning some students as ‘people who really know what they are saying’ (lines 35-36), unlike Maria and Silvia, he positions the collective character of his peers in the story as ‘presumptuous’ and ‘mocking’ (line 39) in their criticisms of his mistakes.

Silvia returns in the following turn (line 44), reaffirming the classroom scene as being a happy one, but qualifying it as being so for those students who know how to ‘take it’ (lines 45-46), where ‘it’ presumably refers to competition again. The character of the students in the class, initially portrayed as a unified whole by Silvia, is now divided into two, those who know how to take competition and those who do not. Silvia then introduces a second, ‘embedded narrative’ (see chapter 6, section 6.2 for a definition). Before continuing with my level one analysis of the main narrative (see section 7.7.2), I examine this embedded narrative, through a level one and two analysis, as it serves to clarify Silvia’s positioning of the students into two types.
7.7.1.1 Silvia’s embedded narrative

In her embedded narrative (lines 48-52), Silvia presents two scenes, one outside the institution, prior to entering it, and the other in the institution. In these two scenes, which are compared and contrasted, Silvia presents herself as two characters, her former pre-institutional self, and her institutional self in the present. The other character in this narrative is the undefined collective group of individuals who Silvia talked to before entering the institution. Through reported speech the character of this group, outside the institution, position her as not being a suitable candidate for the institution itself, ‘oh ssmit oh my god oh no you don’t have to do’ (line 49), which Silvia reports herself as rebuffing in the role of her pre-institutional character, ‘well I like it’ (line 50). The group’s reason is then reported in the pre-institutional scene again, ‘oh too much competition oh too much competition’ (line 50), where the repetition of the phrase ‘too much competition’ serves to highlight the heightened level of competition associated with the institution, and to position Silvia as not having the right identity to fit in there. Silvia’s institutional character then responds by confirming that she was right to rebuff them, as ‘I don’t feel that way I I’m very happy to be here’ (lines 51-52), enforcing her positioning of herself as having the right identity to manage the competition.

The reason for telling this narrative then appears to be to reinforce Silvia’s positioning of herself to the group and myself, as one of those characters in the class who knows how to take competition (her institutional character confirming what her pre-institutional character is described as already knowing), and not someone who is prone to ‘take it personally’ (i.e. someone who doesn’t take comments from other students on her mistakes personally).

7.7.2 Level 1 analysis continued

Returning to the main narrative, after this embedded narrative, I ask the question ‘how does everybody else feel about competition?’ (line 55), Rosa joins with Silvia and Maria in portraying it as being positive, aligning herself with the character of those
students who know how to take it, and echoing Silvia’s point that students give help and support.

58 … cos like everybody helps each other

In the final two turns of this stretch of dialogue (lines 61-72), Matteo enters the discussion. His initial comments introduce competition as a factor in helping students improve their studies as well as preparing them for work after university (echoing a comment that Silvia had made before the narrative)

61 well I:: I think that competitiveness erm: helps you improve (.)
62 because well I think the sslmit prepares you er: to:: to do work that
63 you will meet after the university

Matteo conflates competitiveness with the institution itself, as seen by his substitution of ‘competitiveness’ (line 61) with ‘sslmit’ (line 62); competitiveness ‘helps you improve’ and sslmit ‘prepares you to do work’ (presumably preparing you for competition in the work place).

Seemingly picking up on Federico’s negative positioning of the students in general though, Matteo divides the character of the class into a different binary from Silvia, positioning one group of students as thinking they are better and ‘judging’ (line 68) the others, and another who do not, aligning himself with the latter and criticising the former for creating a bad atmosphere (whilst acknowledging that they help him improve, in line with his initial assertion)

69 (..) well you always
70 meet someone who who thinks he’s better than you or: or so an:d but
71 (.) it’s not er:: I think it’s not a good thing but it helps me improve (.)

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7.7.3 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The principal narrative emerges from talk about the participants’ experiences of interpreting in front of the class, where Silvia comments about how it is good practice for the students’ future careers in the world of work. When I ask Silvia ‘how it feels’ to interpret in front of a class Silvia replies that she hasn’t in actual fact done it yet but that she knows those who have, indicating Maria by her direction of gaze. I then repeat the question to Maria who introduces the narrative of her own experience.

Maria positions herself as an informant for both the group and myself on the experience of interpreting in front of a class, introducing her awareness of her peers monitoring of her performance as relevant to that experience. When I subsequently ask the other participants in the group about the ‘atmosphere’ in the class, with regard to their fellow students in the interpreting lesson, I affirm Maria’s introduction of the other students as being salient for discussion. My final question, ‘is there support?’ positions the group as needing to ratify or not Maria’s underlying assumption that there is (as she has positioned her peers in the classroom as providing polite suggestions for correcting her ‘mistakes’).

Silvia’s turn shows her as not wholly ratifying Maria’s positioning. She introduces student ‘competition’, which initially appears to be in contrast with notions of support. Her reported speech of the students’ comments challenges Maria’s earlier portrayal of them as polite and helpful, highlighting a more negative side to their error correction (at times patronising and dismissive) and positioning the group as ratifying this. However, towards the end of her turn she does align herself with Maria’s earlier positioning in part, by describing the atmosphere as ‘happy’, which Maria in turn immediately ratifies again.

My question ‘yeah everybody feels that’ (lines 20-21) positions the group as potentially not ratifying Silvia and Maria’s claim about the class atmosphere again. Federico takes my direction of gaze (towards him) as an indication that I am inviting him to contribute to the discussion, functioning as a voiceless cue perhaps, as it potentially reminds him of his negative comments made to me in his first one-to-one
Indeed, Federico’s initial phrase seems to ratify this positioning as though he were responding to a direct, verbal request by myself in relation to talk in that earlier interview, ‘yes I told you that I feel weird’ (line 31). Federico challenges Maria and Silvia’s positioning of the group as affirming the positive side of student competitiveness, but he also positions himself as potentially being alone in this (‘it’s not for me’, line 32) and seeking a broader consensus from them. Federico aligns himself with Silvia’s initial positioning of the students by giving verbal expression to what she had suggested prosodically, as their being ‘presumptuous’ and ‘mocking’, offering this more serve criticism for ratification from the group.

Silvia’s subsequent turn challenges Federico by positioning herself as one of those students who knows how to take competition in the class, and Federico as one of those students who does not, hence his finding the class atmosphere negative. Her embedded story of her pre-institutional and institutional characters serves to further reinforce her character as someone who knows how to ‘take it’, because she doesn’t take competition ‘personally’, positioning Federico as the other character again, someone who does take it personally and is therefore unhappy.

Rosa aligns herself with Silvia and Maria, describing students as giving help and support in class competition, and positioning herself as one of Silvia’s characters who know how to ‘take it’ as well.

Matteo however, does not ratify Silvia’s positioning of students as being two types, those who ‘know how to take it’ and ‘those who don’t’, and neither does he ratify Federico’s positioning of all the students as being ‘presumptuous’ and ‘mocking’. Matteo rather divides the students into those who are overly critical and competitive, and think they are better than you, and those who are not, positioning himself as the latter. Matteo then describes the character of those students who are critical and competitive as having both a negative and positive effect on him, negative because of the bad classroom atmosphere they create, and positive because they help him improve his language studies. At the end of his turn, Matteo positions himself as being philosophic about the scene he has described, just taking ‘the good things out of it’
(line 73) and leaving the rest, positioning the other participants as ratifying his approach.

7.7.4 Level 3 analysis: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

There is a general consensus among all the participants in this extended co-constructed narrative that Ssmit students are in competition to show that they are better than others (to a lesser or greater extent) in their knowledge of foreign languages. The work of positioning, both in the narrative event and the narrative-telling event, is not to refute this implicitly shared perception, but in explaining how it emerges in the classroom, whether it has a positive or a negative effect on language learning processes, how it affects relations between students, and how it impacts on the general class ‘atmosphere’ (making it a desirable or undesirable student attribute in the classroom).

The driving force behind wanting to be better than one’s peers is perhaps a shared factor in many learning environments, however it appears here as a particularly intensely debated subject, specifically linked to language learning and language performance in the classroom (i.e. impressing one’s peers by correcting their errors). This is supported by repeated talk about student competition across all the research data in relation to language (see sections 7.8 – 7.12.5 below), and in some cases an alignment between it and the nature of the institution itself (as exemplified by Matteo’s conflation of the two, see section 7.7.2). My participants appear to be influenced by two Discourses, mentioned previously, the interpreter as a language expert (see chapter 5, section 5.2.5), and the neo-liberal Discourse which sees the institution positioning students as being the ‘best of the best…the crème della crème’ (see chapter 5, sections 5.2.6 – 5.2.7) and potentially influencing their need to perform accordingly in the classroom (showing they are better than their peers).

These Discourses can be seen as creating an atmosphere conducive to very elevated levels of competition among the student population, which appear to have corresponding repercussions on the classroom atmosphere. The drive to be worthy of
the title of being the best (hence a valid member of the best institution) combined with an orientation to be a language expert, with displays of language ability as a marker of future interpreter potential, seems to be central to this heightened competitiveness in the Sslmit classroom.

I now go on to represent more data relevant to the theme of competition, and draw more extended relevancies regarding the influence of these Discourses.

7.8 Competition between first and second language students: Matteo’s first ‘Erasmus’ narrative

Although most of the participants’ talk about competition in the previous narrative analysed (section 7.7) was concerned with their shared classroom experiences with their fellow students, studying the same language at the same level, talk also emerged of competition between students of the same language studied but at different levels. I now present two inter-related narrative episodes from the first group interview where this emerged. As previously, I present the entire extract below and then go on to analyse it using narrative positioning.

1 Silvia: well no not quite (. ) I think we all agree it’s different f- for him
2 maybe because I know that erm in the german class there’s more
3 competition or competiveness I don’t know how to say it erm
4 than in the other languages of course English ((small laugh)) but
5 English is more relaxed german class because I have er:: my er
6 flatmate has as first language german and she: tells me a lot of things
7 and they they really are very I don’t know how to say it in English
8 but erm: (. ) they are more precise or pignoli ((Italian)) I don’t know
9 er: [they feel
10 Alan: [fussy perhaps
11 Silvia: yeah they feel the competition they feel they are god ((a little laughter))
12 and so [they
13 Alan: [that’s interesting they feel like they’re god
Silvia: yeah (.) they are they think they are ((laughs)) they’re not but er:: I don’t know why bu: I heard a lot about german class [I don’t know if
Maria: [xxxxxx
Matteo: it depends on the first language
Silvia: yeah
Matteo: because yes: m I found that er:: the students who have for
example german as first language (.) well they: I think that (.) they
think they are better than the than the other ((federico laughs)) students
cos well german is a difficult language
Silvia: yeah [exactly
Matteo: [an::d the English language is the the easy one the language that all all the
world know (.) knows and so
Silvia: you know Spanish is similar to Italian ((adopts a sing-song tone))
French Oh French come on ((adopts tone suggesting it’s not to be
taken very seriously)) you just end the sentence with something
like yeah:: or I don’t know ((small laugh)) and that’s french so:
german german that’s different that’s the way of thinking here but I
don’t really care about it because I don’t (.) I don’t have german
((little laugh)) ((others laugh)) as my language so I I have a lot of
(..) I don’t know of friends but not very friend but in the german class so
Alan: there’s nobody here who has german as they’re second language?
Matteo [(xx)
Rosa: [(us two)
Matteo: we have (.)
we have german as a second language
Rosa: [as second
language but not the first
Alan: and do you feel the same the same thing that german the german
students have this attitude?
Matteo: no I think that it’s just an attitude of the students who have er::
german as first language
Alan: just first language?
Matteo: yes (. ) just first language cos you they I think they think well erm::: to get in the sslmit you have to know to you have to know the german really well for example when I:: I:: did an exam last last no December last January er:: I met a girl and she:: she I think she has german as first language and we were just talking about the erazmus programme (. ) and well em:: I:: I applied for the for the erasmus programme and I have chosen erm: a german a german city to to study there and well and this this girl just said well (but) you it doesn’t matter this well the city doesn’t matter for students of who has erm (.) for students who have german as second language cos you just have to learn german (..) e: but we em but we need to go to universities like Heidelberg and mannsheim and they’re quite prestigious they are like the ssmlit in germany

Alan: ah ha

Matteo: and (..) and I think it’s it’s not true cos I think that the level of of of german taught in the: in the class of first language and second languages I think it’s quite the same (.) and for example we have erm:: the the teacher who erm:: who::

Rosa: (xxxxx)

((whispers inaudibly to matteo))

Matteo: yes erm the teacher of the of the second language class is elena moscato and it’s one and I think she is one of the best interpreters in the (. ) in italy as least [I think cos she

Rosa: [well that’s what she presented herself as ((general laughter))

Matteo: yes ((laughs))

Rosa: we don’t know if it’s true or not ((matteo, Roxanne and matteo laugh))

(GroupId: 1 interview. Recording time: 00:13.37 – 00:17.58. See appendix A: p.416, lines 308 – 419)
7.8.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

In this extract there are two narratives, albeit interrelated, Silvia’s (lines 1-15) and Matteo’s (lines 49-59).

The scene described by Silvia is the ‘German class’ (line 2), which she portrays as being ‘more competitive’ (lines 2-3) than other language classes, in particular more than English classes (line 4). Silvia then introduces the character of her ‘flatmate’, who is studying German as a first language, and who acts as an informant for her assertion that the character of German language students is more ‘pignoli’ (line 8), (meaning ‘fussy’ and ‘attentive to detail’). The German students’ character is presented in the singular, representative of all German students, and is positioned as being more competitive than other language students, which is subsequently expressed as feeling ‘they are god’ (line 11). The metaphor of omniscience positions the German students as behaving in a superior manner to students of other languages (although Silvia refutes this is a personal aside, ‘they think they are…they’re not’, line 14).

Matteo comes in, in the subsequent turn (line 17), not entirely challenging Silvia’s description of German students, but changing the generalised character in her story to students of ‘German as a first language’ (line 20). Matteo positions these students (and not ‘all’ German students) as thinking that they are ‘better than the other students’ of other languages (lines 21), due to the difficulty of learning the German language as well as its smaller global diffusion, comparing it to English which ‘is the easy one the one the language that all all the world know’ (lines 25-26).

Ratifying Matteo’s positioning of German first language students, Silvia begins the next turn (line 27) by voicing the German students through reported speech as though they were belittling the other languages, in terms of effort in language learning. Spanish is described as being close to Italian, French only requires small suffix changes (from Italian presumably) but German ‘that’s different’ (line 31).

In the subsequent exchange with me, Matteo identifies himself as a German second language student, attributing the attitude of superiority to those students of German as
a first language only (excluding himself from that positioning therefore). Matteo then initiates a narrative, a personal story of an encounter with a German first language female student. The scene is set as just before or after a German exam (Matteo does not specify which). In this narrative Matteo uses reported speech to voice the character of the German student as being dismissive of the importance of Matteo’s going to certain German universities for his Erasmus programme, universities which Matteo subsequently defines as ‘prestigious’ (line 58) as ‘they are like the SsImt in germany’ (line 59), (positioning SsImt as an institution with high prestige in the academic world).

In the reported exchange with the other student, Matteo positions her as considering herself to be superior to him due to his being a student of German as a second language.

Matteo’s response to this reported speech contextualises the girl’s positioning herself as being superior to him, as being related to language competence. He however, refutes the suggestion that his ‘level of german’ is inferior. To further ratify this Matteo introduces the character of the German second language teacher, Elena Moscato, to support his assertion. Matteo introduces Moscato as an authoritative figure, positioning her as being ‘one of the best interpreters in Italy’ (lines 68-69), to support his assertion that second language students are not linguistically inferior to first. However, before Matteo can describe her more, his narrative is interrupted by Rosa (line 70), who refuses to ratify Moscato as being ‘one of the best’, reporting the teacher as telling the class that she was, but positioning her as potentially exaggerating her importance to the other students (see chapter 5, sections 5.2 – 5.2.9, for an analysis of a narrative where Rosa’s positioning of Moscato is explored in more detail).
7.8.2  Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narratives emerge after a previous narrative, where the participants talk about competition among Ssmmit students (see section 7.7). Matteo has described the class atmosphere as being ‘bad’, and positions some students as judging him negatively and thinking they are better than him. I then comment that there appear to be negative things about competition, and Silvia indicates that she might not agree with me (making a facial expression which I interpreted as communicating this). When I invited her to talk she introduced her narrative (section 7.8).

In the narrative-telling event, Silvia positions Matteo as being different from other members in the group, as he is a student of German and thus experiences competition differently from the others (her affirmation being that competition is more accentuated among students of German). Silvia also positions Matteo as being potentially like the students of German she is describing, ‘fussy’ (pignoli) as well as arrogant (highlighted by her description of all German students as ‘feeling like god’).

Matteo refuses to ratify this positioning of him however, as not being part of the group and having the characteristics Silvia attributes to all German students. He does not challenge her characterisation of ‘German students’ but specifies that she is referring to ‘students of German as a first language’, ratifying her assertion that ‘these’ students feel superior to other language students but that he (as a second language student) cannot be included.

Matteo’s introduction of his own narrative, of talking to a German first language student about Erasmus placements, serves to position him as the victim of unfair bias, in that German first language students would stop him from applying to prestigious German universities because they judge his level of language as being inferior to theirs. By introducing the character of Moscato, Matteo attempts to position himself as having equal language status with German first language students. However, this is challenged by Rosa who questions his claim that she is ‘one of the best interpreters in Italy’ (lines 68-69), positioning the group as not ratifying it by suggesting that this was
Moscato’s own subjective claim which ‘we don’t know (if) it’s true or not’ (line 73), where the plural pronoun ‘we’ indexes the whole group.

7.8.3  Level 3 analysis: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

Matteo’s narrative appears to invoke a neo-liberal Discourse in HE institutions (see section 5.2.7), which can be seen as positioning students in an educational market, a market where institutions manoeuvre for greater amounts of ‘capital’ (Bourdieu, 1977, see section 2.5.3) to raise their national/international status and attract more students.

The German universities, which Matteo is considering for his Erasmus placement (Heidelberg and Mannheim), are described as

58 … quite prestigious
59  they are like the ssllmit in germany

This positions Ssllmit as having a particular prestige, akin to other German universities, which echoes the institutional talk about Ssllmit students being ‘the best’ (see section 5.2.6). The ‘capital’ that such institutions have, emerges in Matteo’s narrative as being connected to language competency in a second language, suggesting that these institutions only accept foreign students who are ‘the best’ in that language, invoking another Discourse that interpreters are language experts. Matteo frames his right to go to the top German universities by claiming a language level equivalent, or higher, to students of German as a first language. His recourse to concepts of level, places language on a recognisable scale of achievement, and appears to reference the European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), (something which becomes much more evident in another of his narratives, see section 7.10, below). Thus, there appears to be an implicit understanding that interpreters are like language students, whose abilities can be graded in relation to their knowledge of language, and who are expected to move up to native-like ‘proficiency’ levels.
In their positioning of German first language students as feeling superior, Matteo and Maria both seem to invoke other forms of ‘capital’ related to the positioning of German as having more prestige than other languages. German is described as having less global reach, in that it is a language that few people know (unlike English), as well as being a language that is harder to learn for Italian students (the majority of students in Sslmit). The suggestion here is that German is a more limited resource that students have to work harder to acquire, and more prestigious for this reason. From this Bourdieusian perspective (see chapter 2, section 2.5.3) the more limited a resource is, and the harder it is to acquire, the more capital it attains in its field. I look in more detail at Bourdieu’s concepts in chapter 9, where I present my overall findings in the research and their relation to Discourses in general.

I now turn to look at another two of Matteo’s narratives (sections 7.9 and 7.10), which are interrelated (one being an extension of the other), again addressing the theme of competition in relation to students of German.

### 7.9 Second language students can be as good as first language students - Matteo’s second ‘Erasmus’ narrative

In his second one-to-one interview, Matteo returned to the subject of first and second language students of German. After informing me of attaining an Erasmus placement at a prestigious German university, I asked Matteo what was the reaction of students of German as a first language. What emerged were two separate but interrelated narratives which I present here, analysing both at levels one and two of narrative positioning (sections 7.9.1 - 7.9.2 and 7.10 - 7.10.2, respectively) before going on to a level three analysis (section 7.11).

1 Alan: and now you have a (.) a scholarship [to go to
2 Matteo: [yeah
3 Alan: was there any reaction there from these people?
4 Matteo: ye:s (.) erm: during the receiving (ours) hours hours of the of our
erazmus co-ordinator of the co-ordinator of the: (.) erm german of
the (.) germany a::nd (…) well of germany in general (..) erm well
there were 2 or 3 students of german first language and well sh- they
were very angry because students of german as second language won
er: scholarships for hidelberg er: wien ((vienna in german)) er:
(germasheim?) and these are all and munchen and they are 4 of the
hm: 4 great universities for interpreters and they were very angry
because they they said it’s not possible we are german first language
(..) well our language proficiency is better than (..) er: than second
lang- than students of (.) than the proficiency of students of german
as second language (..) and well and what sur:prised me (..) is that the
(..) even the professor said well it’s been (..) you’re right it’s not
possible (..) because she because he: he: thought that (..) well (…) it’s
right he as- he assumed that the language proficiency of the student
of the second of the student of german as second language was m:
infer- inferior? ((incredulous tone))

Alan: hm
Matteo: of the: (..) of the proficiency of the: than the proficiency of the
student of the german as a first language (..) and I think it’s quite
crazy because (..) the: professor moscato said that (..) our level was
higher (..) than german first language (..) so (.).

(Matteo 2 interview. Recording time: 01:16:11 – 01:18:45. See appendix: p.574,
lines 1202 – 1243)

7.9.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

The scene Matteo describes takes place during the receiving hours of the Erasmus co-
ordinator for the German department. The initial characters are Matteo, ‘2 or 3’
students of German as a first language (line 7), and the co-ordinator, who is also a
German professor in the institution.
Matteo describes the students as being ‘very angry’ (line 8) due to students of German as a second language winning scholarships to ‘four of the great universities for interpreters’ (lines 10-11). Matteo positions himself as being the object of this anger, as he is one of those students of German as a second language who has gained entrance to one of the ‘great German universities’.

Matteo introduces reported speech to voice the students of German as a first language,

12 because they they said it’s not possible we are german first language
13 (.) well our language proficiency is better than second
14 lang- than students of (.) than the proficiency of students of german
15 as second language

Matteo’s reported speech positions the students as not expecting any competition for places at the ‘great universities’, as their language proficiency is better than German second language students. Matteo then reports the professor’s reaction to this, which is to ratify the students’ assertion, ‘you’re right it’s not possible’ (lines 16-17). Matteo however, challenges both the students’ and the professor’s positioning of him as not having the same level of proficiency in the language. He reports his reaction to the professor’s comments as being one of surprise, because the professor ‘assumed’ (line 18) that second language German students were ‘inferior’ (line 20), positioning the professor as holding false beliefs (that German second language students have a lower language level) and Matteo as knowing better (that he is as good as German first language students). Matteo also describes the professor’s assumption as being ‘crazy’ (line 24), positioning the professor not only as being wrong but also as not being in contact with the real world. Matteo then changes scene to an undefined place, probably the interpreting classroom, and introduces the character of another German professor, Moscato (the same teacher that he introduced as being ‘one of the best interpreters in Italy’ in the first group interview, see section 7.7). Moscato is reported as telling second language students that their level was higher than German first language students. Matteo therefore introduces Moscato as a means of challenging the first professor’s assumption, and ratifying his own claim that he has an equal if not ‘higher’ level in German than first language students.
7.9.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative emerges from talk about Matteo winning an Erasmus place at Bonn university in Germany. Matteo describes this as being a very important step in improving his German, which he describes as being much weaker than his English. He then talks about how Ssmit is important because it offers many more Erasmus placements than other institutions. I remind him of his earlier narrative in the first group interview about German first language students thinking that he shouldn’t go to the top German institutions. The narrative emerges from this.

Regarding the positioning of the participants in the narrative-telling event, the researcher has no verbal interaction with Matteo during the telling of his narrative, apart from back channelling sounds expressing encouragement that he should continue. However, as an English teacher in the institution, I am positioned by Matteo as ratifying his assertion that students of German, both as a first and second language, should not in actual fact be in competition for Erasmus placements as they potentially have the same proficiency in the language. The introduction of the character of Moscato can be seen as a way of further convincing me that he is right, as she is positioned as an ultimate judge of language proficiency in German. By introducing a colleague of mine in the institution, Matteo positions me as a teacher then who will respect that colleagues evaluation of her students’ language level, and ratify Matteo’s claim to have the same level as his first language German peers.

7.10 Matteo’s third ‘Erazmus’ narrative

Matteo’s next narrative comes immediately after his first, and I present the transcript of it below, going on to analyse it through levels one and two again.

1 Matteo: so (.) and there was another episode that was I think it
2 quite funny because (. ) well to: apply for the: for for the
3 scholarship you: have to certify a B1 level (.)
4 Alan: hm m
5 Matteo: and so I had to certify a B1 level in german language (...) but I was a
6 beginner (.) a:nd (.) and this professor er:: got well I I I wrote him an
e-mail saying that well (.) erm last year er the things were not this
7 way the the things were different WHY? now (.) you well why do
you want a B1 language when I will ah: I will leave in in September?
8 so there’s plenty of time for improving (.) a:nd and well he said no::
9 it’s not possible because our reputation is high and we can’t send
beginners to germ- to ok but (.) there’s plenty of time if we are here
10 (.) I think that it means that we want to study we want to improve we:
11 (.) well and (.) I didn’t say (.) the thing that I will say now but (.) I
thought that (.) this is my second bachelor degree (.) I want to study
12 because there are not so many students who er just get a second
13 bachelor degree if I’m here it’s because I want to study I want to
14 improve I want to learn er: german (.) a:nd and well (.) but well I
15 studied I got the B1 level I applied i: (.) I won the scholarship and the
16 professor said (.) oh (.) you did it (.) yes I did it (.) a:nd (.) well now
17 he’s he’s very kind he’s (.) very great person and but the other
18 students are ve:ry angry very very angry (.)

(Matteo 2 interview. Recording time: 01:18:46 – 01:21:13. See appendix A:
p.575, lines 1243 -1277)

7.10.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Matteo introduces his character in the scene as requiring a ‘B1 level’ in German in
order to apply for the Erasmus placement (Matteo refers to the placement as a
‘scholarship’ as he knows it provides funding, something he stated earlier in the
interview). Matteo introduces a tension between his position as only being a
‘beginner’ and the institution’s requirement that he has to be certified at a B1 level
before he can apply.
The scene is introduced as an email exchange between himself and the Erasmus co-ordinator for the German department (mentioned in his previous narrative, section 7.9). He indexes the co-ordinator as a ‘professor’ (highlighting his academic role in the institution), identifying him as being personally responsible for the B1 requirement from applicants this year, and for changing the institutional position from the previous year, when ‘things were different’ (line 8). The prosodic overlay positions Matteo’s character in the narrative as being angry with the professor (indexed by the heightened stress on ‘WHY’ in his reported question, line 8). Matteo further positions the professor as being unreasonable for requiring the B1 level in the application stage and not allowing for his language development in the period leading up to the Erasmus placement in September. Matteo’s subsequent reported speech positions the professor as being worried about the institution’s reputation abroad as ‘we can’t send beginners to germ(any)’ (lines 11-12). Matteo’s reported response positions all the students who are in Ssmit as evidently wanting to study and improve their languages (indexed by the plural subject pronoun ‘we’ in ‘we want to study’, ‘we want to improve’, line 13), and positioning the institution as a place where this is expected, but the professor however as not acknowledging this. Matteo then introduces a more personal description of himself as someone who is doing his second degree, which he uses to position himself further as being even more likely to study and improve his German than the other students, as he has already successfully studied and acquired a degree in the past.

The final part of his narrative presents a summary of his achievements (given in quick succession, suggesting a check-list of goals set and then met) which position the professor as being wrong in his initial assumptions about Matteo remaining a beginner, and unlikely to get his Erasmus placement, and Matteo as being right

18 … but well I
19 studied I got the B1 level I applied i: (.) I won the scholarship

The professor is then reported as being surprised

20 … (the) professor said oh (.) you did it (.) yes I did it (.)
and showing Matteo greater regard

21… (well now) he’s he’s very kind

whilst the students of german as a first language are left being ‘very angry’ (line 22), emphasised by a repetition of the phrase, together with a repetition of the adverb ‘very’.

Matteo’s overall positioning in this narrative then is of someone who is determined and agentive in his approach to his language studies and his ability to meet his goals, even when he considers them to be unfair.

7.10.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative emerges as a progression from Matteo’s previous narrative where he positions himself as having the same level of German as students of German as a first language, challenging the German professor’s positioning of him as not. His second narrative serves as a vehicle to prove that he was right, as it further positions the German professor as being wrong about his ability to study and improve in order to meet the language requirements for the Erasmus placement.

Again here, I have no verbal exchange with Matteo but I am positioned as a witness to Matteo’s success, and as implicitly ratifying Matteo’s positioning of himself as being capable of challenging the unfair categorisation of his level of German as inferior, by fellow peers and professors, by merit of his ability to study hard.
7.11 Level 3 analysis – Discourses in Matteo’s second and third ‘Erasmus’ narratives

In Matteo’s second narrative the neo-liberal Discourse of HE institutions appears to be invoked again (see section 7.8.3), as exemplified by the German professor’s reluctance to send Matteo to one of the top German universities

11 because our reputation is high and we can’t send
12 beginners

which positions Matteo as not having enough ‘capital’ (in the form of second language knowledge) for the top end of the HE market, which Sslmit is positioned as being part of by both Matteo and the German professor.

The ‘capital’ that such institutions have, emerges in both Matteo’s narratives as being connected to language competency, which is clearly framed in the third narrative by Matteo’s positioning of himself within the European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), initially describing himself as a ‘beginner’ (line 6) but needing to be ‘certified’ at a ‘B1 level’ (line 3). Matteo describes the requisite of a ‘B1 level’ as originating from the German professor, which shows that the institutional representatives actively invoke language levels and position students in relation to them. Furthermore, these levels index a scale of progression towards ‘proficiency’, C2 level in the CEFR, or near native speaker status. This is borne out in the department’s website which defines students’ ‘knowledge and understanding’ objectives as attaining a ‘C1 level’ by their third year (see chapter one, section 1.2).

Moreover, Matteo’s narrative positions institutional representatives (in the character of the German professor as the Erasmus co-ordinator) as applying these levels rigidly in their evaluations of students’ language competence within the institution, and the students’ potential to ‘represent’ the institution on the HE market with other ‘top’ institutions (i.e. the great German universities).
Although Sslmit expresses the goal that all its students will attain a common C1 level in both their first and second languages by the end of the third year (see chapter one, section 1.2), Matteo’s third narrative suggests that this is not what teachers actually expect of them, as the German professor is positioned as being sceptical that Matteo can even attain a B1 level by his second year (when the institution sends its students on Erasmus). Through his narrative Matteo positions himself as challenging this perception of him by the institutional figure of the German professor, showing that he is able to attain the level set, as exemplified by his success story in acquiring a ‘B1 level’ and an Erasmus placement at a top German university.

In the following sections of this chapter I look at how my participants (re)positioned themselves with regard to competitiveness in the classroom in their second term.

### 7.12 Participant (re-)positioning in relation to competitiveness across the data - Introduction.

In the second session of interviews the theme of competition emerged again, albeit principally elicited by myself, often introduced through direct questions to the participants. This elicitation was due to a wish to explore the theme of competition more, as it had emerged so strongly in the first session of interviews, where it was principally unsolicited, and to see how the participants positioned themselves over time. In the following sections I examine how each participant (re)positioned him/herself towards competition in the institution then.

#### 7.12.1 Silvia’s positioning in relation to competitiveness

In the second session of interviews, made during the final exam period at the end of the academic year, I asked Silvia if she still thought that competition in the class was a positive thing or if she had changed her mind. Silvia responded in the following way
1 Silvia:  hm no (. ) at the end I know the people who are into competition (. )
2 too much into competition I know people who aren’t and I know how
3 to deal with them (. ) all of them it’s just I think it’s all about knowing
4 how to deal with different people …

(Silvia 2 interview. See appendix: p.642, lines 683 – 689)

In contrast with her positioning in the first group interview (see section 7.7), where Silvia positioned students into two groups, those that can take competition and those that cannot, here she talks about those students who are ‘too much into competition’ (line 2). She therefore aligns herself with Matteo’s similar positioning of students in the first group interview (see section 7.7), placing more emphasis on the negative aspect of competition in the institution.

Silvia’s earlier division of students in the first group interview, positioned all the students as engaging in competition among themselves, but coping with that competition in different ways. However, this has shifted to identifying two different groups, those who ‘know how to deal with them’ (lines 2-3) and those who do not (where the pronoun ‘them’ refers to students who are ‘too much into competition’). In this new dichotomy of the student population Silvia positions herself as belonging to the former, ‘I know how to deal with them’ (lines 2-3). Competition has therefore shifted from being a generally shared experience, which students can or cannot take, to one of degree, where some students are ‘too much’ into it, and others not. Silvia no longer sees competition as a thing then that everyone has to ‘deal with’ but rather it is the need for one group to deal with another (i.e. those students who are too competitive).

7.12.2 Maria’s positioning in relation to competitiveness

In Maria’s interview in the second one-to-one session I asked her the same question as I asked Silvia, whether things had changed or not with regards to her seeing competition as being a positive thing. Maria responded
1 Maria: hmm yeah there is a lot of competition (.I think it’s good there is cos you’re gonna find it in a working environment there has to be competition (.I think I still think it’s nice (.it’s not that bad everybody knows where your strong point is and where you can rely and where you cannot work that hard because you’re really good with that but you know that you can help and ask help can ask for help to the other people (.)

(Maria 2 interview. See appendix A: p.518, lines 721 – 732)

Maria reinforces her position, as emerged in the earlier group narrative, that competition helps weaker students by providing help and support (lines 4-7), as well as preparing students for future work (line 2). When asked by me to talk specifically about the ‘classroom’ however, Maria says

1 Maria: the live cla- er: there are a couple of people in the whole (..) school that are (.)((exhales)) that I can’t stand sometimes because they they know a lot about the language but they want to show it

(Maria 2 interview. See appendix A: p.520, lines 786 – 790)

As with Silvia in her narrative, Maria identifies the character of a group of students as being overly competitive. Maria positions these students as not helping their fellow students but rather as being show-offs, people who know a lot about languages but ‘want to show it’ (line 3). She positions her own character as not being one of these, and as someone who ‘can’t stand’ them (line 2).

When I subsequently ask Maria what her reaction is to these students she responds

1 Maria: …. we just don’t listen to them if they’re not interesting if they are then we take notes and then we say ok (..) can’t stand you

(Maria 2 interview. See appendix A: p.524, lines 922 – 925)
Diversely from her comments on competition then in her first session interviews (see section 7.7), where the collective character of the other students is described as supportive, in her second session Maria divides that character into two, the minority class show-offs and the majority non show-offs. Maria positions herself as belonging to the latter group, positioning the former as being sometimes helpful (when the non show-offs ‘take notes’, line 2) but still strongly disliked and barely put up with by the non show-offs (who often say, ‘ok can’t stand you’, line 2).

Maria, like Silvia, positions some students as being too competitive, and highlights the need to ‘deal with them’ in order to maintain a positive atmosphere in the class.

7.12.3 Rosa’s positioning in relation to competitiveness

When I posed the same question to Rosa, in her second one-to-one interview, concerning the classroom atmosphere as having changed or not, she responded

1 Rosa: I think that erm (.) atmosphere here like the students is really nice it’s really good (.) everybody tries to help each other out and if you ask somebody help they help you it’s not like it’s not a bad competition (2.0)

(Rosa 2 interview. See appendix A: p.584, lines 158 – 165)

As in her first group session interview (section 7.7), Rosa positions the collective character of the other students again as being helpful and supportive. However, rather than identifying herself as a protagonist who is aligned with this character, Rosa positions herself as being apart from it. Her non-native speaker status in an Italian University is used to position her as being at a disadvantage for competing with the other students

1 I still feel I am disadvantaged but I think maybe like after some years I will be able to ((small laugh)) become like the one of them but
right now yeah still it’s a bit hard

(Rosa 2 interview. See appendix A: p.588, lines 281 – 286)

As her interpreting courses are always between another language and Italian, Rosa identifies herself as a character that is separate from the others, not ‘one of them’ (line 3) and unable to compete on a level playing field.

7.12.4 Matteo’s positioning in relation to competitiveness

When Matteo is asked how he sees competitiveness in his second term (in his second one-to-one interview) he responds,

1 Matteo: (...) well I think the: (4.0) the competitiveness is just the same but
2 since we: (3.0) well (.) during the first semester we didn’t do the
3 mediation so: we couldn’t imagine how (.) in- (.) interpreting was (.)
4 and (.) since we have seen that the mediation itself the interpreting
5 job is (...) really difficult there’s no: (.) you you just (.) there’s no
6 room for competitiveness (.) e:::rm so: you just have to help the
7 other students

(Matteo 2 interview. See appendix A: p.564, lines 849 – 860)

Although Matteo initially appears to support his original comments about competition among students (‘the competitiveness is just the same’, line 1) he nevertheless describes it as being different in the second term. The two types of student from his previous narrative (section 7.7), those who judge and criticise and those who don’t, have become one character in his second interview. This new character is shaped by there being ‘no room for competitiveness’ (lines 5-6) in the interpreting lessons of the second term. Matteo positions himself as having the same character as the other students in this new environment, where everyone has to help each other (lines 6-7).
7.12.5 Federico’s positioning in relation to competitiveness

When I asked Federico about the ‘competitive nature’ of the classroom in his second one-to-one interview, which he described negatively in his first one-to-one and group interviews (see section 7.7), he responded

1 well probably (. ) it’s erm (. ) probably less er (. ) less of it because
2 people know each other better and er the: you know it’s more of a: a
3 personal relation with the people (being) together for one year more or less

(Federico 2 interview. See appendix A: p.474, lines 205 – 210)

Federico’s initial positioning of the character of students as ‘mocking’ and ‘presumptuous’ (section 7.7) changes in his second interview, where they are portrayed as less competitive due to stronger ‘personal relation(s)’ (line 3), and knowing ‘each other better’ (line 2). The negative positioning in the first session of interviews is not present in the second, and Federico makes no reference to the ‘bad atmosphere’ in the classroom that was previously marked.

7.13 Conclusions

The narratives that were analysed in this chapter focus on the relationships between students and their peers in the context of the institution, providing an insight into how Discourses influence the identities of the student-interpreter, and the changes that occur in those identities over time.

These narratives show how my participants position the identity of the Sslmit student as being overtly work and study orientated, allowing little to no time to devote to relaxation and the pursuit of ‘fun’ (i.e. enjoying other social aspects of university life). This identity is linked to neo-liberal Discourses which sees the institution as promoting itself as being the best for students wishing to find careers in interpreting,
and implicitly expecting students to attain high standards through their work and study in order to be entitled to claim the title of being among the best. The participants’ narratives position the institution as playing an active role in shaping this identity, as Rosa’s comment highlights when she implies that Sslmit makes students into ‘nerds’ (sections 7.2-7.3.3). Although this appears to be a generally accepted by the other participants, it is not generally thought of as being a positive student-identity. Silvia challenges it for example (section 7.4), warning her fellow participants that they ‘have to rest too’ (line 2) and that there is ‘not only sslmit we have whole life ok’ (line 1), positioning the student-identity as potentially being self-harming by focusing too much on work and study, and risking their physical and mental health. Both Silvia and Marta (sections 7.4-7.41) attribute part of this identity to the way the institution is perceived as positioning them to perform as though they were already the best, taking for granted that they will work and study accordingly, to the highest of standards throughout their university careers.

Another aspect of the student-identity, which emerged through the narratives analysed, positions Sslmit students as been highly competitive. This can also be linked to neo-liberal Discourses in the institution and the onus on students to perform as though they are the best, which appears to play out in the classroom, with individuals vying to show themselves to be better than their peers. Furthermore, the Discourse of interpreters as language experts seems to underpin the nature of this competition, representing the high standard in language competence that students are seeking to compete in. The participants’ positioning in relation to the competitive nature of the student-interpreter’s identity within the institution is not uniform however, nor is it constant over time (as shown through differences between narratives in the first term in comparison to the second term, see sections 7.12 - 7.12.5). A general acknowledgement that all Sslmit students are competitive in the first session of interviews, is interpreted as being both positive and negative. On the positive side, competition is positioned by some as helping students improve their language skills (Silvia, Matteo and Maria’s narratives) and preparing them for competition in the work place (Silvia and Matteo’s narratives), however on the negative side it is positioned as creating a bad study environment in the classroom, creating tension between students (Federico and Matteo’s narratives). By the second term (in those
narratives collected in the second session) the participants’ positioning has changed. Silvia and Maria’s initial positioning of competition as being almost exclusively positive has turned to identifying a small proportion of the student body as being ‘too competitive’ (Silvia) and ‘show-offs’ (Maria) which upsets the harmony of the classroom. Rosa’s overall positive positioning of competition in the first term appears to remain the same, although she excludes herself from competing on the basis that she is not Italian, positioning it as something that only Italian students engage in. Both Matteo and Federico no longer adhere to the position that competition creates a bad classroom environment, attributing this alternatively to the nature of interpreting studies (requiring cooperation) and improved personal relationships between the students.

Another aspect that emerged through the narratives analysed, is that competition can be different between languages, as well as the level at which those languages are taught. Silvia’s narrative that students of German are more competitive than students of English (see section 7.7), and Matteo’s subsequent narratives on his experiences in applying for an Erasmus placement (see sections 7.8 – 7.11), invoke a Discourse that some languages are positioned as having greater ‘capital’ (see chapter 2, section 2.5.3) than others, capital which is positioned as being greater the more a language differs from Italian and the more limited it is with respect to global diffusion in the interpreting market. Matteo’s differentiation between students of German as a first language of study and those as a second (his own), highlight a competition for places in the top German universities, which the former claim as their right based on a language expert Discourse of language proficiency as the ultimate deciding factor, and assumptions that 2nd language students are inferior in this respect. Matteo’s reported speech of the German professor co-ordinating the Erasmus placements also invokes neo-liberal Discourses about Sslmit’s high status in the academic market, as well as linking that status to language goals among the student population, portrayed as a necessity in order to represent the institution in similarly high status universities abroad.
Chapter 8

Data analysis

8.1 The role of teacher-student relations in shaping student-interpreter identities in the institution - Introduction

In this chapter I look at the relationships between students and their teachers in the context of the institution, and how these relationships seem to affect their perceptions of their identities as interpreting students. Through narrative positioning analysis I focus particularly on those narratives that were concerned principally with these relationships, and the ways in which the students perceive Sslmit as being different from other higher education institutions.

8.2 Teacher-student ratios and better learning: Matteo’s narrative

The participants do not talk very much about teachers in their first one-to-one interviews, however Matteo and Silvia do. These two participants had already frequented other Italian university departments, Silvia having spent a year in Bologna’s department for political sciences before leaving to enter Sslmit, and Matteo having acquired his first degree in ‘oriental languages’ at La Sapienza university in Rome before transferring to Forli to do his second degree at Sslmit (see chapter 3, section 3.3.1 for a brief biographical history of all the participants).

I begin this chapter by looking at the narratives which emerged in Matteo and Silvia’s first one-to-one interviews concerning Sslmit teachers, analysing them through the lens of narrative positioning to examine how they position Sslmit teachers in relation to their previous experiences and invoke wider Discourses which appear across the data.
In his first one-to-one interview, I ask Matteo about his ‘experiences of Ssmit’ since coming to the institution from Rome. Matteo had already talked about his first degree in Rome earlier on in the interview and I ask him what is ‘good or bad’ about Ssmit in comparison. What follows is a narrative that compares his experiences in Rome to Ssmit, followed by two embedded narratives (see section 6.2 for a definition) concerning a friend in Rome and another at Ssmit (frequenting his second year in the institution).

1 Alan: … (. ) what were you’re experiences of sslmit since you’ve been here?
2
3 Matteo: (. ) well
4 Alan: go- good and bad perhaps
5 ((matteo laughs))
6 Matteo: well er::m (…) in rome er:::m the::: the classes were overcrowded
7 (. ) so er::m in my: even in Japanese class well (. ) o:ne (. ) we we can
8 think that Japanese is not a so a a language that is so: (. ) that is
9 popular (. ) but er::m in rome er: Japanese classes but even Chinese
10 classes Korean classes they were overcrowded you couldn’t find a
11 seat a:nd sin- since there were a lot of students in the er: in the
12 rooms well you you don’t have a direct contact with the
13 with the professors
14 Alan: hm m
15 Matteo: er:m so I think here here at the sslmit you: can be: er: (. ) follow I
16 don’t know if I can say I can use this (verb) but you can be
17 followed by the by the professors
18 Alan: hm m
19 Matteo: there’s a: there’s a contact and a and I think that the subjects are
20 more: er: well the- there’s more practice
21 Alan: hm m
22 Matteo: er::m and tha- that’s that’s what er: (…) wh- what I i I find this
23 amazing here at the sslmit
24 Alan: h hm
25 Matteo: first of all then the quality of the: (. ) er::: of s- of the: of the teaching

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26 Alan:       hm m
27 Matteo:  in general [here
28 Alan:               [hm
29 Matteo:  because I think it’s high quality
30 Alan:      hm m
31 Matteo:  it’s completely different for example in in rome er well one of my
32    friends er:m studies
33 Matteo:  er:m mediazione [culturale
34 Alan:                        [hm m
35 Matteo:  in rome well th- the I think that the name of the: bachelor degree
36 is the is the same but the level they they reach at the end of the of
37 their studies at the end of the of the years (. ) er:m is completely
38 different well wha- the the level they reach at the end of their
39 studies is th- the level we need to get into the into the sslmit
40 Alan:      hm m
41 Matteo:  and well i: I have a friend here at the sslmit and he studies he’s
42   er:m he’s attending the second year courses em: well (. ) he: he
43 told me about the sslmit and the courses and well i: i: could see
44    that the level was completely different
45 Alan:      h hm
46 Matteo:  and (. ) that was that was amazing so I decided

(Matteo 1 interview. Recording times: 00:07:16 – 00:10:10. See appendix A: p.371, lines, 140 – 205)

8.2.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Matteo introduces the scene of classes in Rome, which he describes as being ‘overcrowded’ (line 6). The students there are positioned as having to study in physically uncomfortable conditions, as not all of them could find seats (lines 10-11), and the ‘professors’ are positioned as being distant, having no ‘direct contact’ (line 12) with the students. Matteo then introduces Ssllmit, where ‘there’s a contact’ (line 19)
between professors and students, and where the former are able to ‘follow’ (line 15) the students’ progress more, giving more opportunities for the students to practice their ‘subjects’. This contrast between Rome and Sslmit is described by Matteo as being ‘amazing’ (line 23), positioning Sslmit as being a much more positive environment to study in than Rome, in part due to its smaller teacher-student ratio and greater ‘contact’ with teachers who are able to guide their progress more.

Matteo then goes on to position the teachers at Sslmit as providing a higher quality of teaching than the teachers at Rome. He introduces an embedded narrative of a ‘friend’ who is studying for a similar degree in Rome to Matteo’s at Sslmit (‘mediazione culturale’, Cultural mediation). His friend, and the friend’s fellow students (indexed by the plural pronoun ‘they’, line 36), are described as attaining a language level at the end of their bachelor degree which is only the starting level at Sslmit, positioning the institution as providing better language teaching.

Matteo then introduces another embedded narrative with another friend, who is already in his second year at Sslmit, positioning him as being an experienced informant on the institution. Although Matteo begins to introduce the friend’s reported speech about courses in the institution (‘he told me about the Sslmit and the courses’, lines 42-43), he stops before reporting the actual speech to introduce his own voice, positioning the friend as being unnecessary to the narrative as Matteo ‘could see the level (at Sslmit) was completely different’ himself (lines 43-44). This positions Matteo as a language student who knows how to judge language levels.

Matteo finishes his turn by describing the language level in Sslmit as being ‘amazing’ (line 46), using the same adjective that he used to describe the closer teacher-student relationship at Sslmit, and suggesting that this was why he ‘decided’ (line 46) to come to institution. The repeated use of the adjective ‘amazing’, appears to create a causal link between smaller classes, with more teacher-student ‘contact’, and the high level of language teaching in the institution; higher than other institutions, such as Matteo’s last university in Rome.
8.2.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

Matteo’s narratives emerge from talk about his previous experiences in Rome and his new experiences at Sslmit.

In the interview, I position Matteo as an experienced student who already has experiences in another Italian university, which make him a valid informant on how the institution may differ from other higher education institutions. By eliciting ‘good or bad’ experiences (line 4), I position myself as a ‘researcher’ who is interested in obtaining an objective overview, and not as a teacher who might take criticism personally and expect only positive feedback. Affirmed in this positioning, Matteo proceeds to inform me about the negative aspects of studying in his previous institution (overcrowding, less contact with the teachers and less potential to practice their languages) and the ‘amazing’ difference in Sslmit (no overcrowding, more contact with the teachers, more potential to practice and develop languages, and a higher standard of teaching in general). Matteo’s praise for the teachers at Sslmit positions me as a teacher who is equally worthy of that praise, and positions Matteo as a happy and content student in the institution.

8.2.3 Level 3 analysis: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

Matteo’s narratives highlight the difference in the teacher-to-student ratio between La Sapienza university in Rome and Sslmit. This is reflected in the statistics of tertiary education in Italy in general, where the average university teacher has 19.5 students per head, in comparison, for example, to the UK’s 17.4 and the United States’ 13.3 (statistics taken from a UNESCO survey)\(^{43}\). This is a marked difference from statistics from Italian upper secondary education where trends appear to be reversed, with Italy having 10.9 students per teacher in comparison with the UK’s 13, and the United States 15 (Ibid).

\(^{43}\) 2008 statistics from UNESCO’s survey of world education, as presented on their website, http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/default.aspx
The higher teacher-to-student ratio in Italy’s tertiary education might be explained in part by very low public investment in state university education, spending only 4.8% of its GDP in 2008 (1.3 percentage points below the OECD’s average total of 6.1%) ranking it 29th out of 34 countries surveyed (OECD statistics in world education44).

Matteo positions Sslmit as being different from other Italian state universities then, by having a much lower teacher-to-student ratio. This positioning is used, in part, to suggest the reason for higher standards of teaching at Sslmit in comparison to other language teaching institutions (i.e. La Sapienza where he studied). The relation between smaller teacher-student classroom ratios and better teaching and student language learning outcomes, invokes Discourses that lower teacher-student ratios improve student performance in language classes.

Research has suggested that smaller class sizes facilitate a stronger sense of unity and cohesion among students, aiding in creating a lighter, more playful classroom environment (Wang and Finn 2000), and specifically from the student’s perspective on language learning, smaller classes have evidenced lower levels of student anxiety (Harfitt, 2012), where

- Students in smaller classes were more aware of support provided by classmates.
- Students in smaller classes sensed having more confidence in speaking up and participating in class.
- These same students were less anxious about receiving negative evaluation from peers.
- They also perceived a reduced loss of ‘face’ when compared with studying in a larger class.

(Ibid: 336)

44 See http://www.oecd.org/education/school/educationataglance2011oecdindicators.htm
Moreover, students in reduced-sized language classes were also shown to demonstrate a more elevated sense of community, where the teacher was perceived as a member of that community rather than a figure of authority on the outside (Harfitt, 2012).

Matteo’s portrayal of his experiences in La Sapienza appear to invoke a lack of sense of community there, with less ‘contact’ between teachers and students, and less positive learning outcomes. The relationship between teachers and students, contextualised as a tight community in Sslmit, is evidenced across the research data, which I shall be looking at in the following sections of this chapter (sections 8.3 – 8.4.3). Although this community is portrayed as being something positive in the first session of interviews, in particular by Matteo and Silvia (see section 8.3, below), it undergoes changes by the second term, as exemplified by individual and group narratives in the second session interviews (sections 8.6 - 8.9.3). Before turning to look at these narratives however, I present Silvia’s narrative from the first session, and its emphasis on the tight sense of community she portrays between teachers and students.

8.3 Teacher-student ratios and a closer community: Silvia’s narrative

In her first one-to-one interview, Silvia also talks about her experiences in her former department, Political Sciences (at Bologna University), comparing it to Sslmit and the teachers that she has there.

1 Alan: right (.) and in the classrooms in the the lessons after when you
2 started your course
3 Silvia: h hm
4 Alan: what sort of atmosphere (…) was there? was it? [could you describe it
5 Silvia: [ah:::
6 (. ) well I feel really comfortable
7 Alan: yeah
8 Silvia: because I mean I was I attended S.I.D (.) political science (.) I didn’t
9 feel quite comfortable ah because even if there wasn’t that

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Silvia’s narrative is introduced in line 8, after I had asked her about the ‘atmosphere’ in the Sslmit classes. She sets the scene in the department of political sciences where she had studied previously (see section 3.3.1 for a biography) and positions herself as
not feeling ‘comfortable’ there (lines 8-9) as she felt that she ‘wasn’t in the right place’ (line 12), and was not interested in what the teachers had to say. She then changes scene to Sslmit in the present where she positions herself as being in the ‘right place’ now, and in her ‘element’ (line 21). The teachers in Sslmit are positioned as being liked by both her and all her fellow students (indexed by her use of the plural object pronoun ‘us’, when they speak to ‘us students’, line 29) because they are ‘so natural’ (lines 26-27), which suggests that they are relaxed and easy to talk to perhaps. Silvia then positions the teachers as feeling the same about the students as well, portraying them as feeling ‘comfortable when they are speaking to …us’ (line 29), again suggesting a relaxed and informal relationship. Silvia concludes her turn by comparing both teachers and students to being like ‘a family’ (line 31).

8.3.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative emerges from talk about Silvia’s experiences in the classroom at Sslmit. Silvia positions herself as feeling ‘comfortable’ there, suggesting to me that she was meant to study in the institution. Affirmed in this positioning by my back channelling ‘yeah’ (line 7), she introduces her experience in the political sciences department as an example of a place where she did not feel comfortable. In this sustained turn, Silvia seems to be positioning me as potentially doubting her affirmation that Sslmit is where she belongs, and countering that by re-enforcing her positioning of herself as being in the right place now. Silvia uses her narrative to contrast her past and present selves. In the past (in political sciences) she ‘didn’t feel quite comfortable’ (lines 8-9), she ‘wasn’t in the right place’ (line 12), and the teachers didn’t say anything interesting (emphasised by her repetition of her not being ‘bothered’ about what they said, line 15). Silvia’s final stretch of dialogue appears to further reinforce her positioning of herself as belonging in Sslmit, repeating her affirmation (with heightened stress) that ‘I just feel right here’ (line 19), and describing herself as being in her ‘element’ (line 21).

I challenge her positioning of herself as feeling comfortable and in the right place by suggesting that the teachers at Sslmit ‘put pressure’ on her (lines 22-23) and that
potentially therefore she might not be on good terms with them. Silvia however, refuses to ratify this by giving an immediate denial (‘no the teachers I don’t think so’, line 24) and an affirmation that she likes the teachers because they are ‘natural’ (line 27), positioning them as being relaxed and easy to get on with (as previously suggested). Silvia then positions the students and teachers as being like ‘a family’ (line 31). This positions me as a teacher (being part of the teaching staff) and consequently a member of the ‘family’ she is describing, potentially undermining a strict teacher-student asymmetrical power relationship. As a reaction to her own affirmation then Silvia subsequently comments ‘I know it’s a little insane’ (lines 31-32), positioning me as perhaps not agreeing with her, or finding her comment as being threatening to me as a professional teacher in the institution.

8.3.3 Level 3 analysis: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

Although Silvia does not talk about the didactic advantages of a smaller teacher-student ratio, as Matteo does, she does appear to emphasise a greater feeling of intimacy between the teachers and students in Sslmit (in contrast to her previous department), a spirit of community which is positioned as being similar to perhaps the most intimate of communities, the family. In relation to the Discourse that smaller classes can foster a close community environment, with the teacher being considered less of an outsider in such communities (Wang and Finn, 2000; Harfitt, 2012), Silvia’s choice of metaphor (the family) appears to position the teacher as a parental figure, part of an intimate, hierarchical structure, where the students are consequently positioned as children. Silvia’s narrative might be interpreted as her attempt to firmly position herself as a valid member of the ‘family’ of Sslmit, a place where she is ‘comfortable’ and on intimate terms with her teachers (positioning herself it seems as a daughter to her parents), respectful of the power difference but also perhaps expectant of care and concern for her development (see section 8.8, where the parental image of the teacher re-emerges in other narratives).

The intimate teacher-student community that Silvia’s narrative portrays in Sslmit is also present in other narratives that emerge in subsequent one-to-one interviews in the
second session of interviews. I now turn to look at these, and then go on to look at the final group interview where all the participants narrate their perceptions of the effect of this teacher-student community on their lives in the institution.

8.4 Teachers are not ‘classical university professors’: Federico’s narrative

In his second one-to-one interview, I ask Federico about relations between students and teachers, and whether he has noticed any ‘changes or trends’ over the year. Federico begins by talking about missing lessons more in the second term, and not feeling obliged to frequent all his classes as he did in the first term. The following talk emerges from this.

1 Fed: …also regarding to the teachers you: professors I should say (.) well (.)
2 ((laughs)) ah the relation between (…) the students and the professors
3 it’s not exactly a professor student relationship ((laughing tone))
4 Alan: no? why?
5 Fed: well mainly because it’s not (.) 10 (.) metres away and it’s just (.) here
6 (. ) it’s more personal it’s (.) it’s not a classical university professor in
7 italy at least (.)
8 Alan: hm
9 Fed: (.) generally it’s 200 people classes so it’s not (.) personal
10 Alan: hm m
11 Fed: and (2.0)
12 Alan: is that good? do do do you like this aspect of it?
13 Fed: em yes I guess so yes it’s erm (.) yes with the funny ones yes ((small
14 laugh)) (.) but still with the one you don’t really care for you (.) don’t
15 really have to (.) talk to them ((laughs))
16 Alan: hm m
17 Fed: yeah you do the class (and your like) the: the one you you (…) you like
18 more (.) you talk to them and it’s not (xx) becomes more of a erm (…)
19 knowing kinda thing rather than being in the same room and you teach
20 to me and I learn (.)
21 Alan: hm m
22 Fed: so yes it’s good because (.) you get to meet the person and it’s good (.)
23 I guess it’s (.) it’s a good thing ((laughs))

(Federico 2 interview. Recording time: 00:12:31 - 00:14:03. See appendix A: p.475, Lines 247 – 280)

Federico, like Matteo and Silvia, had also been in another Italian university (studying medicine) before coming to Sslmit (see section 3.3.1 for a biography), and he appears to draw on this experience to compare the two in his narrative. I now go on to analyse this using narrative positioning.

8.4.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Federico’s introduction to his narrative positions the teachers and the students in Sslmit as not having a *standard* teacher-student relationship, ‘it’s not exactly a professor student relationship’ (line 3), indexing the teacher as a ‘professor’ and therefore part of the field of higher education, and positioning himself as someone who knows what that relationship should be. Federico then introduces the scene of the Sslmit classroom which is described as being more ‘personal’ than ‘a classical university professor in Italy’ would expect (lines 6-7); where ‘classical’ appears to index what Federico perceives as being the average or *standard* classroom in Italian higher education institutions. The ‘classical’ Italian classroom is portrayed as having an elevated student-teacher ratio (‘200 people per class, line 9) and a greater spatial distance between teacher and students (over ‘10 metres’, line 5). The closer physical proximity of the professor to a smaller group of students in the Sslmit classroom is described as being ‘more personal’ (line 6), suggesting that this is more than just a numerical and spatial variation, but one of personal relationships.

When the I ask Federico if the different teacher-student relationship in Sslmit is ‘good’ (line 12), Federico divides the teachers into two types of character, those who are amusing, ‘the funny ones’ (line 13), and those who are not. Federico positions himself
and his fellow students (indexed by his use of the impersonal ‘you’ pronoun, line 14) as preferring the former, whom they get to know, and the latter as those they do not really ‘care for’ (line 14) and don’t talk to. Federico appears to be focusing on the level of amusement or entertainment that the teacher generates in the classroom in relation to liking a teacher or not. He also describes his fellow students and himself as not attending the classes of those teachers they do not like (‘you do the class the one ….you like more’, lines 17-18) which positions the value of an entertaining or amusing lesson above its didactic value.

Moreover, Federico describes the teacher-student relationship as not being one of ‘you teach me and I learn’ (lines 19-20) but rather of a ‘knowing kinda thing’ (line 19), where personal relationships are highlighted as being more relevant than pedagogical ones. Federico concludes his turn by seeing this ability to ‘meet the person’ (line 22), (presumably to get to know the teacher) as a good thing, albeit tentatively so (noted by the use of ‘I guess’, line 23).

### 8.4.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative emerges from talk about Federico’s experiences with the teachers at Sslmit. I invite him to act as an informant, and Federico takes up that role, positioning himself and myself as having a shared understanding of what the teacher-student roles should be and how Sslmit is different. Federico’s initial comment regarding the ‘teachers’ is reformulated as the ‘professors I should say’ (line 1), positioning me as an institutional figure in a university context. This might also be a way of contextualising the relationship at a university level and showing me that Federico is aware of the difference. I, however, refuse to ratify Federico’s positioning of me as knowing that Sslmit is different from other institutions, by voicing uncertainty (‘no? why?’ , line 4 ) and asking him to explain why he thinks so. Federico subsequently positions himself as an informant on the ‘classical’ Italian university system, and myself as being unknowledgeable about this and in need of the relevant information he can supply.
After highlighting the elevated numerical ratio of teacher to students in Italian universities, and the greater spatial separation between the two (described as being a less ‘personal’ relationship between the two), I position myself as a foreign teacher who is unaware of this cultural difference, and question whether or not it is desirable to have closer teacher-student contact. Although my positioning of myself might be taken as making a teacher’s pedagogical inquiry (i.e. does it facilitate learning?), Federico chooses to interpret it as one of ‘personal’ relationships between teachers and students. He positions me therefore as someone who is interested in the emotive aspect of teacher-student relationships in Sslmit, where students are positioned by him as choosing to frequent classes based more on whether they like the teachers as people, rather than on whether they are good teachers or not. In lines 18-20, Federico appears to clarify his reasons for talking about these personal relationships by positioning me as being potentially unaware about the student perspective of classroom life in Sslmit, where didactic reasons for attending are secondary to personal (‘it’s a knowing kinda thing rather than .. you teach me and I learn’, lines 19-20). In his final turn, Federico reinforces his positioning of himself as a student informant and his choice of interpretation of my question as being about personal relationships, repeating his evaluation of Sslmit as being good ‘because you get to meet the person and it’s good’ (line 22).

8.4.3 Level 3 analysis: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

Federico appears to invoke Discourses concerning smaller class sizes facilitating a lighter, more playful classroom environment (Wang and Finn 2000), where some teachers are ‘funny’ (the ones they want to get to know), and others are presumably not (the ones they do not care for), and how teachers are perceived by the students as being inside or outside their community accordingly (Harfitt, 2012). Federico’s focus however is not on the didactic advantages of lower teacher to student ratios (unlike Matteo in his narrative, see section 8.2) but rather on the ‘personal’ relationships that form between teachers and their students, which he positions as being more important than the actual learning processes in the classroom. In his words the Sslmit classroom is not a place where ‘you teach me and I learn’ (lines 19-20), it is a place of personal
relationships between the students and their teacher, a place where you ‘do the class…you like more’ (lines 17-18), which is not about the lesson but about the teacher’s character. In sum, Federico’s positioning of Sslmit as being different from other Italian institutions, where the teacher is not like ‘a classical university professor’ (line 6) highlights the relationship between teachers and the students as being more personal, playing a larger role in their lives than the didactic processes going on in the classroom.

Furthermore, Federico’s implicit assumption that normal teacher-student relationships (which do not exist in Sslmit) are about channelling information (‘you teach me and I learn’), also invokes a further Discourse which portrays teachers as ‘conduits’ of information, foregrounding cognitive processes and backgrounding social processes in teacher-student interaction. This Discourse, in relation to language learning, takes a decontextualized and reified view of the learner, depicting him/her as a passive container of information, where language is seen as being an objective body of knowledge which is ‘transmitted’ from teacher to student (Kramsch: 2009). The counter Discourse to this sees the student as a ‘social learner’ and not just a recipient of pedagogy, evolving out of a particular socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-educational environment and learning in a situated context (Norton: 1995, 2000, 2006; Pavlenko & Blackledge: 2004; Pavlenko: 2006; Kramsch: 2009).

Federico’s narrative then exhibits a tension between these two Discourses. On one side he appears to accept the Discourse that normal teacher-student relations are about transmitting knowledge, but in the context of Sslmit this does not appear to apply as the social atmosphere of the class is foremost, and central to this is the personal relationship that the teacher has with the students.

8.5 Changes in perceptions of teacher-student relationships in the second term: Matteo’s narrative

Whereas in his first interview one-to-one Matteo is positive about his relationship with teachers (see section 8.2), in his second one-to-one interview he raises a complaint
about them, regarding whether students can or cannot refuse a mark and retake their exams. Matteo takes issue with the different language departments and their contradictory positions on the matter (in particular the German and English departments). The following is a transcript of the dialogue that introduces his narrative,

1 Matteo: yes yes yes erm (..) just erm another thing that i: i’ve found erm during the
2 our classes was the: (..) well the arguments around the possibility to refuse the the
3 mark you get at at the exam
4 Alan: hm m
5 Matteo: and I have found two: different reactions between the English professors
6 and the german professors er: i i just don’t know the law or (these) sort of
7 things but er:m even in the university of rome la sapienza (..) i: could er:
8 refuse the the score i: i got in an exam and and repeat that exam or the: (.)
9 whe-whenever I wanted
10 Alan: hm m
11 Matteo: bu: (..) and the german class the the german professor said yes you can do
12 it you can do it even here even here at the Ssmit but the professor but but
13 the english professors said no (..) we: asked why (…) but (..) there (..) there
14 wasn’t a clear response (..) they just said no (we) that’s the way: we do
15 things here (..) er: it’s not possible (.)
16 Alan: the way we the English do it [here? (or the way we:)
17 Matteo: [the: erm
18 it was not clear
19 Alan: ah
20 Matteo: it was not clear (..) and well (..) the students were (..) quite sca:red cos you
21 know (..) the: the class is not so big (.)
22 Alan: hm
23 Matteo: and so the the professors know all the students (..) so they were quite
24 scared (.) I was quite scared and so i: i said ok it’s ok (.)
25 Alan: so when you say you were scared you were scared to (.) raise your voice?
26 Matteo: yes (..) [yes
27 Alan: [bu- but
28 you weren’t happy
29 Matteo: err (.) yes I wasn’t happy because i: I think I know (.) how:: (.) how are
30 things in the university in general we: we have this right (.) the students
31 have the right to refuse the the score they get at the exam (.)
32 Alan: hm m
33 Matteo: and they can I I think and i: (.) yes I know that they can refuse it er
34 whenever they want

(Matteo 2 interview. Recording time: 00:08:10 – 00:10:49. See appendix A: p.542, lines 112 - 165)

8.5.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Matteo introduces himself as two characters in two different scenes in this narrative, his former self, studying at the University of Rome, and his institutional self in Sslmit (present in the classes of his German and English teachers). The narrative is introduced as being about ‘the arguments around the possibility to refuse the mark you get at the exam’ (lines 2-3), (where ‘arguments’ is potentially a false friend, as ‘argomenti’ in Italian means ‘on the subject of’). Matteo positions the English and German teachers as giving two different ‘reactions’ (line 5) to the possibility of refusing marks. Matteo positions himself as being ignorant about ‘the law or these sort of things’ (lines 6-7), perhaps meaning the institutional rules at Sslmit, but he introduces his former self, at the university of La Sapienza in Rome, where he ‘could refuse the score (he) got in an exam and repeat that exam whenever (he) wanted’ (lines 7-9). This contrast introduces a tension between the two university departments and their approaches to exam retakes.

Matteo returns to the scene at Sslmit where he reports one German professor as telling him that he can do the same as in Rome, but English professors as telling him that he cannot. This shifts the tension from the two universities he has previously introduced to an internal tension between departments in Sslmit itself. Matteo reports himself and the other students asking the English professors the reason for this, indexed by his use
of the plural pronoun ‘we’ in ‘we asked why’ (line 13), where heightened stress on ‘why’ positions the students as being confused but also potentially frustrated. Matteo then positions the professors as being elusive and unwilling to give reasoned arguments by his reported speech of their answer ‘… that’s the way we do things here’ (lines 14-15). Matteo comments on this as not being ‘a clear response’ (line 14), and positions himself as being clearly frustrated by the English professors. His repetition of the phrase ‘it was not clear’ in his following turn (lines 18 and 20) reinforces his frustration at the English professors’ evasive response, positioning himself as a student who expects clear responses on matters of institutional rules and regulations. Matteo then goes on to position the students in the English professors’ classroom, as being ‘scared’ (line 20) to argue with their teachers on the subject because the class is ‘not so big’ (line 21) and ‘the professors know all the students’ (line 23). This positions the professors’ close proximity and knowledge about class individuals as being a potential threat to the students, and consequently positions the professors as being capable of threatening behaviour (although this is not explicitly stated). Matteo reinforces his description of the students as being scared due to these circumstances and finishes the turn with a statement of his own personal feeling of being scared which led him to accept what the teachers said without complaint, ‘I was quite scared and so I said ok’ (line 24).

In his final turn, Matteo shifts from the narrative event to position himself in the narrative-telling event (in the interview situation) as a reliable informant on how other Italian universities work in general, and therefore on his fellow students’ rights within such institutions. The possibility to refuse marks is described by Matteo as a student ‘right’ which he repeats twice (‘we have this right (.) the students have the right..’, lines 30-31) re-enforcing his apparent frustration but also suggesting that the English teachers are unjust, denying students’ rights within the institution which might affect their final degree marks. After an initial hesitation he concludes his turn with a statement to reinforce that right, ‘I think (.) I know that they can refuse it er whenever they want’ (lines 33-34), thereby positioning himself again as a reliable informant on university rules and regulations.
8.5.2  Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narrative emerges from talk about English and German classes in interpreting, where Matteo expresses a greater appreciation for how the German teachers planned and organised their lessons. In the interview, I suggest that the English teachers were less organised than the Germans, and Matteo agrees, going on to initiate the narrative directly after this.

Matteo’s narrative initially positions me as a teacher in the English department, by requesting ratification that the teachers there are not as organised perhaps and clear on the institution’s rules and regulations. I ratify his positioning of myself as a member of the English department, by using the plural subject pronoun ‘we’ in relation to ‘the English’ when I say ‘the way we … English do it here?’ (line 16). By doing this, I also position myself as being potentially part of Matteo’s problem with English teachers, a potentially disorganised and uniformed English teacher as well. Matteo however does not ratify my positioning of myself as actually being part of the problem. He does this by continuing his narrative in relation to those English teachers present at the time and what they had said, focusing therefore on the past, and removing it contextually from the present and my presence. Matteo’s continuation of the narrative further positions me as ratifying his frustration with the other English teachers, as well as my awareness of how students could be ‘scared’ in the classroom when teachers are in close proximity and on familiar terms with each individual student. I ratify this by clarifying my understanding of what Matteo means by scared (scared to raise his voice in class), and positioning Matteo as being unhappy with not challenging the English teachers, which Matteo immediately affirms as the correct interpretation. In Matteo’s final two turns (lines 29-34) he returns to the narrative-telling event, concluding the narrative, in order to position himself as an informant on student rights with regard to the ‘right’ in Italian universities to retake exams, which the English professors are positioned as not respecting. Matteo positions me as potentially not ratifying this right as shown by his insistence that he ‘knows’ it to be true (repeating the verb two times, lines 29 and 33), this also positions me as an English teacher again and potentially just as uninformed as my colleagues appear to be.
8.5.3 Level 3 analysis: Connecting levels one and two to Discourses

Matteo’s positioning of the Sslmit teachers as being positive characters in his first one-to-one interview (section 8.2), in relation to didactic outcomes due to a smaller teacher-student ratio at Sslmit, is absent in his second one-to-one narrative. The Discourses that he appears to invoke in his first interview, which focus on smaller classes as potential sources of higher levels of teaching and learning, are backgrounded. Instead, Matteo appears to invoke a counter-Discourse to the one that Silvia draws on in her first one-to-one interview (section 8.3), where the teacher-student relationship is portrayed as a tight community (‘a family’) and the teacher as an insider in that community, rather than an outside figure of authority (Harfitt, 2012). Matteo’s narrative positions the English teachers as outsiders rather, characters that impose their own unfair rules on the community of students, denying them their rights within the institution. The smaller teacher-student ratio of the Sslmit classes positions the teachers as being more capable of doing this precisely because the community is small, positioning the students as fearful of retaliation by the teachers because they cannot hide behind elevated numbers of students and the relative anonymity of more standard Italian institutions, such as La Sapienza in Rome (Matteo’s former institution).

The second group interview, at end of the participants’ first academic year in the institution, shows an increased breakdown in the ‘community’ of teachers and students. I now go on to look at the narratives that emerged in that interview.

8.6 The teacher-student ‘community’ in the second term: Group narratives

Interviews carried out in the second session of the research revealed tensions in teacher-student relations in the institution. In the following sections of this chapter (sections 8.6 - 8.7) I examine examples of this in comparison to more positive

45 See also my field notes (appendix B, p. 742 and p. 744) for relevant observations in the field (observing Federico and Silvia, and a conversation with Matteo).
portrayals of teacher-student relations in the first session, focusing in particular on the participants’ shared narratives of their experiences.

Towards the beginning of the second group interview the participants are discussing the results of their end of term exams and the possibility of their refusing their marks. I invite Matteo to recount to the group a story he told me in his second one-to-one interview, concerning his flatmate’s experiences in the second year. The following is a transcript of the subsequent talk.

1 Matteo: [ah: no last year
2 the: this this matter came up at the exam (.) so I know this erm because er
3 my flat mate was is erm a second year student (.)
4 Alan:  hm m
5 Matteo: and he told me that last year they didn’t know anything (.)
6 and at the exam the: professor said er: well (.) you cannot
7 refuse the er the mark
8 Alan:  hm m
9 Matteo: you: just we will do the exam in with several groups and then we: we will
10 say er: there are no scores under 24 for example (..) er and that’s it
11 Alan:  right ok so so that was last year=
12 Fed:  =cos also this year we asked
13 Silvia: [yeah
14 Fed:  [because he [(xxxxxxxxx)
15 Maria:  [yeah we asked
16 ((Federico talks in background))
17 cos we knew that somebody
18 Fed:  and then we asked a professor because otherwise they
19 wouldn’t have told us anything
20 ((silvia talks in background))
21 Alan:  what did they say?
22 Fed:  oh they said oh yes it was so last year I don’t know this
23 year because the co-ordinator changed and this year it was
24 professor (cara) I think
25 Alan: hm m
26 Fed: and last year it was someone else (. ) and they didn’t know
27 if this year there would have been the same kinda of (. ) er rules
28 Alan: hm m (. ) ok so it was confusing
29 Fed: but then
30 Silvia: yeah
31 Fed: they told us that there was [(xx)
32 Silvia: [ok (. ) we got it
33 Matteo: yeah but the Sslmit is confused
34 Silvia: yeah
35 ((federico sniggers))
36 Matteo: I am quite disappointed ((general low laughter))
37 Alan: why why why are you disappointed?
38 Matteo: because for example even at the er mediation exam (.)
39 erm i: had to do the exam for less credits
40 Alan: hm m
41 Matteo: i: wrote (. ) more than 10 e-mails (. ) to all the professors
42 (. ) of the erm mediation class (. ) and when I did it the exam (.)
43 they said (. ) what do you have to do? Who are you? less
44 credits why? (…)
45 Alan: right so you got no response
46 Matteo: m: here at the Sslmit they don’t have classrooms with
47 (. ) 500 students (. ) ((Federico laughs))
48 Alan: hm m
49 Matteo:like in the sapienza university (. ) they have (. ) 24 students
50 60 students (. ) ah (. ) and I find i: i find it quite disappointing erm (2.0)
51 Alan: ok=
52 Fed: =I noticed that our professor feel like erm don’t feel the
53 (. ) ea:se of working here I mean it’s surely mainly because it’s
54 a very good school but they don’t understand they have 30
55 students top (..) and it’s
56 Alan: what do you mean they don’t understand?
57 Fed: they don’t they: they keep the same for example
timetables that they would for example to correct an
exam as if they had 500 students or they used the erm:
they act as if they had the (bureaucracy) bureaucracy
weight of(.) that much students as (.) well they really don’t
Alan: hm m
Fed: and it’s not like I’m asking for a: an apple on the table
every morning when I come into the classroom but (.)
((silvia sniggers))

(Group 2 interview. Recording time: 00:08:45 – 00:12:33. See appendix A: p.674,
lines  289 - 385)

This stretch of dialogue presents four interrelated narratives on the subject of teachers.
The first is told by Matteo (lines 1-10), the second by Federico (12-21), and then the
third and fourth again by Matteo (lines 41-50) and Federico (lines 52-65) respectively. I
examine each narrative using level one and two analysis before moving to a broader
level three analysis (see section 8.7), drawing on potential wider Discourses affecting
these narratives.

8.6.1 Level 1 analysis – Matteo’s first narrative

In Matteo’s first narrative he introduces his ‘flatmate’ in the second year at Sslmit
(line 3), whom he describes as going to do an exam and being told by a teacher (un-
named) that he could not retake the exam if he received a mark above 24 (Matteo does
not state this clearly but the previous talk was concerned with cut off grades below
which students should or should not refuse their marks, contextualising ‘24’ as the
teacher’s decision). Matteo’s reported speech positions all the students in the narrative
as a collective character that ‘didn’t know anything’ (line 5) until the exam,
positioning them as being surprised and unprepared for what occurred. The teacher’s
announcement is reported as a series of imperative statements: ‘you cannot refuse the
mark’ (lines 6-7), ‘we will just do the exam’ (line 9), ‘we will say there are no scores
under 24 for example’ (lines 9-10). This positions the teacher (and his colleagues,
indexed by the plural subject pronoun ‘we’), as being unconcerned by any protests the students may have and excluding them from any debate on the matter. The final phrase ‘for example’ (line 10) further positions the teacher as being uncertain about the actual ‘rule’ he is introducing in that moment, as the suggestion is that it may change (serving only as an example of a possible cut off mark).

8.6.2 Level 2 analysis – Matteo’s first narrative

The narrative emerges from general talk about the marks students should or should not refuse, and Maria’s statement that she intends to refuse her mark in Russian. I introduce Matteo’s earlier narrative (in his second one-to-one interview) where he refers to his flatmate’s story for the first time, about being told that he couldn’t refuse his mark just before the exam began, inviting Matteo to share it with the group. Matteo’s narrative emerges from this context then.

Matteo introduces his flat mate’s narrative to position the teachers as being unfair and authoritarian in their approach to the students and, by extension, the participants present in the interview. Matteo positions the group therefore as being potentially under the same threat as his flat mate in the narrative, subject to the unfair dictates of teachers and being unable to trust them with regard to the arbitrary rules they appear to make up at the last minute, which may even affect their academic careers. In doing this Matteo also positions me as an institutional character who will ratify the unfairness of what he is describing, and potentially the injustices that students have to suffer in the institution.

When I note that Matteo’s narrative refers to events that occurred ‘last year’, suggesting that things might no longer be the same, Federico introduces his narrative.
8.6.3 Level 1 analysis – Federico’s first narrative

Federico sets the scene as ‘this year’ (line 12), introducing the participants as characters in the narrative event asking a teacher for information about this year’s rules. Like Matteo before, Federico uses this narrative to position the teachers as being reluctant to communicate with the students, commenting that if the participants had not asked ‘….they wouldn’t have told us anything’ (lines 18-19). Federico’s reported speech of the teacher’s reply positions the teacher as being unsure of the rules and regulations, as well as the internal organisation of the degree course.

22 Fed: oh they said oh yes it was so last year I don’t know this
23 year because the co-ordinator changed and this year it was
24 professor (cara) I think

The professor is reported as not knowing the situation this year (‘I don’t know this year’, lines 22-23), as well as being uncertain of who is co-ordinating the degree course this year (‘this year it was professor (cara) I think’, lines 23-24) and even the year before (‘it was someone else’, line 26). Federico’s further reported speech positions the teachers as being ignorant of the faculty’s rules and regulations on retaking exams this year

26 they didn’t know
27 if this year there would have been the same kinda of (.) er rules

In Federico’s narrative then he ratifies and develops Matteo’s positioning of the teachers, suggesting that they cannot be trusted by the group as they either do not want to communicate with them, or are ignorant themselves of the rules and regulations they should know.
8.6.4 Level 2 analysis – Federico’s first narrative

Federico’s narrative emerges as a response to my suggestion that the circumstances that Matteo has described may no longer be relevant to the group. This challenge is refuted by Federico’s narrative, which ratifies Matteo’s positioning of the teachers, setting it in the context of ‘this year’.

Federico positions the group as ratifying that things have not changed, as well as refuting my suggestion that they may have. I position myself as agreeing with Federico and the group by aligning myself with Federico’s implicit assumption that things were ‘confusing’ (line 28) for the students this year as well. Affirmed by this, Federico then attempts to continue with his narrative, but is cut short by Silvia, ‘ok (.) we got it’ (line 32). Silvia therefore positions Federico as having said everything that needed to be said on the matter to the group.

Matteo returns in the next turn, picking up on my comment that things were confusing by describing Sslmit in general as being ‘confused’ (line 33). When I ask him why, he introduces another narrative.

8.6.5 Level 1 analysis – Matteo’s second narrative

Matteo sets the scene as writing e-mails to the teachers to explain how he did not require the full credits for the mediation exam (this relates to the group’s shared knowledge that this is Matteo’s second degree, which emerged in the first group interview, and that subsequently some credits would be allotted to him from his first degree in Rome).

Matteo highlights the elevated number of e-mails sent, ‘10’ (line 41), positioning himself as someone who was diligent and did all he could on his part to inform all the relevant teachers of his situation. His reported speech of the professors’ response on the day of the exam positions them as having ignored all his efforts to communicate with them (not even being aware of who he is) and/or of being disorganised.
what do you have to do? Who are you? Less
credits why? (…) 

Matteo then goes on to compare SSLMIT to his previous university, emphasising the numerical difference of the teacher-to-student ratio

Matteo: m: here at the SSLMIT they don’t have classrooms with
(.) 500 students (. ) ((Federico laughs))

Alan: hm m

Matteo: like in the sapienza university (. ) they have (. ) 24 students
60 students (. ) ah (. ) and I find i: i find it quite disappointing erm (2.0)

The elevated classroom numbers of students that Matteo describes in his previous institution (‘500’, line 47) and the much reduced numbers at SSLMIT (24 – 60 students, lines 49-50) positions the teachers as not giving enough help and support to students when they are potentially in a better position to do so, and positions himself and the group as being ‘disappointed’ with them consequently.

8.6.6 Level 2 analysis – Matteo’s second narrative

Matteo’s narrative emerges from talk about the institution’s representatives (the teachers) as confusing students with regards to exam rules. Matteo picks up on how the teachers in Federico’s narrative were positioned as being responsible for this, but he develops this by positioning the entire institution as being confused (‘SSLMIT is confused’, line 33) and himself as being ‘disappointed’ with it (line 36). Matteo’s narrative emerges from this then.

My question to Matteo, ‘why are you disappointed?’ (line 37), challenges his positioning of the institution as being ‘confused’ and invites him to defend his affirmation to me and the group. The narrative that emerges serves to position Matteo as being very ‘reasonable’ (writing emails to all the ‘professors’) and the teachers as
‘unreasonable’ and disorganised (evidently not having read his emails or having forgotten them), ratifying his initial claim that Sslmit is disorganised, and explaining his disappointment.

Matteo’s narrative serves to ratify his claim that the institution itself is confused, introducing ‘other’ teachers (other institutional representatives, presented in his second narrative) in another context (his personal correspondence to them), albeit exam related again. His narrative therefore, appears to expand on Federico’s in an attempt to show other instances of confusion and disorganisation within the institution and to have this ratified by both myself and the group.

I ratify Matteo’s positioning of the teachers in my reaction to the narrative, ‘right so you got no response’ (line 45), eliciting further comment. Matteo’s subsequent talk about his previous institution (La Sapienza university in Rome) serves to highlight his initial statement that Sslmit, as an institution, ‘is confused’. By contextualising his narrative in terms of teacher-to-student ratios between the two, Matteo makes the claim for both himself and the group that Sslmit should be better organised, as there are less students to organise.

Federico picks up on Matteo’s comparison between Sslmit and other institutions, and the suggestion that the teachers have an easier job in his second narrative.

8.6.7 Level 1 analysis – Federico’s second narrative

Federico introduces another narrative, which positions the teachers as not understanding the ‘ease of working’ (line 53) in Sslmit in comparison to other institutions. His comment that this is ‘surely mainly because it’s a very good school’ (lines 53-54), positions Sslmit as being an institution which exerts more working demands on its teaching staff than other university departments, and the teachers as having less time for students. However, Federico’s subsequent comment ‘but they don’t understand they have 30 students top’ (lines 54-55), positions the teachers as
being unaware of the extra work they should do in the context of a lower student body, but also potentially positions them as exaggerating their workloads as well.

In response to my request for clarification, Federico describes the teachers’ as marking each exam as though they had 500 to do, and prone ‘to act’ (line 60) as though they had the bureaucratic weight of that elevated number to deal with (significantly, choosing the verb ‘act’ which can suggest a non-reflection of reality). This positions the teachers further as not only being disorganised but also as being potentially reticent to working harder for the students, as Federico’s final comment seems to suggest

63 Fed: and it’s not like I’m asking for a: an apple on the table
64 every morning when I come into the classroom but .

8.6.8 Level 2 analysis – Federico’s second narrative

Federico’s narrative emerges from Matteo’s talk about the smaller teacher-to-student ratio at Sslmit, in contrast with ‘La Sapienza’ university, and his suggestion that teachers should have more time to consider student needs.

Federico positions the group as expecting teachers to understand that their working environment is much easier than other Italian university departments, and that they exaggerate their workload as though ‘they had 500 students’ when ‘they only have 30 students top’.

Like Matteo, Federico’s narrative positions the teachers as not fulfilling the basic requisites to satisfy him and the other students, positioning himself and the other participants as not expecting much, but something more than they actually receive from their teachers.
8.7 Level 3 analysis – Analysing the four narratives in relation to Discourses

Both Matteo and Federico’s first narratives (sections 8.6.1 - 8.6.2 and 8.6.3 - 8.6.4, respectively) invoke a counter-discourse (also present in Matteo’s narrative in his second one-to-one interview, see section 8.5.3) challenging the Discourse that smaller classroom sizes and teacher-to-student ratios increase a spirit of community, where teachers are positioned more as insiders rather than authoritative outsiders (see section 8.2.3).

Matteo’s initial focus on the English teachers as being disorganised and reticent to communicate with students on the institutions rules and regulations, is developed into a general critique of the institution itself, indexed by Matteo’s comment in his second narrative (section 8.6.5), that ‘Sslmit is confused’. This positioning of the institution as being ‘confused’ suggests a general disorganisation at a top-down level, where teachers are not positioned as being directly responsible for it, but potentially contributing to it by being more independently positioned by the institution to make up their own rules as they go along, without institutional checks and controls to prevent them. The counter-discourse then appears to be that when institutions allow teachers to make up their own rules, or do not enforce existing rules, and students perceive these ‘rules’ to be arbitrary and unfair, smaller classes can be seen as oppressive places as students feel unable to criticise and protest.

Matteo and Federico’s second narratives (sections 8.6.5 – 8.6.6 and 8.6.7 – 8.6.8, respectively) also add to this counter discourse, in that they see the smaller teacher-student ratio as meriting a greater degree of care and attention by the teachers, which is described by both as lacking (Matteo’s e-mails appear to go unread and Federico’s exam results are delayed as though teachers had hundreds to mark).

In these narratives then the very reason why Sslmit was initially seen as being special, it’s smaller classes and more personalised contact with teachers, has become the source of its criticism.

Another theme that emerged through the data on teacher-student relationships was
one of maturity in relation to interpreter-student studies, where participants compared and contrasted Sslmit to their ‘high school’ experiences. In this context teacher-student relationships were critiqued as examples of what was perceived as excessive control in the classroom and a lack of autonomy in individual students’ ability to set their own goals and to be respected as mature students. In the following section of this chapter (section 8.8), I briefly turn to look at those narratives which expressed this tension in the institution and how it emerged in the participants’ talk.

8.8 Issues of maturity – A ‘high school’ or a university

In the second group interview I ask the participants to talk about the institution in relation to their ‘high school’ experiences, a subject they had introduced in some of their initial one-to-one interviews. Matteo is the first to respond

1 Matteo: I think the Sslmit is organised like an high school
2 Fed: yea::[:h
3 Rosa: [yeah
4 Silvia: yeah
5 Maria: [(it is)
6 Matteo: [yes
7 Maria: because we’re not that many I think
8 Fed: hm m
9 Silvia: I think it’s [worse
10 Maria: [(..) but it’s also
11 because since we are not that many we know each other more than
12 what normally happens a university I think (.) and so it was possible
13 to organise the (.) trash party (.) ((silvia sniggers)) I don’t think any
14 other university in the world is doing it apart from the American
15 college (..)
Matteo sets the scene as being in Sslmit, where the institution is described as being organised in a similar way to a ‘high school’, which all the other participants ratify as true (lines 2-5). Maria then appears to explain this similarity as being due to the numerical similarities with high schools, ‘because we’re not that many I think’ (line 7), presumably referring to class numbers and/or potentially an overall low student-teacher ratio. Silvia’s comment that Sslmit is ‘worse’ than a high school (line 9), positions Matteo’s initial comment and the groups’ affirmation of it as a criticism of the institution, as in order to be ‘worse’ the concept of a high school must be bad. Maria however chooses to ignore this positioning by introducing a narrative about a ‘trash party’ (line 13) the students organised, portraying it as an example of how similar high school student numbers allows students to get to know each other more than in other Italian institutions, and facilitate the organisation of positive events such as a college party.

After a long exchange among the participants about the ‘trash party’ (concerned principally with describing how they dressed up for it) I ask them if being like a high school is good. Although Maria responds that she is ‘really happy we’re organised like a high school’ (maintaining a positive position), when I reiterate the question to the whole group, Maria returns in the subsequent turn to introduce a negative aspect

1 Maria: [for some things
2 it is for others you just want to get out of high school ((Silvia sniggers))
3 and be a grown up (...) woman

Maria’s comment positions Sslmit (presumably meaning the teachers principally) as treating the participants as adolescents and positions the group as wanting to be treated more as ‘grown ups’ (line 3).
When I subsequently ask the group specifically about negative aspects of being like a high school Silvia is the first to respond, interrupted by Maria

1 Silvia:  teachers know [you

2 Maria: [teachers

3 knows know you and (...) that’s main thing and that (2.0)

4 it’s a high school and you still feel like you’re being

5 checked every single day (.) a:nd you’re not a grown up woman yet

Silvia’s response that ‘teachers know you’ (line 1), introduced as a negative aspect of the institution, seems to suggest that teachers have a more personal relationship with individual students, perhaps knowing them by name and used to interacting with them in a more direct way. This personal and more intimate contact (contrasting with the relative anonymity of students in other Italian institutions) contrasts with Silvia’s positive positioning of teachers and students as being like ‘a family’, which she made in her first one-to-one interview (see section 8.3.1). As previously commented (Ibid), the family image suggests a parent-child relationship where students are treated as adolescents in need of help and guidance. Whereas Silvia initially found this intimate community a positive thing (‘comfortable’ as she described it) it appears to be a limitation in her second group interview, and the source of some frustration to her.

Maria ratifies Silvia’s positioning that the problem with teachers is that they ‘know you’ (line 3), and contextualises this knowing in pedagogical terms, where the group is positioned as being treated as adolescents by being ‘checked every single day’ (line 5), presumably on their academic progress, as the teachers are positioned as not believing that they are mature and independently capable enough of progressing on their own.

In Maria’s narrative about the trash party she highlights the smaller number of students at Ssmit as the reason why students know each other more than in other
Italian universities, and positions this knowing as being positive for student life (i.e. organising a party). However, when both she and Silvia talk about the teachers knowing the students, this becomes a negative aspect of Sslmit, linked to being treated like children at high school and not as mature individuals. Silvia’s ‘family’ it seems has changed from being ‘comfortable’ in her first one-to-one interview, to being uncomfortable in her second group interview, something that appears to be shared by both Maria and the group in general.

In relation to Discourses, the smaller class sizes at Sslmit seem to facilitate a stronger sense of unity and cohesion among students, creating a lighter more playful environment (see section 8.2.3), which Maria appears to be invoking in her narrative about organising a ‘trash party’ (something she describes as only being possible because students know each other much more than in other institutions). However, these reduced class sizes are also positioned as creating a greater intimacy with teachers, rather than facilitating a more elevated sense of community where the teacher is perceived as being a member of that community, it creates tensions instead which position the teacher as being an outsider. These tensions are described by Maria and Silvia as being due to teachers continuing to treat students as high school adolescents, in need of constant guidance in their studies, and limiting their ability to claim the identity of mature, independent and ‘grown up’ learners.

In the final part of this chapter (sections 8.9 – 8.9.3) I examine one more narrative from the last group interview, which develops the parallels that the participants make between Sslmit and a high school, and in particular how this effects the way they perceive teachers in the institution and the influence this has on their studies.

8.9 Teacher-student relations – A narrative of Professional and Personal relationships

The following dialogue follows participant talk comparing Sslmit to a high school, analysed in section 8.8.
Matteo: can I say everything?
Alan: yes
Matteo: ok
Alan: anonymity guaranteed here
Matteo: ok
Alan: anonymity
((Federico laughs))
Silvia: (wow)
Matteo: I think the Sslmit is even worse than an high school
[and]
Fed: [oh thank you
Silvia: (.) that’s what I said before
Matteo: and (...) I think that the some professors (...) are
too close with the students (...) Silvia: (ah ha) ((noise of possible agreement))
Alan: could you explain what you mean by close?
Matteo: close well erm they: (7.0) ha ((laughing tone)) ((rosa snorts in a
laughing manner)) (2.0) I’m just trying to (.) don’t say
the the names ((small laugh)) but it’s quite difficult
Fed: no=
Silvia: =well maybe teachers talk about (.) things that are not (.)
about school with students (.). so: it’s true what
Matteo: yeah but I think there are several (.). projects here- [here in the Sslmit
Fed: [I think
you’re referring to the fact that if you erm (.). do this extra
curricularal [activities
Matteo: [yes
Fed: like [theatre
Matteo: [yes
34 Fed: or stuff (get) in a really tight relationship=
35 Matteo: =exactly
36 Fed: with a professor cos it’s even less people than in a classroom
37 and you’re not in a lesson so you’re not just talking
38 everybody’s talking and doing stuff and it becomes more like
39 a friendship than a a: professor student relationship [so: it’s (less
xxxxxxx)
40 Maria: [I think that still
41 works (..) I think it can work as [long as you have a teacher
42 Fed: [(xxx) ((Federico talking to Rosa))
43 Maria: as like an organiser
44 Matteo: yes=
45 Maria: =but if you have it inside a group ((federico sniggers)) (.)
46 ((federico laughs)) it really gets difficult to create a normal
47 relationship like you you end up either hating or (…)
48 Silvia: being friends
49 Maria: being friends
50 Fed: yeah but also I think it’s not great for those who see it
51 ((maria and silvia whisper to each other in background))
52 Matteo: well I know students that knew the scores of some exams
53 ((maria and silvia talking slightly more audibly to each other))
54 [before
55 Fed: [what?
56 Matteo: they [came up
57 Rosa: [the scores ((talking to federico))
58 Matteo: on the: (.bacc checa ((italian for notice board))
59 Maria: what? sorry
60 Matteo: I know that there are (.students who knew the: their the
61 scores of the exams before they came up on the bacc checa
62 ((maria and silvia whisper))

(Group 2 interview. Recording time: 00:25:38: – 00:28:06. See appendix A: p.690, lines 809 – 898)
There are two narratives in this extract, one extended and co-constructed narrative (lines 10-51), and a second embedded narrative (lines 52-62).

The initial narrative is only hinted at by Matteo, when he says ‘I think Sslmit is worse than a high school’ (line 10), but it does not develop subsequently. Both Federico and Silvia immediately ratify Matteo’s statement however (lines 12-13), as if they were aware of the narrative Matteo intends to relate to the group. Matteo however, has evident problems in actually beginning it, which is eventually left to Silvia. This ‘deferral ... of telling’ (Georgakopoulou, 2006: 123) requires some analysis before moving on to the actual analysis of the narrative itself. I therefore begin by examining the reasons for Matteo’s deferral and then approach the actual narrative through the lens of narrative positioning analysis.

Before Matteo’s comment about Sslmit, Maria had been talking about teachers checking students’ homework as though they were still in ‘high school’, and not treating them as ‘grown ups’, responsible for their own studies (see section 8.8). Matteo comes in subsequent to this, with a question for me that suggests that he is unsure if he should say what he is thinking

1 can I say everything?

Matteo’s question positions me as an institutional figure (a teacher with potential allegiances to the institution) and himself as a potentially vulnerable student. Matteo’s question suggests that he might be afraid that what he is about to say may possibly become public knowledge (with the implicit understanding that this may have negative consequences for him).

I affirm that Matteo can ‘say everything’ (line 2), and that his ‘anonymity’ is ‘guaranteed’ (lines 4-5), positioning myself therefore as a researcher with ethical obligations to Matteo, who is consequently positioned as a research participant and not a student.
Matteo, apparently reassured by my words, then makes a statement

10 I think the Sslmit is even worse than an high school

which is immediately ratified by Federico, (suggesting by his ‘oh thank you’, line 12, that it needed to be said but hadn’t until then) and Silvia, affirming that she had already said as much previously (‘that’s what I said before’, line 13), although this did not actually emerge in the data.

Matteo then goes on to qualify this statement as meaning that ‘some professors are too close with the students’ (lines 14-15). When I ask Matteo what he means by ‘too close’ he responds

21 erm (.> they: (7.0) ha ((laughing tone)) ((rosa snorts in a
22 laughing manner)) (2.0) I’m just trying to (.> don’t say
23 the the names ((small laugh)) but it’s quite difficult

Matteo’s long pause before answering (7 seconds), followed by a marked ‘ha’ and yet another pause (2 seconds), suggests his mental effort of ‘trying to don’t say the names’ (lines 22-23). Matteo positions me as an institutional figure again then, apparently sceptical of my attempt to position myself as a ‘researcher’ and not as ‘a teacher’, and displaying uncertainty as to whether or not he should identify specific teachers who are my colleagues. Matteo’s prolonged hesitation and final comment, ‘but it’s quite difficult’ (line 23), is followed by an interjection from Federico and a comment from Silvia

24 Fed: no:: =
25 Silvia: =well maybe teachers talk about (.> things that are not (.>
26 about school (.> with students (.>

Federico’s ‘no::’, with a long drawn out vowel, suggests irony in the form of mock surprise, and also that certain specific teachers’ names might be shared by the other
participants and not easily revealed to me (thus ratifying Matteo’s positioning of me as an institutional figure).

Silvia comes in on the next turn, apparently tentatively interpreting what Matteo means by ‘too close’ as teachers saying things to students ‘that are not about school’ (lines 25-26). After Matteo’s deferral to tell the narrative it is Silvia then who eventually initiates it.

8.9.1 Level 1 analysis: Positioning of characters in the narrative event

Silvia sets up the general scene then (or series of apparent recurrent scenes) where teachers say things to students ‘that are not about school’ (lines 25-26). This is not defined as being in any specific location, but potentially in multiple locations within the institution (or even outside it). Although Matteo appears to ratify Silvia’s statement as being relevant to the narrative he is intending to tell (indicated by his initial ‘yeah’, line 27, showing concordance), he proceeds however to introduce an alternative framing for the narrative as being concerned with ‘several projects here in Ssllmit’ (line 27). Before Matteo can specify what he means by ‘projects’, Federico intervenes next to give the narrative his own interpretation, as being about ‘extracurricular activities like theatre or stuff’ (lines 30-34), where it seems students ‘(get) in a really tight relationship…with a professor’ (lines 34-36). Matteo ratifies this as a correct interpretation of what he meant to say, shown by his affirmation, ‘yes’ (line 33) and subsequent comment ‘exactly’ (line 35).

Federico continues the narrative, describing a scene with ‘a professor’ outside the institution, where there are ‘even less people’ (line 36), (presumably students), which highlights the potential for greater intimacy between them. Federico positions the students as socialising with the teacher, suggested by his description of them as all talking together and ‘doing stuff’ (line 38), unrelated to what they do ‘in a lesson’ (line 37). Federico then describes this activity as leading to a ‘friendship’ (line 39) between the students and the teacher, positioning the teacher as a friend rather than a member
of the institution (backgrounding his/her professional role), and the students as people in the social world forming sentimental attachments.

Maria’s comment ‘I think it can work’ (line 41), responds to Federico’s positioning of teachers as friends, as being potentially negative for students in general. The pronoun ‘it’ refers to Federico’s description of a situation where a teacher is a friend, and the heightened stress on ‘can’ suggests that most of the time it cannot work. In order for ‘it’ to work (forming a friendship with a teacher), Maria positions the teacher as needing to be an ‘organiser’ (line 43) and not to be inside (line 45) the student group (meaning an equal perhaps, with no differentiation in power relations). This positions the teacher as someone who needs to remain an outsider then for Maria, a figure in control of students, a role similar to the teacher’s institutional role in the class. What Maria appears to be describing is a teacher who remains a teacher (an organiser and an outsider), but who is on friendly terms rather than an actual intimate friend, in the sense of forming sentimental attachments with his/her students. That Maria is drawing a distinction between a teacher who is a real friend and a teacher who is friendly becomes more evident when Maria goes on to position the teacher who is an insider as creating problems for students, who might eventually end up hating him/her (line 47). Maria positions teachers who try to be insiders as being difficult to ‘create a normal relationship’ with (lines 46-47), where ‘normal’ suggests a normal teacher-student relationship (a ‘normally’ asymmetrical power relation between teacher and student, with clear boundaries of power and position between the two). Silvia’s interjection ‘being friends’ (line 48), which finishes Maria’s phrase (‘you end up either hating or.’), suggests that she understands Maria to be making this distinction between teachers as ‘real friends’ with their students, and teachers as being on friendly terms with them.

Federico’s turn, coming directly after this (line 50), sees him positioning ‘those’ students who see friendships between some students and teachers as being negative (‘not great’, line 50), ratifying Maria and Silvia’s earlier positioning. His choice of the demonstrative pronoun ‘those’, positions all the students who are not in a friendship with a teacher as seeing teacher-student friendships from the same negative perspective, and seems to position himself therefore as being one of them.
Matteo comes in on the next turn (line 52) to introduce an embedded narrative about students knowing their exam results before they were officially published. In this narrative Matteo positions the teachers who are friendly with students as being unprofessional and giving unfair advantages and privileges to their student-friends. Emerging as it does after Federico’s negative positioning of teachers with student-friends, Matteo’s embedded narrative serves to present a practical example of why students might see teacher-student friendships in a negative light.

8.9.2 Level 2 analysis: Positioning in the narrative-telling event

The narratives emerge from talk that compares Sslmit to a ‘high school’. Matteo makes the assertion that ‘Sslmit is organised like a high school’ earlier on in the interview (see section 8.8), which is ratified by the whole group, and Maria describes being in Sslmit as being similar to being in a high school by reason of its smaller student population, in contrast to other university departments in Italy (Ibid).

When I ask the group what are the ‘bad sides’ to being like a high school, both Silvia and Maria respond by saying that the teachers ‘know you’ and Maria goes further by positioning the teachers as not treating her as ‘a grown up woman’, as they always ‘check’ that she is doing her work. Matteo’s question, ‘can I say everything’ and the narratives that emerge after, are contextualised by this talk then.

As already analysed (see section 8.9), the pre-narrative stage sees a (re)positioning of myself as a teacher (an institutional figure) and a researcher (an independent figure) by Matteo, as he negotiates the narrative he wants to tell.

Matteo’s positioning of Sslmit as being ‘worse than a high school’, is ratified by Federico and Silvia. However, when Matteo is attempting to name the teachers in the narrative (those teachers presumably who make Sslmit worse than a high school) he appears to be unable to accept my attempt to position myself as a researcher, with ethical obligations to guarantee anonymity, and continues to position me as teacher in
the institution, with potential alliances to its members. Silvia, finally initiates the narrative, avoiding Matteo’s evident problem of naming certain teachers by describing them collectively as ‘teachers’ (line 25). When Matteo attempts to continue the narrative however, contextualising it as being about ‘several projects here in the Sslmit’ (line 27), Federico positions him as not being a good narrator, positioning himself as a clarifier of what Matteo actually means to both the group and myself.

Matteo’s back-channelling ‘yes’ (line 33) invites Federico to continue with his narrative, and his subsequent ‘exactly’ (line 35) ratifies Federico’s version of the narrative, confirming that it is about ‘extracurricular activities’ (line 30), exemplified by the ‘theatre’. This reference to theatre first emerged in the data in Silvia’s second one-to-one interview, where she described herself acting in an annual theatre event organised by Sslmit, where students put on plays in their languages of study and were directed by teachers from each language section. Although Federico does not explain what he means by ‘theatre’ it appears to be implicitly understood by the group (and myself) as an example of what Federico means by extracurricular activity.

Federico continues by positioning the group as ratifying the narrative as being about the development of teacher-student friendships through extra-curricular activities. Maria interrupts Federico however to challenge his potentially negative stance towards all teacher-student friendships, and positions the group as ratifying such relationships as being potentially positive. Federico returns after though to continue his narrative, reaffirming the negative quality of these relationships by positioning all the students who see them as not being content to do so, and the group as ratifying that position.

Matteo finally introduces another narrative, about students knowing their grades before they are officially published, to ratify Federico’s positioning, aligning with Federico’s in his negative interpretation of teacher-student friendships, and positioning the group as ratifying the injustices that such relationships can incur on their student lives.
8.9.3 Level three analysis: connecting levels one and two to Discourses

In this co-constructed narrative, initiated by Matteo and developed by Silvia and Federico, the closer relationships between teachers and students is positioned outside the classroom, in scenes of extra-curricular activity. The Discourse that smaller teacher-student ratios increase a teacher’s potential to integrate into student communities (see section 8.2.3) is challenged by the participants, as they narrate a break down in *professional* teacher-student identities. Maria’s comment that such relationships ‘can work’ (line 41) is dependent on teachers remaining outside the student community, retaining a teacher identity which she describes as being ‘like an organiser’ (line 43), suggesting power differentials between the two, where teachers maintain their authority. The teacher identity becomes problematic however for Maria ‘if you have it inside the group’ (line 45) where more emotive responses can emerge, such as students ‘hating’ (line 47) their teachers. Federico ratifies this problem by positioning students who are not in these teacher-student relationships as being uncomfortable with them (it’s not ‘great for those who see it’, line 50), and Matteo positions them as being an institutional problem, accusing some teachers of unprofessionalism in that they break university rules for their favoured few (i.e. telling them their exam marks before they are officially published).

8.10 Conclusions

In this chapter I analysed narratives that focused on the relationships between students and their teachers in the context of the institution, and how these relationships seemed to affect their perceptions of their identities as interpreting students. Central to the teacher-student relationship was a commonly shared view that Ssmit is unlike other Italian higher education institutions in its reduced teacher-student ratio in the classroom. Narratives about the atmosphere in smaller classes appeared to invoke Discourses in the first session of interviews (in the first term) that teachers in this context are more integrated into the student community (part of a ‘family’ as Silvia describes it) and facilitate better learning (having a level of teaching which is ‘amazing’ according to Matteo).
Narratives that emerged in the second interview session (in the second term) continued to focus on the smaller more intimate classes in Sslmit, although the teacher-student relationships were not positioned in pedagogical terms but rather in terms of personal rapport between the two. Federico distinguished Sslmit from other Italian institutions as being less about ‘you teach me and I learn’ but rather about how much teachers were liked and how much students wanted to know them, positioning Sslmit as not being a normal or classic Italian institution (see section 8.4). Other narratives presented an increasing tension in teacher-student relations where the intimacy of the Sslmit classroom (where teachers ‘know you’) made criticising teacher practices less tenable (as in Matteo’s narrative criticising English teachers for not allowing students to retake exams, but feeling ‘scared’ to say so in class, section 8.5) or limiting the students’ ability to claim mature student identities (as in Maria and Silvia’s narratives of being treated as high school children, section 8.8). Narratives also showed an increasing rejection of the teacher as part of the student community (a counter Discourse to smaller classes usually facilitating this process). Teachers are positioned as not providing enough help and services to students for example, when the smaller teacher-student ratio at Sslmit would suggest a greater potential for this (as in Matteo and Federico’s narratives again, sections 8.6.5 and 8.6.7).

The last group interview presents a co-constructed narrative, which questions student-teacher identities within the institution (see section 8.9), describing a break down in those identities due to over familiar relationships between some of the teachers and students through extra-curricular activities. The authorative and professional role of the teacher is described as being threatened by such relationships, leading to accusations of unprofessionalism (as in Matteo’s claim that rules are not respected in cases where these relations exist, such as telling students their marks before officially publishing them). In this narrative, the small teacher–student ratio in the institution, with its emphasis on the personal relations between the two, has moved from a Discourse of teacher inclusion in the student community to his/her marginalisation, and confusion as to his/her identity as a teacher as well as the participants’ own identities as interpreter students in relation to them.
Chapter 9

Conclusions

9.1 Conclusions - Introduction

In this chapter I review my data analysis in the context of my research questions (see chapter 1, section 1.2), addressing each chapter of my data analysis (chapters 5-8) and drawing conclusions.

9.2 Teacher talk about interpreters

In chapter 5, I analysed narratives that were related specifically to teacher talk about the professional interpreter. The views expressed by two of the teachers (Moscato and Sabatelli) were analysed and interpreted as invoking two different Discourses that appeared to influence my participants’ view of the professional interpreter’s identity. Moscato invoked a Discourse of the interpreter as a *language expert*, positioning an interpreter’s language competence (their lexical and grammatical knowledge about a language), above other socio-cultural communicative skills. This seemed to promote an image of the interpreter as a less visible presence in the *interpreted communicative event* (ICE), positioning the interpreter as a passive conduit for language communication and not as an active participant actively influencing the ICE as an engaged interlocutor. Sabatelli however, invoked a different Discourse, highlighting the interpreters’ agentive and visible presence in the ICE, their active communicative competence and its relevance to the ICE; a Discourse that paid less attention to the professional interpreter’s language skills (see section 1.4.2 for an examination of this in relation to *community interpreting*).

The participant narratives showed that Moscato’s Discourse of the interpreter as a language expert was more dominant in their projected image of the professional
interpreter’s identity, evidenced by their heightened concern to improve their language skills (see section 5.2.4), and much less concern for other factors in the ICE (with the notable exception of Maria). This positioned language as the principal resource for students wanting to become interpreters, by positioning the interpreter as being primarily a language expert.

Reasons for the predominance of this Discourse could be found in the institution’s literature (its on-line statements about student goals) which highlighted language fluency and attaining high language levels (C1 in the CEFR), in both students’ first and second languages by the end of their three-year degree, and which appeared to make only cursory references to other resources, such as acquiring socio-cultural knowledge and understanding (see section 5.2.5).

Another Discourse that emerged from teacher talk was more related to my participants’ image of themselves as interpreter-students in the institution. Narratives described teachers and other institutional representatives as presenting Sslmit as a highly prestigious institution in Italian and European higher education. This seemed to invoke a neoliberal Discourse, a marketization of higher education institutions, where institutions are seen as offering ‘products and services’ and students are positioned as customers, invited to invest in them in order to further their careers (see section 5.2.7). The effects of this Discourse on my participants’ image of themselves seemed to be a pressure to devote their lives to study in order to merit being part of one of the best institutions in the country. The consequences of this became more evident in relation to other aspects of their student identities in the institution, which I summarise further on in this chapter (see section 9.4).

Although the Discourses mentioned so far can be linked to wider Discourses, circulating in the institution and beyond, some teacher talk appeared to evidence more local and subjective discourses (discourses which did not therefore conform to Gee’s ‘Discourse’ with a capital D, see section 2.10). Moscato’s discourse for example, that the interpreter’s life is a life of ‘stress’, appeared to be based solely on the teacher’s own experiences as an interpreter (see section 5.2.8). Nevertheless, it seemed to have had an effect on some participants’ image of the professional interpreter’s identity,
continually (re-)emerging in their narratives over the whole research period (see section 5.2.8). This discourse positioned the participants as individuals who needed to accept and cope with a life of stress, which affected their stated future goals (see section 5.2.9), in some cases leading to an apparent rejection of the interpreting profession.

The importance of Moscato’s discourse then (emerging very often in some narratives), might be explained by Bourdieusian theory (see section 2.12). The students’ concept of professional interpreting could be likened to an imaginary field, whose description is dependent on the teacher-interpreter’s portrayal of that field. Moreover, the importance given to the capital required to work in the field might also be determined by the capital the individual interpreter-teacher is perceived as having by students. Moscato’s capital is highlighted in participant narratives, where she is reported as having worked as an interpreter for influential figures on the world stage (i.e. the Pope and the German chancellor, see section 5.2.9). Moscato’s claim therefore that an interpreter’s life is one of ‘stress’ appears to be given more weight in the participants’ appraisal of the interpreter identity and how that corresponds or not to their own perceptions of their own habituses (see section 2.12), leading some to reject it as being undesirable in relation to how they perceive themselves living their future professional lives.

The influence of individual teacher discourses then, particularly those teachers who are perceived as having large amounts of capital in the field of interpreting, appears to be salient in how students apprise the resources for becoming professionals in the field, and potentially directing students to make different career choices in the institution. This emerges in the continuity of a preoccupation with stress in interpreting in my participant narratives, and a stated rejection of the career in later stages of the research.

9.3 The professional interpreter and the native speaker

In chapter six I analysed the interview data which were specifically related to student perceptions of language as a resource for becoming professional interpreters, a
resource which had become evident in other narratives, positioning the interpreter as a language expert (see chapter 5).

What emerged from these narratives (most notably in the first session of interviews) was a distinct orientation towards native-speaker models (see section 6.4.3), as evidenced in what I refer to as the ‘Rutland’ narratives (see sections 6.2 -6.5). These were narratives that centred on one English teacher’s spoken Italian in the classroom, and how it was evaluated grammatically, lexically and orally by my participants as being as good, if not better, than a native Italian speaker’s. Rutland’s accomplishments in Italian were positioned by my participants’ as representing their own foreign language goals, and the goals that all students should have if they want to become interpreters. This also emerged in other narratives throughout the data (see section 6.4.1).

The Discourse that seemed to be invoked in these narratives was that native speaker levels are a benchmark for interpreter proficiency (see section 6.4), and that students need to obtain such levels in order to claim professional interpreter identities. Although the interview data showed that the institution makes no such claim (i.e. there were no narratives about institutional representatives telling students that they required native speaker language levels, or any evidence in my observations in the field), institutional literature (see section 6.4.2) does appear to show an implicit and explicit assumption that students enter the institution at one language level (B2) and that their objective is to move upwards (C1, in three years), ultimately towards levels of proficiency which my participants represented as being native-speaker levels. The level system (corresponding to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), which is used to evaluate students’ progress in the institution (section 6.4.2), seems to position interpreter students then, first and foremost, as language students, and moreover frames interpreter-student goals in terms of quantifiable language acquisition over their three-year degree.

In my research, the participants’ apparent expectation that they should be interpreters by the end of their three-year degree (see sections 6.6 - 6.9), was complicated by the implicit assumption that that meant attaining native-like language levels in their
foreign languages by the end of that period. As was explicated however (see section 6.4.3), the native speaker model of language draws on the figure of an *idealised* native speaker, equating them, among other things (Ibid), with the questionable precept of ‘one country, one language, one mother tongue’ (Rampton, 1990: 97). Indeed, some participants (Matteo and Federico in particular, see section 6.4) saw the ability of attaining native-like speech, the apparent goal set by all the participants, as being dependant on living abroad (in *native speaker countries*), and hence unattainable within the institution.

The limitations of time in relation to acquiring native-like levels of spoken proficiency within the institution appeared therefore to be a source of great tension for the participants, and in some cases a reason for doubting their potential to become interpreters. Matteo (section 6.6) is concerned that he is not near enough to reaching native-like interpreter levels by the third year, as interpreting requires even more language (specifically lexis) than he imagined at first. Rosa (section 6.7) appears to abandon the career completely as there is even less time for her as she is nor even a native speaker Italian, and Maria worries that her teachers are not doing enough to get her to the native-like level within three years (section 6.8).

The consequences of not having enough time also appear to make some participants concentrate only on the present and not to even consider their future careers. Silvia (section 6.10) describes herself as just studying the languages and not knowing if she will become an interpreter or not in the future. Matteo too (Ibid), describes himself as just trying to do his best (studying languages) and avoiding the ‘stress’ of thinking too much about his potential career as an interpreter.

### 9.4 Interpreter-Student identities in the institution

In chapter seven I looked at the relationships between students and their peers in the context of the institution, and how institutional Discourses may have shaped their interpreter-student identities over time.
An analysis of my participants’ interview data initially revealed a tension between the students’ approach to study and recreation (often referred to as having ‘fun’). Rosa’s narratives in particular positioned students in the institution as being ‘nerds’ (see section 7.2), students who are only concerned with study, giving little to no time to anything else in their lives (i.e. having fun). In describing this apparent Sslmit interpreter-student identity, Rosa positioned herself initially (in her first one-to-one interview, in the first term) as being an outsider, however by her second one-to-one interview in the second term (see section 7.3), she positioned herself as having acquired something of that identity as well, describing this change in her own character as being due to the nature of the institution itself.

Silvia also positioned Sslmit students as being overly concerned with their studies in the first group interview, to the point that they neglected their physical and mental health, expressed as not resting, or having fun, and being under considerable pressure by the institution and its representatives (see section 7.4). One of the sources of this pressure appeared to emerge in another of Silvia’s narratives, in her first one-to-one interview (Ibid), where she narrated the opening day speech by Sslmit representatives, telling students that they were the best as they have entered the best institution, and recounting the pressure that that had put her under. Maria also told a similar narrative in her first group interview (see section 7.4.1), again narrating the opening day speech, where she reported the institution’s representatives as telling students that they were the ‘best of the best’, with the implicit understanding that they perform accordingly.

The representation of the interpreter-student identity in the institution therefore appeared to be one of students devoted to study above all else in their academic lives. This appeared to be linked to Neo-liberal Discourses in the institution, by marketing itself as a high-end provider of academic ‘services and products’ in the interpreting sector (see section 7.5) and its students as privileged customers who are expected to be the best, as a consequence of their belonging to it. Moreover, Neo-liberal Discourses were also seen as joining with the Discourse of the interpreter as a language expert (see section 5.2.5) to further explain this positioning of interpreter students as living for their studies, as they are positioned as being continually required to improve their languages to meet institutionally perceived goals to become the best interpreters.
Another aspect of the interpreter-student identity that emerged through participant narratives was a heightened predisposition to be competitive in the classroom. This was seen as being linked to the same Discourses again, in that the institution’s positioning of students as being the best, and the expectation that that means performing well in languages, appeared to increase displays of competent language use in the class. Some participant narratives in fact compared peer competition in their previous institutions of higher education to Sslmit (as in the cases of Matteo, Silvia and Federico, see sections 7.7 – 7.7.4), recounting a much more heightened level of competition among Sslmit students in the classroom.

Matteo’s narratives about his Erasmus placement (see sections 7.8 -7.11) appeared to show a clear connection between student competence in languages and the institution’s positioning of itself in relation to other institutions of higher education. The Erasmus co-ordinator tells Matteo that ‘because our reputation is high ... we can’t send beginners’ to the top German institutions (see section 7.9), which seems to position students’ language competence as a form of ‘capital’ (see section 2.12) in the higher education market, and positions Sslmit as having a considerable amount of that capital and wanting to maintain high standards in their *product*. Matteo’s narrative (see section 7.9) about being told that he shouldn’t compete for the top German universities because he is only a student of German as a second language (and therefore his level is too low), finds a response to this challenge in another narrative (see section 7.10) where he competes with first language students in German (improving his level), and wins a placement to Bonn university. These narratives show then how competition to succeed in Sslmit (and in other institutions) is tied to the *capital* of language competence, and how teachers are perceived as judging students on that competence.

Another form of capital that seemed to emerge from Matteo’s Erasmus narratives was related to how students evaluated their languages in relation to other languages in the institution. Silvia’s comment that German students think ‘they are god’ (see section 7.8) emerged from group talk about competition among students in general, where German students were positioned as being the most competitive of all. This heightened
competition appeared to be based on the German language itself, and how it was
different from every other first language in the institution. Silvia positioned German
students as feeling superior to their peers because of the greater capital their language
appeared to afford them, a capital which was based on the German language being
harder to acquire, as it differed much more from Italian or languages which Silvia
described as being similar to Italian (Spanish and French), and was less globally
spoken (unlike English). The manner in which both Silvia and Matteo described
students of German (agreeing eventually that these were students of German as a first
language of study), positioned them as feeling superior to all the other students in the
institution, a positioning that was based (in Silvia’s narrative) on the added capital that
they perceived their language as having.

The narratives that emerged in the second session of interviews, in the second term,
showed a shift in participant perceptions of competition in the classroom. Whereas in
the first term competition was described by all the participants as being generic among
all the students (see sections 7.7 – 7.7.4), in the second term it appears to be much
more reduced. Some participants (Silvia, Maria) position only a small proportion of
the students as engaging in it, and these are positioned as being negative characters in
the class. Silvia positions competitive students as being ‘too much into competition’
and the rest of the students as having ‘to deal with them’, positioning herself as one of
the latter (see section 7.12.1). Maria positions those students who are competitive as
being show-offs, as they always want to show ‘they know a lot about the language’,
positioning herself as not being one of them as well (see section 7.12.2). Federico
however, although acknowledging that competition is much reduced (see section
7.12.5), no longer takes a negative stance towards it, seeing it as having generally been
reduced among students due to increased personal relations.

Unlike the other participants, Matteo maintains that competition among students
remains the same but that ‘there is no room’ for it in interpreting classes (which were
initiated in the second term), as students ‘just have to help’ each other (see section
7.12.4). This absence of competition among students in interpreting lessons
specifically, appears to be due to an inability for any single student to position
him/herself as being more of an expert than any other as the language is more complicated and diverse than in other lessons.

9.5 The role of teacher-student relations in shaping student-interpreter identities in the institution

In chapter eight, I analysed interview data which were related specifically to teacher–student relations, and the role these played in shaping my participants perception of the institution and their student-interpreter identities in the institution.

Narratives from the first interview session appeared to position Sslmit as a university department which was very different from other Italian university departments, specifically in relation to the much smaller teacher-student ratio found there. Matteo’s narrative about coming to Sslmit from his first university in Rome (La Spienza) positions Sslmit students as being privileged students in that they have more contact with their teachers and an opportunity to learn more (see section 8.2). This appears to invoke a Discourse that smaller teacher-student ratios improve learning outcomes, in part due to a more unified sense of community where teachers are more included in that community and students are given more support (see section 8.2.3). In this respect, Matteo positions Sslmit as being better at raising student learning levels than in his previous institution (Ibid).

In her first one-to-one interview, Silvia also highlights the smaller teacher-student ratio at Sslmit. Although she does not refer to the didactic advantages specifically, she positions the teachers as being part of an intimate, positive community (‘a family’) where she feels ‘comfortable’, unlike in her previous Italian department (Political Sciences). This again seems to invoke the same Discourse of smaller teacher-student ratios improving learning outcomes, as Silvia suggests by her ‘comfortable’ state that she will be able to study better in the Sslmit environment.

The difference between Sslmit and other Italian university departments also emerges in narratives from the second interview session. Federico, in his second one-to-one
interview, describes the classroom environment as being more ‘personal’, where the smaller teacher-student ratio is again portrayed as creating a relationship with teachers (as in Silvia’s description, above) which is unlike the impersonal ones in other Italian departments; positioning Sslmit students and teachers as not having ‘a classical university professor’ relationship (see section 8.4). Federico’s emphasis is on the type of relation that forms in this tight environment and not the didactic benefits. For Federico, Sslmit it is not about ‘you teach me and I learn’ but about liking teachers and being part of a community. In describing this community Federico invokes a Discourse, that teachers are conduits for channelling information (as exemplified by his phrase ‘you teach me and I learn’), but he appears to background it as not being the most important thing in Sslmit, positioning students as being more concerned with their social interactions with teachers and the community that forms in classrooms. There are didactic consequences however, as Federico describes students as choosing not to frequent the classes of those teachers they do not like. In this context then, learning appears to be based not on what the teacher teaches but on how much the teacher is part of a teacher-student community.

In Matteo’s narrative in his second one-to-one interview (see section 8.5), the didactic advantages of the smaller teacher-student ratios in Sslmit are no longer highlighted, and the community that initially appeared to include the teacher, now positions him/her as an outsider. In Matteo’s narrative he portrays teachers imposing arbitrary rules on students, which deny them the possibility of re-taking their exams and potentially getting better marks (damaging their academic careers). Matteo therefore appears to be invoking a counter-discourse, where smaller teacher-student ratios do not necessarily create tight teacher-student communities, as these smaller ratios also permit teachers to impose unfair rules on the student community, and due to their small numbers students are positioned as being intimidated and unable to voice their protests.

In the second group interview, criticisms of teacher-student relations appear to be prevalent. Matteo recounts another narrative about teachers denying students their rights to refuse exam marks (see sections 8.6.1 - 8.6.2) and Federico recounts a narrative about teachers not knowing the rules and regulations and being reticent to
communicate with students (see sections 8.6.3 – 8.6.4). Another narrative from Matteo develops the lack of clarity in student-teacher communications into a general criticism of the institution itself, which Matteo describes as being ‘confused’ (see sections 8.6.5 – 8.6.6). This narrative makes reference to the smaller teacher-student ratio in Ssmit again, but here it is used as a criticism, as smaller student numbers it is argued should mean more teacher help and support, which Matteo describes as not being forthcoming (a position ratified in another narrative from Federico, see sections 8.6.7 – 8.6.8). The positioning of the teacher as an insider in the first session of interviews, part of a close student-teacher community, changes in the second term then as teachers are increasingly positioned as being unfair in their relations with students and not providing students with services that their small numbers would appear to facilitate more.

Further criticisms of teacher-student relations emerged in the second group interview, where both Maria and Silvia complain of not being treated as mature students, positioning smaller teacher-student ratios as creating environments that are too close, where teachers’ knowledge of each individual student appears to make them overly controlling (a notable contrast to Silvia’s positive description of teacher-student relations as being like a ‘family’ in her first one-to-one interview, see section 8.1). Matteo, Federico and Silvia also narrate a co-constructed narrative where teacher-student relations are described outside the classroom (see section 8.9.3), where friendships are narrated as forming between individual teachers and students, and which the narrators portray as being unprofessional. This narrative further positions teachers as being outsiders to the over-all student community.

In sum, the interpreter-student identity portrayed in the first session of interviews (in the first term), is influenced by the close relation between students and teachers. This identity is initially positioned as being positive and privileged, linked to the image of the institution as being different to other Italian institutions in higher education, foregrounding the smaller teacher-student ratio, and invoking a Discourse that smaller classes improve teacher-student communities with consequential didactic benefits. However, by the second term, participant narratives show an increasingly negative interpretation of smaller teacher-student ratios in the institution, where teachers are
increasingly positioned as being outsiders to the student community (and at times even threatening to that community). This appears to invoke a counter-discourse to the one evident in first term narratives. Rather than increasing closer teacher-student communities and facilitating better learning, smaller teacher-student ratios are seen as increasing the teacher’s power and control over students in a negative way; treating students as adolescents and not as mature students, and allowing teachers to introduce arbitrary rules, such as not allowing them to re-take exams. The interpreter-student identity is no longer positioned as being positive and privileged therefore, with respect to closer teacher-student relations as in the first term, but rather as being powerless and subject to potential injustices.

In the last chapter, chapter 10, I give a summary of my findings and make suggestions for further research.
Chapter Ten

Concluding summary, suggestions for further research and changes to interpreter training

10.1 Concluding summary

Although interpreters play an increasingly important role in today’s society (see chapter one, section 1.1) there has not yet been any substantial empirical research into those institutions that train them (Ibid). The aim of this research then was to fill this gap by investigating an Italian higher education institution dedicated to training professional interpreters (the University of Bologna’s Department for interpreters and translators).

My study was based on narrative research taken from an ethnographic perspective, specifically the positioning analysis of small stories as they emerged in talk-in-interaction informed by my own experiences in the institution and observational notes taken throughout the research period (see appendix B, field notes). This was seen as providing emic insights into how students constructed the identity of the professional interpreter and their own interpreter-student identities in the institution in relation to dominant Discourses.

My research questions were the following:

1. Over the period of their first academic year, how do interpreter-students perceive and negotiate Discourses in the institution, and how do these Discourses affect their constructions of the identity of a professional interpreter and the resources to become one?

2. How do these Discourses shape their identities as interpreter-students and affect their stated future goals.
In answer to my first research question, those Discourses that my participants appeared to ‘perceive and negotiate’ were related to two perceptions of the professional interpreter identity, the interpreter as a language expert, and the interpreter as a socio-culturally engaged interlocutor. The former Discourse presented the interpreter as an invisible conduit for channelling language, whilst the latter presented the interpreter as an agentive and visible player in the interpreted communicative event (ICE). These Discourses highlighted certain resources that my participants negotiated, the importance of language skills and the importance of communicative, socio-cultural, inter-relational skills. What emerged from the research was that the former appeared to be much more prominent, with participants identifying the professional interpreter as being a near native-like speaker and setting themselves native speaker goals as their ultimate aim in acquiring interpreter identities. These goals however were further negotiated within the context of the three-year degree and what appeared to be an implicit assumption by my participants that they should be professional interpreters at the end of this period. The ability of reaching such goals in such a limited period of time was shown to create tensions in the participants’ projected identities as interpreters, in relation to their present struggles with language learning as a vital resource and the apparent gulf between their perceived level and a native speaker level. This was further exasperated by a perception of native-speaker attainment as only being possible outside the institution, involving a substantial period of stay in the countries where the native language was spoken (something that the Erasmus programme was not positioned as being sufficiently capable of supplying).

In answer to my second research question, those Discourses which appeared to shape my participants’ interpreter-student identities within the institution, and which participants were continually attempting to negotiate through their interviews, were linked to neo-liberal Discourses which positioned them as belonging to a top institution in the higher education market, and the Discourse of the interpreter as a language expert again. These Discourses underpinned an image of the Sslmit student as someone who was always studying, giving little time to recreation, and who was highly competitive in the classroom. These identities were linked to a perceived image of Sslmit students being the best students, where best meant the best in their knowledge of foreign languages, and therefore dedicated to studying languages and
performing better in front of their peers (potentially to show themselves to be the best of the best).

Another Discourse which appeared to shape the identity of the interpreter-student, was the Discourse that smaller teacher-student ratios create closer teacher-student communities with improved learning. Although this Discourse appeared to be invoked by some participants in the first stage of the research (in the first term), singling out Sslmit as a special institution within the Italian higher education system and positioning themselves as being privileged over other Italian students, it developed into a counter-discourse by the second term. This counter-discourse portrayed Sslmit students as being ultimately unhappy with smaller teacher-student ratios as they positioned themselves as expecting greater help and support from teachers, which was described as not being forthcoming. They also positioned themselves as being more vulnerable to the potential abuses of a teacher’s power, due to the nature of smaller classes where teachers knew students individually (and could therefore identify individuals as the source of opposition), denying them a collective voice of protest, which the relative anonymity of larger classes might afford them. Moreover, smaller teacher-student ratios outside the classroom, in extra-curricular activities, were portrayed as leading to ‘friendships’ between some teachers and individual students which were perceived by some participants as leading to unprofessional conduct in relation to institutional protocols (such as letting students know their exam marks before they were officially posted) and potential favouritism in the class. Matteo and Federico positioned the institution itself as being responsible for allowing these circumstances to exist, Matteo in particular describing Sslmit as being ‘confused’ in clarifying its rules and regulations to both the student and the teaching body. This counter-discourse then challenged the Discourse that smaller teacher-student ratios might increase teacher inclusiveness in the teacher-student community and facilitate a better classroom environment, with potential better learning outcomes. The teacher was increasingly positioned as being an outsider to the student community and in some cases responsible for creating tensions in the class.

A different form of discourse also emerged in the research, which was identified as a teacher’s subjective representation of the interpreter identity. The influence of this
discourse on the participants was considered as being due to the perception of that teacher’s capital in the field of interpreting, making their appraisal of resources more or less relevant to students’ lives, and their image of themselves as potential future interpreters.

10.2 The institution and the student: Differing perceptions

What emerged from the research was a certain mismatch between the institution’s stated goals and the students’ interpretation of those goals. The institution sets a C1 level as a benchmark for students by the end of their third year, in both their first and second languages of study. This referral to the ‘Common European Framework of Reference for Languages’ is presumably intended to refer not only to a student’s linguistic competence however, but also to their socio-cultural sensitivities to language as the framework description makes quiet clear,

(i)n an intercultural approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner’s whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture.

(The Council of Europe’s Language Policy Unit, 2016:1)

What emerged in the research however was that students perceived this ‘C1’ level as being purely a language requirement, positioning language as being in someway distinct from culture. Although I had already some perception of the vital role that language appeared to be playing in students’ lives before beginning the research, I was unaware to what extent the impact of such an approach might have had on excluding other aspects of an interpreter’s professional identity in their appraisal of the future role.

The importance of language over culture, and the apparent separation of the two, was perhaps reinforced by the institution’s course taxonomies, where first year students are

46 https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf
required to take a module in ‘Lingua e Cultura’ (Language and Culture), suggesting perhaps two separate and distinct entities. From the actual data, Moscato’s advice to Matteo that he use his time in Germany (his Erasmus period abroad) to ‘just learn the language’ might also explain how teachers in the institution may also be responsible for students viewing language and culture as being separate. In sum, the C1 requisite imposed by the institution appears to be interpreted by students as an encouragement to focus specifically on language in its grammatical and lexical sense (not its socio-cultural dimension), and to attain very high proficiency levels.

These high language levels emerged often in the data as being equated with *native speaker-like* performance. The reason for this is perhaps due to the presence of native speaker teachers in the classroom, a fact that the institution advertises as evidently being an important factor in the students’ education. For example, in its course description for the second cycle degree one of the reasons given for prospective students to choose the degree is because Forlì offers an advanced training program, organized into targeted language teaching and specialist courses, taught by *native speaking* professionals.

(My emphasis)

Another important area of potential contrast between institutional goals and student perceptions is in the final objective of the first cycle degree. The data from my research suggests that many students see the three-year degree as leading to a professional qualification as an *interpreter*. However, the institution describes their final degree as ‘Intercultural Linguistic mediation’ and the graduates from this degree as ‘mediators’, and not interpreters. Certainly, the second cycle degree in ‘Conference Interpreting’ clearly identifies the student as a professional conference

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47 http://corsi.unibo.it/Magistrale/Interpretazione/Pagine/Presentazione.aspx#regolamento
48 http://www.scuolalingue.unibo.it/it/corsi/corsi-di-studio/corso/2015/8059
interpreter after his/her studies⁴⁹, but the title of interpreter is never mentioned with regards to the first cycle degree. The question posed therefore was, why do students perceive it in this way?

The difference between what is a mediator and what is an interpreter is perhaps unclear, and is not clarified by the institution’s literature. Moreover, for the new students that enter Sslmit there is a clear suggestion indeed, on the side of the institution itself, that they will be trained interpreters by the end of their first cycle degrees. Although the degree programme is entitled ‘Intercultural Linguistic Mediation’ (Mediazione Linguistica Interculturale) and refers to the formation of intercultural ‘mediators’ in its on-line literature, as previously stated, there is nevertheless a blurring of distinctions between mediators and interpreters. In the same literature, the future graduate’s role in a working environment (‘Funzione in un contesto di lavoro’) is described as involving ‘interpretazione di trattativa’, which in English would be translated as ‘liaison interpreting’. Furthermore, the very title of the school itself (The Advanced School for Interpreters and Translators in Modern Languages⁵⁰) might suggest that any qualification obtained would be interpreter related. The fact that by the end of their first year students were still referring to themselves as future interpreters after their three-year degree, suggests that the institution had not clarified the difference between a mediator and an interpreter, and what students were exactly professionally trained for after their studies.

Although the institution’s curricula for the three-year degree is evidently aimed at training students to be community interpreters (see section 1.3), or perhaps one should say community ‘mediators’, the students’ awareness of the different roles involved in community and conference interpreting appear to be confused, as emerged in the data.

The emphasis on acquiring language skills above socio-cultural understandings and inter-personal communication seems to index the role of the conference interpreter much more than the community interpreter (Ibid). Indeed, apart from Maria, none of

⁴⁹ http://www.scuolalingue.unibo.it/it/corsi/corsi-di-studio/corso/2015/8060
⁵⁰ Now renamed ‘Department for Interpreters and Translators’ (D.I.T.).
the other participants placed much emphasis on the latter, preferring instead to highlight language acquisition as the principal aim of their studies, and referring on many occasions to the need to speak ‘perfectly’ and/or ‘like a native speaker’.

10.3 Suggestions for changes to the institution and its curricula

Proposals for changing aspects of the institution’s curricula or organisation emerged through my research (see section 10.2, above) with the ultimate aim of improving the professional training of interpreters.

Specific to this research, the collectively held view among my participants that students should be interpreters after their three-year degree needs perhaps to be addressed, by clarifying the objectives of the first-cycle degree in relation to the second-cycle degree, and the different forms of interpreting that exist.

The second-cycle degree quite clearly aims to train students to be conference interpreters (see section 1.3) and the general orientation of the first-cycle degree appears to have the objective of preparing students to be community interpreters (Ibid). However, the difference between a community interpreter (liaison or dialogue interpreter) and a conference interpreter has been shown to be quite distinct, with very different potential interpreter identities in play (see sections 1.4.1 - 1.4.2). For example, the conference interpreter, working in a booth with headphones (see section 1.4.1), might be expected to have a very different experience of interpreting from the community interpreter, working perhaps with immigrants in a hospital, police station or at immigration control (Ibid).

The Discourse that interpreters are invisible conduits for channelling language appears to be a dominant Discourse in my participants’ projected identity of the interpreter, with an emphasis on language as the dominant resource, and a positioning of the interpreter as a language expert. However, this appears to be more applicable to a conference interpreter than a community interpreter. The counter Discourse that interpreters are visible and agentive, actively effecting the outcome of the ICE,
appears to be more applicable to the identity of the community interpreter and places an emphasis on a range of resources in addition to language (see section 1.4.2). By actively exploring the different identities of these two types of professional interpreter in the students’ first year, teachers might reduce the emphasis on language learning as a student’s primary concern, as well as an apparent implicit assumption that they require native speaker levels to become interpreters (particularly in relation to the time restrictions of a three-year degree) and the pressures that appears to bring.

Moreover, teachers might also explore the whole Discourse of the native speaker to reflect the changing world and the changing role of interpreters in it. This might entail introducing courses that explore the concept of the native speaker, challenging its predominance through different perspectives such as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and World Englishes (WE), (see section 6.4.3).

The changes I have proposed above might also influence the interpreter-student identity in the institution, reducing competition on language performance in the classroom and increasing the importance of cultural knowledge for example, or reducing tensions to reach potentially unrealisable goals, such as native-like speech in three years.

10.4 Unanswered questions: Improving future research methods

Central to this research project was the aim of accessing the cultural world of the students in the institution, to provide emic insights into how they perceived themselves and their future careers within the context of the institution; particularly in relation to its Discourses and practices, and how they play out in everyday life. However, many questions were left unanswered that any future studies should perhaps address.

Although it was very productive working with one tight-knit group over the period of their first year in the institution, a greater in-depth understanding of their socio-cultural worlds might have emerged if the interviews could have been carried out on a more regular basis, i.e. once a month, as opposed to once every three to four months.
There was of course the risk that such demands on the participants’ time might have led to a feeling of resentment, and a potential break down in relations with myself. If time was less of an issue with regards to the data gathering period (usually one year in doctoral research) a larger longitudinal study with the same group would have been preferable, following their progress to the end of their degrees, investigating the wider significance of institutional Discourses on their entire academic trajectories.

With regards to narrative research from an ethnographic perspective, questions of the scale and magnification of the participants’ socio-cultural worlds were salient. How much can such research claim to see, and what does it inevitably leave out? Certainly, it is more than a micro discourse analysis, the turn by turn construction of meaning in the flow of discourse (such as conversation analysis), but it is also much less than a full ethnographic study, attempting to draw in as many experiences of a cultural group’s life as possible. On reflection, as a researcher, I would have liked to enrich the research more by enlarging the ethnographic perspective, placing the narrative analysis in a more detailed socio-cultural context. This might have been facilitated by recording the participants directly in the classroom environment, to listen to their interactions with their colleagues and the teacher, and compare and contrast this data with the interview data. Moreover, interviews with the participants’ teachers would have added an additional and richer set of perspectives on how institutional Discourses played out in their approach to teaching interpreting. Another ethnographically enriching approach might have been occasioned by playing the interviews back to the group and eliciting their responses to my observations and interpretations of what was going on, and/or giving them my field notes and asking them to comment on the observations I had made.

Having considered all these variations on my actual research methods I would certainly adopt one or more of these in any future research projects.

10.5 The research as an ‘Italian’ case study: Relevancies for Italian institutions of higher education with regard to professional interpreter training, and potentially beyond
The Sslmit case study revealed a disjuncture between the institution’s stated objectives and the students’ interpretations of them (see section 10.2). In particular, the role of language learning in relation to becoming a professional interpreter appeared to be taken as a de facto essential, and dominant requisite by the latter as a means of attaining a professional status in the field. This seemed to occur despite the evident importance of developing students’ socio-cultural awareness in what is essentially the training of professionals in the field of ‘community interpreting’. The evident lack of awareness of exactly what students are studying to become in their first cycle degrees, and the resources required to achieve such goals, is a serious issue that needs to be addressed by the institution, and leads to a wider consideration of professional training in other similar institutions in the Italian context.

This research revealed that institutional curricula may be conveying the wrong message to students, either through the Discourses it communicates implicitly or explicitly, or by the way that students interpret it (see section 10.3). Institutions therefore need to examine their curricula more carefully to identify and evaluate the specific Discourses that they are communicating and to respond to research which investigates how curricula is interpreted by students, regardless of institutional presuppositions of how it should be interpreted.

My conclusions in this research might have relevancy for institutions seeking to train professionals in other fields, apart from interpreting, which might lead to similar research in these as well (see section 10.6), widening the debate about curricula in general and questioning how relevant and effective it is in catering to the needs of aspiring professionals. The following question therefore needs to be addressed: are the curricula of Italian higher education professional training institutes adequate to the needs of a students’ development in their chosen field?

Although this research did not set out to challenge my participants’ perspectives on becoming professionals in their chosen field, it is hoped that research such as this might ultimately lead to their considering alternative perspectives, through
institutional changes in curricula, but also through the debate and reflection that might be generated consequently.

10.6 Suggestions for further research

The use of narrative research from an ethnographic perspective was shown to give emic insights into the lives of aspiring professionals in the field of interpreting in a higher education institution in Italy, describing the continuities and changes in their projected identities both as interpreter-students and future professionals. In particular, a small story approach, adopting narrative positioning, allowed for an analysis of how identities are negotiated in co-constructed situated talk, both in the narrative event as well as in the narrative-telling event. Analysis of small stories over time, combined with ethnographic data to explore the influence of wider Discourses on those stories, give the researcher a perspective on the continuities and changes in an individual’s orientation towards the social world of the institution and how they position themselves in that world. Furthermore, the emergence of patterns in narratives over time (i.e. the re-occurrence of certain themes or story-lines) can provide insights into the Discourses they are negotiating and positioning themselves towards, in order to make sense of the field they are attempting to become experts in.

My research explored student identities (as students in the institution and as projected future professionals) in an Italian first-cycle degree at Bologna’s department for interpreters and translators, providing insights into an Italian institution. Further research might examine similar first-cycle degree programmes in other European countries, to compare and contrast this Italian case study with those. Furthermore, within the present institution under examination, similar research might be carried out on students frequenting post-graduate courses in interpreting, even potentially the same students in the present research cohort (see section 10.4), in an attempt to trace changes and continuities in their projected identities over their whole academic careers in the institution.
Research into institutions which might have already implemented some of the proposals I have made here with regard to interpreting (see section 10.3) might also be of interest in evaluating the potential for positive change in interpreting institutions in general, with the aim of improving the training of the increasingly important figure of the professional interpreter in today’s society (see chapter one, section 1.1).

Specifically related to the Italian context, this form of research might be extended to other higher education institutions for professional training to examine the effects of curricula on their developing identities as future professionals in other fields, potentially critiquing curricula and initiating debates on changes to it in order to improve professional training in general.
References


Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). *Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal


Appendix A

Interview transcripts
First interview session
Federico 1 (Fe): First interview

Alan: if you had imagine your life with regards to languages as if it were a book (. ) the different chapters and moments in your life how would you describe this book?

Fed: I I th- think mainly I studied english from the beginning because my mother wanted me and my sister to know english so we had a (. ) er:m various visitors who were from england or australia the classic students but at the beginning it was just a studying so: that wouldn’t (. ) I think m: count

Alan: how old were you?

Fed: er: from (…) between 3 and 6 (. ) up to: 10 years old

Alan h hm

Fed: but the elementary school I I think it’s more of erm (. ) I liked (. ) dialects because i- my: mother is from bologna my father is from marche and e:r m we didn’t have the er:m the grandfather or grandmother who spoke in dialect but for example my father knew always (. ) he knows e:r lots of dialects since he talks them very well I don’t know why I
have no idea and when I was a child I I was really (.) I really liked it so i: would er everything I know dialect is through him or some other people’s (.) er grandparents and e:r that’s what I: (. ) cared more of and I I ne- never was much for italian really e:r I never liked e:r writing in itself or nobo- I wasn’t creative e:r particularly I couldn’t if you would give me the classic homework for kids e:r describe your day I wou- would just stare at the paper because y- you didn’t know what to write and couldn’t m: (. ) think immediately and n: put it into words in italian so I think its (.) as a kid it was yes dialects m: bolognese and marchigiano but (.) middle school I was trying to think but I see major school as a kind of intellectual wasteland it always is ((laughs)) nothing really intelligent comes out of it was (xx) yeah it’s it’s not really the:n high school english surely I studied english in out of school seriously like in [n: Alan: where? Fed: the british school (. ) in bologna and in e:r well later in the first year in university e:r at the italian
American association and then with the teacher of Italian association but privately so that’s surely English (or)

Alan: what sorry can I ask what school you went to?

Fed: er liceo righi

Alan: liceo?

Fed: righi (.) scientific high school

Alan: scientific high school

Fed: it’s no (.) it doesn’t really er (.) have anything to do with languages because it I didn’t I never used to think of it as a job it was something I liked to do er something I I knew I knew better than other people

Alan: hm

Fed: er in highschool that was pretty obvious because I (xxx) you know how it is taught and I had fun and it was (3.0) spare time er amusement let’s say

Alan: was it just one language or other [languages

Fed: [no:

only one language I never I wanted to to er start Spanish with high school but er there was a mix up with classes and I ended up in a even more scientific class and couldn’t maintain the Spanish one so: I just stayed with the English
Fed: and then e:r (...) I’m really (..)
fell for english m: last year really
because I was in med school (.)
e:r
Alan: s- sorry you were where?
Fed: medicine school
Alan: a ha
Fed: and for the first 2 years but after
the first year I was (..) m-
crushed mainly ((laughs)) by it
Alan: h hm
Fed: and it was the only thing I would
do as a: (..) really as fun I am not
a sport people e:r sport person
don’t really like sweating and I
don’t see the point so ((small
laugh)) it was my: hobby shall
we say it sounds ridiculous
because it was watching films in
english and reading books in
english and in one year I read
about 25 books and e:r but it’s
also because I wasn’t studying
much but that's another part
Fed: a:nd e:rm but also there was for
example (.) from the last year of
high school and the first year of
medicine I would erm (.) when I
started to think of going into
medicine i e:rm seeing it now I
guess (.) i: turned into a more (..)
well cynical I’ve always been
more: rational probably in state
of mind so also in talking e:r I
think it’s (.): m: (..)
overthinking and knowing what
you’re saying before you’re
saying it being e:r (..) I the word
that comes to mind is scientifical
but not scientifical meaning e:r
chemicals but e:r precise

Alan: h hm
Fed: and so maybe that’s (.): that
would be (.): yes maybe a stage
would be that or a chapter would
be that (.): e:rm (…) 
Alan: so the change from medicine to
((Filippo laughs)) that sounds
like a chapter
Fed: yeah that sounds like a chapter I
hope it’s it will be a chapter and
no I hope it will be more of a
book than a chapter because a
chapter ends ((small laugh)) a:nd
e:rm m: (…) right now I like it
((small laugh)) [it’s ehm
Alan: [ wh- what
happened to make you change
from medicine to languages?
Fed: e:r I realised medicine was not I
liked it I liked it I like it I don:: I
don’t deny what I chose and what
i: fell for e:r I still like but I I
never liked it enough to study
medicine probably
Fed: It’s very much like the school because you have to really (.) really want it and to: it doesn’t have to be it’s just something you like but something you are (.)
really passionate about cos otherwise you can get yourself through it’s pointless it’s it’s no longer high school you don’t have to just get through it but to want to (xx)

Alan: so why did you decide to do medicine in the first place?
Fed: oh because i was sure it was and because I was sure it was one of those jobs you you can get out of there and more or less have a job it’s not always (.) the best but you always get a job and it was (. ..) let’s say (..) well actually it was the last 20 years my father had problems but but I came to know it when I was 15 more or less so I thinks it’s I think it had an influence on me and (. .) knowing that (2.0) i: it gave me a more precise idea of how difficult the working er world is so I think it’s a: it has an influence surely then I would always see my mother working and I liked it I mean

Alan: she worked
Fed:  sh- she she’s a doctor
Alan:  ah
Fed:  and e:r she she also works at
home because she’s a radiologist
so she would do the exams at
home
Alan:  h hm
Fed:  and I liked it I liked the: e:rm m:
the human body and how it
works and it’s e:r and so and I
was (.) I was never good at em
say italian and history or
geography or math or: so science
and biology was pretty much
where I was good and I wouldn’t
and I didn’t see english as a (.) as
a thing of work as a as a job sorry
so I as an amusement
Alan:  h hm
Fed:  so=
Alan:  =you mentioned your father I
don’t understand your father
Fed:  em: he had a: he let’s say
inherited the: e:rm from my
grandfather a:: company and e:r
there were (..) of course the
classic thing my grandfather had
this company in the best period
you can have it my father had it
((laughs)) in the worst period you
can have it a:nd e:r it was a slow
decline also a couple of problems
as e:rm he trusted the wrong
people no no I’m not talking
mobs (.) kind but he but he got (..)
he got screwed mainly e:rm so
that kind of thing in a company
that sets you off on the wrong
path he: got into the crisis also so
it ((laughs)) all crumbled together
and in the end of course it (..)
(xxx) it’s not like e:rm (…) I saw
him for example I would never
get into economics and my father
once asked me if it was (.)
because I saw how many
problems he had a:nd but no it
never influenced me that way it
didn’t cut e:r (..) jobs off because
I’m: had to e:r get away from that
it was just er (4.0) I don’t really
see what’s fascinating in having a
company and running a company
(xx) but still it e:r (2.0) as a kid
it’s well maybe I was not a kid 15
years old but i:t (xx) you and it
gives you a really e:rm strongly
an idea of what’s e::r (.) a job
Alan: uhum
Fed: and it’s not always good for
example I had the healthy
comparison between my mother
who::: who she works 10 hours a
day and (.) for the past 5 years (.)
6 and a half e:r days a a:: week so
it’s not like I had the perfect job
part time overpaid and my father
267 but still e:rm (2.00) you feel like
268 you have to put yourself in the
269 condition to have less problem at
270 all in the world (.) so (3.0) I think
271 it’s why medicine came as a as
272 an option also (.m: of course
273 there’s doctor house but that’s
274 another thing ((laughs))
275 Alan: so when you decided to stop (.)
276 doing medicine how did you (.)
277 come up with SSMLIT?
278 Fed: e:r at first I just wanted to: give
279 up studying a:nd I thought good
280 a:nd e:r but still it’s (. stupid
281 because I had nothing in my
282 hands a:nd e:r the reason why I
283 would have liked to leave italy
284 and go (.) work somewhere was
285 to learn another language ((small
286 laugh)) so I thought (put 2 and 2)
287 and I said yes why not learn
288 another language and go work
289 somewhere else e:rm (. study
290 and develop that (xxx) and I can’t
291 understand the people who say
292 that interpreting has always been
293 my dream or maybe when I was a
294 kid you know the (austrian accent)
295 the interpreting doesn’t really
296 come to your mind and and it
297 was not my dream I told it was an
298 amusement for most of my life (.)
299 but I also think that it’s even
300 probably better because if (.) it is
always I have done for fun (.) I
hope it will stay that I mean it’s
not just a job or the job or the job
you have to do but also what you
like to do ehm: (..)
Alan: and how are your experiences
here now since you started your
degree?
Fed: (2.0) pretty good really e:rm (.)
it’s really different fro::m from
medicine so I can I can say I can
( ..) make a comparison because
it’s the hours more or less are the
same ( .) here we have
homeworks ( ..) which is weird
for me because I have stopped
doing homework in 4 th class
more or less and ((laughs)) e:r
there you had to just e:r study
study study and break your head
on a book here it’s not just that
not only that you have to: (…) (or at least for me) you also have
to like it you can’t learn a
language if you ( ..) if you don’t
fall for it e:rm ( …) right now I
am ((laughs)) (also my life
started immediately) with the ( .)
also with the Russian and Slovak
Slovak (this is?)
Alan: Slovak yeah
Fed: Slovak ( .) and I think it’s better
because I’m: ( .) m: f- for
example right now I have it
have an average 34 hours a week which for the past (term) you know 6 weeks I become between 28 and 36 but otherwise I knowing myself I know I have to be busy otherwise I am (…) decline ((laughs))

Alan:  h hm
Fed:  and (2.0)
Alan:  what’s the atmosphere in the classes like? in general any languages any classes
Fed:  that (.) pretty much is similar to medicine there is a lot of you don’t notice it the first month because everyone is new and everyone is just (..) looking around
Alan:  h hm
Fed:  (.) but you realise the: a fight in the in that you have to be the better one and because it’s another faculty you’re just (piece of) knowledge it’s of course there’s a: there’s a part of intelligence in it it’s not (xxx) to put a brick on another brick but a huge chunk of it is knowledge so knowing that you’re knowing it better you’re
I’ve never really been competitive and I don’t put myself in the situation to be I mean: 

Alan: how does this competitiveness come out what do you see or [hear?]

Fed: [ah y- you you Sh] I think the moments where it’s more obvious are the translation classes I think and for me it’s really funny because I don’t see the point but you see:: when someone corrects someone else not correct as you’re talking you make a mistake and someone else corrects you that’s just to (punch) but or like I make my translation and someone else: (.). (.) corrects you I see people really taking it personally which is ([laughs]) really stupid because it’s the concept of translation that it there is somebody probably even less competent than you correcting it and making it different (.). you cannot take it personally it’s (.). how it works it’s in a translation you can think you are the one saying it and stays like that
Alan: how do you see this? (. ) I mean
you say they take it personally
but how is that manifest?
Fed: (. ) erm the: (. ) back and forward
the: erm (. . ) mostly no one ends
up saying oh yes you’re right and
that that I was wrong or: just the
the: just reality and: r you you
realise that often it starts ((makes
facial expressions and hand
movements))
Alan: you mean bodily gestures
Fed: yeah bodily gestures right and
erm I don’t know: (. ) erm the
after comments (. )
Alan: such as
Fed: [so::
Alan: [after comments ((filippo laughs))
for example?
Fed: oh for example like they they
don’t generally turn into: r that’s
also amusing for me they don’t
just say on: r oh I think he:
translates horribly they get in
((small laugh)) personally: r I:
don’t know i: think he is: r (. ) I
can’t think of anything of course
right know but: rm I don’t know
(. ) they get a like: rm (. . )
joking on people and: rm (. )
Alan: making jokes about?
Fed: making making jokes about
people and: r (. ): rm (. ) a not
in a particular sick way I mean
it’s
not like (they’re all crumbling)
and e:r (grumbling) and hating
each other no of course not but (.)
you see it more than in a: I don’t
know in a (...) history class
Alan: hm
Fed: e:r or: erm: I don’t know (.) and
also in law I’ve got also friends
(of course most the different
things) and their always most
about (5.0) equal (.) ((laughs))
there’s not never (..) there’s
always someone trying to e:r to
be the best and be the first and
the: e:r but e:r not in such a
competitive way e:rm (..)
Alan: what about the teachers do they:=
Fed: =no (.) no no no I don’t think
e:rm they: (2.0) feed this
mechanism no not at all actually
(.)
Alan: h hm
Fed: m: (3.0) e:rm well you
would hope they don’t I mean e:r
in a: (..) up to a certain point is
good but (.) e:r because yes when
you work you have got to think
you are the the best one for the
job you have got to e:r you can’t
say oh no he’s better just give the
work to him I’ll (.) I take the next
one
Alan:  h hm
Fed:  but e:r e:rm (.) it’s both
interpretation and translation it’s
never only you so you have to be
able to work in a: group and e:r
and e:r (..) value also the other
people as you’re as you’re equals
it’s (..) more as an equal but (…)
Alan:  hm right (.) ok very interesting I
think we can stop there? Great
Maria 1. First interview:

1 Alan: ok (.) so: (.) Maria? Yeah
2 Maria: yeah
3 Alan: tell me (.) a little bit about (.)
4 Maria: [er:::
5 Alan: ok so the chapters (. ) the first one
6 is bingo it’s from 6 years old to
7 10 years old it’s the main thing
8 we were doing in the elementary
9 school so we were playing bingo
10 ( . ) and I know the English way of
11 saying numbers thanks to the
12 bingo so that’s my kindergarden
13 then we have
14 Alan: b- b- but that made you (.)
15 Maria: yeah yeah it was funny and it
16 was the only foreign language we
17 were studying (. ) and it was a
18 funny way to do it so: (. ) bingo
19 Alan: hmm did you get many bingos is
20 Maria: m: no I didn’t get one ( . ) but it
21 was funny and it was an
22 interesting way to develop (. ) this
23 Alan: hmm
24 Maria: and an:::d we only did it with one
25 of the teacher the first one wasn’t
26 really good she was starting with
27 the grammar which is not what
28 Alan: we should do in the elementary
school so:: (.) I can’t remember what we did with her but I do remember the bingo and I do remember enjoying it a lot so (.).
that’s the first experience of English I think (.). from 11 years old to 13 years old so: (.). during the media ((Italian for junior school))

Alan: h hm

Maria: I do remember Cirencester I went on a school trip every year during the summer for 2 weeks and we were staying in Cirencester so: (.). that was my idea of England it was (.). in the middle of the er land it was really green with a lot of people coming from all over the world but we were mainly speaking Italian with Italians and Spain and Spanish with the Spanish so it wasn’t that useful but it was great (.). we went to London we went to oxford so we saw a bit of England

Alan: you said that was England what do you mean by that?

Maria: yeah

Alan: what do you mean by that?

Maria: it it was what I was expecting I ha- I had seen the first movie of harry potter I think he had it had just come out an:d it was green
and my parents had travelled in England for a while with the motorbike and they told me about the driving on the other side and all these rabbits just walking and jumping next to the street next to the roads in the outside of the cities and all these really green and really grassy areas so I was happy with that.

Maria: and it was my idea of England because the pasta was horrible so

Alan: pa- sorry?

Maria: pasta was horrible pasta spaghetti

Alan: oh the food

Maria: yea:h no just the pasta was horrible I had the best mushroom soup of my life I think but the pasta was horrible and everybody had told me that so that was my idea of England

Alan: hmm

Maria: and then during the first 4 years of high school I just called it adolescence and I started watching movies in English reading books in English and translating songs so while I was (singing) I always tried to make up the words of the songs which I couldn’t understand and I made up a lot of words which I was sure they existed and of course they didn’t they
were just in my mind (.) like erm: (.)

the (lanes) I was sure they were called

courses because there is corsia in

Italian I was sure they were called

courses and when they said lanes (.)

no no it’s not ((emphatic intonation)) (.)

anyway so that adolescence a:nd that’s

when I read my first book in English

which is harry potter the third? I think

it’s the third? (..) yeah (.) so I can’t

remember much of it a:nd I started

learning something about er: english

literature but it

wasn’t that interesting so 18 years

old is the year of into the wild I got

erm: really obsessed with the movie

and the book so I read the book

which is quite difficult I found it

really difficult at the per- at the

moment a:nd I became interested in

English and especially American

novelists and literature a:nd I

started to re:: to read a bit of the

English playwriters (.) a bit more of

the English playwriters and 19 years

old is the trip is the year of the trip

so (.) ah I wen- I was a lot into slang

imitation of and understanding of

different accents so I was trying to

challenge myself in understanding

where an English person a person

was speaking English was coming

from (.) a:nd I go- I got more and

more interested in the cultural
differences in and the people’s point of view in particularities so not just from English this time so but from all over the world so: I was really interested in how (. ) in way of saying I think it’s cultural bumps let’s call them bumps like we say: we touch iron and you touch wood and so I asked all the people what they were doing for luck if they were crossing the fingers or pushing the thumbs or holding the thumbs or all this way of doing (. ) so: that was really interesting and I tried to read both the translation of a book and the original version and I’m not reading in this moment I’m not reading an Italian book and that’s quite strange for me because I’ve always read a lot and now I’m just trying to read the English one (. ) because they’re different from the Italian version (. ) and now that I’m 20 this is the blank page chapter I’m studying something that I know because I know something of English but I’m no- I’m studying it in different ways that I’ve never done so that’s what really interesting about this year Alan: hmm Maria: so I’m studying (. ) li:nguistics I’m studying the: (. ) phonetic alphabets the humour and
something more specific about
more than literature especially
the American one because with
whitsitt we are doing the
American one

Alan: hmm

Maria: and so that’s something I had
never done and I haven’t done by
myself this year last year so
that’s a blank page

Alan: right (.) and since you came to
the faculty the university erm: (.)
apart from this have there been
what sort of experiences have
you had in general that you
didn’t have before anything that
was particularly striking? (.) or
different for you?

Maria: um: (. ) n: yes but I just wanted
to do this faculty I want to be
part of something international in
in my future so I think this is the
best one that can prepare me for
something which is out there

Alan: hmm

Maria: and I want to (understand) as
many cultures as I can because
they’re so different from the
Italian one the Italian one is
really good I love it but it’s old
and is (.) is not likely to change
in the next years so it will take a
while and because we are in a
different in a difficult situation
now we’re trying to: (.). a lot of people go away and I wouldn’t love to go away but I would love to come back so: I’d love more to come back to Italy to work in Italy to work for my country and I think that for doing this the best I have to learn and understand more cultural things so: I’m going to study Russian and I’m probably gonna study Chinese (.). cos I think these are the biggest economies in the moment and they’re developing really quickly and I want to understand what makes them develop so quickly of course the resources and everything but (.). what’s the mentality behind it if I like it if I think it may help Italy or not (.). so: for all these reasons and just because I love languages and I love the proposed me by this faculty I decided to come here I decided to try to come here and I got here (.). so that is my purpose.

Alan: you said that yo- you want to help Italy? Did I understand correctly? Maria: yeah I just don’t want to go away and live away and live abroad and stay there and complain about how my country was
unable to support me (.) I don’t wanna be a brain which leaves I wanna be a brain that leaves and comes back ((translates Italian phrase ‘fuga dei cervelli’, brain drain usually in English)) I wanna help Italy in this difficulties we’re (..) we’re having

Alan: hm

Maria: and I’d love to be able to say my opinion without being a- being prepared for it so I wanna be prepared for saying my opinion and I wanna say it if it really counts so I think (.) that going abroad and come back will open my mind

Alan: I don’t understand when you say say your opinion (.) I want to say my opinion and ?

Maria: I wanna say my opinion if it (.) if it does have a real meaning not just to say it not just to say something then (.) I rethink I wanna say if it does mean something and if it really can help Italy or the situation I’m living or: everything else or: the work I’m doing or

Alan: say it to who? so who are you talking to?

Maria: ah: say it just (.)
Alan: you want to have your own opinion?
Maria: yeah
Alan: ahh right
Maria: I want to have it I just don’t want to erm:: to get it from from other people and make it mine
Alan: hm
Maria: I wanna listen to everybody and then say my opinion to everybody who wants to listen (.).
Alan: w- if it really has meaning (.). and I think this faculty helps it helps me do this
Maria: ((hesitant beginning)) w-w- so you opinion with regards to italy? or with regards to:?
Alan: ah ha
Maria: regarding the problems of italy and how do you see yourself as being part of I imagine you see yourself as being part of the solution
Alan: I [I
Maria: [how do you find yourself =
Alan: =being an interpreter
Maria: ah ha
Alan: in si- in an economical and political situations so (.). I would like to be part of a team as being an interpreter so not just working
by myself going there and say
yes he said a b c d f so I just want
to be part of a t- be part of a team
which collaborates to: (. ) help
italy so (. ) I don’t know what
about er: embassies or: (. )
working with some diplomatics
who knows who know what they
are doing and I can help them say
it in the proper way in a different
language
Alan: hmm so you think one of the
problems is (. ) the interpretation
of what they say?
Maria: is the interpretation of what they
say and maybe the preparation
they’re not prepared to say things
properly so they might need (. )
the development of the language
of the foreign language just to
start ah: a meeting so I think it’s
if a person abroad starts a
meeting with a phrase with a
sentence of that language and
then of course he he goes on with
his own language so: I think that
as an interpreter you might (. )
also suggest people what to how
to say something so that there are
no miscomprehension?
Alan: hm misunderstanding
Maria: misunderstanding and so that’s
something that really interests
me more than translation
Alan: right so you if I understand correctly you want to facilitate communication

Maria: Yes

Alan: and in particular between your country and other countries

Maria: yes

Alan: cos you think there’s a problem there (…)

Maria: maybe not now because we don’t have a political situation we just have an economical one but what about when berlusconi said oh yeah I’m so happy the new American president is tanned ((adopts a light hearted jovial tone)) (…) jesus Christ you can’t say that and somebody should have told you that it may be fun in Italian but it’s not something that you can say as being president so (.). yes I would like t- (..) I mean I think I think that was something you can justify or whatever but=

Alan: =so y- you think that was a problem of culture of not being able to understand

Maria: of culture of not being able to to get into the others shoes you have to know it’s a president it’s something completely new it’s a black president it’s never have any history (.). so you can’t say
that straight away you have to (.)
you know you can say it during a
dinner or during something else
but not from italy to America
Alan:  hmm
Maria:  just a way (. ) and so I think that
(. ) an interpreter could have
helped you him to say it in a
different way
Alan:  hmm
Maria:  or just stopped him ( … )
Alan:  Stopped him?
Maria:  no no I would have stopped him
like (. ) you’re the president of a
nation you can’t ashamed me in
this way
Alan:  hmm
Maria:  it’s not fair (. ) but (. ) it’s not
something I can do and it’s not
something (. ) anybody could
have done because it was
something he said straight away
probably he didn’t think about it
(. ) I hope=
Alan:  =so when in that situation if you
were the interpreter for
berlusconi when he said that in
Italian what would do?
Maria:  I would ask him er: are you sure
is this something you want to say
you want me to translate (. ) in
this way does do I have to
translate it in a different way so it
can be funny for the Americans
or: (.) what do you want me to do with this phrase

Alan: hmm

Maria: how? do should I have to be rude?

Because y- because you have been rude so I have to was it rude was it just (banal) was it just something you didn’t think about it how should I behave? This is something you said so (.) I don’t wanna change it because it’s not my (. ) it’s not my job to change it my job is the translated to make it understand by other people but what do you want me to do? (.) so (.) I probably would have asked him (. ) before saying anything (.)

Alan: and if he said no I want you to say what I said how would you feel about that?

Maria: (.) ashamed (. ) but I would have done it (…) ashamed because if I don’t do it probably somebody else will do it in 30 seconds (. ) so if asked me if he had asked me to do this I would have done it and I would feel ashamed because it’s something I wouldn’t have said and (. ) something I don’t think (. ) correct

Alan: hmm
Maria: and I don’t think it em I don’t think it goes on well with the situation

Alan: hmm

Maria: but if he asked me that and if he said yeah that’s what I mean I would have done it ((depressed tone)) (..)

Alan: hmm because you say that you know as an in- interpreter you want to represent your country (.)

Maria: =yes

Alan: to the world (.) but if you are in a situation where your country’s spokesmen the people who are speaking the politicians and so on are saying things that you are (. ) not happy with

Maria: I have to do it ((tone of resignation))

Alan: right (. ) so i- it goes against the grain it goes against

Maria: it goes against the=

Alan: =the purpose

Maria: yes but it’s my job a::nd (.) I I cannot allow myself to change what they are saying because (. ) I’ve got to do (politics) and not translations not interpretation it’s no- it’s not my job it’s not my: (...) my::: skills

Alan: hmm
Maria: they’re not my skills I cannot do
that
Alan: but it sounds like you would like
to sit down with these people=
Maria: =I would like to sit down before
(.) when probably people are
understanding what they’re going
to talk about so that they can
prepare themselves an- (…) ask
and ask an: understand what they
will
say and the reason why they say
that so I wanna go to a job
prepared in an- and understand
all the aspects of what they’re
talking about because I have to
do it for my job (. ) and because I
want to know what they’re
talking about not just because I
have to say it in that language
Alan: hmm
Maria: because it does interest me (. )
and it does interest my family
and all the people I’m living
with ( . ) so: ( . ) I will translate
what they say what they say but I
will have ( . ) a way of
understanding and decide by
myself if it’s just something that
( . ) other people may not like or if
it is something that is fair ( . ) but
( . ) not like but something I don’t
like at all all the same ( . )
Alan: [hmm
Maria: [so (.)

Alan: but it sounds like you you would like to be: sort of a you’d like to be in a position to help influence people to: s- to communicate with the outside world (.).

Maria: in a [better way

Alan: [in a better way in a more informed in a more culturally informed (. way So if I interpret correctly you’re not just an interpreter you’re also a cultural me:diator

Maria: I wouldn’t mind it

Alan: yeah (. ) you’d like to me:diate

Maria: yes

Alan: on both sides (. ) the cultural (. ) aspect as much as just the translation word to word

Maria: yes

Alan: hmm

Maria: like er: talking about Chinese I haven’t done it yet but I know something about the Chinese cultures so (. ) if you go to a meeting and the Chinese person is (snorting) next to you you shouldn’t find it rude because it’s not rude in asia coun- in asian countries so I would I’d like to advise people who are who are not er: who doesn’t know or don’t know much about asian
culture but not being offended by this
Alan: hmm
Maria: because it’s something natural
and if instead a Japanese I’d like to say to Japanese people who Italians were snorting inside a napkin so they were blowing nose they’re not being rude (.)
they’re just doing what they have been taught to do
Alan: hmm
Maria: so: yes mediation (.) cultural mediation is something that would interest me a lot
Alan: hmm (.) very good excellent I think we can stop there (.) I think (. ) ok
Matteo 1: First interview

1  Matteo:  well (.) er  I had my first approach
2            with the m: languages in general with
3            with the English language cos here in
4  italy er: English language is taught er:
5            since you you’re a child
6  Alan:    yeah
7  Matteo:  and well I have been studying English
8            since I was a child and well er: I’m 25
9            a:nd when I attended the the
10           elementary school er:m  English
11           languages is er::m  a language that a
12           language that is is imposed (.) oh well
13            it was imposed cos now you can
14            choose you can choose er: for example
15            English French Spanish but when I
16            was a child er: I could only choose
17            er:m English language and so well er: I
18            was forced ((laughs)) studying english
19            but er: it’s er: a language that I love
20            I’m:: I’m not proficient but I have a lot
21            to learn but erm I love English
22            language cos er::m  well I love for
23            example I love er:m (.) films video
24            games and video games in particular
25            and since I love a particular kind of
26            video games er:m they are called er:
27            role playing games
28  Alan:    h hm
29  Matteo:  and it’s a kind of game where erm the
30            storyline is important is more
31            important for example than game play
32            (.) er::m well you you have to
understand the storyline and er:m since this kind of games are not so common here in italy er: they are only available in English language or in Japanese

Alan:  hm

Matteo:  and so since I was a child I: have been playing this games a:nd well I: (.) well it’s my passion on- one of my passions=

Alan:  =could [I just

Matteo:  [one of my Hobbies

Alan:  could I just ask what type of games you play

Matteo:  er: role playing games is the the type of game I I love playing but er: well I play: a lot of games ((snorting laugh)) in general but now I don’t have time [cos

Alan:  Any specific ones that particularly like or liked? still

Matteo:  well m:: final fantasy’s one of the brands that it it’s quite famous but now the this brand is er::m  is translated in Italian but there are other games that are not translated in Italian (.) you’re lucky if they’re translated in English cos the original language is Japanese (.) and so I kept playing with this games in a in English language and so er: i:: I loved er: I loved yeah I: loved English language and well I decided to study er: to study English (.) and then Japanese cos I love japan I love
Alan:  hm
Matteo: yeah er: in this m: in that country er; I
have been in japan (. I went there i: I
think 4 4 years ago er::m and well er::m
I i loved this country I like that country I
love japan in general er::m well i:: went
to the univer- I I studied at the university
of rome la spienza ((italian name of
main university in rome)) I studied
oriental languages and culture (. cos
er::m I always er: good marks at school
but er: er:m (. English language was my:
favourite subject and I have the best
marks a:nd well so I decided to to study
oriental languages cos m: now I think
that the er; English is er: a language that
well it’s easy to find a a person in the
world that can barely speak er: speak
English er::m ev- even even though well
not so well but it’s quite easy and so
er::m i: since I had this passion for japan
I decided to study er: japan Japanese too
a:nd well at the university of rome la
sapienza I studied English Japanese (.)
Japanese and Korean a:nd I graduated
last December (. but since I want to
become an interpreter in the future of
course it’s the: (. it’s (. the: m: the fee:
not the (xx) the job the job I like er: well
i need er: er::m a particular training and
er: so the the sslmit wh- what the sslmit
before well it’s the: I think it’s the: this
this institution that can that can help me
er: (. ) study to: to become an interpreter
i:n in the future (. ) i:: i: prefer
interpreting (. ) er: but (. ) erm: ( . . . ) w-
well I I like translation too but I like I
prefer interpreting cos er: what
fascinates me is the the: ( . ) is the the fi-
figure of the interpreter cos er::m I think
it’s a::: a mediator a key between ( . ) not
between two languages but two different
cultures so if we have a for for example
a Japanese person and I am an English
person well they have different cultures
different (worlds) different histories and
and so and so I think it’s a great a great
field the the interpreting one and so: and
now now here here I am this is my
second bachelor degree and I hope I will
be er: I will be able to get into the laurea
magistrale ((specialization post-grad
degree))
Alan: right
Matteo: yeah
Alan: hmm
Matteo: but I have to improve a lot cos er::m (. )
since I have we- well my contact with
the English language has m: has been
written (. ) and so he- well I understand
er: English writing well well I have no
problem I have no problem in
translation but when it comes to
speaking or listening well er:: i:: yeah
I’m I’m not at ease (. )
Alan: hm hm can I just so you transferred from well you were living in rome=
Matteo: =living in rome yeah
Alan: and now you’ve mo:ved to:
Matteo: forli
Alan: forli erm (..) what do you th- what were you’re experiences of sslmit since you’ve been here? at the school in general
Matteo: (.) well
Alan: go- good and bad perhaps (matteo laughs))
Matteo: well er::m (…) in rome er::m the:: the classes were overcrowded (.) so er::m in my: even in Japanese class well (.) o:ne (.) we we can think that Japanese is not a so a a language that is so: (.) that is popular (.) but er::m in rome er: Japanese classes but even Chinese classes Korean classes they were overcrowded you couldn’t find a seat a:nd sin- since there were a a lot of students in the er: in the rooms well you you don’t have a direct contact with the with the professors
Alan: h hm
Matteo: er:m so I think here here at the sslmit you: can be: er: (. ) follow I don’t know if I can say I can use this (verb) but you can be followed by the by the professors
Alan: hm m
Matteo: there’s a contact and a and I think that the subjects are more: er: well there’s more practice

Alan: h hm

Matteo: er::m and tha- that’s that’s what er: (...) wh- what I i I find this amazing here at the sslmit

Alan: [hm m

Matteo: first of all then the quality of the: (. ) er::: of s- of the: of the teaching

Alan: [hm

Matteo: in general [here

Alan: [hm

Matteo: because I think it’s high quality

Alan: [hm m

Matteo: it’s completely different for example in in rome er well one of my friends er::m studies

Alan: [hm m

Matteo: er::m mediazione [culturale

Alan: [hm

Matteo: in rome well th- the I I think the name of the: bachelor degree is the is the same but the level they they reach at the end of the of their studies at the end of the of the years (. ) er::m is completely different well wha- the the level they reach at the end of their studies is th- the level we need to get into the into the sslmit

Alan: [hm m

Matteo: and well i: I have a friend here at the sslmit and he studies he’s er::m he’s attending the second year courses em: well ( .) he: he told me about the sslmit
and the courses and well i: i: could see
that the level was completely different
Alan:  h hm
Matteo: and (.) that was that was amazing so I
decided
Alan: right (.) wh- just talking about perhaps
the sort of class dynamics your
colleagues and so on what sort of
rapport do you ha:ve in among your
colleagues
Matteo:  (..) well m: (.) even though I’m older
than my my colleagues cos m: er:
they’re they’re younger er: I’m 25 and
they’re I think 20 er: (. ) yeah or 19 but
er::m well (.) i don’t feel the: this I
don’t feel any: any distance (. )
between us er::m well you have er::m
you have to study a lot so er::m (.)
you can think that here at the ssmit
you don’t have the time to er: to: to
make friends to:: to know other
persons you can just chit-chat at m:
dur- during the: during the: well the
classes a:nd that’s it but er: well erm:
even though I’m older than my
colleagues well they: (. ) th-they’re
and i: feel that there’s a competition (. )
between us among us cos er::m when I:
er::m (...) in rome there: there were so:
many students er::m wh- what was
important was the was just to pass
the exam get a bachelor degree and
and that’s it but here at the ssmit m:
well you just don’t have to study for
the classes oh well that’s my
point of view cos I just try to: to do
more (. ) cos I feel that there’s a lot of
com- there’s a great competition

Alan:  h hm
Matteo:  [and
Alan:  [well how is
this manifested?
Matteo:  (. ) well er::m: (..) you you can feel it
by: can feel it m: how they: m: (..) how
y: sp- how they (. ) well I don’t
know em (. ) during the the classes you:
if you: for example when we are
translating ( ) er::m just translating or
spea- or er: speaking in er in English
er::m during our du- during the classes
well I feel that em: one (. ) tries to
speak better than the other (. ) tries to
find th- the: mistakes done by by other
students wants to show that he is better
than the other a:nd but (. ) m: jus- but I
I think it’s quite good cos er: (. ) it
helps you er: improve

Alan:  h hm
Matteo:  a:nd well and that’s what I’ve noticed
up till now i: I’m doing I’m trying to
do my best cos er: I know that er::m
you can study a lot but it’s not enough

Alan:  h hm (. ) is it all good then this
competition you think?
Matteo:  (. ) yeah I think it’s good ye- yeah think that
it’s what er::m (. ) it’s what makes this
university different

Alan:  hm ((surprised tone))
Matteo: haven’t I haven’t (found competition) at in rome and so (.) well you jus- you can you can study you can study well you can study (.) but (.) m: here in forli yo- you have to study: you you just have to reach a: a high level cos (.)
yeah there’s a lot of competition an- and it’s good cos it’s I think it’s a good thing cos erm in the near future when we will (work) when we will work er: well I think that this kind of competition I I we will find this kind of competition even the: when we will try to: to: to find when we look for a wor- for a for work Alan: right I see and do the teachers have any influence upon this (..) aspect do they are they responsible in some way or: [not Matteo: [er::m (.) responsible for the com- for [the competition? Alan: [the com- competitiveness Matteo: comp- contem- competitiveness yeah er::m : (.) no I don’t think so (.) fo:::r (.) no no it’s just (.) hm: (...) no I think I think that it’s just er: the the kind of student that that studies at the sslmit cos ah (.).) well i:n if you want to get in hm:: this university you: I think you: (...) you have to be a a good
student cos the the entry test I think is quite high level

Alan:  hm

Matteo:  er:mm: and so (. ) no no I don’t think that the professors erm do something for (...) to increase this this this com-

com- competitiveness

Alan:  h mm h mm (. ) very good ok I think we can stop there then
Rosa 1: First interview

1 Alan: so (. ) rosa tell me a little bit about this
2 this book with regard to languages
3 Rosa: ((laughs)) erm: i don’t know what should
4 i say about it? (. ) i: started learning
5 english when i was about 6 i think? 6 7 i
6 don’t know a::nd the:::n i started
7 learning fre- french when i was about 12?
8 Alan: 12
9 Rosa: yeah i think because my father he used to
10 live in france and also in london so he
11 for him in was very important that we
12 learn lots of languages my sister lo-
13 didn’t like learning languages but i really
14 loved learning languages so i first he
15 first he started like to teaching me but i
16 couldn’t like (. ) learn with him so:
17 ((small laugh))
18 Alan: hmm
19 Rosa: i couldn’t studying it all with him so I
20 started going to oth- the classes myself
21 and i really like learning languages bu:t
22 er: for example in school we had also
23 english and france french bu:t in school i
24 don’t know i didn’t tend like to go to
25 classes i wasn’t like the best student but
26 then i started watching series and english
27 series like friends and i think like that
28 part of the chapter for my english was
29 the best part
30 Alan: how old were you when that started?
31 Rosa: er::m about 14? No maybe older s- s-
32 sixteen or fifteen
Alan: hm
Rosa: i think my english improved mostly in that part cos i fell in love with friends i was like watching it like twen- twelve hours a day or something ((laughs))
Alan: wow
Rosa: ((laughs)) yeah waking and watching it and then going to sleep so (. ) i think that was like the bigger part of the chapter Alan: right and wh- what happened after that then? So Rosa: and after that? erm: nothing special? I was like living my life and then i (. ) hm decided to go i wanted to go out of iran like for lots of years but bu: t it was like hard so i had to first like graduate and then go graduate high school and then i go go out so so:
Alan: so i graduate from high school means you you finished your high school Rosa: yeah i finish high school sorry ((small laugh))
Alan: er it’s a different system so ok Rosa: so: erm: i studied also for coming to italy we had to ha- to take a 2 exams we have to pass 2 really difficult exams language exams so i started also learning italian? So for about 1 year before coming to pass those two exams and also i really loved the language as it was also a bit like fra- french which i knew so it really helped me
Alan: cou- could you just tell me wh- what
were these exams again (.) to get into
school?
Rosa: to get into italy
Alan: to italy
Rosa: for the embassy
Alan: ah
Rosa: for the embassy right see we had to like
pass those exams
Alan: oh and why did you choose italy?
Rosa: e::::rm i liked the culture i have heard
that it it’s really like iranian culture bit
and actually there are some similarities (.)
and i don’t know i liked the country
because i i didn’t want to go to a cold
country because also iran is not cold so i
wasn’t i’m not used to cold weather
Alan: h hm
Rosa: a:nd also i wanted to go to a country
with seas so germany was out of
question
Alan: h hm
Rosa: ((small laugh))
Alan: warm sea at least
Rosa: ((small laugh)) yah ((both laugh))
Alan: ok so you came here did you have any
specific plans when you decided to come
here?
Rosa: nothing ((small laugh))
Alan: nothing?
Rosa: no nothing i just knew that i wanted to
come here and like continue my life like
i don’t know (.) finding out what i’m
going to do here
Alan: right did you come alone or did you come with family?

Rosa: ah: alone (.)

Alan: hm? Was that an easy thing for you to do?

Rosa: erm at first it wasn’t but then i got used to it but it wasn’t that hard

Alan: h hm (2.0) and and your parents were happy with this?

Rosa: erm: yeah they were happy they wanted me to be happy so (.)

Alan: h hm ok so when you arrived here and you are here now in SSLMIT so what happened in between?

Rosa: e::rm i arrived er last year and like at first we had to choose like one university in wh- what do we want to study a:nd so for the for the first year i i decided that i don’t want to do anything i just want like to find out (.) find myself ou:t and like don’t do anything really serious so i thought maybe if i go to a language course language university it’d be good and i had no idea like that SsLmit is like one of the best in Italy and like it’s in forli i had no idea i mean like forli is a dead city and something like that so: i jus- had the idea to learn languages for one year and then choose what i want to do for the rest of my life so i decided to this city and this university (.) then i came here i saw the city and and so it wasn’t like the best city wh- what i expected from europe it was also my first time out of iran not out of iran out
of asia so it wasn’t what i hav- i
expected so i chose that before doing the
exam i just (.) like decided tha- that i
want to go to another city and people
told me rimini is so (. ) i just went there
were one year there and like not studying
just like finding out myself? And then i
thought about it and and i heard really
good stuff about Sslmit and i saw like i
really enjoy learning new languages so (.)
i chose to come back here

Alan: right so when you came to italy where
were you living before you came to this
part?

Rosa: hm:: before: which [p-
Alan: [did you did you
come straight to forli: or [rimi-
Rosa: [ah::
at first I went to bologna but I wanted to
come to f- to be honest it was like a
misunderstanding because I heard it wer-
i: her- I read that it’s university of
bologna so I though it’s going to be in
bologna so before coming I rent a room
in bologna and I went there and I wanted
to go there and they told me that ah the
faculty is in forli

Alan: hm

Rosa: so I went there for three days and I had
like already found like the flat and
everything so I came back here I came to
forli: I found another flat and then I went
to rimini ((small laugh))

Alan: go:d
((Roxanne laughs))

that’s a that’s a big mix up

Rosa: yeah it was

Alan: but you said when you came to Italy y-

you already wanted to study at Sslmit

Rosa: er: yeah but I didn’t know like that

Sslmit is like only for interpreting and

only like that I just wanted to improve

my Italian (..)

Alan: right ok

Rosa: and have fun ((Roxanne laughs))

Alan: ok and let’s talk a little bit about (.)

perhaps the chapter of Sslmit so far

Rosa: hm

Alan: what sort of experiences have you had in

the faculty since you’ve arrived

Rosa: well I find it a bit like difficult to

translate from English to Italian because

none of them are my real languages but:

e:rm I don’t know I like it I enjoy

learning new languages I have took like

for me it’s like 5 different languages for

people for everybody it’s like 3

languages but I also chose fre- French as

an optional and also Italian for me it’s a

new language so it’s like 5 languages (xx)

but I’m enjoying it I like

Alan: yeah and what about your

colleagues I mean what sort of (.)

atmosphere is there in the classroom

since you’ve arrived?

Rosa: m::: I think it’s good like (.)

everybody is like (. ) nerd like all the

time studying it’s like
Alan: ner:d
Rosa: yeah (laughs) ((both laugh))
Alan: what do you [mean by
Rosa: [wasn’t expecting that (laughs))
Alan: yeah?
Rosa: yeah I I don’t know I thought like it’s a university here because also like last year in rimini it was really different and university because I also went to the university there but it was completely dif- different like the atmosphere everything
Alan: how?
Rosa: m::: everybody was thinking about partying not studying ((small laugh))
Alan: yeah ((joins laughter))
Rosa: and I was in a group of erazmus people [so: like
Alan: [hm
Rosa: everybody was like the goal was to have fun but to pass the exams and like learn stuff (..)
Alan: and so what’s different here n ner:ds you say I mean (.) d- you can you be more more precise?
Rosa: e:rm everybody is like studies like (.) comes to the university till about 5 and then goes to study till (.) 12 or something everybody is like stud- like only studying (..) nothing else
Alan: everybody?
Rosa: erm everybody that I have got to know recently like in this month yeah ((small laugh))

Alan: wow and and in the classroom what what sort of (.) feeling do you have about you know the the (.) class when you’re doing your lessons have you got any particular (.)

Rosa: em:: (..) not I don’t know like why I don’t [understand

Alan: well you know you’ve all got different languages different teachers and so on any particular experiences you’ve had in the classroom that (.) em:

Rosa: I like that the teachers are all like from different from the same country like their teaching also the language I really like that cos I I haven’t I wasn’t used to that for like of course like no person from america or from england would come to iran to teach

Alan: hm

Rosa: so for me it was really and like I saw for the german class classes like in germany and (..) I like that and also but I like also that there are different people like mother tongue that they have like different mother tongues and like e:r people from other countries I’m again in the erasmus group also here so I really like that also (…)

Alan: hm
Rosa: also the erazmus people here are really different from here and rimini ((laughs))

Alan: how?

Rosa: for example in rimini they didn’t know italian (.) nobody in the erazmus everybody was speaking in english or mostly also spanish because they were all from spain but here everybody knows english re- italian really good so

Alan: hm

Rosa: it’s like in (england) it’s Sslmit so

Alan: yeah and what about so the teaching styles in in the classroom erm is it different from your usual experiences?

Rosa: e:::m:: a bit yeah m: for example we usually like study one book in the class and usually study that book in the house but here like teachers don- (.) teach from a book

Alan: hm m

Rosa: they just like teach everything so then we have to like go to the book and study it (.) erm

Alan: wh-which book?

Rosa: e:rm they tell you like they teach in your in like in my country they usually teach from a book

Alan: hm

Rosa: and then we have to like read the book for th- the e- exam

Alan: right

Rosa: and the exam would only be from that book

Alan: h hm
Rosa: but here like they tell you like you can also read those books but they like teach you like generally everything

Alan: hm

Rosa: hm (..)

Alan: so are we talking about books for grammar or or: just books in general I’m not sure what books you mean

Rosa: for example e:r m: I don’t know for example history (.) in the class of history that I used to have like they had like one history book

Alan: hm

Rosa: so they taught from that book and they had the exam from that book but here like the teacher is like teaches for from all the 9 er:m thousand ninety ((confused perhaps intending the 1900’s)) and then we have to read like lots of books like to understand what it was exactly what happened in those years and stuff like that

Alan: right he gives you an outline and you have to [fill in the

Rosa: [yeah

Alan: middle bits ok yeah (.) and with regards to languages?

Rosa: the languages I think m: (..) m:: (…) it’s kind of the same (it’s like) only english which is difference like in germany in german class it’s the same our teacher like teach us grammar and everything and then we study it and so but the english class like that we have like
different teachers that teach different 
stuff that I never had (xx) one is like for 
learning cul:ture another like boo:ks 
another like listening I never had it like 
classes like this much divided 
Alan: right (. ) an- and for german for example 
do you the book to study or 
Rosa: no 
Alan: no ((small laugh)) hm 
Rosa: lecturers like just come and like tell us 
like about grammar different grammar 
parts and gives us papers (x) 
Alan: hm how do you feel about this style of 
teaching? 
Rosa: e::rm ( .) I prefer with books ((laughs)) 
(xx) 
Alan: why? 
Rosa: e:rm I don’t know I it’s like easier for 
me I am used to it I think maybe 
Alan: hm 
Rosa: I don’t know (3.0) 
Alan: hm:: (…) why? ((both laugh)) let me 
iliterate the question why would you 
prefer books and not this style of 
teaching? 
Rosa: hm:: ( .) f- for the german or for the 
english? 
Alan: whatever [in general 
Rosa: [because 
I don’t know but for english I actually 
prefer like this because like it’s more fun 
but for german because I’m not that 
good at it it’s like I don’t know I think 
it’s better because like now I have like a
million papers so it’s like really hard to find them like when I want to study I don’t even like want to look at those million papers but (.) I don’t know with books like it’s easier I know like which chapter like it’s more organised but english I kind of know it and it’s not that hard for me I enjoy it like this it’s much much more fun

Alan: right but german b- because it’s not one of the languages you studied at=

Rosa: =no:

Alan: then you w- would prefer

Rosa: yeah pref- because I’m a beginner so for the beginners yeah I prefer to read books but then yeah of course I would prefer like to talk about topics and like read about you know

Alan: hm what about the level is is the level ok?

Rosa: hm here?

Alan: f- for beginner german

Rosa: mm:: it’s not for beginners we have also more classes and we have to study ourselves because it wasn’t for beginners but they told us it’s going to be difficult but it is actually a bit difficult because I think everybody else’s level is like B1 but like we are like a group of 4 5 6 we are like A1 beginners so

Alan: hm

Rosa: it’s kinda difficult and we have to study all ourselves but it’s not bad

Alan: right (.) so do you go home and study every evening too?
Rosa: sometimes ((laughs)) but every evening I cannot do that.

Alan: you go to rimini to escape

Rosa: ((laughing voice)) sometimes all- also that one in the weekends usually

Alan: yes yes I can imagine weekends and em: and what do you do are you going you said you came here just to learn languages but have you changed your opinion now of what you want to do?

Rosa: em: I’m thinking about becoming an interpreter e:r like there was the first time the idea came to me was from the movie ‘interpreter’ with nicole kiddman and I don’t know it’s I like the I heard some bad stuff also about interpreting for example one of my friends she studied about 10 years to become a really good like interpreter and she was really successful but then like she tolds me that you cannot do like have an opinion yourself you just have to interpret so: she didn’t like it but somethimes I don’t know

Alan: hm

Rosa: I like the idea of like interpreting (.)

Alan: so your friend didn’t like it because she wasn’t expressing her own [ideas

Rosa: [yah she said like you it like she told me it’s kinda like she was like a (crew) she wasn’t like mm:: she wasn’t like (...) considered like her (proficient) like a really high level
proficient she told me when she was like
interpreting like in politic ambient or
something she was was always like
respected as a crew not like somebody
who has studied that much
Alan: hm as a crew you mean as part of a team?
Rosa: yah
Alan: (. ) hm and you don’t mind that
Rosa: mm:: I would prefer like to have like I
don’t know all my friends usually in iran
they studied like engineering or some
stuff like that I would prefer also like
that but I also like interpreting I don’t
know
Alan: hm: and what what sort of
interpreting would you like to do? are
you thinking of a particular career?
Rosa: (. ) mm: (...) I think that I thi- like I have
no idea to be honest but like the thing
that inspired me the most was the movie
so UN but I think it’s not possible so it’s
just like an idea an image
Alan: why is it not possible?
Rosa: er: because I’m not like mother tongue in
any of the important languages so
Alan: hm (3.0) m iranian is quite
Rosa: ((laughs)) it’s not that important in the
world the language
Alan: no (..) but there are political things at the
[mo- 
Rosa: [yeah
Alan: that require probably a lot of lots of
interpreting
((both laugh)))
Rosa: yah maybe?
Alan: hm (2.0) ok well we’ll stop the interview
there that’s great
Silvia 1: First interview

1  Alan:  le- let’s start from the beginning I mean
2  Silvia:  yeah
3  Alan:  what were your first memories or
4       experiences of language
5  Silvia:  well actually (.) i::: i think that the first
6       chapter would talk about my elementary
7       school
8  Alan:  hmm
9  Silvia:  experience because I think that
10      something missed (.) in at that time in
11      fact we didn’t have English lesson
12  Alan:  hmm
13  Silvia:  I was like looking for something because
14      all people all children especially they
15      have something some (passion) they
16      want to carry out you know (.) so: I don’t
17      know there was something we missed (.)
18      that missed a:nd then college I start I
19      started studying English
20  Alan:  college is sch- is school?
21  Silvia:  scuola media ((Italian for junior school))
22  Alan:  ahh because college for me is university
23  Silvia:  ah ok
24  Alan:  college y- yeah you mean junior school
25       perhaps
26  Silvia:  junior school yeah
27  Alan:  right
28  Silvia:  (.) ok oh maybe i- it’s a fren- French
29       (francesismo) ((possible influence from
30       Italian meaning language that has a
31       French origin)) I don’t know
Alan: yeah
Silvia: ok ((small laugh)) em: er: an:d well er: (. ) then I st- studying English it was like basic really basic ((laughs))
Alan: yeah
Silvia: a:nd there was this friend of mine who always copied from me who cheated ((small laugh))
Alan: yeah
Silvia: during in this test he was like sarah how do you say io sono in English ((mimics whispering at exam)) I was like oh my god come on ((laughs)) junior school come on you can do it (. ) a:nd then i: I had to choose where to go (. ) wh- wh- which path I had to to take
Alan: h hm
Silvia: I was like ok so (. ) high school what could I do ?
Alan: yeah
Silvia: I was like well maybe yeah language section I don’t know I don’t know if it- (. )
Alan: is it liceo linguistico?
Silvia: yeah exactly
Alan: right
Silvia: ah::: yes I I was pretty sure about it I never regretted it eh:m I st- studied English then French and Spanish
Alan: a ha
Silvia:and it got better and better ((small laugh)) because I I had found my true passion ((little laugh))
Alan: yeah
Silvia: and well

Alan: what was it you liked about languages? (.)
was it the teachers or was it the experience in general?

Silvia: no:: bad experience with teachers
((whispered voice followed by small laugh)) yeah most of the time but I I also hated English at some point because of my teacher but then I (. ) well my passion called me so ((small laugh)) a:nd well (. ) I think that I liked changing because lang- languages are always changing

Alan: h hm

Silvia: it’s not (. ) the same (..) a:nd I do like it I i like when something (..) goes on and (..) doesn’t (. ) stuck to get stuck to what it was a:nd then that’s that’s why I would like to become an interpreter

Alan: hmm

Silvia: a:nd well my fourth chapter would be SSLMIT ((laughs)) I think

Alan: yes

Silvia: I think a:nd but it’s just started so I don’t know I just like it I hope I (..) I could(n’t) say I’ll be an interpreter one day ((small laugh)) I I just say I hope I will

Alan: yeah

Silvia: for now because there are so many people better (. ) better than me ((small laugh))

Alan: yeah?

Silvia: yeah much better bu:t I will do what I can to become to fulfil my dream anyway
Alan: right why do you say that people are better than you?

Silvia: (. ) well because I don’t know but (. ) I’m taking about ((small laugh))

Alan: that’s ok

Silvia: ok I’m talking about fluency when you speak I’m talking about knowledge (. ) grammar I don’t know everything

Alan: h hm

Silvia: but since I I think I have this passion maybe (. ) someday (. ) I will

Alan: h hm

Silvia: I don’t know bu- but I’m studying for it so ((laughs))

Alan: yeah but still I don’t understand why you feel that you- lots of people are better than you in the class

Silvia: well I think my my brain tells me that because when you when you create a sort of competition well say well healthy one ((small laugh))

Alan: h hm

Silvia: (. ) that’s more li:ke you’re you’re trying to: to get better yourself

Alan: h hm

Silvia: because you know there are people like who are better than you well you get better you have to to pass them I don’t know and so: I think I I always had this thing with the competition ((small laugh))

Alan: h hm

Silvia: it’s my thing a:nd
Alan: just you or or also you’re colleagues in you’re class
Silvia: well
Alan: do you feel some are more competitive than others are
Silvia: well I think that for now they keeping quiet ((laughs)) I mean (.) they’re actual (. (me) will come out once the (xxx) real exams will take (. I don’t know will take place
Alan: h hm
Silvia: because Sslmit is has always been a competition a place th- they told me that but I can kind of agree with them
Alan: h hm
Silvia: (. so:: well I don’t know I just like it I just like competition because it’s a way to get better and better every day a:nd (. if you if it’s a healthy one as I said (. I don’t know why: why you should I don’t know why you should I don’t know kick it apart you know ((laughs))
Alan: yeah y- you say you feel this competition (. where do you feel it? I I mean how does it show itself how do you see it?
Silvia: erm: well sometimes when you: for example we just had mock tests
Alan: h hm
Silvia: a:nd ah I don’t know h- how was it like?
Alan: h hm
Silvia: did you get a good note (. a good mark?
Alan: h hm
Silvia: we- yeah I don’t know which one? they always want to know (. which mark did you get
Alan:  h hm
Silvia: did you get
Alan:  yeah yeah don’t worry
Silvia: and so I don’t know it’s just a little (.)
Alan:  h hm
Silvia: for show but
Alan:  you say they do you mean the whole
class? or they
Silvia: in general I I I’m not saying I don’t like
them er: th- the other guys and girls in
this (.) school (.) I do like them but it’s
true there is this a little bit of
competition and for now just a little bit I
don’t know
Alan:  h hm
Silvia: in the future ((small laugh))
Alan:  yeah
Silvia: bu- but I like it so it’s cool for me
Alan:  right (.) and what about the teachers? in
general not just english but all the
teachers do you feel they create an air
that merits this competition or is it?
Silvia: m:: not quite I mean the first day we were
here (.) ah: in aula magna
Alan:  hm
Silvia: they told us you’re the best (.) because
you just (.) entered the best school in
italy for example I was  like oh my god
((intake of breath with half laugh)) a lot
of pressure but (.) it’s not the teachers
maybe it’s the (.) w- we could say the
background
Alan:  a ha but did you not know you were
entering a very important institution?
Silvia: ye- yeah I know that’s why I (. ) chose it
((small laugh))
Alan: a ha so what was the surprise? in in the
aula magna (. ) you said they told you
this and wow
Silvia: yeah because when they (. ) tell you it’s
different from what you think
Alan: h hm
Silvia: when it’s real when you have to face it
it’s re- really different ((small laugh))
Alan: h hm
Silvia: a::h I mean the outside world is n- not
like (. ) you imagine it you plan it so: (. )
it can surprise you even if you know it (. )
if you know the truth or whatever they
say (. ) it’s surprising but it’s for me it’s
a positive surprise because it’s ok I i
knew it so: (. ) ok
Alan: h hm
Silvia: just facing it and trying to: (. ) to handle it
((small laugh))
Alan: right (. ) and in the classrooms in the
lessons after when you started your
course
Silvia: h hm
Alan: what sort of atmosphere (…) was there? was
it? [could you describe it
Silvia: [ ah::::
(. ) well I feel really comfortable ((small
laugh))
Alan: yeah
Silvia: because I mean I was I attended S.I.D (. )
political science (. ) I didn’t feel quite
comfortable ah because even if there wasn’t that [competition]

Alan: [hm m]

Silvia: so much I mean (..) I I felt like I (wasn’t)
in the right place and now I feel like it so:

Alan: hm m

Silvia: (...) I did I don’t bother about I don’t
know (.) I can’t be bothered from I don’t
know by by I think ((small laugh))

Alan: hm

Silvia: what they (. ) what they say: what how
people react or (.) I don’t know (. ) hm: I just feel right here

Alan: hm

Silvia: so it’s my my element I can I could say

Alan: yes yes (. ) so you don- in the the stu- the
teachers (. ) they don’t put any pressure
on you to: (..)

Silvia: no: the teachers I don’t think so

Alan: h hm

Silvia (. ) I I do like my teachers ((laughs)) erm:
(…) because they are so: (. ) natural I
don’t know

Alan: h hm

Silvia: they feel comfortable too when speaking
to the to our st- to us students

Alan: h hm

Silvia: so: (. ) I feel like we are a family (2.0) I I
know it’s ((laughs)) (. ) a little bit insane
but ((laughs through last phrase))

Alan: no wh- why is it insane?

Silvia: I don’t know it’s just I do like I do like
SSLMIT because I’ve been dreaming
about entering this school (. ) so long that
now it’s like a dream came true so: (..)
an- and it’s- finding out that you feel comfortable actually here it’s not that bad because people told me oh my gosh ((mimics people in awed voice)) you’re entering er: oh: they are so: er they feel passion you have to study close yourself in the house in the house and study you can’t go outside except for exams (.) something like that

Alan: hm:
Silvia: yeah they were very (..) er: st- strong words
Alan: yeah
Silvia: but I don’t feel like ((small laugh)) I don’t feel the same I mean it’s different from what they said and I (.) I appreciate it
Alan: yeah (.) right so erm: are there any negative aspects at all? Or ((Sara laughs)) that makes you reflect in a sort of more questioning way (.) about your experiences here?
Silvia: (.) well I think there are always negative aspects but the positive ones (.) they are so much more ((small laugh)) that I don’t (.) I can’t really think about one now (.) about one negative (.)
Alan: hm
Silvia: (..) a: maybe yeah lot of (.) work to do ((small laugh)) but I think when you enter this school you know it’s er you know it’s not that surprising er:: well competition for some for some people it
is a bad thing (.) since for me it’s not
((small laugh)) I I just change it into a
positive one so: (.) it’s ok
Alan: do you know people who who aren’t
happy about this compe- this competitive
aspect?
Silvia: hmm yeah (.) there are some and they
are: usually they are the (. ) most shy
ones
Alan: hm m
Silvia: because there are ah a surprising aspect
just thought about it there are a lot
people with erm: (. ) ah (. ) pronunciation
(…) pr-
Alan: problems?
Silvia: problems yah me too I am one with the
gl sound ((small laugh)) I was like oh my
god school of language and all these
people like me it was like it was
surprising a a good thing cos you know
sometimes you say ok I don’t do this
because I’m not erm: I don’t fit in here I
don’t fit in here yah (.) but then there
are people who: try to fight (. ) their
nature to to fulfil their dreams so: (.) it’s
a I don’t know it’s something you: you
can think about it all day because ((small
laugh)) you know I don’t know how to
express it [it’s just
Alan: [yo- you say
they fight their nature
Silvia: yah
Alan: wh- what do you mean by that?
Silvia: their nature mean what the nature gave them when they were born in this in this meaning in this way yah because you don’t choose to speak (.) with a French ‘r’ or you can’t pronounce pronounce the ‘gl’ sound so stuff like that

Alan: h hm

Silvia: you just have it yo- you can’t I don’t know erm: (..) correct it

Alan: h hm

Silvia: bu:t you didn’t choose it so: (.) trying to correct it by doing something in which it is very important all that stuff it’s I I found it I find it like erm: (..) symbol of strength? A demonstration of strength?

Alan: h hm

Silvia: I don’t know

Alan: it’s like a struggle

Silvia: a struggle yeah

Alan: a struggle [with

Silvia: [but

Alan: no?

Silvia: (.) struggle yeah but most more interior that than exterior

Alan: h hm (.) i- it’s a struggle what you said it’s a struggle if I understand correctly with sounds in the different languages (.) are there other struggles or is it jus- is it pronunciation only that

Silvia: oh no there are other a lot of stru- kind of struggle but I’m speaking about this one but there are a lot there are people I don’t know who can speak fluently ((intake of breath)) (.) now I can speak a
little a little bit more fluently that I used
to because I went to london
Alan: h hm
Silvia: when I ha:d this er: exam I mean I don’t
know how you call it because you
don’t have it but like oral exam eh: in
high school (.) I was always anxious and
(.) I ((breathes out)) I don’t know I I
didn’t even try to speak properly I felt
really uncon- uncomf- uncomfortable
Alan: h hm
Silvia: but now yeah I have problems ((little
laugh)) because I lost more most most of
what I learned there well er: speaking
well I’m trying to (. ) recollect it ((little
laugh))
Alan: h hm right so you have problems in oral
exams in school
Silvia: yeah
Alan: so you haven’t done your oral exams
here yet?
Silvia: no ((little laugh))
Alan: so are you worried about those?
Silvia: yeah ((little laugh)) but ( . ) because I I
haven’t spoken ( . ) not ah English for so
I’m not even sure if I am using the right
verbs I think I’m not but ((little laugh))
I’m just trying to speak because it’s just
what it’s all about I don’t know ( . ) I will
be an interpreter so I have to get used to:
(.) to to speak
Alan: h hm
Silvia: and so I am trying to do it
Alan: h hm
Silvia: just trying (.)

Alan: yes do you think as an interpreter you have to to struggle to be an interpreter?

Silvia: struggle?

Alan: with your wi- with what you have you’re talking about fighting against the things that you=

Silvia: =yeah

Alan: things you don’t naturally have you have to work on them

Silvia: yeah I have to work on them more than a struggle yah to work on it

Alan: a ha

Silvia: (.) i: I have I have got a lot of work to do but (.) I’m just the beginning so: I: think I mig- may ((stuttered laugh)) I may I may reach it

Alan: what sort of qualities do you think an interpreter has? (.)

Silvia: well first of all (…) he should like it ((small laugh))

Alan: of course

Silvia: (. ) m- I I know it’s like ((small laugh)) obvious I I’m (captain) obvious in this but (. ) y- you have to you must I can say you must

Alan: a ha

Silvia: bec- because if you don’t you can’t you can’t be a good one I mean

Alan: yeah

Silvia: a:::nd then (. ) you have to work a lot on your pronunciation your fluency your skills in general

Alan: h hm
Silvia: and you have to go abroad where the language you study is (.l) spoken and that’s topical ((small laugh)) as topical matter and then you have to ((small laugh)) (.l)I don’t know if you say it (.l) to:: (draw) yourself in
Alan: to draw yourself in?
Silvia: [(trow)
Alan: to throw yourself in ah right
Silvia: ok (.l) yeah throw
Alan: I thought you said draw yourself in
Silvia: ((small laugh)) ok
Alan: right so you imagine it as being something like a swimming pool or a sea: or:
Silvia: yeah more like you’re falling from a rock (.l) into the sea yah something like that or (.l) i- better into the fire
(... ((laugh))
Alan: that sounds a little dangerous
Silvia: n- n- no: I like flames (laughing voice)) I’m not ((laugh)) (.l) piromane ((Italian for pyromaniac)) but er: it’s just my element so I feel more comfortable talking about fire than
Alan: a ha
Silvia: than water I don’t really like water so
Alan: hm
Silvia: yeah throw yourself into f- flames
Alan: [right
Silvia: [it’s better
Alan: and what happens in the flames?
Silvia: (.l) well it’s really hot
Alan: yeah
Silvia: but if you can handle it (.) you rock (.) so
((small laugh)) that’s clear
Alan: yeah
Silvia: yeah
Alan: an- and if you throw yourself into flames
you can also get burnt can’t you?
Silvia: yeah sometimes you will (.) certainly
you will
Alan: hm
Silvia: but y- you will anyway I mean
interpreter or not in life always I think
but if you ca:n (.) I don’t know er: (..)
get passed (n-) this (…) you can do
whatever you want I mean if you can
throw yourself into flames what can you
do? (.) everything
Alan: hm
Silvia: so: (.) I mean it’s a strong imagine
strong yeah ((small laugh)) but yeah it it
is for me
Alan: hm m
Silvia: but it’s cool ((laughs))
Alan: or it’s hot
Silvia: it’s hot ((laughs))
Alan: ok (.) that’s great then
Alan: so jus- just to kick the ball jus just to get the ball rolling just tell me a little bit about your experiences here in the first (..) Fed: who are you talking to? ((general laughter))
Alan: in the first (.) in the first year Fed: good really (.) it’s nothing really less or more than what I expected it’s (xx) of tests a lot it requires a lot (.) erm: teachers are teachers well (in that respect) no I’m really (xxx) I don’t need to you don’t need to expect to have a (..) different relationship to teachers (xx) and in other circumstances it’s self (xx) most of them know your names because classes are 30 people so they know your name but it doesn’t need to be anything else I didn’t expect it to be anything else it’s erm (..) more or less normal really (…) Alan: hm (.) so how would you define normality? I mean what does normality mean? (.) if it’s normal what does normal [mean? Fed: [no no I mean I’m saying it’s just not really different than any other erm:: (.) faculty or circumstances academics in general it’s (.) quite (..) you know (.) normal (.) considering the others and erm that’s it so a lot of people erm: believe that since
this is a small school and of course we are divided into smaller groups and even then even smaller groups it should be more of like in a high school or something and thank god it’s not (xxx) it shouldn’t be it’s a university it shouldn’t be a high school so

Alan: hm (.) anybody else want t- I don’t want to say now you speak ((general laughter)) you speak anybody who feels they have something to say just say it I mean it’s not a question of (.) you know

Maria: erm I’m quite happy about the first semester but I’m happier about the second ((federico laughs)) because I really didn’t like the lectures about translation we (.) any- anybody could have done it so:: we were just (.) looking for some different terms but it was just one term missing or (.) in a whole text so:: I thought it would have been done in a different way I thought it could be done in a better way definitely (.) while I’m really happy about the erm: the active translation (.) because is way: more difficult a::nd it opens your mind because you have to think in another language and you have to think it (.) you have to think naturally so you don’t have to pretend like you were thinking you have to do it (.) so: that’s (.) translation is the only thing I wasn’t happy about it

Alan: translation from which language to which?
Maria: from English

Alan: to:?

Maria: Italian from (.) yeah from English to

Italian

Fed: to me that’s also because the teachers

were Italian ((laugh)) and er: no it’s eh: I

think it’s different it’s different when

you go into a class and the teacher starts

talking in English and you are studying

English I think it’s it puts you mo:re (.)

you feel more like you are already doing

something

Maria: yeah definitely but also I mean it’s all

right if they are Italian because you are

translating towards Italian and they’re

real translators so they aren’t just doing

articles they are doing book and

everything so: they have to know Italian

really well and that’s perfect but (. ) it

just didn’t work for me and I guess that

when we saw the marks for the exam

((laughter from others)) yeah the (xxx)

vota di media ((Italian for average mark))

was 23 for a translators school that’s

really low ((noise from outside drowns

out voices))

Alan: it’s just unbelievable isn’t it? But you

said you were agreeing what did you say

about translation?

Matteo: because in the first semester I’m well I

don’t like the I don’t like the way the

teachers er erm er (taught) the subject

because erm I think when you translate

something you: you just (. ) need er::
guidelines and well the course was just
well (.) that’s the text just translate it oh
how have you translate how have you
translated this part? Oh well and you and
you and you and stop ((laughter))

Maria: ha ha it wasn’t even like that it was how
did you translate it? Er: like this (..) er
what about somebody else?

Matteo: yeah

Maria: It wasn’t even yes or no or you could
improve it

Silvia: [or try to be more precise
Maria: (xx) somebody else (.) what?
Alan: try to be more precise?

Silvia: yeah something like that or just general
[advices
Fed: [xxxxx
You never had [a
Silvia: [ok
Fed: direct
Silvia: no but [I
Fed: [yes
Silvia: with all of the them the second term is
definitely better because the teachers are
(.) I don’t know if that’s the fact is that
the active translation so they’re more
active but I don’t know ((laughs)) but
they’re like yo yo you feel like your
mind is: (...) activating itself ((laughs) ye
ye you feel you think a lot a::: you feel
like a: (xxx) coming down to you I don’t
know it’s very interesting the first one
was like I don’t know you know the
animals when they sleep all the time
[(xxx)
Alan: hibernate
Silvia: what?
Alan: to hibernate
Silvia: yes it’s something I like I love the first
term because it’s sslmit ok ((small
laugh)) so I I really liked it but I prefer
this one (.) it’s way better
Alan: just one thing what does active mean?
Silvia: (…) er:: I mean that you participate
Alan: hm
Silvia: in the lesson you:: (.) you have to have
an open minded an open mind and (.)
you can you can talk to the teachers they
actually tell you yes or not or you should
do this thing you shouldn’t do this one
Alan: mm
Silvia: [erm
Alan: [they give you feed back
Silvia: [yes
Alan: [basically
Silvia: like it’s both ways you participate you:
you are free to say whatever you think
it’s not that you weren’t free before but
you feel free now (.) it’s they motivate
you I don’t know if [you can say that
Alan: [yeah
Silvia: and they call you to go to the: desk and
so you you have the whole class in front
of you and you’re forced to do what will
doing a few years I hope ((Laughs)) so I
it’s:
Alan: hmm
Silvia: it’s more it’s closer to what we are going
to do in the future
Alan: hmm
Silvia: it’s closer to:: erm:: to the (. ) world of
the of the o::f the work (. ) to the job I
don’t know
Alan: how does it feel to do it in front of the
class?
Silvia: well i::: (.) didn’t do I haven’t done it yet
but there are people who already
((laughter, looks at maria)) just
Alan: ((directs gaze at Maria)) how does it feel?
Maria: it’s good
Alan: yeah
Maria: it’s real an::d I was funny cos I was too
short and I sat on the chair where
everyone else had seated (. ) had been
seated ((pronounces each word slowly))
I my feet couldn’t reach the ground so
the first thing I did was to (. ) lower the
chair like so that I could touch the
ground and then I could start and then I
put the chair back up again so nobody
could have noticed ((alan laughs)) but it
was just nice it was (. ) erm:: emotional
because (. ) it’s not just you and two
people so you know that the other people
do and say about what you’re saying so
(. ) if you make (any) mistakes they
understand and they say maybe they say
ahh well I might have said it in another
way (. ) or as soon as you talk other
things come up through your mind and
you say oh: (that) was (the) word but
that’s fine an::d it’s just (.) good
Alan:  hm
Maria:  it feels good
Alan:  what’s the general feeling in the
classroom do you think I mean what sort
of atmosphere do you get from your
colleagues? is th- is there a lot of support
there?
Silvia:  Ah:: there’s competition but there’s also
support (. ) yes (. ) they tell you in a calm
way it’s not the wa:y it’s this way
((imitates another student whispering
with a condescending tone)) ((laughter))
or they might say ((makes sound with
lips suggesting a brush-off remark)) that
was that was wrong (. ) you can’t say it
that wa:y (. ) but it’s: there’s a happy
atmosphere
Maria:  relaxed
Silvia:  [relaxed yeah
Alan:  [yeah everybody
feels that?
Alan:  is it [is it relaxed
Rosa:  [((yeah I think so)
Alan:  yeah?
Silvia:  excited also [we are all
Alan:  [hmm
Silvia:  motivated as I said
Alan:  yeah
Silvia:  an:d (2.0) I don’t know what to say
((small laugh))
((Researcher looks at Federico))
Fed: yes I told you that I feel a weird ah:

degree of competition (and) er erm high
self esteem (.) and then (.) again it’s
it’s not for me I’m not judging anyone (.)
erm: I just sometimes feel it’s weird
it’s it’s nothing I do so I don’t really
understand it (.) bu:: m:: (.) yes it feels a
little bit exaggerated and it’s most times
(.) justified it’s people who really know
what they are saying but you always
have a way to of sometimes you just
don’t really need to say it ((small laugh))
to to show that you (.) knew better an::d
a::: there’s always a:: (.) a way to say
and not to say as a in a mocking or a:: (.)
presumptuous way (.) and it’s not that
the general thing they’re not saying
you’re a just a bag of (3.0) not quite
((laughter)) eh: no it’s (good) people
and it’s very there’s a good thing yes
and (xxx) exciting erm:: it’s (.) erm
(don’t know) maybe you don’t speak of
this at [the beginning

Silvia: [well

the: there is competition but it’s all about
how you feel about it (.) how you take it
because I do I really feel close to the
others (.) there are people who I like
more than others but I I’m happy with
the atmosphere with the people because
before entering here they told me oh
sslmit oh my god no you don’t have to
do that ((whispered awed voice)) well I
like it oh competition too much
competition ((repeated whispered awed voice)) but I don’t feel that way I’m very happy to be here and so: (. ) yes there is competition but it’s all about how you take it so (. ) it’s not if you don’t take it as a personal thing you’re happy with it Alan: how does everybody else feel about competition? The same or different? Rosa: Yeah kinda the same (. ) there is competition but it’s not a bad competition I think (. ) cos like everybody helps each other it’s not like I don’t know I think it’s good (. ) Alan: Matteo (. ) Matteo: well I: I think that competitiveness erm: helps you improve (. ) because well I think the sslmit prepares you to: to do work that you will meet after the university Alan: hmm Matteo: and so:: (…) you: here at the sslmit you’re trained (. ) and I think it’s a: a good thing (. ) but I just don’t like the atmosphere in the classroom so much cos you: are always I or at least I think you’re quite always judged by the others cos mm: not not not everyone not not all the students in the in the classroom but (. ) well you always meet someone who who thinks he’s better than you or: or so and but (. ) it’s not er:: I think it’s not a good thing but it helps
me improve (. ) and so I just take the the
good things out of it (. )
Alan:  hmm (. ) but there a: re negative things
then
Matteo: yes but:
Alan:  you disagree ( .. ) ((silvia appears a little
unsure about my statement))
Silvia:  well no not quite (. ) I think we all agree
it’s different f- for him maybe because I
know that erm in the german class
there’s more competition or
competitiveness I don’t know how to say
it erm than in the other languages of
course English ((small laugh)) but
English is more relaxed german class
because I have er:: my er flatmate has a
first language german and she: tells me a
lot of things and they they really are
very I don’t know how to say it in
English but erm:: (. ) they are more
precise or pignoli ((Italian)) I don’t
know er: [they feel
Alan: [fussy perhaps
Silvia: yeah they feel the competition they feel
they are god ((a little laughter)) and so
[they
Alan: [that’s interesting they feel
like they’re god
Silvia: yeah (. ) they are they think they are
((laughs)) they’re not but er:: I don’t
know why bu: I I heard a lot about
german class [I don’t know if
Maria: [xxxxxx
Matteo: [it depends on the fir::
on the first language

Silvia: yeah

Matteo: because yes er:mm I found that erm: er::

the students who have for example

german as first language (.) well they: I

think that (.) they think they are better

than the than the other ((federico laughs))

students cos well german is a difficult

(language an:::d

Silvia: [yeah exactly

Matteo: the English language is the the easy one

the language that all all the world know

(.) knows and so

Silvia: you know Spanish is similar to Italian

((adopts a sing-song tone)) French Oh

French come on ((adopts tone suggesting

it’s not to be taken very seriously)) you

just end the sentence with something

like yeah:: or I don’t know ((small

laugh)) and that’s fren:ch so: german

german that’s different that’s the way of

thinking but I don’t really care about it

because I don’t (.:) I don’t have german

((little laugh)) ((others laugh)) as my

language so I I have a lot of (.:) I don’t

know of friends but not very friend but

in the german class so

Alan: there’s nobody here who has german as

they’re second language?

Matteo ((xx)

Rosa: ((us two)

Matteo: we have (.)

we have german as a [second language
Rosa: [as second language but not the first]

Alan: and do you feel the same the same thing that german the german students have this attitude?

Matteo: no I think that it’s just an attitude of the students who have er:: german as first language

Alan: just first language?

Matteo: yes (. ) just first language cos you they I think they think well erm:: to get in the ssmlit you have to know to you have to know the german really well for example when I:: I:: did an exam last last no December no last January er:: I met a girl and she:: she I think she has german as first language and we were just talking about the erasmus programme (. ) an:d well em:: I:: I applied for the erasmus programme and I have chosen erm: a german a german city to study there and well this this girl just said well erm: you it doesn’t matter well the city doesn’t matter for students of who has (. ) for students who have german as second language cos you just have to learn german (. ) e: but we er::m but we need to go to universities like Heidelberg and mansheim and they’re quite prestigious they are like the ssmlit in germany

Alan: ah ha

Matteo: and (. ) and I think it’s it’s not true cos I think that the level of of german
taught in the: in the class of first
language and second languages I think
it’s quite the same (. ) and for example
we have erm:: the the teacher who erm::
who::

Rosa: (xxxxx)
((whispers inaudibly to matteo))

Matteo: yes the teacher of the of the second
language class is valentine moscato and
it’s one and I think she is one of the best
interpreters in the (. ) in italy as least
[I think cos she
Rosa: [well that’s
what she presented herself as ((general
laughter))

Matteo: yes
Rosa: we don’t know if it’s true or not ((mattoe
and Roxanne laugh))
Matteo: but she works for
((Roxanne continues to laugh))
er presidente del consiglio ((Italian
prime minister))
Fed: parli german ((italian for ‘speak
german’)) ((general laughter))

Matteo: yes
Silvia: I told you german people think they’re
god ((more general laughter))
Matteo: ye:s
Silvia: as an interpreter
Alan: so do you think that she might be selling
herself a bit?
Rosa: ya:::: (. ) she’s good but not that good
((laughter))
Rosa: because the first thing when
Matteo: [no she’s good]

Rosa: she was telling about herself about half an hour that she told that ya I’m like one in the like ten people in all Italy that can do that does interpreting for as English and german not like er:: not Italian but English to german and german to English which there were two teachers there and the other one also said that I have doubts if there are only ten people to do that and she just ignored the other but (.) I think she’s good but not that good ((general laughter))

Alan: any other languages? What are you’re second languages again?

Fed: russian

Maria: russian

Alan: what experiences have you had there? (.)

Fed: well she’s good [so

Maria: [yeah

Fed: for others it’s a bit [different

Maria: [er:: (..)

it’s an amazing language and I think it was great the way it was presented ((fillipo laughs)) and the first semester was quite good but not good enough for what they are expecting from us (.) because if we have to reach an interpreter level for the third year (.) we’re way late and we’ve done a lot like we didn’t stop for a moment (.) we we hadn’t time to catch our breath but it’s not enough (.) an::d (.) this year I
think it was the first year that we only had forty hours of grammar instead of sixty and so: she was really good but I think that if we had had the boscolo from the first semester we would be half of it

Fed: I don’t think [(xx)

Maria: [half the number yeah because she is really strict we’re going this way so you’re doing 25 exercise for next week (.). that’s it (.). ok?

So you have to come here and you have to know everything you’ve done (.). up to yester<day> (.). so: (.). it’s great it’s a great language and it’s really to do it and you have to focus a lot but it comes natural after a while

Alan: hmm

Maria: but we should have started earlier and (.). in a stronger way (.). so:

Alan: hmm

Maria: it’s good I’m happy with what we did but (.). we should have started with boscolo

Alan: and you federico do you agree?

Fed: yeah more or less I am not actually quite that happy with the first semester teacher but I’m not saying she’s not good erm:: maybe because I’m not a first class student so it’s not mine to judge ((laughs)) I mean I know I’m I’m:: saying I did surely didn’t but the all:: the (.). effort I put otherwise I would be: you know
Alan: hmm
Fed: better (.) but I still think if I’ve got it right she wasn’t even supposed to be the first semester teacher [and I]
Maria: [I have that idea]
Fed: and she’s she seems like she would really be a good teacher if you already knew Russian a bit and we started fr- from the wrong level and it’s:: she seemed a bit erm: you know [confused
Maria: [confusing yeah]
Fed: confused and confusing [er::]
Maria: [confusing]
Fed: she: wasn’t really sure why you should know and what you erm: should focus on [an::]
Maria: [she was always saying]oh you’re going to do this with [boscolo so:
Fed: [yes I know I’m [jus-
Maria: [I really can’t answer this question I’m not sure what you’re asking it doesn’t really matter inside this programme ok but (. ) like I’m asking because I want to understand so if there is a method or if it’s just random
Fed: yes I mean the most used sentence was just learn it by heart and [ I ((laughs))
Maria: [yes
Fed: I mean [it’s just
Maria: [it’s like this (xx)
Fed: learn everything you need to sometimes just (. ) rules and
Alan: yeah
Fed: and you know the rule and then you know the (how to do it) and I know we’re not (.) elementary school so it’s not we’re not just supposed to have the rules so you do this and this and this.

Alan: hmm

Maria: [and it doesn’t matter if you have to (xx)

Fed: Maria: you write er:: on the blackboard on the whiteboard with the black or the red pencil it does-

[doesn’t matter

Fed: [or the blue

Maria: or the blue [yeah

Fed: [or the blue

Maria: it doesn’t matter I mean just write whatever you want to write down so like

Fed: (xxx)

Alan: I don’t understand what you mean by

Fed: She she was most focused on the colour of the pen than was how clear she was writing on the blackboard on the whiteboard

Alan: uh hu

Fed: so she [(xxx)

Maria: [so she would start writing down I don’t know ah:

something (. ) and then she would say oh maybe I should write it in black so she just wipe it over and then and start again

Fed: she should [focus that time

Maria: [xxx

Fed: on writing clearly and making sure we understood and got it right
rather than [((laughs))]

Maria: [right and]
Fed: than making sure it was colour coded
      and [((laughs))]

Maria: I think she is a she is a very sweet

Fed: =yes of course

Maria: she certainly would be great for the high

school or for preparation where we
would have more time (. but (. in this
type of school I think that you have to be
strict I mean what you’re going to do is
not easy so we don- we’re not going to
have a teacher or a man who takes your
hand if your if we’re scared (. she
always did that she always asked if we
had questions so if someone was asking
something about an exercise she would
spend the whole lesson explaining to
him again what he or she hadn’t
understood which is fine but you should
you were supposed to do it during the
ricevimento ((Italian for office hours))
because we have t- we have a strict
programme and we have to follow it (.)
and (. I’m sorry to say it because I don’t
want to seem a hm: I don’t know selfish
but it’s not my problem if you don’t
understand [you have some timetables

Fed: [(xxx)]

Maria: when you can go and speak directly to
the teacher but if it’s not another class
problem just say it in another moment
Fed: another thing she should have I mean
I’m not complaining that she explained things twice or three times but
sometimes it took me the fourth of fifth time to understand ((maria laughs)) I think she if she:: erm:: if she did that and she gave the same time to explain the new thing it would have been fine

Alan: hmm
Fed: but if you have to reduce the time to explain the new part and most likely more complicated part because it’s after erm: and to reduce you have to tighten that part to explain over and over something else
Alan: hmm
Fed: that doesn’t work then it’s probably er: I mean it’s (. ) was useful for me because she was repeating so but then again she wasn’t (. ) explaining quite with all the time she needed the next thing so it’s er you know a chain of erm:
Alan: ah (. ) this thing about workload I mean general wh ((fillipo snorts a small laugh))
(…)
What are your [(. ) comments about workload
Silvia: [I do I don’t think anyway I don’t think she’s selfish thinking that way because it’s a group work so you can’t spend all of your time on one person
Alan: hmm
Silvia: there are receiving hours for that sh-
she’s right I think an: d about the (.)
((sniffs and laughs)) workload well I
don’t think it’s (.) that much if you can
organise yourself if you can I don’t
know if you say ok today I do this and
then say I’ll do this well sometimes you
you have mm: you need more time to
understand one language rather than
another

Alan: hmm

Silvia: but the thing is that you (xx) I don’t
know you waste a lot of time for
example he commute
Commutes ((looks at fillipo)) and that’s
a way of wasting time so there are lots of
((Roxanne whispers something)) oh I am
just saying ok (xx) ok sorry ah: I’m
saying that there’s not only sli me we
have whole life ok? ((small laughter))
there are plenty of thing we can do and
sometimes we just have to rest to I don’t
know to go and have fun because there
are a lot of [pressure on us

Fed: [or to work
Silvia: what?
Fed: or to work
Silvia: or to work (xxx) and so:: sometimes yes
it’s too much and it depends er: but I
don’t think it’s different from one
language and another but how well you
know that language (.) because I mean
even Spanish can be (.) difficult if you
Alan: don’t have a clue of what the language is
what the culture is
Silvia: so you have to to work on each language
(.). and well I’m talking as a Chinese
second language so I’m saying (.). and
the thing is also the the teachers it
depends on the teachers I think that our
teacher is too: erm: well how can I say it
is not that strict (.). she should be a
chinese I mean sometimes we have to
know and she’s confusing she’s
confused li- like they say an:d if you if
you have no clue on your saying just
don’t say it just skip it
Alan: hmm
Silvia: because your confusing your students
and we have to learn a new language we
don’t know what we are dealing with so
I don’t know if you are understanding
what I am saying (.). so: what do you
think?
((laughter))
Matteo: well I think that the workload m: (.)
doesn’t matter so much cos I think here
at sslmit you have to do even more (.)
cos yes you: m:: you you have a
homework bu- but hm: it depends on the
on the language but you have to study
even more than home than (.). you study
here cos (.). for example i: i:: started
learning german as a beginner and well I
spent er: the whole weekend writing a::
a glossary an:d (.). I don’t think I don’t
think it’s a waste of time but well I would have preferred to have spent my time learning the new German grammar or or a something else so you have you have a heavy workload here at the SSLMIT but I think you have to do even more to improve your language proficiency for example the your speaking skills your erm: your accuracy when you speak cos for example I’m I just do many mistakes when I: when speaking English well I started studying as a beginner so: it’s it’s a mess and I hope I will go to:

Alan: [why it a mess?]

Matteo: what?

Alan: why is it a mess?

Matteo: (3.0) well cos I think that at the end of the university at the end of the SSLMIT i: I just have to speak perfectly er but I have to speak a perfect language first language and second language cos we won’t I think we won’t become interpreters or translators and so em: I: I want to become an interpreter and I think that you just need a proficiency that is eh quite amazing one near to a mother tongue level

Alan: is that everybody’s point of view?

Silvia: yeah and I think that we should have er: started with mediation (xxx) ((talks in low voice to Roxanne) in
English I mean in English ok everybody
knows it (..) I don’t know why we didn’t
I we we lost a whole term not speaking
English and now (.) well I I don’t I must
say I’m surprised because we can speak
it (.) fluently more or less depends on the
people
Alan:  hmm
Silvia:  bu::t (.) I I think we should have started
er- earlier (.)
Alan:  hmm
Silvia:  erm:
Alan:  what do you think about this whole idea
about being perfect in a language?
Maria:  (. ) it does have at least the grammar (. )
Alan:  hm: wh what do we mean by perfect?
Maria:  I mean that I can perfectly understand
and perfectly speak even with (.) couple
of mistakes that’s fine but I have to be
able to perfectly understand whatever
they’re saying not in a specific erm:: (.)
situation I don’t pretend I don’t erm: I
don’t think yeah I don’t expect I will be
able to know and to understand a
medical situation (.) with er: a specific
terms and words
Alan:  hmm
Maria:  but I wanna be able to perfectly
understand (.) everything another people
another person in another languages is
saying in another language and (.) I I
prefer not to feel my Italian accent when
I am speaking in English or when I am
speaking in Russian (.) because (.) it
wouldn’t be a proper failure failure but (.)

it wouldn’t be a great work

Alan: hmm

Maria: it wouldn’t be it wouldn’t show what i worked and what I worked for (.) [so

Fed: [well

as interpreters unless we manage to be

one of the ten people in italy who can
interpret ((general laughter)) russian and

English for example or English and

Russian from english to Russian and (.)

we would be mosty from Russian to

Italian we would oh ah I (if didn’t) if we
don’t want to become mediators o::r I
don’t know translators but I don’t think
well I mean I don’t think I will never be
a [translator from

Silvia: [speak up

((small laugh))

Fed: Italian to Russian but [a:

Silvia: [no but i

Fed: [but my

expectation is from Russian to Italian as

an interpreter or in- in- interp- as a

translator o::r whatever (.) so yes I (.)

that’s what I focus on for perfection I

want to understand perfectly and er:: m:
of course if I have studied for five years

and then (.) I don’t know how many later

Russia I go to Russia I can I can go to

the grocery [and

Silvia: [yeah

Fed: tell there I don’t [know

Silvia: [((xx) how much is it
Fed: yes if I can tell it of course but I don’t expect to reach a level of a speaker spoken Russian (..) as the one of I expect to of understanding level I don’t expect it and I don’t quite think that I even should if I’m to become a mediator probably between Russian and English or Italian yes of course yes that’s when you have to but as an interpreter I don’t think what that’s required to

Silvia: hmm I don’t know

Maria: probably not if you’re working at the U.N but I think you have to start somewhere lower so:: like if you were working for a company they’re just going to hire one person they have to save money so they’re not gonna hire three person because if you can speak Russian I suppose you can be an interpreter from and to Russian

Alan: hm

Silvia: so

Alan: hm

Maria: I don’t wanna have an Italian accent when I’m speaking Russian and I wanna speak it perfectly

Alan: hm so how do you feel at this moment about your future lives as potential interpreters? Are you feeling positive about the developments

Silvia: ((small laugh))

Rosa: I think my case is probably completely different from the others er: [but
Alan: [why?]
Rosa: that’s if I can ever become an interpreter because I’m
Alan: [why?]
Rosa: (xxxx) ((speech overlap with other participants))
Rosa: none of the languages are my mother tongue so I think I don’t even know if Persian would be useful so I’m concentrating on Italian English like everybody else but I don’t think I can ever become like a mother tongue somebody with mother tongue so (.) a bit negative ((laughs))
Alan: yeah
Rosa: yeah ((laughs))
Alan: wh-why is it negative is it to do just you?
Rosa: yeah I just
Alan: the institution?
Rosa: no no just me becau- I don’t know em: I (. but I’m looking at the others because I see that it’s like to become like a mother tongue it’s kinda impossible so: sometimes I have a few doubts
Alan: hm but when you came to the university did you think it was possible?
Rosa: yeah I thought like that there would be lots of like foreign students also an::d but I don’t see any foreign students so: (. also ((Rosa laughs))
Silvia: because you’re in forli
((alan and Rosa laugh))
Alan: forli? What do you mean by you’re in forli?
Silvia: I mean that ((laughs)) well if you were in bologna there are a lot more a lot well (.).
erm: of course erm: well as she says her case it’s different a little bit but if you go I don’t know to erazmus oh (.). how you can say andare in erazmus? I’ve never understand that ((asks for translation from Italian to English))
Alan: to go on a erazmus (.). to go on erazmus?
Silvia: [to go]
Alan: [on erazmus?] = on erazmus
Ok (.). if you go on erazmus (.). you:: well for example your first language English and you go to Exeter for example ((fillipo laughs))
Silvia: we- (xxx) ((laughs)) erm:: you you speak to English people or foreigner or erazmus students you improve a lot in speaking terms and because for example I I’ve been to London (.). and: before going I (.). I didn’t know how to speak in English I had I had no clue (.). I I’m not saying I I have a clue now but I I think I’m I’m more flu- fluent now than I was before
Alan: hm m
Silvia: so you can improve you can be an interpreter there are a lot of interpreters who if it w- was impossible well (.). you wouldn’t be here there wouldn’t be a
school for interpreters (.) but ah: for
example er: (.) for me i: i:: started here (.)
thinking I want to be an interpreter and
now I find myself (.) thinking well I I
don’t want to be an interpreter I want to
work and I don’t know in the er: tra:-
tra:- travelling tourism sector things like
that so I changed my mind there are a lot
of things er: coming I don’t know
happening [this way
Alan: [so you don’t
Want to be an interpreter?
Silvia: we::ll not necessarily
Maria: that’s good
((general laughter))
uno in meno per la magistrale ((says in
Italian one less person for the postgrad
degree))
((general laughter))
Silvia: [well i
Alan: [is that
The competition again?
((more laughter))
Maria: yah a little bit [i
Alan: [ are are you are you
already thinking about
Maria: [ah
Alan: [magistrale?
Silvia: [I think there are special
places for Chinese (.) I don’t [think
Fed: [ah ha
((general laughter))
Maria: my third language is Chinese
((overlap of voices with laughter))
Fed: Russian English and Chinese you want
to take all of our jobs
Silvia: well don’t worry [anyway because I I
think
Maria: [(xxxxx)
Silvia: I’ll try I think I’ll try when I want to do
the master [er:
Maria: [go for it
Silvia: so thank you for your support I know
what your thinking
((loud laughter))
Maria: no it’s really good
Silvia: I know you’re doing it for my well yes (.)
Alan: so this competition thing seems to have
[come up again
Silvia: [no::
I do like her I love her she’s so amusing
(.) no no re- really I I don’t feel that
competition because sh- I mean (.). she
will take will take the place ((laughter))
(.) I’m not worried i just I’m just happy
because I’ve tried three times to enter
here and now that I am here I don’t care
about anything anyone I just want to
have friends do what I can do and then
the future is from the last just wait for us
so what we’ll do I don’t know will be ok
Alan: yah (.). so a future interpreter?
Silvia: I don’t know we’ll see I’m I’m not tense
to any more I was no I er: was ten I think
(.) I want to be an interpreter an
interpreter an interpreter ((adopts fast
insistent child-like voice)) and then can
you change ((general laughter)) my mind
oh come on and yes
Alan: but why? I still don’t understand why exactly you changed your mind? (..)
Silvia: I don’t know (.) because I’ve been working the tourism sector area for for:
( .) seven years
Alan: ah ha
Silvia: and I really like it (.) I mean
Alan: but isn’t that interpreting? (..)
Silvia: well yes (.) mediator or I don’t know but just being at a desk maybe (.) if you can change but ah: the receptionist I don’t know you you can speak a lot of languages I think that will be fine in a hotel in a restaurant whatever it is then offer you the possibility to speak to speak it frequently (.)
Alan: so that’s a mediator?
Silvia: yeah
Alan: if I understand correctly and [it’s different
Silvia: [oh yeah
Alan: from an interpreter so how how do you interpret (.) being an interpreter
Silvia: we- [we:ll
Alan: [what’s the difference?
Silvia: I don’t know ((small laugh)) no what I meant was that more than mediator or you just have to speak the mother the language that the person in front of you speaks (.) he’s mother tongues you don’t have even to interpret because you have
to speak to him or to her so it’s fine with
me ((laughs))

Alan:  hm

Silvia: you don’t have to be I I mean I cou-
hmm make (wars) break out all over the
world because I’m not a patient person
or a pacific one so it’s ok with me

Alan:  yeah

Silvia: it’s ok with the world I think ((laughter))
it’s better for the world

Alan:  wh- wh- how do you understand the
concept of being an interpreter
everybody? (1.0)

Fed:  she seems to want to ((indicates
maria))

Alan:  yes ((general laughter)) maria seems to
know what it means what does it mean
for you maria?

Maria:  what does it mean? (.) it means I’m able
to: (. ) to get in touch with people from
all over the world because with the lang-
with the languages I have chosen erm: (. )
I’m (. ) I’m taking in a lot a great part of
the world

((fillipo laughs))

Alan:  hm

Maria:  so: (. ) it’s really and an interpreter also
means for me that I’m able to understand
their culture because if I have to know
what the ground hog’s day is ((general
laughter)) I have to know really where
has it come from why is it why: (.) is
there a ground hog’s day

Alan:  h hm

Maria:  and ((laughs))
Silvia: because Infanti says so ((small laughter))

Maria: and so it means understand the way of

thinking of a people with a different type

from mine

so: Chinese how do they think?

they probably think with images because

the ideograms are the characters are (.)

im- images they’re [no-

Silvia: [they’re concepts

Maria: yeah they’re not letters they’re not

words (.) and that’s amazing [that’s

Silvia: [that’s more

attractive than our language is

Alan: hmm

Maria: no=

Silvia: =not more attractive=

Maria: = no: I just (.) I love my mother tongue

Italian is is a beautiful [language

Silvia: [I’m not

so sure of that

Maria: I know I know so I love my mother

tongue I love Italian and I love to

understand and get to know different

languages and cultures so:: being an

interpreter for me means to be able to let

the other people know what’s on the

other side

Alan: h hm

Maria: and (.) I think this is amazing

Alan: right

Maria: so

Alan: but just let me bring it back again to the

institution and to your education here (.)

what experiences have you had here that
have led you to (.) desire to be interpreters or not to be interpreters have you had positive you said you’ve lost ((alan looks at Roxanne))

Rosa: ((laughs)) a bit yes but I don’t think it was from the institute I think because like it was more like ((participants whisper)) seeing other peoples and like seeing like I thought because like mostly concentrating on people who are more like who have mother tongue English so:

Alan: ah ha

Rosa: ah for someone who is not is really difficult to become like that like for the words and like I don’t know it’s kinda difficult (xx) I don’t know ((laughs))

Alan: hm:

Rosa: but I [i [so you feel like you have to be a mother a native speaker [in one of the languages

Rosa: [yeah because Yeah like because they have like the mo:d- the moda da dire they say like this stuff like that ((uses Italian word for colloquial expressions)) I [don’t=

Alan: [yeah

Rosa: =know like I could ever like know all the expressions all the thi:ngs like (.) so:

Alan: that’s interesting isn’t it the fact that you you have to be a native speaker you feel in one language in order to be a successful interpreter (.) within the institution they expect you (.) if I
understand correctly? They expect you
to be:

Rosa: yeah

Alan: a native speaker ((rosa laughs)) in one of
the languages

Silvia: but I think you can be I mean for
example

Alan: well she says no

Silvia: yeah I do think it’s possible because for
example professor rutland he speaks
Italian better than us

Maria: yeah

Silvia: better than I than better than we do (.)

Alan: yes

Silvia: em: it it the the fact that you’re a mother
ton- that your mother tongue is Italian
doesn’t mean that you know Italian that
well

Alan: h hm

Silvia: I don’t know Italian that well ((small
laugh)) so: I think it’s possible because
you’re studying it we: sp- we: overlook
(. ) erm: (. ) often er the fact that erm:
things that other people don’t because
they’re studying it so they want to know
it we we overlook it because it’s our:
mother tongue so you’re not we don’t
need to know that

Alan: can I just ask you when you said that he
knows your language better than you (.)
can you give me a specific episode

where
Silvia: well first lesson he was [using
Fed: [but did we have one?
Silvia: yeah (( both laugh)) (. ) well the only
lesson sorry ( ..) ok the fir- the only
and first lesson we had with him a:: he
was speaking and we're like oh my::
[go::d ((tone of amazement))
Maria: [he said
something like [erm:
Silvia: [em:: (. ) u:: ((Italian
pronunciation of letter))
Maria: utilizando in quest’ er:: utilizing in un
determinato contesto per poter rendere
tali ((Italian phrase))
Silvia: hm ye- yeah
((Fillipo laughs))
Maria: which was something like I
Silvia: phew ((sound associated with something
that impresses))
Maria: I understand I never use ( . ) I use tizio e
cosa e:: ((Lower register Italian words))
Silvia: exactly
((general laughter))
he he speaks in a proper way
Maria: yeah
Silvia: as it should be ( . ) for a- an interpreter it
should be that way but we don’t
Maria: and he’s a
[translator
Fed: [why don’t you think
we talk we talk better I mean I hope I
talk better than the: and and I hope
( xxxxxxxxxxx ) a normal er: you know
er::: ( . ) m: a builder from erm:: ( ..)
Silvia: I’m not at [exeter
Fed: [exeter
I hope I have a better English than a a m:
with a more norma:l grammar
Silvia: (well i)
Fed: than a normal people in England (.)
because
Silvia: [well probably it’s because
Fed: because we studied
Silvia: eh eh
Fed: it it’s normal that you study a lot the
language you know you focus on the
grammar an::d therefore you you really
go: for the grammar [and not the
speaking
Silvia: [yeah but if you
Fed: I have a lot of foreign [friends
Silvia: [if you’re gonna
live (.) there you will be able to to: to to
speak it erm: (.) properly so you will be
better than a native speaker because you
you studied and then y- y- you you’ve
been there [I don’t know
Fed: [yeah ye-
[yeah
Maria: [that’s what you’re saying
Fed: yeah exactly=
Maria: =you’re agreed
Fed: what I’m saying yes
Silvia: I didn’t understand what you said that’s
why
Fed: well then I said it right
((laughter))
Silvia: ok ((laughs))
Rosa: cos English is like easier than Italian

Fed: [because

Rosa: =like sometimes like i make a sentence

and which is like completely makes

sense to me like even if I’ve translated it
to my language or English like it’s a
translation from it they say like no: it just does not make sense in italy ((fillipo laughs)) in Italian I’m like why:? no it’s just like that just er: we don’t say it like it doesn’t make [sense

Silvia: [because

Fed: [Italian

Rosa: yeah

Fed: we don’t go for the grammar just go for

the (.)

Silvia: use of Italian ((laughs))

Fed: expression

Alan: ah that’s interesting because you know when you get that feedback you don’t feel you know where to go

Rosa: yeah yeah (xx)

Alan: if I understand correctly you’re saying ok but (.)

Silvia: why?

Alan: = so? ((general laughter))

Fed: why not?

Alan so? what do I do next? you know you know is that what you’re saying?
Rosa: yeah I can like every time that I I want
to like translate or like interpret I’m
thinking like does it make sense for them
do they say it like that? And (. ) I mean
((laughs)) it’s it’s not grammar it’s just
that they say it like we don’t use it like
that in Italian and there’s lots of things
that doesn’t use it in Italian like that or
[we use
Silvia: [well
Rosa: it like that [(xx)
Alan: [give me an example
For example in the classroom when this
happened
Rosa: right now nothing comes in my mind
((laughs))
Alan: no? quite specific
Rosa: erm::: (...) nothing comes into my mind
but I just like because I remember like
just like people saying to me a lot that
phrase that does not make sense (xx)
Alan: without giving you an explanation?
Rosa: sometimes yah but sometimes yah it’s
like also oh I’ll solve it yeah grammatics
stuff or they didn’t use those words but
Silvia: trust me it doesn’t mean that you were
wrong [becau:se
Fed: [well I don’t understand what her
most of the times ((general laughter)) (..)
and [I like
Silvia: [because he’s from
the north I am from the south that’s
Alan: oh you too
Silvia: yah
Fed: (xx) most of the time we don’t yes
Alan: are you joke:ing?
Fed: (xxxx)
Silvia: you can’t understand my dialect I can’t
understand yours and I don’t want to but
Fed: yeah that’s it
Alan: but you two speak a dialect together?
Fed: no ((xx)
Silvia: [maybe it’s not dialect it’s
[li:ke=
Fed: [it’s what
we think is [italian
Silvia: [slang
Maria: I don’t know it’s a sort of slang
Silvia: it’s a sort of slang it’s not even dialect
bu:t er:
Maria: yeah if we are saying really simple que-
er: sentences questions to each other we
have no idea what the other is talking
about or we think it’s something else
because if you ask for a cicca ((Italian
word)) ((Federico laughs)) in turin it’s a
cigarette it’s not a chewing gum (.) if
you ask it here it’s a chewing gum
Fed: she obliged me today to ask her for a
gigomma instead for a cicclas
Maria: yeah
Fed: as I said ((xx)
Maria: [we say ciglas
Fed: and I don’t know why it should be a
gigomma there’s no [g
Silvia: [chewing gum
Fed: chewing gum ((incredulous high pitched voice)) it’s a [ci::
Silvia: [yeah
Fed: ci: ci: I don’t see why it should be a
[g::
Silvia: [yeah but
some people
Fed: no:
Silvia: from person to person it changes and so
from chewing gum to gigomma
Fed: (xxx)
Silvia: so from ci to g
Fed: she wouldn’t=
Maria: =it happens
Fed: give up (. ) it’s normal ((silvia laughs))
it’s:
Maria: come on you said in russian you know it
happens ((laughs))
Alan: is that why you find you found professor
rutland so impressive?
Fed: I don- wel- ((silvia laughs)) (. ) no I’m
not saying I’m just saying yes it didn’t
quite strike me th- the italian but yes he
talks a really good italian (.)
Alan: but it just seems to me you’re you’re=
Fed: =he’s teaching in italy I don’t see why
he shouldn’t
Silvia: w- we- I was just making an example
Fed: no no no I’m er: i’m not saying you were
saying bullshit I’m ((silvia laughs))
saying it’s er. I I
believe in every every teacher should
talk a good italian
Alan: so- sorry m- matteo
Matteo: but even erm: he’s erm: pronunciation (.) is perfect
Silvia: ah
Maria: yeah he doesn’t even have an accent
Matteo: yes
Silvia: well a little [bit bu-
Matteo: [he doesn’t have an/english accent
((two or three voices overlapping))
I couldn’t say he was an an english
teacher I thoug- thought he was he was
(..) italian and not an english teacher (.)
and it was amazing (.) and I:  think if
just not a method of grammar cos I’m:
well erm: (..) you know this is my
second bachelor degree and I have a
friend of mine erm: who studied with me
at the university of rome (.) em: well she
has the highest level possible of japanese
proficency (.) she’s amazing an:d she
has been in japan for er:: three years
and she just told me that well if you
want to learn a language (.) just that well
if you want to learn a language just go to
the country and forget your grammar
Silvia: hm
Matteo: just forget your grammar
Maria: yeah
Matteo: live there and then you will be: (.)
proficent in that language (.) and I think
it’s amazing it’s just not a matter of
grammar it’s not a matter it’s I think it’s
a matter of use of the language
Silvia: [yeah but even the grammar
Matteo: [(xxxx)
Silvia: [because
Alan: [could I just ask
(.) you said when you were at rutland’s
lesson
Matteo: hm m
Alan: and th- then you thought he was italian
Matteo: yes
Alan: can you tell me (. ) how that episode
developed? (...) 
Fed: heh talk in english ((general laughter))
Matteo: er::: no: well ((silvia talks in
background)) he said just a few things
that well (. ) then the pronunciation of
those few words well could er: well I
said ok he’s english [but
Maria: [ehm
Alan: sorry
Maria: I’d said [that
Alan: [can I just
Maria: he could have been foreign not english
yeah I was [th- there’s (something weird)
Matteo: [yes foreign
Maria: but I wouldn’t be able to say where he
comes from
Fed: if we didn’t know he was an english
teacher
Maria: yeah
((overlap of voices))
Alan: but I’m not quite following how it
worked how this thing developed I mean
he spoke so good so well
Silvia: well he started speaking in italian
Alan: right
Silvia: and we were like (.). wow because it was a really good Italian.

Alan: yah

Silvia: we expect to er I don’t know we expect a:

(.) I don’t (.). a good Italian I don’t say

a bad Italian but not that good I mean it’s more than a native speaker (.). because I don’t speak like that ((small laugh))

even [the pronunciation]

Fed: [he’s teaching us mediation]

[he’s teaching us=

Maria: [= (xxx) =]

Fed: = to talk like we don - we don’t have any

i- Italian accent why shouldn’t we expect

him to have the same

((overlapping talk with maria))

Silvia: I wasn’t expecting that (.). oh come on

Maria: he’s teaching translation

Silvia: (1.0) yes (come on)

Fed: still ((laughs)) (.). no I think it’s we have

a lot of good teachers an - and I think the English ones a: are:: the one who are (.)

and it’s come back to Russia I think it’s a th- the one who are pushing more to er:

( .) know Italian for example and I it’s

what I look for in my erm studying er:

Silvia: well I didn’t expect that right

Federico: [my development]

Silvia: I didn’t expect that right

Fed: because I want to be like that

Silvia: ok

Fed: that’s why [I: (xxx)]

Silvia: [me too]
I’m not saying that

Alan: how did you feel and think looking back to matteo you started this how did you feel and think when you heard his italian (. ) personally

Matteo: (...) I want to be like him ((general laughter)) in Japanese in english in german yes cos i: (. ) I really want to become an interpreter (. ) cos i:: m:: (. ) I like this job I:: (. ) well I attended the classes of valentina moscato the interpreter: the italian interpreter and well er: m: she: she: gave us her feedback about the interpreter experience er:: there’s a lot of stress a lot of m: (2.0) a lot of stress lot m: and

Rosa: she’s kinda negative to be honest= ((general laughter))

Matteo: =yes

Rosa: about it

Matteo: yes yes yes

Rosa: about the interpreting (. )’all the time she’s saying (. ) I actually want to ask her if she regrets her choice ((laughter)) because she’s always saying that ‘it’s so: much stre::ss it’s so much ((high pitched intonation, whining tone)) [you won’t have any

Maria: [(it’s just for the competition)

Rosa: other life if you’re interpreting

Fed: (xxxxxxxx)

Rosa: if you want to become an [interpreter

Maria: [(xxxxxxxx)

Rosa: and it’s kinda negative
Alan: yes
Maria: yes she talked about talent (..)
Rosa: mm
Alan: ah:
Matteo: ah (.) yes (.) she said erm: if you want
to if you want to be an interpreter you
have to (.) well you need talent
Alan: un hu
Silvia: ok I’m out= ((laughs, general laughter))
Matteo: =and we said oh my god do i have
talent or not (.) an::d cos she just said
well you have to know the language you
have to know the the grammar the word
the vocabulary (.) all these things but (.)
there’s a: (..) a: percent m:: needed to be
an interpreter (.) then well you have to
you need talent to do that to do that job
(.) a::nd well the:: the classroom the
other students were all (.) scared cos
they just said well do we have talent or
not (.) and but she said well if you’re
here at the Sslmit you have talent
((matter of fact tone)) (.)
Alan: hmm
Matteo: (.) and so (.) I don’t know what what
does she mean with talent or not (.) but
well
Rosa: her explanation was if we have dou:ble
personality: ((general laughter))
Matteo: ahh
Fed: Is that a good thing or:
Rosa: [xxx] she said a really good thing she
was she said yeah I used like to see
another me in front of me and I was talking to myself so it’s a really good thing
Fed: good thing
Rosa: good thing
Silvia: (xxx)
Alan: talking to myself in::
Rosa: erm like she told us that she used to see herself as exactly as she was staying like sitting in- like next to her and in her mind she was always talking to herself for example she said [that I was talking to someone and she was telling
Fed: [we were all going ((makes sound and gesture of mocking disbelief))]
Rosa: was telling me like oh look at the hair of her and stuff like she was like that the other was always talking to me make fun of people to say something about people and stuff like that
Matteo: I think she was kidding she was just said that well you have to be mad you have to be mad to do that to do this job cos it’s a really important job you:: have to have to study the whole life cos you:: you never stop learning you:: yes you have to study all your life
Alan: this question of talent (.) when you came into the university some of you in our one to one Interview said you had the speech at the beginning and talent was mentioned and you got into the best institution in Italy
and you are the top of the top and people
well some some of the students said they
were quite impressed some were quite
shocked by this speech and it made a
good it made a strong impression on
them how do you feel your talent has
developed in your first term do you feel
as confident or perhaps you didn’t feel
confident (.) have you developed? Has
your talent increased or deceased (.) how
do you feel about the (.) talent ?
((General laughter))
Silvia: about [the talent
Fed: [it’s disgusting
Silvia: What
Fed: disgusting word it’s
((general laughter))
(xx) we’re talking ((cough interrupts
speaker))
Alan: you don’t like the word [how wh: what
sorry
Silvia: [xxxx
Fed: (xxx) an american ideal it’s not like we
[xxxx
Silvia: [xxxx
((laughter))
Fed: (.) which subjects m:: (.) we all know
and maybe we all are a bit better at
something or
something else but we are not studying:
erm I cannot even think anything (.) we
are not studying to become a painter
they:: it’s not like er: m: drawing er:: our
profession’s going to be going to be
more:: (..) surgical more technical than
what talent is required for that I think
but maybe it’s you know my deviated
[m:: perception of talent
Silvia: [well
no I think you:: if you’ve got talent your
lucky but (.). well you can achieve your
goal even if you don’t have it because
you are studying hard or whatever (.). m:
I don’t think I have talent but and I don’t
think I got in because I was talented but
(.) I:: from the first semester I learnt that
there are a lot of people who are really
talented here and but I am not afraid I I
usually will be but I’m not afraid
because it makes you work harder and
harder to achieve your goal so: (.)
[it’s a good thing
Fed: [this talent it it’s
[quite
Silvia: [there are there are people
who are keen
Fed: oh yes yes I think what I have achieved I
have achieved because I did a lot
together it’s not because I’m talented I
hope because it was I studied hard and I
practice and I did
A lot not just because [(xxx)
Silvia: [there are people
who can speak
er [fluently
Fed: [yes yes
Silvia: more fluent more than others so: (.)
there’s a thing called talent for me
Maria: well, well I don’t agree with that cos if you see I don’t know I didn’t check the (.) la classifica ((Italian))

Alan: er:: the classification

Maria: the classification again I just see I was pass and that was it but (.) there are some people in our first English course that really amazing with grammar and so they took the maximum point in the classification who were between the first twenty that’s great but when they talk (.) I I al Italian and I can’t understand their Italian accent so it doesn’t depend on talent that’s what they studied they were great with grammar and they probably didn’t have the chance to (.). speak the:: English or whatever the language so I do not agree with the word talent because it seems really good if you are in the first a hundred that got in

Alan: hm:

Maria: and it seems like a justification (.). if you’re if you got in from 101 to I don’t know to 180 (.). an::d I think it’s it was used in a bad way because there are a lot of people who try for the second or third time to get in here (.). and that’s bad what does it mean last year I wasn’t talented and this year I am? It doesn’t it doesn’t so I didn’t like the word talent and then:: I mean it was good to feel that way the first day you’re finally here you got it you did it you’ve been able to get
here and the (test) and (.) everything (.)
you did it
Alan: hm hm
Maria: that’s great (.) but I don’t think the word
talent was what I was expecting (.)
Alan: wh what word would you use?
Maria: (.) I would use (.) err: (…)
congratulation (.) you did it (.) now keep on it it’s not like you get in so you’re an interpreter no way (.) [you have Alan [congradulation suggests you passed something I think but you’re talking about something that’s not talent]
Maria: it’s not talent it’s hard work
Alan: ah [so it’s hard work
Maria: [it’s passion (.)
it’s passion
[I’m not saying
Silvia: [yeah (maybe passion)
Maria: I’m ready to bet that someone who
didn’t get in was way more talented than what I am
Alan: but you don’t believe in talent?
Maria: no but that’s what I’m saying talented
I’m saying er:: maybe he deserved it more than me i:: I sometimes I feel like I’m cheating because I got in just because I stayed one year abroad I wouldn’t I wouldn’t have been able to get in otherwise I’m sure about it so I feel like I’m cheating and I feel (.) way: less than people who haven’t had this chance that I [I
Alan: why why cheating?
Maria: cheating because I I don’t know?
because somebody did it without going abroad and I haven’t been able to pass the test in Trieste so talent wasn’t the word I wanted I wanted to hear absolutely not
Silvia: I’m not saying that you are talented if you get in I’m saying that there are people
Maria: it’s not what you saying it’s what we were welcomed with they said ohh you’re the more talented one ((gushing)) the best of the best you’re the la crème delle crème
Silvia: yeah I don’t but I’m not saying that they can say whatever they want but I disagree
Maria: I’m disagreeing with you Silvia: ah yeah but I’m disagreeing too what I meant by talent I mean there are people in here maybe they are talented in speaking there are people who are talented in grammar I don’t know there are lots of things I think talent does exist but it’s not what they er tell us Rosa: I don’t think it really does matter in a sense professionally Silvia: no you don’t get in because you are talented because there are a lot of people I I don’t think I’m talented I just studied this summer and what talent is for me when for example
er(.) you can speak as you are like you
are a native speaker or you can write like
you are an English writer that’s (talent)
as he said a painter(.) you’re talented
because you can paint a lot of beautiful
things and people er:: will er:: start to
know you to congratulate you and that’s
talent because you can do something
maybe with passion and you are able to
do it in a different way in a good way
but it’s not that you are here because you
are talented
Alan: so what about chris Rutland let’s come
back to professor rutland (laughter) is
he talented? Or is it just hard work?
Matteo: how long has he been in italy?
Maria: I think more than professor barnard
Fed: how much is that?
Maria: I don’t know professor barnard has been
working here since ’93 in here and he
was teaching in italy before that
Fed: there you go
Silvia: I can’t really say if he’s talented or not I
just like his way of teaching and accent
Alan: Matteo you were the first person who
seemed who seemed to be quite (.)
struck by his
Matteo: I don’t [kno::w
Alan: [good Italian
Matteo: if he has talent because I I just don’t
know him m: well I: want to attend the
classes I want to see the way how the
way he teaches and I can say if he: has
talent or not but well er::m I don’t
believe in talent because it’s just a matter of work I think that when we got in the sslmit when well we had something that the others students didn’t have because I think that what’s needed to get in this university is not taught at the high school the level of the test is high and the level of English or German or French taught at the high school is insufficient to get in the sslmit

Alan: hmm Matteo: well if you’re able to get in the sslmit you have studied hard but not at school you have studied hard on your own I don’t know you: you like tv shows you like tv series you like English books you like for example in my case I like video games er: in original language so Japanese English language mm: that’s what is talent it’s what makes it’s something that makes you improve and it doesn’t depend on the school it’s something else

Silvia: Sometimes [you pass because Matteo: its passion its: Silvia: you got the right answers for you because there are people who
maybe they would have er: (xxx) ((asks
for help to translate italian word))
deserved it more than you do so
sometimes it’s luck a great deal of luck
(.) so: (. ) it depends on on because [ I
Matteo: [yeah
part b is luck
Silvia: sorry part [b
Matteo: [part b of the
test [is luck
Alan: [the cultural part
Matteo [xxx] ((laughs))
Silvia: [yeah yeah
luck and for for two years I didn’t get in
now I got in (. ) why? ((small laugh))
Alan: hard work?
Silvia: hard work or luck
Alan: or cheating ((laughter))
Silvia: well I’ve been to London (. ) two years
ago and when I came here came back I
tried did I get in (how is it how is ) it
works it’s not cheating maria (. ) it’s just
that you have ah: number of experiences
or luck than others have so (. ) that way
it’s life
Alan: so let’s just finish off today by talking
about the future then how do you
imagine yourselves progressing (. ) as
future interpreters in the school? do you
think (. ) what’s what’s the secret of your
future success (. )
Maria: mm::: (..) tea and coffee
Alan: for Russian?
Maria: hm:: no it’s just (.) it might be passion
and (..) it might be (.) the willing to keep
on going (.) so:::
Alan: what about the teachers and the
institution?
Maria: the teachers i:::=
Alan: =cos you did criticise a little bit
Maria: I did criticise I’m really happy with them
Alan: hmm
Maria: if I if I didn’t care I wouldn’t criticise at
all I’d just say whatever an::d and since
they’re really good and since I meet
people who are really good in what
they’re doing I can also see if they’re
doing something wrong it looks way
bigger than a normal teacher so (.) I’m
hopefully I’m hopeful for the future and
(.) think it will be great an::d it will be
tiring (.) really tiring an:d I’m going to
need support from anybody who can
give it because sometimes you just
wanna sit down and say wh why?
Alan: hmm
Maria: does it really matter? Well I think that if
I’m able to say but I really like it so let’s
do it let’s (.) keep on doing it (..)
[an::d
Alan: [so passion an:
is is very important
[if I understand
Maria: [passion and support
Alan: Support from whom?
Maria: family and friends because (.) if you see:
I don’t know when you see your friends
they all well it’s just a degree it doesn’t matter you’re not gonna get work anywhere and there is a crisis and... nobody cares it’s just about money it’s only about who knows who and no what no I don’t think it’s that way and I think my university is one of the best one and I really want to do this job so:: I think I can do it

Alan: hm m

Maria: I think I can do it I think I can do it get to it

Alan: hm m

Maria: and family because (. ) maybe sometimes you choose some languages that they don’t really agree with they say oh why would you study Portuguese? You’d get to know it in (...) in ten seconds you just go to brazil or to portugal and you know a month then you can speak it that’s ok ok

Alan: hm mm

Maria: ok but it’s important to have a family that can say to you (.) well you can do it you just have to work harder

Alan: ok what about everybody else? (...) same question (...) ste- fillipo do [you care]

((laughs))

Fed: [xxx) less

Alan: less what?

Fed: less emphasis probably er that [xxxx

Silvia: [xxx

((whispered quick exchange between the two))
Fed: no yes she:: pretty much said it all (.)
I think yes I’ll I’ll probably pull through
more than she will erm: literally
meaning through and erm: because what
I wanna do is not study but go there and
learn it so erm: I’m going to (.). erm:
well of course I need to study to
graduate and to and what I’m looking for
is to is not to (.). the graduation you
know but the day after when you take
your luggage and leave and learn the
language somewhere and em:: (..)
Alan: so you don’t see the institution as being
a place where to learn the language?
Fed: no no no I do but I think it won’t be
enough for my erm: (.). I don’t I
don’t think it’s enough for me to learn it
that well as I would need so I think its it
will be what gives me the possibility to
(.). pick up my luggage and leave and
learn it really because its er:: it will have
the: m:: good level but I don’t want a
good level erm: otherwise I wouldn’t
study all these year if I wanted just a
good level I would have just left and
learned it in the everyday use of the
language er: I want to learn here what
gives me after the (.). great err I think
erm I mean I want the basis to really
really know the language perfectly when
I will pick it up as a (.). living skill
required skill (.).
Alan: ok (.). Silvia (.).
Silvia: I think you (.). you need a strong will
Alan: hm m
Silvia: yah
Alan: why?
Silvia: verily friends are important because sometimes you don’t think you can do it on your own (.) but a strong will because family can’t ((not clear sounds like can)) do it for you or friends can’t do it for you (.) you have [too
Alan: [sorry they can or they can’t
Silvia: can’t
Alan: can’t ok
Silvia: (xx) can’t ok and so: you have to believe yourself ("small laugh") it’s a phrase that you hear everywhere but it’s true it’s actually true because I got in when I started to believe in myself and work hard because I I took it for the two years but I didn’t pass I took it as a (.) as a game
Alan: hm mm
Silvia: when I started to take it seriously (.) I got in (.) because sometimes in life you have to take things seriously you don’t play all the time but now I get in I have the time to play too: I mean it’s like (.) erm I don’t know how to say it in English even in Italian (xx) but (.) you have to get to gather all the forces you can gather (.) yours your friends or your family an::d keep on doing what you want to do because it’s the passion
that (.) keeps you (..) going passion and
will strong will (.)
Alan:  hmm ok Roxanne?
Rosa:  mm: I think for me patience maybe
((laughs with alan))  the thing about I
heard that everybody thinks professor
rutland is speaking so good because I
mean I don’t understand it of course I
like if when I hear that it’s even possible
for somebody to become like have that
grade of language like the mother tongue
people would say that he had it like
better than them because I I thought it’s
not possible to have an accent that
nobody would understand like if you’re
from you’re not from italy or not
because if I like when I started saying
hello how are you in Italian everybody
was like oh well you’re not Italian like I
did not say any::thing ((laughter)) how
can you say that? And I look kinda
Italian I think er but everybody like er: I
don’t know but really like I don’t
know it’s some sentence smallest
sentence of all I think maybe ahh I need
to have patience ((laughs)) (..)
Alan:  patience
Rosa:  I usually expect too much of myself so
hmm
Alan:  (..) ok matteo
Matteo:  well I’m::: (…) I’m quite confident
about the future erm: because even
though outsi- outside the world outside
is a jungle m: one thing one thing is for
sure I will keep trying and trying until I become one of the best interpreters.

and I think it’s just a matter of passion.

(erm) cos I have mm:: I have (.)well

all my friends just erm at first erm sai:

said oh my god you’re getting a second

bachelor degree? ((mimics shocked tone)) you’re mad you:: (.) it’s just crazy

but I:: I love the foreign languages and I love the job of the interpreter and it doesn’t matter the:: the work load it doesn’t matter how many years it will take to become the interpreter I want to become but (.) I will do it I think I can do it and I think I have the passion not the talent I have the passion to do it (.)

and I’ll keep trying and trying.

Alan: hurray::: ((laughter)) ((alan claps)) thank you very much ok thank you very much.
Second Interview session
Federico 2: Second interview

1  Alan: so federico i just want to ask you (. ) how
2       has the last term gone for you? What sort
3       of experiences you have had?
4  Fed:  yeah it, s ( … ) erm i like the first more I
5       don’t know it was maybe the classes or
6       something i think it’s er (we did less)
7       and i mean it’s not such a bad thing (not
8       having to do a) translation (every
9       weekend ) a couple of translations and er
10      but you feel like you’re doing more or
11      less nothing ( . ) but for English really (x
12      italian I didn’t do nothing xxxx) but yeah
13      fine
14  Alan: you say you’ve done less this term
15  Fed:  yes but i think it is also how the class
16       was er (. ) thought in the first term you
17       have a lot of exercises (at home xxx
18      more or less it (. ) is done) this term was
19      more ( .. ) work in class and less at home
20      which is ( .. ) because you have the other
21      languages you have to study (and do
22      homework xx) erm ( .. ) well er ( .. ) you’re
23      doing more in class and less on your own
24      ( . ) on your ( .. ) on your own and it’s it’s
25      ( . ) feels like you’re doing less ((small
26      laugh))
27  Alan:  is that because you have different
28      teachers or different
29  Fed:  no no it was how the class was thought ( . )
30      you know ( . ) a lot of work in class and
31      not much at home which is ( . ) ideally it’s
better because you are doing (.) the
translation with the teacher (.) instead of
doing it at home and the teacher will tell
you oh yeah that could be ok not really
having a (…) real translation (xx) yes so
this term was more (2.0) you saw more
the dynamics of translation and er  erm
(3.0) yeah really (did translation) rather
in the first one we did what we always
did within translation more or less it’s (.)
yeah it’s a different (.) approach but (3.0)
Alan: is this from italian to english and english
into italian both ways
Fed: yes this term was only italian into
english
Alan: right
Fed: the first time one was into- from italian
into er from english to italian (or was it)
oh yes it was
Alan: right (.) and your teachers were?
Fed: er this term iechivelo a:nd rutland
Alan: right
Fed: (rutland) yeah (that’s) the name (.)
rutland
Alan: rutland (.) so did you find there there (.)
did you find it helpful the way they did
their classes ?
Fed: erm i thought the class was very well
thought I didn’t particularly care for mr
rutland’s ((small laugh)) classes really
but erm but because it was probably
because it was less it was less er:
cooperation between the students and the
teacher not because of the teacher i mean
we i don’t know why it probably because it was intimidating you know just (..)
((small laugh)) be silent in his classes and there’s less er (..) talking about translation so: er me i was the first not to really interact er
Alan: why was that? Do you think
Fed: i don’t know it was more boring
((laughs)) so i didn’t really feel like (.)
saying much (.) and there’s always the one who wants to talk so we let him talk and (.) eventually stuff comes out (.) so
Alan: but that was because the material that you were translating was boring or the lesson plan was not exciting?
Fed: erm:: well in the first term we did cooking so i don’t think it’s ((laughs)) er the material (xx) the problem erm i don’t know it’s (3.0) they didn’t (it’s also that we had a lot of ) i think they did less classes this term i’m not sure but er probably not but it always erm the first term felt (I don’t know xx) we went deeper into the different types of (..) articles we should translate probably because there were there were less types (xx) i don’t remember if there was another this one it was (tourism) and geography and erm (…) we did a biography and we did a technical erm text and stuff like like that which is interesting of course but then again we do not have that in the exam we don’t have a technical text in the exam we
should know it we should learn how to
do that but we should also know really
well what to do in the exam so we had a
lot of stuff but never I think really
(deeply into one)
Alan: this year
Fed: this term (. ) yes
Alan: this term (. ) so it was less last term but
more concentrated
Fed: yeah
Alan: and this term very
Fed: very yeah very interesting probably
because there is a lot of very different
things and they are all very different so
you know you do one week you’re
talking about (. ) bora-bora or: whatever
and then the last the next week you’re
talking about the: (. ) set up of a
computer or what was it so it’s fun
because it’s different stuff and it’s not
always the same but then again you’re
not really looking into the ones
particularly and probably also doing it in
class (. ) you have the the professor there
you have 30 other people around you so
you really have to think what to write if
you are all alone you have to translate it
you have to come up with something if
you are in class (. ) even supposedly
((laughs)) you hear translation (which
comes along) (xxx)
Alan: but there was less homework there was
less [(xx]
Fed: (xxx) there was more or less no homework. I think (or if there was I didn’t do it or) I didn’t realise. (laughs)

 erm but it’s since you do not have to work on your own. You probably put less into the translation less effort:

Alan: hm.

Fed: (xxx)

Alan: right so it was more feedback more:

Fed: yes more feedback of course and more:

erm: (4.0) (I don’t know) at the beginning of the lesson we would start (and brainstorm the ideas and what kind) er: vocabulary you might need but (having it on the board) just there and it’s also it’s already there (and so when you xx to translation) and when you translate the text you have already what you will need you don’t have to come up with it

Alan: right

Fed: on your own you have to come up with it at the beginning of the lesson but it’s no it’s different doing it on your own (than in a class with 30 people and a professor who says) yes that’s the best way

Alan: right

Fed: it’s [a:

Alan: [so the first year was different then?

Fed: yep er still I’m not sure which one I prefer

Alan: hm
Fed: it’s very different (.). probably it’s good
we had both
Alan: so in the first year they just gave you
texts go away translate and we’ll look at
it afterwards
Fed: not just like that almost yes hmm you it I
don’t know maybe 5 or 6 sentences in
class and then you finish the translation
at home and then you go and look at it
again in class and then someone reads it
out loud and we hear what other people
translated
Alan: right
Fed: well in this term we: erm we started (xx)
looking at what would be the problems
in the text and really it’s how we are
going to do it (if we have a translation in
front of us) we look at it (.). we see
what’s the problems and how to rewrite
it and how to: (whatever) but we were in
30 people we were 30 people doing it
Alan: hmm
Fed: so I think you should have had the
method of the second the: you know the
analytical view of a translation and what
you have to look for and check up (.).
with more: of the first term (.). on your
own work (.). yeah probably that would
be the best
Alan: right 8.) ok (.). there’s too much [class
Fed: [yes
I think so
Alan: hm hm
Fed: for me at least
Alan: right and you talked last time you talked a lot about this sort of competitive nature of the classroom (.) how did that occur this this term?
Fed: well probably (.) it’s erm (.) probably less er (.) less of it because people know each other better and er the: you know it’s more of a: a personal relation with the people (being) together for one year more or less
Alan: yeah
Fed: and I’m not the biggest friendly guy in talking (to everyone but) still you know everyone you talk to couple of times in your classes so it’s probably er (..) it shows less probably yes because it’s more you’re not always well more or less always talking about classes and stuff like that but it’s a different approach (age probably) er (.) when you talking to people it’s not (.) simply the class and what did I do and what did you do? it’s (work) (.) real (.) talking to people but probably it shows probably yes I don’t know (xxx and quite care for it so:) probably yes people are more (xx) i think there was less of it or it showed less
Alan: hm (.) considering the beginning of the degree the first year er and now the end of the first year how would you say things have changed over the year? with regards to (.) relationship between the students and the subjects and the
teachers did you see any changes or trends?
Fed: you know which ones you really have to (. ) focus on and er: which ones you can (. ) quite not ((laughs)) no but erm I don’t know erm (. ) well for example in the first term I lost I think 2 classes (. ) in this term in the last 2 weeks I lost (. ) I don’t know more or less all the absences I could make (. ) because you tell you: you’re more relaxed so you know you can skip a class and that’s not the end of the world and it’s er also regarding to the teachers you: professors I should say (. ) well (. ) ((laughs)) ah the relation between (…) the students and the professors it’s not exactly a professor student relationship ((laughing tone))
Alan: no? why?
Fed: well mainly because it’s not (. ) 10 (. ) metres away and it’s just (. ) here (. ) it’s more personal it’s (. ) it’s not a classical university professor in italy at least (. )
Alan: hm
Fed: (. ) generally it’s 200 people classes so it’s not (. ) personal
Alan: hm m
Fed: a:nd (2.0)
Alan: is that good? do do do you like this aspect of it?
Fed: em yes I guess so yes it’s erm (. ) yes with the funny ones yes ((small laugh)) (. ) but still with the one you don’t really
Alan: care for you. don’t really have to. talk to them (laughs)

Fed: yeah you do the class (and your like) the: the one you you (...) you like more. you talk to them and it’s not (xx) becomes more of a erm (...) knowing kinda thing rather than being in the same room and you teach to me and I learn."

Alan: hmm

Fed: so yes it’s good because you get to meet the person and it’s good. I guess it’s. it’s a good thing (laughs) (.). but yeah really there’s (not really) yeah it’s not really that bad (laughs) (.). yes it’s yes

Alan: hm (...) some teachers it works well

Fed: yes some others you don’t really have to (I mean those you I don’t know those you don’t care for you) (. it’s not like you’re obliged to go and have a pizza with them so it’s like any other day (.). if you want to stop and talk you talk (xx)

Alan: yeah (.). you said that erm with regards to Russian (.). you I presume you’ve kept the same languages

Fed: yeah

Alan: with regards to Russian you said that it started at the wrong level it was too difficult?

Fed: it was not quite the way to teach it to someone who really doesn’t really know anything about Russian erm (.). it was erm (...) I don’t know it’s not like I
know how to teach to people like (4.0) a
teacher ((laughs)) so I really don’t have
any idea of how they should have done it
but I saw that how it was done it really
didn’t quite work for me and there are
students who loved the first term and the
teacher the first term and (...) I didn’t but
erm that really doesn’t (...) it’s not (xxx)
(big deal) but this term the teacher is
better she she’s erm according to me
she’s not exactly adorable but er
((laughs)) she’s very (...) strict at least I
mean we are learning Russian we aren’t
learning I don’t know how to fold a
piece of paper (we have) to be er (...) methodic and strict she doesn’t really put
much effort into explaining stuff it’s a 30
second explanation if you get it well if
you don’t we have 30 exercises after so
after we go to the 30s 30th exercise you
have got it you did understand so it’s a
more practical more: (...) probably a more
efficient (...) er way er it’s really
demanding because you have a lot of
homework and she checks it so you have
to do it because she checks it in class she
makes you read out loud so it you didn’t
do anything you either know the (...) what
the answer should be but you don’t know
the answer if you do not do the exercise
and learn the rules so you just ((xxx) in
silence or you do it (...) erm yes it’s more
of a high school kind of way but for this
better because it obliges you to do it
even if you know that day you are tired
and just want to go away and get to bed
you can’t because you have to go home
and do the homework for the next day
and you have to do it every lesson it’s
more strict (x) course
Alan: because you did say I don’t know if it
was the first teacher that was explaining
again and again and you weren’t very
happy about that
Fed: I would have been if she: explained it the
first time and the second time it was
much it was better and the third time it
was better and you got it every time
better but since she did it first time in a
way the second time she explained it in
another way (xxxx) and the third way it
was still another way so it was just a
huge mess erm (...) so yes it wasn’t really
useful er: I mean it’s useful because she
repeats and repeats and repeats (.) so (.)
more or less you get something but this
second term the more practical way I
have to say and I’m (.) kinda sad because
it’s a lot of work (laughs) but it is
better er you learn better (.) so
Alan: (…) so it’s better that erm (.) you also
criticised the lot of learning by heart
Fed: oh yes that’s awful and i: (doesn’t) it
stays there (laughs))
Alan: yeah?
Fed: yes (.) it’s awful because I I have no
memory but that’s not the: you know it’s
not like I’m (.) there was a natural rule
like that we didn’t know and er now she
told us and it’s all easy because (you
have the rule and just xxx) so there’s a
lot of learning by heart (x) it’s er you do
it (. ) ((small laugh)) it’s erm we’re not
studying math (. ) where there is always
the rule to follow (..) and also there’s
often the rule and the reason why that
rule doesn’t work in that particular
occasion which (…) is not a rule
((laughs)) I mean it doesn’t work in that
occasion then you’re talking to someone
and then it would work in another
occasion so it’s (. ) experience more or
less (xxx learn it xx in the end just do it)
also for example the other day I went to
talk to the teachers who does the
letrainer Russian ((small laugh)) and she
said that erm for the first year we should
just learn the rule (…) but just the rule
and just not try to go and erm put
something more because we had to right
some small (. ) essays or whatever so
that she corrects them and in the oral
exam we we have to talk about the
subject and so we have something to go
for and and: when we are writing in any
language you just don’t try to say er talk
by this rule the walls are white (. ) the
doors are grey (. ) there’s a trash can you try
to put it in a little bit better way but we
don’t really know the grammar to do it in
a better more articulate way so it turns
out we make a lot of mistakes (. )
obviously but she doesn’t want you to
try to do something a little more
articulate she only wants you to do it the
easy stupid sentences (.) and she she got
a little fed up because I was trying to do
normal actual sentences someone would
say and she was saying oh you have to
do it only the rule and er you can’t er (.)
can’t know how to actually write it so
you don’t it’s the first year you just do it
and it was weird because I was never
told was studying too much or
looking too much into something
((laughs)) that really happened but it’s er
easier actually to be just go for the rule
(xxxx) so I should listen to her ((laughs))
because it’s er better for the exam if I do
a simple right sentence rather than a a
maybe longer one and more intelligent
one but it’s completely messed up in the
grammar

Alan: hmm is that the most important thing the
exam you think?
Fed: no because I don’t work for my exam
grades I don’t really care for the grades
erm: I don’t er but I had to do the exams
((laughs)) to get to the end of the to get
to the second cla- to the second year so I
can do the new class and you learn more
this year to learn this and I would hope
the the exams are a reflection of what i
have to learn in the first year so if I
manage to do (..) to learn the right way I
have to do for that exam I hope that’s
what I need to have learned this year (2.0)

at least in the languages I start from zero

Alan: yeah cos you did say last time I think you were talking about the university degree and to graduate from the school it wasn’t your main objective linguistically

Fed: no I wanted to learn the language (.) but still I hope they know how I’m supposed to learn the language ah not me

Alan: you talked about the school the graduation as being a sort of springboard towards learning the language

Fed: to learn a to actually how to use it yes and that’s actually a proof of what this professor is saying because here I’m learning the grammar and the: rules and I have to learn that and not how I’m going to use a natural sentence I’m not never gonna to use ((says russian phrase)) I got to use a full sentence when I talk to a russian and translate and interpret but before I have to hear (to learn) based the core of the sentence and (2.0) hopefully before the end of the three years I will know how to make a (.) an actual useful er sentence that will sound effortless and not out of er a grammar text (.) book ah: but if not I just go to russia (xx) way to do it

Alan: so do you have confidence in your russian teacher in this sense

Fed: oh yes I do and this semester is also more than the first semester it’s hm (.) I don’t know (.) I mean it’s always (.)
she’s tougher so it looks like you are
doing more and probably you are
because I have learnt more in this
semester than in the first one so (..) I
guess she it is working
Alan: and what do you think is different about
this semester then? About this teacher
perhaps?
Fed: I don’t know it’s also that the first
semester teacher was erm scary and
((laughs)) no it’s useful erm; (…) you
know you have to do something and (.)
but then again the: er: slovak teacher is (.)
as far from scary as you could get but
still I want to do the homework and do it
anyway
Alan: hm
Fed: but it’s a different yeah yeah sure it’s a
different approach the one from slovak
to russian because for russian I do all the
homeworks and you study your lesson
and you get up in the morning and
you’ve done it and most likely not
always in the best way but you have
done what you could but for slovak
sometimes I I (..) maybe I forget an
exercise or I don’t do that one because I
don’t know how to do it it’s not (xx) for
example when I’m at home I look for I
don’t know erm (…) slovak television
and something like that it’s erm (2.0) it’s
very different the russian still goes more
on the book the other one go I kinda look
for it more (..) it’s I take the approach I
give to english for example in slovak (…)
not exactly the same cos I don’t know
slovak enough well to listen to the: er: I
don’t know news and understand what
they are actually talking about (x) I stay
20 minutes at the computer listen to the
news in slovak and try to (2.0)
understand until (…) it’s (weird) yeah
(half I’d say well) fun
Alan: you say you prefer more (.) you said you
the the russian is better this year because
do I understand it correctly you’re more
afraid of her?
Fed: oh yes (((laughs))) no yes I’m (.) I don’t
know because she’s actually I’m sure a
lovely person and she’s not like she: (3.0)
well she will (2.0) not scream but you
are close to it (((laughs))) but no she’s
actually a person but you get more of a:
erm: you feel more that you have to do it
yeah you more er what’s the word the:
(4.0) it’s gone (I don’t even know the
word in italian) (xx) the: il dovere the:
Alan: er the erm (2.0) the duty
Fed: the duty yes you feel more of a (2.0)
maybe she just puts us more pressure on
it (…) er: you feel it more yes that’s
probably it (…)
Alan: how does that come out in the classroom
then ? I mean how does she make you
feel [like
Fed: [oh
I’ve no idea (.)
it’s probably just (2.0) also the fact that
we have already spent we started from
her and we studied with her and we had
already studied 6 months and you get to
studying you mm (.) we’ve finished with
her I’ve done 9 months so or 10 what it
is studying a language so you feel (2.0) I
feel at least that i: didn’t know enough
for how much time I’ve spent learning it
so you feel (.) more pressure er: studying
and learning

Alan: it’s the same teacher as the first this?
Fed: no
Alan: oh it’s different
Fed: no it’s different (..) er the one who does
em: the lettarato is is the same but the
one who does the grammar no
Alan: and this is the one who does the
grammar
Fed: yep
Alan: yeah and is there a particular was she
asks questions? That makes you feel
more:
Fed: m: (3.0) I don’t know she probably it’s
also the fact that she’s italian (.) so she
has learnt it ((laughs)) so it’s a: (.) it can
get less er y- you know the first day it
was for us russian so: she does know
russian because she is russian this one
has started she’s like 28 (.) no probably
she is older ma: I don’t know she looks
very older but I don’t know how actually
younger than how she looks er:: (..) so y-
you: I guess that puts a: (.) more a:
pressure because she has done it so she
knows (.) and she has done it here so she
knows erm (..) well we should have
learned by now and hopefully she
remembers what we should learn by now
and er we can learn so if she tells you
that this is what you have to study for
this lesson (.) for this month or whatever
( .) you: kinda think yes I have to do it
and this (2.0) I should manage to do
Alan: hm m ( ..)
Fed: probably yes
Alan: so one of the influencing factors is the
fact that she is italian
Fed: yes yes and it’s also an influential factor
on the explaining part of the plan part of
the lesson so it’s a short part of the
lesson the explaining it for her but it’s
erm a little bit more clear because she’s
talking actually italian (and we) can
understand what she’s saying (2.0) and=
Alan: =not like
Fed: no not like the first one no ( .) no: not like
no: ( …)
Alan: cos the first term was a russian teacher?
Explaining in italian but
Fed: yeah ( .) or: or: some pieces in russian
and go figure there’s there’s three
months what I knew in russian ((laughs))
to understand an explanation yes it was a
little bit unsettling because while she
was talking italian you didn’t really
understand what she was saying and
when she was talking in russian I: didn’t
really understand what she was saying (.)
so it’s more clear this 6 months (3.0)
Alan: and what do you think about your future
as an interpreter now? have you (.)
thought about it again (.). reformulated
your:
Fed: not really I don’t know erm: (.) I still I
kinda think I’m liking the mediation (xx)
but I don’t think you can really eat on
mediations (..)((laughs)) no: it’s a fun
part (xx) in english and it’s funny (.). it’s
fun but erm: (.) you’re not quite sure
you can erm: (2.0) live only on
mediations and er: (.) still like the idea of
interpreting (..). I’m not sure how erm:
(2.0) I’m not sure (I can do it) for the 30
days a y- month 30 days a month
Alan: yeah
Fed: er: I would rather probably combine the
2 things (.) cos it’s erm: it’s more than a
natural job than interpreting ((laughs))
it’s more er::: (..) probably er tiring also
er at least from what I’ve done now
mediations (have all been) kinda fun er
sure if you have to mediate a contract it’s
not quite (2.0) laughs and er: stuff like
that still it’s a more personal approach to
it and I think I’d rather like yes
Alan: hm (3.0) so erm: (..) you gave up
medicine obviously things (…) changed
Fed: quite a bit yes
Alan: when you look back how do you=
Fed: =no:: (2.0) I do not regret it ((laughs))
Alan: no?
Fed: no: no no no and also because I’m still going out with my friends from med school and I really don’t regret it (. ) erm
Alan: why?
Fed: because i::: had problems with the a:::
subjects of the first year and the second year but more or less the first year really (...) and: I know what they are doing
now on the third year and it’s (. ) the the classes I hated more: in subjects I hated more (. ) repeats repeat themselves (xx)
in the second year do physiology and er:
and er: I don’t know in the third year you have erm: semiotica or stuff like that so UTTERLY boring and and erm: it’s like doing the: learning by heart of this er university but without the logics part
((laughs)) there’s a lot a lot of learning by heart a:nd erm: without the: more:
(2.0) fun part of the learning the language (. )
Alan: language or medicine now? you’re talking about
Fed: them 2 in the medicine you have some logics because a part of it is physical science so you have to (...) develop something you have a: I don’t know a: (. )
erm: (3.0) a rule about erm: (...) a thought we have to follow to understand something which in this university you really kinda don’t because you have to learn to speak it and understand and how are: erm (an atomic bonding is forming)
how the atoms er these presence have in
the space but (.) you have it’s a different
kinda reasoning it’s less logical here but
then again there there’s also a huge
chunk of learning by heart (.) just
learning by heart and remember it not by
half or a couple of months (.) so just
learning by heart
Alan:  hm m
Fed:  for ever (.) which is really boring
Alan:  yeah
Fed:  yeah and I’d really have some learning
by heart here but the rest aside is (.)
more fun
Alan:  yeah (.) when you were talking in the
first interview you talked about your
father’s company
Fed:  hm m
Alan:  which he inherited from his father (.) and
the problems the company (.) had and
the: I think I think you said your father (.)
did ask you whether you went into
medicine or you were interested in
medicine because of the problems that
[he had
Fed:  [yes
He asked me if i: didn’t like economy I
never thought about studying er er
economy because of him (.) and I told
him not and I still kinda think I didn’t
but I still kinda think that I didn’t do it
erm: consciously but probably
subconsciously I did saw that it was a
hell of a boring job and er with a lot of er:
… problems (.) which I wouldn’t really want (.) and erm

Alan: cos he wanted you to go into economics?

Was that it?

Fed: no no (.) no no he doesn’t push me he asked me if it was his fault I never I never consider studying economics (.) because neither me and my sister EVER thought of going studying in the faculty of economics but like never ever even in a slightest idea I chose here I chose literature because I really didn’t want to do the economics and a law exam and also actually the history one and but sorry yes well that that part was not my: (. ) piece of cake (. ) and I know I should (. ) in myself I know I should do as an optional the economics exam but I really ((laughs)) think I’m gonna have to fight to do it because I think it’s utterly boring and er: (. ) just boring and he he wondered if was seeing him having problems with the: company and stuff he does make me reject that idea of a job and it w- it probably is (. ) er::: but f: now it’s been almost a year now something he’s been working in this other company and I still don’t think I would ever do what he does it’s (3.0) I really don’t see myself in it

Alan: yeah (.) and how do your parents look at you now? studying in (. ) moving from medicine to [(xx)

Fed: [well
My mother is still terrorized I am going to have another breakdown and escape also this university of course she doesn’t say it because she’s afraid that’s gonna make true (xx) she’s a doctor who actually (xx needs a) rational mind to do it ((laughs)) but er my father (…) I guess that he’s happy I think he: (…) he: I think he does give some credit to my mother’s worries but also he thinks she’s (…) quite exaggerating as she actually is because erm (2.0) I smoke and I: I bite my nails and chew things and I’ve been doing (.) I’ve I’ve been biting my nails since I was I think three and I had (.) teeth but she think that that’s er because I’m agitated I’m really worried for the university and Alan: hm Fed: which doesn’t really have I’ve been smoking for 6 years and I was in high school when I started and she doesn’t know that but erm she thinks I smoke because I’m agitated I’m worried for the university and she can more or less think everything is (here xx) worried about the university er: so: she is exaggerating but he does I think give us some (fresh) kinda beliefs he er: still (a worrying matter) (xxx) it’s it’s useless to try to convince her that I’m not (.) quite that worried because she would keep thinking I am so
Alan: the reason why she should think you might be in danger so to speak?

Fed: (2.0) not (in my:) ((laughs)) not that I know ((laughs))

Alan: hm

Fed: er yes yes I know (.) I guess she doesn’t want me to ending up not having at least a degree and m: er something so she er:m or or a job (.) er: so I think she’s more worried that I’m er. (.) if i: don’t manage to do this er and I and if I don’t manage to do this I won’t start another university because the third (come on) ((laughs)) would be kinda ridiculous ((laughs))

Alan: hm

Fed: er:: and she thinks er:: if I stop I can have no future (...) she’s a mother she’s supposed to worry

Alan: hm (…) what does she think about you leaving medicine to come to SSLMIT for example did she=

Fed: =oh she would never say anything wrong (.) she’s too scared ((laughs)) no I think she’s too scared for that I would take it that I would take it wrong and er er:m and this to tell me anything but I think she’s happy (.)

Alan: hm (…)

Fed: I think (.) yes (...) I hope she doesn’t think it would be (would have been better) and I she has told me more than once that I (.) could have finished medicine but I i:: answered her that I
couldn’t that I could have done it but I
didn’t want to and so I wouldn’t er so I
think she’s happy (...) she’s not happy (.)
with me leaving in september but
((laughs))
Alan: leaving in september?
Fed: I I have the 6 month in erazmus
Alan: oh of course
Fed: (xx) she’s not happy about that but er:m
I am so ((laughs))
Alan: you are going to?
Fed: er: in slovakia (to xx) cos I won the that
was funny I won the I won london (2.0)
but er: (...) in in england there was
double the people first er:: compared to
the: er: places you could go
Alan: yeah
Fed: so ah (and also) I study slovak and
russian slovak though (was only in
london) and russian was more or
less in half of the cities of course (with
the one with) russian was exeter with 15
people asking for it or bristol (. ) 20
people ask in there and er I didn’t I don’t
have (great) grades really (. ) so I thought
there was no possibility me for me to get
in I don’t know 26 the average ((out of
30 in the italian grading system)) and
there’s people who have 30 plus which I
thought was a grade not an average
because people only get 30 plus in
exams
Alan: wow
Fed: yeah ((laughs)) and it was a it was a girl from the second year for GOD’S SAKE do you sleep?

Alan: ((laughs)) and er:m so I I chose to go away to slovakia (. ) and er: (. ) wh- which I’m happy with because i:'m (2.0) I may end up actually learning slovak (. ) and er: it costs a lot less than england but then I won the seat for the place for london (.) because I’ve 10 credits they gave me from med school so I think that (. ) put me up but london was for 9 months and I could only stay away 6 months because of this second term we had translation from italian into russian (. ) and I have to be here actually I I don’t need just the exam er validated and whatever (. ) I have to learn and do it and study for it (. ) I have to be here so I would have needed to shorten the: erazmus (. ) but I couldn’t for credits and stuff like that (. ) and also they had made a mistake with the gradu- with the list (. ) so there was a girl that should have gotten in but she hadn’t and it was naturally my problem because I was the first it should have been the problem of the second girl but she had already accepted so they called me a couple of times so tell me so: you are going to (nitra) you tell me ((mimics high interested tone)) and I said no I have some problems but if I solve them I’m going to london oh yes but you know nitra is rea:lly good choice ((again
mimics high tone voice)) it’s a really
place you know studying yes but I want
to go to london ((laughs)) and er I
realised that if I had any slightest
problem they wouldn’t have helped me (.)
and er since I started from problems it
really wasn’t smart to keep trying for
london so I (. ) I gave up london and I
took slovakia (. )
Alan: hm
Fed: and I’m happy with it
Alan: right (. ) and why is your mother unhappy
you said she’s not [very happy
Fed: ] cos I’m going away
for 6 months she is italian after all
Alan: ah
Fed: oh and also because I want to go to the
dormitory of the university (. ) which
costs 83 euros a:: a month it’s er: like
(…) to me it’s not even a question and
also it’s next to the university there’s
people and there’s a canteen so if you
don’t want to cook you can go just there
and eat and think that’s erm the easiest
way (. ) but she’s afraid the kitchen is
going to be dirty (. ) that the people in the
room won’t be: er I don’t know what?
whatever (xxx) just sleep in the room it’s
not like er so she’s she’s a mother so
she’s worried (. ) and she’s complaining
and she’s already decided in 2 mon- in 6
months she’s coming 2 times (. ) which I
already I don’t want her to be there and
still I’m not there ((laughs)) help (. )
please (.) she wants to but an i-phone so
just she can call me via skype even if
she’s not home (.)
Alan:  hm (3.0) she’s
Fed:  she’s being more italian than she’s ever
been in her whole life and (.)
Alan:  hm
Fed:  er
Alan:  why do you think this is?
Fed:  ah because my sister has never gone out
from within a holiday and she doesn’t
even actually want to and the: i: actually
do (.) want to leave not only for 6
months if it was for me a.nd er: then she
is worried about the university and if I
(am agitated or depressed or whatever)
and I won’t be here (.) and er she doesn’t
know how to work the vc (vcr) so you
know ((laughs)) she’s (xxx) for these
kinds of stupid things and I won’t be at
home under her protecting wing and I
don’t know whatever (.) and anything
else that could happen in slovakia I mean
I’m not going in kuwait to (..) aid dying
soldiers I mean it’s europe (xx) (it’s stuff
she’s worried about)
Alan:  right (.) cos you have one sister yes?
Fed:  yeah
Alan:  and [she’s young
Fed:  [older
Alan:  older than you?
Fed:  older (.) three years
Alan:  three years older (.) what does she do?
Fed: er: she studied language in bologna and now she’s doing her dissertation about erm (3.0) erm communication or stuff something like that (I don’t know really know the) precise names (xxxxxxxxx) she’s more or less done

Alan: right
Fed: but she doesn’t want to leave so ((laughs))

Alan: oh ok (. ) so your mother’s more worried about you
Fed: yes (. ) she’s more worried about her getting a job for that she should worry more but er than me leaving really ((laughs)) (3.0)

Alan: great ok (. ) that’s fantastic we’ll stop there
Maria 2: Second interview.

Alan: so mart a you’ve come to the end of your second term
Maria: yes
Alan: I just want you to give me some of your thoughts and impressions about you know about your experiences (. ) here
Maria: ah it’s getting (. ) better (. ) better and better
Alan: hm
Maria: I just lo:ve the way things are working out and (. ) I enjoy (. ) all the things that I am doing here
Alan: hm
Maria: so I’m enjoying I’m really much enjoying the Italian literature course we’ve been having it was great (. ) and it felt like being at university finally because sometimes (. ) in the first semester some of the courses were like a little bit too simple? And it felt like being at high school (. ) and I’m down on high school I’ve been there 5 years and that’s enough but now it really seem like being at university and we are treated like equal (. ) of course we are students but we have a good deal of respect and that’s amazing that’s what I was looking for (. ) a:nd even in Russian we (. ) we are expected to know a lot a:nd (. ) the we don’t spend time we don’t waste time on people who haven’t studied and so don’t
know things that should be our basis.

and that’s good I mean I wouldn’t mind like having a review or revision together with the other people but if I decided to do it and we all decided to do it not if one person isn’t hasn’t studied is behind everybody else

Alan: hm m

Maria: we have to stop the lesson while it did happen in the first semester a lot for one or two per- persons people a:nd so I really feel like being at uni

Alan: hm m

Maria: a:nd that is really good

Alan: so just to understand more what do you mean by this year this term feels more like university? How would you ?

Maria: erm (...) it feels like I I left high school for ever

Alan: hm

Maria: so: I can look for help in for a teacher so I can ask him but it’s my problem it’s not his so he’s not doing his work good he is I am not

Alan: hm m

Maria: and that is the difference with high school and university so if I’m not ready it’s my problem it’s not the teacher’s problem it’s not the class’s problem

Alan: hm m

Maria: a:nd (...) that is good because it make you feel more a lot more responsibilities and you: you are responsible for what
you are doing and for what you are not doing

Alan: hm m

Maria: so: (.) it’s good because you know

exactly how you are doing and how you are supposed to do and what exactly you are getting from it

Alan: hm m

Maria: so (.) it’s good

Alan: cos I remember you saying I think in the (.) group interview if I’m not mistaken that you were worried that there might not be a quite clear method (.). erm said there was a little bit of confusion (.)

Maria: yeah I thought at the beginning there was in in some lessons there still is a bit of confusion we have different teachers teaching the same (.). class

Alan: hm m

Maria: and they use different methods and we don’t know which one to rely on because sometimes there are some discrepancies between them like (.). quite a big one (.). so we don’t really know who to rely but (.). I think at this point we know (.). how to (.). how to manage it because we are (.). we have (.). been presented with our responsibilities we know what we are supposed to do (.). and we are able to decide between (.). 2 methods which are not wrong but they are different between one another and we can choose which one suits us better (.). and so I think that is what university should prepare you for
Alan: hm m
Maria: cos of course I’m going to meet a lot of different people who decide to work in a different way (.), and it doesn’t mean my way is wrong; it just means that I can correct it or can take something from another method and use it and make it mine.
Alan: hm m
Maria: and that what was (mithing) what was missing at the beginning (.), I wasn’t we weren’t prepared for that.
Alan: hm m (.), is that a specific language or in general.
Maria: I’d say in translation and in mediation for English.
Alan: English to: ?
Maria: English to Italian and (.), yeah because we in both translation and mediation we had (for) like 2 different teachers and 3 different teachers.
Alan: hm m
Maria: and there was a bit (.), confusion (.), confusing at the beginning.
Alan: hm
Maria: but now it’s better (.).
Alan: were there any contradictions? that were difficult to resolve.
Maria: hm not ((exhales)) not contradictions in the method the method was quite similar (.), but in the topics that we were presented with and in the: in the exam
prepa- preparation
Alan: hm
Maria: ah: for example with professor Rutland (.)
we: like analysed like instructions but it
was (.) really detailed so it was about
something we don’t even know we don’t
even know what it is in Italian it was all
about all different types of screws and
erm (.) panels and hm wires and that’s
great

Alan: hm

Maria: but I think it was a little bit too much and
if it wasn’t we should have spent more
time and we should have done it the
same with the professor Infanti (.) cos
with her we did instructions and it was
like (.) open the bottle take the tap out
and pour the water put the top back on (.)
so it was really simple and so we know
that this this is really big topic but we
haven’t (.) we didn’t take it in the same
way: we were: they were on total
different side and it was really confusing
because we don’t know what to expect at
the exam (...) and we talk a lot about
erm: source text and parallel text (...) but only with professor Rutland (.)
because with professoressica Infanti we
only talk about them in erm: in
instructions and tourism (. .) so (.) I
don’t think that i: like we knew that (.)
professoressica Infanti didn’t really want to
share her course that she didn’t want it at
all (.) and it was like we were (.)
prevented we were prevented from (.)
understanding and really taking from
professor rutland what he was trying to
give us
Alan: hm
Maria: because there was this conflict
between them (...) these conflicts
between them
Alan: can can you give me an example of (.)
that?
Maria: erm: like for the for the exam infanti said
oh I’ve prepared it in November so: he’s
not gonna be able to say anything about
it (.) a:nd I know he wanted to do
something like a new topic something
we haven’t done in class
Alan: hm m
Maria: while I think that the topic should be
between among those we have tried a:nd
those you have seen so tour- tourism
geography ahmm instructions and (.)
something else (...) and (. and even for
the corrections they said we don’t know
we maybe are going to split them and
that’s it
Alan: hm m
Maria: now you can’t because I’ve taken a
course with both of you (.) so it’s not
fair if you only correct a half of our
exams and the other one corrects the
other half
Alan: hm m
Maria:it’s not equal (...) and like we knew they
didn’t really want wanted to work
together so it was like (…) a bit (. odd
Alan: hm
Maria: going from one class to another you didn’t want to say oh but professor run-
rutland said to say said to do this (.) cos she said yeah but I don’t think that’s a good idea
Alan:  hm
Maria: what am I supposed to do? I’m gonna take what I need from both of you and that’s it
Alan:  hm (.) how did you interpret this?
Maria: hm (…) erm: i: didn’t like it (.) this is something that reminded me of high school
Alan:  hm
Maria: teachers have problems of course they have they’re people (,) but (.) it’s not my problem so you should get a long with it and I should (.) but without you saying me (,) what’s your problem?
Alan:  hm
Maria: we’re not friends
Alan:  hm
Maria: it’s not what we’re meant to be (.) we are meant to be student and professor
Alan:  hm m
Maria: that is it (.)
Alan:  so she to- [she told
Maria: [she told us (.) in the class oh I’m not happy I have to split my course and I didn’t want too (.) ok (.) ((small laugh)) I don’t care sorry (.) so yeah that was a bit odd (…) Alan:  yeah it sounds erm it sounds confusing
Maria: it does (.). and the topics they analysed were really different so (.). we don’t know what to expect at the exam because we know professeress infanti prepared it but we don’t know if professor rutland accepted it (.). or if he’s gonna decide to do something different (.). and we don’t know the way they are going to correct it (.). so

Alan: right so there’s confusion about=

Maria: =yeah

Alan: the whole [modality of the exam

Maria: [yes yes
definitely

Alan: and how does that make you think or feel?

Maria: ah: I think I’ll just do some more translation and then I’ll stick with my method cos it seems good for both of them I think it works for me

Alan: hm

Maria: so (.). I’ll stick with it

Alan: right (.). hmm so that’s the source of tension there then

Maria: it is (.). yes I think English was the most problematic language this year

Alan: [hm

Maria:[it (wasn’t?) really done the way I was expecting to I don’t think I have learnt that much this year

Alan: hm

Maria: the first (course) the first semester the: st- professor steedman’s course was definitely the thing we needed but we
Alan: hm

Maria: and we need to practice it (.) every year

Alan: hm (.) what does he do again?

Maria: grammar

Alan: hm

Maria: so all the prepositions and how (.) which is the better way to say something or to transform a sentence if we don’t know how to say it

Alan: hm

Maria: and to use different words in different ways (..) and like all the difference between on the other hand (.) in fact

Alan: hm

Maria: er: definitely (.) finally (.) ah eventually

Alan: hm

Maria: and that is important because we (.) we’re getting english from (..) er TV shows and TV series and music and they’re not always talking (.) properly

Alan: hm

Maria: or perfect english or standard english so we we really need to work more on that

Alan: hm (..) but you said at the beginning it’s getting better and better and that[(xx)

Maria: [it is it is cos it’s way: more interesting than what it was at the beginning (.) because we have started to do mediation and

Alan: hm
Maria: it’s amazing and in Russian is so: scary (..)
because you are taught really fast but you
realise you are understanding what they
are saying it’s such a satisfaction
Alan: hm
Maria: and so it is getting better
Alan: yeah (.) so Russian what’s Russian like
this year? (xx)
Maria: hm quite rough
Alan: hm
Maria: it’s really big a:nd sometimes it seems
you’re never gonna understand it
because there are so: many differences
and (.) if you (..) use a variation like in
the verb it means something completely
different (.) because of the intention so if
you say I’m going you have to specify
whether you are going by foot or by
transport and if you are going but you
have the intentions to come back or if
you are coming back
Alan: hm m (..)
Maria: and so it makes you (.) think about your
language
Alan: hm m
Maria: in Italian I can lie in every way I don’t
have a problem with that (.) because I
can just miss some details and that’s it
I’m not actually (lying) but I am (.)
while in Russian I couldn’t (…) a:nd (.)
it just makes you understand how (.)
difficult a language can be
Alan: hm m
Maria: and (. ) I admit I didn’t think there was a

difference a: language more difficult

than italian

Alan:  hm

Maria: cos I know Italian is really difficult and

it makes me understand more of my

language and I find a lot of similarities

between them

Alan:  hm

Maria: and I find a lot of similarities between

Russian and Chinese actually (. ) and ( …)

it it really makes you feel like ( ..) a flea

Alan:  hm

Maria: you’re nothing (. ) compared to this

language but you are studying to get a

little bit bigger every day and everyday

you learn something more and (. ) you

get a little bit more confident

Alan:  hmm: so it gets better (. ) but sometimes

it’s just so: disappointing (. ) because ( ..)

you don’t get it (. ) from the beginning

you have to study hard for that (. )

you say a flea (. ) how do you interpret

that?

Maria: like a small little flea that sees the

mountains and says oh my god and I

have to go on the other side

Alan:  hm

Maria: so it will take a long time but eventually

I will get there

Alan:  hm mm (. ) you also said that you were

very interested in different cultures

Maria: yes (. ) yes:

Alan:  yes
Maria: I am starting to understand some of the things of Russian people and some and I am really looking forward to understand Chinese (.) cos it’s so different and (.) I know I am not understanding Chinese right now because I am still thinking in (pinen) which is the way they transcribe characters so it’s with letters but it’s not the way they think they’re thinking with images.

Alan: hm m

Maria: and that’s amazing and I think it is so different from our form our way to think

Alan: hmm

Maria: and I am really trying to (.) think the way they could (.) the way I think they do

Alan: hm m

Maria: so with images and not words (.) so it’s completely inverted the way I do now(.)

Alan: hm

Maria: and that’s what is interesting me the most in this moment

Alan: hm (.)

Maria:[and

Alan: [how does that work ? thinking in images

Maria: thinking in images because if you think if I say the words school you see the words school you know (.) if you think the word school you see s.c.h.o.o.l. ((spells it out)) that’s what you see (.) while they see (.) a character which is a picture (.) and it’s not a picture of the school but is a picture which is (.) which
Alan: h hm
Maria: and I think that’s amazing (.) so completely different from our way to think
Alan: is that what the Chinese teacher told you or-
Maria: no (.) it’s what I think they do
Alan: h hm
Maria: because when I write I write in (pinin) but I should write a characters because that’s what what I am supposed to see when I talk Chinese
Alan: h hm
Maria: because there are a lot of different characters but sometimes they are pronounced the same way with the same tone so (.) if yous- if you just spell it it’s not the same you don’t get the same meaning
Alan: h hm
Maria: you have to write the characters (.) and that’s
Alan: h hm
Maria: great
((researcher laughs))
Alan: and you also sort of like the different cultural (.) sort of ways of doing things you said
Maria: yeah
Alan: and the differences between cultures
Maria: yes and I am trying to understand a little bit more but they’re quite a different (. ) quite a difficult people to reach

Alan:  h hm

Maria: so everytime I try to speak a little more with Chinese people for example at the shop the:: happy shop I think it’s called

Alan:  h hm

Maria: and I go there and instead of saying (.) grazie I say (xx) ((Chinese for thank you)) and he answers me and it’s such a big joy: because he understand what I am saying (. ) and so I think this is the way to start a little bit more to know them

Alan:  h hm

Maria: because they are really happy to share their culture but they are really closed (. ) in our (. ) they’re really closed (. ) they feel (. ) they are different (. ) while they’re not

Alan:  h hm

Maria: they’re just (. ) from another country it doesn’t make them different (. ) and it’s really difficult to talk with Russian people because those that are here are only here for travel tourism and hm entertainment (. ) and the few erasmus I’ve met that are from Russia (2.0) they they are (. ) they do want to talk about their country but (. ) it’s not like they’re that open it’s not like me when I talk about italy when I am away (. ) they’re
always saying oh it’s different if you (.).
you don’t realise that it’s different (. it’s
like I have to go there to get to know a
little bit more (. and so: I am looking
forward to go there in the third year
Alan: h hm (. so they say that it is different
but they don’t actually say how?
Maria: they do like but I I they say if you’re not
t here you can’t really understand like I
can tell you that (. I don’t know the
hairdresser is open 24/8 24/7 (. but until
you until are until you are there and you
actually see it and you go cut your hair
at three o’clock in the morning you don’t
realise it
Alan: h hm
Maria: because it seems so far away and
impossible and nobody would do it here
Alan: h hm these are the students or also the
teachers that say these things?
Maria: ah this is students and er the the teachers
when they are talking about Moscow
they say it’s (. y- you cannot realise
how big it is and I have been I have been
living in really big cities like Sydney and
it has 5 millions people living it
Alan: h hm
Maria: but then I think of Moscow and it has 12
and a half million people living in it and
it doesn’t have skyscrapers oh like a few
it does just getting bigger and bigger
because it has so much space and if you
take the underground (. it takes an hour
to get from the end of one line to the
cen- to the city centre not even to the end to of the same line (..) and I can’t think of it (.) I think (.) it doesn’t take me an hour to go from Milan to turin

Alan: h hm (.)

Maria: I can I cannot imagine how big that place can be and how different it can be

Alan: h hm

Maria: even living there because (.) during the winter you shouldn’t walk next to the buildings because if a block of ice comes down you die you dead and a lot of people of die in this way (.) and I can’t think of it

Alan: h hm

Maria: of course there is (.) like a risk of a snow coming down or ice coming down but the most you get a headache you don’t die for that (.) in the city

Alan: a ha

Maria: and so I am: I think they are right when they say if you don’t go there (..) you cannot really understand it (.) but I think it’s the same with every single country not just with Russia (..) I can tell you that naples is amazing but if you go if you don’t go there you don’t realise how much it is (..) and so: I just I was actually hoping to find a: (.) an erasmus or an overseas (.) er scholarship in Vladivostok which is (.) far far away ((semi comic very high pitched tone)) next to china (.) I don’t think there are

Alan: it’s a long long way away
Maria: hm mm
Alan: why so far?
Maria: because I would be (.) in Russia but I would be really close to china and I could go and visit both of the countries
Alan: h hm
Maria: not Moscow maybe
Alan: you chose these languages because: ?
Maria: (. ) I I find them interesting (. ) I I wasn’t really sure of chinese actually I wanted to take Portuguese and then I went to see a lesson at the beginning of the first semester to take it as a second language and I fell in love with it (. ) i: loved the sounds and (. ) I just (. ) it makes me happy (. ) to study it and because i: (. ) it does have a lot of sense in it (. ) it’s not like some science and that’s it it does have a really big story (. ) it’s really impor- important what you want to say and it takes it goes really (. ) er: back in the old days (. ) like three thousand years ago (…) the same way my language does as it comes from (. ) greek (. )
Alan: hm when you say story big story what do you mean by that?
Maria: I mean that every time you take every time you say a character (. ) it does have a story in it (. ) so when you say the characters school there is (. ) a roof and there’s a child under it so you are supposing that a child going to a place that has a roof and it’s sort of a home because it’s the way they used to teach
572 at home (.) and it’s amazing (.) we we
573 don’t have the same thing here (.) or
574 when you are saying (..) er: like er the
575 word peace there is a roof and there is a
576 woman under it so because it means that
577 if a woman is at home everything fine
578 everything is right
579 Alan: [was this
580 Maria: [it does makes sense)
581 Alan: was this told to you or:
582 Maria: yes it’s the way that you can see it if you
583 know the character (.) and you
584 understand the meaning you can really
585 understand why the meaning is that
586 meaning (.) and light there is a sun and
587 there is a moon (.) that is light (.) of
588 course it is you’re right why should I
589 call it luce ((Italian for light))? (.) it does
590 come from an old word but where does
591 it come from does it describe something
592 no but yours does (..) great
593 Alan: yes
594 Maria: yes
595 Alan: is that how the teacher explains things in
596 the classroom?
597 Maria: yes some of the characters not all of
598 them because they are divided but like
599 the ideograms they come from the really
600 old characters and that’s what they are
601 so (.) in order to make you understand
602 why that thing means that she sh- she
603 explains it to you (..)
604 Alan: hm
605 Maria: and it does make sense (..) so
Alan: yeah when you said erm when you were talking last time you (.) said that erm you were very interested in helping italy you said

Maria: yes (.) we: are in a lot of troubles and we don’t know how to deal with it we’ve always been in a lot of troubles but it was different we were divided we weren’t in a single nation (..) our government is falling to pieces we don’t know what we want we don’t know how to do it (.) and I think most of the time we we are saying so many things to a different coun- to a lot of different countries and they don’t really match (.) and I think that if some people could explain the real culture and what they actually mean with one single word I think that would change our politics our foreign politics it would help italy to do something different

Alan: all right

Maria: or: with tourism we’re not (..) yes we are: thinking about tourism it’s one of our biggest thing but we aren’t actually doing something for it (.) and if one could explain why? the whole world is coming to italy to see it and to experience it why it’s so different from every single country in the world (.) I think that would make big difference and we would start having different type of politics for our country
Alan: hm m you you said you know you
thought your role as a future interpreter
might (.). facilitate this
Maria: I hope so
Alan: you still? (.)
Maria: yeah I still do so I think I would love to
work as an interpreter at the (.) I don’t
know parliament European parliament of
course but I would prefer probably to
work (.). with (.). a company or in a
minister (.). with a minister and help
them to understand the importance of
our culture and the importance of the
other cultures (.). so that we can help
each other (.). and we can build a better
future (.). because it’s not going well at
all
Alan: hmm
Maria: and I don’t want my sons to (.). to be
born and to grow in another country
because I’m really proud to be Italian
and I want them to be here (.). but I want
them to have a future and I want to have
(.). bright future (.). and not to say oh ok I
hope to get to the end of the month
Alan: hm
Maria: cos Italy’s not that (.). and it doesn’t
deserve it
Alan: hm m (.)
Maria: and I think that (.). a lot of people who
are actually (ruling us) at this moment
they are hoping for Italy to be a better
place but not for everybody just for
some of them (.). and it isn’t fair and if
we if we should realise how tourism is important for us I think there would be a lot of place a lot of place for work and a lot of people would stop being disoccupied ((unemployed in Italian)) because everybody loves italy but they don’t realise how much they do (.) and in and in the way they could do it and the way that it could help italy to be a better country for everybody (..) so I would prefer to work in an environment that helps me that of course I can use languages because I would die without using them (.) but that I could use to make my country a better place

Alan: hm m (.) better place? in what sen-
Economically or in another [sense
Maria: Place yeah of course economically would help but economically like (..) we’re not we are in a crisis but we are not that bad we’re getting a little bit better I I’d say
Alan: hm m (.)
Maria: but to have a better conscious of our country (.) because (..) we we are proud of being Italian but we forget it and we forget what we really have and we decide ok I want to go to London yes why? Oh because it’s a beautiful city of course it’s a beautiful city (.) and you are right but we have beautiful cities in italy and if everyone keeps going away (..) we are going to loose it
Alan: hm m

Maria: because (..) we are not going to be able
to enjoy it (.) and whilst you’re going to
be living in London and say oh i’ll go
and visit italy one day you are Italian
what’s the point?

Alan: hm m

Maria: so we should (..) help (.) build a better
conscious (..)

Alan: hm m when you were talking about the
dynamics in the classroom you said
there’s a lot of competition but that you
found it er that it was relaxed and have
you stayed with the same opinion still?

Maria: hmm yeah there is a lot of competition (.)
and (.) I think it’s good there is cos
you’re gonna find it in a working
environment there has to be competition
( .) and (2.0) I think I still think it’s ( .)
it’s not that bad everybody knows where
your strong point is and where you can
rely and where you cannot work that
hard because you’re really good with
that but you know that you can help and
ask help can ask for help to the other
people ( .) because they have different
strong point and that’s where maybe
you’re weak and I think it’s good like
with my friends I do like this and we
help each other with different things and
at the end we all equal

Alan: hm m

Maria: so we are helping but we are getting a lot
Alan: right and are you all friends together in the classroom or?

Maria: we are but like (. ) more with other people like I know the people who live in bologna but I don’t really hang out with because they live away in bologna or with the people from here from forli of course I know them but maybe I tend to hang out with er like valeria who she is living here cleilia which is living here and we go home for the weekends maybe I don’t know we see each other during the weekend

Alan: hm m

Maria: because they’re my new friends because I didn’t know anybody when I came here and because we are taking same class and we rely on each other so if I am not coming to les- to school because I am sick I’m going to get your notes and vice-versa

Alan: hm m

Maria: so we are competitive between ourselves but not with marks we are competitive on other things ( . ) it’s always on the level of knowing the language but ( . ) it’s it’s relaxed because we know that if I if I know if I realise that you know way more Russian than I do ( . ) I’m gonna help you with English because you don’t know as much as I do and you’re gonna help me with Russian ( . ) and since we are taking mediation and translation where you can’t really do it
alone and we’re changing our roles and
we’re doing mediation so everybody
said oh I would have said it that way oh
that’s great the way you said it can i?
I’m going to write it down cos it’s a
good way to say it I wouldn’t know that
Alan: yeah (..)
Maria: so it is competitive but it’s good
Alan: hm
Maria: it needs to be
Alan: hm m but actually in the live classroom
th- th-
Maria: the live cl- er: there are a couple of
people in the whole (..) school that are (.)
((exhales)) that I can’t stand sometimes
because they they know a lo: about the
language but they want to show it like I
have been studying Russian for 5 years
at high school so of course I know more
about it than you do (.) but it’s not like if
the teacher is writing something
down oh yes I know it because it is blah
blah blah ((imitates enthusiastic high
pitched tone)) of course you know it you
studied it what’s the point of saying it (.)
so there are 2 people in the whole (..)
course that do it but (.) and nobody
(stands) them when they do it but who
cares
Alan: nobody what?
Maria: nobody ((exhales)) can stand them when
they do it but (.) it’s all right
Alan: right
Maria: we all do it on somethings I do it on
knitting needles and erm: crochet
needles [it’s different]
Alan: [sorry? ((small laugh))]
you do it on (x)
Maria: in mediation when we were talking about
(.) erm: forbidden item on the plane and
we were talking about er: knitting
needles and crochet? I think it is called
Alan: hmm
Maria: and we were talking with professor
Bennett and professora san giorgi and
they said oh yeah I think it’s the same
NO ITS NOT ((laughs)) and I said it’s
not sorry it’s different and I was the only
one to know that and I explain it and I
was really proud of myself for that (.)
but well so everybody has his
environments and everyone knows
something and knows a lot about
something so we together we know a lot
about everything
Alan: hmm
Maria: and everybody’s got his own (..) topic
Alan: so when you did that in the classroom
did you feel [(anybody)
Maria: [no
Like everyone was laughing like why
would you know that a:nd so it’s no’ it’s
not really em: you don’t feel stressed
when you do it you just say ok I know it
and I’m gonna explain it because it’s
something that needs to everybody
because otherwise I should go home
maybe I forgot to do it and then I’ll do it and then I made the exam and what’s the difference why there is a difference a difference between them yes and somebody said it in class so it’s useful (..) but not in Russian when you say oh yes I know it yeah (.) good for you

Alan:  hm (..) so er who does this yes I know it

Maria:  ah it's a guy from (.) from our own class I don’t know I think he’s taking (.) german as first language and so he’s always asking oh could I say it with the other word ((high pitched excited tone)) and nobody has ever heard that word like he looked for it on the dictionary and they say sometimes they say yes you can say that or sometimes they say no why would you use that word? Oh I look for it I looked it up in the dictionary ((same tone as previously)) but it doesn’t make sense here (.) oh ok

Alan:  hm

Maria:  so we all get our little revenge and we’re happy

Alan:  you get your revenge?

Maria:  yes (.) because sometimes they say no it doesn’t make sense

Alan:  hm ((laughs)) (..)

Maria:  that’s the point

Alan:  that’s a point

Maria:  yes:::

Alan:  is there a point system going on?
Maria: no that’s the point like stop looking the things up in the dictionary it doesn’t (.)
always make sense

Alan: and why do you what do you think when this person does this wh- what is your opinion of

Maria: oh sometimes it’s intres- it’s intresting and (.) necessary because he’s (…)

making our dictionary bigger our vocab-
vocabulary bigger but sometimes you jus- you know you want to show off and somebody say ok stop it (.) yes:: thank god somebody said it to him (. stop it

Alan: right

Maria: and it was a teacher so it wasn’t me and I don’t feel like I am a bad person

Alan: do you think there are there are show offs then?

Maria: ehm really a few (. some) in Russian there is only this guy because it’s Russian we’ve never done it before apart from him and another girl and she’s not showing off (. in English sometimes there is a couple of person but they doing like even in normal life it’s the way they behave so (. it’s not really showing off (. for them and we know: they do it

Alan: what do you mean in normal life?

Maria: like there’s this friend of mine giacomo the one who has a really beautiful English accent (. and ((laughs)) he’s like always doing it like here you’re saying a couple of words in Russia and
he says oh yes I know sbasiba ((mimics high toned excitement)) and he starts talking Russian even though he doesn’t take Russian and you’re I don’t know you’re speaking French oh yes I know ca va ca va ((mimics high toned excitement)) and he starts speaking French (. ) he does it with every single language and he’s really good with it and with theatre and with everything he does it with everything food wine beer everything so we know we i- it’s the way he is he’s not showing off (. ) so we don’t care (. ) we all laugh about it

Alan: right (. ) but there are people perhaps that Maria: hmm a couple yeah but we just don’t listen to them if they’re not interesting if they are then we take notes and then we say ok (. ) can’t stand you

Alan: Hmm Maria: and that’s it

Alan: you also said I think ehm in our one-to-one and also in our group session we talked about talent and you said you don’t like the word talent (. ) and

Maria: I still don’t

Alan: hmm (. ) so to be a good interpreter for you?

Maria: you can have I I am not saying there is not such such a thing as talent there is (. ) but not for learning languages (. )

Alan: hmm

Maria: you can be talented in mediation because maybe you have (. ) a better relationship
you can be in a better relationship with other people with the person you are talking to maybe because you’re not shy and you’re not afraid to look the person in the eye and he makes you feel way more comfortable

Alan: hm

Maria: and because maybe you know that you’re the focus point in everything so everything is ruled by you

Alan: hm m

Maria: and people are scared of it so sometimes they don’t realise it and they say ok sorry can you repeat it it’s not your fault if he’s talked for 10 minutes you can ask cos you’re the one whose ruling everything so I’m saying for that you can have a talent so if you we say faccia da culo ((Italian idiomatic phrase for shameless)) if you have a good faccia da culo you can do whatever you want and that’s what a lot of people who are good who do really good at the exam have cos you’re not afraid to speak with the other person even though he’s a teacher or he’s the king of norway you know you’re as good as him in that thing and so you can put yourself on the same level of the other person and that is amazing and that is a talent no not everybody has it but not for learning languages it takes passion and of course you can be piu portato so if maybe when you were a child your
mother was talking French with some friends at the phone or you met some English people you might be your mind might be a bit more open (.) but it doesn’t mean you’re better it makes it makes it for you simpler to understand it and maybe to learn it (..) but it’s not a talent (.) it’s not something that was giving to you by god (..)

Alan: that’s how you interpret the word talent?

Maria: sometimes not with faccia da culo 

((Italian for shameless, brass-necked))

that’s not given by god it’s given by experience and life and theatre and everything you do (..) I: think that to play and to be an actor is talent and it’s given by god because some people are just amazing (.) on the stage and when they are not they’re shy and insecure but the stage gives them everything they need to all they need so (.) that is the talent for me

Alan: do you think that [might be

Maria: [or painting painting is like drawing that is talent it’s not something you can you can study it but it will never be natural for you (.) and you’ll always draw your men like sticks and (.)

Alan: hm m you said that you know it’s talent perhaps when you stand on the stage (.) you become different from what you are

Maria: yes
Alan: is there some parallels with interpreting there?

Maria: yes I think so (.). I think that (..) it does (.).

when you are interpreting you are being an actor because you are (..) you’re trying not to emulate the other person because if she’s angry you cannot be (.).

you have to mediate her feelings between you (..) you are the in-between so you have to mediate everything (..) feelings of course

Alan: yeah

Maria: and words and (..) strong words and strong things and movements (..) cos if I’m talking if I’m with an Italian guy and I’m talking with an English guy and he starts doing like this it means he’s mad not his hope for luck and I as the mediator I have to mediate everything so I am being an actor because I am being an actor between two cultures and I’m trying to put in them together and makes them having sense (..) so it is like being an actor but it’s not like being on stage (.).

cos being on stage you are another person (..) mediation you are in yourself you are using what you are and what you know and you’re not taking it I said when you get on the stage (..) you’re taking energy from the stage so it’s all the people who have gone through it all the people who have walked on the stage on that stage they’re giving you their strength so it’s not only your strength
that you’re using but the theatre the theatre with the capital T in mediation I think it’s you you are the matter you are taking everything you can from you and the other two person of course (you’re saying) mediation we are mediating what they want to say so it’s not your thoughts but you are so good you can make them understand each other and make them reasonable if they’re not Alan: so you don’t feel like it’s like acting? When you interpret Maria: you it’s a bit like acting but it’s not like acting on stage that is different Alan: and acting on stage you said some people have talent as you said Maria: yes and maybe they don’t have it for mediation because it like they can be a little bit more relaxed that what they would be normally if they hadn’t been on the stage but it’s not the same you don’t you might have a public but it’s not you’re not working for them you’re not working for yourself you are working for two other people so you have to think half of your brain is for one person half of your brain is for the other and your brain total is for both of them so you make them co-operate that is great but it’s not acting on the stage Alan: right you make them co-operate? Maria: yes
Alan: [cos you
Maria: [that’s

Why you have to (.) that’s what your
power is you are making them to co-
operate not some machine or something
else (.) you are

Alan: that came across a lot in our one-to-one
and in our group session as well I think
that you see interpreting sort of as
bringing harmony and understanding
between cultures=

Maria: =yes=

Alan: =and people (.) that’s quite a strong
belief I think still is it?

Maria: I think so

Alan: hmm

Maria: it is again (.) you’re mad (.) no (.) I hope
I’ve taken you luck (.) or I don’t know
I’m giving away (.) I don’t know how to
say it (.) non ti porto sfortuno (.)

Alan: yeah I don’t bring you bad luck

Maria: yeah I don’t bring you bad luck

Alan: hm m (.)

Maria: and it might cause some
misunderstandings if a mediator is not
there (.) and so not just the words but the
culture

Alan: hm m (.)

Maria: and what if you’re talking with a
Chinese per- people er person (.) and he
starts picking his nose

Alan: hm m

Maria: it’s disgusting he’s disgracing me (.)

like he’s not (.) he’s not respecting me
for what I am maybe I am a boss and
I’m saying no I’m sorry it’s the Chinese
culture it is considered impolite to make
sounds so he wouldn’t not blow his
nose (..) in front of you because he is
taking you respects he’s respecting you
Alan:  hm m
Maria: and that’s his way to do it (..) so you
don’t need to (. ) call the security
((laughter))
Alan:  you also said that a erm you need a lot of
help and support to study here
Maria: I think so (. ) I think sometimes you just
( ..) you just want to say ok I’ll do it
another day and I’ll do it another year
I’ll take the exam another time (. ) I’m
not ready I don’t want to die on the
books (. ) and you realise you’re not just
doing it for yourself you’re not (. ) you’re
not here to take pride only to yourself
but to your family because they are
believing in you and I think that gives
you the strength to do it
Alan:  hm m
Maria: like (. ) I’m believing in you it means you
can do it doesn’t mean (. ) you have to do
it now (. ) but I believe you can do it (. )
and so I believe you can finish all your
exams before the summer comes (. ) well
if she believes it maybe she’s right she
has never been wrong before (. ) I’m
saying
Alan:  whose she (. ) sorry
Maria: erm: mum but like I’m taking all my exams before summer so I was just saying like that (.) but I think it’s important to have support and family (.) and friends

Alan: hm (.) can you give me an example of when you’ve thought about family and friends

Maria: mm (..) that sometimes when I come (.) home from erm mediation from Russian mediation

Alan: hm

Maria: I say ok ((tone of exhaustion)) I’m never gonna do it why am I doing this it’s why am I doing it? Will I ever be able to do it?

Alan: hm m

Maria: and then my boyfriend calls me and says what are you saying you’ve always been (. ) really good in everything (. ) a:nd if you’re saying you don’t know anything you’re ra- you’re wrong because you know a lot and you’re studying for it and you’re preparing yourself for that of course you don’t know it now because you’re not ready (. ) but you will so just keep doing it and if it’s hard the first time it will not be that hard the second time and maybe it will be easy the third time so just keep trying (.) and keep going it doesn’t come sleeping (.)and the next day I’m (wrong) and I can do the mediation it’s only the feeling that I had before going there because when I am there I can do it my brain opens (.) but
like when I am at sitting in my place and
I am looking at and they’re talking so
fast I’m saying oh my god I can’t
Alan:  hm m
Maria: and then I remember he believes in me
so he knows what I am doing he knows
what I am capable what I am capable of
even though sometimes I forget it
Alan:  hm m
Maria: and that is really important
Alan:  hm () so your boyfriend is really
important for you in all
Maria: yeah () we’ve been travelling together
we’ve been knowing each other since
the first year of high school () and () I
think we travelled the whole year last
year () it’s really important so we know
a lot about each other and we know ()
when we’re talking on the phone we
know who’s weak and why and what
was going on in his mind and () why:
he behaved like that or I know his
problem he knows mine () and so we
give strength to each other every time
we can and so that is really important I
don’t know if I could I could live
without him but it would be so much
harder so I think it’s greatly important to
have somebody who supports you and
not only your family because your
family will always support you it should
() but () somebody you know you have
built your trust on and you know they
trust you and rely on you for a reason
not just because their family they have to
Alan: hm so when you have to you talk
to your boyfriend because you said you
thought you couldn’t (.) do the
mediation was that anticipating (.) the
mediation or actually doing the
mediation
Maria: oh I was anticipating it it was we had a
first lesson and (.) we had never done
mediation before we had just finished
grammar so we hadn’t (studied) it yet
because we had lesson on Tuesday and
Wednesday (.) so Tuesday we finished
grammar it was the last case
instrumentally which is quite big and on
Wednesday she said ok then we are
going to start mediation and she kept
correcting everything maybe you know
the words but when you’re declining it
you missed the (5.0) the dessonance (…)
and she keeps correcting it and she keeps
saying so come on come on you can do
it come on come on but you’re saying oh
my god it’s so big I can’t I can’t it’s too
big (.) and then when you go there it’s
after a couple of weeks so you have had
time to study and you know you’re a bit
more satisfied of what you’re work is
and (.) you know you can rely on some
things (.) it’s better
Alan: hm
Maria: but (3.0) sometimes it’s hard and it’s
good to have somebody that you you
know you would say it to yourself in a
couple of days maybe after mediation so
yeah you see Marta it wasn’t that hard
you did it but if somebody believes in
you before you do it believes you can do
it even though you haven’t done it yet (.)
I think it’s great
Alan: hm (. ) you said that em you know to be
an interpreter you need to be almost
perfect in the language accent and
grammar=
Maria: =ah I’m not really sure of that of it now I
think it’s just em: (...) (greed) that is
talking
Alan: sorry?
Maria: greed
Alan: gree::d?
Maria: yeah (. ) I’d lo:ve to have a perfect accent
and to be able to switch between
different accents (. ) and to be able to: (. )
use a language a foreign language the
way I use mine
Alan: hm m
Maria: so switching and changing and going
from (. ) one meaning to another (. ) that
would be great but I don’t think it’s (. )
that neces- necessary to be a perfect
interpreter you can be an interpreter even
though you don’t know the language
perfectly if you don’t understand a word
you can ask (. ) because you have the
power you have (. ) the control of the
situation (. ) yeah
Alan: when did you change your mind then?
Maria: ahh don’t know (.) didn’t really make a switch a switch and change but (.) I went through it and I realised it’s not that important I know people who are not that good in english but they can do a really good mediation because they are able to play with the words (.) they understand the meaning even if they don’t know how to say maybe (.) drapes they can’t remember the word drapes but they can explain it in another way so (.) now I don’t think it is necessary (.) I think it would be great to know to perfectly know a language but (3.0)

Alan: hm (.) it’s this idea of you being your flea perhaps

Maria: yeah ((laughter))

Alan: noticing that the task is a little daunting ((laughter)) yeah (.) but how do you think just to finish perhaps erm how do you think things are going to develop then (.) in the next

Maria: hmm

Alan: couple of years?

Maria: I don’t know I’m just really excited about it (.) a:nd it seems to me it’s going so fast since I started a couple of months ago and it’s the end of the first year a:nd (.) I’m: making a lot of friends and then there is summer and then half of them are going away on erasmus the other half is going away because they have
finished the third year so it’s a bit big
it’s a big thing and I’m looking forward for next year because it’s going to be different again because I know how things works so: (2.0) I can enjoy more hopefully in what there in what there is offering (and) more of university so the university life I’m going to study in different places with other people because it helps or: I don’t know choose make some- different decisions and maybe know more people and see or do what they tell me see what they can transmit me

Alan: hm m
Maria: so: I’m excited
Alan: hm you said you know how it’s going to happen next year what’s going to happen did I understand?
Maria: erm (..) I don’t know I’m going to take I’m still going to be taking my courses and I’m gonna be taking Russian literature which I’ve not taken before and (.) I know what they’re gonna talk about because we know the books but (.) it’s gonna be different (.) and it’s gonna be way: interesting [than (xx)]
Alan: [more interesting]
Maria: more interesting than the grammar because grammar it’s interesting but (.) not that much because it (.) we’re going to see (actually news) and people are gonna be away for a semester or for a term or for two months in the erasmus
and then they’re gonna come back and tell everything has happened

Alan: hmm
Maria: and I hope I’ll have my things to tell and so we’re gonna share more and know more about each other (.).
Alan: hm m and when you finish are you still thinking about (.). a high:
Maria: yes
Alan: level
Maria: yes I’m not sure it’s gonna be here (.). I’d like to go abroad and do it abroad (.). or: (.). I don’t know I wouldn’t (.). I don’t know if I will take another gap year (.).
Alan: it’s gonna be here (.). I want to have (.). like (.). a perfect erm preparation from work and then maybe start travelling and looking for work or I I don’t know I I think I would like to keep on studying (.). but I don’t know if here or somewhere else Ve or (3.0) I wouldn’t go to Trieste now I’m happy I came here instead of Trieste (.). but I don’t know
Alan: hm so you’d like to continue perhaps with education
Maria: yeah
Alan: a post graduate=
Maria: yeah I [think so
Alan: [degree (.).
and after that?
Maria: after that erm: I have my last (xx) the first one not the second one is living in Sardinia with sheep and (.). being a
shepherd and just enjoying nature and
the other one is being an interpreter or
journalist or (.) something else different
and travel (.) in a lot of different places
and know a lot of people and just (2.0)
see the world
Alan: hm (.) so you’re you’re attracted to both
of these [worlds?
Maria: [yes
I know there are good things in both of
them
Alan: Sardinia and sheep
Maria: yes ((laughs)) I don’t care sheeps I prefer
horses but (.) sardinia’s (3.0) it’s like (.)
hm a magnet (.) once you go there you
cannot leave it (2.0)
Alan: interesting ((marta laughs)) choice of
worlds very different yeah?
Maria: yeah ((laughs))
Alan: ok thank you very much
Matteo 2: Second interview

Alan: so (.) matteo erm since our last chat (.) a few months ago (.) how would you see yourself now at the university what’s been going on (.) how do you see yourself

Matteo: well I’m I’m more satisfied (.) m: because erm at the beginning of no in the beginning of the semester erm well erm (.) last semester we didn’t do erm mediation and so I think it is the subject that characterize this faculty in general and so I was not so satisfied (.) well I I want to become an interpreter so I couldn’t find anything that was so: er focused on the interpreters job for example but (.) in the second semester the mediation classes were (.) awesome even though I have preferred the even though I have preferred the german one because I think it was more structured than the English one and (.) and that’s it well I am quite satisfied and I find the I found the subjects quite difficult (.) erm (.) and that’s it

Alan: you said you were quite satisfied (…) I mean (.) german is better because it’s more structured why why is it better?

Matteo: (.) well (.) in the English classes we just I think I think er we have done just I think 4 mediations prepared by our
professors and other mediations were prepared by (bad) students well I think that
Alan: sorry by bad students?
Matteo: by the students
Alan: oh
Matteo: by the students yes sorry (.) and well I think that even though the mediations prepared by the students were quite difficult too I think that they (.) the students don’t have in their mind what is really complicated in the job of the interpreter they just don’t know what are the points er that need more focus or: well I think that the professors should have given more attention to the mediation itself (.) and the german class was completely different the mediation was prepared by the by our professors the Italian speaker and the german speaker and well they were really difficult I think even though I haven’t studied german before cos this is the first year I (.) well the first year of study (.) and the mediation were more complicated and they the professors let you mediate from the beginning to the end and at the end of the mediation they gave you the feedback and it was (.) well even though you thought it was a good mediation or even well you didn’t think you had done so many errors you discovered that you had messed up all the things during the mediation and so
on (. ) and that’s it cos because in the
English class (2.0) there were some
classes where the students hadn’t
prepared the mediation for that lesson
and without their mediations we couldn’t
do any lesson because nothing nothing
was prepared and I found that quite
difficult (. ) quite

Alan: what was the teacher’s reaction to this (. )
non preparation
Matteo: they were (. ) erm they were (. ) they were
very polite erm (2.0) so they just said
well just get them prepared for next time
(.) I think that it’s not the professors
fault (. ) I think it’s the student’s fault too
cos erm in my opinion (2.0) well (. ) the
class the class itself needed more
interaction between students and
professors ( . ) just that I think ( . .)

Alan: but in the german session they prepared
the the teachers prepared the material
Matteo: yes
Alan: and the English did not (. )
Matteo: no the English teachers prepared the
material but just (. ) for example we
analysed 4 topics and they prepared just
1 mediation for each topic ( . .)

Alan: right
Matteo: and the other mediations were prepared by
the students (. ) for example the first lesson
we did the mediation prepared by the
professors ok next time prepare in a group
of 3 or 2 prepare other mediations (. ) ok
and then after 3 or 4 classes we changed
topic and then another mediation prepared by the professors and the other by the students and so we found easy mediations er difficult mediations there wasn’t a trend that was (.) that remained the same all over the classes and so they were great classes (.) but I think that they can be improved (.).

Alan: right because there was less preparation for some than others

Matteo: yes

Alan: right (.0 and did you feel the teachers were responsible for organising this?

Matteo: yes yes yes erm (..) just erm another thing that i: i’ve found erm during the our classes was the: (.) well the arguments around the possibility to refuse the the mark you get at at the exam

Alan: hm m

Matteo: and I have found two: different reactions between the English professors and the german professors er: i i just don’t know the law or (these) sort of things but er:m even in the university of rome la sapienza (.) i: could er: refuse the the score i: i got in an exam and and repeat that exam or the: (.) whe-

whenever I wanted

Alan: hm m

Matteo: bu: (..) and the german class the the german professor said yes you can do it you can do it even here even here at the SSLMIT but the professor but but the
english professors said **no** (..) we: asked
why (...) but (.) there (.) there **wasn’t** a
clear response (.) they just said no (we)
that’s the way: we do things here (.) er:
it’s not possible (..)

Alan: the way we the **English** do it [here? (or
the way we:)
Matteo:[the: erm

it was not clear

Alan: ah
Matteo:it was not clear (.) and **well** (.) the
students were (.) quite **scared** cos you
know (.) the: the class is not so big (.)

Alan: hm
Matteo:and so the the professors know all the
students (.) so they were quite scared (.)
I was quite scared and so i: i said ok it’s
ok (.)

Alan: so when you say you were scared you
were scared to (.) raise your voice?

Matteo: **yes** (.) [yes
Alan: [bu- but

you weren’t happy

Matteo: err (.) **yes** I wasn’t happy because i: I
think I know (.) how:: (..) how are things
in the university in general we: we have
this right (.) the students have the right
to refuse the the score they get at the
exam (.)

Alan: hm m
Matteo: and they can I I think and i: (.) yes I
know that they can refuse it er whenever
they want (.) and I just don’t know why
the because it’s just behaviour that
changes according to the according to
the languages .)
Alan:  hm
Matteo:  erm
Alan:  can you explain what that means (.) the
changes according [to the language
Matteo:  [in the the
german professors let you do this er I
think the Japanese professor let you
refuse the score but the not the English
professors all the english professors (.)
but the mediation professors I think that
they’re not so: (2.0) glad to do it do that
Alan:  right (.) who are they specifically
Matteo:  ermm (.) professor Barnard and
sabatelli
Alan:  right (.) only they?
Matteo:  (2.0) no (.) because my flat mate is a
second year student and he did the
mediation exam of the second year with
professor martins I think and he said
even the professor martins said that they
couldn’t refuse the score (.) and I know
they said that before the beginning of the
exam (.) so this thing didn’t come out
during the classes (.) but just before the
exam
Alan:  hm
Matteo:  the day of the exam
Alan:  yeah
Matteo:  and i: he told me that he told me how
things were las- (.) no this year cos his
the a second year student so he did this
exam las- yes last January (.) and so I
think that it’s just the way the department (.) do: the exams but I don’t know I’m just er I’m just (.) guessing

Alan: hm but it’s not clear
Matteo: yes it’s not clear yes (.) I know the things have changed now cos because (.) erm a student (xxx) I think asked about this asked about this matter er I don’t know if to the segretteria didattica ((the departmental office)) or another department but and (.) well the things were not so clear and so the professor said ok you can refuse the score but if you do the exam another time (.) well I’m not so sure that you will get a score ah (.) a better score (.) but I just don’t know how are things and so I’m just guessing

Alan: hm m (..) what about well you said you love Japanese and that was a very important language for you (.) how have your Japanese studies being going?

Matteo: well I have studied Japanese on my own because (.) I can’t attend the classes here at the SSLMIT cos what the Japanese professor here in forli (.) well what she does in er three years what we did in 1 year in the university of rome and so I just continued on my own (.) I know a Japanese girl here in forli and she is from co- cobin around cobin I think in japan and well she is here in italy just for just a year and well I
practice Japanese with her er we became friends and=

Alan: you’re not studying it now?
Matteo: erm just on my own (.) I have my books
I’m studying advanced Japanese and that’s it (.) but just on my own I’ve won an erasmus scholarship and so next year I will be in Germany but erm (.) the city of Bonn that’s the city I will study in next year (.) it’s one of the best (.) in Bonn there’s one of the best universities in the world for the Japanese studies and so I think that I can continue the study of this language in Germany I think

Alan: but sorry isn’t (.) you’ve got English first language
Matteo: English first language er German second language and Japanese third language but erm all the Japanese exams are English first language validated ? are co:n- in Italian is convalidati they are; they er accepted all the exams I did in rome and that’s it so I just don’t have to do more exams here in Forli and I didn’t choose another another third language because I think English German and Japanese are: (.) for the at moment are enough cos I have to improve my English infinitely and German and Japanese as well

Alan: hm (.) so you have no intention of following the Japanese courses
Matteo: here in Forli?
Alan: yeah
Matteo: m no I don’t think so because I know I talked with the Japanese professor at the beginning of the first semester and she said no there’s no need to attend the classes because they’re quite basic (.). erm and so I just don’t attend the Japanese classes and I just study Japanese on my own.

Alan: because you did say at one point in our past conversation that you wanted to be a mediator between the two cultures between Japanese and I think the English culture.

Matteo: English culture german culture Italian culture.

Alan: right.

Matteo: and gen- in general.

Alan: so how do you envisage that now you have no contact with the Japanese (.). here (.). do you think you are already at a certain level where

Matteo: no no no (.). no but I think in these classes the (2.0) well the professor the Japanese professor professor (xx) said that the japanese classes are centred on grammar on:: vocabulary and things I have already done in and couldn’t find more in those classes and I know that I have to improve my Japanese and my (3.0) and my whole knowledge of the Japanese culture and I hope the third and I hope I will spend erm (.). not all the third year but half erm half in japan erm.
(. of the third year because I will try to win the overseas scholarship

Alan: right

Matteo: and I think it’s only way to bring my Japanese knowledge to a new level (.)

a:nd (…) and even though i: well (3.0) I think that after the SSLMIT I will spend at least a year in japan

Alan: right

Matteo: to im- improve my now the most important thing is to get the tech- the mediation technique (. and I have to improve my English and german (. cos I have been studying English since I was a baby but I have to improve infinitely because even now I just do many errors and (. even the day we met I don’t know what it was but well I said to meet you ((laughs)) and not it’s good to see you again and it was because I was tired of the exam (. and but was (3.0) an error well I said oh my god (. how can I say this sort of things

Alan: you did say you wanted to be an interpreter and it was a very strong desire

Matteo: yes

Alan: and but you said you need to speak the languages perfectly

Matteo: yes

Alan: do you still believe that that’s the case?

Matteo: yes (. I think that you need (. you need many things and the knowledge of the language is just the first thing but there’s
a (world) behind the language it’s just
the first thing erm the first element you
need to become an interpreter I think (.)
and but you need many things and I’m
here to find them (.) because if I wanted
to learn English perfectly I would have
gone to England and that’s it but I’m
here because I think there’s more to be
(taught) I think

Alan: are there any experiences in the
classroom that have made you think
differently about this? (.) or re-enforced
perhaps?

Matteo:mm yes even though the (. i: the
german professor (. professoresa
moscato erm: (2.) said that the most
important thing is the language (. the
most important thing because I’m: well
next year I will spend next year in
germany but in the university of Bonn I
won’t attend any mediation class and so
(…) so I was afraid that well a year
without mediation (. erm how can I
become an interpreter? (. and the
professor moscato said (. no just don’t
worry (. you the first thing is to go er:
just go to germany learn german
and then I can teach you the the well she
said I can teach you the techniques in an
hour (. but the most important thing the
most important thing is to learn the (.)
the language and so: but (. I think that
(.) in my opinion there’s a world behind
the language
Alan: but you’re moscato said she could teach you
Matteo: yeah the techniques in an hour but I I think she was kidding (.) well she was just saying the language is the important thing (.) and when you: well when you will be back in forli you will have plenty of time to learn the techniques to (work) in the classes I can maybe I will attend all the mediation classes the the third year
Alan: this is not the first time you said moscato was kidding (.) when one of our students said she was talking about being sort of split personality and working=
Matteo: =yes
Alan: and she said you said she was just kidding again
Matteo: yes mmm I think that (2.0) she’s a great interpreter (..) and so it’s just I think it’s just a matter of personality (..) and and that’s it (..) I don’t know if she is right or not about (..) many things she thinks about the job itself (.) for example she say er you can’t become an interpreter you were born as an interpeter if you: and that’s it (.) and it was qui- quite scary cos you say well am I an interpreter or not (..) and well I think it’s just a matter of personality you know (.) and that’s it (=)
Alan: but when she said to you (.) you cannot become (..) you either are or you are not
an interpreter (.) and you say that I was quite scary

Matteo: yes but m: well (.) she said that to the
german class but she also said if you are here th- the SSLMIT (.) you were born interpreters or translators (.) and so we say (( makes phew sound)) (.) ok

Alan: but she still said you were (.)

Matteo: yes cos she said that em at the end of the lesson (..) not at the beginning when when well erm (..) what happened was erm a student asked a question to the to the professor and she said this thing er: I I don’t think that you can become an interpreter you::: you were born as an interpreter or as a translator and that’s it (.) at the end of the lesson another student said well but er how can I know that? and she said well you’re here at the SSLMIT you have passed a: (.) an entry test and it was (…) it was it was very difficult so if you are here now you have the ta- you have the talent (..) and that’s it (.) it was (..) yes it was scary but just because we know professor moscato is a great interpreter and so (.) erm since she’s one of the best german interpreters here in italy (.) er everything that comes out ((laughs)) of her mouth is a is gold for us (.)

Alan: hm (.) you say she’s one of the best (.)
again that was sort of questioned a bit in the past because I think one of the
students said well she says she’s the best

Matteo: yes (.) she NO (.) she no no no she didn’t say that (.) she didn’t say that (.) erm well her behaviour erm makes you think that (2.0) and what well if I think hm (.) I did my: my research (.) at home on my own and well I found that she’s one of the of the best german interpreters here in here in italy since she works for the the: erm:: presidente del consiglio (.) the prime minister (.) here (in the world) (.) it’s a job that you cannot get if you are not one of the best interpreters (.) I think but (.)

Alan: but she told you that in the classroom or:
Matteo: no no no no no

Alan: how did you know she was one of the best before you researched her? (..) you said she gave you some impression perhaps
Matteo: (2.0) m:::
Alan: you [said
Matteo: [NO no no

One one of the things she said erm during the first lesson (.) was well I’m I’m a real interpeter (2.0) the first thing she said (2.0) you have in front of you (.) m: a real interpreter (…) and I think it was quite strange because erm well (.) why are you saying that (.) the other professors are: (.) maybe they are not interpers? So they cannot teach mediation or interpreting (…) wh- why
are you saying that? Because she said
that with (.) she was quite sure quite firm:
(.) and she said you have in front of you
a real interpreter (.) and (we said) oh ok
Alan: but how did you interpret that? (.) as
you said (.) aren’t we all interpreters
who teach interpreting how did you
interpret (.) her presentation
Matteo: (2.0) well I think that (6.0) I don’t think
that I can say she thinks high of herself
Alan: highly of herself
Matteo: highly of herself yes I think she thinks
highly of herself (…) but m:
Alan: was that obvious from the first time that
she said this?
Matteo: yes (…) yes
Alan: why was it obvious?
Matteo: er because the first lesson was quite a
show (.) cos she:: she kept saying well
I’m er I’m I’m a real interpreter I walked
for I worked for the ministers er for
angel merkel er (. ) the german people
just just think I’m a german native
speaker a:nd (. ) and this sort of things
they are not so: (. ) useful (. ) f- for the
lesson (. )
Alan: useful?
Matteo: ah yes useful cos all this information
(2.0) I just I just don’t think that they’re
so: useful for the: for that lesson in
particular well saying well the for
example the german people think that
I’m a german native speaker (. ) ok (. )
but you can say (. ) that once not (…) 2
times 3 times 4 times because she kept
saying things like that several times
during the semester (.) so she’s just em:
(..) I think that she’s just erm: (.) a good
a really good (. ) interpreter and she
knows that (3.0) and but it’s just a matter
of personality I think because in my
opinion if you’re one of the great
interpreters and your humble in my
opinion you’re the best interpeter or
wha- what the best m:: er: the best
person in general for example if you’re a
painter and you’re a great painter but at
the same time you’re humble (…) you
try to teach how to paint er you just
don’t think so highly of yourself (.) well
(.) I think that makes you one of the best
persons (. ) er:m (. )
Alan: but you said she was one of the best
interpreters (. ) and yet (. ) she is the
person who is (. ) making these
comments about being one of the best
interpreters you think is not necessary (. )
to be the better interpreter (. ) I’m curious
to see how you are playing this I mean
how you are thinking of this (. ) you you
appreciate her as the best
Matteo: hm
Alan: you think the best don’t need to say
they’re the best
Matteo: yes
Alan: but she says that she’s the best
Matteo: yes (…) well (. ) er:m (4.0) I know that
she’s (. ) erm she’s a professional ok
she’s a professional and I think in my opinion she’s one of the best german interpreters here in italy

Alan: why?
Matteo: because the things she has done the study she (…) the study she did when she was young the way she interpreted during the lesson because she did a few mediations during the classes and well all these things all together and the position she holds now in italy and since she’s the I think she’s the president of the IET Lazio one of the region and well all these things all these things make me think she’s one of the best german interpreters even before coming here in forli I knew her name valentine moscato

Alan: how did you know that?
Matteo: just talking with my other other students in rome with my flat mate he he (…) he was a friend of mine even before coming here in forli

Alan: hm m
Matteo: and when I was getting information about interpreting in general about german language interpreting with the german language well I found her name quite often

Alan: cos you studied oriental studies in rome
Matteo: yes but I graduated in 2011 and then I worked just to get the money here in forli and during
the meanwhile I was doing my research I was looking for a university or school that could let me become an interpreter. (. ) and well I didn’t know that I would have studied the german language and so I was just looking for another language that was an European language and so while looking for information about the german language and interpreting with the german language well I: found several times the: the name of this professor and well I just knew that she was a great interpreter when I came here in forli and when I met her ( .. ) well I: ( .. ) I attended her classes and I think she’ s a great interpreter but that doesn’t mean that she’s a ( .. ) m: (3.0) not a great ( . ) it’s not good to say that but ( . ) it’s not the best person ( . ) in the world because I think that you’ re a great professional but if you’re humble ( . ) that makes you the: great interpreter a great person er (5.0) yes I think it’s just a matter of ( . ) personality

Alan: so to be humble is important for you Matteo: yes ( .. ) yes Alan: but in your job do you think to be humble is important? Matteo:(2.0) em: in the interpreter’s job? Alan: yes Matteo: yes but I think you have to be humble ( . ) in all the jobs in gen- in general because not been humble makes you ( .. ) arro- arrogant (the example xx) when you’re
not humble you just don’t see your limits
( ) cos you think too highly of yourself
you think you’re the best ( ) and you just
don’t see your limit and I think one of
the best things in not in the job of
interpreter but in general is erm let other
people know your job ( ) erm teach your
job to other people ( ) help help them
improve ( ) e:m ( ) and that’s it

Alan: hm m so ( ) just to finish so martin
moscato ( ) does she satisfy this criteria
you’re talking about? ( … )

Matteo: no ((low voice)) no: not entirely I think
she’s a great professional but I think
she’s not the best interpreter ( … )

Alan: she’s certainly not the most modest by
the sound of things ( … ) and you think
that’s very important so is she seriously
flawed because of this lack of modesty
in your opinion?

Matteo: I think I think she can she can be the
best interpreter (3.0) but she’s not
humble

Alan: hm ( … )

Matteo: and ( ) if she was humble I think she
would be one of the best interpreters or
the best interpreter

Alan: so she’s not the best=

Matteo: =she’s not the best one=

Alan: =because she’s not humble

Matteo: yes because I think she’s one of the best
professionals

Alan: hm m
Matteo: but (.) being a great professional
doesn’t make you the best interpreter (.)
you’re a professional (.) but you’re not
the best one (.) cos it’s just (.) there
are many things that help you (.) being
the best in what you do

Alan:  hm

Matteo: in general not in (.) it doesn’t concern
the interpreting (.) or the translation or
the painting or (.) anything else

Alan:  hm (.) so what is the value of being
humble in an interpreting (.) situation?

Matteo: well I think that (.) m: for example even
in the: well I think I think that professor
moscato’s a great professional but not a
great teacher

Alan:  hm m

Matteo: I think that’s an important thing
because we spent many lessons (.)
talking about her about her job about
what she did (.) and for example out of
an hour’s lesson (.) we: the real lesson
was just (3.0) ten minutes (.) twenty
minutes (.) and (3.0) and we spent (.)
the other minutes about her (.) about her
job ah: about how good she: is

Alan:  hm

Matteo: (.) er: these sort of things

Alan:  there is a difference between her as a
good teacher and her as a good
interpreter

Matteo: yes

Alan:  cos you were saying (.) if I understand
correctly a good interpreter (.) has to be
humble but now you’re talking about a
good teacher
Matteo: hm
Alan: so there seems to be (..) a contrast here
(..)
Matteo: well I think that you’re (..) you’re a
good interpreter
Alan: hm
Matteo: if your humble (..) well being humble
help you teach your job to other people
(..) because if you’re humble you: just
don’t spend so much time saying (.) well
I’m the best i: di- I did this I did that (.)
and so on
Alan: hm
Matteo: you you: just want the other people (.)
erm become good as you are (.) and I
think that modesty
Alan: hm
Matteo: in the my opinion I think that modesty
is the key in this situation (.) she’s a
good professional but I think she’s not a
good teacher and modesty is just what er
what (..) I think modesty is what she:
lacks?
Alan: yeah
Matteo: I think modesty is what she lacks and I
think she (.) need that to become a::: (2.0)
a great teacher too (.)
Alan: a go- a great teacher too
Matteo: too too yes
Alan: right (..) but you also said erm (…) I
think at one moment you said you don’t
have great talent but that talent isn’t the
most important thing (.) that what makes
you improve isn’t the talent but the
passion
Matteo: yes
Alan: (...) do you still agree with that comment
that thought?
Matteo: yes because erm: (...) I think that the
passion for the: foreign languages I think
that it’s what erm (...) I think it’s what
brought me: here (.) here in forli
(.)because when I talk with the other
students they just say (.) oh my god this
is your second bachelor degree (.) you’re
mad you (.) how can you spend so much
time studying I’m just a year has passed
and I’m just tired of studying (...) well I:
(.) just answer well I love what I’m
studying i: love English language I love
german language I love Japanese
language I love and all the subjects that
erm: concern the: (...) the foreign
languages (. in general and (...) I think
that passion is what makes me go on
passion is what gi- passion is what gives
me strength (. in general well I’m from
rome so I’m: far from my family I was
far from my girlfriend (.) erm (.)
Alan: why do you say was?
Matteo: cos she’s not my girlfriend any more
((laughs))
Alan: ahh
Matteo: (...) erm (...) Alan: is that something to do with being here
or?: =
Matteo: yes, yes of course
Alan: you [talked about how
Matteo: [xxx]
Alan: much work you have to do and how
much you have to invest in studying here
do you think is that part of the reason
or:
Matteo: yes it’s part of the reason well she: she studied oriental languages with me
Alan: hm
Matteo: (xx) in rome and (...) we graduated er (.)
together and well we (2.0) we were very different I wanted to become interpreter but she just wanted to study Japanese language but she didn’t know what to do with her life well i: she decided to study Japanese language in London i:n (. at the: SOAS I think well a university in in London and (. and well she just said well e:rm come with me (. or we break up (3.0) and well and it was (. the first time (. I had to face this kind of matter my: (. my life no my life (. but my passion (. or my (3.0) (not love (. but my private life (.)
Alan: hm
Matteo: (xx)
Alan: and (. your=
Matteo: =and we break up (.)
Alan: right
Matteo: we broke up (. e:r and that’s it
Alan: right (..) erm (…) right so your private life (.) was put against your professional life and your passion
Matteo: yes but (…) I just had to choose what was more important to me (..) at that (..) at that time
Alan: hm m
Matteo: erm (…) well (.) I just want to be happy (..) and studying languages is just one (.) of the things (.) that (made) me happy (..) and (…) so it’s just (..) you: (…) I just can’t live it’s true I just can’t live without foreign languages (..) they’re very important to me (.) very important to me even even though I’m (xxx) even though I have to improve infinitely but (..) I just want to improve I just want to (x) (…) I just want to study and I think my: all the other things (.) about family (.)erm (…) they will erm (…) how can I say I think that (..) love and family will erm (.) they they won’t come after but they will come along the er way?:
Alan: hm m
Matteo: can I say that? (.) I just think that (.) so: (…) if the things ended ended the way they ended (.) I think that maybe was not so important
Alan: hm m (…) did you feel responsible or did you feel you’re not responsible for this situation?
Matteo: (.) n: no not responsible b: because i: said that we: could continue (…)
continue our (…) not our affair. our relation our relationship (.) relation or relationship?

Alan: relationship

Matteo: relationship (.) but she just said no come with me (.) and that’s it (.) you studied Japanese (.) what’s the story now (.) studying german becoming an interpreter (.) let’s continue studying Japanese in London it’s one of the best universities where you can study Japanese (.) yeah but we (have months) er (…) well it w- it was (.) er it was December (.) yes December January? and well I just said well I will do the entry test in September maybe I won’t get in that university so what’s the point in arguing about these things now?

Alan: hm m

Matteo: er m (.) but no she was (5.0) ((voice fades)) and so (.) the: things er: (3.0) didn’t didn’t go didn’t go well and we broke out

Alan: hm m

Matteo: but ah well my passion my: er my love my love for foreign languages is a really important thing in my life thinking I think in my life (4.0) that’s it

Alan: ok but erm (…) just talking about this passion of yours (.) just going back to the classroom atmosphere you said that (.) you’re older than some of the students in the classroom

Matteo: hm m
Alan: ah: (…) not necessarily (.) correlated but there’s a lot of competition in the classroom
Matteo: hm m
Alan: I’m just wondering how these things have developed in the last period (.) this idea of age difference and (.) competitiveness in the classroom how do feel about those things?
Matteo: (…) well I think the: (4.0) the competitiveness is just the same but since we: (3.0) well (.) during the first semester we didn’t do the mediation so: we couldn’t imagine how (.) in- (..) interpreting was (.) and (.) since we have seen that the mediation itself the interpreting job is (…) really difficult there’s no: (..) you you just (..) there’s no room for competitiveness (.) e:::rm so: you just have to help the other students and let them help you to: improve because (.) the: the mediation is something you improve with other people not alone (..) and so during the first semester you: you could study the those subjects on your own (.) the: for example for example the (.) reformulation for mr stevens and other subjects in general well you could study that on your own but mediation is something you have to do with the: with other people (.). you can study the glossary but (..) the: the mediation and the confidence when you speak is
something is something you get when you’re talking if you just don’t have people to talk with (..) you cannot improve even though here there are not many native speakers you just improve (.) your errors their errors (.) so it’s just something that has changed (.) m: we have (formed) several groups to: to do some mediation a:nd (.) well my age (.) ah: I didn’t know there were other students that who were old well old? Well other students of my age or even 2 or 3 years older (..) er for example during the first semester i: there was an erazmus student in my (.) er (.) in my in my house here in forli (.) but during the second semester another student came back from Russia and she took the place of the erazmus student (.) the erazmus student came back in England because she was an English student (.) and the italian student came back well she (.) she came in our apartments and well she’s er 28 (.) I’m 26 now a:nd she has bachelor degree and I think a master (x) 2 years what we call a magistrale and (..) and well she studied (.) I think art (..) so something completely different Alan: yeah Matteo: but she: she was not satisfied about her job about what she was doing (.) a:nd well talking with her she is a student of the SSLMIT and other students (because I know they’re in the second year)
another student was studying erm
literature and philosophy I think (.) well
she’s older than me and well I’m (.) that
made me think well I’m I’m not alone

Alan:  yeah
Matteo:  well the other students in my classroom
(are not so:) well they’re they’re very
kind a:nd i: just don’t feel the gap
between us (our ages)

Alan:  hm
Matteo:  (xx) they make me feel younger
((laughs)) yes
Alan:  hm yes ((laughs)) so generally the age
gap the competition has changed
Matteo:  yes yes (.) it has changed (the
competitiveness has changed with the
mediation classes) and the: (..) and the
gap between me and the other students
well it has changed with the with the
time I think

Alan:  hm
Matteo:  even though there are some episodes of
hm: (..) students well during the german
classes well (.) one day er we were
attending a german class it was letterato
and well i: (..) i: started studying german
as a beg- as a beginner I (..) I just (…)
yes I never heard (…) anything in
german before (.) and well erm this
student well I we were in aula nuova (.)
and this student just came late and
during the lesson she missed a thing I
don’t remember what it was but a:nd
well she looked at me er I was I was
sitting in front of her and so she needed
to ask a thing and she looked at me and
said oh well what about what about (..)
oh well never mind ((mimics student
giving up on a question)) she asked to
the students to the students sitting next
to me
Alan:  hmm
Matteo: and that was because I was a beginner (.)
and then: i: had (3.0) I know that it was
because this is my second bachelor
degree and so I took the place of another
student er: (.) that was not graduated that
wanted to get in the SSLMIT and so I
already have a bachelor degree the other
student (therefore) who couldn’t get in
the SSLMIT well (.): erm (.): they
(…) they graduated from the high school
can I say that
Alan:  well they finished high school
Matteo: ok yes (.): and so I know that she
was angry=
Alan:  =how? How did you know this?
Matteo: ah: the other people told me told me
that (.): I talked with with this student (.):
with the with this person (.): and well
she said no no no I’m sorry: but well you
know (.): and that’s it
Alan:  but why did you so: I mean it seems like
a short quick scene where she asked and
oh no never mind=
Matteo: =yes
Alan:  why did this become so (.): important for
you (.): why did you (.): investigate
Matteo: ah: because it was just one episode (.)
but (. ) there were many episodes during
the er: the first semester
Alan: with ?
Matteo: with this with this girl
Alan: only this girl?
Matteo: ah: with this girl a:nd yes in with this
girl in particular in particular but well
during the first semester I: (. ) I feel this
(3.0) I could feel that they were quite
surprised about my: presence
Alan: why surprised? Because they knew
about your past?
Matteo: because the:: er (..) well because they
(4.0) this is their first university for them
and so I think they: (...) they didn’t
imagine that a student could get another
second bache- another bachelor degree
Alan: hm m
Matteo: if he wanted (. ) and so they were qui- (..)
some students were quite surprised (. )
and e:::rm
Alan: told you personally?
Matteo: yes (. ) yes
Alan: when they found out?
Matteo: yes yeah well I think during the the:
er:m I think during the first classes (..)
yes
Alan: and how did you feel when they reacted
in this way
Matteo: no i:: (4.0) I was curious about their
reaction because it was something that i:
(…) had never seen before a:nd (…) but
I was just curious
Alan: never seen before because [you’ve]
Matteo: [yes]
Alan: never been in that situation=
Matteo: =yes ((laughs)) and I think this will be
the uni-situation the: (3.0)
Alan: [but you said your friends
Matteo: [ (xxx)
Alan: your friends were surprised when you
said you wanted to do another degree at
SSLMIT (. ) so=
Matteo: =yes
Alan: perhaps the reaction of the students at
SSLMIT when you arrived you had in
someway prepared you in some way for
that reaction?
Matteo: m: not so much because because he i:
(…) I know this student and we have the
same strong passion and so he: imagined
that I would have gotten another
bachelor degree (. ) er because i: my:
will was (. ) was very strong and it was
the only way to become an interpreter
cos I couldn’t do the entry test for the
magistrale because i: (. ) I didn’t know
german French or Spanish or another
second language
Alan: right
Matteo: another European language (. )
Alan: so you decided to start from the
beginning
Matteo: yes (. ) well i: (…) I know that i: could
have studied interpreting in England I
think (. ) in leeds and you can become an
interpreter between English and
Japanese but they just accept (...) mother tongues Japanese mother tongues (.) and so on

Alan:  hmm (.)

Matteo: yes it m: (..) and I know that you just don’t well 2 foreign languages are not enough (..) and at least (.) another European language I think (.) it’s it’s essential (..)

Alan:  hm (…)

Matteo: and so here I am

Alan:  right (.) and just finally your thoughts for the future? Considering you’re now coming to the end of your first year (.) how do you see the future developing?

Matteo: well next year I will be in germany (.) and well I hope I will I will improve my german (3.0) a::n well (..) er: I just don’t think about the future (.) so much (.) so so often well I know: I will try to get in the: (…) in the magistrale here in forli or in Trieste or in germany when I will finish the: this er:::

Alan:  degree

Matteo: special degree this bachelor degree (.) but I know I will try the entry test and well I’m just enjoying my time here now here in forli I will enjoy my time in germany next year and I will study

Alan:  hm so this passion to become an interpreter (.) can we say that it’s not central at the moment?

Matteo: no no (.) it’s it’s central (…) i just think that i just think i am on the right path (…).
well I was more afraid when I graduated
the first time because I wanted to
become an interpreter but I’ve never
studied well no I’ve never (. I have
never studied interpreting (. and i:
didn’t know if i: could have m: (.) if (. the entry test would have gone well or
not
Alan: hm
Matteo: (. and but now I’m (.) I’m here in the
in the Sslmit and I’m I think I’m I’m just
on the right path and so I’m more (...) er:
(. not at ease (. but er: I’m more
confident
Alan: has that got anything to do with
professor moscato who said (. now that
you are here (.) you are future
interpreters or is that just me not
interpreting correctly ((small laugh))
Matteo: ((laughs))
Alan: cos we started with this idea that if you
are HERE you will be an interpreter and
now you seem to be quite content
Matteo: yes
Alan: and relaxed perhaps=
Matteo: =yes I’m quite relaxed=
Alan: = is that related to people like moscato
saying these things or is it something
different perhaps?
Matteo: (3.0) hm: yes something has changed er
(4.0) because i: have seen that studying
to become an interpreter ah: brings you a
lot of stress (. but I’m just doing my
best and I’m in the right place so: (3.0)
I’m just taking it easy (3.0) and that’s it
I’m: (...) my my passion is the same (. i:
(...) I spend many hours studying an-
(...) and so I’m just quite I’m quite
relaxed
Alan: cos you said hard work was=
Matteo: =yes I was quite I was afraid during the
first semester I was afraid because I’ve
never studied german before and so just
study here in the SSLMIT well I know
that i: can’t improve my german so
much and so when I won the erazmus
scholarship well the things were more
relaxed in general
Alan: so that was an important turning point=
Matteo: =yes yes wining the erazmus wining the
erazmus scholarship was one of the: (.)
one of the most important things during
the first year
Alan: what does what does scholarship mean
in this case I’m not sure I understand
Matteo: I’m I will spend next year in germ- in
germany and well I will get a
scholarship so I will get money and
that’s important too because er: (...)
Alan: lots of money or:
Matteo: (...) 280 euros per month
Alan: hm but not everybody gets this?
Matteo: no
Alan: how do you think you got it?
Matteo: (. ) the: the scholarship?
Alan: hm
Matteo: well we did an application and then
there was a there was a list of students
and from the first one to the last one well the difference was the number of credits that the student got with the exam with the exams he or she passed and the scores and so we just did the applications the students chose the city the country and the city for I could choose for example England or Germany well all the all the countries in Europe well you just choose the country that speaks where people speak the language you study and so it was a very important thing because the opportunity of winning the Erasmus scholarship the overseas here at the SSLMIT is one of the things is one of the things that make this university important because erm the classes are high level we have great professors er up till now I’m very satisfied with all the professors even though yes I can prefer the mediation the German mediation classes but the English classes the German classes and even the other classes were high level but it’s not enough if you want to become an interpreter you well the language proficiency level is the first thing and I know that I have to improve my English infinitely but well it’s easier to for example to spend a month or two in England you can get a job my my knowledge of the English language is better than the
german one (..) and so it’s very very
very important (x) the number of
scholarships here in the: here at the
SSLMIT I think the number is higher
than the number of the other universities
(...) erm because I think that at least (.)
60 (..) 70 percent of the students (.) er
win an eraz- er: a scholarship in german
Alan: you talked at one point german as a first
language german as a second language
there’s jealousy er not jealously I’m I’m
mistaken (.) you were saying one of the
students said (.) you shouldn’t
necessarily go for the big german
universities because you’re just german
second language (..) do you remember
that? And and you said she said it’s only
german first language that need to go to
the important universities
Matteo: yes
Alan: and you found that quite interesting
Matteo: yes
Alan: and now you have a (.) a scholarship
[to go to-
Matteo: [yeah
Alan: was there any reaction there from
these people?
Matteo: yes erm: during the receiving (ours)
hours hours of the our erazmus co-
ordinator of the: (.) erm of the co-
ordinator of the german of the germany
and (…) well of germany in general (.)
erm well there were 2 or 3 students of
german first language and well sh- they
were very angry because students of German as second language won scholarships for Hidelberg: Wien, ((Vienna in German)) or (Germasheim?) and these are all and Munich and these are all 4 of the HMs: 4 great universities for interpreters and they were very angry because they said it’s not possible we are German first language (.). Well our language proficiency is better than (.). er: than second lang- than students of (.). than the proficiency of students of German as second language (.). and well and what surprised me (.). is that the (.). even the professor said well it’s been (.). you’re right it’s not possible (.). because she because he: he: thought that (.). well (...) it’s right he as- he assumed that the language proficiency of the student of the second of the student of German as second language was more inferior? ((Incredulous tone))

Alan: hm

Matteo: of the: (.). of the proficiency of the: than the proficiency of the student of the German as a first language (.). and I think it’s quite crazy because (.). the: professor Moscato said that (.). our level was higher (.). than German first language (.). so (.). and there was another episode that was I think it was quite quite funny because (.). well to: apply for the: scholarship you: have to certify a B1 level (.).
Alan: hm m

Matteo: and so I had to certify a B1 level in german language (..) but I was a beginner and (..) and this professor got well I I wrote him an e-mail saying that well (.) last year the things were not this way the things were different (.) WHY? now you well why now want a B1 language when I will leave in September ? there’s plenty of time for improving and he said no: it’s not possible because our reputation is high and we can’t send beginners to german ok but (.) there’s plenty of time if we are here I think that it means we want to study we want to improve we: (..) well and (.) I didn’t say (.) the thing that I will say now but (.) I thought that this is my second bachelor degree (.) I want to study because there are not so many students who er just get a second bachelor degree if I’m here it’s because I want to study I want to improve I want to learn german (.) a:nd and well and but well I studied I got the B1 level I applied i: (. ) I won the scholarship the professor said oh (.) you did it (.) yes I did it (.) a:nd (.) well now he’s very kind he’s very great person and but the other students are very angry very angry (.)

Alan: is this one of the students who said you shouldn’t go to?=

Matteo: ye:s
Alan: so you know these people quite well now?
Matteo: yes
Alan: But there are more of them
Matteo: yes
Alan: you find this (.) how do you find this experience of being judged as inferior (.) by the sound of things
Matteo: ah: I just don’t I just don’t think about it
I: well what’s important to me was going to germany and (...) and that’s it (...) I just found it funny (...) just that
Alan: so it’s not just a question of age?
Matteo: no: I don’t think so no (3.0) no yes be- because yes it’s just it’s not a matter of age they’re (6.0) that’s just the way the SSLMIT sha- the SSLMIT shapes you
Alan: m: (2.00) that a very ge- broad generalisation because you did say that german [(xx)
Matteo: [yes
Alan: from
Matteo: yes but the em things have changed but the (...) competitiveness remains not as the (. ) the fir- the first semester but well it’s just in our (blood)
Alan: is it still more in the german or in general i:n
Matteo: in generally in general
Alan: I see so similar problems in English? Or similar situations?
Matteo: yes but er:m (3.0) there weren’t episodes showing this

Alan: ah:

Matteo: (…) so: (.) I cannot say that

Alan: (…) there weren’t episodes? So how did you realise it?

Matteo: (…) well this erm: (.)

Alan: if there’s nothing concrete (.) in german it was obviously quite concrete

Matteo: ok

Alan: and English?

Matteo: (.) in English during the:: well during the classes er: while: but just during the first semester because er: m (…) you just (2.0) you could feel that (.) there was that the other students was looking around them seeing oh that that that student knows more things than me: yes but his pronunciation is a complete disaster but but he: he has a good grammar ahh (.) you could feel that

Alan: you could FEEL all of that?

Matteo: yes ye:s during the classes of mr steedman during the error analysis during the reformulation (.) yes yes

Alan: j- just curious how can you feel all of that? A lot of [interpretation

Matteo:]it’s just a matter of behaviour and well now I cannot mention the episodes cos they are passed

Alan: hm

Matteo: but it’s not just my opinion (.) er: (…) even when I talk with my friends here in forli well (…) it’s something true (.) but
now everything has changed (.) thanks to  
the mediation cos now things are  
difficult now we have to co-operate (.)  
you just you: you just can’t move on  
alone (.) no you just need to help and  
you need help (2.0) yes  
Alan: so the mediation situation  
Matteo: yes  
Alan: has created more  
Matteo: yes  
Alan: unification  
Matteo: yes (.) co-operation (.) yes and I am  
satisfied I’m really satisfied (.) well I  
think it’s normal that you prefer one  
class and not another one but I’m really  
satisfied with all the classes the English  
and the german ones (.) as well yes I am  
very satisfied even with the professors I  
can (2.0) not judge because I don’t like  
this verb but (.) erm: I can notice erm  
several things about the about the  
lessons but it’s just my opinion  
and I’m just an ignorant I just don’t  
know how to teach I just don’t know  
what to teach so: (.) it’s just my opinion  
just talking  
R: hm  
M: and that’s it but (.) I’m (.) very satisfied  
(2.0)  
R: great thank you very much for that  
M: you are welcome
Rosa 2: Second interview

Alan: so rosa it’s just a (.) a little update on what’s been going on (.) in your life (.) recently (.) in the last term erm: (.) just you can tell me anything you like I mean what’s happened in the last months at the end of towards the end of the course

Rosa: but how: my languages have improved or: what ((laughs))

Alan: you’re experiences in general here

Rosa: ahh my experiences I think the courses have become a lot harder so ((small laugh)) so: yeah I mean I’m studying almost all the time now (.I became a nerd finally ((laughs))

Alan: I was going to say it ((both laugh))

Rosa: yeah I’m studying I think all the time (.I’m studying in the library till 10 kinda until it’s closing but I mean they’re all so I’m enjoying but there are a lot so it can be really hard

Alan: hm (..) you’re studying for (.particular languages?

Rosa: em::::: for the mediation for the Italian part but not the English part I also have to start the
English part but I didn’t have
time for that and also the
literature because they have
changed the teachers so we have
to do like 2 course we’re it’s
kinda like we’re doing 2 courses
so for 6 I think credits we’re
doing we have to read about (. ) 7
books I think

Alan: 7 books?
Rosa: yeah it’s a bit hard (. ) so all the
time I’m doing that either the
Italian parts of mediation or:
translating because we have the
first exam on 23rd which is
translating yeah

Alan: translating from?
Rosa: I have both because I didn’t pass
also the first one but the others
only have from Italian to English
( . ) I have in the morning Italian to
English and in the evening

English to Italian

Alan: right ( 2 . 0 ) this a problem for you
you said in our initial conversation
Rosa: ah yeah: the Italian part it’s like
it’s a bit difficult for me but (. ) I
think I’m I’m like getting used to
it understanding how it works
now bit better but still need lots
of time lots of works

Alan: hm the Italian bit but is the

English ok then?
Rosa: ah: also that because I think my English is better than my Italian still but still have difficulty for understanding the Italian part so: I don’t know how to translate it into English (.) but (2.0)

Alan: because when we were talking the first in the one to one you said that you have 5 languages

Rosa: yeah

Alan: whereas the majority of people only have three

Rosa: yeah

Alan: one of your problems was that (.) at least one of the translation or interpreting languages was into your native language (.) or Italian or English (.) but you had this problem didn’t you?

Rosa: yeah yeah ((small laugh))

Alan: yeah how has that developed?

Rosa: e:r I think my Italian is improving a lot more so I’m get- becoming like I’m feeling (.) first I was feeling that English like if I have to choose one take it as my native language I’d have chosen English but maybe like living here in italy I’m becoming more used to Italian so: (.) it’s still hard but ((small laugh))

Alan: so your Italian it’s stronger now your Italian
Rosa: yeah I’m trying like to only listen to italian music watching Italian series so

Alan: oh right because in (. ) you talked about falling in love with English because of friends ((the american sitcom))

Rosa: yeah ((laughs))

Alan: and now wha- what programmes are you watching in Italian?

Rosa: hm: I’m watching everything like er dubbed dubbed in translated in Italian but like American series again

Alan: right

Rosa: game of thrones in Italian they’re a bit strange but ((small laugh))

Alan: are you finding that particularly difficult then Italian version of (. ) game of thrones?

Rosa: er: no I don’t know why always my: I think my good my strong (...) thing is understanding I can understand good but (. ) erm like talking sometimes it’s a bit difficult but understanding no it’s (xx) easy

Alan: hm (. ) cos you said you also have problems with colloquial Italian the modo da dire ((Italian translation))

Rosa: hm in writing ((laughs))

Alan: a ha has that improved then do you think?
Rosa: erm ((laughs)) a bit maybe yeah
Alan: (3.0) are you confident then about
Rosa: I’m still not a hundred percent but (. ) bit more
Alan: yeah (.) and what about the class- classroom atmosphere (. ) has that changed? over the last term (. ) is it
Rosa: erm (2.0) I don’t know ((small laugh)) er (…) I think maybe now that only that everybody is only studying but ( . ) it’s it’s Sslmit so: I was expecting that ((small laugh))
Alan: cos you said that when you came here first you ( . ) you thought that the students here they were as you said ner:ds
Rosa: ((laughs)) well now that I have became another nerd so ((laughs)) maybe I am getting along better
Alan: yeah?
Rosa: yeah th- ( . ) yeah they kinda study a lot but once a day once a week also go out and have fun so (. ) I think that the erm (. ) atmosphere here like the students is really it’s really good (. ) everybody like tries to help each other out and if you ask somebody help they help you it’s not like it’s not a bad er competition (2.0)
Alan: do you think the atmosphere in general is still very positive?

Rosa: yeah I think it’s really positive

Alan: yeah (.) has anybody complained about anything which you (. ) you agree with? do you think m:

Rosa: (.) not that I can think of ((small laugh))

Alan: (..) so you’re very positive in general=

Rosa: yeah I’m very positive (..)

Alan: yeah (. ) and erm: you said that erm: you know ( ...) one of the teachers was talking about becoming an interpreter is very stressing

Rosa: hm yeah

Alan: and erm you questioned whether ( . ) it was a- if she should have been an interpreter? Do you think it’s still sort of very stressing this idea of becoming an interpreter?

Rosa: erm kinda a bit yeah but on the other hand because like we’re looking at every subject so much that for example we were doing for the german we were doing only food for 3 months so I feel really confidence about that now food in general also in Italian also in English we were doing everything like foods so after working that much on that ambient I think (. ) if somebody
works in that ambient it can be it
cannot not be that difficult if can
be like it’s possible so
Alan: hm (..) because you were also
talking about the lack of books
for learning languages and you
preferred books
Rosa: yeah
Alan: has that changed in anyway?
Rosa: er: now we’re going lots of
glossaries so: (.) i have for the
English I needed some books
now I have about 20 pages of
glossaries so ((laughs)) (.) I think
it’s good (.:) it’s enough
Alan: hm but learning the language like
german cos you said was you you
had a very low level in german
Rosa: yeah
Alan: and has that I mean how do you
think the course has progressed
this year?
Rosa: er well we have to work ourself
they told us that from the
beginning that it would be very
hard for you starting from zero
because everybody else have
started like from for 5 6 years the
german but you have to choose it
yourself so I chose it and I was
studying all the time german also
(.) and so I finished 2 or 3 books
myself now I think I got into a
good level and also in the
summer I’m going to Germany for 5 months so after that I think (. ) I’ll be able to talk

Alan: (…) but you have to work a lot to
Rosa: yeah a lot ((small laugh))
Alan: is it more than you expected?
Rosa: erm a bit yeah because erm I: it was (. ) we also had to do the mediation also for me I had to do it from Italian to German and German into Italian so I didn’t know which one which part to concentrate so: I was concentrating all the time in the German parts and one time I had to mediate and then I could do the German parts but I could not do the Italian parts so I was really shocked like that I’ve been here for 2 years and I couldn’t say really m: easy parts and so I had to also concentrate on the Italian try to like memorise the glossaries from both ways and (. ) er but now it was really stressing it was really stressful because I had to I wanted to do it and (. ) june the exam but now I have decided I will do it on September so: now it’s ok ((small laugh))

Alan: hm
Rosa: after 5 months being in Germany maybe
Alan: cos you were in Germany for 5 months?
Rosa: no no I’m gonna go for 5 months
Alan: go (. ok (. but you were talking about being at a disadvantage I think you said because most people either speak Italian or they are
Rosa: yeah
Alan: very fluent in English you thought you were at a disadvantage I believe
Rosa: yeah yeah
Alan: how do you feel now about that?
Rosa: I still feel I am disadvantaged but I think maybe like after some years I will be able to ((small laugh)) become like the one of them but (. right now yeah (. still it’s (. a bit hard
Alan: cos you did talk about you know people like professor Rutland (. sort of made you positive (. or think positively about the potential to be (. native speaker like
Rosa: hm
Alan: hm
Rosa: yeah
Alan: how has that (. progressed in your mind?
Rosa: erm ((laughs)) it still needs time ((laughs)) but yeah I think now maybe it’s possible
Alan: so thinking back to when we we talked the first time (. ) I mean do you think you have changed in your opinion towards (. ) the languages you are studying?
Rosa: yeah for example I changed Chinese into Arabic
Alan: oh
Rosa: ((laughs)) yeah I thought that it’s not possible and I’m gonna leave French I’m gonna (. ) lasciare? ((small laugh))
Alan: leave French yeah
Rosa: leave French also next year so I’m gonna concentrate only on English Italian a:nd german
Alan: ok can you explain the reasons for this [change
Rosa: [it was too much chinese was not possible because (. ) I like the language a lot but it took a lot of times and I the thing I don’t have here is time so: (. ) I saw that I cannot continue with Chinese so I changed into Arabic because it’s really similar to my language my mother tongue and also we had to study Arabic for 6 years in iran so (. ) everything that they are teaching now they are the same things that I had studied (. ) I don’t like the language I hate it always the language bu:t (. ) at least it’s something less (. ) so=
Alan: less to study
Rosa: (.) yeah
Alan: why don’t you like the language?
Rosa: ahh it’s really complicated but I think it’s like because of the history of the countries (.) in iran nobody likes it to be honest (.) you are like forced to study it all the time and from the second from first year of high school we were forced to have the courses (.) it was kinda like lat- lat in iran here where everybody studies it we were we had the Arabic but (.) erm we have like politic problems with arabs and everything so
Alan: hm
Rosa: and also I think it’s not really a pretty language (..) but I’m trying to like it cos I have to ((laughs))
Alan: (..) erm you’re trying to like it (.) is that (.) why are you trying to like it?
Rosa: cos I know in the future I have to work with it if I I choose to become an interpreter (.) maybe it’s an advantage for me also because I think can get better in Arabic than the others because it’s really similar to my mother tongue so (.) it can be a really good point for me so I have to just like it ((laughs))
Alan: yeah and what about the teaching of it what about the teacher I mean the experience in the classroom (.) with Arabic

Rosa: erm: (..) like what? ((small laugh))

Alan: is it a positive experience ? do you like the teaching meth- the teaching methods the teaching style?

Rosa: ah (..) he (..) the teacher’s really slow so: I don’t know in which level they’re gonna we’re gonna become but (..) I don’t know also because it’s a bit weird for me cos I always (studied it) from Persian to Arabic now from Italian to Arabic so sometimes it’s a bit weird and it’s like more complicated from Italian to Arabic (..) bu:t (.) to be honest I went to the classes only 2 times so ((small laugh)) I don’t know that much also

Alan: only 2

Rosa: yeah like I had studied all these things like for example they were studying how to write the alphabet which is the same in Persian so I didn’t need to go and then other things that I had studied so

Alan: so it’s an easy option for you

Rosa: yeah I choose it only for that (.) like now I feel it’s just three languages not Arabic because I
think in the third year maybe the
level will be the level that I am
now so (3.0)
Alan:  hm (.) so just to re-cap you’ve
dropped Chinese
Rosa:  yeah
Alan:  and you’ve taken up Arabic a:nd (.)
Rosa:  ah French because I thought that I
will finish this year but I will
drop it next year (.) also
Alan:  why?
Rosa:  ah it’s too hard to keep up with
all the languages so I think it’s
better to concentrate on one and
then like learn it better than like
taking up lots of languages and
not being able to talk all of them
Alan:  hm (...) what do you think about
you’re future as an interpreter
now?
Rosa:  ahh I have no idea I mean I think
it’s something a bit hard but (.)
I’m positive about it I like
becoming an interpreter but (.) I
would also like to work in a
company or something like that
like I don’t know business
woman something like that
Alan:  hm m (.) where?
Rosa:  mm I have no idea ((laughs)) (.) I
would like to work with
languages bu:t it’s I’m not going
to stay only with language only
become an interpreter (xx) I like
to travel a lot know lots of
different people and erm talk
different languages so (..) I think
I need to find something that I
would like (…)

Alan: are you unhappy about having to
leave Chinese and French?
Rosa: erm: Chinese a bit yeah cos i: (.)
both ((small laugh)) yeah Chinese
I really like it and I found out that
it’s not possible because it’s
really really har: d (.) like it is
possible but it needs time a really
lot of time maybe if I become (.)
my Italian or my english become
really good and then I would
have time I would choose that
again but right now no: and also
French m: (.) I will be sad to
leave it because I studied French
for about 6 years before coming
here and then for 2 years I did not
study at all and now that I’m
studying again it’s I have
forgotten everything so: (. ) now I
am remembering again
everything but now I have to drop
it again so it’s all the time
becoming like zero becoming
again good at it (it’s a bit hard) (.)
but I thought I will go and live
there for some months maybe
next year (. ) it depen- I think the
best way is living in the country

to learn the language so

Alan: hm (.) so what about studying

here (.) what’s the point?

Rosa: ((both laugh)) erm concentrating

on the other languages (…)

Alan: Italian obviously=

Rosa: =yeah

Alan: cos you’re living in italy

Rosa: also german also English

Alan: yeah (…) you also said about

interpreting being er you said one

of the negative things is you

didn’t express your own opinions

(.) one of your friends=

Rosa: =yeah

Alan: said this was something that was

negative about it (.) but you were

inspired by the film the

interpreter

Rosa: not any more ((laughs))

Alan: oh tell me what happened?

Rosa: ah I don’t know I mean (…) to

work in the UN it’s not possible

and I don’t even want to I mean

it’s lots of stress I don’t want to

have a life that too much stressful

so (.) I’m like (.) I mean (.) I don-

I right now I don’t have any idea

what I’d like to do but (.) I know

only something with languages I

would like to do that but not but

not something really stressful

(…)

Alan: so why did you change your mind?

Rosa: er all- maybe because also of the
things that our german teacher
said about it being so: stressful so:
(. ) em ( .) I don’t want to have a
live a life like that so ( …)

Alan: the german teacher was that the
teacher who talked about how
they had to be two people at once

Rosa: yeah yeah yeah

Alan: so you you agree with=

Rosa: =yeah like working for ( .) like ( .)
really important people it could
be like she always says that she
had interpreted also for the po:pe
for the er Burlusconi and people
like that that’s one of the reason
that when she tells us stories
she’s always (this thing like)
yeah I was so stressed because of
that and I don’t want to have that
kind of responsibility ( …) I’d
rather like work in some
company ( .)

Alan: hm ( .) wh- what sort of company?

Rosa: ah ( .) I have no idea ((laughs))

( …)

Alan: would you say that your sort of
your goals have changed

Rosa: yeah

Alan: since we last talked

Rosa: yeah a bit yes ( …)

Alan: so what=

Rosa: =maybe I became more realistic
Alan: hm and what would you say made you become more realistic?
Rosa: erm: (…) maybe also seeing other people seeing other students (. ) cos there are people like have are bilingual or er trilingual? And so em I think they would have more chance like of becoming I mean it would be better if they become something (. ) like working in the UN people like people like them have to work there now (. ) erm (. ) I don’t know ((small laugh))
Alan: so you think you have to be (. ) bilingual from an early age?
Rosa: yeah=
Alan: =to to work in (. ) but is that because of the ability of the person to speak the languages or is it something to do with the stress because you seem to be suggesting that (. ) it’s very stressful more than a question of skill it’s a question of stress
Rosa: it’s both I think (3.0) ((small laugh))
Alan: do you feel (. ) how do you feel in relation to the idea of changing your goals? (. ) from UN interpreter to (. ) a company interpreter or a company
Rosa: m: (…) I don’t know I mean ((small laugh)) ye:s right now
I’m enjoying just learning and just going but I cannot say what I want to become (..) I like a lot of stuff so I need to think about them

Alan: yeah (..) but it did seem to me you were thinking about (. .) UN interpreter you said the film had inspired you=

Rosa: =yeah I thought about it a bit but (.) I don’t know ((small laugh)) (2.0) it seem like also because it’s a goal that every everybody studying languages has so: it’s a really hard thing to get (.) may- maybe there I might have the advantage of having persian as my mother tongue but (.) also on the other hand there are a lot of persian I think that are living er I don’t know in America in English language so they have English as their mother tongue so

Alan: hm

Rosa: (3.0) I don’t know it would be very difficult to get there because everyone wants them and I don’t want to have that kinda stress always in a competition

Alan: hm (.) is that stress to get to the position [or

Rosa: [bo:th

Alan: in that position
Rosa: both I think both ((small laugh))

Alan: hm m (..) so I’m just trying to understand (. .) you (. .) the idea of being an interpreter has changed (. .) for you now you’re thinking more (. .) something simpler less stressing=

Rosa: =yeah

Alan: less competitive (3.0) and are you happy with this?

Rosa: yeah yeah I’m happy with it (. .) maybe like an interpreter but not an interpreter of UN

Alan: hm

Rosa: (. .) a normal interpreter

Alan: so if you were offered a position you wouldn’t accept it?

Rosa: in the UN?

Alan: hm

Rosa: if they offer of course I would ((laughs)) they will not offer me I mean I won’t go to try and get it but if they come and offer me ((laughs)) I won’t say no

Alan: no? (..)

Rosa: (no it’s)

Alan: (..)why?

Rosa: I don’t know it could be a experience maybe (. .)

Alan: hm but if you don’t try you’ll never know (2.0) so what’s stopping you from trying and then discovering afterwards
Rosa: cos I don’t think it’s possible .
yeah there are lots of students
who who are better than me so: (.)
and then (. or like mother tongue
like English Italian and bilingual
so their much better than me so I
don’t think it will be possible so

Alan: hm (.) so you think interpreting
is (.) to be a good interpreter you
just need to be bilingual?
Rosa: no not just be bu:t if somebody is
of course it’s an advantage

Alan: hm (3.0) so you don’t think that
there are other things that might
make you a better interpreter than
just being (. mother tongue?
Rosa: hm like what? ((laughs)) (. I
don’t know (. like wha:?

Alan: well we talked about talent last
time
Rosa: hm

Alan: and there was this idea that talent
is not necessarily (. the only
thing that counts also (. hard
work and practice (. and
perhaps the desire to get
somewhere (. and I don’t know I
can’t remember (. but I think a
lot of people were saying it’s not
talent it’s hard work (. and [if
you put the work in

Rosa: [(I

think it’s both) I think that it’s
both you need also to have the
talent
Alan: (. ) hm but is that talent talent
because you’re a native speaker
or talent because you’re capable
of learning
Rosa: both also ((laughs))
Alan: hm (4.0) so I don’t know I’m just
trying to understand because you
did seem to be quite I’m not
saying negative but [(xx)
Rosa: [yeah I was
in the last I was kinda negative (. )
now I’m a bit I’m more positive
maybe because I’m expecting
less from myself so: (. ) and I’m
trying only to concentrate on
three language instead of five so
(.) I think that’s good
Alan: so you’re more positive because
you expect less of yourself?
Rosa: yes ((whispered)) ((laughs))
Alan: is that positive?
Rosa: erm I think yeah ((laughs))
maybe I was expecting too much
now I’m expecting something
like ((voice drops and slows))
something possible
Alan: ok let’s just understand what
were you expecting before (. ) that
you’re not expecting now?
Rosa: erm like learning five languages
instead of three ((sing-song tone))
like more than anybody el:se and
learning as much as I can in the language lots of other languages also (if I would be able) and working in the UN working something (xx) having a really important job (..) now I’m expecting I would like to only m: choose three languages the three that I have chosen and make them perfect like not perfect (xxxx) but as good as they can a:nd I would also be happy to work as an- anything I like interpreting not translating I don’t like translating at all er (.)

Alan: why don’t you like translating? Rosa: er ((small laugh)) I don’t know I’m not good at writing I think I don’t like that much writing (3.0)

Alan: hm: can you be more specific what do you mean (. ) you don’t like writing

Rosa: hm: (3.0) ((laughs)) I I don’t know I don’t like it just (. ) I like writing for example something myself but translating finding the words then I am always like thinking if I can change them or if I cannot change them if I to only translate by wor- by words or if I change it right now would it be different and that I don’t really like
Alan:  (3.0) hm () I’m still interested to
know why you changed from
being () sort of thinking about
such high aspirations an
interpreter for the united nations
and to become some- someone
who seems quite content just to
work in an office perhaps or a
small company () wh- what
happened in the middle?
Rosa:  ((laughs)) I saw the other
students (...) Alan:  you saw? Sorry
Rosa:  other students I th- I saw that ()
er I mean everybody is (study) I
thought ok so: erm you said talent
hard work but everybody here is
ha- is working really hard so ()
the hard work is something that
everybody is doing () so then
there’s talent and there’s m:
mother tongue so () I saw the
competition I didn’t expect this
much competition () so it’s () I I
still think that if somebody wants
to and somebody works really
really hard can get it but I don’t
want to it’s too much stress it’s
too much competition so ()
Alan:  can we talk about this
competition () what do you
mean by it too much competition
Rosa:  I don’t know there would only be
two places I think I I have no idea
but (..) I (..) think that there would be something like that that they would say that there’s 2 or 3 places? So everybody wants to get that place so: it is a competition.

Alan: which place?
Rosa: er in a job or something in a work in future
Alan: who said that there’s only 2 or 3 places?
Rosa: there’s not that much jobs so ((laughs)) (there would be) it’s not like they would take every student so for every I don’t know it would be hard to choose one student over somebody else (3.0)
Alan: I’m just interested to know where this information is coming from (.).
Rosa: not 2 or 3 but still there’s not that much places (.).
Alan: hm (..) only in the united nations
Rosa: (..) I have no idea but still that’s there won’t be that much places (.).
Alan: (..) is this the sort of thing you’ve heard in the classroom?
Rosa: yeah like talking to everybody everybody’s dream is becoming is working there so (..) but also like me nobody wants to continue it (always) so (.).
Alan: nobody?
Rosa: not nobody but er: most of the people say that yeah it’s too much difficult it’s too much stress so (.) it’s just a dream (2.0)

Alan: I still want to know why so many people have decided not to pursue this dream

Rosa: hmm

Alan: what do you think is the reason?

Rosa: (4.0) m too much students too much interpreter students (2.0)

Alan: well numbers doesn’t necessarily mean (..)

Rosa: too much good students so ((laughs))

Alan: ah

Rosa: hm

Alan: (…) so are the people who are saying this (.) or saying they don’t want to be interpreters at the united nations any more (.) the students you would consider to be less (.) capable students?

Rosa: (.) m: no I think they’re also good but I don’t know (.) it’s (a little less than bilinguals )

Alan: hm (..) so who are these bilingual students? How do you define bilingual in this context?

Rosa: (2.0) I don’t know what do you mean? ((laughs))

Alan: well wh- wh- you say there are too many bilingual students (.) but I’m trying to understand what
you understand as bilingual what is bilingual for you?
Rosa:  er having 2 or 3 languages as mother tongue being capable of talking like speaking those languages with the proper accent with like knowing all the words well not all the words but all the necessary words (xxx)
Alan:  but are these people (...) have they got have they been brought up in the countries they have mothers or fathers speak the languages? Or are they just very very gifted people in your opinion
Rosa:  ah most of them the ones that I met they were for example in one country till 7 or 8 years old and then they went to another country or they had er for example English family and they were living in italy so (...) (stuff) like that
Alan:  hm (.) so you would say that most people are put off being top interpreters because they think the competition by bilinguals students is too high
Rosa:  ah the others I don’t know I didn’t ask them they just also think it’s too hard (.) not possible
Alan:  hm (3.0) what happen- any particular incidents or episodes in
the classroom that have really enforced this idea for you?

Rosa: erm (.) no the only the only teacher who also says that it’s really hard to become an interpreter is the one the german one who is also an interpreter but other than her no no (.) but also yah wait to be honest when I talk to other teachers about interpreting they all says it’s too much stress I talked with professor infanti so I asked her if she had ever interpreted and she told me that she had mediated for some years but then it was too hard too stressful so (.) she quit it

Alan: why was it too stressful did she say why?

Rosa: er she said that like m: (..) something like people could not understand like they were saying like (.) I don’t know I did not quite understand she was just like I couldn’t understand the people they were (too) complicated

Alan: hm m (...) so would say that infanti as you said (.) the german teacher as you said was there anybody else who talked about the difficulty of being an interpreter

Rosa: er no nobody else (..) we don’t have any other interpreters (xx) I think
Alan: (4.0) well I’m just curious still to understand what’s made you change your mind I mean 2 professors have talked about the difficulty of being a top interpreter (…) you seem to be a bit worried about (.) the fact that there are bilinguals in the classroom (…) but to change quite a lot from what you said at the beginning when I interviewed you were thinking of the united nations and so on coming down so so much from your dream I think it sounded like a dream I don’t know if it’s a dream or not it sounds strange that you (.) you did it based on 2 teachers and a few students

Rosa: hm (…) oh yeah maybe also like because I’m studying a lot but the result is not bad but it’s not as I expecting so: (.) erm I know that- I got to know that it would be really really difficult also to get that high level so (…) I don’t know maybe I’ll (surpass) that?

Alan: hm what do you mean you got to know it would be very difficult at a very high level what do you mean by? How did you judge yourself?

Rosa: erm for example at first before coming to this university I was
trying to like learn same time 3 4 languages but I wasn’t studying it as I’m studying now like every subject you have to know everything like doing mediations and (.) like studying it like this goo:d I was like just studying to be able to talk to people normal saying hello normal things and then erm here (.) erm like more than 3 languages so: difficult cos (.) it’s just you don’t have time (.) I’m always having problem with time ((small laugh)) (..) it takes a lot of time like to know a language like to be able to do a mediation cos you have to know like all the wor:ds and (.) so (..) I got to know that (xx) will need a lot of time a lot of work a lot of time (.)

Alan: right so in the individual mediation situations (.) to learn the (..) vocabulary (.) is it mainly vocabulary we’re talking about or: grammar or

Rosa: er yeah everything but yeah also vocabulary

Alan: because you think it’s SO much work (..) that to become a good interpreter becomes more difficult

Rosa: maybe a bit
Alan: hm (4.0) and are you quite happy with this change of perspective?
Rosa: yeah I am (…) 
Alan: and what are your aspirations then now for the future?
Rosa: I have no I idea ((laughs)) because I I don’t know I’m just studying until I graduate and then maybe I have to think about it more but (..) I know I like language I know I like interpreting (. ) translation no (.)
Alan: hm (4.0)
Rosa: that’s it 
Alan: hm (...) so you’re quite happy to carry on like this do you feel (.) a little less enthusiastic at this point?
Rosa: m: a bit maybe (.) but not that much 
Alan: hm (4.0) so moving from aspirations to high (. ) interpreting levels of the united nations to more sort of limited potential for the future (. ) you- your quite happy with that? do you not feel any slight change in (. ) your emotions or feelings about the future or is it just I don’t know ((laughs)) (. ) I really don’t know but I think I’m becoming more realistic 
Alan: realistic? Hmm (…) right and you said a lot of people in your
class (. ) people are becoming more realistic as well

Rosa: yeah ((small laugh))

Alan: yeah (2.0) is there a sense that students agree that some students will be ( ..) top and others won’t be is that happened in the last year? (. ) since the beginning it wasn’t certain and now it seems that (. ) some students are destined for something and some students aren’t am I understanding correctly?

Rosa: erm (2.0) a bit yeah a bit yeah ((laughs))

Alan: hm? (2.0)

Rosa: not destined but ( ..) I think yeah some students have more possibility ( …)

Alan: because?

Rosa: because (. ) they have talent ((small laugh)) ( ..) lots of talent

Alan: talent is?

Rosa: ((laughs)) I don’t know talent is talent I mean they’re just good like (. ) also like maybe they lo:ve learning: I mean I like it but not that passionate about it ( ..) you can see the difference like between me and some students that are really passionate about lang- learning language like every language (4.0)
Alan: so you’re not you’re not as passionate?
Rosa: hm: no (.) I like it but not as passionate as some people no: (2.0)
Alan: did you think the same at the beginning when you started?
Rosa: yea:h I knew from the beginning that (.) I still haven’t found my way I mean I’m alwa-
always still thinking also about other like when I finish my studies here maybe I would start another study I don’t know I’m still (.) kinda (xx) undecided
Alan: wh- what other study?
Rosa: hm (.) I don’t know I always like math (..) so: first I wanted to become an architect so: (.) then I decided language because I always liked math and languages so I took language but on the other hand (makes me think something with) math (.) like economics also they can go kinda good together (.) something like business woman (..)
Alan: hm (…) so you’re thinking of a totally different career (.) potentially?
Rosa: m: maybe I don’t know (…) it’s just (..) so complicated ((laughs)) there many stuff and I still haven’t found my way
Alan: hm (.) cos you were talking about finding your way=
Rosa: =yeah
Alan: when you first came to italy and you decided to come to SSLMIT after the first year
Rosa: yeah (2.0)
Alan: but
Rosa: still not ((laughs))
Alan: still not
Rosa: I still (xx)
Alan: when you started here did you think that (.) you’d discovered your way or (.) were you still thinking about it?
Rosa: erm (.) I’m becoming more and more positive about interpreting (.) at first also (.) at first I was yeah maybe more positive now I’m (.) kinda like (in the way) but still more positive (3.0)
Alan: still comes the question comes back (.) why this change
Rosa: ((laughs))
Alan: you started and you were more positive and now (.) you’re not (4.0) no? you’re not going to tell me why ((starts laughing))
Rosa: ((laughs))
Alan: this happened you’re not sure perhaps
Rosa: yeah I think I told you the reason that (.) seeing other students (...) I don’t know like if I would be
going if I go to find a job in erm I
don’t know if they say there’s
once er 2 places for an in-
interpreting job a:nd I go for an
interview and also a mother
tongue Italian goes for an
interview I think like for sure
they would take them
Alan: hm
Rosa: why would they take me I’m not
I don’t have the proper accent so:
(3.0)
Alan: but if they were looking for
interpreters into Persian and
Arabic?
Rosa: erm ah in arabic yeah I could
have some chance but in persian
(.) I don’t think they would look
for Persian ((laughs)) (3.0)
politics maybe=
Alan: = you seem to assume that it’s
always towards the language (.)
of the country you’re studying
in=
Rosa: = yeah I think one way it has to be
(.) first I thought no there could
be both ways for example like
italian and english but now I
think like from one way there has
to be the mother tongue (3.0)
Alan: and you still feel that your Italian
is not good enough then?
Rosa: as a mother tongue? I don’t think
it could ever be maybe years but
Alan: what about professor Rutland?
Rosa: [the others said ((laughs)) I don’t know I cannot (xx) but I think also he has I think he has been here for more than 20 years so (...) after 20 years
Alan: (...) but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: but also professor Bennett has been here for 20 years as well and they did comment on the difference in the Italian (.).
Rosa: [they you seemed to be quite enthusiastic about the fact that]
Alan: you said when you were back in Iran engineering was quite a strong subject.

Rosa: yeah.

Alan: yeah.

Rosa: I came here like with I came here to study engineering and I chose language.

Alan: why?

Rosa: erm: (...) to be honest the entrance exam was too hard ((laughs)).

Alan: ah (2.0) but if it wasn’t too hard you (..) you would (..) prefer

Alan: erm: (...) I don’t know maybe maybe not cos also that when I talk I still have always this fascination about this jobs always ask my friends who have chosen it and sometimes I hear negative things sometimes positive things but (. ) one of the other reason is in the work for finding jobs they always say like for example architecture it’s (. ) there’s too much architecture so: it’s a bit hard to find jobs (. ) like maybe something to do: with languages you would be able to find a job easier but (2.0)
Alan: what was more important then 1209
was it (.) getting a job or: doing 1210
what you like? I mean erm 1211
Rosa: erm well 1212
Alan: if you had to decide between the 1213
2 which one would you decide on? 1214
Rosa: erm (.) (a) job 1215
Alan: hm (.) and job meaning what for 1216
you? 1217
Rosa: (4.0) independence? ((laughs)) 1218
Alan: (4.0) independence in what sense? 1219
Rosa: well like having a job like (.) 1220
standing on my own (.) having I 1221
don’t know 1222
Alan: hm 1223
Rosa: becoming independence 1224
completely 1225
Alan: because at the moment are [you 1226
not independent 1227
Rosa: [yeah yeah 1228
I am (4.0) I want to keep on go- 1229
being independent so: 1230
Alan: hm and what would the 1231
alternative be? 1232
Rosa: (.) hm: (…) ((laughs)) I don’t 1233
know like er (…) 1234
getting money from the parents 1235
the not being able to find a job 1236
not working (2.0) 1237
Alan: hm support from your parents 1238
Rosa: yeah 1239
Alan: hm (.) and you don’t want that 1240
Rosa: ((small laugh)) no 1241
Alan: are they still happy with you being here [and still studying]
Rosa: [ya:h they’re really happy about it (4.0)
Alan: have they decided to come and see you?=
Rosa: =erm actually my mom is trying to get a visa to come on September and my sister’s gonna come and see me on (. ) july
Alan: hm (..)
Rosa: then on (. ) july we’re going to go together to germany (. ) my mom is coming to germany ((laughs))
Alan: right (. ) why germany?
Rosa: ah I have parents there my: aunts and my grandmother live there so:
Alan: (. ) right and your father he’s not coming?
Rosa: erm no (. ) he has another life ((laughs))
Alan: right (5.0) so (. ) independence is the main thing
Rosa: yeah=
Alan: =if I understand correct so (. ) if if it wasn’t interpreting it would be something else?
Rosa: (…) m: (..) yeah maybe (engineering) but I don’t know I like them both I can’t say which one more (. )
Alan: they’re quite different though aren’t they? Engineering and interpreting
Rosa: yeah they are ((laughs)) (. ) I was always confused about these 2 subjects I always liked (. ) England- math and language so: (. ) but I think now I’m becoming more happy about my choice becoming interpreting interpreter cos I mean I like to travel a lot know different people so (. ) that’s a job

Alan: hm

Rosa: interpreter

Alan: hm (. ) but as you said if you were not an interpreter you would think about studying something else?

Rosa: yeah

Alan: do you think it might be difficult to become an interpreter in a company?

Rosa: (. ) m: like (. ) what company?

Alan: well you said I don’t want to be necessarily a united nations interpreter perhaps a company or a business

Rosa: it would be difficult yah I mean (. ) interpreting is a bit stressful as everybody says it is but less stressful than the other like less stressful than UN

Alan: hm ( . . ) but stressful and the ability to do the job to find the job are 2 different things (. ) it would be difficult to find a job?
Rosa: [(xxx)
Erm yah I think it would be really
difficult or still even that but
Alan: hm m
Rosa: it would be possible let’s say
Alan: why would it be difficult to be an
interpreter for a company?
Rosa: ah there are too many people who
are studying the languages so (2.0)
Alan: [here in the school
Rosa: [(xx)
Here in the world
((laughs))
Alan: ah (..) and don’t you think you
have some advantage over them?
Rosa: (...) I don’t think so ((laughs))=
Alan: =no?
Rosa: I don’t even have Italian as my
mother language so:
Alan: right (…) but but what’s the
purpose of studying here at the
school? If there’s no advantage in
it for you personally
Rosa: cos I like it ((laughs)) I don’t
know cos I like interpreting and (.)
mediating (.) so
Alan: but doesn’t it make you feel more
special than somebody outside
the school? (.) who speaks
languages
Rosa: hm (…) I don’t think so at all
((small laugh))
Alan: so what’s the purpose then?
Rosa: ((small laugh)) maybe studying here I don’t know they teach the best ways to (relate) teachers are really good so you are able to learn a lot of things so: after three years of (.) learning here (.) yah I think I would be better than somebody who has never studied here yeah of course that yeah

Alan: (4.0) but?

Rosa: no (no but) ((laughs))

Alan: so you would learn something more than perhaps

Rosa: yeah yeah

Alan: even if the people were native speakers

Rosa: yeah because also for example they teach us how to act and how to behave while interpreting and they teach us how to act in different occasions in for example we never had interpreted so ew had like in- erm mediation courses (. ) somebody who has like never had these classes could not understand like how to do it erm mediation how to mediate so they tell us everything about how to become a good mediator like what’s what to say what not to say how to ( . ) calm down people so (. )

Alan: so there are skills as well

Rosa: yeah yeah
Alan: (. ) hm so it’s positive for that?
Rosa: yeah (. )
Alan: so it’s not just language it’s also (. ) technique isn’t it?
Rosa: yeah yeah it is
Alan: hm ( … )
((both laugh)) ok:: thank you very much
Silvia 2: Second interview

1  Alan:  so silvia (…) how’s this last term been
2    for you? How would you describe it?
3  Silvia:  em: last month
4  Alan:  the last term because we met at the it
5    was the end of the last of the first term
6  Silvia:  hm m
7  Alan:  so how has it been going so far?
8  Silvia:  well erm it’s been busier ((small laugh))
9    than the first one I had several rehearsals
10   for japanese and english theatres and
11    also the subjects were a little bit heavier
12  Alan:  hmm
13  Silvia:  I can say (.) e:m well I like it more than
14    the first one anyway
15  Alan:  yeah
16  Silvia:  because the first one especially in
17    English was about culture and the
18    second one is about mediation so I like
19    that part more than the first one a::nd in
20    Chinese we start to talk in regular
21    sentences ((laughs)) and japan we started
22    Japanese it’s one of my favourite
23    languages so: I find it more interested
24    than the first one
25  Alan:  hmm
26  Silvia:  and the friendships were (.) I don’t know
27    I started to get to know people better
28    than the first term so:: we enjoyed the
29    second term together a:nd I: have lots of
30    friends in SSLMIT so (.) I like the way it
31    went
Alan: hmm
Silvia: in this past months
Alan: right is it more difficult this year did I understand correctly?
Silvia: more difficult this term?
Alan: hmm
Silvia: yeah because it er was busier I mean er:
we started a new language for me it’s Japanese for others it’s Portuguese or Chinese or whatever and we have the exams I think the exams of this term are heavier or more difficult anyway (.)(in take of breath)) but they are more interesting too so: (.)(er you have to study a lot
Alan: hmm
Silvia: and to improve your English my Chinese and my Japanese especially e::m but even the the friends erm my friends er I know them better than before so i: I don’t know I am feeling more(..) I don’t know how to say it(..) feeling better anyway
Alan: hmm
Silvia: em
Alan: what’s it like since you’ve started studying Japanese now? Is it(.) have things become more difficult for you
Silvia: em: a little bit more difficult but more interesting
Alan: hmm
Silvia: a lot more interesting because(.) I like Japanese very much I love that language it’s very difficult ((small laugh)) bu:t
since it’s one of my favourite ones I
don’t care as long as I can learn it so (.)
it’s ok
Alan: hmm one of your more difficult ones (.)
because it’s very difficult more different
from the other languages you learnt?
Silvia: yes it’s not that different from Chinese (.)
but er: it’s I think Chinese is more
difficult than Japanese
Alan: yeah
Silvia: ah but since I: watched a lot of (animes) in Japanese in original language er I like
to understand sometimes some words or
expressions i: hope some day I will
know this language better than I do now
so
Alan: hmm (.) how do you find it in the
classroom is it the same is it very
different from the other languages you
are learning?
Silvia: ah: well er: you mean the class mates?
Alan: yeah the atmosphere the way you have
to learn
Silvia: er: the atmosphere is good (.) in
Japanese lessons it’s very good the
professor is great and the class- I know
most of the class mates so I’m ok we’re
all right in the Japanese lesson (.)
Chinese ah I don’t like er: erm: I don’t
like Chinese like I like erm Japanese (.)
the same level but (.) I guess it’s ok
some of the my classroom mates in the
Chinese lessons are my friends so: we’re
not much we’re not many we are 15 or
and in English we’re a lot ((laughs))
lots of classes and I know most of them
(.) erm I like English it’s why I came
here (.) first of all ((laughs)) because I
love English language so: (.) it’s
becoming more difficult more and more
difficult (.) because they ask you ahh
high level in the spoken and written
language bu- but I guess it’s ok it’s why
I came here after all ((laughs))

Alan: when you say they ask you for a high
level does that mean you experience it in
the classroom as a high level or they ask
you in what way?

Silvia: er both (.) I mean er even the professor
the professor (.) ok it’s normal (.) but
also my classmates there’s a high level
between among my classmates there are
people who are very keen in English
they study a lot or they just talented I
think a:nd I think I am one of the worst
in the school for English er so I have to
improve a lot in this year that’s is why I
would like love to go to Exeter in
erasmus but since er it wasn’t the case
((laughs)) I am going to brest in france (.)
hoping to to learn French be- better than
I do now so when I will go out of this
school I will know French at least more
than the others I don’t know because
Chinese and Japanese are too difficult to
learn them good erm I don’t think I
will know them after three years I have
to go to china to japan so: (.) it’s
difficult and I don’t know in English it
should have been better if I went to
Exeter but since I can’t it’s ok I’m gonna
improve in another way ((laughs))
Alan: why can’t you go to Exeter?
Silvia: because I was er: in the (. ) list the
gradutoria
Alan: yeah
Silvia: (. ) er but I wasn’t vincitore ((Italian for
winner)) (. ) then I accepted brest and
then I: found out that I was I was taken
I don’t know I was vincitore for Exeter
be- because somebody er ha rinuciato
((Italian for renounced))
Alan: yeah they they renounced their place
Silvia: renounced can can you say renounced
Alan: ye:ah they gave up gave up their place
Silvia: gave up their place and so I was oh my:
ok let’s go to brest then ((laughs)) er
since I think that everything that
happens to me it’s the sign of the destiny
(. ) let’s go ((laughs)) (xx)
Alan: destiny
Silvia: yeah ((laughs))
Alan: you still so you believe in destiny
Silvia: yeah ((laughs)) (. ) guess so ((laughs))
Alan: because you said I remember in the first
interview you were talking about (.)
having to you know work
Silvia: hm m
Alan: to become a good interpreter
Silvia: yeah but there’s also (. ) well I think
there are things you can’t control
Alan: [yeah
Silvia: [so:]
I guess that’s destiny ((laughs))
Alan: yeah such as? what would you say you
can’t control?
Silvia: I mean not everything that happens to us
it’s up to us so ((laughs)) I don’t know
like what I just said a while ago I don’t
know 10 minutes ago er ((exhales)) I
don’t know err a lot of things
Alan: hmm
Silvia: now I can’t remember but a lot of things
Alan: yeah
Silvia: I mean why did you do what you did?
Alan: since our last interview our one-to-one
interview do you think you’ve changed
in some way since then?
Silvia: yeah
Alan: how would you describe that? (...) change
Silvia: well both first of all I started to: go to go
to japan theatre so I started to opt (. ) er
to: to be on stage er speaking in
Japanese and I never (. ) done this before
then with my friends I thing I have
changed some er behaviour I think even
towards the: (. ) school exams and classes
(. ) I think my behaviour changed a little
bit (. )
Alan: could you describe a little bit how it changed
Silvia: oh well I started to be more erm practical for administrative things I don’t know
Alan: hm m
Silvia: technical things I don’t know er because you’re on your own when you’re here you don’t have your parents behind you you have to go through a lot of things a lot of stuff
Alan: yeah
Silvia: and the::n i:: ((exhales)) I don’t know with friends I think that with every person you meet changes you in some sort of way: I changed my behaviour according to each person
Alan: hm m
Silvia: er (_) I don’t know er
Alan: can you think of some specific episodes that might you know might (_) you know explain this change
Silvia: well once a friend shouted at me _rm in the past we used to answer back (...) er but that time I didn’t (_) I realised ((possibly a false friend ,‘realizare’ to do)) something else so:
Alan: shouted at you in what sense?
Silvia: because I was being I guess I was being a little bit ((laughs)) a: ((laughs)) drag ((laughs)) I don’t know
Alan: hm m
Silvia: I was stressing others I think a:nd someone told me that
Alan: is this the classroom or in general?
Silvia: yeah this one one of my classmates but it didn’t happen in the class anyway
Alan: what happened in that moment that (.)
you think they [got stressed with you
Silvia: [er well I realised that er (..) sometimes I had to I don’t know control myself and not let the others feel my pain I think my stress erm keep it for myself when it’s (..) exaggerated I don’t know when I I exaggerate (.). erm (.). and that sometimes you just can’t answer back you just have to keep it for yourself just to think about it and say ok maybe he’s right
Alan: you said pain stress erm (.). something quite specific it sounds like you know
Silvia: [yeah
Alan: [express your pain your stress what does that mean
Silvia: er it mean that it was er the end of the classes it was a month ago not the end but I mean the great work that you have to do it’s on your back
Alan: hmm
Silvia: you feel it a:nd I always er I also work working in forli I have classes to go to I have exams to pass er: rehearsals to do (.). so:: I was busy and I felt the stress
Alan: yeah
Silvia: maybe not knowing it i: erm throw it on my friends shoulders you know and they let me notice ((laughs))
Alan: hmmm
Silvia: so now I: i try to take it more you know (. relaxed
Alan: hm m can you think how that episode occurred where that stress was obvious
to you (.) can you tell me what happened in that specific moment that episode
Silvia: ah well I went down a:nd the all the where we were English class I was I
don’t know how can you say inquieta ((laughs))
Alan: eh inquieta I think perhaps I was agitated [not very relaxed
Silvia: [yeah
Exactly I was agitated all the time during that one and half hour (.) so: my friend
came down stairs to have (a film) I reached them
Alan: to watch a film
Silvia: (..)
Alan: you said to have a film
Silvia: an ice-cream sorry ((laughs))
Alan: oh sorry it’s me (xx)
Silvia: an ice-cream a:nd I reached them a:nd I was complaining about something I
can’t remember what and there was a point my one of one of my friends (.)
((exhales)) talk start starts to shout at me yeah because I wa:s (.). stressed and I
was stressing them too (.). the other friends were just watching they weren’t
they weren’t they actually weren’t didn’t agree with the-. (.). they said they told me
ok maybe: over reacted er I wouldn’t
have done it (.) and I was saying no it’s
ok ((exhales)) it was right (.)
Alan: what did you do? I don’t understand
what you did
Silvia: i:: I didn’t react I suddenly I was like (.)
ok (. ) I; er turned my back because I
forgot something in the classroom and I
got upstairs and when I went
downstairs they were gone because they
we’re trying to take (nothing) I didn’t
react
R; why did they shout at you?
Silvia: because I stressed them too
R; how did you stress then?
Silvia: cos I was always complaining (.) or they
are friends there is a friend of mine who
do not like when people act childish and
I was laughing at something very
childish during the class because I was
so stred- I had stressed I had to er let it
go in some other ways like ((laughs))
laughing for something very stupid a:nd
so was always saying come on you you
do you have ten are you ten years old?
Or something like that it was like (xxx) I
wanted to laugh it’s ok and the: n more
and more of these episodes in the same
class and when I went down stairs ah
well he he: couldn’t erm bear the the
weight so: he told me (. ) a::nd
Alan: what were you laughing at?
Silvia: ((laughs))
Alan: that he considered childish
Silvia: well stupid things ((laughs)) very stupid things I can’t remember now what they were just very stupid I mean like (puns)

I think

Alan: sorry

Silvia: puns

Alan: ah ha

Silvia: games in languages when it’s in Italian and English just some kind of game with words I don’t know

Alan: right (.) so were they speaking in English and you were punning on the english words or

Silvia: in Italian yes (.) something like that ((laughs))

Alan: ah ha

Silvia: but I think it was stress too ((laughs)) so my this is just an episode there are lots erm ((exhales)) I can’t remember them but there are a lot

Alan: are you more stressed this term do you think?

Silvia: (.) now no I’m not that stressed because I took two day for to relax (.) so: I didn’t do (.) anything in particular just rest myself because I was really (.) stressed because of all those things I had to do and I have to do so: there was even erm a friend of mine who came all the way here from france to visit me and to to watch my theatre (.) performance so she was here for 2 weeks so I was I was (.) was doing these rehearsals so I was studying I was I had to do a lot of things
for my house for my flatmates friends
and then I had to stay with her too
because she came here for me too so: I
was kinda stressed now I’m kinda
relaxed I have to study because the
whole section is about to start but I’m ok
(.) I’m more relaxed anyway
Alan: yeah so from the very beginning of your
university degree to now you’ve gone
through a change?
Silvia: yeah I I wouldn’t say a big change bu:t I
think that you change a lot during the (.)
the months the weeks I don’t know (. ) as
the we- as the weeks go on on and on
you change a little bit
Alan: sure
Silvia: you never stay yourself
Alan: hm m
Silvia: for too long
Alan: cos you talked about going through a
sort of trial by fire
Silvia: hm m
Alan: in our first one-to-one interview you said
it’s like throwing yourself into the fire
Silvia: yeah ((laughs))
Alan: [and
Silvia: [do you
remember that ((laughs))
Alan: yes you said it was a very positive thing
and that out of this came ( . ) if I
remember correctly out of this came
positive things
Silvia: yeah
Alan: but you weren’t afraid of the fire
Silvia: no: I’m not afraid even here now I’m not afraid of this fire even in the class when I see that other people are better than me because they are ((laughs)) err I’m not afraid I just think ok I shall improve and I can do it I have I think I have the (...) the instruments I don’t know em (.) a way to do it anyway mm (.) maybe I should perhaps put myself more in it because ((laughs)) I er let the school is the last thing on my list sometimes and I shouldn’t be doing it so: I just have to think about my: (.) err ((exhales)) not my needings my: (.) how do you say (.) I can’t even remember in Italian the word er priorities (.) and that’s it er there are people there are some of my friends better than me and I like to to go along with them to to go out with them mm because they are positive friendship they can bring something to me and sometimes you need other people to bring something to you because you can’t do it on your own that’s ok

Alan:  

hm m (…) what do they bring to you?

Silvia: well some people brought a little bit of erm knowledge about erm my behaviour how I I look outside some others a sch- a schools things I don’t know like English or Chinese or Japanese they help me with (.) knowing more about these languages or knowledge about I don’t know the world outside abroad there
are a lot of people who went to Australia
America er they travelled a lot and they
had all those fantastic experiences so I
try to erm to take some of these some of
that information and try to use it to on (. )
in the future
Alan:  hm m ( .. ) you said some friends took
        you out to think about yourself?
Silvia: yeah also
Alan:  in relation to?
Silvia: I mean on the outside because as you
        know ((small laugh)) we think of
        ourselves from the inside and just the
        other people can make you realise what
        you’re doing what you are from the
        outside
Alan:  hm
Silvia: so: sometimes er they told me something
        I ( . ) couldn’t realise because I don’t
        know myself from the outside
Alan:  hm m for example (. )
Silvia:  erm I don’t know maybe when I react to
        how I relate to some sort of situations (. )
er for example when I’m childish or
        when I’m strong even in the positive
        way not always negative ((laughs)) I
        mean they tell me oh you’re fantastic
        you’re so strong and I I know I’m not
        but they told they tell me and I start to
        think maybe i: I don’t know i: lack this
        strength er go to them and I don’t say
        transfer? Transmettere
Alan:  yeah to transfer [it to
Silvia: [transfer
Alan: yeah what sort of strengths are they talking about
Silvia: more because ((laughs)) I think I am
erm(.) I don’t know I’m a (fire) character I am I mean there are some characters that there are (.) erm (.) cold
Alan: hm m
Silvia: I think I am the opposite ((laughs)) [(x)
Alan: [firey
Silvia: yeah firey I’m explosive so they tell me oh you’re so full of energy all the time and when th- they see that I’m not rarely rare occasions because i: try not to erm make this (.) feeling er go out in the world i: i: try to keep it for myself when I’m not full of energy I’m not myself but in that rare occasions erm(.) they tell me you’re not as you’re used to I know you don’t usually are this way what happened to you? so: it's maybe: I don’t know I think I’m more open now than I was before even in the: theatre er: meeting we had on during the second term I think erm: there was this erm actor who came here because one from the senza limiti ((theatre group)) called him to make us express ourselves in another languages(.) and learn how to express ourselves in other languages er he made us do some games with expressions games I realised I was err (...) shy ((laughs)) I didn’t know that but I was shy I realised that in that moment so:
(.:) this is how f- fate changed for me (.:)
so: I don’t know ((laughs))
Alan: shy in that language or shy in your own
language?
Silvia: no in general I’m: they say ok you’re
not shy (.:) but I thought I wasn’t shy
and then I realised I was and this actor
told me (.:) well for me it was clear (.:
you are shy why did someone told tell
you that you’re not? It was like no: they
told me no you’re full of energy you’re
always the first one to drag us into
something I don’t know maybe go to the
(vecchio stazione) or other things (.:)
theatre and so that’s it ((laughs))
Alan: did they effect the way that you looked
at yourself
Silvia: (.:) yeah
Alan: how?
Silvia: (.:) well when someone er (.:) err show
you shows you that you’re not what you
thought you were ((exhales)) it strikes
you y- (.:) you’re grown up 20 years
thinking about yourself in some ways
and then you find yourself thinking other
things about yourself (.:) you’re not what
you thought you were so (.:) it’s kind of a
trauma ((laughs)) but not the kind of
trauma that er (.:) keeps you cold or away
from the world it just a: sort of barrier
you have to over pass you know er to
pass through anyway and
Alan: so you accepted their view
Silvia: yeah and i realised i was (...) how they
tell they told me i was (...) it's ok i just
have to go through this barrier i know to
pass through and (...) it's another (
challenge ((laughs))
Alan: right this barrier (...) to feel timid or shy?
Silvia: yeah
Alan: but is that any has that got any
relationship to being a future interpreter
or (...) your dream?
Silvia: oh well i don't know because it was so
sudden i don't know if (...) it has anything
to being a future interpreter (...) i just
have to (...) overcome it in some way and
maybe will be good for me even as an
interpreter to (...) er ((exhales)) (...) to
crash this barrier i don't know
Alan: hm cos you said in your first interview
that you were very (...) it was your dream
to be an interpreter
Silvia: yeah erm i mean it's my dream always
be but i'm changing my: (...) point of
view
Alan: why?
Silvia: (...) i don't know i: ((in take of breath))
I've seen so many things this year i: i'm
not sure i will be or want to be an
interpreter (3.0) there are a lot of things
to do so: i will see i'm not sure about
being an interpreter in the future
anymore (...) i will see as the opportunity
come (...) i wish to choose something i
don't know (...)
Alan: hm what has happened to make you think about this differently you think
Silvia: oh because first there are a lot a lot of jobs you can do (.). ahh (.). jobs that you can’t even imagine exists so: there’s this friend of mine who came from france to watch my theatre performances er. she’s going to australia (.). ah she told me well i: will find a job but there are so many jobs we (.). can’t imagine (.). that maybe I will find one that I don’t know now it’s my favourite one so I’m I’m not saying I will do that in future I’ll just choose as I (.). as I go (.). I don’t know so: I feel the same
Alan: what is your favourite job?
Silvia: well could be interpreter but I don’t know it (.). I’ve never been an interpreter so I don’t know if it’s if it will be my favourite job the the idea ok to be an interpreter (.). yeah it would be good very good but I don’t actually know if that’s my job (.). so: (.). we’ll see ((laughs))
Alan: I’m trying to understand because when we talked you said that was your aim in life was to be an interpreter it was your dream it would be to realise a dream (.). and now you’re saying you’re not sure I’m just wondering if there’s an episode or something what happened between (.).
Silvia: an episode (.). I don’t know
Alan: well episodes or people or
Silvia: I think more episodes I can’t remember
but (.) I haven’t I don’t have a good
memory any more ((laughs)) I don’t
remember what I ate last night so
((laughs)) er but I think lots of episodes
[er:
Alan: [in the classroom
Or outside the classroom?
Silvia: (. ) both I think all the people I met in
this year (.) er all the opportunities that I
came to know about (…) hmm ((smacks
lips, exhales)) (. ) maybe I was thinking
about a future job because I am 2 years
late err compared to the others it was
like ok I have to get a job soon but now
that I am I had this experience in
SSLMIT and all the people I met aah
I’m saying ok I’ve been working for 10
ah 7 years during summer I will find
other jobs if I need to err there’s no need
to hurry (.) because there are lots of jobs
a::nd (..) I want to find out about all
those jobs and those opportunities I
want to travel so: I don’t know I I’m not
thinking about job any more (.) I see
Alan: hmm
Silvia: ((laughs)) er very very far away so ( .) I
[er:
Alan: [it sounds like
life has become more complicated ( .) am
I wrong in interpreting that?
Silvia: well complicated err to become an
interpreter is quite complicated (.) so: to:
( .) to be thinking about reaching that
goal (.) ah I think that (.) err leaves a lot
of erm stress (.) or but if you think about
life (.) one step (.) er (.) at a time (.) I
think you: you enjoy more ((laughs))
just that because sometimes we have this
social stress ok you have to find a job
you’re living with your parents money
money money lack of money especially
er you don’t really enjoy your life and
your 20 years er now we can enjoy it be-
before we are 40 and then something
else comes to mind as other problems so
I think we should take it more (.) relaxed
( .) I don’t know slowly anyway
Alan: right (.) ((takes out handkerchief)) it’s ok
( .) erm you you talked about (.)
competition when we talked the first
time
Silvia: yeah ( .) well there’s a lot of competition
here but I like I’m I don’t mind I mean
er I mean each of us is doing his own er
path he chose his own path so: err ( .) I
don’t know I don’t care about others
being challenged I mean I care as long
as erm ( .) the friendship is involved but
for (xx) for the I don’t know the marks
or that stuff I don’t care hmm ( .)
Alan: but it was ( .) you were very positive
about [competition
Silvia: [yeah ( .) yeah
Yeah I like competition because what it’s saying
it helps you to go through err challenges
( .) so: ( .) it’s ok I don’t I don’t mind
there are people who can’t stand just
can’t stand competition I am not that kind of person I live (.) w- well with competition ((laughs)) go on well

Alan: so do you have the same opinion or different opinion from when you started the school about competition you said that it was all very positive everybody helped each other y- you said you saw it as a very positive thing

Silvia: [yeah

Alan: [has that

Changed or (.) not

Silvia: hm no (.) at the end I know the people who are into competition (.) too much into competition I know people who aren’t and I know how to deal with them (.) all of them it’s just I think it’s all about knowing how to deal with different people so if you know if you can’t do something with that person or something else with the other person you just go on (good well) I don’t know

Alan: you say too much (.) it didn’t come out in the first meeting (.) that people are too much it was all positive in the first meeting but you say now that people are too much I mean what does that mean?

Silvia: well I think it’s positive but it’s my point of view it’s competition isn’t always positive for other people it’s negative

Alan: yeah

Silvia: all of it

Alan: so what’s too much then?
Silvia: well it’s
Alan: [from your
Point of view
Silvia: when they say too much it’s not from
my point of view from the point of view
in general too much competition I mean
(.) for a:- it doesn’t bother me but I
know that maybe it can bother other
people
Alan: for example
Silvia: for example people who: I don’t know
((exhales)) hard to say ((laughs))
Alan: an example (.) where it was too much for
some people
Silvia: ahh (.) writing ideograms Chinese
ideograms (all around) SSLMIT walls
((laughs))
Alan: what was this?
Silvia: yeah ((laughs)) people like that (.) bu:t
even with those people I have a bond (..)
so: really it doesn’t bother me it can
bother other people because I know it
bothers other people because I heard it (.)
[but
Alan: can you just tell me
what this is about because I’m not sure (.)
writing ideograms around?
Silvia: well there are people who are too much
(.) how do you say in English esaltate
Alan: t- too excited [about
Silvia: [too excited
About doing this type of school we can
say that and they show it too much and in
a strange bizarre way ((laughs))
Alan: hm m
Silvia: and not all the people understands this ways and they say oh my god what is he doing or is she doing maybe she’s not she’s too much into er this (. ) language thing (. ) they’re too much excited
Alan: what did she do or he do?
Silvia: ((laughs))
Alan: you don’t have too mention names just Silvia: no [no
Alan: [the idea
Silvia: (xx) I can’t remember now I just know it’s the behaviour it’s the basic behaviour
Alan: one thing that?
Silvia: like writing ideograms all over the place ((laughs))
Alan: what ideograms
Silvia: I mean writing on the (sheet) and pinning it pin it to the wall where anybody can see it (. ) so:
Alan: and what would that ideogram signify?
Silvia: no: I mean it’s the whole behaviour I can’t just explain it (. ) ah you have to know those people ((laughs)) but as I said I don’t mind it doesn’t bother me (. ) ahh it depends on how you take those behaviours (. ) hmm (. ) in the whole I think that those people (. ) are excited about this because they’re doing they are doing what they wanted to do and they want to do it er in the best way they can (. ) so it’s taking it seriously for pe- for some people it’s taking it too much seriously for others it’s ok (. ) I think it’s ok or speaking the
languages all the time for example you
you know 30 people you know that this
person speaks or studies (laughs)
Portuguese Spanish and French you start
speaking to him in French or Spanish
when- as soon as you see him or her err or
other languages too Chinese Japanese err
sometimes it’s a frame of mind (. ) who
speaks Chinese every time he sees me and
like oh stop it (laughs) I don’t like
Chinese please
Alan: this this is an Italian person speaking?
Silvia: yeah exactly well I know please stop it I
ju- I have to go to all the Chinese classes
take the accents and all the (. ) the stuff I
don’t want to hear it after school (. ) so:
(laughs) but they’re just too excited
about it so they can’t stop ( . ) it’s like an
illness we can say but not a negative
illness
Alan: hmm but you don’t like it?
Silvia: well it’s not that I don’t like it sometimes
it’s annoying I say ok stop (laughs) but:
if you just let it be it’s not annoying er I
said it depends on how you deal with err
some kind of behaviours so (. ) if you
know how to deal with it it’s ok (. ) it’s not
a problem (3.0)(laughs)
Alan: right but there’s some people who
obviously insist on speaking these these
languages
Silvia: yeah (laughs)
Alan: right and you find that?
Silvia: well (.) it’s good for them because they
can improve (.) sometimes just too much
((laughs))
Alan: isn’t that good for you as well? (..)
Silvia: ahh well (.) it’s just that sometimes (.) ahh
you have to stop being what you are what
you usually are (.) mm there’s some cases
which you (.) you should heed what the
others have to say (.) and these people
sometimes don’t so: (.) they’re self
centred or sometimes selfish ((in take of
breath)) so: it’s not the case of my friend
he’s just self centered he’s not selfish but
((laughs))
Alan: hmm
Silvia: depends on the people (.)
Alan: hmm
Silvia: ahh well I guess that kind of behaviour
which make me improve (.) but it’s just
not me I can’t do that all the time I speak
other languages when I’m outside the
school but (..) some cases (.) depends (.)
sometimes you don’t need to do it (.)
when there are people who don’t
understand you can’t do it (.) it’s rude I
think ((laughs))
Alan: hmm so you speak other languages (.)
with Italians or with people who speak the
languages
Silvia: ah (.) both depends on the cases but
mostly with people who know those
languages (.) otherwise I don’t find it very
useful
Alan: but Italian students who know the languages? (.) or the actual people who speak those languages I mean if you’re speaking to an Italian who’s learning Spanish it’s different from a Spanish person [who’s Spanish]

Silvia: exactly what I said I mean I al- usually speak to those to the mother lang-?

Alan: mother tongue

Silvia: mother tongue ((laughs))

Alan: (xx)

Silvia: err I don’t speak to Italians who speak that language

Alan: but some people do

Silvia: yeah (.) yeah of course

Alan: and you feel?

Silvia: they can do what ever they want but I don’t find it useful (.) because: er the other one can’t er (.) tell you if you’re mistaken something or not they’re not mother tongue so: sometimes for the fluency it’s good but it depends on the cases as I said er sometimes there are people who don’t understand that language you just can’t keep speaking that language because you have to show the world that you know it ((laughs))

Alan: hm m you think they are showing the world they know it

Silvia: [yeah sometimes

Yeah when I say they’re excited too much excited I mean also that

Alan: hmm (.)
Silvia: it’s rude (.)
Alan: how do you interpret that? (...)
Silvia: being weak ((laughs)) I mean weak in the meaning of being erm er ah insecure about er oneself (...)
Alan: interesting (. ) insecure because they speak (2.0) ((silvia laughs)) a language they’re learning to other people
Silvia: yeah to other people
Alan: [why (xx)
Silvia: who who don’t understand that language I mean (. ) it’s sho- if you have to show something to the others it means you’re you’re insecure about it
Alan: hm
Silvia: I think I’m not a psych- psy- psychologist but (…) erm because there’s no need to do it you know those people don’t understand you so ((laughs))
Alan: hm so you have people you know
Silvia: yeah
Alan: who speak a language to- a- other students and they know they don’t know that language
Silvia: yeah it happen al- to me too (. ) ahh once a girl spoke to me in german (. ) I just know the numbers in german ((laughs)) a:nd sh- she said oh it’s true you don’t know german and I like yeah and she kept on speaking german ((laughs)) just to show that she knew it ((in take of breath)) yeah it happens all the time
Alan: how did you interpret that? (..)
Silvia: being insecure (.) er meaning that she
         want the world to to know that she know
         more than they do ((laughs)) so: putting
         yourself (.) at a higher level than the other
         are so: but you know that (.) it just (.) you
         (. ) try to do it

Alan: hm

Silvia: it’s not the real the real thing

Alan: right so they speak a language they know
       you don’t know ((silvia laughs))

Silvia: yeah it’s becoming ((silvia laughs)) a a
       game

Alan: yes?

Silvia: a word game

Alan: a wor- between many people? or just a
       few do you think

Silvia: err (.) depends on the cases sometimes
       there are a lot of people sometimes it’s a
       restricted group sometimes just one
       person who don’t know that doesn’t know
       that language depends tha- ((laughs))

Alan: what if you see that if you see somebody
       speaking to an Italian student and they’re
       both Italian speaking in a language they
       know the person doesn’t know how do
       you interpret that?

Silvia: (...) being insecure (laughs) I told you

Alan: but insecure how do you understand
       insecure then

Silvia: because by: er having people (.) errm erm
       (. ) awe you (.) I mean a.w.e.

Alan: in awe in awe of you

Silvia: in awe of you exactly erm: you you feel
       like you’re doing something very cool
((laughs)) and you you know something that the others don’t know

Alan: hmm

Silvia: and so you feel more secure about yourself and you feel that you can do whatever you want (. I mean ohh they’re in awe for me so er that’s cool yeah keep being in awe ((laughs)) er (. all of us need some people to erm ((exhales)) (. to feel as: as- astatic ((ecstatic?)) I don’t know

Alan: to feel [enthusiastic

Silvia: [enthusiastic to bow to him (. enthusiastic about ourselves so (. er I don’t know it’s just a normal process of the mind

Alan: hmm

Silvia: I think

Alan: but when you were talking last time it seemed more harmonious (. the university atmosphere (. there was competition but people were helping each other but you seem to be revealing a different side now there- there’s this sort of people speaking languages that other people don’t know and they KNOW they don’t know them ((silvia laughs)) that’s different from what you were talking about at the beginning

Silvia: be- because I’m not bothered about it I’m not bothered

Alan: but you see it now you didn’t see it before (. or did you see it before?
Silvia: (. . .) hhh ((exhales)) I can’t remember if I’ve seen it I didn’t care I think I really I’m not bothered because I think I know why people are doing it and even if I don’t know I’m (. . .) I’m ok with it (. . .) maybe if I’m: (. . .) there I can say something if I’m: or (. . .) I just pretend n- not to know what they are doing mm not to care about what they are doing

Alan: are these your own colleagues or other people from other languages only?
Silvia: both
Alan: both
Silvia: yeah
Alan: yeah (. . .) but I still think that you gave the impression I think that there was a more harmonious sense of [sharing
Silvia: [yeah
Alan: the competition was positive and there was a friendly atmosphere but but what you’re saying now suggests that it isn’t isn’t quite as friendly as it was
Silvia: no because err I already told you so I mean (. . .) er what I said before in the first term it was all from my point of view (. . .)
Alan: righ:t
Silvia: but other people don’t like competition (. . .)
Alan: er my colleagues who were was there that day we had this meeting
Silvia:((in take of breath)) err they didn’t agree (. . .)
Alan: yeah
Silvia: mm all not all of them maybe some of them because they have other points of view
Alan: yes
Silvia: em now I’m trying to (.) er ((small laugh)) go out from that point of view (.) I mean mine and talk as I’m trying to: to speak from all the point of views (.) I don’t know if you understand what I’m saying (.) I mean I’m trying to say my point of view and then go out from them from it and say something that other people told me because those are their points of view (.) so: I’m just referring I don’t know (.) er telling you what I’ve heard (.) other points of view
Alan: (.) so your saying that your talking from the point of view of other people now
Silvia: yeah what I think they think yeah a:nd (.) what they told me
Alan: but when we started this conversation you were saying that you’d begun to think about yourself through what people were talking and saying about you
Silvia: yeah but= alan: =so now you’re suggesting that (.) am I am I understanding correctly now you’re beginning to see not just yourself= other people but yourself as well through the point of view of other people?
Silvia: yeah ((laughs))
Alan: so it’s not just you as an isolated case
Silvia: yeah
Alan: it’s you as a person who has become aware of people talking about you criticising you making points of view about you and you consequentially
looking at them and other people they talk about [it seems you (xx)

Silvia: [yeah more it’s like a web it’s like a spiders web

A: ah it’s like spider web

Silvia: yeah

Silvia: I I’m not clear when I speak er in every
glanguage (.) even in Italian I I have all this

confusion in mind I have never a clear
idea of what I am s- saying all the time I
don’t have like a plan or something I don’t
follow any plan

Alan: sure

Silvia: I just say what comes to my [mind what I

want to

Alan: [sure

Silvia: just try to get some information

Alan: yeah

Silvia: a:nd (.) I don’t know (.) it’s like a spider

web as I said

Alan: has life become more complicated or is it

just (..)

Silvia: er what do you mean?

Alan: well when we first talked almost 7 or 8
months ago I presume erm (.) things

seemed to be more straight forward (.a

little bit more clear (.it seems now there

is a bit more complexity in the way you’re
talking about things (. have things

become more complex? for you do you

think or [(xx)

Silvia: [more than

Complex I’d say in Italian articulato

Alan: more a- (. sort of like (. particular
Silvia: like [there’s this

Alan: [individual things

Silvia: tree ((small laugh)) a lots of branches and
from each branch other branches coming
out and from all this each and everyone of
these branches other branches coming out
it’s not complicated I think it’s (..)
articulato ((laughs)) there are lots of
things I got to know a:nd in the first time I
didn’t know (..) lo- all all those people of
these people (.). now: i: know them (..)
more than I did before I know more of
them (.). I get I got to know more people
so it’s as I said it’s a spiders web a:nd (.)
if I started talking about my point of view
now I’m I’m trying to talk about others
point of view (.)

Alan: hm

Silvia: keeping myself erm I mean erm objective
because they’re not my point of view but:
I’m just telling you what I heard what I
feel about er what they told me (.). and I
started to think about those things when
they told me those

Alan: hm m

Silvia: things err (.). I started to ta- er think about
them and I was like ok maybe he’s right
maybe she’s right

Alan: so their influencing you

Silvia: (.). in some ways yes bu:
Alan: if you say (.). m sometimes you sound as if
it’s just I’ve begun to listen to them but
you seem to say that I’m still separate
from them (.). but then you say things like
this and it sounds like well their right [that
means that they’re influencing you isn’t it?
Silvia: [we::ll
well but maybe I think well yeah I notice
that I mean he did this (xxx) but I: don’t
I don’t care about it ((small laugh)) I still
don’t care about it (.) I I start to noted it
we can say like that
Alan: yeh
Silvia: I start to note things that before I didn’t
notice (.) bu:t it doesn’t mean that they
influence me
Alan: hm m
Silvia: I mean maybe I notice now (.) but maybe I
still don’t care ((small laugh)) or I still not
er (..) bothered about it
Alan: but you say maybe (.)
Silvia: yeah (.) depends on the case ((small
laugh)) you don’t have the absolute truth
er so: (.) I don’t know
Alan: right (.) but there might be somethings
that do influence you then
Silvia: yeah (.) of course (.) there’s always
something that influence you (.) now I
can’t recall anything but (.) maybe
something of those things I heard
influenced me (.) maybe without me
knowing it (.)
Alan: hm m (..) anythings in the classroom the
teachers that said to you that have changed
the way you view (.) your (.) the relation
to languages translation and interpreting
that made you re-think yourself as an
interpreter for example?
Silvia: (...) we'll for example I like being among people (...) talking to them and for example the interpreter who stands in the cabin and translates everything in the cabin I don’t like that kind of job

Alan: hm m

Silvia: when I was like oh I want to be an interpreter I didn’t know what it was like now stay here I start to understand what it is like (...) step by step so I’m changing my point of view of course (..)

Alan: this is a conference interpreter

Silvia: yeah for example

Alan: right but there are different types of interpreter

Silvia: there are different types of interpreter absolutely exactly for example I I don’t want to be that kind of interpreter let’s see wh- what the others do

Alan: why not?

Silvia: because I want to stay with people I don’t like to do my job into a cabin (...) alone I want to talk with people so I don’t think it’s my stuff

Alan: hm m (...) what is your stuff?

Silvia: ((laughs)) I don’t know I’m (...) I’m searching (...) I’m still searching for something there are several kinds of things of

Alan: but you are beginning to exclude [which]

Silvia: exactly

Alan: suggests you are beginning to

Silvia: exactly

Alan: if that’s not your type of interpreting
Silvia: exactly

Alan: then

Silvia: I'm starting to choose my own path

Alan: hm

Silvia: because now I am er in the real place to do it

Alan: hm

Silvia: I have something that that help me do it

Alan: right and we talked about talent and there was an argument there in the group

Silvia: talent yeah if talent exists or not

Alan: any views on that now?

Silvia: well I still think that some people are cut out to to do something special and that what I call talent but (here) I think with hard work you can improve so maybe with your hard work you can’t reach people who are naturally born to do something but still you can try

Alan: such as? what are some people naturally born to? in your opinion

Silvia: well there is a friend of mine he was naturally born to: to speak languages ((small laugh)) he can speak any of them there is a lot of erm hard work behind it too but he has fluency he has knowledge he: he has passion and that’s more important and so I like the way (the good things) come out from people I’d I’d like for everyone was can find his own way his own passion er but since it’s not possible well let’s see what happens in the future
Alan: that’s a word you used a lot in the beginning (.) you said a lot about my passion (.)

Silvia: hm m

Alan: has your passion changed?

Silvia: (.)(exhales deeply)) well er languages are still one of my passions bu:t (.) in this (…) I think three (.) past three months (..) i: I’ve I’ve understood that theatre it’s one of my passion too (.) and mixing them together wa:s was great (..) I I love just to be to be on stage to stand on stage em with people looking at you ah it gives you that adrenalin that just few things give you so: I’m I’m finding out more about myself too these months let’s see in the in the 2 years coming ((small laugh)) after this

Alan: hm (.) is that theatre in different languages or just theatre in general? Because you were talking about theatre when you were doing it in different languages (..) is that related to your studies or is it just a general desire for theatre?

Silvia: I think it’s a general desire for theatre and then when languages (.) er are (.) combined

Alan: hm

Silvia: with this passion I think it’s a powerful bomb ((small laugh)) it’s perfect for me because I love languages too (.) all of them (.) there are languages that in this year that I understood are not for me (.) for example Russian or Slovakian they’re
very beautiful languages but I think I’m not  
talented for those languages

Alan: why?

Silvia: I don’t know ah (2.0) you just think it  
(thinks so) you see it er: once a: a

Slovakian guy (. ) tried to teach me

something in Slovakian a: nd we were all

the night long trying to I was all night

long trying to repeat it and I couldn’t

bring myself to say it ((laughs)) it was like

ok I’m not talented for this I’m I don’t

know you just see it and you know it (. )

Alan: for that specific language

Silvia: yeah (2.0)

Alan: but other languages you are? You think or

Silvia: well ((small laugh)) I think so maybe I’m

not talented but I’m keener on them than I

am on Russian or Slovakian

Alan: why do you think that’s the case?

Silvia: (…) because there are languages I see that

there are languages that erm came came to

me I can tell I don’t know (. ) naturally

more natural (. )

Alan: you’re more attracted to them perhaps

they’re more immediate more spontaneous

for you

Silvia: yeah exactly

Alan: hm

Silvia: spontaneous (. ) they came spontaneously

( . ) they don’t they are those I am forced

to speak I feel this stress when I’m

speaking them (. ) I mean even in English

ah: I think I made lots of mistake today

but I don’t care I mean I care ((laughs))
because er I’m studying it but I like speaking in English and even if I make even if I made lots of mistakes ah: I can improve and I want to improve (.) I like speaking it reading it and listening to it ((exhales)) (.) Slovakian Russian I like those languages but I just (can’t ?) feel them like they are my languages (.) I start I wasn’t sure about my second language at the beginning I: attended Chinese both Chinese and Russian classes and then: I chose Chinese even if chi- I have a (.) struggle with Chinese because it’s very difficult and I don’t know if I’m keen on it but I like it more than (.) I think it’s more appropriate than Russian for me

Alan: hm

Silvia: ((small laugh)) Japanese too (.) er (..) I I feel like I can do it (.) French Spanish (.) m: I don’t know it’s just a thing that you feel I can’t explain it I don’t really I can’t explain it (2.0)

Alan: no no? (..)

((small laugh))

Alan: no words you can give this to express this desire for (.) Chinese and Japanese but not russian or Slovak?

Silvia: well you feel like er: (.) there’s th- there’s this river (.) flowing (.) er: (.) into your (.) in your inside I don’t know when you are speaking a language you are keen (.) on and well ((small laugh)) but when you I don’t know when I was learning Russian or Slovakian I was like ok maybe not I
don’t feel this bond with this language we can say like that it’s like when you meet a friend when you meet a person (.) sometimes you know that that person will be your friend sometimes you know that that person won’t be your friend because you don’t feel it (.) you don’t feel the bond we can say like that I don’t know if it helps you understand but I don’t know how to express it (.)

Alan: no I understand (.) it’s sort of a deep seated feeling [inside you]

Silvia: [yeah yeah You feel it’s:

Alan: is it the sound of the language you think or is the language

Silvia: hm (.) all of it ((small laugh))

Alan: is it an image you have in your mind of the people? (..) or not

Silvia: (..) er: you mean (.) people er (..) linked to that language?

Alan: yes

Silvia: (.) like er: stereotypes

Alan: could be

Silvia: (3.0) well (.) I don’t know (.) well ((laughs)) for a girl maybe it’s better choosing Russian than Chinese I mean Russian people are tall and blonde and with er I don’t know blue eyes and Chinese are (.) are ((laughs)) Chinese so: I don’t think it’s all: that it’s that I mean (..) even the culture the Culture? Yes (.) erm I like Chinese culture and Japanese culture and maybe also the thing that since I have
always been interested in er things so far
away from me from us our culture maybe
it’s that (. ) because russian it’s different
but it’s not that far away I think they still
have some kind of link to us (. ) er: even
the language (. ) it’s an alphabetic one I
want I wanted to change completely (. )
point of view (. )
Alan: well Russian is Cyrillic not alphabetic it’s
not [the
Silvia: [yeah but
the Cyrillic is an alphabet (. )
Alan: [aah
Silvia: [there are letters
Alan: right I understand it’s not the same
[alphabet
Silvia: [no
because the Chinese and and Japanese
instead have this ideograms pictograms [and
Alan: [right
Silvia: so on (. ) it’s completely different and so I
wanted to change everything from the
start a:nd maybe it’s that we’re on the
extreme sides ( .. ) ((laughs)) seek for
something different I think (. )
Alan: right (. ) so just (. ) to finish what (. ) how
do you see the next (. ) couple of years
developing what are your (. ) what’s your
view of the future do you think at this
point
Silvia: well I’m positive always positive? I think
I am a positive person even thinking about
the future (. ) er I can’t wait to go in
erazmus ((small laugh)) and we will see I
don’t like making plans for the future I
just like to live the day (.) er now and here
because since I have been in er in London
I I started to think like this to enjoy every
single minute hour day and week
Alan: you were in London when were you in
London?
S; ah 2 years ago i:=
Alan: =so before SSLMIT?
Silvia: yeah before (. ) and I st- I learnt how to
enjoy life (. ) day by day (. ) so:
Alan: before now
Silvia: no because in here they all live like it’s a
(plan full of) I don’t like them a kind of
thinking (. ) er: the society I mean (. ) yeah
you have to do this 5 years old (. ) of high
school and then blah blah blah no when
I’ve been in London I learnt that everyday
something different can happen to you so
I: I like to think that way (. ) I don’t know
what is going to happen in these 2 years
coming I don’t really care ((small laugh))
we’ll see
Alan: (. ) so if you’re an interpreter or not an
interpreter
Silvia: we (are here) I don’t know it doesn’t mean
that I I won’t be studying or trying hard to
to reach my goal but since my goal is not
that clear any more we will see what is
going to be
Alan: hm (.) but if you say you’re not sure of
your goal but you’re going towards your
goal it would suggest [that some goal
Silvia: [yeah
Alan: is there some where ((silvia laughs))

Silvia: yeah because I mean my goal is to know those languages (.) right

Alan: right

Silvia: so I’m studying to know those languages (. and that’s (.) for sure ((small laugh))

Then we’ll see if I (..) (I don’t know if)

am becoming an interpreter or not

Alan: right

Silvia: it’s a way to ah:: to reach (.) my f::irst goal but since I’m not sure what is going to be my: next goal or if it’s gonna be the same (.) ah: I’m just working day by day to to reach it and then if there’s erm a a path to choose I will choose then I don’t care now ((laughs))

Alan: so you’re open to

Silvia: yeah open to different things

Alan: so learning language is the most important thing

Silvia: yeah and having fun

Alan: and having fun

Silvia: yeah

Alan: yeah (.) is it easy to have fun here?

Silvia: (2.0) well it’s forli forli is not for fun but if you are surrounded by the: the right people you can have fun whenever you want and wherever you want

Alan: right because some people say you know erm (.) SSLMIT students are very serious they study a lot

Silvia: well but they are fun too ((small laugh))

we’re not robot or machines I mean (.) I want to try it to try hard to reach my goal
I want to enjoy what I am doing because if you start thinking ok I have to study hard and no time for that no time for this well maybe you end up hating what you’re doing so I I don’t like that thought

Alan: hmm
Silvia: so I want to have fun too
Alan: I hope you have lots of fun
Silvia: thank you
Alan: we’ll stop there then thank you very much
Group interview 2: Second interview

Alan: well thank you for coming
welcome back I want to start off
with a question about the exams
I mean how did you find the
exam period any episodes or
experiences you’d like to talk
about? (4.0)

Maria: nightmares

Alan: nightmares?

((general laughter))

Alan: (. ) why?

Maria: erm last night I dreamt I was
coming to my Chinese exam
and I met giacomo and he
knows everything about
Chinese (. ) and he came to me
and said oh my god I forgot it (. )
what? (. ) I forgot how to say (. )
circumcisione (Italian for
circumcision) (general
laughter)) (. ) horrible

Silvia: erm I dreamt that we were (xx)
and one of my friend was er::
magician? I don’t know and she
could make the: er: (. ) how do
you say (xx)?

Maria: she could advocate

Silvia: (advocate) animals (. ) so

Alan: advocate animals?

Maria: (advocate)
Matteo: summon
Silvia: (summonly) summon
Alan: summon animals?
Silvia: yeah something (xxx) I don’t know ((small laugh)) just you er picture something and you have to draw something on the floor (. ) then you put your hand on it and then the animal comes (. ) so it’s a bit strange yeah (. ) nightmares
Maria: nightmares
Fed: I dreamt I went to the groceries (xx) ((whispered voice and overlapping talk))
Alan: you went where?
Fed: to buy groceries and fruit and stuff it was kind of a normal dream ((general laughter))
Alan: in Italian?
Fed: yeah yeah in Italian
Silvia: that’s the weirdest one (. ) groceries? ((tone of disbelief))
Fed: well it sounded weird but you know summon animals and (. ) circumcisione (. )
Alan: yeah=
Fed: =I guess my (. ) bag of fruit was normal
Alan: yes (. ) was it a nightmare?
Fed: no no it was absolutely (. ) boringly normal
Alan: ((laughs)) anybody else a (.)
dreams (. ) experiences?
[overlap]
Maria: another one for chinese
Fed: [(xxx)
Maria: another one about Chinese erm (. ) the exam was in a church and
((federico snorts a laugh)) I had to kneel cos in a church you
have to kneel a:nd (. ) so we’re kneeling down and I was writing and I was writing it in the cyrillic alphabet? pinyin which is chinese the chinese transcription
Alan: right
Maria: and I couldn’t stop writing in Cyrillic (. ) [and (xxxx)
Silvia: [she mixed russian
Maria: I was mixing Russian and Chinese (. ) so all together
Alan: right
Maria: [and
Alan: [wh- what church was this
Was it greek orthodox? =
Maria: = I have no idea and the proforessa wasn’t the real one but she was (. e:m the bad headmaster from matilda
((general loud laughter)) it was (. ) remarkable
Fed: [god I love my grocery dream
Maria: (xx) stick to it

Alan: talking about the exams themselves I mean wh- di- did you experience what you were expecting to experience? Were you happy about (. ) the outcomes? (…)

Maria: m: not all of them (.) I wasn’t happy about Russian I went there and I had (.) like blank wall I couldn’t remember anything

Alan: hm

Maria: and I knew I hadn’t done a er (.) written part (.) written exam (.) so I was freaking out and I’m doing it again in September (.)

Alan: why?

Maria: because it wasn’t a mark I’m going to take (.) it was a lower mark than I expected and I don’t want to have that mark on my ( .) curricula

Alan: hm m=

Maria: =curriculum

Alan: [right

Maria: [so i’m doing it again

Alan: hm cos we did talk about this aspect that some times you are not allowed to refuse your marks ( .) some people had that experience
Maria: federico do you want to talk about it? ((small laugh))
Fed: oh I couldn’t refuse a er failed exam (. ) I would have accepted it but ((general laughter)) but no I I just failed
([(overlapping talk))
Rosa: [(in the end)
Fed: [(xxxxx)
Rosa: in mediation they said we could (. ) no:?
Silvia: [yeah at the end=
Fed: [(xxxx)
Maria: =but they said we’re (doing it for you) (. ) that’s great Silvia: because we went to talk with (. ) marzabotto and I Maria: someone else Alan: which mediation is this now from? Maria: ah English to Italian it was mediation so it was both (. ) and Fed: so we could in the end? Maria: we could yeah Fed: oh thank god I (didn’t) refuse ((general laughter)) (the point of it) I I was really tempted to refuse for (…) just because I wanted (them) to have to explain to me that I couldn’t refuse ((laughter)) I was adorable an- and pathetic at the same time thank god I didn’t then
Alan: yeah so there was confusion there about whether you could or couldn’t (. ) [refuse
Maria: [we we can
Alan: right
Maria: because there is there are some written rules in the statuto dello studente ((student rules and regulations)) and we can refuse a mark
Alan: how do you know this?
Fed: oh because it’s [written
Maria: [it’s written ((overlapping talk))
it’s the law
Silvia: one of our friends found it
Maria: =but not [just that
Alan: [so one of your friends looked for it?
Silvia: yeah
Maria: yeah=
Alan: =so why did they look for it?
Silvia: because she was worried about this whole situation so she looked for some documents and she found it and then when she found it she erm (. ) brought it to: belafonte I think
Maria: yeah
Silvia: I think (. ) the name of the professor
Alan: hm m
Silvia: so: erm
Alan: so she brought it because she was complaining?
Maria: no
Silvia: no: [she
Maria: [last year they couldn’t refuse the mark ((matteo makes noise))
while it’s written that we can even though you got 29 you were looking for a 30 you can refuse it I mean it’s not [the best thing to do
Fed: [it’s university (I mean) it’s not high school
Maria: yeah
Matteo: yeah but there were rules even last years (..) [even past years so
Silvia: [(xxxxx)
Matteo: it’s quite strange=
Silvia: =it’s just that no one looked for it
Matteo: m:: all the the universities know this things (.) the SSLMIT no
Alan: hm
Matteo: and I can say this because I come from the university la sapienza a big university (.) and I have found I have found several things here in the SSLMIT (.) that are quite strange ((federico laughs)) they are very different (.)
Fed: (xxx)
Matteo: and well I know that the SSLMIT was not a university was a was a professional school
and then it became a university but the structure it’s self remained and the one of the professional school.

Silvia: the thing is that when went to speak to belafonte and also the other professor the one who was going to: erm to do linguistics next year

Maria: marasciotto=

Matteo: marasciotto

Silvia: marasciotto er he talked to us he he told us that erm you can refuse it (. ) it’s just that it’s not (. ) advi- it’s not like=

Matteo: advisable=

Silvia: advised I mean your 29 come on

Maria: yeah of course [but

Silvia: [they had to do [more job and [((overlapping talk))

Maria: (xx) take 22 and [(xx)

Silvia: he said ok I can understand a 22 all right and if someone has some problem with the (ergo) about money for (nation) I don’t know (refund) (. ) erm: maybe ok you need a thirty ok we do the exam again but just in that
case you have to tell me he told us
Fed: (xxx) ((sniggers)) a lot if he doesn’t want me to refuse a 29 if I want (all) thirty I I would go (personally) I would go with all 19 it’s not a problem but if I want to have only 30s in my curriculum (.) I should be
Silvia: well in that case they’re not that understanding ok ((overlapping talk)) I’m just saying what they told me ok ((talks over the others)) ((overlapping talk))
Alan: ok ok sorry to interrupt you Michele was talking about in our one to one interview talking about the: the choice of being able to or not being able to refuse your mark actually it came up at the exam
Silvia: [(xxxxxx)
Matteo: [ah: no last year the: this this matter came up at the exam (.) so I know this erm because er my flat mate was is erm a second year student (.)
Alan: hm m
Matteo: and he told me that last year they didn’t know anything (.) and at the exam the: professor said er: well (.) you cannot refuse the er the mark
Alan: hm m
Matteo: you: just we will do the exam in
with several groups and then we:
we will say er: there are no
scores under 24 for example (..)
er and that’s it
Alan: right ok so so that was last year=
Fed: =cos also this year we asked
Silvia: [yeah
Fed: [because he [(xxxxxxxxxx)
Maria: [yeah we asked
((Federico talks in background))
cos we knew that somebody
Fed: and then we asked a professor
because otherwise they wouldn’t
have told us anything
((silvia talks in background))
Alan: what did they say?
Fed: oh they said oh yes it was so last
year I don’t know this year
because the co-ordinator changed
and this year it was professor
(cara) I think
Alan: hm m
Fed: and last year it was someone else
(.) and they didn’t know if this
year there would have been the
same kinda of (.) er rules
Alan: hm m (.). ok so it was confusing
Fed: but then
Silvia: yeah
Fed: they told us that there was [(xx)
Silvia: [ok (.). we got it
Matteo: yeah but the Sslmit is confused
Silvia: yeah

Matteo: I am quite disappointed

((general low laughter))

Alan: why why why are you disappointed?

Matteo: because for example even at the mediation exam (.) erm i: had to do the exam for less credits

Alan: hm m

Matteo: i: wrote (.) more than 10 e-mails (.) to all the professors (.). of the mediation class (.) and when I did it the exam (.) they said (.) what do you have to do? who are you? Less credits why? (…)

Alan: right so you got no response

Matteo: m: here at the Ssmilt they don’t have classrooms with (.) 500 students (.)

((Federico laughs))

Alan: hm m

Matteo: like in the sapienza university (.).

they have (.) 24 students 60 students (.) ah (.) and I find i: i find it quite disappointing erm (2.0)

Alan: ok=

Fed: =I noticed that our professor feel like erm don’t feel the (.) ea:se of working here I mean it’s surely mainly because it’s a very good school but they don’t understand
they have 30 students top (.) and it’s

Alan: what do you mean they don’t understand?

Fed: they don’t they they: they keep the same for example timetables that they would for example to correct an exam as if they had 500 students or they used the erm: they act as if they had the (burocracy) bureaucracy weight of (. ) that much students as ( . ) well they really don’t

Alan: hm m

Fed: and it’s not like I’m asking for a: an apple on the table every morning when I come into the classroom but (.) ((silvia sniggers)) I’d like to (. ) [since i

Silvia: [sometimes the same class =

Fed: =yeah exactly =

Silvia: =is split into 2 teachers (. ) it doesn’t make sense and they took a lot time to examine I don’t know the exams

Alan: this whole aspect of the 2 teachers for 1 course what were your experiences with that particular (. ) system

Maria: I don’t think it’s (. ) the best way to do it

Alan: why?
Maria: cos it’s quite confusing and I think it’s good for the lesson and the learning itself but it’s not good for exam because you keep getting two different type of erm requests and explanation of the exam of how it’s gonna be and what do you what do they expect? We keep receiving 2 totally different things

Alan: is that just in 1 course or in other courses?

Maria: in 2 courses it was translation and mediation and=

Silvia: =well the teachers linked to some programmes as erazmus for example they don’t exist they’re ghosts ((small laugh)) you are tempted to cut your own head off your own neck ((small laugh)) because you can’t find them you sent e-mails nobody answers from the first moment you choose to go on an erazmus until the last one when they recognise all of your exams you are not yourself ((small laugh)) you’re out of your mind so it’s it’s very confusing well they are more organised than other universities I think but it’s not the top one anyway so (..)
Alan: 

hm just to change subject looking back now because this is the end of your first year (. ) and the initial research was based on you being interested in being interpreters (. ) so looking back what sort of skills do you think are important to be an interpreter? 

What have you learnt from your teachers? (. ) What have they said or done or haven’t said or done that have perhaps made you change your (. ) ideas of what it means to be an interpreter (7.0) 

Maria: 

I think professor sabatelli was one of the best one (. ) in talking about the interpreter profession because she (. ) everytime we were going mediation in class and we’re talking with in front of other people she was always saying ok you have the control of the situation so: just remember to keep calm you’re not you do not have to erm (. ) like erm beg for mercy if you don’t remember one thing it is your job they’re talking too fast or they are talking too much so just keep calm this is your job this is your moment (. ) and she was always saying remember not to cross your arms because it’s not to present (. )
yourself and do not dress in erm (. ) in an unproper way just
remember to be always polite
a:nd (. ) oh she was always saying
keep your voice loud because we
all have to hear you this is (. )
keep your voice loud because we
all have to hear you this is (. ) like your voice this is your instrument
to work (. ) and so I think she was one of the best to remember us all
what we are doing here (. ) apart
from the apart from those whose want to be a translator (. ) but for interpreter she was really doing a
great job (. ) I think (. )
Alan: (. ) everybody else? (8.0) is that practical that that explanation
you’re in control and so on do [do you
Maria: [yeah
she was always saying it to everybody whilst doing mediation
Alan: but did you have any experiences then that sort of with other (. ) teachers that perhaps (. . ) contradicted that position or:
Maria: er no but she was the first one to actually tell us
Fed: [(xxxx) ((Federico talks in background)
Silvia: [she highlighted it very often=
Maria: =no not the only one but she was
Silvia: she highlighted it she reminded very often [and
((Maria talks in background))

Silvia: when we were at the exams well we’ve seen I think all of us seen that (.) it was the proper way to do (.) an exam like that (.)

Alan: hm m

Silvia: so yeah you can be anxious but you have not to show it so: be calm (.l) relax (.l) understand what they’re telling you and then you have to have the control of the situation so

Alan: did that help you in the exam then or in the mediation exams?

Silvia: hm (.l) well I think yes it depends on (.l) each and every one experiences so (.l) in my experience yes

Fed: actually I thought (.l) I think I was really lucky in the (.l) dialogue I had (.l) it was also the first one they were doing I was the third person they were (or even the second) so they were probably very calm and (.l) but it was- it sound to me that it was easier than the (.l) the one we done in class

Maria: well all of [my exams
Fed: [I had
Maria: have been like that
((background talk))
Alan: sorry they’ve all been easier?
Maria: yeah (.) than what I expected (…)
Silvia: apart from the
Maria: Chinese today was way easier
than I expected
Silvia: ja- Japanese wasn’t ((stilted
laugh)) but it was ok I know how
my teacher’s so she’s like that (..)
[and
Maria: [(they) were
definitely shorter but I think they
were the same level it’s just that
you were more prepared at the
exam than what you were in class
Silvia: yeah=
Maria: =a little bit ((Mick makes sound))
Silvia: maybe they I think maybe they
did it oh sorry (.) [go on
Matteo: [no no no=
Silvia: =ok (.) maybe they did it because
they want it ((talks in low voice
to maria)) ok ((laughs)) because
they want us to: (..) to be
prepared so: they were I don’t
know (.) tougher during the class
and then at the exam they were
(.) cooler just calm and I think it
that’s the way so we were ok (.)
it seemed better than what we
practiced so (.) we can do it
Alan: right ok(.) so you you were quite happy about the exams?

Silvia: yeah yeah it was(.) faster shorter ((small laugh)) (.). easier (.). so ok(.) yeah

Alan: good (..) so are we all still convinced we want to be interpreters or have we

Matteo: yes

Silvia: (x) don’t know i don’t think so ((whispered voice))

Matteo: yes I think I will miss the (.) the classes of the next year because I will be in erasmus (.) at the university of bonn in germany (.).

they: they don’t have mediation classes (.) I will just do translation (.) and so I think I will miss the mediation and but I think the third year I will attend both classes (.) the second year one and the third year one

Alan: right

Matteo: because I don’t want to miss (.). anything

Alan: hm because you said in our one to one interview you were talking about (.) erm (.) what was the name of the professor again?

Matteo: moscato

Alan: moscato you said that it’s most important to learn the language
but when you return here she can teach you everything about [interpreting in one hour]

Matteo: [ah yes ((laughs) (.)

Fed: in an hour ((laughs))

Matteo: about mediation

Fed: oh (hello) that’s flattering (.)

Alan: what do you think about [that?

Matteo: [(she’s mad)

Fed: wh- why am I even here studying then? (.

((rosa gives a small laugh))

Matteo: tell her (.)) ((rosa gives a small laugh)) ask her (...) Alan: I don’t know I mean (.) you you said you thought she was just kidding

Matteo: yes

Fed: ok then

Rosa: when did she say that?

Matteo: er when well i: just I was just asking erm which university was the best (.)) (London or bonn) and I just said well but I think but I will miss the: the: mediation classes and she said no: it’s ok the most important thing is to: master the language (.)) and the the technique (.)

comes after I can teach you it in:
in an hour (.) that’s it (.) but I
think she was kidding
Silvia: she must be great (.) at teaching
((irony in voice)) cool
Matteo: she’s a great interpreter but
she’s not a great teacher
((federico laughs))
Matteo: hm (…)
Alan: in our initial conversations we
talked about maturity and er
coming to university is different
from high school (..) erm is that
is that your opinion still?
You’ve got a very different
experience from high school
here? And if so why or how?
(5.0) ((all look around))
((Federico makes a sound
through his teeth and silvia
starts sniggering))
Matteo: I think the Sslmit is organised
like an high school
Fed: yea::[:h
Rosa: [yeah
Silvia: yeah
Maria: [(it is)
Matteo: [yes
Maria: because we’re not that many I
think
Fed: hm m
Silvia: I think it’s [worse
Maria: [(..) but it’s also
because since we are not that
many we know each other more
than what normally happens in a university I think (.) and so it was possible to organise the (.).
trash party (.)) ((silvia sniggers))
I don’t think any other university in the world is doing it apart from the american college (..)

Alan: trash party?
Maria: yeah [it was a trash party
Matteo: [yeah
Alan: what is a trash party?
Maria: [don’t you remember how (all of them were) dressed up?
Rosa: [it’s a party (organised)
Alan: I wasn’t here
((overlapping voices))
Rosa: [(xx)
Silvia: [and the music
((overlapping voices))
((federico giggles))
Maria: no no it was like (..) trash (.). trash music and [(.) trash
Silvia: well you don’t wear as you usually wear you can say ((laughs))
Maria: yeah
Silvia: you can put on anything ANYTHING
Maria: I was wearing a sock that I usually use (.). as a pet
Alan: a pet?
Fed:  (xx)
Silvia:  I had a (hand)
Alan:  [you use a sock as a pet
Maria:  [(it was all fir)
yes (.) it was a sock up to the
knee (all) fir around we usually
put it in a box and it’s our pet
Silvia:  I had a (hand) attached to my
blouse ((laughs)) ((alan laughs))
Maria:  there were people dressed with
a erm=
Fed:  =why do you [use a
Maria:  [rubbish bag
Fed:  sock as a pet?
Rosa:  yeah ((laughs)) exactly=
Maria:  =cos it’s all made of made of fir
Fed:  oh [(xxx)
Maria:  [and it really looks like a
kitten or something ((federico
sniggers)) we call it (procioni
casseta?)
Fed:  ok
((silvia laughs))
Alan:  sorry I’m losing track here what
is this is relationship from high
school to university?
Maria:  cos u- usually you organise are
able to organise a party at a high
school definitely not at
[university not that I’ve ever
heard of
Fed:  [(xxxxxxxx
Silvia:  no [it’s
Maria: [(what) the whole university
inside of the university?]
Fed: only because there’s=
Silvia: =no=
Maria: =not possible=
Fed: =about=
Silvia: =well=
Fed: about 3000 people but
Silvia: well I’d be in (S.I.G) the
((laughs)) the international
sciences whatever it was way
different (. ) way (. ) different
Alan: ah ha (. ) but this ability to
organise a party erm I I’m
thinking of perhaps about
different things why it’s more
like a high school
Maria: yeah but [I was
Alan: [not because you can
(xx)
organise a party ((general
laughter))
Silvia: (x) it was an example ah that
since we are (. ) this few able to
do more things or less things
than other university (. ) like I’m
really happy we’re organised
like a high school because (. )
it’s the end of june and I’m (xxx)
and those who are really late
have still one week of (. ) of
exams the first week of july (in
turin they’ve started now it’s the)
Alan: so as a high school is it goo- is it good that SSLMIT is like a high school then? [you seem to be suggesting]

Maria: [for some things]

Alan: there’s a little confu- I’m a bit confused here because you’re saying [on one side]

Silvia: [I’m (.)]

yeah (.) I find good sides and bad sides

Alan: what are the bad sides as a high school like hm atmosphere?

Maria: like the teachers know [you]

Maria: [teachers knows know you and (…) that’s]

main thing and that (2.0) it’s a high school and you still feel like you’re being checked every single day (.) and you’re not a grown up woman yet

Alan: hm (.) or man
Rosa: or man ((laughs))
Fed: thank you
((overlapping talk))
Matteo: can I say everything?
Alan: yes
Matteo: [ok
Alan: [anonymity
guaranteed here
Matteo: ok
Alan: anonymity
((Federico laughs))
Silvia: (wow)
Matteo: I think the Sslmit is even worse
than an high school [and
Fed: [oh thank you
Silvia: (. that’s what I said before
Matteo: and (…) I think that the some
professors (.) are too close
with the students (.)
Silvia: (ah ha) ((noise of possible
agreement))
Alan: could you explain what you
mean by close?
Matteo: close well:::
((I look at her while she is talking to maria in background))
Silvia: sorry ((in response to my look))
Matteo: erm they: (7.0) ha ((laughing
tone)) ((rosa snorts in a laughing
manner)) (2.0) I’m just trying to
(.) don’t say the names ((small
laugh)) but it’s quite difficult
Fed: no:=
Silvia: =well maybe teachers talk about
(.) things that are not (. about
school with students (...) so: it’s true what
Matteo: yeah but I think there are several (...) projects here- [here in the Sslmit
Fed: [I think you’re referring to the fact that if you erm (...) do this extra curricular [activities
Matteo: [yes
Fed: like [theatre
Matteo: [yes
Fed: or stuff (get) in a really tight relationship=
Matteo: =exactly
Fed: with a professor cos it’s even less people than in a classroom and you’re not in a lesson so you’re not just talking everybody’s talking and doing stuff and it becomes more like a friendship than a a: professor student relationship [so: it’s (less xxxxxx)
Maria: [I think that still works (...) I think it can work as [long as you have a teacher
Fed: [(xxx)
((Federico talking to rosa))
Maria: as like an organiser
Matteo: yes=
Maria: =but if you have it inside a group ((federico sniggers)) (.)
((federico laughs)) it really gets difficult to create a normal
relationship like you you end up
either hating or (…)
Silvia: being friends
Maria: being friends
Fed: yeah but also it’s not great for
those who see it
((maria and silvia whisper to
each other in background))
Matteo: I know students that knew the
scores of some exams
((maria and silvia talking slightly
more audibly to each other))
[before
Fed: [what?
Matteo: they [came up
Rosa: [the scores ((talking to
federico))
Matteo: on the: (. ) baccheca ((italian for
notice board))
Maria: what? sorry
Matteo: I know that there are (. ) students
who knew the: their the scores of
the exams before they came up
on the baccheca
((maria and silvia whisper)) (..)
Alan: and is this friendship is this if I
understand correctly is this from
the theatre experiences they’ve
had or are you talking more
generally?
Silvia: well mostly the theatre [one
Matteo: [the theatre
Silvia: also the (programmes anyway) (.)
if [you go
Alan: [sorry (. ) the programmes? 
Silvia: yeah like if you go to strasburgo Strasburg=
Matteo: = ah ah ah ah ((matteo appears to have remembered this too and shows agreement))
Silvia: with maggiorani and you get closer to him I don’t know ((speaks with a laugh in her voice)) (. ) I guess? But yeah mainly the the theatre but I think that (. ) you (. ) can just avoid it (. )
Alan: hm
Silvia: (it goes) like this (. ) a:nd (. ) when we are going to the theatre erm group and (. ) meetings (. ) you’re actually doing something else you’re not studying so you have to put other effort in it and (. ) well there are bad sides and good sides so: oh I don’t know I don’t think it’s gonna be condemned for that I don’t know
Matteo: yes but m: (. ) I think that er:m (2.0) I think it’s not normal that a student knows the score the scores of an exam
Maria: that is not acceptable ((overlapping talk))
Fed: of course it is (. ) ((general laughter)) ((overlapping talk))
Alan: so this is not just one
Silvia: (xx) typical
Alan: this is not [just
Matteo: [it’s just
one thing=
Alan: =is it just one professor or a
different professors? do you
think
Matteo: ahh [different
((overlapping talk))
Silvia: ((talking to maria)) the (cores)?
The (cores)? I don’t know what
he means
Maria: the score
Matteo: ah
Alan: mark ((talking to maria))
Matteo: [another thing erm
Silvia: [ahh
ok
Alan: mark ((talking to maria))
Matteo: other students knew that they
had won the erasmus
other students knew that they had
won the erasmus scholarship (.)
be:fore the: (. ) the graduatoria
Alan: right before the
Matteo: yeah
Alan: marks came out or the [list came
out
Silvia: [well I can
tell you that there are some
teachers th:at (. ) who behave in a
friendly way even if you don’t do
anything extra curricula (. ) for
example there is one of my teachers (.) she was very kind to me even if I don’t have anything to do with her so: (.) it depends on the wh- what you said yean yes ok it’s not right it’s not fair that you know your score but that’s the least I think there are maybe you can think when they higher your score because you know you: attend some extra classes or whatever (.) it can happen Alan: this er: idea of competitiveness that’s been constant through out our talks both in individual and group (.) do you think that effects the idea of (. ) the dynamics of competitiveness students feel (.) teachers are favouring them giving them= Silvia: =yeah Alan: unfair advantages? Fed: (I wish) ((whispered)) Alan: (. ) sorry? Fed: I wish ((laughs))) Alan: (ah he) wishes? Fed: no I’m only joking but it would be (. ) [I’m I’m hopeful professors are][((silvia and maria whisper))] Fed: as (mad enough) to understanding they are professors and still if they
(build that) ah a personal relationship with a (if you build even) a friendship with a professor [ then you hope in yourself that you
[((silvia and maria continue whispering))]
You know you are doing it and the professor is I don’t know 40 50 years old he’s mature enough to separate the two things then sometimes it obviously doesn’t happen but that’s not I think the problem the problem is the professor not managing to separate his er role as a professor and as a person not that I tend to build a relationship that’s not quite as neg- [as negative as
Silvia: [well I think the fault is also of the students the students’ fault
Fed: [it’s not only the teachers’
Silvia: we’re we’re not [(.) 12 ((small laugh))]
Fed: [yes yes but if you look for it [if you do it
Matteo: [(your 22)
He’s (.?) 50
Fed: exactly
Matteo: or [she’s
Silvia: [yeah I know
but=
Matteo: yeah but he’s older [or she’s]

Silvia: should make an effort and (. ) I (. ) think (. ) I’m (. ) wrong now because I couldn’t do it (. ) so: i’m (making) my own fault

Matteo: yeah yeah I think it’s true but (. ) m: I think it’s just the professors fault (. ) I know that you are (. ) [grum-] that you’re grown up but (. ) you: (. ) the professor

Silvia: yeah maybe he or she could behave differently because sometimes you just end up doing things or behaving in a way that you (. ) wouldn’t have (. ) done normally so: maybe yes but still (. ) you can behave in a sort of way you you decide to so (. ) [it’s=]

Alan: [do

Silvia: =bilateral I think

Alan: everyone had experiences? I mean can you give me an episode or some experience you’ve had where this has happened this has occurred? Do you think?
Maria: i don’t I had no idea about the advantages that people like knowing the score the mark before it came out I had no idea about that but I do have a problem with the teacher who was doing theatre with us (.) professor infanti cos she came and she was an actress inside the group like she wasn’t (.) the director or she she didn’t do anything apart from acting (.) and in that moment you have to realise whether you want to be a professor whose graciously graciously coming to our theatre group I don’t know to do something with us or you’re an actress just like me

Alan: hm m

Maria: because if you are an actress i’m I have to be able to tell you (.) sorry you’re not doing this properly because nobody can hear you or nobody can see the other person behind you (.) and you have to accept my critic because (.) you’re just as in my level we are at the same level in this moment (.) but if you if I can’t say that to you because I feel that you will say oh it’s not true I’m not I’m not like (closing) I’m not erm non sto bloccando
nessuno ((Italian for I’m not standing in front of anyone))
what am I supposed to think?
That you’re behave- you’re just not a really actress (. ) or you’re a professor and I can’t tell you that because I feel like you would remember that and say oh she told me that

Alan: ok I’m think more about the sort of school though that’s understandable but I’m thinking about any episodes or experiences in the school where you saw this or you [experienced

Silvia: [for example an experience

Sometimes I’m like (. ) ok (. ) did I get that mark because I deserved it? Or because I did something outside (. ) the school? The university? Like theatre (. ) for instance

Alan: ah ha

Silvia: sometimes I doubt it (. ) maybe she gave me that mark because I improved but sometimes I doubt it so:

Alan: hm

Silvia: (. ) there is that

Alan: right (3.0) rosa you’re very quiet do you have any experiences of this or anything similar?

Rosa: hm (. ) yeah for example proferessa infanti we also used to
go play basket with (silvia) and other students and actually we really liked it I think like because before coming here I used to go to university faculty of er economia di turismo and we were about 400 students we did not know the teachers the teachers did not know us and I did not like it at all because I think it was really infor- it was really formal and impersonal and I I didn’t like it but this year like that to be able to create to be able to create a relationship with the professor and for the professor to know you and even like to consider her as a friend I really like that a:nd I don’t know I mean nothing like that happened like she would tell us about (the) grade when you would talk about school of grades or (or this or with like silvia or) with some other students playing basket and just talking and (.) I really love that (.) I think it was a good thing so:  

Alan: yeah (.) ok well let’s talk about something else perhaps (.) erm (..) a lot of people talked about passion (.) that one of the most important things about languages and learning languages and becoming an interpreter is is
passion and (. ) I just want to know about your passion what sort of situation your passion is in after your first year? Thinking back to when you came in and thinking now ( … )

Silvia: Erm (. ) posso ((Italian for may i?))

Alan: of course

Maria: please speak please speak ((very low))

Silvia: erm well (. ) for me (. ) my passion grew a lot because when I was studying the language I (. ) I already liked (. ) my passion grew I was like oh my god I’m finding out I’m finding out other things (discovering other things) and I like it more than I did before so: (. ) and well the other (side) is that other languages that I chose maybe it’s ok maybe it’s not the language that I like so it depen- it depends on the language (. ) but my passion is still there and it’s growing

Alan: is that passion to learn the languages or to become an interpreter?

Silvia: to learn the languages

Alan: ah

Silvia: not (making) an interpreter any more

Alan: you’ve changed your mind about it
Silvia: yes
Alan: or specifically you don’t want to
become a particular type of interpreter?
Silvia: yeah or also not becoming an interpreter (. ) I don’t know I will wait to see in the future I’m confused ( (small laugh) )
Alan: right ( . ) so your passion for languages remains though?
Silvia: yeah I want to learn languages but I don’t know how I will use them ( . ) so we’ll see
Alan: right ( (silvia gives small laugh) )
Silvia: and what about everybody else? (. ) passion wise?
Rosa: I really like mediation I really like mediating and like to: ( . ) pay attention of how to: behave also like to be able to mediate I really like that and I still have no idea what I want to do but I like that
Alan: hm ok ( (both laugh) ) (5.0)
Matteo: I think that my my passion is quite the same ( (spoken in undynamic manner) ) yeah [I’m
Alan: [doesn’t sound very enthusiastic ( . ) when you say that ( (general laughter) )]
Matteo: yeah m: well I I love foreign languages I: want to become to become an interpreter (. ) and I just know that it’s m:
more difficult than I imagined (.)
before (.)

Alan: why?

Mick: (. ) ah because erm (4.0) even
though you: you think that you
know a a foreign language for
example the: the English
language (..) when it when it
comes to interpreting (..) it’s
complete different thing (. ) a:nd I
just can’t can’t speak at all (..)
it’s: (2.0) you need a (.) a: (..) a
thorough knowledge of the
language to manage the situation
(2.0) that’s it

Alan: right (3.0) ((alan looks around
group at each individual))

Maria: passion keeps growing

Alan: you’re very enthusiastic [still
aren’t you

Maria: [I am yeah

Alan: yeah and nothing has
dampened your spirits

Maria: ah it does when I almost I didn’t
fail my Russian exam but I was
really unhappy with myself (..) I
wasn’t enth- entusiastic but (.)
I think I ask too much of myself
( .) and now that I realise that I
know that it’s not that much of a
big problem (. ) I can do it again
it’s just an exam (. ) it’s not
passion (. ) so passion is growing
I’m really happy in what I’m doing.

Maria: and I look forward to start to work.

Alan: hm

Maria: so I still don’t know if I will be like a (proper) interpreter I like (be in) tourism but who knows?

Alan: hm m [erm

Maria: [ I’d like I’d like to invent a new job (.) for myself (.)

Alan: hm (.) have you any idea what that might be?

Maria: ah it might be like working for travel agency a:nd (.) er going around the world with a specific group of tourist who wants to have (first kind of life’s) tourism and I can take them all around the world (.) not the world but like china and Russia and (.) anglo-saxon countries and explain them and make them talk with people and ask them what they really want to know (.) cos otherwise it’s really difficult to do it.

Alan: did this come from yourself or did you have somebody suggest this?

Maria: no: like from myself
Alan: hm (. ) interesting idea (. ) when you say you know the exam didn’t go very well and you weren’t happy about it you also talked especially in our one to one it’s very important to have help and support [here]

Maria: [yes]

Alan: in the university (. ) not necessarily your family is that something that everybody else shares? (. ) this idea of help and support (. )

Fed: (never quite my cup so) ((very low voice)) ((general laughter)) (. ) no I don’t it’s typically because (xxxxxxxx)

Alan: right so any bad experience here or things (. ) you’re getting perhaps a little bit depressed or whatever what do you do to pick yourself up?

Fed: oh beer

Alan: beer? (( general laughter))

Rosa: ice cream ((laughs))

Alan: ice cream

Silvia: vodka

Alan: vodka? 

Silvia: it’s good ((overlapping talk))

Silvia: and tv series (. ) and (. ) anime ((laughs))

Alan: tv series and ?

Silvia: anime ((overlapping talk))

Alan: are cartoons?
Maria: (xx) japanese
Silvia: japanese [cartoons
Maria: [Japanese cartoons
Alan: japanese cartoons (.) right (.) ok
but any relations people who
help you and make you
Silvia: oh yes of course
((general laughter and overlapping talk))
Alan: yeah (3.0)
((laughter abates))
Silvia: yeah [friends
Maria: [friends
first by myself I have to be able
to pick up myself and then I talk
with friends then they pick me
up
Alan: hm m (4.0) right (.) t- t-
coming towards the end I don’t
want to keep it too long but erm
(.) in your experience over the
year have (.) have you sort of (.)
what positive and negative
experiences have you had in the
classroom with (.) teachers
anything that's sort of (.) made
you change in a particular way
or in quite a strong way your
view about your future careers
or or your future is there any
experience like that? (2.0)
Fed: well I don’t want to become a
teacher (you know)
Alan: you don’t want to become a
teacher?
Fed: no? ((silvia laughs))
Alan: why? (2.0)
Fed: not talking personally but they all kind of look (.) exhausting erm un-nerved and (.) on the verge of (.) starting to throw objects (.) IT DOESN’T look like a very enjoyable (. ) job ( .) career
Alan: is that everybody’s experience?
Fed: you you don’t look like that I mean you’re tanned and ((alan and silvia laugh)) (.) but there’s a lot of professors who you go and talk with them and start a conversation and quiet and then they start getting this (..)
Rosa: (aggressive)
Fed: frustration and oh COME ON it’s a job and just relax and do it
Alan: Roxanne what did you say?
Rosa: aggressive I said
Alan: so you have a similar
((overlapping talk))
Maria: (x) no no no obviously
Alan: Oh you haven’t had [this experience
Maria: [no no I’ve never heard this
Alan: is it is it just federico who’s had this experience? ( .) what do you think of your teacher then?
((overlapping talk))
Maria: erm: (…) sorry no it’s just (.) some (.) er kind of professor they really are
going crazy and you you can see that they have [NOTHING] apart from university

Fed: [(xx) yes yes
Maria: and just like (. ) get a life ( . )
Silvia: ( important ) one case
Maria: I don’t know I know one case
Silvia: yeah more than one
Alan: can can you give me an example?
((general laughter))
Silvia: no (. ) [I won’t ((humorous tone))
Maria: [one of them
were Russian teacher
Fed: ( dumchev ) ((other voices pronounce name))
Alan: you don’t have to talk this
(. ) [teacher just the experience
Fed: [(xxx)
Maria: no she’s she’s like crazy she was writing emails as like 2 am saying o:k I checked your exam they’re good and see you again tomorrow and take prepare your oral exam I don’t know but (. ) [2 am
Fed: [(xxx)
I don’t know she’s ( not the [worse case)
Maria: [no
she’s far [out
Fed: [oh she’s just boring (. ) it’s not her fault come on
Alan: she’s [what? boring?
Maria: [she is=
Fed: =boring
Maria: she is boring (.) but no she’s just like
you can see that she doesn’t have (…) I don’t want to be mean ((laughs, others laugh)) she doesn’t have=
Fed: =friends
Maria: friends ((federico laughs))
Silvia: (life)
Maria: a life
Silvia: like (.) get a life
Maria: no but (.) she doesn’t know like she doesn’t it seems like she doesn’t have
time to take care of herself (.) she comes ((federico laughs)) like her hair is worse than mine and (.) she really looks like
really tired and she’s always like quite grumpy?
Alan: hm
Maria: (.) so just (.) ok I mean I know that this is important it’s your job but really this is your job you’re not living (.) to do a job to have a job you’re doing a job so you can live in a better way
Alan: hm m
Maria: just (.) take it easy
Alan: so you agree with federico about this obsession [with the university
Maria: [not with all the professor I met but (.) a couple at least (.)
Alan: is that everybody’s experience?
Silvia: a couple at least
Alan: hm: (3.0)
Matteo: nothing particular (2.0)
Alan: what are your impressions of the teachers in general then do you have a general impression or everybody’s different?

Matteo: everybody’s different (.) yeah ((voice fading)) (…) (that’s it) (.) nothing special (..)

Alan: ok erm (..) just before we finish then (.) coming towards the end erm (..) about the future (4.0)

Fed: hm: [(xx)

Silvia: [(xx) ((inaudible low voice))

Alan: this is the end of your first year moving on now you’ll be going some of you will be going to erasmus (.) some of you will be coming back er (.) generally speaking wh- what sort of ideas do you have about your future now? (.) erm I think you talked about destiny and fate silvia in our one to one you [said

Silvia: [well

Alan: I just I just surrender to DESTINY ((general laughter))

Silvia: I did yes yeah

Alan: yeah (.) so

Silvia: I don’t remember

Alan: so?

Silvia: yeah I don’t think about the future very much I want to live now so:

Alan: hm
Silvia: what will be will be ((small laugh))

Alan: yes [this is

Rosa: [I’m the same

Alan: you’re the same?

Silvia: exactly exactly=

Rosa: I’m enjoying learning languages and I like to travel a lot so like go to the countries I’m learning the language and improve them and I like what I’m doing (but) I have no idea about the future ((federico laughs))

Silvia: [well well I don’t rush towards

Rosa: [(xxxx)

Alan: but I don’t think some people are of the same opinion maria you you don’t have this (..) opinion do you?

Maria: erm I am looking forward for what’s coming but I am really enjoying the present so: (..) I am being careful not to waste (.). my time now

Alan: so you don’t have any plans for the future

Maria: I have some I have [plenty

Fed: [you already told us (one)

Maria: yeah I have ((federico laughs)) plenty

Alan: hm m

Maria: I just which is more and which is (.). best one

Alan: hm
Maria: or the right one
Alan: right (.)
Maria: yeah
Alan: is it destiny and fate as silvia said
((silvia laughs))
Maria: I’m I I don’t like the word fate
nor [destiny
Silvia: [me neither
Maria: I always said it’s sort of an
excuse to say OH (.) su- sugar
happens ((sugar instead of shit
perhaps)) erm you know it’s
destiny (.) it’s not it’s bad things
happen I do agree with karma but
( .) destiny’s a sort of explanation
you want to use if you’re not ( .) if
you’re failing yourself so ( .) I
don’t believe in destiny
Alan: right
Maria: I decide what I want to do ( .)
Silvia: (I agree) ((whispered)) ((small
laugh))
Alan: Michele?
Matteo: I just can’t wait to go on
erazmus ((general laughter))
( .) well hm::
Alan: what’s happened Michele?
you’ve changed a lot since we began this [session
Matteo: [no no no
I’m: ( .) I’m just tired of forli
((loud general laughter))
erm well erm the: another flat
mate she’s erm I think she will
graduate this summer well erm
well she went in England and
Russia she said that (..) m: once
you go in a foreign country for an
experience like the erasmus one
(.) or the overseas one or another
exchange well erm your mind
changes (.) and you enjoy the
Sslmit in a different way (..) a:nd
(.) I just can't wait
Alan:  hm
Matteo: because er
Fed:  cos you’re obviously enjoying it
a lot ((general laughter))
Matteo: yeah
Alan:  is it when you said forli did you
mean the city in general? or:=-
Matteo: =the city in general
Alan:  does that influence you all the the
place you study?
((a chorus of ‘yeah’) forli (…)
rosa
Rosa:  yeah I’m not now it’s not that bad
but
Fed:  (cos you’re) studying (Chinese)
((general laughter))
Silvia: shut up you’re from bologna
Fed:  yeah
((silvia makes gesture which
appears to want to excuse herself
for the out burst))
Alan: no problem
Maria: so from april we was born again
Rosa:  yeah
Maria: there started a lot of things (.)
Rosa: there was nothing
Silvia: because forli had 2 sides in spring
it changes (.) I’ve been here for 2
years so I already do it so (.)
like ok (.) calm down you will
see ((small laugh)) (.)
Alan: are you’re talking about the
weather?
Maria: no [(xx)
Silvia: [not only
not only (.) the second term is
completely different the way (.)
you behave (.) the way you see
what you’re doing (.) well the
weather kind of helps ((small
laugh))
Alan: yeah
Silvia: but well (.) when it’s sunny all
RIGHT (.) when you can get to
the park (.) sunbathe I mean (that
way) cos for example we don’t
have many parks where I live in
abruzzo so here it’s a bit (.) a new
thing
Alan: hm m
Silvia: and the spirit it changes
completely
Alan: the spirit of?
Silvia: yeah summer is coming (.) m:
you know spring for all animals
and ((general laughter)) we are
(social) animals so: (.). different

(?small laugh)

Alan: hm right interesting (.).

Silvia: you are interpreters (.). interpret

((general laughter))

Alan: well the city itself does it erm (.).

apart from the weather (.). what aspects of the city=

Rosa: =for example on Mondays when

you’re thinking about the

weekends and in winter there was

nothing so I was like=

Alan: =on Monday or Friday?

Rosa: on Monday like on the first day

that you start the week and you’re

going to the university so you

thinking ok so on the weekend

it’s gonna become like I’m gonna

have 2 days off like in the

weekends but then I’m thinking

what I’m gonna do in forli there’s

nothing to do ((federico laughs))

like last 2 years ago when I was

in rimini ((costal town)) I was

like always looking forward for

the weekends because we always

had some big plan like going out

being out like until the sunrise I

mean it was like amazing thing

every week is like something but

here nothing ((federico laughs))

((general laughter))

Maria: like now there’s a little bit more

((overlapping talk))
Alan: yeah but now now there’s a bit more?
Maria: yeah on Wednesdays everything is open and=
Silvia: there’s music
Maria: there’s music and and anyway even the other days there’s people going around ((federico snorts laugh))
Rosa: yeah
Silvia: concerts lots of lots of stuff
Alan: because you guys study a lot
Alan: languages are very difficult so you have to study a lot I suppose it’s even more important perhaps to be able to relax ((chorus of yeah)) ..
WELL in a good way ((small laugh)) so the city effects in that way perhaps? yeah
Maria: I don’t care like I prefer it to be a little bit more calmer during the winter because I knew if I were back in turin I’d be going out every night and so it does have 2 sides xx (..)
Silvia: well I think if I er will have gone to bologna I would have studied more
Maria: no way
Silvia: yes
Maria: no way:
Silvia: for sure
Alan: why?
Silvia: because when you have lots of stuff to do (.) maybe you can organise your time better and here I waste I wasted I’ve been wasting and I’m still wasting all the time doing (.) nothing (.) because I’m like that [it’s just my character

Maria: [(xxx)

Silvia: (. ) sorry what?

Maria: watching tv?

Silvia: no I don’t watch tv but watching [shows on my er yeah exactly

Maria: [(tv series xxxx)

Silvia: so you: (.) maybe you become a little more a little nerdier ((general low laughter))

Alan: nerd as in nerd nerdy nerdier

Silvia: but I think in bologna I don’t know like go out during the weekends (.) and study ((maria makes sound of suppressed laughter)) what do you want?

Fed: why only the weekend? [there’s 7 days a week

Silvia: [not only the weekend bu:t I mean OK I will go out don’t know when and er I will study for the rest of the time because there are lots of libraries and stuff and there is one [library and

Maria: [oh:
Silvia: what (do you want?) (. ) it’s my character I know myself all right?
((small laugh))

Maria: oh: all right

Silvia: sorry (. ) you don’t I do ok (. ) so:
that’s good (. ) sorry ((to alan))

Alan: so in bologna you’d be able to study more because you:

Silvia: because I will have more fun I will have my life more organised

Alan: right

Silvia: so now I study and then I go out (. ) here it’s now what do I do?
((small laugh)) so: [(wasting time)

Fed: [(xxx

Silvia: on the computer (. ) and it’s my character everyone is different so:
[I’m just saying

Fed: [(I know anyway) you have time to study later cos you don’t have anything to do=

Silvia: =exactly exactly ALWAYS study later I have plenty of time
bologna is different ok I have to go out ok for because I don’t have the strength to to: (resist) for 2 hours on the books no: just 20 minutes and then ok you have to have a break and then 20 minutes ok break ((laughs)) I’m like this so: ok 40 minutes then go out then come home and then study maybe it would be different I think this way
Alan: right (.) is that everybody’s experience are you able to manage your studies properly in that way? or

Matteo: I can’t manage my time ((general low laughter)) (I just can’t manage any time)

Silvia: I can’t manage my room (.) so: ((laughs followed by general laughter))

Alan: well some teachers have some courses have very strict rules about what you have to prepare the lesson does that help? when they say you [know tomorrow

Silvia: [yes

Alan: you have to have=

Silvia: =yeah

Alan: prepared

Silvia: I still ((laughs)) er

Fed: don’t ((laughs))

Silvia: yeah I still don’t bring them (..) in time (.). a little bit late but I do it at least so and not always late ok? so yes it does

Alan: ah do you prefer that do you prefer strict [stricter

Silvia: [yeah

Alan: teachers that are more: (.). give and take and more [relaxed perhaps

Silvia: [I am too

Alan: laid back then otherwise

alan: what about everbody=
Maria: I prefer strict teacher but I like it more if she: like she said ok this is the scheduled time you have to do it (.) by this day (.) but you organise yourself I’m not gonna ask every single day how are you doing and have you done it have you done it yet? (.) oh my god

Alan: so good deadlines [clear deadlines

Maria: [I’m not in high school

Alan: (.) are you? ((federico gives small laugh))

Maria: i: hope not

Alan: right (.) ok (.) what about you matteo?

Matteo: (2.0) I prefer strict professors (.) yes (.) because erm ((alan notices silvia making signs that they are hot and nods at her to open the window)) they just help me manage my time and that’s it

Alan:right which which subjects do you have strict professors in?

Matteo: e::rm (4.0) er just in general (..) there is not a subject in particular

Alan: some are [stricter

Matteo: [but it’s just er I’m too laid back

Alan: right (.) so you need

Matteo: yeah ((small laugh))

Alan: something
Matteo: I need strict rules

Alan: strict rules (. ) ok Rosa?

Rosa: yeah me too because if they don’t say yeah it’s obligatory I don’t do it so ((laughs)) I know it’s not good

Alan: is that general is that ((nods of confirmation and some yeah responses from the group)) unless the teacher says you need to do this have to do this

Maria: it depends on the language=

Fed: =yeah exactly=

Silvia: =and on the people

Alan: language

Fed: and on the teacher

Rosa: for example the translation the active translation we didn’t have to do it so: I never did (the homework) and so like for the exam I was just always I was saying oh why didn’t I just do it ((general laughter)) I had so much time but

Silvia: [or (x)

Rosa: [(xx)

Silvia: sorry go on

Rosa: so for the passive we had to so: I did translation so:

Alan: right (. ) it’s interesting mix there because between being strict and being sort of you know (. ) you’re mature students you know how to study ((small general laughter))
Silvia: (for sure)
Fed: (..) I like having a strict professor coz you have to do your stuff (.)
but sure- it’s not the (.) the best
it’s (rather the best) to learn the language but not to become a a worker
Alan: a worker?
Fed: yes to approach and to prepare myself for a job
Alan: hm
Fed: one day hopefully (.) have one (.) er but erm because it’s probably the best approach to it ((silvia and Marta whisper in background)) you have to do it and you are going to do it and that’s it but it’s the responsibility is no longer on you
Alan: hm m
Fed: you have the professor telling you do this this and that (.) no not that sentence (.) the other (.) yes that and that and that (.) stop (.) you do that and you’re (not) going to worry about what to prepare and what to think about (.) in a in a working situation will never be like that (.) you won’t have a study page 4 and 5 and then do this and that (and then a) a list and a schedule precise (.) you have to do it yourself so it’s great for learning but not so great
for (..) learning to become a
natural (auditor)
Alan: a natural what?
Fed: adu- adu- adulto
Maria: adult=
Alan: adult
Fed: adult thank you sorry ((silvia
gives low laugh))
Alan: whose going here on erasmus
here by the way?
((overlapping talk)) ((show of
hands))
Maria: I didn’t ask
Alan: why didn’t you ask to go on
erasmus?
Maria: because I’m waiting for Russian
for Russia a:nd (. ) I have been
abroad last year so I talk a lot of
english and I prefer being here
that's (. ) next year
Alan: oh (. ) different from Michele who
can’t wait to escape
Fed: (xxxxxxxx)
Alan: and why aren’t you going on
erasmus
Rosa: I’m on overseas here ((general
laughter))
Alan: ah: of course (. ) so you’re you’re
stuck here ((Roxanne laughs))
great (. ) and silvia where are you
going?
Silvia: france
Alan: france (..) looking forward to it?
Silvia: (3.0) ((federico makes celebratory sound)) YES hm well it’s not the (. ) the place I would like to to go but ok yeah it’s erazmus so: (. ) the thing is many people told me about it in a (. ) bitter way so: I hope I enjoy it anyway

Alan: why why bitter?

Silvia: because they didn’t like it I met just 2 people who talked about it in a good way so: (. ) and the preparation the bureaucracy (. ) behind the erazmus programme it’s so:: ((exhales)) (. ) stressing I think and so well I will be able to enjoy it only when I will be there I think (. ) but now I can’t say I can’t wait (…) I can wait ((laughs)) we we will see I don’t know

Alan: good or bad things to do with the bureaucracy only or the actual institution or the atmosphere?

Silvia: no the thing is that I don’t study French so I’m doing a (…) weird thing for SSLMIT (. ) apparently (. ) from what they told me (. ) we’re just doing this year going out in a place in a country we don’t tha- that we don’t study that language so: erm you know (. ) teachers are a bit (. ) tough and they say (. ) why are you doing
this? (.) you’re already you’re
already (plenty) doubts doubts
and when well the teachers don’t
have at all so: (.) I don’t know
we’ll see (…) 
Alan:  we’ll see indeed (.) well
everybody thank you very much
for your time I think
APPENDIX B

FIELD NOTES

Date: 8/10/2012
Time: 15:45
Place: Classroom: First Presentation of research

Situated on the 3rd floor of a building opposite the main entrance to SsItmit (known to students and teachers alike as via Oberdan, or palazzo Becchi), the classroom was one of the smallest in the institution and was quite tightly packed with students. It was hot and some students looked visibly uncomfortable, fanning themselves with pieces of paper. I opened a window to let some fresh air in.

When I announced that I had something important to communicate there was a puzzled look on some of the students’ faces, perhaps because they thought it was something to do with official university business. The room fell quickly silent. I explained that I intended to carry out some post-graduate research relevant to those students who were expressly convinced, even at this early stage in their academic careers, that they wanted to become professional interpreters. I told all those students that might have such convictions, that this research aimed to investigate their changing views towards their studies over the period of their first year, in order to make proposals for potential changes in the department’s curricula to improve the teaching syllabus for future students. I also told them that I was carrying out this research as a post-graduate at Kings College, part of the University of London. A few students seemed to be impressed when I mentioned my institution’s name.

I then described how the research project was designed, requiring volunteer participants to be interviewed twice individually (for approximately one hour), at the end of their first and second terms, about their experiences in the institution, and twice all together in ‘workshops’ (group interviews) which would last around two hours at the end of each one-to-one interview session. I informed them that all
interview dates would be decided based on their own availability and not imposed by me.

I then explained that I had information sheets and consent forms that I would distribute to all those students who might be interested, explaining the nature of the research again in print, together with information about how volunteers would be treated according to research ethics (guaranteed anonymity and the right to pull out of the research whenever they wanted, with none of their data being used without their consent). I asked those students who might be interested in participating to raise their hands and I would give them the sheets to read (and, regarding the consent form, sign and date at a later date) if they were interested. I then told the students that were interested to place their consent forms in my departmental pigeonhole within 2 days. I wrote my e-mail on the white board telling the class that they could contact me through that if they had any further questions or wanted simply to confirm that they wanted to participate. I further explained that I would hold one hour, recorded interviews with all those students who were interested, and would choose only five at the end, as group work would be logistically impossible with more than that.

When I had finished I asked the students if they had any questions. One put his hand up and asked if his participation would influence his final mark for the year. At that point I explained to the class that my research had nothing to do with student courses and was my own private research, which had been authorised by the institution but which had nothing to do with their studies. Some students looked disappointed at this and, I suspected, had lost interest in my proposal immediately.

When I had handed out the information sheets and consent forms to those students who put their hands up (15 in a class of approximately 35), I told everyone that I would hang around at the end if they wanted to ask me any individual questions in private. Then I dismissed the class and sat down at the teacher’s table at the head of the classroom.
Date: 8/10/2012  
Time: 16.10  
Place: Classroom: Talking to students after presentation

As the students filed out, two stopped to tell me that they definitely wanted to be part of the research and asked if they could hand in the research consent form immediately. I said that they could of course and that they should write me an e-mail so that I could contact them for the first interview. These students (Maria and Silvia) would later become part of my research cohort. They appeared to be very excited at the prospect of being part of the research and I surmised that they might be friends who wanted to work together. Another student, who had been waiting behind them, asked me if the research definitely had nothing to do with her official academic studies, as she didn’t want to participate. She appeared a little worried as though it might be a ‘bad mark’ against her academic career. I assured her that this was nothing to do with her studies and that she could tell everyone she knew that I only wanted students who wanted to participate and that I wouldn’t be offended in the least if students didn’t want to be in the research, particularly as I was sure that not all the students wanted to be professional interpreters. She smiled and left the room. Another student approached me, shyly at first, and asked if the research project was only for Italian students as she was interested but she was Iranian. I said that nationality was not a problem and that she could apply if she wanted to. She thanked me and left. (This student, Rosa, was later selected to be part of the research as well).

Date: 10/10/2012  
Time: 10.45  
Place: Classroom: Presentation of research

The presentation of the research to the second class appeared to be received in much the same way as the first. It took place in a much larger classroom on the ground floor of the main building (known as Palazzo Montanari), looking onto an internal courtyard in the institution. There was a sudden silence and a puzzled look from some students again when I made the first announcement, that I had
something important to say. However, there were a few students who were talking quickly (in the manner of asides) to other students near them. I thought that they might have already heard about my research from the other class and were potentially informing others that they knew what I was about to say. When I had explained the research as before I told the students that I would wait behind if they had any questions.

**Date: 10/10/2012**

**Time: 11.05**

**Place: Classroom: Talking to students after presentation**

As the class was filing out, students were picking up their bags which they had left in the corner, just inside the door, and causing a small queue to form. Three male students were talking animatedly close to my desk and then one approached me, asking if he and his friends might give in their consent forms, as they were very interested in participating together. I thanked them for wanting to be part of it, but told them that I couldn’t guarantee that they all could be in the research, as the final number I wanted to work with was only five. They handed me their consent forms and I asked them to contact me via my e-mail to set up the initial interviews. [Subsequent to this encounter I saw the same students around the institution and in the streets nearby, and they would always stop talking and smile at me, often one saying ‘buongiorno professore’, apparently as a sign of respect. Most students would just smile and nod at me when they saw me, so I didn’t know if this was some way of ingratiating themselves with me to get on the research project or not].

**Date: 15/10/2012**

**Time: 9.05**

**Place: Talking to Federico in at the local café.**

There is a café on the same road as the main building of the institution (Palazzo Montanari) called ‘café Forlì’. Outside there is an extensive area of wooden decking with around 10 tables, where many students would congregate in the
morning to have coffee and chat before their lessons began. While I was having a cappuccino on my own, a student approached me. He asked if he could talk to me and I said yes of course. He told me that he had handed in a consent form but that he had changed his mind, as on reflection he didn’t think he was suitable for the research as he was quite timid and didn’t like talking in front of people. I asked him his name and told me it was Federico Campofiori (I use a pseudonym here). I told him that it was no problem, that I understood his reason, and that I wouldn’t contact him for the research. He looked relieved, thanked me and went away.

Date: 16/10/2012
Time: 15.20
Place: Talking to Matteo in corridor

As I was coming out of the teacher’s room on the second floor of Palazzo Montanari (the main building) a student stopped me in the corridor and asked if it was too late to hand in his consent form. I told him that it was still fine to do so and asked him his name, Matteo he said. Matteo looked a little older than the other students, perhaps in his mid to late 20s. I asked him why he had seemingly hesitated to do the research and he explained that he had had to go to Rome as he was moving from there to Forli. We talked about Rome and I said that it was a wonderful city and must be quite a contrast coming to live in such a small town like Forli. Matteo laughed and said that he would miss it but that this was his second degree and he was very excited at having got in to Ssmlit and loved his studies already. I said I would contact him soon if he would drop me an e-mail and took his consent form, which he had signed and dated.

Date: 17/10/2012
Time: 14.00
Place: Another encounter with Federico at the local café.

As I was drinking a glass of red wine at café Forli on a sunny Monday afternoon, Federico approached me again. He appeared to be a little embarrassed and uncomfortable. I invited him to sit down and asked him what he wanted to talk
about. He explained that he had talked to his friend and that she had convinced him to try and be part of the research as she had also applied and wanted to work with him. Federico asked me if he could possibly be considered again. I said yes of course but only if he truly wanted to. He appeared to hesitate for a second, gave a little laugh, and said yes and that he was sorry for confusing me so much. I said it wasn’t a problem and that I would contact him soon for the initial interviews.

Date: 3/12/2012
Time: 11.00
Place: Classroom, First interview with Maria

This first interview took place in a small classroom in via Oberdan on the second floor (as did most of the other interviews I conducted), and was my first planned interview (the time and place of the other interviews had been agreed via e-mail with the other students). I was particularly worried that everything would work, particularly the ipad I was using to record with. Before Maria arrived I tested the device a few times by recording my speech and playing it back, it seemed to work fine.

When Maria arrived I think I was more nervous than her, as this was the first day of my PhD research, something I knew I would be spending the next 4-5 years of my life on. I began by describing how I wanted to conduct the interview by firstly getting her to think about her life as though it were a book and jotting down the title of the chapters she would put in that book, to represent the significant phases in her life. I told her that I would leave her think about that for a few minutes and I left the classroom to go and get a coffee. When I returned, I turned on the recording and began by asking her to describe her book, which she did. For each of the titles she had given for the chapters I asked for more information and clarification as to why she had identified them as being significant to her. Initially I imagined that most of the talk would be about her more remote past life, but I was surprised that she began to talk quite quickly about her recent experiences in the institution, and what emerged were fragmentary tales about life there. At this point I began to question my whole premise that this part of the research would elicit a ‘big story’; a rounded, well-formed narrative that could be analysed under
that paradigm. A little panic set in, and I found myself re-thinking my theoretical approach to my research as Maria spoke. However, I stopped myself from continuing like this quite quickly, as I was sure I would miss important things in the interview if I allowed myself to be distracted. I decided not to return to the subject of Maria’s ‘book’ if she did not, and allow her to talk about whatever she wanted to with a minimal of interruption. When the interview was concluded however and Maria had left, I sat for a while thinking about the type of data I had to analyse and how it appeared to be much more relevant to a ‘small story’ approach; small, fragmentary and often incomplete narratives that emerge in conversation.

Considering Maria as a possible candidate for the research project, I thought that she would be highly suitable, as she was evidently passionate about her studies in the institution and her goal to become a professional interpreter, as well as being very talkative (an important factor from the point of view of the group interview).

Date: 3/12/2012
Time: 14.30
Place: Classroom, First interview with Stefano

I carried out the same initial interview procedure with Stefano (and all the other candidates), referring to the ‘book’ metaphor again and asking him to write down his ‘chapter titles’ as I left the room for a few minutes. However, when I began interviewing him his responses were extremely short and my follow up questions got even less response. He appeared to treat the interview as an interrogation, only answering my direct questions and not elaborating or developing any of his comments. I rapidly came to the conclusion that Stefano would not be a meaningful contributor to the research 10 minutes into the interview, and concluded it shortly afterwards.
Date: 3/12/2012  
Time: 11.00  
Place: Classroom, First interview with Giuseppe

Giuseppe appeared to be a friend of Stefano, as when I arrived to carry out the interview with him he was standing outside the door chatting to Stefano. The interview was surprisingly similar to the one with Stefano the day before. He was not very communicative and appeared to be extremely nervous, treating the interview as an oral examination on his English as he was continually apologising for his mistakes in the language and pausing to rephrase what he said. This made the interview very repetitive and I became increasingly frustrated (which I tried to hide from him). Needless to say I concluded quite quickly that Giuseppe would not be a suitable candidate. This episode also sensitised me to how some students were positioning me as an ‘English teacher’, regardless of the different role I was attempting to position myself as, ‘a researcher’.

Date: 4/12/2012  
Time: 14.30  
Place: Classroom, First interview with Federico

Federico arrived with Silvia (the student I planned to interview after him). I assumed that they must be friends (or even possibly girlfriend and boyfriend). Remembering my conversation with Federico at café Forli on the 17/10 (see above, p.705), where he told me that a friend had convinced him to try to be selected for the research, I imagined that Silvia must be this person. Federico was very talkative, unlike Stefano and Giuseppe before him, but he had an agitated manner of speech, commenting on his own thoughts and ideas as he expressed them, and speaking very quickly and in a low tone sometimes, which worried me when I thought about how I would write a transcript of the interview (something that kept coming into my mind in the interview). However, I found his experiences in his previous institution very interesting as he had done 2 years in med school but had decided to drop out to apply to Sslmit and become an interpreter. The choice to abandon the natural sciences and an evident passion for foreign languages made him an interesting subject I thought for the research
programme. By the end of the interview in fact I was sure that he might be a very viable candidate.

**Date: 4/12/2012**
**Time: 17.00**
**Place: Classroom, First interview with Silvia**

Federico came with Silvia for her own interview, and it seemed to me that they were both encouraging each other to be part of the research. Silvia was the most enthusiastic about getting into Sslmit, of all the people I had interviewed till then. She had already tried once and failed and this had been her second attempt. In her interview she positioned herself as being destined to become an interpreter, referring to it as almost being a calling in life, and connecting the profession to her early love of languages. Like Maria she was very communicative and talked at length whenever I asked her a question. Considering that both she and Federico were evidently intending to be participants together in the research, I concluded that she was a good candidate.

**Date: 4/12/2012**
**Time: 18.15**
**Place: Talking to Silvia and Federico after interview at café**

After Silvia’s interview Federico was still standing outside the door so I invited them both to have a coffee with me at café Forli. They looked at each other for an instant, perhaps even a little shocked that I would make such an offer. However, they agreed and we went straight there.

After I had ordered 3 espressos at the table outside the café, I felt that they were both a little uneasy about speaking to me. I began by asking them how they were finding their studies at Sslmit and Silvia was immediately very animated in her response, which was very positive. Federico however was a little more subdued, letting her talk at first. Although Silvia said that she was very passionate about English, and saw Sslmit as the perfect place to improve her language skills, she
was worried about reaching the ‘right level’ by the end of the degree. She also compared her English to other students and positioned herself as being one of the worse students overall. When I asked her why, she said that some of her peers were bi-lingual and spoke like ‘mother tongue’ English people, while she still had problems with her pronunciation and her grammar. Federico commented that she was very good and described his own English as being far worse than hers sometimes.

From their conversation I realised that their goal of becoming interpreters was based on an understanding that language was the most important thing. I suggested that being an interpreter might require other skills such as an awareness of cultural differences and the ability to manage people in difficult situations. Silvia replied to this however by saying ‘yeah, I suppose so’ and made no further comment or reflection on what I had said. The conversation slowed down soon after and they both said that they had to meet friends and thanked me for the coffee. I thanked them for allowing me to interview them, said that they had talked about some very interesting things, and that I would be in contact soon to let them know if they would be in the rest of the research. They thanked me again and left.

**Date: 5/12/2012**

**Time: 11.00**

**Place: Classroom, First interview with Giulia**

Giulia arrived late to the interview and apologised. When I started to record her she immediately became very nervous and kept looking at my ipad (obviously very aware that she was being recorded). I tried to calm her down by saying ‘just relax and think of this as a little chat’ but she appeared to be unable to do this. Sometimes her face appeared to flush red as though she were embarrassed, although my questions were never personal. By the end of the interview I concluded that she was too self-conscious to be part of the cohort.
Date: 6/12/2012
Time: 11.30
Place: Classroom, First interview with Stefania

Stefania appeared to have a nervous tick, which emerged as a loud clicking of her tongue throughout the interview. I did not point this out to her, but decided that she would be unsuitable for extended recordings and group work which might distract other participants.

Date: 7/12/2012
Time: 11.00
Place: Classroom, First interview with Rosa

Rosa had already approached me after the first class presentation of the research (see above) where she asked me if non-Italians could volunteer. In the interview she talked about her experiences of coming to Italy from Iran and her very different learning experiences there. She talked about Italians in the institution as being quite different from herself and appeared to present an outsider’s perspective on the institution in general. She listened carefully to my questions and answered them in an extended manner, with little need for me to intervene to clarify or direct her. I therefore decided that she would make a very interesting candidate for the research, potentially highlighting aspects of the institution that might be taken for granted by other ‘Italian’ participants.

Date: 7/12/2012
Time: 12.30
Place: Classroom, First interview with Anna

Anna did not appear to always understand my questions, and began talking about things I had not asked her, until I had to point out that she was talking about something completely different from my original question. She appeared nervous
and agitated in the interview. I therefore decided that she would not be a suitable candidate.

Date: 7/12/2012  
Time: 16.00  
Place: Classroom, First interview with Giorgio

Giorgio was the same student who had approached me in the second class presentation of the research on the 10/10 (see above, p.704). In the interview his manner of speech was very short and clipped and he did not seem to engage well with my questions, talking about things that had little to do with the institution and his studies (which were my focus) and continuing for extended periods of time to recount things that had no bearing on my initial questions. By the end of the interview I had difficulty recalling anything of interest, and was very tired and disinterested by the whole experience. I therefore did not consider him as a good candidate for the research.

Date: 14/12/2012  
Time: 14.00  
Place: Classroom, First interview with Francesca

Francesca talked in a very loud voice, perhaps as a consequence of feeling nervous. However, this was sustained for the whole interview and made it very difficult for me to relax in her company. From the perspective of a group interview I suspected that she might be too dominant and potentially intimidate the other participants by shouting them down. I therefore decided that she was not a suitable candidate.
Date: 21/2/2013  
Time: 17.00  
Place: Classroom, First workshop interview

I was very nervous initially that the students I had chosen to be my cohort, based on their first one-to-one interviews (see above), might not work well together as a group. My principal concern was that one or two students might dominate the whole interview and the others might not engage at all. However, perhaps because of the evident friendship between some of them, specifically between Maria, Silvia and Federico (whom I had regularly observed together in the cafes and bars of the town) there was a much more balanced exchange of views in our discussions. Matteo also expressed his opinions very often, perhaps because of his maturity (being older than the rest and having already completed a degree). Rosa however appeared to engage less, perhaps because she was not Italian and felt a little bit of an outsider. This led me to elicit her opinion a little more in the interview, especially when she had been quiet for a long time.

Around half way through the interview the group became aware of a loud drilling noise coming from the wall, which at times drowned out their voices, causing them to pause and in some cases laugh. I, however, was extremely nervous as I thought they were talking about some very interesting issues that would possibly be inaudible on the recording, as well as wondering how the noise was affecting their thought processes, potentially skewing my data in some way. The source of the noise I subsequently learnt was coming from maintenance work on the floor above but I did not want to interrupt the participants’ talk. Fortunately it only lasted for about 10 minutes.

What emerged from the interview was a close connection between Silvia and Maria, where the former appeared to echo much of the latter’s thoughts and ideas. Silvia regularly agreed with Maria and did not challenge her directly. Federico on the other hand appeared to often challenge Silvia, and Silvia Federico, in a playful manner, adopting what appeared to be a slightly childish rivalry between the two. Rosa remained mainly impartial although she often challenged Matteo’s positioning of the teacher Moscato as being one of the best teacher’s in the institution, revealing perhaps a dislike for the teacher in general.
Overall however, there were no instances of serious tensions between the participants and the general atmosphere was amicable. By the end of the interview I thought that some very interesting things had emerged from the discussion and was eager to begin analysing what I had recorded.

**Date:** 21/2/2013  
**Time:** 19.15  
**Place:** Drinks at a local bar with the group

After the first group interview I asked all the participants if I could buy them a drink at the local café, hoping to gain some more insights into some of the things they had been talking about in the interview. Everyone agreed, apart from Rosa, who said that she had a prior engagement and had to run. I bought everyone a drink to thank them for being in the research and giving up their personal time. When there was a pause in our talk I asked Maria what she had meant by the teacher Moscato being in competition with the other students (something that had emerged in our interview). Maria responded that it was only a joke but when I pressed her she said that all of the teachers at Sslmit were potentially in competition with students when they graduate, as this was the best interpreter’s school in Italy. I asked the other students if they thought that this was true, that Sslmit was the best. Silvia was vehement that it was true, telling me about all her friends being amazed that she managed to finally get in, and how proud her parents were. I asked her why Sslmit was considered the best and she talked about the entrance exam, which in her opinion was the hardest of any interpreting school in Italy. Matteo also said that it was undoubtedly the best, and that it was a commonly known fact among students in ‘la Sapienza’ university in Rome, where he had studied oriental languages previously. Matteo’s friends were all described as being impressed that he had made it in, especially as his ‘English was not that good’ (Matteo’s comment).

This conversation with my participants seemed to place Sslmit on a very high pedestal in the academic world in Italy, where students were proud of having being accepted (passing an exam that it seemed was generally considered to be the
hardest among interpreter institutions in Italy). The talk also was notable for how my students appeared to be worried about their language level and meeting the standards that they felt the institution expected, based it seemed partially on the high benchmark set by the entrance Sslmit exam.

Date: 26/2/2013
Time: 21.00
Place: meeting Giorgio and his friends at a pub in the centre of town

In the evening I went to the Irish pub in the centre of town. ‘The Abbey’ is situated in a quiet courtyard behind the main piazza (Piazza Safi), and outside there are a series of long tables and benches where many students gather in the evening. I was sitting, enjoying a Guinness, when Giorgio walked pass me with a few of his friends. He saw me, stopped and said ‘buona sera professore’ with a broad smile. I chatted to him for a while. I had not selected Giorgio for the research (see above, p. 713) so I was worried that he might have been offended. I apologised and told him that I was looking for a particular group dynamic in the research and unfortunately he didn’t quite suit my target. He asked me if it was because his English wasn’t good enough because he knew he still had to improve it a lot, if he ever wanted to become an interpreter one day. I told him that his English was fine and that I was more concerned about how my participants might interact in the group interviews so I needed a particular mix of people. He said that he understood (‘Capisco prof’) and wished me a pleasant evening.

Giorgio’s English could be described as being quite proficient and it was not because of that that I had not selected him (see above again, p.713), it was more to do with his communicative skills and his apparent inability to listen to what was being said to him (at least in the interview I conducted). However, this meeting re-enforced the idea that everything seemed to centre on language competence for students. There appeared to be a continual self-appraisal of their language skills going on, and a continual self-criticism that they are always lacking and needed to be improved greatly.
Date: 6/6/2013  
Time: 16.30  
Place: Classroom, Second interview with Federico  

In my second interview with Federico he talked much more about his teachers’ characters, how some were ‘scary’ and ‘strict’ (particularly the Russian teachers) and others were very ‘nice’ (the Slovak teacher). These different characters appeared to have different effects on his study and learning, as he described himself as not daring to go to the Russian classes without doing all his homework whereas with the Slovak teacher he might or might not do everything, as the atmosphere was more relaxed. I noticed how teachers were much more present in his talk about the institution in general, and the role they played in his life.

Date: 6/6/2013  
Time: 18.00  
Place: Seeing Federico and Silvia in café Forli  

After my interview with Federico, I went to café Forli for a coffee. As I entered the café I saw Federico and Silvia at the bar, talking. I tried to catch their eye and I was sure that Federico had seen me enter, however he did not look in my direction. When I was sitting outside drinking, they both came out and were directly in front of me. I smiled in their direction but they turned sharply and walked back towards the institution. I was sure that they had been aware of my presence but for some reason they did not want to engage with me. I thought I had might have done something to offend one or the other, but I couldn’t think of anything. The interview with Federico had gone well, I was sure, we had chatted and even laughed and there was no discernible tension between us. However, somehow I felt that I had been ignored for some reason. This episode contrasted greatly with my encounters with both Federico and Silvia in the first term where they would always stop to chat or say hello when we met in the street, or in the institution. Something had changed in our relationship, which made me feel like an outsider, a stranger.
Maria was much more critical about her teachers in her second interview. In particular she talked about rivalry between some teachers who shared courses, and ‘childish’ behaviour (where one teacher didn’t want to work with another), which threatened her potential to get good exam marks and a good degree. Her maturity as a student seemed to be a central concern in her talk, reprimanding some teachers for not being strict enough with her fellow students and wasting time on weaker students when language goals (corresponding to ‘interpreter levels’, which she had set) were not being met. Maria also positioned teachers as treating her like an adolescent and not ‘a grown up woman’, checking her work continuously to see that she had done it.

What was noticeable then was Maria’s central preoccupation with issues of ‘maturity’, positioning herself continually as being more mature than her teachers and her peers.

Silvia’s second interview saw a much greater emphasis on her personal development, how she had changed over her first year in the institution. There was much less interest in her professional goals and her learning than in her first interview, and much more about human relations, in particular with all the new friends she had made who had made her ‘realise’ things about herself that she hadn’t been aware of.

Whereas in the first interview she appeared to want to impress me much more with her ‘dream’ of becoming an interpreter and her ‘passion’ for languages,
which had shaped her life. In the second interview she appeared to be much less inclined to impress me with these things, she didn’t know if she wanted to become an interpreter now, and she was just getting on (living for today) and studying her languages.

Date: 9/6/2013
Time: 15.00
Place: Classroom, Second interview with Rosa

Rosa appeared to be much less engaged in her second interview. I got the impression that she didn’t really want to talk about the institution or her life there any more. There were much longer pauses in her talk, where she appeared to have nothing to say, and the atmosphere was much more tense that in the first interview. At times I felt that I had to drag her thoughts out of her. This might have been connected to her confusion about her future, which emerged in the interview. She appeared despondent about never becoming an interpreter as she ‘wasn’t bi-lingual’, like some of the students, and her Italian would never be as good as the majority of her native speaking peers.

Date: 15/6/2013
Time: 11.00
Place: Classroom, Second interview with Matteo

Matteo criticised his teachers much more in his second interview. His criticism however was not directed so much at individual teachers but at the different language departments, and their different ways of teaching and testing students. Matteo described the English department as not being as ‘organised’ as the German department, and the English department as not respecting university rules and regulations with regard to re-taking exams (the latter denying students’ their ‘rights’). Matteo positioned the institution itself as being ‘confused’ and allowing teachers too much power over their students. All of this was in contrast to Matteo’s positioning of teachers in the first interview, where they were in close
‘contact’ with students. By the second interview, teachers appeared to be much more outsiders (at times threatening), not part of a close community with students. This observation made me reflect on how I had felt an outsider myself when Federico and Silvia ignored me at café Forli. Was this a symptom of a greater distance between students and teachers, developing more in the second term? And what relevancies might this have for my research?

Date: 15/6/2013
Time: 12.15
Place: Talking to Matteo in café Forli

After my interview with Matteo I invited him for a coffee. I commented that he appeared to be more stressed than last term. He smiled and said that he just couldn’t wait to go on his Erasmus placement, to get away from Forli. I asked him why he needed to get away and he responded that he was tired of struggling with his teachers and felt that they didn’t understand him sometimes and frustrated him. When I asked him to clarify what he meant by that, he said that they didn’t appreciate how much work he put into his studies and took it for granted, always expecting more and more, and that they always thought that their subject was more important than any other. Matteo wanted to take a break from the pressure he was under and come back refreshed for his final year.

I remembered Matteo in his first term, when he appeared more convinced about his future as an interpreter and how now he seemed overcome by his workload, which he portrayed as being excessive, unappreciated by teachers, and without a clear objective anymore.

Date: 19/6/2013
Time: 16.30
Place: Classroom, Second workshop interview

In the last group interview most of the talk was about teachers. From the very beginning to the end, my participants talked about individual teachers, language
departments, and their relationship with them and the institution in general.

Nearly all the comments made appeared to be critical of all of these. I got the distinct impression that there was an ‘us’ (students), and a ‘them’ (teachers), with no sense of a shared community.

**Date: 19/6/2013**
**Time: 19.00**
**Place: Drinks at café Forli**

After our last group interview I invited the whole group for drinks at café Forli, to thank them for taking part in my research.

When we were sitting outside, at a big table, I asked them what they thought about taking part in the research. Silvia said that it was very interesting and that she thought it was like going to the psychiatrist and telling him your problems and being listened to. She thought that these chats should be organised more often, for all the students to get things off their chest, and explore their problems in Sslmit. Maria and Matteo agreed. Federico said that he had enjoyed it too, spitting out all his ‘venom’ about Sslmit. I asked them if they still wanted to be interpreters and only Maria said ‘yes of course’, Matteo laughed and said ‘yes, I think so’ and Silvia said ‘well, we will see’. Matteo then said that the teachers and the institution put ‘too much pressure on students’ and that ‘they’re never happy’. There was a general nodding of heads and a few ‘yeah’s. Federico said that he knew that he was in the best school in Italy, but asked what can they expect students to do in ‘only three years’. Maria agreed and said that they would only become interpreters when they live in the countries and learn about the culture, and that takes a lot of time. We finished our drinks and said our goodbyes, wishing each other a great Summer. I said, I hope you all come back refreshed, and they laughed.

What emerged from this conversation was a deep sense of frustration among the students. They all appeared to be under pressure (by their teachers and the institution) to do their best but there was a sense that they didn’t know what that exactly meant. Learning their respective languages appeared paramount but there
was a sense that that could only be done elsewhere (in the foreign country where it was spoken). Matteo’s desire to go to Germany on Erasmus was perhaps a desire to ‘really’ learn the language, just as much as escaping his teachers and the institution, which perhaps were asking him to do the impossible. He needed to speak ‘perfect German’ (to become an interpreter) but he felt that he didn’t have enough time or opportunity to do so.
APPENDIX C

SERVICES

Public Relations Office (URP)

The mission of this office is that of favouring the relations with the University through direct contact at the front office or through the call centre and e-mail service. The office promotes and encourages information and communications activities mainly addressed to students, providing for general information and analysing user needs.

P.le Solieri 1, Forlì  Ph. +39 0543-374800  urp.forli@unibo.it  Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri: 9.00-12.00 | Tue, Thu: 14.30-17.00  www.unibo.it/urpforli

Guidance Office

The office supports the student in the selection of study programmes and in the ongoing evaluation of the programme undertaken. The Office offers welcoming tutors to help the student in getting acquainted with the university system and environment. It offers consultancy and advice to newly graduated students in the shift from the University to the job market through individual interviews. To book an appointment, please visit the Website

www.orientaonline.unibo.it

P.le Solieri 1, Forlì  Ph. +39 0543-374860 orientamento.fc@unibo.it

Internship and Placement Services

These services offer to students and recent graduates the guidance and administrative support required to carry out internships or job placements, and develop relations with private companies to encourage the entry of graduates into the job market. For further information, please consult the Website of your degree programme to identify the relevant Internship and Placement Office.

Student Administration Office

This Office executes and implements all the administrative procedures and best practices related to the university career, from first year enrolment to graduation, through its help desk open to the public.

P.le Solieri 1, Forlì  Ph. +39 0543-374809 segforli@unibo.it  Online services
https://studenti.unibo.it  Mon, Tue, Fri: 9.00-11.15  |Wed: 9.00– 12.00 | Tue, Thu: 14.30-15.30

University e-mail address

All students enrolled at the University of Bologna have a university e-mail address, which is automatically generated when enrolling in the first year. The e-mail address has the following domain and format: name.lastname@studio.unibo.it. The university e-mail is the main channel for all communications between the University and the student, both for general information and for specific needs.
Degree Programme Secretariats

These Secretariats represent the core information point for students, both prospective and enrolled. They provide for help and assistance in the compiling of your study plan and for the assessment of the prerequisites; they offer guidance and advice about the university system and the degree programme regulations, admission tests for the School programmes, career monitoring and analysis, career reconstruction and credit recognition.

The Tutors

The tutors work with the degree programme secretariats and deal with the activities of support to the services addressed to students; they provide guidance and information to newly enrolled students and to past-year students.

Contacts:

School of Economics, Management and Statistics Ph. +39 0543 374673 Fax: +39 0543 374660 E-mail: ems.fo.studenti@unibo.it

School of Engineering and Architecture Ph.: +39 0543 374401 Fax: +39 0543 374477 E-mail: ingarc.vpce.segrdidattica-fo@unibo.it

School of Languages and Literatures, Translation and Interpreting Ph. +39 0543 374505 E-mail: segreteria.didattica@sslmit.unibo.it

School of Political Sciences Ph.: +39 0543 374100 Fax: Ph. +39 0543 374078 E-mail: info.spfo@unibo.it

Services for disabled and dyslexic students

These services are mainly addressed to students with disabilities and with physical difficulties at the entry into the University and provide them with support during their entire study career, with the objective of identifying and designing the kind of aid or support required to allow them to successfully attend and complete their study programmes.

Each School appoints a person to whom the disabled or physically impaired student can apply for his/her special needs.

Disabled Student Service

University of Bologna Via Ranzani 14 400127 - Bologna - Italy Ph.: +39 051 2095941 Ph.: +39 051 2095942 Fax: +39 051 2086164 Mon to Thu: 9.00-13.00; 14.00-16.30| Fri: 9.00-13.00; 14.00-15.30