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Changing Footings on ‘Jacob’s ladder’: dealing with sensitive issues in dual-role mediation on a Swedish TV show

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ABSTRACT

This case study examines a Swedish TV interview with a Soviet pop singer in 1985 where the talk show host, who is both a trained interpreter and an experienced media journalist, acts as a dual-role mediator, interviewing and interpreting at the same time. The analysis is contextualized within the political and military relations between Sweden and the USSR in the 1980s. Theoretically, the study draws on ethics of interpreting, ethics of entertainment and the notions participation status or footing. A potential challenge for a dual-role mediator is that two different ethical stances are involved; here, ethics of entertainment (entertainment, comfort, culture value orientation) and ethics of interpreting (impartiality, neutrality, accuracy). These may clash, but the study claims that the different stances can also be used to the participants’ advantage. Here, the role of talk show host dominates over the role of interpreter, and interpreting ethics can be flouted and played with if it suits the purposes of the former. The study shows the complexity of dual-role mediation and emphasizes the need to take into account the perspectives of both of the involved roles in research on participants’ interaction and changes of footing.

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Dual-role mediation; TV interpreting; interpreting ethics; ethics of entertainment; participation framework

Introduction

In the misty evening of 27 October 1981, people in the Karlskrona archipelago in Sweden heard a loud engine sound during most of the night. Living near Sweden’s southernmost naval base, they were used to hearing noises from navy vessels. So, nobody bothered to check (Hela natten kämpade ubäten, 1981, p. 5). Late next morning, however, a fisherman going out to empty his nets was surprised to see a submarine stuck in the shallow waters some 35 m from an islet. The black vessel had no nationality signs but did not look Swedish, and when the fisherman tried to take a closer look, the crew pointed machine guns at him. There seemed to be no Swedish presence on the scene. So, he went back home, picked up the phone and called the Karlskrona base to tell...
them about what he had found. After initial disbelief, the Swedish navy acted, and arriving at the scene, were able to identify the Soviet submarine U137.

This was a harsh reminder of the then ongoing “Cold War” and Sweden’s relative proximity to one of the main protagonists in that war, the USSR: Karlskrona is a mere 348 km from the Soviet (now Russian) naval base in Kaliningrad. The submarine was not able to get off on its own and this led to a diplomatic incident with quite a lot of tension between the two countries, further amplified as Swedish instruments indicated that the submarine was carrying nuclear weapons. It took 11 days of intense high-level diplomatic discussions between the two countries to reach an agreement whereby Soviet authorities were allowed to tow the submarine back to its home base in Kaliningrad.1

This incident and its impact on the image of the USSR in Sweden serves as significant background to the case study presented here, and is also in a sense its focal point. Its point of departure is an interview with a Soviet pop singer on a Swedish TV entertainment show, broadcast 4 years after the submarine incident, where the presenter both conducted the interview in Russian and interpreted it into Swedish for the viewers. He thus performed two different roles: that of presenter and interpreter. This is an instance of what Hlavac (2017, p. 200) calls dual-role mediation, explaining: ‘Those who mediate linguistically between others may often simultaneously adopt or retain another distinct role, e.g., counsellor, lawyer.’

Dual-role mediation is quite common, both in non-professional and professional settings. The present study examines a dual-role mediation situation where the mediator not only fulfills two different roles but also has two professional identities, both interpreter and journalist/presenter. These two roles impose partly incompatible constraints, in terms of conversational visibility and participation status or footing (Goffman, 1981). The present paper focuses on ethical aspects of this role combination. It is a case study, and as such has limited power of generalizability, but it has potentially wide implications.

The study draws mainly upon research on the ethics of interpreting, more particularly dialogue interpreting and TV interpreting, and Goffman’s (1981) concepts of speaker and hearer roles. This will be discussed in the next section. Then, the context of the case study is presented, followed by the analysis of one segment from the interview, involving multiple changes of footing. Discussion and suggested conclusions follow.

**Theoretical background**

**Ethics of interpreting dialogues**

The discussion of interpreter ethics will take as its point of departure the Code of Interpreter Ethics which was valid in Sweden at the time of the present case study, God tolksed (1980). This Code was developed after Sweden launched its system for state authorization of interpreters in 1975 (Norström, Fioretos, & Gustafsson, 2012, p. 245). Although primarily intended for the needs of community or public service interpreters, it was ‘a codification and part modification of the prevailing rules and conventions within the interpreter community, for example organizations like AIIC, the international association of conference interpreters.’ (Niska, 2007, p. 301). As will be shown below, the talk show host in this study can be assumed to have been familiar with it from his training and professional interpreting practice. This code stipulates e.g., confidentiality, neutrality
and impartiality, and with regard to accuracy and interpreting performance, some basic tenets (the most relevant from the point of view of this study) of the Code are:

- Everything that is said should be interpreted. The interpretation should be as exact as possible, rendering terms and linguistic nuances.
- The principle of information transfer can be summarized as ‘not withholding, adding or changing anything’.
- It is not the interpreter’s task to judge what is of interest or not in what is being said. (Gołkised, 1980, p. 10–12, my translation here and throughout)

The Code has since then undergone some revisions, but the basics remain very much the same and are similar to ethical codes in other countries. In their overview of interpreters’ codes of conduct in different countries, Mason and Ren (2012, p. 236) conclude: ‘… faithfulness, accuracy, neutrality, impartiality, and detachment are the key notions in the role prescription of interpreters.’ See also Hale (2007, Chapter 4).

An underlying assumption of the Code is that by adhering to it, the interpreter would be able to play the neutral part of a ‘translation machine’ and hence become, as it were, almost ‘invisible’ as a person in the conversation, not contributing anything of his or her ‘own’ to it. As Mason and Ren (2012, p. 235) say: ‘Indeed, it has been the traditional and persistent view that interpreters should be transparent, invisible, passive, neutral, and detached.’ However, in a growing body of international research on dialogue interpreting, this metaphorical image of ‘the interpreter’s invisibility’, the ‘conduit metaphor’, has come to be widely questioned, see, e.g., early studies such as Wadensjö (1992, 1998, 2008a), Roy (1993) and Metzger (1999). Exploring the role and functions of the interpreter, based on recordings of authentic interaction situations, they show that the interpreter actually by necessity takes an active part in the interaction (cf. also Englund Dimitrova, 1991, 1997, with a specific focus on feedback and turn-taking). The idealized clear-cut interpreter role and its ethics is a construct with very fuzzy boundaries, negotiated continuously by the professional interpreter in interaction with the other participants in the interpreting situation.

**TV interpreting and ethics**

Research on TV interpreting has focussed mainly on interpreting done by an interpreter (professional or non-professional), this being his/her only task on the programme. Interviews on TV can be interpreted because the interviewer and interviewee do not share a common language (or choose not to speak in a common language); in which case the interpreter’s function is to make the interview possible. The situation thus resembles interpreted dialogues in other settings in being a triadic mediated interaction. When such interviews occur on talk shows, the interpreter and the interpretation have been shown to be explicitly addressed by the talk show host in order to become part of the entertainment function (Straniero Sergio, 1999, p. 314; Wadensjö, 2008a, 2008b). The supposed ‘invisibility’ of the interpreter is then called into question and effectively cancelled.

If the interviewer and the interviewee share a common language which differs from that of the audience, the interpreting is carried out for the benefit of the audience. This is the case in the present study with the particular feature that the interpreting is done by the
presenter. This is not unique in media; e.g., at sport events, reporters interview participants in the event and interpret, often in condensed form, to the listeners/viewers. However, there seems to be little research on the actual conversational management of this particular kind of media (TV, radio) interpreting (however, for general descriptions of this type, see Ghignoli & Torres Díaz, 2016; Straniero Sergio, 2011). In a prototypical sense, this is not dialogue interpreting since its main purpose is not to enable or facilitate dialogue between two parties. It could perhaps be called an instance of self-translation or self-interpreting, embedded in a larger discourse involving two or more people.

For TV interpreting, Katan and Straniero-Sergio (2001, p. 217) postulate an ethics of entertainment, based on what they label ‘the comfort factor’, which ‘relates not only to the degree to which the TV viewing audience is entertained, but also to the degree to which the producers and those on-stage – including the interpreter – feel comfortable with what they are doing.’ Further, they claim that the TV audience ‘will expect an ethics based on their culture’s own value orientations’ (Katan & Straniero-Sergio, 2001, p. 218). Clearly, comfort, entertainment and culture-specific value orientation concern values other than those of neutrality, confidentiality, impartiality and accuracy characterizing interpreter ethics. Hence, combining the two professional roles can pose an ethical challenge. Monacelli and Punzo (2001, p. 279) point out: ‘Interpreters’ ethical behaviour is situated in the domain of interpreting and not in the domain of clients’ communication, because in the latter interpreters have no autonomy.’ When the interpreter performs more than one role (professional or other), the domain of his/her ethical behaviour by necessity expands its boundaries, incorporating to a greater or lesser extent aspects of the other role as well. From the point of view of ethics, such role combinations can be assumed to exert conflicting demands on the interpreter. This is confirmed by Snellman (2016), who finds that military interpreters view themselves and act primarily as soldiers, not as interpreters, and concludes: ‘… as a group, military interpreters align more closely with the professional ethos of soldiers than with that of interpreters.’ (p. 274)

**Interpreting and participation framework**

Sociologist Erving Goffman’s ideas on social roles and how the participants in talk negotiate their participation framework, including changes in interactional status or footing, have proved fruitful for the study of (dialogue) interpreting. Goffman (1981) describes three different speaker roles: animator – defined as ‘the talking machine, a body engaged in acoustic activity’, author – ‘someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded’, and principal – ‘someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say’ (p. 144). These conceptualizations form a continuum of growing engagement on the part of the speaker for what is being said and its consequences. Since these are social roles in talk, one person can take on more than one role at a time.

When applied to interpreting, the interpreter (in a normative role) might either be seen as the animator only (if interpreting is seen as mere transcoding of messages, cf. the conduit metaphor above) or, as animator and, partly, as author (at least as concerns the selection of words), if interpreting is viewed in the light of newer research (see Wadensjö, 2008a, p. 189). The interpreter’s own contributions, e.g., questions for clarifications, are
made in the role of principal. Hence, the interpreter’s participation status will vary, just as will that of the other participants. Goffman’s ideas have been discussed and further developed for interpreting by e.g., Keith (1984), Edmondson (1986), Mason (1990) and Wadensjö (1992, 1998), and applied in empirical analyses of different types of interpreting (e.g., Englund Dimitrova, 1995; Hlavac, 2017; Merlini & Favaron, 2005; Metzger, 1999; Wadensjö, 1992, 1998, 2008a, 2008b).

A dual role, however, as is the case here – talk show host and interpreter – tends to bring with it expectations and constraints that may be partially incompatible. The talk show host clearly needs to be the principal, to take an active role, entertain, steer the conversation, make the interview both informative and entertaining. As Straniero Sergio (1999, p. 306) puts it: ‘It is the presenter who, with his or her discourse register, personality and conversational style, ultimately determines the participation format, the identity and the success of this specialized form of talk.’ The role also includes keeping track of time (especially in live transmissions) and other aspects of the production. As figure 1 shows, these aspects are in contradiction with the constraints imposed on the normative interpreter role.

Goffman (1981) also suggests different hearer roles for recipients of talk, making a major distinction between ratified (or official) and non-ratified participants. Ratified recipients are further divided into addressed hearer(s)/recipients and unaddressed hearer(s)/recipients. Goffman (1981, p. 133) says: ‘… the speaker will, at least during periods of his talk, address his remarks to one listener, so that among official hearers one must distinguish the addressed recipient from “unaddressed” ones.’

When an interviewer also interprets, different parts of his/her utterances have different addressed recipients: prototypically, the addressed recipient of the questions in the interview language is the interviewee, whereas the addressed recipients of talk in the language of the show (whether interpretation or not) are the viewers/listeners and the studio audience, if any.

The context of the case study
The show and the participants

The interview in this case study was broadcast in the second episode of a new TV show, Jacob’s Ladder [Swe. Jacobs stege] which had started the week before (with American

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker roles in Goffman terms</th>
<th>animator, author and principal</th>
<th>animator and author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected ‘visibility’ as a person</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low or none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected influence on what the interviewee will say and how he/she will speak</td>
<td>moderate to high</td>
<td>none or low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Talk show host and interpreter: expectations connected with their respective (normative) roles.
singer Diana Ross as the main guest) and which was subsequently broadcast throughout
the second half of the 1980s. The programme was broadcast live but without a studio audi-
ence, on 19 October 1985, almost to the day 4 years after the beginning of the submarine
incident. The show was centred around its host Jacob Dahlin (1952–1991). Featuring
Swedish and international artists, its characteristics were entertainment and the abundant
serving of champagne. Dahlin always finished his interviews by serving the guest a glass of
champagne accompanied by the phrase: ‘Skål, ta mej fan!’ [Cheers, damn it!]. This defiant
defence of partying and glamour became his mantra and is today, more than 25 years after
his death, still connected with him.

Dahlin had learnt Russian at high school and then gone on to study the language full
time at Stockholm University for four semesters. The last semester was devoted entirely to
translation and interpreting, and included both theoretical aspects and practical exercises.
After graduation, he did some teaching at the university, and also took on interpreting
assignments. Gradually, he went into journalism, with a special interest in reporting on
modern Russian and Soviet culture, working with Swedish radio and then TV. A quote
from an interview published two years before the show analysed in this case study eluci-
dates his own view on his background: “I didn’t start out as a journalist at all,” he says. “I
studied Russian and History at Stockholm University, became an interpreter, and travelled
with delegations on various missions in the Soviet Union.” (Hallert, 1983, p. 40; my
italics) Thus, he identified mainly as an interpreter, and although he never applied for
state interpreter authorization, he must be assumed to have been well acquainted with
the contents of the Code of Ethics quoted above.

Dahlin’s guest on the show was the Soviet singer Alla Borisovna Pugacheva, born in
1949. At this point in time, she was a superstar in the Soviet Union and had also had sig-
nificant international success, mainly in the Socialist countries. At this time, Michail Gor-
bachev was the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, having succeeded
Konstantin Chernenko some seven months earlier in this powerful position in the
USSR. Today, Gorbachev is remembered for his reforms, for glasnost and perestroika,
and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union. At the time of this show, however,
in October 1985, he was still quite new as General Secretary. He had started to plan
certain reforms, but their actual implementation and results were still in the future. The
Soviet Union was still in existence as a state, and the Iron Curtain and the Cold War
were a reality. For Soviet citizens, even fame was no guarantee for personal safety. For
instance, Andrei Sakharov, the dissident, civil rights defender and Nobel laureate for
peace in 1975, was at this time still being kept in internal exile in Gorky; Soviet authorities
would not allow him to go back to Moscow until December 1986, i.e., more than a year
after this show was broadcast (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei_Sakharov, accessed
June 4th, 2018).

Pugacheva had already on previous occasions met Dahlin and other Swedes. For
instance, in November 1980, she had featured on Dahlin’s radio show Galaxen [The
January 1983, she had met two members of the Swedish pop group ABBA, Benny Anders-
son and Björn Ulvaeus, who were working on the musical Chess. As its theme was con-
nected with the USSR, they went to Moscow to get a feel for the atmosphere. There,
they met Pugacheva and offered her the part of Svetlana in the planned concept album.
In the musical, Svetlana is the wife of a Soviet chess player who defected to the West, a
clear allusion to the internal situation in the USSR. Evgenij Boldin, Pugacheva’s then husband, states in an interview published after the fall of USSR that Pugacheva was advised (i.e., by the authorities) to meet the two visiting Swedes, but to decline the offer of singing in the album. It was politically impossible for Pugacheva to take part in the project: ‘such a role would not only be forbidden for Pugacheva, even to think of it was forbidden’ [Rus. ‘подобная роль была бы для Пугачевой не только запретной, помыслять о ней было нельзя’]. (Melik-Karamov, 1997, no p.).

In April 1983, Pugacheva had been in Stockholm to participate in the entertainment show Nöjesmaskinen [The Entertainment Machine] and had been interviewed by Dahlin (https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nöjesmaskinen, accessed Nov 27th 2017). On this occasion, the major daily newspaper Dagens Nyheter published a long article on her, drawing both on an interview with her in Moscow and a report from a press conference held in Stockholm (Mortenson & Luthander, 1983, p. 27). The reporters note the presence at the press conference of, among others, both ‘interpreters’ and ‘staff from the embassy’, that ‘Alla slides elegantly around the questions’ [Swe. ‘Alla glider elegant kring frågorna’] and that during her career, she has ‘carefully avoided politically sensitive texts’ [Swe. ‘nogsamt undvikit politiskt känsliga texter’]. The article is presented mainly in the form of questions and answers, written as if transcribed more or less verbatim and quoted without any comment, leaving it to the readers to draw their own conclusions. The final question raised the issue of the USSR’s then ongoing war in Afghanistan, and Pugacheva’s answer is indicative of her cheerful and evasive way of answering:

In the USA, many artists protested with their music against the Vietnam war. Can you protest against the war in Afghanistan?

-Those who are against it can sing about it. But there’s no war there. I have been asked to sing in Afghanistan. But it’s too hot there.10 (Mortenson & Luthander, 1983, p. 27)

Thus, Pugacheva was well aware of the need to be careful in political matters, even as a superstar and even when abroad. Furthermore, she and the talk show host Dahlin had met several times before, so he was aware of her tendency to try to avoid political matters in interviews.

**Pugacheva on the show**

On the show, about 28 min are devoted to Soviet pop culture in general and Pugacheva in particular.11 She sings several songs, both recorded and live in the studio, and clips from her latest film and a video are shown. Interspersed with this are comments by Dahlin on her career and on Soviet pop culture. The interview is done towards the end of the show, before her last song.

The block on Pugacheva is introduced by Dahlin marching up a staircase in the studio, to cheerful march music, sounding typically ‘Soviet’.12 He’s wearing a green jacket resembling a military uniform (although the sleeves are slightly rolled up in a non-military fashion), holding a uniform cap in his hand. Reaching the top of the staircase, he puts on the cap, salutes, and says in Russian (not translated on the show): Лестница Якоба приветствует народную артистку Аллу Борисовну Пугачеву! [Jacob’s ladder greets People’s Artist Alla Borisovna Pugacheva!] Dahlin thus alludes to the USSR as an international superpower with strong military power. The ‘military’ theme is continued by
Pugacheva, who in her first song wears a masculine-looking jacket with the broad shoulders typical of the 1980s and a cap which bears some resemblance to a uniform cap. The interview lasts for 5 min and 33 s. Dahlin asks about her wish for a career in the West, her views on the recent political changes in the USSR (i.e., the new General Secretary of the Communist Party), and what the source of her energy might be, in view of her hectic artistic life. Both speak in short turns, with Dahlin interpreting consecutively. Their turn-taking is very quick and a clear indication that both of them have experience of similar situations. Some questions are first put in Swedish, then interpreted into Russian, in other cases, the Russian question comes first and the interpretation into Swedish after that. Dahlin applies flexibly different rendition techniques, interpreting in ‘you-form’, in short, quick exchanges, combining this with his own feedback – to convey Pugacheva’s self-description; in ‘she-form’ (or omitting personal references) – to convey the discussion on pop-culture and politics; and in ‘I-form’ (prescribed by the Code of Ethics) – to convey Pugacheva’s account of her personal life and driving forces.

The submarine surfaces

As outlined above, the addressed recipient of Dahlin’s Russian utterances in the interview is Pugacheva. His utterances in Swedish, both his own contributions as a presenter (as principal) and his interpretations of Pugacheva’s contributions (as animator and author), have the TV viewers as addressed recipients. However, at 2m48s into the interview, this established frame or participation framework is suddenly changed, when Dahlin asks a question, clearly intended for Pugacheva, but in Swedish only, without interpreting it into Russian. See turn 48 in excerpt 1. (For transcription conventions, see the appendix.)

Excerpt 1.

47 А. = и потом учти что (0.9) они интересны нам потому что (0.2) все-таки херейс это олицотворение молодости швеции. [R: and then keep in mind they’re interesting for us because after all Herreys are a personification of Swedish youth.]

48 J. (0.4) ähm а потом така интересант для что Herreys är (0.5) en bit av (0.2) sv- den svenska ungdomen och det är intressant för oss dom att komma i kontakt med och förresten har du sett har du sett (0.2) den här (0.6) vet du vad det är? [S: hm. and then also it’s interesting because Herreys are a piece of Sw- the Swedish youth and it’s interesting for us them to get in touch with that. and by the way, have you seen have you seen this do you know what this is?]

49 А. (0.9) Лягушка. [R: Frog.]

In turn 48, Dahlin first looks into the camera, at the addressed recipients, the viewers, and interprets into Swedish Pugacheva’s preceding utterance from turn 47 (given here to show the context of the first part of turn 48). Reaching the end of the interpretation, he turns his gaze towards Pugacheva. Without any perceptible pause, he goes on to ask a question, i.e., a change of footing to principal, as talk show host. This he does, however, in Swedish only, without interpreting. He smiles and pulls forward towards her the lapel of his uniform jacket with some medals, showing her one of them, looking at her. By not continuing his speaker’s turn and through his gaze and smile, he indicates to Pugacheva that she is the addressed recipient of his question and expected to take the turn, although he has not interpreted to her. Looking at his jacket, she answers, see turn 49, by naming in Russian what he is showing her – a frog. Pugacheva’s answer in turn 49 comes after a pause of almost one second. This is perhaps a slight hesitation, which may be an indication that she is waiting for his interpretation into Russian. When it does not come, she answers in Russian.
Excerpt 2 shows Dahlin’s turn 50, which demonstrates several rapid changes of footing. First, Dahlin swiftly interprets Pugacheva’s answer into Swedish (as animator and author), then, without any pause, changes footing to principal and talk show host function, explaining in Swedish that this is not a frog, but ‘a frogman’s medal’ awarded for good conduct aboard a submarine. The explanation is not interpreted into Russian, i.e., Dahlin stays in his talk show host function. Then, after a short pause (with a camera close-up of the medal), he introduces a new topic by asking a question in Russian with Pugacheva as the addressed recipient, before changing footing and interpreting into Swedish for the viewers:

Excerpt 2.

50 J. (0.2) groda, nä det är grodmansorden för gott uppförande ombord på ubåt. (0.7) а как с театром? hur går det med din teater? [S: frog. no it’s the frogman’s medal for good conduct aboard a submarine. R: and what about theatre? S: what about your theatre?]

By addressing Pugacheva in Russian again, Dahlin returns to the prototypical frame of the interview. However, the lack of interpretation of the Swedish explanation in turn 50, a zero rendition in the terminology of Wadensjö (1998, p. 108), has not gone unnoticed by Pugacheva. Instead of answering the question Dahlin put to her, she touches the ‘medal’ on his chest and demands laughingly in turn 51, after a pause of 1.4 s, that he should interpret to her what he just said in Swedish; see excerpt 3. Dahlin, however, refuses to change footing and in turn 52, persists with his question in Swedish. In the following turns, both repeat twice what they said in turns 51 and 52, she her demand for interpretation, and he his question about her theatre:

Excerpt 3.

51 A. (1.4) ты уже перевели что ты тут сказал. [R: you should translate what you said here.]
52 J. = hur går det med din teater? [S: what about your theatre?]
53 A. (xxx) что [R: what (xxx)]
54 J. = men hur går det med [din teater? [S: but what about your theatre?]
55 A. (xxx) что ты тут сказал (xxx) = [R: (xxx) what you said here (xxx)]
56 J. = на ничего. откуда у тебя столько энергии? var får du all din energi ifrån? du har just gjort din fjärde fi lm, du åker och har haft hundratals konserter bara i år. [R: oh alright. from where do you get so much energy? S: where do you get all your energy? you just finished your fourth film, you’re touring, giving hundreds of concerts just this year.]

During the turns in excerpt 3, there is a lot of overlapping talk and laughter, giving the impression of a friendly informal chat. Only Dahlin’s repeated question in Swedish is heard clearly. The disagreement over the topic and who should say what is resolved by both ‘giving up’, as it were: both laugh, and in turn 56, Dahlin asks a question, first in Russian, then in Swedish,13 introducing a completely new topic which is subsequently answered by Pugacheva and interpreted by Dahlin. The prototypical frame of interpreted interview is thus re-established. Pugacheva’s turns in excerpt 3 are not interpreted into Swedish, so her request for interpretation is never conveyed to the viewers. Unlike Pugacheva, Swedish TV viewers were in no position to demand interpretation.

The part of the interview which follows the question in turn 56 is interpreted by Dahlin strictly according to the Code of Ethics, interpreting in I-form and not omitting anything. This is where Pugacheva talks about her driving forces and motivations, and the interview takes on a more serious tone. Dahlin returns to the frog theme towards the end, when Pugacheva gets up to go to a microphone for her final song. The camera then closes up on Dahlin who reaches under the table and pulls out a uniform cap, decorated with various fish and crabs. He puts on the cap, pours himself some champagne, looks into the camera and raises the glass and, after introducing Pugacheva’s song, says:
The cap decorations show that the end pitch, with its allusion to the submarine theme, was carefully planned, as a playful follow-up to the USSR military theme introduced at the beginning. In this respect, the champagne was a further ‘wink’ to the viewers, since there have been suggestions that the running aground of submarine U137 had been due to the captain’s misconduct, i.e., insobriety.  

Discussion and conclusions

Introducing the frog theme as part of the interview, Dahlin manages to make his Soviet guest part of the submarine allusion and draw her into the joke by making her utter the key word ‘frog’. As shown above, Pugacheva had a well-known tendency to avoid political issues in public. Dahlin and Pugacheva had collaborated before and also did so after this show, and it was common knowledge at the time that they were good friends. Most likely, Dahlin and Pugacheva had discussed the interview questions before the show and how to treat political matters, but it is impossible to know whether this also concerned the frog theme and its particulars. In view of the political circumstances at the time, it seems doubtful, however, that Pugacheva would knowingly and willingly have agreed beforehand to participate in such a charade if she had known the exact details. After all, it did mean making fun of an embarrassing and much ridiculed incident committed by her own country’s navy.

If Pugacheva was not aware beforehand that such an exchange was planned, an intriguing question is how Dahlin was able to elicit the ‘correct’ answer from her. The question was asked in Swedish, a language of which she knew very little. Furthermore, Dahlin’s question (in turn 48) is asked quite swiftly, not at all slowly and clearly as if talking to a foreigner with limited knowledge of Swedish, but as to a fellow speaker of Swedish. He only shows her non-verbally what his utterance is about and that he expects her to answer (see above, excerpt 1). Her answer in Russian, лягушка, was in excerpt 1 above translated as ‘frog’; and that’s also how Dahlin interprets it into Swedish, groda, i.e., its lexical literal meaning. However, Russian does not mark definiteness/indefiniteness morphologically. So, her answer could also have been interpreted either as ‘a frog’ (the appropriate answer to Dahlin’s question), or as ‘the frog’ (e.g., if he had shown her the frog or a similar one before the show.  

From the point of view of interpreting ethics, Dahlin blatantly flouts some basic principles. He does not render several turns and thus withholds content both from his guest and from the viewers, even when explicitly told to interpret. After having done this, he may have wanted to show that he was actually quite well aware of what an interpreter should and should not do, and therefore interpreted the rest of the interview strictly according to the code of ethics (cf. the preceding section).

In this case, the role of being a talk show host is superordinate to the interpreting task, which means that it influences how interpreting is done and what ethics are adhered to. Strict interpreting ethics are adhered to only if it is feasible from the perspective of the superordinate role. The interpreting role is embedded, as it were, in the other role and its larger context. Hence, it is
important not only to consider whether or not interpreter ethics are adhered to, and what effect this has, but also to explore what effects arise – from the point of view of the talk show host role – from not adhering to them. On the show, by not interpreting his explanation about the medal into Russian, Dahlin manages to hide the exact nature of the joke from Pugacheva, since it is all done only in Swedish. In this way, he avoids confronting her verbally, because if he had interpreted his explanation about the medal, she would have needed to give some kind of response. Furthermore, the fact that he refuses to interpret, in spite of her request repeated three times to do so, can be seen as a way to protect her also after the show. Thanks to this, she would be able to claim to Soviet authorities, if needed, that she was not to blame for what had happened on the show; she had understood nothing at all – after all, she had demanded interpretation three times, but he had not complied! In this way, Dahlin could adhere to the ethics of entertainment (cf. above), in a playful manner alluding to the viewers’ image of the USSR while at the same time limiting potential damage to his guest. Combining two roles offers not only challenges, but also potential advantages.

Interpreting dialogues is a highly demanding cognitive task (Englund Dimitrova & Tiselius, 2016), and combining two roles increases the cognitive demand even more, especially if done in live transmission under time constraints. There are indications (both verbal and non-verbal) that Dahlin experienced some cognitive load towards the end of the interview. Perhaps this is the reason why most other interviews on this show were done monolingually by Dahlin, in English or Russian, before the show, recorded and subtitled, and then included as clips in the live transmission.

Notes

2. Non-rati…
4. I thank Elisabeth Löfstrand and Fredrik Dufwa for helping me access Dahlin’s study records.
5. Sweden has long had military interpreter training in Uppsala where the soldiers are taught Russian; many of them became linguists when dismissed from the army. While working on this paper, I have heard people state with great conviction that Dahlin had gone through this military interpreter training. However, this seems to be a ‘modern myth’, since he is not found in the records of the military interpreting training school (M. Dahnberg, personal communication, August 23rd, 2016).
6. Swedish original: ‘-Jag är inte alls journalist från början, upplyser han. Jag läste ryska och historia vid Stockholms universitet, blev tolk och följde med delegationer på uppdrag i Sovjet.’
8. The case study is built upon a video which has been publicly available on Youtube since 2013. I have therefore not sought the consent of Pugacheva for this study (and as already mentioned, Dahlin has passed away).
12. The well-known song dedicated to the Soviet capital Moscow – ‘Moscow in May’.
13. Dahlin’s Swedish utterance in turn 56 involves another change of footing, from animator/author in the first part, to principal after that.
14. Furthermore, the submarine happened to be of a type called Whiskey, so the incident was punned Whiskey on the Rocks.
15. In Swedish swimming schools, children are awarded badges for different levels of swimming proficiency; the lower-level badges are in the form of a frog. The quality of the Youtube video does not give a very clear image of the frog, but it is possible that the frog medal was made of such a badge. I thank Cecilia Alvstad for pointing out this possible connection to me.

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References


**Appendix.**

Key to transcriptions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Alla Pugacheva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Jacob Dahlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[text in square brackets preceded by S:]</td>
<td>transl. of Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[text in square brackets preceded by R:]</td>
<td>transl. of Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xx)</td>
<td>inaudible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>pause in seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[</td>
<td>start of overlapping talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>latching with previous turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>abrupt interruption of talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>rising intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>falling intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>continuing intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[…]</td>
<td>omitted part of turn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>