



International Pragmatics Association  
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# ***ABSTRACTS***



**17<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Conference**

Winterthur  
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# 17th INTERNATIONAL PRAGMATICS CONFERENCE

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# Interpreter's use of gestures in interpreter-mediated psychotherapy

Panel contribution

***Dr. Jelena Vranjes***<sup>1</sup>

*1. UGent*

Talk is one of the building blocks of therapeutic counseling. Through the process of talking, the patients gradually open up about their experiences and establish a shared ground of mutual understanding with the therapist (Peräkylä, 2013). The question is how therapeutic work is organized when the therapist and the patient have no understanding of each other's language. Many industrialized countries offer mental health care programs that rely on interpreters to enable communicative contact between the therapist and the patient. However, the interpreter's presence inevitably changes the interactional dynamics of a typically dyadic therapeutic setting into a *triadic* constellation (Bot, 2005). Studies have shown that, besides translating language, interpreters perform multiple tasks during the therapeutic encounter and thus have a significant impact on the negotiation of meaning and the unfolding of the interaction (Bot, 2005; Miller et al., 2005; Tribe & Keefe, 2009; Bot & Verrept, 2013; Ticca, 2018, Vranjes et al. 2019). Furthermore, dialogue interpreting is a multimodal activity, in which speakers integrate speech with bodily action (e.g. facial expressions, gestures and gaze orientation). Yet, except for a few studies focusing on the interpreter's body orientation, gaze and head movements (Wadensjö 2001, Bot 2005, Vranjes et al. 2018, Vranjes et al. 2019), research on multimodal aspects of interpreting in therapeutic conversations remains scarce. Adopting a micro-analytic approach, I will investigate in detail the use and the role of the interpreter's co-speech gestures in the context of a therapeutic encounter. More specifically, I will focus on the interpreter's use of gestures as a face-work strategy in the context of face-threatening acts (Goffman 1967).

The analysis is based on one interpreter-mediated psychotherapeutic session between a Russian speaking asylum seeker and a Dutch therapist. The session was recorded using mobile eye-tracking glasses (Vranjes et al. 2019). The study contributes to a better understanding of the role of gestures in interpreter-mediated psychotherapy. More globally, this case study may extend our understanding of the interpreter's social role in the institutional context of mental health care.

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