

Discursive Analysis of (pre-) Negotiation Behaviour in Mediated Press Conferences: Insights from the Sports Context

Basın Toplantılarında Sözlü Çevirmenin (Ön-)Müzakere Edimlerinin Söylemsel Çözümlemesi: Spor Bağlamından İçgörüler

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how pre-negotiation behaviour influences interpreter-mediated interactions in sports press conferences, with a focus on soccer player signings. Negotiation, inherently a social interaction, becomes complex when parties rely on interpreters to achieve their goals. While much of the existing literature emphasises the exchange phase of negotiation, this research highlights the often-overlooked pre-negotiation stage, demonstrating its critical role in shaping discourse dynamics. Utilising a discourse analytic approach, the study analyzes transcripts from football press conferences, revealing that pre-negotiated power dynamics and institutional roles heavily influence both the structure and content of the interaction. Interpreters, positioned as key agents within these institutional settings, not only adhere to predefined roles but also actively reinforce pre-negotiated strategies. Their involvement in the pre-negotiation phase, although less frequently examined in the negotiation literature, allows them to align with institutional objectives, thereby impacting the negotiation outcome. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how pre-negotiated dynamics and institutional goals shape interpreter-mediated communication in sports contexts, while also stressing the need for further research into the role of interpreters in pre-negotiation phases, as their participation reveals significant insights into the broader macro-social networks that govern football negotiations.

Keywords: soccer press conferences, pre-negotiation, discourse dynamics, interpreter-mediated, discourse analysis

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ÖZ

Bu çalışma, müzakere öncesi sürecin futbolcuların imza törenleri bağlamında, spor basın toplantılarında sözlü çevirmen aracılığıyla gerçekleşen iletişim ortamını nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Müzakere, doğası gereği toplumsal bir etkileşimdir ve taraflar, hedeflerine ulaşmak için çevirmenlere ihtiyaç duyduklarında daha karmaşık bir hale gelir. Mevcut literatür genellikle müzakerenin etkileşim aşamasına odaklanırken, bu araştırma sıklıkla göz ardı edilen müzakere öncesi aşamaya ve bu aşamanın söylem dinamiklerini şekillendirmedeki kritik rolüne dikkat çekmektedir. Futbol basın toplantılarının çevriyazıları söylem çözümlemesi yaklaşımıyla incelenmiş ve müzakere öncesi güç dinamiklerinin ve kurumsal rollerin etkileşimi nasıl şekillendirdiği gözlemlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu kurumsal etkileşimde kilit eyleyenler olarak konumlandırılan sözlü çevirmenler, sadece önceden tanımlanmış rollere bağlı kalmakla yetinmeyip, aynı zamanda önceden müzakere edilmiş stratejileri etkin bir şekilde pekiştirmektedirler. Çevirmenlerin müzakere öncesi aşamadaki katılımları, müzakere literatüründe daha az incelenmiş bir alan olmakla birlikte, onların kurumsal hedeflerle uyum sağlamalarını ve müzakere sonucunu şekillendirmelerini sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, müzakere öncesi dinamiklerin ve kurumsal hedeflerin spor bağlamında sözlü çevirmen aracılığıyla iletişimi nasıl etkilediğine dair daha derin bir anlayış sunarken, çevirmenlerin müzakere öncesi aşamalarındaki rolüne ilişkin daha fazla araştırma yapılması gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Futbol basın toplantıları, ön-müzakere, söylem dinamikleri, sözlü çeviri, söylem çözümlemesi

1. Introduction

“Negotiation is primarily a social interaction” (Alexander et al., 2015: p. 2) that individuals engage in when “parties are unable to accomplish their goals independently, without the help of others” (Balliu & Spahiu, 2020: p. 75). It is a dynamic process that essentially involves prior planning, with the pre-negotiation phase playing a pivotal role in structuring the encounter, whether interpreter-mediated or not. While much research into the negotiation process in both face-to-face and virtual communication has concentrated on what occurs during the exchange and the interactive nature of meaning-making (Turner & Merrison, 2016; Tebble, 2012; De Boe et al., 2023; Jiang, 2015; Wadensjö, 2017), the preparation phase for such interactions and its influence on the actual negotiation are often largely ignored in the existing literature.

This study employs a discourse analytic approach to elucidate how pre-negotiation behaviour impacts interpreted interactions within the sports context. Specifically, it explores how pre-negotiated power dynamics and institutional roles influence the discourse structure of mediated press conferences, with a focus on soccer. As a case study, it focuses on the analysis of transcripts from publicly available press conferences related to soccer player signings. These transcripts are particularly well-suited for examining the impact of pre-established discourse on ongoing negotiations due to their institutional structure. In such organisational settings, the roles and the behaviour of the parties involved are significantly shaped by previously negotiated conversational norms, prevailing power relations and social disparities. For instance, as a key participant, an interpreter’s rendition behaviour is influenced by their institutional identity, which may reflect prior agreements. Likewise, culturally specific attitudes and expectations established before the negotiation phase profoundly impact the direction of ongoing discussions and the interpreter’s positioning. This highlights how the negotiation process is deeply rooted in its preparatory phases, ultimately shaping the discourse in interpreter-mediated soccer press conferences.

The article thus begins with an overview of negotiation and pre-negotiation behaviour, examining the boundaries, if any, and the interplay between the two stages.

2. Understanding (pre-) negotiation behaviour

We are constantly engaging with other people, either in personal or professional relationships, who have the power to influence our lives for better or worse. Negotiation is one such way of interaction that can shape people’s behaviour. Through this direct communication, individuals seek to obtain what they desire from others. Fisher et al. (2011) stated that people often “see two ways to negotiate: soft and hard” (p. 21). While the ‘soft negotiator’ tends to avoid or resolve conflicts to achieve a consensus between the involved parties, the ‘hard negotiator’ takes an uncompromising position with the sole aim of achieving the desired outcome. Negotiation can also be viewed as a struggle to win between two competing sides. This adversarial approach, termed “positional bargaining” (Zhao, 2021: p. 223), embodies the idea that one party’s loss is the other party’s gain. This win-lose philosophy, known as ‘competitive’ negotiating behaviour, contrasts with ‘collaborative’ negotiating. Peterson and Lucas (2001) indicate that in competitive negotiation there is only one option and a limited exchange, “characterised by rigid power plays” (p. 45). In collaborative negotiation, however, multiple options exist that facilitate the removal of barriers and promote flexible, open communication.

In another broad categorisation of negotiation—distributive and integrative—power asymmetries are emphasised

(“Harvard Essentials: Negotiation,” 2003: p. 2). In distributive negotiation, a party with considerable power can prevail, leading to a clear conflict of interests where the other party’s needs are disregarded to maximise their own benefits. In contrast, integrative negotiation features more equal power dynamics, with parties working together to pursue common and long-term interests. It is crucial to note that the degree of power asymmetry is influenced—and in some cases, even determined—by the pre-established norms of organisations, which affect the entire negotiation process from the outset, known as the ‘pre-negotiation’ phase.

Commonly referred to as ‘talk about talk’ (Berridge, 2015: p. 27), pre-negotiation is viewed as ‘small talk’ before the formal negotiation. While Wakelin (2012) emphasises the importance of seeing pre-negotiation as “an integral part of the overall negotiation process” (p. 1), Zartman (1989) questions whether it is merely “a prelude to or part of negotiation” (p. 237). Although the boundaries between these two remain somewhat vague, there is a phase preceding the negotiation. Lewicki et al. (2024) argue that pre-negotiation is “one of the three key stages” (p. 409) in the evolution of negotiation. This stage involves informal contact among the parties, who construct and sequence the agenda items to determine how the negotiation should proceed. Due to the less structured and less governed nature of the pre-negotiation phase, parties aware of each other’s interests can form coalitions in advance to promote or block specific agenda items. Compared to the active and post-negotiation phases, the pre-negotiation phase is more open-ended and fluid.

Pre-negotiation behaviour is not a fixed entity; it is shaped by the interactions of the participants, whose roles and goals are previously distributed, and who, in an organisational setting, are expected to adhere to its norms. The dynamics of discourse observed in either the negotiation proper (active negotiation) or the pre-negotiation phase can thus be seen as arising from external forces, specifically the social networks and situational context that define the organisation. Pre-existing institutional practises and the social dynamics characteristic of a situation or an organisation influence how parties interact during the negotiation and shape the resulting discourse to align with institutional goals.

The following section aims to examine (in)visible social relations and interactions in soccer to uncover how this established network affects the behaviours of key actors during mediated press conferences.

3. (Un) Mediated press conferences in sports: The social network of soccer

Negotiation can occur directly between the involved parties or through agents acting on their behalf, such as in interpreter-mediated conversations. Interpreters, as negotiators, are often “under the invisible influence of the institutional culture and norms” (Zhao, 2021: p. 222). In these settings, the discursive norms that theoretically define the roles of the interlocutors, including the interpreters, can be considered part of the pre-negotiation process. These norms establish the expectations and boundaries for communication before the actual negotiation begins, shaping how the interpreter conveys information. Additionally, power is both manifested and negotiated through discourse in settings where institutional power imbalances are established in advance (Rudvin, 2005: p. 159). Strictly defined institutional norms theoretically indicate who holds the more powerful discursive position. However, Van De Mierop et al. (2012) offer a different perspective, suggesting that while “interpreters may orient to pre-discursively determined norms specific to a situation, their translation tasks are often interactionally negotiated” (p. 47).

The interactions between actors in soccer and their social relations are fundamentally shaped by both visible and invisible networks. As Widdop and Collins (2016) describe, these networks can be either “enduring and institutionalised or transient and informal” (p. 348) and may also include commercial aspects. The social network within soccer extends beyond the scope of sports discourse, connecting to a broader framework that encompasses commercial and economic factors (Boyle, 2006: p. 4). In recent years, the global commercialisation of the soccer industry has demonstrated that it has become a market where the economic concerns of clubs are predominant. This interplay of networks is evident in soccer press conferences on player signings, as these media events publicly communicate the commercial and economic dimensions of football, reflecting the broader market dynamics and financial interests at play.

Soccer press conferences are primarily “one to many” interactions (Sandrelli, 2012: p. 84). Although the conversational practises in such (un)mediated exchanges are institution-specific, they are relatively less scripted compared to other institutional settings (Clayman, 2004: p. 84). These press conferences typically function as a forum for public figures to engage in an open dialog with a group of journalists. In these settings, journalists are not merely passive participants; they hold significant influence, with equal rights to contribute to the conversation and engage in the speech event on par with the players and institutional representatives, reflecting balanced power relations (Özsöz, 2024: p. 226). The dialog primarily revolves around question-and-answer sequences initiated by the interviewees—typically journalists. These questions are designed not only to elicit information about the activities of the interviewees—such as players, coaches, and club officials—but also to challenge them with probing inquiries. Interpreters in press conferences, driven by their in-group allegiance (Mason, 2009: p. 81)—which reflects a protective behaviour and an understanding of pursuing institutional goals—often adhere to pre-negotiated behaviours and pre-determined institutional norms in

their interpreting performance. This adherence can result in deviations from the original utterances of both the interviewer and the interviewee's responses. In line with this, Bulut (2018) emphasises the 'side-taking behaviour' that interpreters exhibit, particularly when "the pragmatic meaning of an original utterance is shifted to align more closely with institutional objectives" (p. 18).

The next section discusses the data collection process and the methodological approach employed in this study, offering a detailed overview of the steps taken to analyse the discourse within interpreter-mediated soccer press conferences.

4. Data collection and the methodological approach

Audio-visual recordings of interpreting contexts, which are inherently characterised by key structural features of spoken discourse, provide researchers with the opportunity to analyse both the verbal and non-verbal dimensions of interactions between interlocutors in detail. In studies conducted using authentic material in this way, researchers are typically obliged to obtain ethical clearance. However, as the corpus of this qualitative study consists of publicly available press conferences, the researcher did not search for ethical clearance, nor did they take steps to anonymize the interactants by excluding names and other identifying information in the transcription. The dataset consists of extracts from six different interpreter-mediated soccer press conferences on player signings conducted in the consecutive mode. Links to the digital video recordings of the media content obtained from the electronic environment are provided in separate footnotes. The exchanges in the dataset were transcribed based on an adapted version of Yılmaz's (2012) transcription guidelines. The adapted guidelines, originally developed for the written representation of spoken Turkish data, include conventions that convey meanings different from their usual use in written language.

By nature, interpreting situations are inherently bilingual. This study examines interactions within the English-Turkish language pair. The inclusion of Turkish is particularly significant, given the limited research on interpreting practises involving Turkish in this specific context. During the transcription process, all Turkish utterances were back-translated into English. In this back-translation, the pragmatic value of the utterances was carefully considered, with a strong adherence to the source utterances and a preference for word-for-word translation in most cases. The interpreters in this study are professionals contracted by the club, all of whom are native Turkish speakers. Although the institutional representative, who holds the title of club president, is a native Turkish speaker, it is important to acknowledge that he also has a threshold level of proficiency in the target language.

5. Case study: Examining (pre-) negotiation in practise

To provide a general overview of the exchanges under consideration, it is observed that in each dialogue, the institutional party, typically represented by the club president, incorporates jersey sales as part of the pre-negotiation process during the contract signing ceremony for new players. The number of jerseys sold for a newly signed player varies, ranging from 5,000 for renowned footballers to 1,461, a figure of historical significance for the city in which the club is based. While some players are made aware of this pre-negotiated practise in advance, others only learn of it at the negotiation table, specifically during the signing press conference. Additionally, it is notable that the institutional representative, being proficient in the target language, occasionally conducts negotiations independently, without the need for an interpreter.

Abbreviations:

IP: Institutional Party/ **FP:** soccer Player/ **I:** Interpreter

Extract 1.¹ (03.24-05.18)

IP1- %yine% bur(a)da dürüst olmak istiyorum çok ciddi finansal kayba uğradık ## bizim
here again I just need to be honest, we have suffered serious financial losses
 elimizdeki %ctek% # enstrüman # ts klabin forma satışları ##### kendisinden önce
the only instrument we have is TS Club's shirt sales to the three players
 [hesitant speech] kadromuza dahil ettiğimiz üç oyuncumuza beşer binden # onbeş bin
we signed before him we sold each five thousand shirts a total of fifteen thousand
 Forma sattık # tahmin ediyorum ki kendisi de %aynı% sayıda beş bin formayla ##

¹ [youtube.com/watch?v=bhNFVc0IpJM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhNFVc0IpJM)

shirts I believe he will personally contribute to the budget of Trabzonspor
Trabzonsporun # ürün %satışınla% birlikte trabzonsporun bütçesine beş bin formalık bi(r)
along with product sales of Trabzonspor with the same number of 5000 shirts
Katkıda bulunacak *herhalde yanılmıyorum* (?) [gazing at the player]

I assume I am not wrong.

I1- financial loss we have we suffered was huge %and% in this process the only instrument %that we have% is the jersey that we are selling in TS club [IP gazing at the player & smiling] in the official shop of our club and also as you know (. . .) players that joined us this season they bought five thousand each (. . .) totally we sold them fifteen thousand # so I am guessing that you will be contributing to our club by %buying% the same amount like other players I think I am not wrong about this [IP still gazing and smiling at the player] [P smiles back]

FP1- yes it is no problem I um have a lot of friends (.) they want the jerseys they # are always asking for this I am happy to have it %but% what is your target (?) hmm how many jersey you want to sell (?)

IP2- target (. . .) this year (?) [IP gazing at the FP with uncertainty]

I2- %çok% forma isteyen arkadaşlarım oluyo(r) forma isteklerinde bulunan tanıdıklarım (.)

I have many friends that ask for a jersey and people I know requesting jerseys

dolayısıyla ben de bu formayı almaktan memnun olurum %sizin% bu yıl ki forma hedefiniz nedir?
so I would be happy to buy jerseys what is your jersey target for this year

In competitive negotiation, interactions are typically confined to a single choice with minimal room for compromise. In this scenario, the institutional party presents the player with a single option: to purchase 5,000 jerseys, with no alternative options available (IP1). In using the post-rhematic structure 'herhalde yanılmıyorum' ('I assume I am correct'), the institutional party implies that the player is expected to confirm the previously discussed number as the 'preferred response' (Levinson, 1983: p. 332). The phrasing subtly directs the player to agree to the specified amount without presenting alternative options, as the response that aligns with the intended action—getting the player to agree—is the preferred outcome. Conversely, any response that hinders this objective would be considered misreferred. This approach reflects a pre-negotiated behaviour that constrains the actual negotiation, thereby narrowing the scope for further discussion. The gesture of the institutional party directing his gaze towards the player at the end of the sentence also acts as a non-verbal cue that reinforces this expectation.

Further influencing this interaction is the invisible network of commercial interests that shape the negotiation context. The institutional party prefaces his statement (IP1) by emphasising that "the club has suffered serious financial losses and that the only instrument they have is the sale of jerseys for financial support." This commercial network operates as a constrained framework that predetermines the parameters of the negotiation. Within this framework, the pre-negotiation behaviour not only directs the preferred response but also limits the possibility of alternative outcomes, further tightening the player's choices and reinforcing the institutional party's objective.

The interpreter's rendition plays a crucial role in reinforcing the institutional party's pre-negotiated strategies throughout the interaction. By closely mirroring the institutional party's narrative, the interpreter emphasises the club's reliance on jersey sales (I1). Meanwhile, the institutional party's gaze and smile directed at the player during the interpreter's rendition further underscore the constrained nature of the negotiation. Additionally, the interpreter's follow-up statement within the same turn, "I think I am not wrong about this," closely echoes the institutional party's wording. This alignment restricts the player's response options, reinforcing the institutional party's expectations and promoting the desired response. The player's reciprocal smile indicates agreement (FP1), signalling not only an acknowledgement of these pre-negotiated norms but also an initiation of the preferred response. Through these actions, the interpreter actively participates in the negotiation, demonstrating a clear understanding of and adherence to the institutional goals. This behaviour exemplifies "in-group allegiance" (Mason, 2009, p. 81) by aligning with the pre-negotiated behaviours that shape the interaction.

Extract II². (08.15-10.14)

IP1- um [clears his throat] %Kouassi% choose one of the (.) those numbers later on I will tell you what does it mean (!) <[laughs and shows a card of numbers]

FP1- <[laughs and checks the numbers]

I1- <bu rakamlardan> bi (.) bi(r) tanesini seçmeni rica ed(e)ice(ğ)i(m)

² facebook.com/haber61.net/videos/1020896331865711

I need you to choose one of those numbers

sonrasında sana ne anlama geldiğini ifade ed(e)ice(ği)m

later on I will explain to you what they mean

FP2- [pointing a number on the card] first one

IP2- %why% first one (?)

I2- <ilki> # neden ilki (?)

first one why first one

IP3- <look at> my bag # it is (.) ## [grabs a bag] it is written here

I3- bur(a)da yazılı olan ne (?)

what is written here

IP4- this is a lucky number (!)

I4- şanslı numata bu

this is the lucky number

FP3- you asked me to choose

IP5- yeah [all laughing] ah no no no I am not (.) I am not not hmm putting under the pressure [showing the card] you are free to <choose

I5- <seni bas (.) seni baskı altına da almak

I do not do not want to put you under

istemiyorum # seçmekte özgürsün

pressure feel free to choose

FP4- I choose (. . .) sixty-one

IP6- ah sixty-one okay

I6- (. . .)

FP5- %but% I do not understand (.)

IP7- so # thank you very much [gazing at the card]

I7- teşekkür ederim

many thanks

IP8- <a thousand> four hundred sixty one jerseys [touching player's t-shirt] # yours ## I will make a # decent discount on that

I8- [. . .] indirim de yapı(a)ca(ğ)ım onun için

I will also make a discount for that

FP6- [staring in wonder] [laughs and shakes head in disagreement] still way too much (!)

I9- [just laughs]

IP9- thank <you [lends a hand for a shake]

FP7- <it is %too much%

I10- [laughs] çok falla

it is too much

FP8- [shakes hand] it is too much for me (!)

IP10- be sure it is %not% [still shaking hands]

I11- emin olabilirsiniz çok fazla d(e)ğ(i)il

make sure it is not

IP11- I sold %five thousand% [gesturing the number] jersey to Marek Hamsik [laughs]

I12- Marek Hamsike beş bin forma sattım

I sold Marek Hamsik five thousand jerseys

FP9- Yeah, but I started in the middle of the season [laughs]

I13- ben %sezon ortasında% seldom

I came in the middle of the season

FP10- you can give me %half% may be

I14- %belki% yarıya indirebiliriz

perhaps we can cut it in half

IP12- no (!) *I told you* I will make a decent discount on that

FP11- (. . .) we can keep sixty-one because I know that sixty-one # um is important (. . .)

I15- atmış bir kalsın ama belki ilk rakamları değiştirebiliriz

you can keep sixty-one, but perhaps we can change the first numbers

IP13- sixty-one will remain # the first two figures { we will negotiate it }

FP12- yeah

IP14- but um I mean %the public% # watching us now # the fans are watching us # *ok lets make it* a thousand sixty one (!) [hand move to prevent further negotiation] I made a four hundred discount [laughing & averting gaze to another party]

The institutional party's invitation for the player to choose a number, followed by the statement that its meaning will be explained later, suggests a seemingly structured interaction shaped by a previously negotiated discourse (IP1). This opening already hints at a pre-negotiated agenda where the institutional party controls the flow and outcome of the interaction. The institutional party and interpreter repeatedly emphasise that the player is "free to choose," (IP5; I5), yet this freedom is clearly constrained by the pre-negotiated framework. The institutional party's reassurance that he is not putting the player under pressure is contradicted by the structured interaction and the subtle cues pushing the player towards a specific outcome. The interpreter, in his role, continues to mirror this contradiction, translating the institutional party's reassurances while simultaneously reinforcing the pressure through close renditions and non-verbal cues.

As the interaction progressed, the player expressed reluctance, noting that the suggested number of jerseys is "still way too much" (FP6). Despite this, the institutional party persists, eventually reducing the number slightly but maintaining control over the negotiation by invoking the idea of a public audience and fan expectations (IP10; IP14). This strategy highlights how soccer discourse is manipulated by external factors, using the social network of soccer as a pre-negotiated source of pressure to influence the negotiation and advance the institutional party's objectives. During the negotiation, both parties make small concessions, continually testing the limits of the other party's willingness to compromise (IP9; IP12; FP10; FP11). Although 'positional bargaining' involves a contest of wills, if the more powerful party exerts excessive pressure on the other party, it may lead to the breakdown of the entire negotiation (Zhao, 2021: p. 223). At some point in the exchange, competitive negotiation shifts to collaborative negotiation to reconcile with the other party and avoid a breakdown.

The institutional party's references to previous high-profile players who purchased larger quantities of jerseys, such as Marek Hamsik, further exemplify the pre-negotiated agenda aimed at driving a favourable outcome (IP11). The interaction is tightly controlled by pre-negotiated norms, guiding the player towards the institution's desired outcome and revealing the intricate power dynamics and complexity of negotiations within such institutional settings. The institutional party's dismissive laugh and deliberate gaze shift to another party without waiting for a response highlights the power asymmetry in the negotiation (IP14). This nonverbal behaviour reinforces their dominance and signals a lack of interest in further discussion, effectively closing the negotiation on their terms.

Extract 3³. (21.04-21.50)

IP1- adetten <olduğu üzere # sol taraftan başl(ayay)ıim %Yusuf beni yormadan% kaç forma
as is the custom let me start off with the left side without tiring me out Yusuf how many shirts
Aliyo(r)sun (?)

are you going to buy

FP(a)1- <[smiling]

IP2- 1461de başlamıştın d(eğ)iiil mi { futbola sen } (?)

you have started soccer at 1461 haven't you

FP(a)2- %Araklısporda% başladım başkanım

I started playing soccer at Araklıspor

IP3- [outward laugh indicating amusement]

FP(a)3- [laughing] transfer sayılıırım

I am practically a new signing

IP4- [inhaling sharply] %o zaman% ikinci defa geldiğine göre bin dört yüz atmış biri iki ilen

okay then since it is your second signing we multiply by one thousand four hundred and sixty

çarpıyoruz <n(e)a(ya)pıyo(r) (?) bin # dokuz yüz # %yirmi iki% [gazing at the player]

FP(a)4- <[praying with folded hands] başkanım on saniye öncesine dönebilir miyiz (?)

Mr. President can we go back ten seconds?

IP5- [both laughing] bin dört yüz atmış bir mi diyo(r)sun (?)

so you are saying one thousand four hundred and sixty-one

³ <https://www.facebook.com/haber61.net/videos/491563562419860>

FP(a)5- evet başkanım [in a hesitant tone]

yes, Mr. President

IP6- [gazing at the other player] so Timo how many %shirts% (?)

FP(b)1- one thousand [hesitant pauses] four hundred sixty-one [smiles]

IP7- [gesture of approval] thats it # bin dört yüz atmış bir [inhaling]

The institutional party's strategic use of the customary practise of selling jerseys not only establishes a dominant stance but also influences the negotiation dynamics (IP1). This approach encourages the player to conform to the expected responses and decisions, as indicated by the player's smile, a nonverbal cue suggesting agreement (FPa1). It demonstrates how the institutional party manipulates a culturally ingrained practise to structure the negotiation, creating a favourable environment and advancing their objectives. The negotiation framework is determined by an external force—namely, “the speakers' tacit knowledge of how the interaction is structured” (Diez, 1983: p. 12)—with both parties adhering to pre-determined goals that they have previously agreed upon.

This exchange exemplifies the pre-negotiated nature of the interaction, where the club representative's inquiry and the player's response are not spontaneous but rather rehearsed (IP6; FPb1). The representative's gaze and the non-verbal cues, like the gesture of approval, emphasise the structured and controlled environment of the press conference (IP7). The player's immediate recall of the exact number, even with a slight pause, reflects a pre-mediated compliance with the institutional script. The alignment between the representative's expectation and the player's response illustrates how pre-negotiation shapes not only the content of the interaction but also the dynamics of power and conformity, emphasising the importance of discussing the institution's objectives in a public communication setting to effectively manage public perception.

Extract 4⁴. (11.38-15.01)

IP1- çok sıkıntılı bir finansal süreçten geçiyoruz ee bu arada ne bulursak satıyoruz yani (. . .)

we are going through a very challenging financial period meanwhile we sell whatever we can

sebze meyve satıyoruz ama sezon açıldığı zaman özellikle forma satıyoruz ### pazara hoş

find we sell fruit and vegetables but when the season begins we especially sell jerseys

geldiler [smiles] eee bu ee %normal% süreç yaşadığımız zaman (.) normal sezonlarda ee yani

welcome to the market when w ego through normal process in regular seasons I mean

Bu kalibredeki oyuncularımıza biz %beşer biner% forma veriyorduk {forma satıyo(r)duk}

we were giving five thousand jerseys each to players of such quality we were selling

onun için beni yormasınlar (!) ## %ben% kendilerine [pointing at the footballers] beşer bin

so tell them no to tire me out I assigned them five thousand jerseys each Forma yazdım ## fiyat konusunu hallederiz

aramızda anlaşırız [gazing at the player]

we will later settle the price issue among ourselves

I1- so guys as you know we are (.) we are going through difficult process difficult times (. . .) you know because (. . .)

every club is suffering *because of* the pandemic as you know there is no income from the stadium and as you know

(.) you know the broadcast with (. . .) the income that we have is going down also so to bring income to the club we

sell everything now we sell water sometimes we sell %fruit% sometimes we sell %vegetables% well also with the new

times (.) in the new season we sell jerseys # so as you all know we have a tradition and also I *am gonna* (. . .) %five

thousand% jersey for each one of you

FP1- <[laughing]

IP2- <[laughing]

I2- <because> you guys {in your level}# when we sign a contract generally they buy five thousand so *I am gonna

(. . .)* (.) *I am gonna* write five thousand and after we speak about the price [translating in Spanish for the other

player]

IP3- ve bizim Türkçede bi(r) söz vardır # ağanın lafı üzerine laugh söylenmez ## %veya% şöyle

there is a saying in Turkish: never argue with the boss or let's

söyleyim *babanın* sözü üzerine söz söylenmez ben de onların artık (.) ## üvey babaları

put it this way, father's word is law and I am now their father may be you can think of

mı dersiniz (?) başka bi(r) isim mi takarsınız (?) ben ee imza atarak bu kulübün kapısından

it as a step father or name it differently I treat anyone who signs to join the club

⁴ [youtube.com/watch?v=88RxhI2tPU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88RxhI2tPU)

içeri giren her oyuncuyu # kendi evladımın ayırt etmiyorum %dolayısıyla% babalarımı
as my real son I don't differentiate between my children so let them not upset
%üzmesinler% (!)
their father

I3- so guys in %Turkish% (. . .) we have a saying (.) we say that %if your boss% (.) I mean if %your father% is saying something you can't go %against his word% # you can't (. . .) something %opposite% so because %every player% (.) every man that goes inside this (. . .) this club is like my %son% so I see you as a son and I am like a <father

FP2- <yes [in approving manner]

I4- so doesn't make your father <sad

FP3- <[laughs]

I5- [translating in Spanish for the other player]

IP4- [stands up and clinches a deal with a fist bump]

The act of assigning a previously specified number of jerseys to players, with subsequent price negotiations deferred, exemplifies a pre-negotiated behaviour within the football club's social network that integrates commercial elements (IP1). Within this network, players are expected to contribute to the club's financial stability, illustrating the interplay between institutional roles and economic concerns in the broader soccer industry. In other words, players are commercial assets essential to the club's financial strategy, which aims to encourage fans to purchase club products and thereby support the club financially. During the interpreter's rendition (I1), the mention of the number elicited laughter from both the player and the institutional party (FP1; IP2). This nonverbal response serves to communicate the player's awareness of and compliance with the established practise, signalling a mutual understanding and acceptance of the pre-negotiated norm within the interaction.

Power in negotiation underpins one party's capacity to secure an advantage over the other party. The institutional party, being more capable than the other interlocutor, uses expressions rooted in cultural practises to reinforce his position, thereby making the differences in status and power both evident and legitimate (IP3). This approach reflects 'hierarchical cultural values', which emphasise clear distinctions in rank and authority, in contrast to 'egalitarian cultural values' that prioritise equal opportunities for all parties (Adair et al., 2004: p. 90). The interpreter faithfully renders the cultural expression from the source text, translating it in a manner that preserves the institutional party's position of power and persuades the other interlocutor to agree to more favourable terms (I3). The interlocutor nods in approval during the interpretation (FP2).

Extract 5⁵. (14.08-17.22)

IP1- adetten olduğu üzere [journalists laughing] # evet ## aramıza %her% katılan
as is the custom, yes every new player that joins us

Oyuncumuza belirli miktarda forma satıyoruz ### ancak ee çok sıkıntılı bir süreç yaşadık ##
we are selling a certain number of jerseys, but we have been through a very awkward period
ee geçtiğimiz hafta # vuku bulan orman yangınları # hepimizi çok derinden üzdü # [. . .] bugün
last week the forest fires that occurred deeply saddened us today

farklı bi(r)şey yapmak istiyorum ben## beşer bin forma yerine her iki oyuncumuza da
I wanna do something different I instead of five thousand jerseys I assign both
%atmış bir% biner fidan bağış yazıyorum # finansal olarak baktığımız zaman aslında beş
players sixty one thousand plants from a financial viewpoint. In fact, it is
bin formadan biraz daha az bir rakama tekabül ediyor %ama% anlamı büyük # %rakkam% da
equal to a little less than five thousand jerseys but it means that the number is
büyük # eğer uygun görüyo(r)san (?) # {Dorukhan}

also huge if you deem appropriate

FP(a)1- %memnuniyetle% başkanım onur duyuyorum çok memnun olurum
gladly Mr. President it would be an honour for me I would be very pleased

IP2- çok teşekkür ediyorum # atmış bir bin for (.) ee af(f)edersiniz (!) [smiles] # atmış bir bin
thank you so much I assign sixty one thousand jerseys pardon me sixty one thousand young
fidan Dorukhana ve atmış bir bin fidan # Andreasa yazıyorum # %sen% tercüme edebilirsiniz
trees to Dorukhan and sixty-one thousand young trees to Andreas, you can translate it

⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyMZ9SjMeS8

I1- it is a tradition (.) you know we (. . .) that our new signings (.) as you know that buy a new jerseys {jerseys of the new season}

FP(b)1- [nodding head]

I2- and as you know we have had a %tough% process in Turkey %tough% week in Turkey *because of the* wild fires all over the south of Tur%key% and you know (.) I wanna say that these wild fires (.) you know what happened in the south of Turkey %saddened% all of us [. . .] so %today% I want to make a change I *want to make* something different so today instead of buying jerseys (.) instead of %selling% the jerseys to the players I want to tell them that we are thinking %of% planting new plants # in these (.) in these mountains so %today% instead of buying jerseys I want to say that (.) you know (.) both players (.) each of them they will be bu (.) *they will be* planting sixty one thousand new plants in these mountains # but %economically% if you think in a financial way this is gonna be %cheaper% for you but I am (.) I think that this means

FP(b)2- [nodding head in agreement]

The journalists' laughter, which emerges shortly after the institutional party begins speaking (IP1), serves as a nonverbal cue indicating their familiarity with the content of the forthcoming statements. Although press conferences are generally less scripted, with journalists actively engaging and posing questions, the laughter suggests that the discourse follows a pre-established pattern or expectation. If the negotiating parties have such a structured framework, key member roles, such as promoting a particular agenda specific to the situation, are determined before the interaction. Some of these roles are "self-oriented" (Lewicki et al., 2024: p. 411), allowing certain negotiators to dominate the conversation and steer other parties towards a preferred outcome. The interlocutors' awareness of the framework's requirements, established during the pre-negotiation process, aids in their understanding of the expectations and discourse related to the more powerful party's interests, considering that power is not equally distributed. In this exchange, the institutional party's decision to alter the pre-negotiated agenda (IP1) is recognised by the other party, who, given the prevailing power dynamics, consents to the proposed modifications (FPa1).

In the conversation, the institutional representative inadvertently uses the term "jerseys" instead of "saplings" (IP2), a term commonly used in their discourse. Upon realising the source of the trouble, the representative attempts to repair it, which prompts laughter. This reaction arises because journalists and other participants are aware that previous press conferences typically focused on selling jerseys to players, a well-known topic and pre-negotiated. The representative party's tone in saying "sen tercüme edebilirsin (you can translate it)" (IP2) suggests that his words are not open to discussion and positions the interpreter to adopt the same uncompromising stance in his rendition. The interpreter downplays the institutional party's potentially face-threatening act by shifting the focus away from the direct command and reframing the message in a more empathetic and less authoritative manner, making the institutional party's message less confrontational. (I2). The interpreter's success is evidenced by the addressee nodding, as if to confirm their acceptance of the message (FPb2).

6. Reflecting on the findings and drawing conclusions

This research reveals how the complex interplay of pre-negotiated power dynamics and institutional roles influences the discourse structure in interpreted soccer press conferences. The study draws on a corpus of video recordings from publicly displayed new player signings. In these institutional events, negotiation strategies are often pre-formulated based on predefined objectives. Club-paid interpreters frequently consult with the institutional party to understand the intended content, tone, and broader communication context, allowing them to anticipate challenges from cultural or contextual factors and align with the parties' interests and power dynamics to achieve desired outcomes.

The interpreters' roles are both pre-discursively and interactionally negotiated. The term "role" refers to the interpreter's behaviour during interactions and is used to denote the actions the interpreter is expected, or required, to perform or avoid (Krystallidou, 2016: p. 173). Interpreters' perceptions of their own roles, often shaped by their professional training and personal experiences, may sometimes conflict with the roles imposed on them by the institution they work for. The pre-established roles assigned by the institution often mandate interpreters to assume responsibilities beyond mere interpretation. By aligning with the institutional party and its objectives, interpreters are expected to act as negotiators who facilitate communication (Karanasiou, 2017: p. 202). This role is supported by the findings of the study in that interpreters not only adhere to institutional roles but also actively reinforce pre-negotiated dynamics through their renditions. By closely aligning their verbal and nonverbal behaviour with the institutional party's objectives, they act as key agents in shaping the interaction, ensuring that the communication remains within the constrained framework dictated by these pre-negotiated strategies.

Zartman (1989) suggests that the pre-negotiation period “enables parties to move from conflicting perceptions and behaviours to co-operative perceptions and behaviours” (p. 7). However, as Balliu and Spahiu (2020) point out, negotiation is a dynamic communication process where “new information, concerns, emotions, and goals may emerge, potentially deviating from the predefined agenda” (p. 76). Therefore, negotiators must be prepared to handle contingencies and other factors that may interfere with the pursuit of their goals. The findings of the current study support Balliu and Spahiu’s perspective, as the institutional party adapts to newly emerging conditions during the ongoing interaction. Despite initially adhering to a predefined agenda, he makes small concessions in response to these changes, continually testing the other party’s willingness to compromise. This adaptability leads to a shift from competitive to collaborative negotiation, as the institutional parties seek to reconcile differences and reach a mutually beneficial agreement. In such situations, the interpreter adapts to new conditions by softening potentially threatening statements made by the institutional party. This adaptive behaviour is evident in the current study, where the interpreter’s adjustments play a key role in facilitating effective communication amid changing circumstances, thereby aligning with the evolving dynamics of the negotiation.

The interpreter’s source of power in the interpreting session stems from being the only participant in a bilingual triadic configuration who understands what all parties are saying at all times (Rudvin, 2005: p. 171). This unique ability can be used strategically to achieve desired outcomes or shift the power distribution in favour of certain parties. However, in our dataset, the institutional party’s fundamental proficiency in the target language restricts the interpreter’s ability to influence power dynamics, thereby diminishing their control over the conversation. In this context, ‘epistemic brokering’ becomes relevant. The term refers to the interpreter’s behaviour as a ratified participant to ensure that the ongoing interaction is both linguistically and socially facilitated to establish a common ground (Raymond, 2014: p. 427). This approach helps manage and refine the inherent asymmetries of power within the interaction, adapting to the evolving dynamics of the conversation. In the soccer press conferences analysed in this study, the interpreter must navigate the pre-negotiated norms that prioritise the club’s interests. This requires the interpreter to make translation decisions that align with these established norms, ensuring that the translation reflects and supports the institutional priorities in the interaction. This behaviour is somewhat at odds with the principles of epistemic brokering, which emphasises adapting to and managing the evolving dynamics of the conversation. By strictly adhering to the pre-negotiated norms, the interpreter may be constrained in their ability to engage flexibly with the emergent aspects of the interaction. As Wadensjö (1998) notes, “the negotiated outcome of an event may not be in the best interests of one of the participants,” (p. 45) highlighting the potential mismatch between the negotiated outcomes and the interests of all parties involved.

In contrast to the typical scenario where “interpreters are primarily involved only in the action phase of negotiations” (Zhao, 2021: p. 232), this study reveals that the interpreter also plays a key role in the pre-negotiation phase. By participating in this earlier stage, the interpreter can function as an external consultant, helping the player understand the club’s interests by rehearsing pre-negotiated discourse. This finding highlights the need for increased research into how the presence of interpreters in the pre-negotiation phases influences the discourse in institutional communication settings. Moreover, understanding the role of interpreters in these early stages is crucial for comprehending the broader macrosocial networks in football, which significantly impact negotiation dynamics and institutional interactions. Further studies should explore how these macrosocial networks shape and are shaped by interpreters’ involvement, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of negotiation processes in the soccer industry.

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