Editorial

After discontinuing publication for some years, *The Interpreters' Newsletter* now appears in a new format[1] and has a new editorial board. This issue was conceived to bridge the gap between past and future and is devoted to studies carried out at the SSLMIT, University of Trieste, both by young and older scholars to show what is going on in Trieste. The next issues will have a new scientific board and a double blind peer-review system, though these are only some of the changes *The Interpreters' Newsletter* is undergoing to cope and comply with the new research environment we are now living in, albeit without forgetting the objectives leading to the founding of the journal. Futher details about the philosophy to inform the future of *The Interpreters' Newsletter* are given at the end of this Editorial.

For this issue, I wanted to remain within the spirit of the publication and, therefore, decided to offer young researchers large publication space. The first three papers are a selection of empirical MA-theses, two on simultaneous interpretation and one on interpreting in a medical setting. Their contributions give an overview of their studies based on experimental and empirical research with special attention to methodology. The aim is to foster further debate within the interpreting research community about methods employed as well as to offer food for thought for further developments, replications or constructive criticism.

1   The old issues are now available in electronic form at:
    http://www.openstarts.units.it/dspace/handle/10077/2119.

Lorenzo Bevilacqua's and Diletta Pinochi's papers address two issues often mentioned in literature when listing possible stumbling-blocks in simultaneous interpretation (SI): interpreting from verb-final languages and interpreting numbers.

Lorenzo Bevilacqua is now an EU-interpreter and in his paper compares SI-renderings by professional interpreters interpreting from two germanic languages with verb-final structure, Dutch and German, into Italian. Compared to German, Dutch makes wider use of extraposition and, therefore, the use of verb-final structures is less frequent in Dutch than in German, especially in formal language use. Original speeches and their translations have been used for the experiment, therefore, it was possible to compare the same speech-segments with verb-final structure in German and in Dutch as well as instances in which the verb-final structure was present only in German but not in Dutch. Differences in the interpreters' renditions depending on the presence or absence of verb-final structure corroborated, therefore, the assumption of a greater cognitive load when interpreting from German into Italian. Stratagies such as anticipation, EVS, stalling, compression, omission have been used to describe the way in which interpreters solve verb-final structures.

Pinochi's study analyses SI-renditions of a speech dense in numbers by advanced student-interpreters and investigates not only possible universal causes for the high percentage of errors found while interpreting numbers, but also examines whether language-dependent causes can be recognized. The language pairs investigated are English-Italian and German-Italian. The English and German versions of the same speech were used to assess similarities and discrepancies between the language-pairs and special attention was given to those instances in which German numbers are pronounced from right to left while in English and in Italian they are pronounced from left to right. An error category 'transposition of digits' was chosen within the six error typologies to take into account this kind of error and compare the results from the two language pairs. Participants in the study had the choice of writing down the numbers or not and the notes taken shed light on the way interpreting students tackle numbers in SI under given experimental conditions.

Interpreting in medical settings in Italy is the subject of Pittarello's paper, a case-study aiming at contributing to a better understanding of differences and similarities in the roles and tasks of mediators and interpreters. Both terms coexist at present in Italy and designate similar professional figures providing communication between healthcare personnel and foreign patients. The lack of clarity may depend on the fact that, in Italy, community interpreting professions and research in this field are fairly recent. Aspects such as invisibility versus active participation, expectations and opinions about the role of interpreters and mediators, the use of personal pronouns and indirect speech were investigated through a questionnaire submitted to healthcare providers and interpreters/mediators, followed by an interview, the results of which were compared with the results of mediated encounters and commented

upon from a qualitative point of view. An integrated analysis was deemed the best way to achieve the objectives of the study providing a complete and holistic frame.

To counterbalance the young researchers side, the following two papers concentrate on the teaching of conference interpreting. David Snelling addresses the question of general knowledge or more specifically what kind of general knowledge could be expected from young conference interpreters to cope with their task interpreting from English. The definition of what general knowledge is or may be lends itself to different interpretations. Is it the background knowledge absorbed by living and growing up in a certain country, language and culture? Or is it rather the result of studies, experiences and cultural choices? And if so, can it be reduced to a canon, a corpus, a list of accepted books shared by a given cultural community? Certainly it can, but it is much more, depending on the cultural environment acted in. David Snelling, former Dean of the SSLMIT, former editor of *The Interpreters' Newsletter* together with Laura Gran, simultaneous interpreting professor with over 30 years of experience in the field, suggests what, in his opinion, may be important to read and know in terms of institutional, literary and historical texts. His suggestions show what readings are advisable to a young generation of future interpreters, but they also contribute to acquiring better interpreting competence during the never-ending task of continuous education and life-long learning of an interpreter. Linguistic formulae and the way concepts are expressed in words have a direct impact on what is understood and interpreted. Not recognizing a given cultural, literary or institutional expression hampers an accurate rendition of what the speaker is saying and, even worse, the interpreter will not even be aware of what is happening. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same can be said for a lack of knowledge of other specific subjects, technical terms or idioms. The rapid retrieval of concepts through certain linguistic expressions and the ability to express them accurately and quickly in an other language contribute to a better quality in interpreting. Pursuing the aim of quality in interpreting is the task of interpreting teaching. It can be achieved, among other things, by raising language sensitivity in interpreting-students, pointing to the subtleties of a specific language and culture and to the risks inherent in a lack of knowledge, in whatever field.

Aptitude tests in conference interpreting have been, among others, Salvador Pippa's research-field in the past. Building on the knowledge acquired, in this paper, Pippa shifts his attention to the thorny issue of the evaluation of students at the end of interpreting studies. Not much has been said on the subject so far, aptitude tests and intermediate exams being of greater concern to researchers when tackling evaluation questions. A possible reason is that student assessment at final exams is commonly felt somehow easier than during or before entering conference interpreting studies. On this occasion, student/interpreters have to show their command of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting at professional level and there is little doubt about what quality in conference interpreting is. Actually, things are much more complex. Pippa illustrates the risks inherent in an

intuitive approach to final evaluaton but also those inherent in too high a number of criteria guiding evaluators. He proposes the adoption of competence criteria rather than criteria assessing possible mistakes. At a time when much discussion is going on within interpreting faculties on the level required at final exams and criticism is heard about the insufficient preparation of candidates entering EU-tests, a deep reflection on evaluation methods and criteria is needed to understand the reasons and to bridge the gap between the university and the professional world.

Forthcoming Issues

The range of conference interpreting studies has greatly expanded. Compared to the time when *The Interpreters' Newsletter* was first published, it is now considerably diversified. In addition to conference interpreting, it now encompasses community interpreting, with interpreting in medical settings and public service interpreting, but also judicial interpreting and interpreting for the media, to name only those that have gained momentum in the last 15 years. *The Interpreters' Newsletter* will be open to all aspects of interpreting research in its broadest form and will be published every year. The editors will be chosen depending on the subject and will be internal and/or external to the editorial board with guest editors for thematic volumes.

The next issue will contain a selection of contributions to the second session of the conference *Emerging Topics in Translation and Interpreting*[2], to be held from the 16-18 June 2010 to celebrate the launch of the new Ph.D. programme in Interpreting and Translation Studies of the Research Department in Language, Interpreting and Translations Studies (DSLIT, Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio, dell'Interpretazione e della Traduzione), University of Trieste, and the first thirty years of the Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori as a fully-fledged University Faculty. There will be five sessions corresponding to the main research areas of DSLIT-members. The title of the second session, *From interpreting theory to the interpreting profession*, will present papers on simultaneous and consecutive interpreting research which – in addition to highlighting methodologies – are aimed at the professional world and the way findings can be applied to conference interpreter training. Coordinators of the session and editors will be Jane Cynthia Kellett and Alessandra Riccardi.

The 2011 issue will be devoted to television interpreting. Editors of this special issue are Francesco Straniero Sergio and Caterina Falbo.[3]

We very much hope that *The Interpreters' Newsletter* in its new format will be as kindly received and arouse as much interest as its predecessors.

Alessandra Riccardi

2   You can find the Conference Programme at: http://www.dslit.units.it/pageview?pid=31.
3   See the call for papers at the end of the volume.

The Position of the Verb in Germanic Languages and Simultaneous Interpretation

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Abstract

This paper reports on an experimental study analysing the impact of SOV on simultaneous interpreting from D and NL into Italian and the language-specific strategies adopted by 15 professional interpreters to tackle SOV-related difficulties. Despite the typological affinity between the two Germanic final-verb languages, the greater rigidity of the SOV structure in German appears to require more extensive anticipation efforts as well as a longer ear-voice span. Dutch is less rigid and characterised by systematic violations of the SOV order through the extraposition of a constituent. The load on short-term memory is, thus, less onerous which justifies a shorter ear-voice span and occasionally a blander approach to reformulation than is the case from German.

1. Introduction

The subject-object-verb word order (SOV) is often perceived as the most problematic feature in simultaneous interpreting (SI) from German (D) and Dutch (NL) and since early stages it has forced student interpreters to develop suitable strategies to manage their limited cognitive resources as a key for a quality performance (Moser-Mercer 1997: 259). This paper reports on an experimental study on the implications of SOV for SI from

D and NL into Italian (I). The aim is to analyze the language-specific strategies applied by professional interpreters to overcome the constraints linked to SOV and to identify differences in strategic behaviour during SI from two typologically similar languages such as German and Dutch.

The 15 professional interpreters participating in the experiment were divided into 3 homogeneous groups of five subjects depending on whether they only had D or NL or both in their combination. 4 texts were used, two original speeches in D and NL and their respective translations in the other language. Thus, each group of subjects, including those with only one requested language, was able to interpret two texts, which allowed not only a thorough analysis of the language-specific strategies, but also a cross-comparison between SI from D and from NL on the basis of the same texts, whether original or translated.

Every text contained several "target sentences" which were subjected to a preliminary linguistic analysis. Particular emphasis was laid on the relative rigidity of the Germanic word order in contrast with the pragmatic flexibility of Italian which allows for a wider range of syntactic manoeuvres. These can easily be exploited in SI in order to cope with the constraints imposed by the SOV source structure. For each target sentence a hypothetical solution was then devised on the basis of 4 interpreting strategies widely described in literature and deemed apt to overcome the syntactical gap between D/NL and Italian: *anticipation, ear-voice span management, reformulation* and *compression*. The aim was to verify whether the proposed solutions were actually applied in the performances of the 15 interpreters.

References for proposed solutions and strategies were found in contrastive linguistics and psycholinguistics, in the attempt to strike a balance between theory and praxis of SI. Admittedly, SI can not be seen in isolation from its practical dimension, but I would argue that an awareness of the typological differences between languages is crucial in improving interpreting skills and accelerating learning (Ross 2000: 8).

2. SOV

From a typological point of view, it is generally assumed that German and Dutch are basically two verb-final languages (Gerritsen 1992, Eisenberg 1994). The word order not only marks subordinate clauses as widely recognized in literature, but also main clauses which contain what is known as a *verbal brace*. In this case the finite verb takes the second place, while all the non-finite verb forms come in final position, embracing complements and adverbials (Giacalone Ramat 1992). Thus, the word order of the main clause can be described as S -finite verb- OV:

(1)

   a. Die Welt **hat** sich nach dem Fall der Berliner Mauer vor fünf Jahren und seit Vollendung der deutschen Einheit dramatisch **verändert**. (Riccardi 1996: 218)
   * The world changed dramatically after the fall of the Berlin wall five years ago and since the German reunification.

   b. Het afgelopen weekend **heeft** de Europese Raad een actieplan ter bestrijding van de dramatisch oplopende werkloosheid **aangenomen**. (Ross 1995: 51)
   * Last week the European Council approved an action plan to fight against the dramatic increase of unemployment.

In both examples, the finite verb appears in the second position and expresses the grammatical categories of person and number, while the non-finite form takes the last place and conveys the semantically most significant information (*Träger des Geschehens*, as Eisenberg puts it: 1999: 391). These verbal braces embrace a sort of syntactic midfield comprising all other complements in the sentence. The length of the syntactic midfield can obviously give rise to difficulties in SI into Italian. In fact, the syntactical asymmetry between D/NL and I is due to the long distance between the finite form and the lexical form of the predicate. Italian needs to make the verb explicit earlier than D/NL, whereas the frequent split predicates in these languages make cognitive processing more demanding (Frazier & Rayner 1988 speak of "discontinuous nature"). The position of the semantic verb focus at the end of the sentence can hamper information retention and overload the working memory of the interpreter. Hence, the importance of developing specific strategies whereby the interpreter reformulates the target text overcoming source language constraints (Riccardi 1996: 145).

Despite typological affinity between the two languages, D and NL diverge nonetheless when it comes to an important pragmatic phenomenon: *the extraposition*, i.e. a violation of the rigid brace structure whereby a constituent comes after the second verbal *pole* (ANS 1984).

   a. Anna heeft veel geld uitgegeven **aan kleren** (Snel Trampus 1993: 277)
   Anna has spent a lot of money on clothes.

   b. Wir haben in der letzten Zeit häufig nachgedacht **über dieses Problem**. (Eroms 2000: 370).
   Lately we have often thought about this problem.

The aim of this manoeuvre is to emphasize a semantically significant element by putting it at the end of the sentence. Yet, besides pragmatic considerations, cognitive processes play a role in governing this phenomenon. Speakers often perceive the verbal brace as a burdensome structure to process, therefore they tend to simplify it by extrapolating the rhematic complement, thus relieving short-term memory[1]. The main

difference between D and NL lies in the frequency of the extraposition. In fact, although both languages have in principle the same opportunities to postpone constituents, NL seems to do it more systematically than D, which tends to preserve verbal braces instead (Haeseryn 1990). In conclusion, German has a more rigid verb-final structure, while Dutch can be described as "moderately verb-final SOV language" (De Schutter 1994: 466). On the basis of this typological contrast, it is not inappropriate to assume that German with its longer verbal braces could cause more retention problems during SI. Interpreters will need to keep a wider ear-voice span and to rely much more on the strategy of anticipation than when interpreting from NL because in the latter the extraposition often makes the cognitive processing easier. This assumption will be verified in the experimental study.

3. Experimental Study

The experimental study was carried out at the SSLMIT of the University of Trieste and at the European Parliament in Brussels.[2] The interpreters involved were asked to interpret two speeches and their performances were recorded on a multi-track DAT recorder which allowed a certain degree of precision in the study of anticipations and ear-voice span management.

3.1 Subjects

Subjects tested were 15 professional interpreters who at that time were regularly working in the private market or in the European institutions. They were divided into 3 homogeneous groups of 5 subjects: the DN group with both German and Dutch as C language, the D group (only German as C language) and the NL group (only Dutch as C language). This division allowed a comparison of the performances between the 3 groups neutralizing a possible disturbing factor like the hypothetical influence of a language on the interpreting behaviour.[3]

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1   Note that the cognitive processing of a rhematic element, i.e. of a new information, implies a greater concentration effort for both speaker and listener (Shannon 1993: 127). Taking into account that interpreters deal with the comprehension and production phases almost simultaneously, the extraposition becomes even more relevant for SI.
2   The author wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance by the Italian language unit of the EP Interpretation Directorate in finding suitable subjects.
3   Sella (1997: 290) assumes that subjects generally tend to keep a wider ear-voice span and to reformulate more if they have a language pair with strong syntactical

3.2 Source Texts

In the experimental study, 4 texts were used, 2 original speeches (TD1/TN1) and their respective translation in the other experimental language (TD2/TN2). The German speech (TD1) was pronounced by the EU commissioner for enlargement Günter Verheugen, while the Dutch speech (TN1) was pronounced by the socialist member of the European parliament Jan Marinus Wiersma. Both were held on 09. April 2003 during the plenary session of the European parliament and both were about the same topic, namely the enlargement process, which did not pose particular problems as far as terminology is concerned.

The translations of the first speech in NL (TN2) and of the second in D (TD2) were taken from the official website of the European parliament[4]. They were not revised or modified as they kept the essential stylistic and rhetoric features of the original versions intact. The four texts were read by 2 mother-tongue speakers at a standard speaking rate in order to try to minimize the impact of speed on the interpreters' performances.

Text	Length	Words/min
TD1	10'34"	116/min
TD2	9' 01"	106/min
TN1	7' 28"	127/min
TN2	10'16"	129/min

Each group of interpreters could deal with two texts according to the following pattern:

- · DN group: two original speeches TD1/TN1.
- · D group: TD1 and the translation of the Dutch speech TD2
- · NL group: TN1 and the translation of the German speech TN2

The final corpus of deliveries consisted of 30 interpreted texts:

- · TD1: 10 deliveries
- · TN1: 10 deliveries
- · TD2: 5 deliveries
- · TN2: 5 deliveries

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asymmetries (D-I) in their combination. This is probably due to the fact that they are more used to coping with very diverging sentence structures.

4   www.europarl.europa.eu

3.3 Evaluation criteria

To pursue the aim of this experimental study, a certain number of target sentences with the typical SOV structure was identified in the 4 texts. After a short linguistic description of the sentences the accent was put on the difficulties they raised during the interpreting process (Bevilacqua 2003: 61). Finally, a proposed solution was formulated according to 4 interpreting strategies deemed essential to bridge the typological gap between D/NL and Italian: *anticipation, ear-voice span management, reformulation and compression*. In addition to the 4 mentioned strategies, the category of *omissions* was taken into account as a consequence of retention problems caused by SOV and time constraints in IS (Bevilacqua 2003: 58).

As interpreting strategies are part and parcel of professional interpreters' skills, they are applied unconsciously and they are so closely interlinked that it is often difficult to isolate them (Riccardi 2003). Therefore, in the evaluation of every target sentence it was necessary to abstract the strategy which turned out to be more decisive at that particular moment of the SI process. At the end of every text, the use of the 5 categories was quantified in order to establish their impact on the interpreters' performances and to verify whether there were significant language-specific differences in the two language pairs D/I and NL/I.

3.3.1 Anticipation

Anticipation consists in interpreting the source text before it is completely delivered by the speaker and it can be triggered by linguistic and extra-linguistic cues. In the former case, interpreters rely on their knowledge of the source language to identify linguistic units which can help them to infer what the speaker is going to say. Linguistic anticipation is based on the probabilistic nature of language, as words do not follow one another at random, but in more or less probable combinations.

> *A high level of linguistic proficiency in individuals means not only that they know words and structures and they can recognize them, but also that they have good knowledge of transitional probabilities and can use them in comprehension.* (Gile 1995: 177)

But anticipation can be extra-linguistic as well when it is not the exact inference of the speaker's words, but rather of his ideas which are consistent in a given communicative situation (Gile 1995). During the SI process interpreters activate mental models (Johnson-Laird 1983) which contain their extra-linguistic knowledge on the topic and allow them to put the message in the right pragmatic context and to get rid of ambiguities.

It goes without saying that anticipation plays an important role from the cognitive point of view, as it allows interpreters to unload the working memory during the comprehension process and to achieve a high-quality SI performance (Wilss 1978). This is even more important in the light of the SOV word order where the verb, i.e. the semantic focus of the sentence, comes in the final position. In the experimental study (Bevilacqua 2003: 50) an attempt was made to determine to what extent professional interpreters relied on anticipation to overcome the obstacles of the target sentences and to establish whether it was mainly triggered by linguistic bottom-up cues or contextual top-down elements. To check the accuracy of inferences, they were classified in three qualitative categories: **exact**, **generic** and **false anticipation** (Jörg 1995). "Generic" means that the delivery does not precisely correspond to the final verb of the sentence but it is rather a generalization of the message on the basis of the interpreter's extra-linguistic knowledge. In the conclusions the incidence of the anticipation was compared in the four texts to ascertain the validity of the assumption stated in 2. according to which the rigid verb-final structure of D obliges resorting to inferences more than NL which tends to shorten verbal braces through extraposition.

3.3.2 Ear-voice span

The ear-voice span (EVS) is the distance between the acoustic perception of the incoming message and the delivery of the interpreter. By increasing the EVS the comprehension of the source text improves and misunderstandings are less likely, but at the same time it risks overburdening the short-term memory leading to omissions in the delivery. There is no precise theory governing the management of EVS, which is fundamentally a subjective choice of the interpreter. Nonetheless, Goldmann-Eisler (1980) showed in her experimental study that the SOV typology exerts an influence on that choice, obliging interpreters to keep a wider EVS in order to hear the final verb.

In the discussion of the experiment (Bevilacqua 2003: 52), the EVS was considered an alternative strategy to anticipation and reformulation (see following paragraph) and was divided into two sub-categories: **waiting in silence** and **stalling**. The "waiting in silence" EVS was measured in seconds from the moment the speaker pronounced the very first word of the target sentence until the starting of the interpreter's delivery. It is important to stress that EVS is an intrinsic feature of SI between D/NL and Italian, therefore the attention was devoted only to those cases where the EVS was remarkably wide and due to the constrictions posed by the structure of the target sentences.

The other sub-category considered was **stalling** (Setton 1999). While waiting for the significant information, interpreters can fill the time gap

with semantically neutral material like repetitions of already known elements to reinforce the cohesion of the sentence, Italian passe-partout expressions like "*per quanto riguarda, a proposito di, in questo contesto*"[5] or simple phonetic occurrences such as the lengthening of the last vowel[6] or slowing down while pronouncing a word. Another possible way to stall the sentence is the use of a "semantically pale verb" which can be integrated or rectified afterwards as soon as the verb in final position is heard. Through this strategy, the interpreter eludes the risk of a one-way anticipation in full respect of the least-commitment principle (Riccardi 1998). Even in relation to the EVS, a cross-comparison between German and Dutch texts was made to verify the assumption stated in 2 and 3.3.1.

3.3.3 Reformulation

Unlike anticipation and EVS, reformulation is not bound to the comprehension process but rather to the production of the target text. The strategy is applied to reduce the complexity of the source text on the one hand and to avoid interferences with the linguistic surface of the source language on the other by reformulating the sentence according to the typological structure of the target language (Kalina 1998).

   In the theoretical part of this work (Bevilacqua 2003: 31) the flexibility of the Italian sentence was highlighted as a precious tool in the hands of interpreters to achieve the above mentioned goal. Thanks to the mobility of Italian constituents, the interpreter has the opportunity to start a sentence from a different point to the speaker, in particular when the verb in the final position is hard to infer. This strategy was called **replacement of constituents** and was seen as a prerequisite to loosen the verbal braces.

- **Die Welt hat sich** nach dem Fall der Berliner Mauer vor fünf Jahren und seit Vollendung der deutschen Einheit **dramatisch verändert**. (Riccardi 1996: 218)
  * Dopo la caduta del muro di Berlino cinque anni fa e dalla riunificazione tedesca, **il mondo è cambiato drammaticamente.**

Other reformulation strategies (Bevilacqua 2003: 54) were proposed as possible solutions to the target sentences including:

- **paratactical reformulation** (Riccardi 1999) which consists in the transformation of subordinate clauses into main clauses with the aim of simplifying the source text and avoiding one-way solutions (least-

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5   As regards, as far as, in this context.
6   Note that the perspective is always language-specific. Italian, being the target language of this study, offers the opportunity to apply this strategy, as Italian words end with a vowel.

commitment);

- **segmentation strategy** (Gile 1995) to break down a complex sentence into shorter clauses;
- **the left dislocation** to deal with the SOV and OVS word order (Sella 1998):
  Ich glaube, **dass wir diese Themen in einem Gesamtzusammenhang betrachten müssen** mit der gesamten Entwicklung des Ostseeraums. (Kommissar Verheugen 13/03/2002)
  ** Credo che **questi temi, li dobbiamo considerare** nel contesto globale dello sviluppo dell'intera regione baltica.*
  [I believe that we have to consider these questions in the wider context of the general development of the Baltic sea region.]

3.3.4 Compression

In dealing with the time constraints of SI the interpreter tends to simplify the structure and the contents of the source text and reduce the number of syllables preserving, nonetheless, the main message (*Makropropositionen*, Kalina 1998). The compression can be triggered by different factors like the high informative density, the complexity of the source text or a high speaking rate, but it can be language-specific as well. For instance the SOV structure of D and NL, the frequency of embedded and participial clauses make the ability to compress the sentence essential to succeed in SI from these languages.

As in the case of anticipation, also the compression strategy was considered as either linguistic or extra-linguistic (Bevilacqua 2003: 56). **Linguistic compression** was observed in particular in relative clauses which often have a low informative content and are mainly used by speakers to make the message clearer and more structured. Thus they can be reduced into a single syntagm opting for a nominal style which is a congenital feature of the Italian language (Ross 1995):

- Deshalb ist das sicherlich eine Entscheidung, **die zu den wichtigsten gehört, die das Haus in seiner gesamten Geschichte zu treffen hat.** (Kommissar Verheugen 9/04/2003)
  *È** sicuramente una delle decisioni **più importanti dell'Assemblea in tutta la sua storia.
  [This is certainly one of the most important decisions of this House in all its history.]

The interpreter can also compress the source text relying on the extra-linguistic context. In fact, the SI is a dynamic process whereby the interpreter and the listener constantly interact sharing a wide network of information about the communicative event, the topic, the speaker etc. The interaction grows as the speech proceeds creating "a common ground"

of extra-linguistic knowledge the interpreter can exploit to compress all redundancies of the text as in the following example:

- · I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of the United Republic of Tanzania. (Chernov 1994: 146)
  Tanzania!

3.5.5 Omissions

This term indicates a missing element in the interpreter's delivery compared with the source text. Omissions may be seen as the consequence of the interpreter lagging behind in the elaboration of the sentence, but the deletion of an element could also be a deliberate choice to pursue the need for simplicity and greater clarity of the target text. In this case, the two categories of omissions and compression overlap and any attempt to draw a line between them would be rough and subjective. Nonetheless, in the discussion of the experiment (Bevilacqua 2003: 58) an approximate distinction was proposed shifting from the interpreter's to the listener's point of view. The evaluation criterion used was the redundancy of the deleted element and the recovery capacity of the listener: if the missing information was redundant and, therefore, could be easily recovered by the listener relying on the knowledge he shared with the interpreter, the occurrence was classified as compression, otherwise it was considered an omission.

The omissions were divided into two sub-categories[7] according to their impact on the source text:

- · **Skipping omission** of a single noun or adjective which in most cases does not jeopardize the communication;
- · **Delay omission** of highly informative rhetoric elements or even source text segments like phrases or whole clauses. This type of omission badly distorts the speaker's message and is normally due to the interpreter's delay in the elaboration of the previous information unit.

4. Results

4.1 Anticipation

After a thorough analysis of the interpreters' deliveries (Bevilacqua 2003: 281) it was observed that the subjects often relied on their ability to infer the message in order to deal with the difficulties of the target sentences, which happened in 45% of all occurrences. It is a high percentage

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7   See Barik (1994).

compared to the 8.03% Sella (1997) registered in a similar study conducted among student interpreters. The data confirm Moser-Mercer's expert-novice paradigm (1997) according to which professional interpreters' linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge is better structured and interlinked and, therefore, can be faster retrieved when needed. The result is a more frequent and precise use of the anticipation strategy than in students'perfomances.
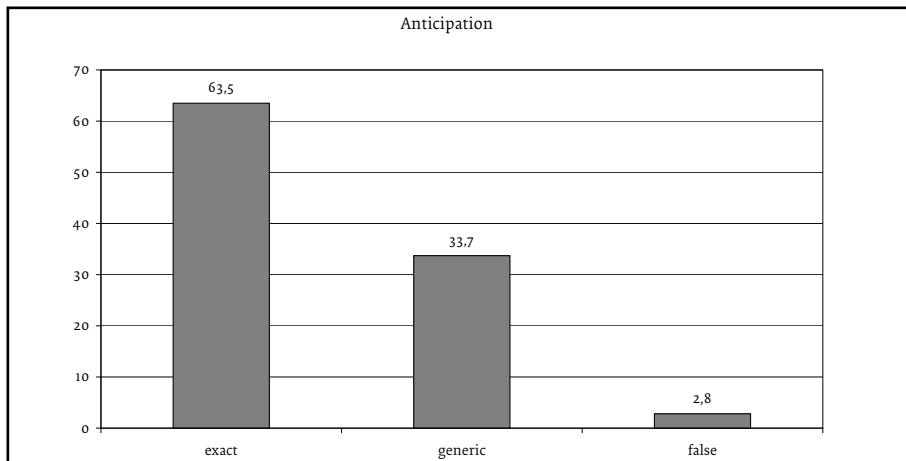

Figure 1. Anticipation

Both in the German and Dutch texts, exact inferences were predominant (63.5%) followed by generic ones (33.7%), while false anticipations were limited to few cases (2.8%). In the conclusions of the SI experiment, the inferring ability was defined as a prerequisite for an effective management of the cognitive resources and for a quality delivery (Bevilacqua 2003: 282). Both aspects are closely interlinked because the precious energy saved through the anticipation of the final verb can be concentrated on processing the other constituents of the sentence, thus improving the final product. It was stressed that besides the sensitivity to the structures of D and NL, the subjects showed a wide repertoire of cliché expressions they could activate without effort from the long-term memory (Wilss 1978) by association with a particular context. The result was an exhaustive and high-quality delivery as clearly emerges in the following example (Bevilacqua 2003: 65):

Ex. 1

TD1. [...] Ich glaube es sollte auch vermerkt werden dass das Europäische

DN1.   [...] *va notato (1") che il*

Parlament wie kaum ein anderes in Europa schon in der Zeit des Kalten
Parlamento Europeo.   come . nessun altro in Europa . già .

Krieges immer wieder die offene Wunde der Spaltung Europas zum
durante la Guerra Fredda . ha sempre insistito sulla necessità di sanare

Thema gemacht und für eine europäische Zukunft plädiert hat [...]
*quella ferita **aperta** della divisione dell'Europa (3") in vista . di una . Europa* [...]
[it is worthy of note that the European Parliament as no other (institution) in Europe during the Cold War always insisted on the necessity to heal the open wound of a divided Europe.][8]

The well-known question of the open wound of the divided Europe allowed the interpreter to resolve the long verbal brace by using a cliché expression like "to heal the open wound of the divided Europe". Although the delivery appears slightly generalized, the subject succeeded in conveying the message in its entirety preserving its rhetorical features. Also in the next example (Bevilacqua 2003: 253), the interpreters relied on their extra-linguistic knowledge to infer a verb which came late at the end of a long infinitive clause. Moreover their task was made more difficult by an embedded clause making the target sentence discontinuous and therefore difficult to process (Frazier & Rayner 1988).

Ex. 2
TN1. Het administratieve bestel in de nieuwe lidstaten is waarschijnlijk nog
DN4.   [...] *il sistema amministrativo nei nuovi stati mem*
niet voldoende in staat om de massale geldstromen die op die landen
*bri non è ancora sufficientemente in grado per eh asso: di **assorbire***
afkomen voldoende te kunnen beheren.
eh i flussi finanziari che affluiranno in questi nuovi paesi dell'Unione Europea
[The administrative system in the new member states is still not ready to absorb the financial flows which will flow into these new countries of the European Union.]

The financial absorption capacity of the candidate countries is another recurring question in the discussions on the EU enlargement and the linguistic cue *massale geldstromen* was enough to activate the knowledge of the interpreter and to trigger anticipation. Some subjects opted for the generic inference of the sentence and then integrated their translation after having perceived the verb at the end. This strategy was registered on several occasions from both D and NL and was described as the result of the self-monitoring process whereby interpreters check the conformity of their output with the source text (Bevilacqua 2003: 255).

Ex. 3
TN1. Het administratieve bestel in de nieuwe lidstaten is waarschijnlijk nog
DN2.   [...] *il sistema ammin*
niet voldoende in staat om de massale geldstromen die op die landen
istrativo nei nuovi stati membri probabilmente non è ancora in grado:

---

8   The English translation tries faithfully to reflect the Italian word order in the interpreters' delivery.

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afkomen voldoende te kunnen beheren.

di fronteggiare in maniera ottimale i flussi di denaro che si riversano sul paese e di sap e di gestirli correttamente [...]

[The administrative system of the new member states is probably still not ready to cope in an effective way with the flows of money which flow into the country and to manage them correctly]

The few cases of false anticipations seem to have a common cause, i.e. an excessive focus on the top-down dimension of the speaker's message to the detriment of the linguistic surface of the source text. It is interesting to note that these occurrences were observed in target sentences with an apparently high anticipation potential. But this very factor induced some subjects blindly to rely on their knowledge and to opt for solutions well anchored in the communicative context, but far from the speaker's intentions (Bevilacqua 2003: 197).

> **Ex. 4**
> **TN2.** [...] en hebben tientallen jaren wanhopig geprobeerd om hun nationale en
> **NL4.**   [...] *e per **decenni** hanno dovuto*
> culturele identiteit ondanks het heersende 'Russificatiebeleid' te
> *soffrire (1") e rinunciare alla loro **identità** culturale e nazionale*
> behouden.
> *(1")   e a <non sono riusciti a mantenerla> e sono mm hanno lottato per mante-nerla* [...]
> [and for decades they have suffered and they had to give up their cultural and national identity and they could not preserve it and they struggled to preserve it]

After self-monitoring the subject realized his mistake and tried to improve his delivery with an addition. A similar occurrence was observed in the same target sentence of the German text (TD1), but in this case the interpreter did not succeed in recovering the original meaning probably because of his delay (Bevilacqua 2003: 95):

> **Ex. 5**
> **TD1.** [...] die sich verzweifelt bemüht hatten, über Jahrzehnte ihre nationale
>
> und kulturelle Identität gegenüber einer Russifizierungspolitik aufrecht
> **D3.**   [...] *e per decenni hanno visto calpestata la loro*
> zu erhalten.
> *identità culturale* [...]
> [and for decades their cultural identity has been repressed]

The conclusion drawn from a careful analysis of the aforementioned mistakes was that while student interpreters' performance often reveals a "spasmodic concentration on the linguistic elements" (Riccardi 1999:

166) and a decontextualization of the message, professional interpreters seem rather to run the opposite risk, i.e. to underestimate the bottom-up dimension and to deliver a translation mainly underpinned by their extra-linguistic knowledge often motivated by the need to optimize the cognitive resources and to reduce the burden of linguistic processing, but it may be misleading if their own expectations are not matched by a constant monitoring of the incoming segment (Bevilacqua 2003: 282).

Turning now to the contrastive analysis of the two language pairs German-Italian and Dutch-Italian, in par. 2. the Dutch word order was defined as "moderately verb-final" compared to the more rigid SOV structure of D. In particular, the accent was placed on the frequent extraposition of a constituent after the second pole of the verbal brace in the Dutch sentence. The shortening of the verbal brace has significant implications for the comprehension phase as it reduces the syntactic distance from the final verb which is the semantic focus of the sentence. Thus, it was assumed in par. 3.3.1 that interpreters would be obliged to anticipate more and to keep a longer ear-voice span from D than from NL as result of this typological difference.

The comparison between the original Dutch speech and its German translation showed a gap of 6% in the frequency of anticipations (TN1 6%, TD2 12%) speaking in favour of the assumption previously stated. The extraposition played a decisive role in the strategic choice of the 2 subjects in the following example (Bevilacqua 2003: 231, 127):

Ex. 6
TN1. Mijnheer de Voorzitter, toen ik in 1997 door het Europees Parlement
DN2.   [...] *Presidente   >quando:*
 werd aangewezen <u>als rapporteur voor de EU-lidmaatschapsaanvraag</u>
 nel novantase:tte<   <<u>son stato nominato</u> dal Parlamento Europeo>
 <u>van Slowakije</u>[9] keken sommige collega's mij meewarig aan.
 come relatore per . la . richiesta di adesione all'Unione Europea da parte della Slovacchia [respiro] >alcuni: colleghi mi hanno: guardato: con sufficienza<[...]
 [President when in 1997 I was appointed by the European parliament as rapporteur for Slovakia's EU membership application some colleagues looked at me condescendingly]

Ex. 7
TD2. Als das Europäische Parlament mich 1997 zum Berichterstatter für den
D2.   [...] *quando il Parlamento Europeo> nel novantasette <u>mi</u>*
 Antrag der Slowakischen Republik auf Aufnahme in die Europäische
 <u>ha nominato</u>[10] relatore per la richiesta dell'adesione della Repubblica
 Union **ernannt hatte**, haben einige meiner Kolleginnen und Kollegen
 Slovacca (3")   *alcuni dei miei colleghi (3")*

9   Extraposition of the constituent after the verb.
10 The interpreter anticipates the verb in final position.

mich mitleidvoll angesehen
mi hanno guardato con **compassione** *quasi* [...]
[when the European parliament 1997 appointed me as rapporteur for Slovakia's EU membership application some of my colleagues looked at me with pity]

It could be objected that the longer verbal braces in TD2 are merely the consequence of the written style of the German translation, but the argument is contradicted by the data relating to the second pair of texts. In this case the gap was limited to 1% (TD1 23%, TN2 22%), but it turned out to be wider taking into account the whole text and not only the target sentences. In fact, TN2, although a written translation, registered 10 cases of extrapolation more than the original TD1. In conclusion, it is not inappropriate to state that the rigid SOV word order of German demands a greater predisposition to anticipation than Dutch. This language-specific difference in interpreting behaviour will also be verified in relation to the ear-voice span in the following paragraph assuming a longer EVS in the SI from D.
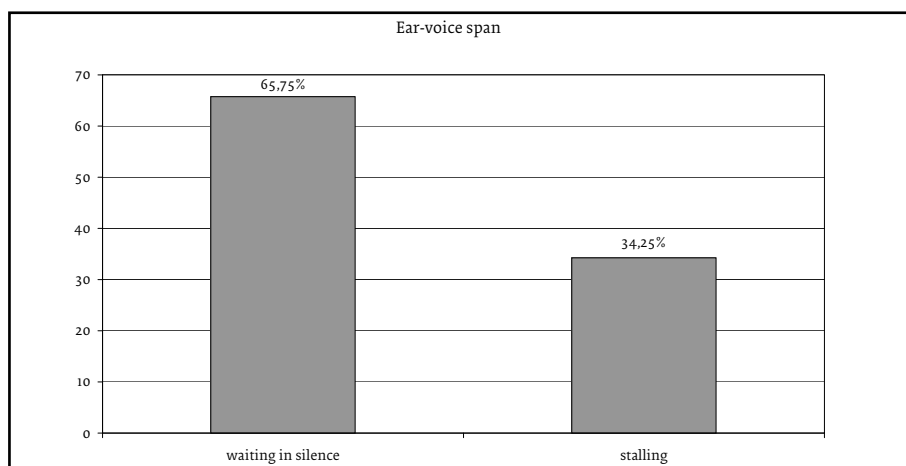
4.2 Ear-voice span

Figure 2. Ear-voice span

The SOV word order of D and NL often obliged the subjects to wait for the verb coming in final position. The most burdensome sentences appeared to be the transitive ones where the typological divide between the Romance SVO and the Germanic SOV was particularly constrictive. In dealing with these sentences, the interpreters strongly felt the close semantic and syntactic link between the object and the verb and, thus, the necessity for Italian to release V before O which clearly contrasted with SOV in D and NL.

The waiting in silence (65,75%) prevailed over the stalling (34,25%) in every text and the gap between interpreter and speaker could be quantified in an average interval of 2-5 seconds (Bevilacqua 2003: 100).

Ex. 8

TD1. Sie, meine Damen und Herren Abgeordnete, haben den Weg dieser

DN3.   [...] *voi onorevoli deputati (5")*

      Länder in die Europäische Union über viele Jahre begleitet.

                                 per molti anni <avete accompagnato la
      strada di questi paesi verso l'Unione Europea> [...]
      [you, honourable members, for many years have been following the path of these countries towards the European Union]

The discussion of the results highlighted the interdependence between EVS and the other interpretation strategies like anticipation, compression and reformulation. In particular, a long EVS was usually followed by a strategic intervention of the interpreter on the source text, while a shorter gap led in most cases to a delivery closer to the original (Bevilacqua 2003: 157).

Ex. 9

TD2. [...] stelle ich fest, dass alle Vorhaben, die in den vergangenen Jahren

D4. [...] *devo constatare (2")*   *che tutti i progetti che negli*

      formuliert wurden, in der Praxis vor Ort noch zu wenig umgesetzt
      anni passati sono stati formulati elaborati >   *in pratica non hanno*
      wurden.
      trovato attuazione [...]
      [I must say that all the projects formulated and drawn up in the past years have not been concretely implemented]

Ex. 10

TD2. [...] stelle ich fest, dass alle Vorhaben, die in den vergangenen Jahren

D5.

      formuliert wurden, in der Praxis vor Ort noch zu wenig umgesetzt
      [...] *(2") **vedo** che tutti i progetti degli ultimi anni poi >concretamente<*
      wurden.
      sono stati applicati troppo poco [...]
      [I notice that all the projects of the past years concretely have been insufficiently implemented]

The subject D4 keeps a very tight EVS and delivers the relative clause in its entirety. On the contrary D5 was obliged to lengthen the EVS because he lagged behind the speaker. Thus, in order to regain ground he carried out a compression (see 4.4) of the relative clause in one single constituent "degli ultimi anni". This example shows how the SI can be considered the constant swinging of a pendulum whereby the lengthening of the EVS is offset by the implementation of another interpreting strategy to reduce

the delay accumulated with the speaker. On the one hand, a longer EVS gives the interpreter a wider perspective of the text and increases the potential use of other strategies (Gile 1995), but, on the other, it can overburden the short-term memory leading to a loss of information. In the latter case, the subjects applied emergency strategies (Kalina 1996) like the compression[11] and the generalization of the message to overcome a difficult situation. They showed the ability to extract the relevant information avoiding a total break down of the communication as in the following example.

> **Ex. 11**
> **TD2.** [...] stelle ich fest, dass alle Vorhaben, die in den vergangenen Jahren
> **D1.**
>
> formuliert wurden, in der Praxis vor Ort noch zu wenig umgesetzt
>
> wurden.
> [...] *non sono stati attuate le in loco le misure che sono state proposte* [...]
> [the measures which were proposed have not been locally implemented]

Stalling (34,25%) represented the alternative to EVS. To avoid a long (and sometimes embarrassing) wait the subjects filled the gap adding semantically neutral material like repetitions of already known elements or Italian passe-partout expressions like *per quanto riguarda* in the following example (Bevilacqua 2003: 104).

> **Ex. 12**
> **TD1.** [...] dass wir die europäischen Völker, die sich nun seit 13 Jahren auf
> **D5.**   [...] *però mi rendo anche conto >che noi<   per quanto*
> den großen Moment vorbereiten, nicht länger warten lassen konnten.
> *riguarda questi . po:poli <che si stanno preparando> da tredici anni*
> *a questo grande momento bene non li possiamo fare aspettare oltre* [...]
> [but I realize that we as regards these peoples who have been preparing
> for this great moment for 13 years well we can not leave them waiting
> anymore]

In other cases, to stall the sentence the subjects released "a semantically pale verb" which was then modified or integrated after having monitored its compliance with the source text. In this way, the typological transition from SOV to the Italian SVO was facilitated by an intermediate step: S-neutral verb-O-V (Bevilacqua 2003: 93).

> **Ex. 13**
> **TD1.** [...] die sich verzweifelt bemüht hatten, über Jahrzehnte ihre nationale
> **D4.**   [...] *e che*

---

11 See 4.4.

> und kulturelle Identität gegenüber einer Russifizierungspolitik
> *>per decenni hanno cercati di:* <u>*trovare una propria*</u>
> aufrecht zu erhalten.
> *identità   culturale<   <u>mantenendola</u> nei confronti de: una tentata*
> *russificazione*[...]
> [and for decades they have tried to find their own cultural identity
> preserving it from a policy of Russification]

Evidently this strategy involves an inevitable manipulation of the source text which could give rise to deontological objections. It would be legitimate to wonder whether the end always justifies the means even when they imply a strong intervention on the source text. It is an open question which would deserve a thorough case-by-case analysis taking into consideration the possible consequences for the equivalence and the accuracy of the message (Viezzi 1996)[12]. It goes without saying that the interpreter's sensitivity in the choice of the stalling material is decisive to avoid distorting the speaker's message.

The role of EVS was more prominent in the German texts that in NL, thus validating the assumption formulated in 2. Waiting in silence was recorded in 54,41% of the cases in the German texts against 45,59% in TN1/TN2, while the gap was wider in relation to the stalling 63,30% against 36,70%, which is symptomatic of the higher cognitive stress interpreters perceived interpreting from D. Stalling can be seen as a defensive strategy the subjects applied to cope with long verbal braces and to avoid the overburdening of the short-term memory.

In the next example (Bevilacqua 2003: 77) the subject interpreting from D stalled the sentence by adding a neutral verb and storing the long object in short-term memory. By contrast the same sentence in the Dutch translation did not demand a great cognitive effort since extraposition of a constituent shortened the syntactic midfield. This can explain the absence of omissions in NL5 delivery.

> **Ex. 14**
> **TD1.** [...] die aber auch mit Mut und Entschlossenheit den Weg für ein freies
> **D1.**   [...] <u>*si tratta di popoli*</u>
> und geeintes Europa geebnet haben.
> <u>*anche che hanno deciso*</u> *eh fermamente di* <u>*avviare*</u>*(1") una strada <di*
> *intraprendere una strada di democrazia>* [...]
> [these also are peoples who firmly decided to initiate a way to embark on
> a path of democracy]

---

12 Viezzi's model of quality assessment is based on four principles: equivalence, accuracy, adequacy and usability. An interpreted text can be considered equivalent to the source text when it fulfils the same illocutionary act, while accuracy concerns the extent to which detailed propositional content is conveyed in the interpreter's delivery.

Ex. 15

TN2 Deze mensen hebben ook zelf moedig en vastbesloten het pad geëffend

NL5.   [...] *persone che*
voor een vrij en verenigd Europa.
hanno aperto la strada con molto cora coraggio per una Europa libera e
unita [...]
[people who paved the way with a lot of courage for a free and united
Europe]

The following target sentence in TD2 (Bevilacqua 2003: 133) forced the
subjects to lengthen their EVS substantially to escape a particularly
restrictive and unpredictable verbal brace, while in TN1 the task was once
again facilitated by the extraposition:

Ex. 16

TD2. Sie steht den anderen für den Beitritt im nächsten Jahr auf der Liste

D4.   [...] *la: Slovacchia (3")*
stehenden Ländern keineswegs nach.
          è (1")   *non è <arretrata rispetto agli altri paesi che verranno>* eh
entreranno nell'Unione Europea l'anno prossimo [...]
[Slovakia is does not lag behind the other countries which are joining the
European Union next year]

Ex. 17

TN1. Het doet niet onder voor de andere kandidaten die voor volgend jaar op

DN1.   [...] *la Slovacchia non: fa minor*
de ledenlijst staan.
figura rispetto agli altri paesi candidati per l'anno prossimo [...]
[Slovakia is not worse than the other candidate countries for next year]

The conclusion is warranted that a good management of EVS is a
prerequisite for a high-quality SI from both D and NL considering their
SOV typology. Nonetheless, the more rigid verb final structure of D
imposes a greater burden on the working memory and demands a higher
retention capacity.

4.3 Reformulation

Reformulation ability was decisive to overcome the constraints of SOV and
it was the most frequently applied strategy in 3 texts out of 4 (TD1 24%,
TN1 32%, TD2 18%), while in TN2 it followed the anticipation with 18% of
the occurrences.

   The replacement of constituents (47,91%) stood out among the strategies
proposed in 3.3.3. In particular the elements expressing the notion of time
and place offered favourable reformulation opportunities because of their

mobility in the Italian sentence which is not bound by the *verb-second constraint* like D and NL (Simone 1990). Thus, the subjects could move these constituents at the beginning of their delivery in order progressively to empty the syntactic midfield separating them from the final verb (Bevilacqua 2003: 86).
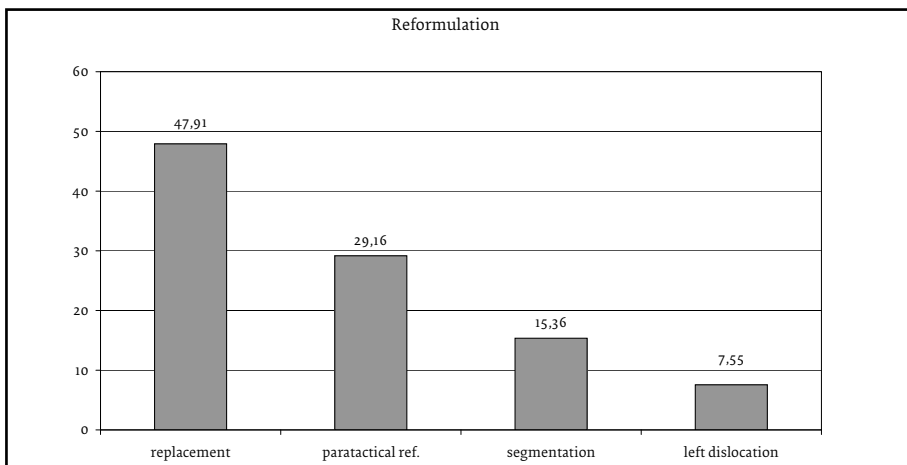
Reformulation

Category	Value
replacement	47,91
paratactical ref.	29,16
segmentation	15,36
left dislocation	7,55

Figure 3. Reformulation

Ex. 18
TD1. Ich habe in der vergangenen Woche in Ungarn in einer Rede darauf
DN4. [...] *e nella: scorsa settimana in*
hingewiesen dass [...]
Ungheria in un mio discorso ho indicato che [...]
[and last week in Hungary in my speech I stressed that [...]]

In this same category, occurrences were included whereby the subjects did not only reshuffle the order of syntagms but also modified the semantic roles of the basic constituents SOV. This mainly happened in sentences beginning with a dislocated element whose semantic role was difficult to predict. To avoid inconsistencies, the subjects reformulated the dislocated syntagm into S (*Think nominative principle,* Visson 1986) and opted for a transitive construction which left the sentence open to several alternatives. In the language pair D/I the reformulation of the semantic roles was mainly used in sentences starting with a dative case (Bevilacqua 2003: 88):

Ex. 19
TD1 [...] dass wohl <u>allen europäischen Politikern</u> meiner Generation die
DN4. [...] >*che: tutti i politici europei*< *della mia*

Hilferufe der Füher des ungarischen Aufstandes 1956 noch im Ohr

generazione (5")

sind.

*hanno ancora ben presente la voce: della ribellione dei leader: dell:'opposizione
ungherese: <nel cinquantasei> [...]*

[that all politicians of my generation remember very well the voice of the
rebellion of the Hungarian opposition leaders in 1956]

The same praxis was recorded in the Dutch text (Bevilacqua 2003: 191)
where the semantic role of the dislocated element was expressed by the
highly polysemic and ambiguous preposition *bij*.

Ex. 20

TN2. [...] dat <u>bij alle Europese politici</u> van mijn generatie de noodkreten van de

NL5.   [...] *ho detto che (1")   di tutti i politici eh <u>che</u>*

leiders van de Hongaarse opstand van 1956 als het ware nog steeds in

<u>*tutti i politici europei*</u> *della mia generazione (3")*

hun oren doorklinken.

             *sento ancora risuonare nelle loro orecchie le grida . dei politici
ungheresi del cinquantasei [...]*

[I said that of all politicians that all European politicians of my generation
still hear the screams of the Hungarian politicians of '56 echoing in their
ears]

The paratactical reformulation (29,16%) was systematically applied in all
four texts and the subjects seemed to master it with a certain degree of
automatism. By transforming subordinate clauses into main sentences,
the interpreters could avoid one-way solutions and monitor the
development of the text. Then they restored the logical relations *en route*
using adverbs and other connectives in order to maintain the cohesion of
the message (Bevilacqua 2003: 238).

Ex. 21

T.N1 Omdat Slowakije vanwege het niet-voldoen aan democratische criteria

DN3.   [...] (4")   [...] >*per*

niet in de eerste onderhandelingsgroep werd opgenomen, is het meer

il non rispetto dei   criteri   democratici<   la Slovacchia non era stata

dan de andere kandidaten getoetst en getest op de kwaliteit van de

inserita nel primo gruppo di negoziati (1")   <u>ma per questo</u> è stata

rechtsstaat.

*verificata **più** degli altri candidati rispetto alla qualità >della legalità dello stato
di diritto [...]*

[because of the non-respect of democratic criteria Slovakia was not
included in the first group of negotiations but therefore it has been
verified more than the other candidates as regards the quality of the
legality of the rule of law]

In the next example (Bevilacqua 2003: 153), the same strategy was applied to face a particularly restrictive embedded clause turning a burdensome discontinuous structure into a more linear one made up of two coordinates.

Ex. 22

TD2. Das Verwaltungssystem in den neuen Mitgliedstaaten ist der Aufgabe,

D2. [...] il *sistema amministrativo nei nuovi stati membri*

die diesen Ländern massiv zufließenden Geldströme effizient zu

(3'') >*deve prepararsi pe:r*

bewirtschaften, wahrscheinlich noch nicht gewachsen.

eh poter in: gestire in modo efficiente le eh< risorse comunitarie che fluiranno in questi paesi finora non **riesce** *ancora a farlo* [...]

[the administrative system of the new member states must get ready to be able to effectively manage the community resources which will flow in those countries, until now it has not been up to the task]

The segmentation strategy (15,30%) was described as more congenital in D/I than NL/I. In fact, the subjects interpreting from German resorted to it more systematically (18%) than those interpreting from NL (11%). This gap can be considered a further consequence of the more rigid SOV word order of D discussed in 4.1 and 4.2. The complexity of the German sentences often induced the subjects to split them into two or more segments in order to optimize their cognitive resources. The best opportunities were offered by the German deverbal nouns (-*ung*) which abound in the typical nominal style of elevated political speeches. In the next case (Bevilacqua 2003: 97) the subjects opted almost unanimously for the verbalization of the word *Unterstützung* dividing the sentence into two shorter clauses:

Ex. 23

TD1. das mit seinem Referendum mit 90% Unterstützung für den Beitritt zur

DN4. [...] *e con il suo referendum* ha dato appoggio al

Europäischen Union ein Zeichen dafür gegeben hat [...]

novanta per cento all'adesione <nell'Unione Europea> dando così un **segno** chiaro [...]

[and with its referendum it gave 90% support to accession to the European Union thereby sending a clear signal [...]]

The left-dislocation (7,55%) had a minor impact on the interpreters' deliveries. In particular it appeared to be the last resort in the following sentence where an embedded relative clause created a remarkable syntactic distance between the object and the verb leaving the subjects no other options than starting with O (Bevilacqua 2003: 208):

Ex. 24

TN2. Ik weet echter zeker dat wij de Europese volkeren die zich nu al dertien

NL4. [...] *io comunque so con certezza che >i popoli europei*

jaar op dit grote moment voorbereiden, niet langer meer kunnen laten

che ora già da tredici anni< si stanno preparando a questo momento

wachten.

importante questi popoli non li possiamo più lasciare aspettare [...]

[nevertheless I know for sure that the European people who have already
been preparing for this important moment for 13 years these people we
can not make them wait anymore]

During the discussion of the reformulation strategies the accent was
placed on the importance of the exemplified techniques as a valid
alternative to anticipation or to prolonging of the ESV. Nonetheless, it is
worth remembering that every intervention on the source text implies an
additional cognitive burden which can only be minimized if these
strategies are applied with a certain degree of automation.

> *Automation is essential to mastery of the interpreting skill as it allows the interpreter
> to bypass common processing limitations and to make optimal use of available
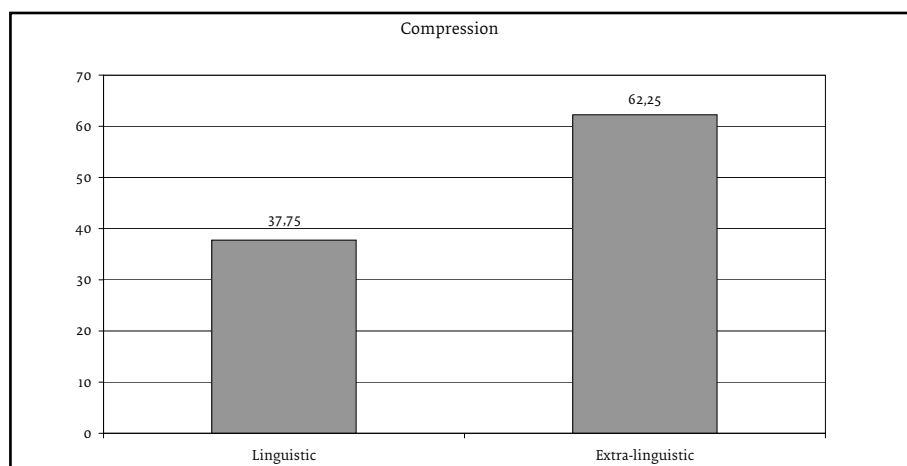> processing capacity.* (Moser-Mercer 1997: 259)

4.4 Compression

Figure 4. Compression

Extra-linguistic compression (62,25%) prevailed in all four texts indicating
the subjects' ability to exploit the communicative situation (EP plenary
speeches) and the contextual knowledge they shared with the audience to
reduce long syntagms to few essential cues. Compression is always the
result of a strategic choice between given and redundant information and

the new contents on which the interpreter concentrates his translation effort. On the basis of this informative hierarchy, the subjects were able to abstract the essential message and compress the sentence striking the right balance between the precision of the delivery and the economy of their cognitive resources.

In the next target sentence (Bevilacqua 2003: 88), most subjects compressed the long object: *die Hilferufe der Führer des ungarischen Aufstandes 1956*. Considering that the topic of the Hungarian revolution was already known as it had already been introduced by the speaker in the previous sentence, the interpreters opted for a simplification of the syntagm to save precious resources which could be better used to cope with a particular restrictive verbal brace.

Ex. 25
TD1 [...] dass wohl allen europäischen Politikern meiner Generation die
DN5.   [...] *che tutti i politici europei*
      Hilferufe der Führer des ungarischen Aufstandes 1956 noch im Ohr
      della mia generazione (4")
      sind.
      >*si ricordano <u>le urla della: ribellione del cinquantasei</u>*< [...]
      [that all European politicians of my generation remember the yells of the
      '56 rebellion]

Deictics played an important role in the compression of the source text replacing constituents through anaphora. Besides the Italian demonstratives pronouns *questo/quello*, the Latin *idem* was effectively used to compress a whole embedded clause (Bevilacqua 2003: 260).

Ex. 26
TN1. Daarom vraag ik van de Slowaakse regering - in het verslag over
NL4.   [...] *ecco perchè noi chiediamo al*
      Tsjechië vindt men dezelfde tekst – een soort meerjarenverbintenis [...]
      governo slovacco >e: idem per <u>peraltro anche al governo ceco</u> un miglioramento nel giro degli anni< [...]
      [therefore we ask the Slovak government and idem for the Czech government an improvement in the course of some years]

Linguistic compression (37,75%) was observed in relative clauses which often have a low informative content and are mainly used by speakers to make the message clearer and more structured. Thus, they could be reduced into few words (Bevilacqua 2003: 62):

Ex. 27
TD1 Deshalb ist das sicherlich eine Entscheidung, die zu den wichtigsten
DN5.   [...] *ecco . perchè . sicuramente .*
      gehört, die das Haus in seiner gesamten Geschichte zu treffen hat.
      si tratta . di una delle decisioni <u>più importanti della storia del Parlamento</u> [...]

> [therefore this is surely one of the most important decision of the history of parliament]

The opportunity to compress the source text seemed sometimes to contrast with the need to closely stick to it and to avoid reformulations demanding an additional effort. This contrast emerged more clearly in the SI from NL whereby the extraposition of a constituent favoured a more faithful delivery (Bevilacqua 2003: 294).

> **Ex. 28**
> **TN2.** Hiermee zijn wij voorlopig aan het einde gekomen van een zeer lange
> **NL1.** [...] *infatti: siamo giunti così alla*
> weg die met name gekenmerkt is door de sterke wil om de Europese
> *fine di una strada   molto . lunga che è stata caratterizzata dalla forte*
> opdeling definitief op te heffen.
> *volontà: (2")di eh <eliminare le divisioni> all'interno dell'Europa* [...]
> [in fact we are at the end of a very long road which has been characterized by the strong will to overcome the divisions in Europe]

It is worth remembering that compression like other interpreting strategies is closely linked to the management of EVS. A minimal gap between the speaker's and the interpreter's speech reduces the textual perspective and makes an intervention on the source text less likely as exemplified in the previous case.

It was the same type of speech, i.e. a political speech offering numerous opportunities for the interpreter to filter out introductory clauses often used by the speaker to mark textual junctions. Clauses such as *ik ga ervan uit, we moeten ook vaststellen, ik vind het ook vermeldenswaard, ich glaube, es sollte auch vermerkt werden, wie ich feststellen konnte, ich bin mir aber bewusst* do not add any information to the text and the subjects could easily omit them.

4.5 Omissions

Omissions mostly involved single nouns, adjectives or adverbs and did not detract from the general sense of the source text (53,75%). It is interesting to note that skipping omissions were much more frequent in the first pair of texts TD1 (73%) and TN2 (75%) compared to TN1 (29%) and TD2 (38%). This difference can be explained in terms of text type. Contrary to Wiersma's more pragmatic and argumentative text (TN1/TD2)[13], commissioner Verheugen's speech belongs to the epideictic genre, i.e. it aims at strengthening the audience's commitment to the shared values of the European integration. The text displays a solemn register with an

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13   See 3.2.

extensive use of long adjective chains solemnly to evoke the landmarks of European unification. Subjects often had to memorize long sequences of nouns, each with their respective modifiers. This caused retention problems and led to many skipping omissions (Bevilacqua 2003: 111).
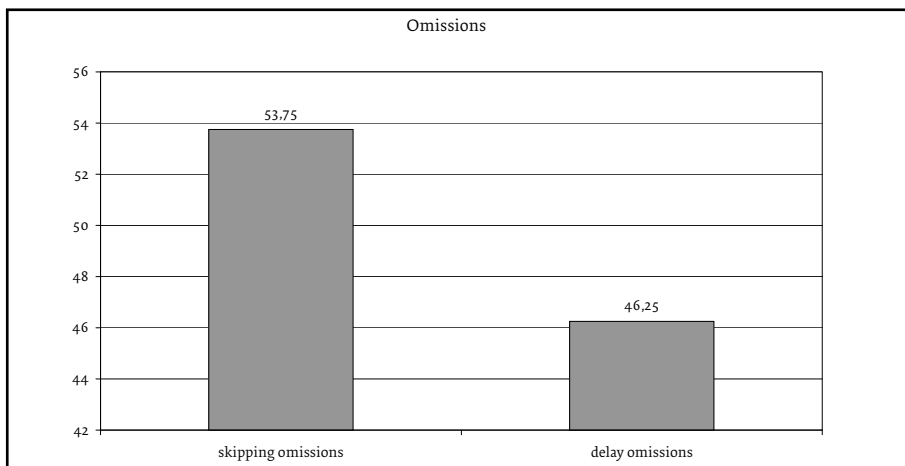

Figure 5. Omissions

Ex. 29

TD1. […] und seinen Bürgerinnen und Bürgern ein Jahrhundert der friedlichen

DN2.   […] *(5")*

Entwicklung, der persönlichen Freiheit und der individuellen

   e per garantire ai cittadini europei un . secolo . di .

Lebenschancen zu schenken.

sviluppo. liber:tà . personale . e . individuale […]

[and to give the European citizens a century of development, personal and individual freedom]

In the four experimental texts, the occurrences of delay omissions (46,25%) were seen as the result of an unbalanced distribution of the interpreter's cognitive resources among the four different phases of the SI: listening, analysis, memorization and production (Gile 1997). Sometimes it was a simple delay in the reformulation of the previous sentence that put at risk the processing of the incoming segment. To re-equilibrate the four efforts, the subjects applied emergency strategies to catch up with the speaker[14]:

[…] interpreters may also find themselves in a situation where their capacity is exhausted or their competence is not in accordance with the demands made on them

14 See 4.2.

[…]. They will then try to overcome this situation by means of "emergency strategies".
(Kalina 1996: 130)

In the following example (Bevilacqua 2003: 205), NL1's ability to select the core information and to convey it through a generalization was the key to cope with the delay and avoid a break-down of the communication.

Ex. 30

TN2. Ik ben mij er echter van bewust dat nu de beslissing nadert, niet bij

NL1.

iedereen in dit Parlement en ook niet bij iedereen in de Europese

[…] *>e credo:*

buitenwereld de twijfels over het uitbreidingsproces uit de weg zijn

che eh ora che il momento si avvicina nessuno< (2")

geruimd.

eh sia esente da **dubbi:** *ne in questo Parlamento ne in altre* **sedi** […]

[and I believe that now that the time is coming nobody is free from doubts either in this House or anywhere else]

A serious loss of information was registered only in few isolated cases where the subjects could not save the macro-structure of the message or they were obliged to skip an entire clause owing to the delay accumulated (Bevilacqua 2003: 253, 147).

Ex. 31

TN1. Het administratieve bestel in de nieuwe lidstaten is waarschijnlijk nog

NL1.   […] *la gestione amministrativa*

niet voldoende in staat om de massale geldstromen die op die landen

nei nuovi paesi forse non è . ancora . in grado . di . affron .

afkomen voldoende te kunnen beheren

(2")   *eh di eh non sarà ancora in grado di affrontare i problemi futuri* […]

[the administration of the new countries maybe is not able yet to deal it will not be able to deal with the future problems]

Ex. 32

TD2. Uns wurden Zusagen gemacht, anhand derer wir die neuen

D1.   […] *ci sono state fatte alcune*

Mitgliedstaaten nach ihrem Beitritt stets beim Wort nehmen können.

proma promesse (2")   *sul fatto eh sul* (2") *[cough]*

sulla capacità eh di dei pae di questi dei paesi candidati di rispettare i criteri […]

[some promises were made to us about the capacity of these candidate countries to fulfil the criteria]

4.6 Conclusion

This experimental work is meant as a contribution to the study of language-specific interpreting strategies applied by Italian professional interpreters in order to cope with the SOV word order of German and Dutch. The techniques used by the subjects were classified and analyzed taking into consideration the linguistic and psycholinguistic factors affecting the process of simultaneous interpreting. A contrastive study of the two language pairs shed light on the main differences in the SI from D and NL. Despite the typological affinity between the two languages, the data collected confirmed the initial hypothesis that D forces interpreters to anticipate more and to keep a longer EVS in order to overcome the constraints of a more rigid SOV structure. By contrast, Dutch can be considered a moderately verb-final language as it violates the SOV word order more systematically than D through the extraposition of a constituent. This syntactic manoeuvre relieves the short-term memory of the interpreter justifying a shorter EVS and sometimes a softer approach to reformulation, as appears from the data obtained in this study. Indeed, individual subjects appeared to resort to reformulation strategies less frequently when interpreting from Dutch than from German.

It is necessary to stress that this study is far from being exhaustive and besides providing some answers to the assumptions made, it also raised new questions related to the specificity of German and Dutch sentence structure and its impact on SI (Bevilacqua 2003: 302). New experimental studies would be desirable in order to collect new evidences in this challenging field. This paper attempts to isolate and observe some of the most interesting strategies and processes involved in SI. It is undeniable that these cognitive processes are sometimes complex and elusive and the border between a conscious application of interpreting strategies and the intepreters' improvisation is often difficult to trace. Nonetheless, improvisation skills are not all inborn but they always develop from acquired knowledge and experience. Hence, the importance of studies of this kind to shed light on the *mare magnum* SI is.

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Simultaneous Interpretation of Numbers: Comparing German and English to Italian. An Experimental Study

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Abstract

An experimental study was carried out to investigate whether the difficulty of delivering numbers in SI is language-independent or whether some specific features – such as the different structures of the numerical systems in SL and TL – may also be relevant and influence SI performance negatively.

To this end, a German text and an English text, both dense with numbers, were interpreted simultaneously into Italian by 16 students. The first language pair (EN-IT) had a linear numerical system and the second one (DE-IT) did not, as in German the so-called inversion rule has to be applied.

An initial analysis of the results suggested that the difficulty of delivering numbers in SI is language-independent. However, a more detailed analysis of the outcomes showed that a significant difference between the two language pairs was apparent in the distribution and typology of errors: transposition/position errors (including inversion errors) were evident in German but not in English.

1. Introduction

In the existing literature on interpretation, numbers are often referred to as one of the most common "problem triggers", yet only a few experimental studies[1] have focused on this issue in an attempt to

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1   In Italy: Alessandrini (1990), Crevatin (1990), Braun and Clarici (1997), Mazza (2000).

investigate the causes of such difficulties or propose any solutions to overcome them. Moreover, very different methodologies have been used in the analysis of these studies' results, which have also been based exclusively on just one language pair each time,[2] thus not allowing for a cross-linguistic detailed comparison between multiple language pairs.

This discussion document aims to provide a cross-linguistic analysis on the performance of simultaneous interpretation (SI) of a speech that is dense with numbers in two language pairs: German-Italian and English-Italian.

The final objective is twofold: on the one hand to shed light on the *universal causes* which underlie the (often) high percentage of errors made in the SI of a speech dense with numbers; on the other hand to investigate if some *particular causes*, connected to language specific structures, also play an important role. More precisely, the aim is to find out whether, in addition to *language-independent* causes of difficulty in the SI of a speech dense with numbers, there may also be some *language-dependent* factors and if so, to what extent, in order to determine whether the *language factor* is relevant.

The language pairs chosen for this study are characterized by a different numerical structure. In the first pair (English-Italian) the structural correspondence of the digits order is quite linear, and in the other one (German-Italian) it is not, as in German the so-called inversion rule is applied.

2. The numerical system: an overview

When dealing with numerical systems it is necessary first to distinguish between "numbers" and "numerals". Numbers are arithmetical objects, whereas numerals are the names used to name them (Hurford 1987).

Each number can be expressed through two different modalities, written and oral. These, in turn, can be represented through at least three different codes in all (Deloche and Seron 1987): the oral, phonological verbal code [/faiv/], the written graphemic or alphabetical code [*five*] and the written Arabic code [5].

Like all other linguistic systems, the numerical system also has its own lexicon/vocabulary (digits in the case of Arabic numbers and numerals in the case of verbal codes), its own syntax, which determines and regulates the relationship between the digits or the numerals, and its own semantic dimension. It is worth noting how the oral numerical system sometimes differs from the written one and how the verbal numerical systems of the languages analysed in this study differ from one another.

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2   Italian-German (Braun and Clarici 1997) and Italian-English (Alessandrini 1990, Crevatin 1990, Mazza 2000).

The Arabic code is without doubt the only system common to the languages in this study. The universality of this code is opposed to the specific features of the various verbal numerals in any particular language. In SI, where all stimuli are perceived through the acoustic channel, one obviously has to deal with numerals. But that does not mean that numbers are extraneous to the interpretation task, as most interpreters and interpretation students (as this study aims to confirm) tend to note down numbers in the Arabic code (i.e. 5) when they are heard. In doing so, the interpreters can detach themselves from the phonological surface of the source language (SL) and of the target language (TL) using a neutral, "visual" representation of the number to be interpreted.

The code most relevant to the present analysis, however, is the oral phonological verbal code, i.e. numerals, which will be briefly described in the following sections.

2.1 The verbal numerical code

Deloche and Seron (1982, 1987) gathered important information about the syntactic and lexical mechanisms regulating the verbal numerical system. They analysed the errors made by brain-damaged patients writing down numbers to dictation and reading them aloud with the aim of using the results to describe the normal functioning of the mechanism.

Their hypothesis was that the numerical lexical system is composed of primitive elements and miscellaneous elements. The set of primitive elements is made up of units, teens and tens, while the miscellaneous elements are the multiplicators (hundred, thousand etc.).

On the basis of the actual positioning of the miscellaneous elements, the above-mentioned components combine through syntactic mechanisms and form complex denominations through additive or multiplicative relations (i.e. 300= 3x100; 103= 100+3). In this way it is possible to create infinite denominations starting from a limited set of items.

The linguistic formulation of the numerical relations upon which the construction process of numerals is based can be represented as follows:

• Lexicalization (i.e. a simple, new word: cinque, five, fünf);
• Addition (i.e. a complex numeral obtained by the addition of its elements: trentadue, thirty-two, zweiunddreißig > 30+2);
• Multiplication (i.e. a complex numeral obtained by the multiplication of its elements: ottocento, eight hundred, achthundert > 8x100).

The system is thus a hybrid one, well exemplified by the languages analysed in this study, which can be illustrated by a tree structure as shown in figure 1 below (350.272):
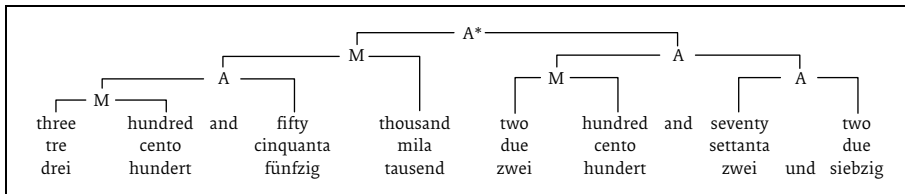
Figure 1.

So far, the three systems analysed – Italian, German and English – seem to follow the same construction rules. However, the German numerical system differs considerably from the English and the Italian ones, as described in the following section.

2.2 The German numerical system

Like the Italian and English numerical systems, the German system is constructed according to the rules described in the previous paragraphs. However, the German system has a major difference, that of non-linearity between the Arabic and the verbal code.

For instance, the Arabic code is universally visually understood and read from left to right, whereas some German numbers are pronounced from right to left. This requires the application of the "inversion rule", according to which "25" will be pronounced "five and twenty*" instead of "twenty-five".

This rule is applied to:

• All numerals with the ending "–zehn" (drei-zehn, vier-zehn…);
• All groups composed by teens + units (ein-und-zwanzig, zwei-und-zwanzig…), except when the unit is equivalent to multiples of tens (zehn, zwanzig, dreißig…).

Ths means that the inversion rule applies to all numbers between 13 and 99 (except for the tens), i.e. 79 numerals out of 100.

In transcoding a German number, i.e. switching from one code to another – from the Arabic to the verbal code or vice-versa – the processing of the number is not linear and requires one the performance of a series of non-linear, energy-consuming operations as shown in figure 2 below (Bosshardt 2004), regarding the number 32, 528, 331.

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*   A= Addition; M= Multiplication.
     Representation by Dehaene 1992, slightly modified to be adapted to the present study.
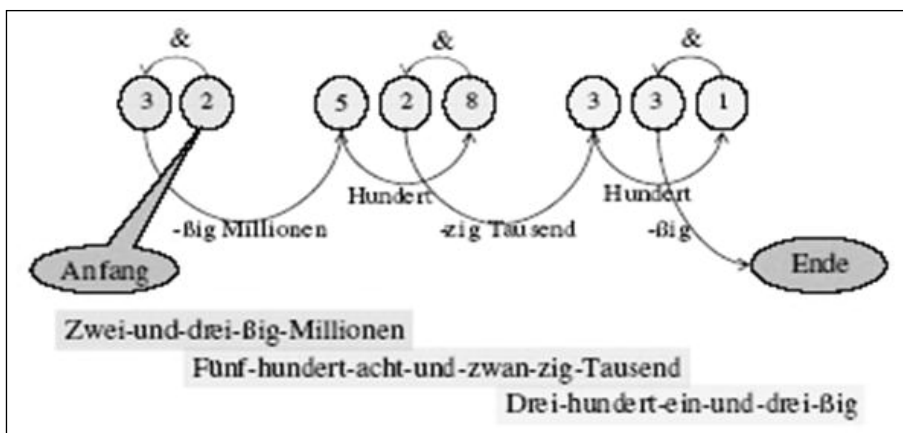
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Figure 2.

2.3 The "Verein Zwanzigeins"

Starting from the statement made in 1915 that:

> Bei jedem Übertragen von Zahlwörtern in Ziffern, oder beim Lesen von Zahlen […] muss man eine gewisse Denkarbeit für die Umstellung aufwenden, die das Behalten der Zahlen erschwert und häufig Veranlassung zu Fehlern gibt

the Mathematics and Psychology Department of the Bochum University in Germany launched a proposal in 2004 which led to the foundation of an association with the very apt name of "Verein Zwanzigeins".[3]

With regard to the "opposite verbalization" of German numbers, the association aims to change number reading in German in accordance with the linearity of the Arabic code. This would mean that "einundzwanzig" would be read as "zwanzigeins", as in their name.

According to the association, the inverted pronunciation of the German numbers may have negative consequences in several areas:

• Education: it may create difficulties in the learning of mathematics at primary school level;
• Business: there might be a high error percentage in the communication of data and figures, especially in foreign trade, which may cause financial losses;
• Politics: a reform may be required to adapt to international standards and those used within the European Union; moreover, many foreigners have difficulties in learning German numbers.

3   http://www.verein-zwanzigeins.de/

The association does not, however, aim to abolish the current pronunciation completely, but intends to promote a parallel usage of the two, perhaps following the example of the Czech language, where both varieties coexist.

The problem is now exacerbated by the digital and technological era: typing a (German) multiple-digit number on a keyboard is not an easy task, as it is difficult to leave an empty space to the left to type in the second digit when it is uttered (as many native speakers use to do when writing longhand). This has obvious practical implications, as when hearing a 5-digit number one has to type the second digit first, remembering the first one and typing it afterwards, then type the third one, remembering the fourth one when typing the fifth, and so on.

Hence, one of the slogans of the association is:

Sorgen wir für Erleichterung und beseitigen wir für unsere Nachkommen alle Schwierigkeiten, die nicht in der Natur der Sache liegen!

3. Simultaneous Interpretation and numerals

SI is a complex cognitive task during which the interpreter has to carry out several operations at the same time or, at least, in very brief succession. Chernov (1994: 140) defines SI as "a complex, bilingual, meaning-oriented communicative verbal activity, performed under time constraints and with a strictly limited amount of information processed at an externally controlled pace". Under such extreme circumstances, not all verbal messages, but only messages with an adequate degree of redundancy, can be interpreted simultaneously. This means that there are several "shadow zones" in SI which are commonly recognized to be particularly difficult even for professional interpreters. The high error score reported by the studies mentioned in the first paragraph suggests that numbers are one such element in SI. This could be due to several universal, language-independent causes which might occur in all language pairs. In the following sections some of the most significant among them will therefore be discussed.

3.1 Universal causes of low accuracy for numbers in SI

3.1.1 The difference in hearing modality

Numerals are managed in a very different way compared to other semantic elements of a phrase. In the listening phase of SI, hearing a numeral causes problems for the interpreter because it has to be perceived both integrally and correctly, contrary to other phrase elements, which can

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be reconstructed or deduced from the context. Whereas for other elements the interpreter's attention is focused on the semantic meaning, dealing with numerals "intelligent hearing"[4] has to be abandoned in favour of "literal hearing". This breaks the usual mental activity required during SI because, as Seleskovitch (1975: 126) says, "*le chiffre, intervenant à brûle-pourpoint dans le raisonnement, ramène l'attention sur la perception auditive du discourse.*"

After translating the numeral, the interpreter has to shift back to "intelligent hearing", otherwise running the risk of losing important information following the numeral; this continuous switching between the two modalities and the continuous search for a balance between them could be one of the factors leading to frequent errors in the SI of numerals.

3.1.2 The non-application of common SI strategies

The SI task can only be facilitated and mastered once the interpreter has internalized the particular aspects of SI and is able to manage them by means of specific strategies. Gile (1995, 1997) distinguishes between preparation strategies and strategies to be applied during the conference. The latter are also called "coping tactics" and there are three kinds: the coping tactics of *comprehension* (delaying the response, reconstructing the segment with the help of the context, using the booth-mate's help), of *prevention* (changing the Ear-Voice Span, segmenting the text, taking notes, changing the order of the elements in an enumeration etc.) and of *reformulation* (replacing a segment with a super-ordinate term or a more general speech segment, explaining or paraphrasing etc.).

Last but not least, a major strategy applied especially during the SI of a language pair which does not permit a linear transposition is *anticipation.* Anticipation can be defined as the interpretation of a natural piece of spoken text before it is completely finished by the speaker, not only due to intra-textual clues but also due to extra-contextual elements connected with the semantic level of the text. According to the model of *probability prediction,* as elaborated by Chernov (1994), the indispensable premise for the interpretation to take place is *redundancy.* In other words, redundancy allows and at the same time implies the predictability of the message, permitting its anticipation.

The above mentioned strategies – often applied in order to master the SI task – cannot be employed in interpreting numerals, as the verbal numerical system is characterized by some intrinsic features which prevent their successful application.

For instance, numerals are characterized by:

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4 This is the listening to the incoming information for a time lapse that is sufficiently long to understand its meaning (Lederer 1982).

- Absence of redundancy – which prevents the application of the anticipation strategy;
- Absence of predictability – which prevents the application of strategies like the reconstruction from the context or again, anticipation;
- Exact content – which requires the numeral to be listened to carefully, thus preventing the application of reformulation strategies;
- Only one meaning – preventing any reformulation;
- Lack of semantic content – requiring literal hearing and thus preventing reconstruction/anticipation.

3.1.3 The role of memory

Numerals are integrated in the linguistic system that they belong to as their meaning strictly depends on their syntactical and lexical formats. This means that the recall of previously stored numbers will be successful only if each single item composing them can be recalled in the correct order as per the original stimulus. The phonological trace of the number is constantly refreshed by so-called subvocal repetition (reproducing the order in which the items have been heard).

Memorizing numbers, especially longer ones, is particularly difficult in the extreme conditions under which SI takes place; the human working memory (WM) has only a limited storage capacity[5] and exceeding its threshold may lead to either a loss of information or wrong recall. Furthermore, the memory span for digits[6] varies according to the language used, since longer numerical expressions in some languages (e.g. Welsh compared to English) require a longer time to be processed, resulting in a reduced digit span (Ellis 1992). A reduced memory span is also usual in "late bilinguals" who have learnt their second language later in life (Brown & Hulme 1992).

During SI the normal reaction time increases and the so-called articulatory suppression, which prevents subvocal repetition, takes place. Limited WM storage capacity is possibly the reason why longer strings of numbers, composed of several elements to be read in different blocks, are the most difficult to retain and thus to translate correctly. In addition, the analysis of large numbers has shown that even on their own they create a considerable load for the WM. As they are composed of several elements and since each element is independent of the others, considerable WM

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5   It has been shown that the average storage capacity is about seven unrelated items (Miller 1956).
6   Several experiments on memory involved memorizing digits, especially as a secondary task, to test capacity during concurrent tasks. The *digit span* can be determined with an experiment in which subjects are presented with lists of digits of increasing length and asked to repeat them. When repetition is accurate 50% of the time, the digit span has been reached (Gran 1997).

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capacity must be allocated to memorize their correct sequence (i.e. a number like 638.146 needs 13 lexical elements to be transcoded in the German phonological verbal code: "*sechs-hundert-acht-und-drei-ßig-tausend-ein-hundert-sechs-und-vier-zig*").

The effect of large numbers on WM is therefore likely to be greater than that of small numbers during cognitive tasks and thus to increase the WM effort, being represented by a long string of items that must all be retained in order to interpret the number correctly.

3.2 Particular causes of low accuracy for numbers in SI

The features described in the previous sections and confirmed by previous studies suggest that numbers are problem triggers in SI. The working hypothesis underlining this study is that apart from the above-mentioned language-independent causes of disruption in the SI of numerals, the performance might also be influenced by some language-dependent factors. These are represented essentially by the different linguistic formulation of numerical structures (e.g. the application of the inversion rule in German, but not in Italian or English) compared to Arabic numbers and the length of the German verbal numerals, which requires a longer processing time.

During SI several cognitive tasks have to be carried out at the same time, requiring a great cognitive effort. An interpreter with little experience, like the participants in this study (student interpreters), or even the more experienced, may therefore make the mistake of following the phonological mapping of the SL in their interpretation into the TL. In the case of SI from German into Italian this can lead to inversion errors or, more generally, to transposition or position errors.

4. The experimental study

4.1 Aims

The present study aims to analyse and draw conclusions upon:
• What difficulties, if any, are encountered by a student interpreter in the SI of a speech dense with numbers, like the one used in this study;
• Whether the results for the two language pairs show similar trends, based on a series of statistical analyses;
• Which class of numbers is more prone to produce errors, as the assumption is that different numeral typologies lead to different kinds of errors;
• Which typology of error is the most common;

- Whether student interpreters prefer to note down numbers in the booth or not – if given a choice – and whether note taking reduces the error rate.

4.2 Subjects

The present experiment was conducted on 16 students attending the SSLMIT[7] in Trieste. All participants were Italian mother tongue speakers and had attended at least two years of interpretation courses at the SSLMIT. All subjects were female,[8] aged between 23 and 28 and right-handed.

The 16 students were divided into two groups, one group consisting of eight students having German as their first foreign language (B-language) and the other one consisting of eight students having English as their B-language.

A fundamental criterion for the selection of the participants was a successful result in the SI exam from their B- into their A- language (i.e. German into Italian for the first group, English into Italian for the second one), as the study text was to be interpreted from German into Italian by the first group and from English into Italian by the second group.

4.3 The experimental text

The ideal text for the study had to be dense with numbers but at the same time it had to be presented in a spoken format in order to simulate real working conditions[9] as much as possible.

The text chosen was an actual speech given by the CEO of a well-known German automobile producer at its 2006 Annual Press Account Conference. The speech was originally in German, but the official translation into English was accessible on the company website – and was proofread by a mother tongue editor. Hence, it was possible to use two perfectly equivalent texts, one in German and one in English, both containing exactly the same amount (61) and type of numbers.

Some preparatory texts were distributed to the participants a few days before the experiment, along with a glossary of the most difficult

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7   Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori.
8   No male subjects were found who satisfied the required selection criterions.
9   It is nevertheless unavoidable that an experimental situation differs from a real life one, as noted in the studies conducted by Alessandrini (1990), Crevatin (1990), Braun and Clarici (1997) and Mazza (2000). The experiment was artificially set up, it did not take place in real working conditions, the participants were students and not professionals, the speech was recorded and not spontaneous.

expressions, in order to allow student interpreters to prepare for the SI – as professional interpreters usually have the chance to prepare themselves for a conference.

The two equivalent study texts were read and recorded by mother tongue speakers in order to give the exact same speech to all subjects of each group. The length of the speech was 8'12" in German and 8'33" in English.

4.4 Methodology

Numbers contained in the texts were classified into five categories according to their size and type:

A. Numbers with 4 or more digits read at once (i.e. 920,000);
B. Numbers with 4 or more digits read in two blocks (i.e. 928,346);
C. Numbers with less than 4 digits;
D. Decimals;
E. Dates.

A categorization of number errors was also set up, partly based on that identified by Braun and Clarici (1997) and partly adapted for this study which, contrary to the previous ones, has a cross-linguistic dimension.

The typologies of number errors identified for this study are:

1) *Omissions*: the numeral is left out altogether or replaced by a generic expression such as *molti, pochi* (many, few), etc.;

2) *Approximations*: although the translation respects the right order of magnitude, it is rounded up or down. The interpreter is usually aware that the SL number was different and accompanies his/her interpretation with a lexical element (e.g. 47,325 being translated as *più di 47.000*, "more than 47,000" or 8.1% being translated as *8% circa*, "about 8%"). However, approximation cannot be considered an error of the same severity as the others, as the message conveyed is not altogether wrong with respect to the stimulus. Several authors do define approximation as a useful strategy or *éscamotage* to overcome translation difficulties, stating that the most important thing is to convey at least the right order of magnitude. For the purposes of this study, it was therefore decided that if a number was affected by two different mistakes (for example approximation *and* lexical error) it would be categorized by the error type which would most change the original communicative intention.

3) *Lexical errors*: the order of magnitude of the stimulus is maintained, but one or more number-words within the numeral have been misinterpreted (e.g. 277,000 translated to 276,000, or 2004 translated to 2005).

4) *Syntactical errors*: the number is of a wrong order of magnitude even if possibly containing the right figures in their correct sequential order (e.g. 300 being translated as 300,000, 150,000 translated to 1,500 or 47,000 to 47%).

5) *Errors of phonemic perception*: the error can be related to a phonemically wrong perception of the *stimulus* in cases of similar sounding linguistic features (e.g. 17, "seventeen", perceived as 70, "seventy").

6) *Errors of transposition (of the digits) or position errors*: the wrong assembly of the figures composing the number, which are correctly selected but misplaced. This includes on the one hand the classical inversion errors typical of the German-Italian language pair with its different numerical structures, but on the other hand it also includes all position errors, possible in English as well, which are not directly attributable to the numerical system structure. The extension of the typical category of inversion errors (identified also by Braun and Clarici in their study, 1997) to a broader error category, which could count for such mistakes made in English too, was chosen because of the comparative character of this study. In order to carry out the statistical analysis on the final data it was necessary to make use of error categories applicable to both languages; in some cases the substitution of a digit could not be classified as a simple lexical or inversion error but rather as a transposition or position error, as shown in the following example:
7.6% → 6.7%
8.1% → 1.8%
528,015 → 285,000.

7) *Other mistakes*: this category includes all other mistakes not belonging to any of the previous types and whose causes are often not apparent. These errors are kept apart and form a rather miscellaneous group (e.g. 528,015 translated with 270,000 or 22.4% with 3.5%).

4.5 Procedures

The experiment took place on two consecutive days at the SSLMIT in Trieste. The two experimental texts had been read and recorded by two mother tongue lectors with a digital double track recorder (DAT) SONY TCD-D7 while a person sitting next to them monitored the speech speed. Every subject was given a piece of paper and a pen and was free to decide whether to take notes while interpreting.

   After the SI each subject was asked to hand in the piece of paper if notes had been taken and to fill in a questionnaire about his/her perception of the source text and his/her performance.

   At the end of the trials the material was collected and the transcription phase of the 16 interpretations begun, according to the methodology

10 In order to maintain consistency with all experimental studies carried out at the SSLMIT.

established by the *"Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio, dell'Interpretazione e della Traduzione"* of the University of Trieste.[10]

4.6 Statistical analyses

4.6.1 Hypothesis testing

In order to establish how relevant *the language factor* in the SI of a speech dense with numbers is, two mutually exclusive hypotheses were formulated. The first hypothesis – H0 – argues that the language factor is relevant in the SI of a speech dense with numbers and the second one – HA – argues that the difference is not significant.

To verify which of the two hypotheses should be rejected, the unpaired Student's t-test for independent samples (C.I. 95%) was carried out, being one of the most commonly used techniques for testing a hypothesis on the basis of a difference between sample means.

In this study it was used to:

• verify which hypothesis between H0 and HA can be rejected;
• analyse if there are significant differences between the results obtained for the German Text (GT) and for the English Text (ET) concerning the general proportion of errors in each numeral category;
• analyse if there are significant differences among the results obtained for GT and ET concerning the trend of the different typologies of mistakes made.

A further statistical parameter – correlation – was used in order to analyse the positive or negative correspondence between note taking and the performance.

5. Results

5.1 General performance in GT and ET

At the end of the trials, all wrongly interpreted numerals were counted to assess the subjects' performance.

From an initial analysis, it was striking that not one of the study subjects interpreted 100% of the numerals correctly. The error score on the total amount of numbers in the texts corresponded to 40.6% (mean value: 24.8) in the GT and 41.2% (mean value: 25.1) in the ET. These figures were considerably high and in order to verify if their difference was statistically significant, the Student's t-test was conducted on the mean values, with the following outcome:

[Stat $t = -0.156$; $df = 14$; $p = 0.87$].

The resulting p> 0.05 indicates that the difference is *not* significant. From this first overview, the H0 hypothesis, according to which the language factor is relevant in the SI of a speech dense with numbers, can be rejected in favor of HA.

However, the comparison between the general performances in the two texts indicates only a general trend. For this study, different numeral categories and different error typologies have been taken into account as well as whether a detailed analysis of these factors could lead to a partial re-evaluation of the first results obtained.

5.2 Errors and numeral classes

As pointed out previously, the error score was 40.6% for the GT and 41.2% for the ET. These total error scores affected the five numeral categories to varying extents. For each category, the mean score of the errors was calculated to determine which numeral category was most prone to errors. The results are illustrated in figure 3 below.
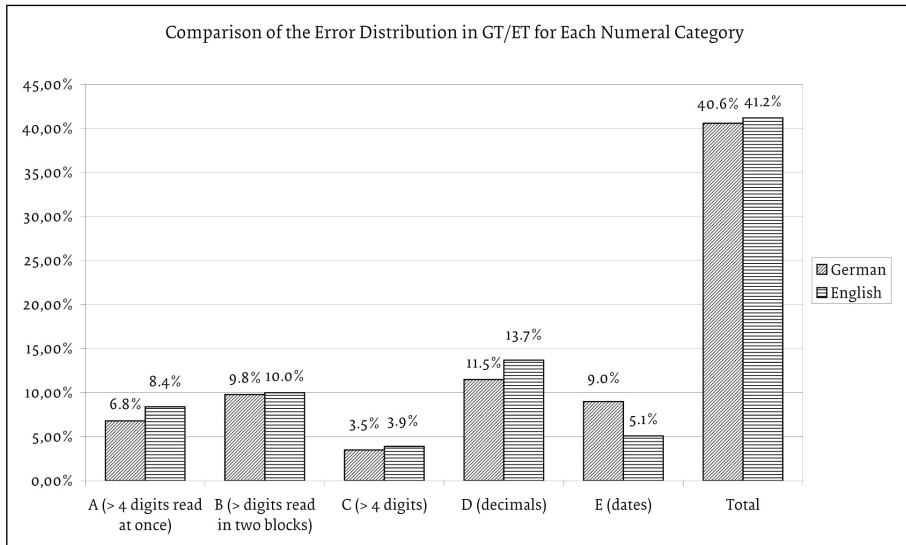

Figure 3.

From an initial analysis, most mistakes involved the numeral classes D (decimals) (11.5% of the total mistakes made in GT and 13.7% in ET) and B (numbers with 4 or more digits read in two blocks) (9.8% in GT and 10% in ET), while the most accurately interpreted class turned out to be C (numbers with less than 4 digits) (3.5% and 3.9% in GT and ET respectively). Category A (numbers with 4 or more digits read at once) showed a higher error score in ET than in GT (8.4% vs. 6.8%) thereby becoming the third most difficult category to interpret after D and B, showing a slightly higher, though not significant, difference between the two languages.

This parallelism was only interrupted by the results obtained for category E (dates) where errors made in GT exceeded those made in ET. The dates of the study text often referred to the current year of business and were therefore repetitive and redundant. This feature required a different processing modality, which might have led to some different strategic choices and hence results.

The above described trend was confirmed by the Student's t-test:

Category	Stat t	df	P		Outcome
A (whole ≥ 4 digit 1 block)	-0.984	14	0.34	(p > 0.05)	Difference is not significant
B (whole ≥ 4 digits 2 blocks)	-0,260	12	0.79	(p > 0.05)	Difference is not significant
C (< 4 digits)	-0.361	14	0.72	(p > 0.05)	Difference is not significant
D (decimals)	-0.955	14	0.35	(p > 0.05)	Difference is not significant
E (dates)	2.850	14	0.01	(p < 0.05)	*Difference is significant*

While figure 3 shows the major differences or similarities given the same conditions, representing the objective distribution of the total errors made among the numeral categories, figure 4 examines the error score in relation to the number of items in each category, showing clearly which categories are more susceptible to mistakes:
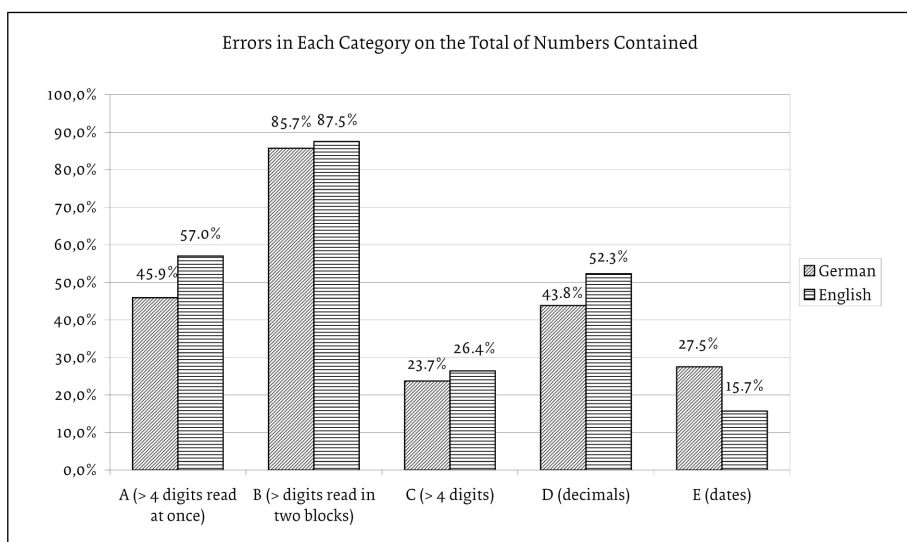

Figure 4.

Class B (numbers with 4 or more digits read in two blocks) proved to be the least accurately interpreted category (85.7% in GT, 87.5% in ET). Category A (numbers with 4 or more digits read at once) was misinterpreted in approximately half the cases (57% in ET and 45.9% in GT), followed by D (decimals, 52.3% in ET and 43.8% in GT); C (numerals with less than 4 digits) and E (dates) were interpreted more accurately.

5.3 Error typologies

The total error scores (40.6% in GT and 41.2% in ET) were made up of different types of errors; figure 5 summarizes their occurrence in the two texts:
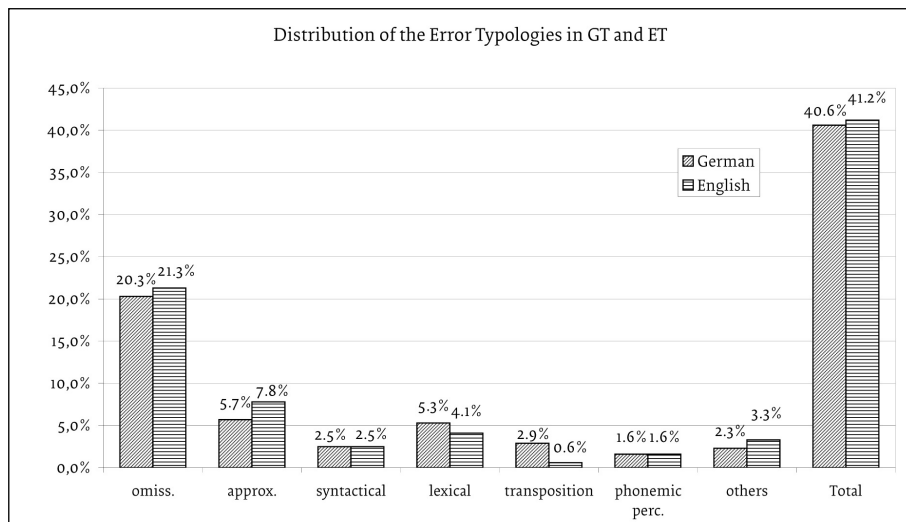

Figure 5.

Some error typologies – particularly omissions – showed a very high error percentage (20.3% in GT and 21.3% in ET of the total amount of errors made). The other error typologies were distributed quite uniformly: they ranged from 7.8% (approximations in ET) to 0.6% (errors of transposition, again in ET). This suggests that the numerals contained in the study texts were affected by different error typologies and that the underlying causes were different.

To allow a clearer and direct comparison between GT and ET, the breakdown of the different error typologies was calculated on the total number of errors made, as shown in figures 6 and 7 (breakdown per language) and in figure 8 (comparison between German and English):
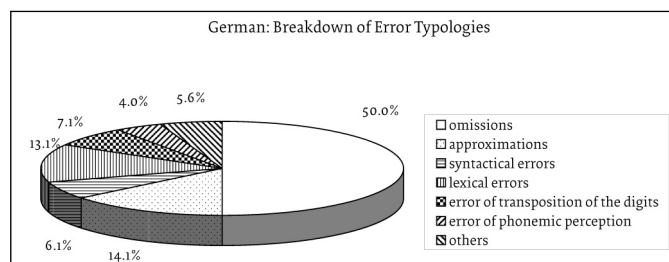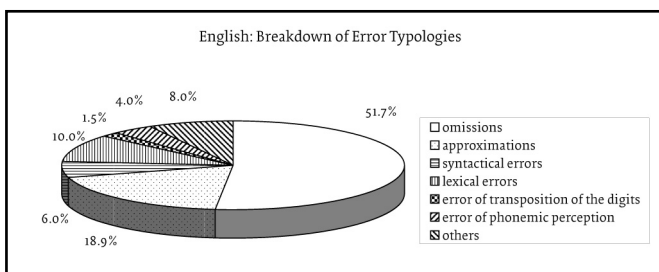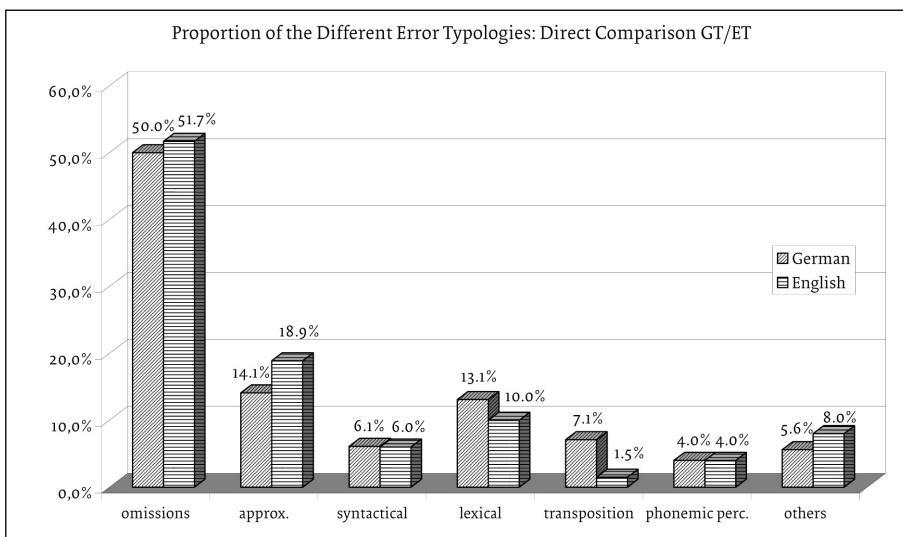

Figure 6.

Figure 7.

Figure 8.

Omission was the most common mistake in both texts (50% in GT and 51.7% in ET of the total errors made). Approximations were also fairly frequent, but slightly higher in ET (18.9% vs. 14.1%), whereas the transposition errors were rather higher in GT (7.1% vs. 1.5% in ET). Lexical and syntactical errors, those of phonemic perception and other mistakes followed a homogeneous trend, with a slight prevalence of lexical errors in GT (13.1% vs. 10%) and of other errors in ET (8% vs. 5.6%).

These results were verified through the Student's t-test:

Error Typology	Stat t	Df	P		Outcome
Omission	-0.290	13	0.77	p> 0.05	Difference is not significant
Approximation	-1.091	13	0.29	p> 0.05	Difference is not significant
Syntactical	0	14	1	p> 0.05	Difference is not significant
Lexical	1.287	14	0.21	p> 0.05	Difference is not significant
Transposition	2.33	8	0.04	p< 0.05	*Difference is significant*
Phonemic Perc.	0	7	1	p> 0.05	Difference is not significant
Others	-0.828	14	0.42	p> 0.05	Difference is not significant

The results obtained through the Student's t-test confirmed that the only significant difference between the two texts as far as error typologies were concerned was represented by the errors of transposition (or position errors). These included all the cases in which the error consisted of a wrong assembly of digits within the number, including all inversion errors in the classical sense – i.e. the inversion of teens and units. The proportion of inversion errors in the transposition category led to the higher incidence of transposition errors in German compared to English. For instance, in the latter language such errors were determined not by internal factors, but by external ones, such as a sort of echo effect on the numeral itself.

6. Note taking

In this study the participants had the choice of taking notes during the SI if they so wished. The only condition was that they had to hand in the papers if they wrote down notes, so that they would be analysed in order to establish whether note taking was a valid support in the SI of numbers or if the inaccuracy in numbers could be attributed to that very action.

Only one participant chose not to take any notes (SI from German into Italian).

The first analysis consisted of counting how many numbers were noted down, how many of them were written down correctly, and the correspondence between note taking and performance.
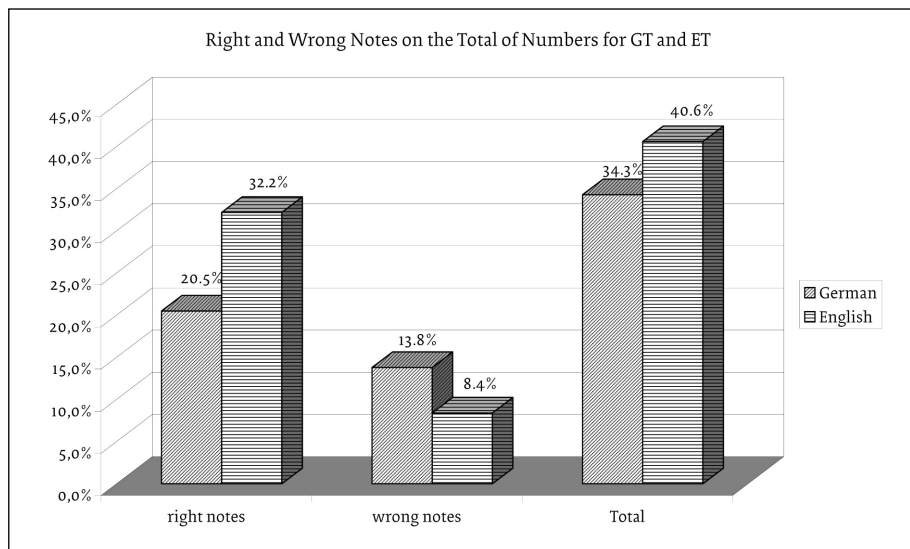

Figure 9.

Figure 9 shows that more notes were taken in the SI from German into Italian than from English to Italian (40.6% against 34.3%). This could be ascribed to the awareness of the interpreters from German regarding the different structures of the numerical systems. The GT group, conscious of the intrinsic inversion difficulty, made recourse more often to paper support than the ET group by means of Arabic notation. The mental application of the inversion rule would be more energy consuming, especially for subjects who did not learn German as their mother tongue. This difficulty, already apparent in a normal communicative situation, becomes more crucial in SI, which takes place under time constraints not normally present. The widespread use of note taking is understandable: writing the numbers down can help the interpreter feel more confident and able to avoid the mistake of following the phonological mapping of the stimulus, as first the units are written down and then the teens.[11] Afterwards, it can be read out more effortlessly at the moment of reproducing the numeral in the target language.

German notes were more prevalent and generally more correct than English notes. This is possibly due to the fact that interpreters working from German are more used to taking notes, as a more or less automatic operation, being aware of the internal structural difficulty. This was not always the case in English, where the difficulty may be perceived as something "external", thus leading to poorer application of prevention tactics (and to less practice in them, determining more errors). Only two participants in the group interpreting from English into Italian had German in their linguistic combination, which may be relevant.

The breakdown of the wrong and right notes taken is summarized as below (figures 10 and 11):
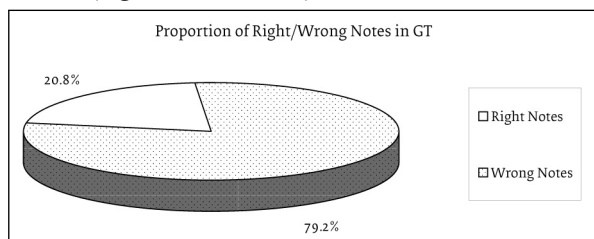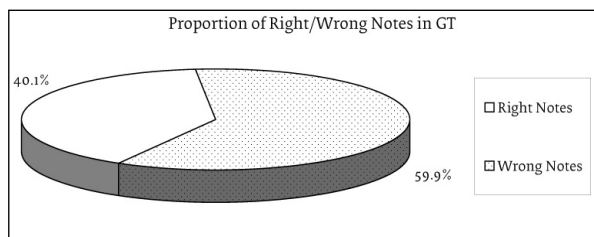

Figure 10

Figure 11

11 As stated by almost all the students in the questionnaire given at the end of the trial.

As so many notes were taken, it was felt necessary to analyse whether they turned out to be a valid support to the SI of a speech dense with numbers.

Of the total notes taken in GT, 71.2% were right leading to correct interpretation, 8.1% right leading to wrong interpretation, 19.7% wrong leading to wrong interpretation and 1% wrong notes leading to correct interpretation.

In ET the proportion was slightly different: of the total notes taken, 56.9% were right leading to correct interpretation, 3% right leading to wrong interpretation, 39.5% wrong leading to wrong interpretation and 0.6% wrong leading to a right interpretation.

There was a general linearity among the results; if a number was correctly noted, it was often interpreted correctly and vice-versa. This was also confirmed by the analysis of the correlation between notes and performance:

The coefficient *r* of correlation for the two texts was:

GT   +0.76
ET   +0.89

The two values were close to +1: this means that the variables "notes and performance" were positively correlated, so when one increases, the other one does the same. The slightly lower value obtained in GT is due to the fact that in 8.1% of cases right notes led to a wrong interpretation.

Subjects tended not to manage complex numbers well, such as those belonging to category B (numbers with 4 or more digits read in two blocks), which were presumably perceived as structurally too complicated even to write down (only 31% of the total amount of numbers present in that category in GT and 33.4% in ET were noted down). A and D were the categories most frequently noted down (A: 57% in GT and 63.8% in ET and D: 60.1% in GT and 51.6% in ET) as they are quite complex to retain in memory but quite easy to represent with the Arabic code (requiring just a few digits). C and E were the categories least noted down: C (less than 4 digits), as they are very short and thus easier to remember (47.2% of the total amount in GT and 29.1% in ET) and E (dates) as they are perhaps the simplest to interpret, requiring a different processing modality (13.1% in GT and just 4.3% in ET). The dates category is presumably the only one that can be "visualized" and associated to a semantic meaning, which makes retention simpler than in the others, where interpreters have to rely only on phonological clues.

7. Discussion

The results suggest a fairly homogeneous trend for the two language pairs analysed, but at the same time also show some differences. The most obvious similarities are the results concerning the omissions, which

turned out to be the most common mistake in both texts, followed by approximations, and the results concerning category B (numbers with 4 or more digits read in two blocks), which got the highest error score. As expected, the major difference occurred in the error category "transposition of the digits" or "position errors", which were much more prevalent in German than in English.

In terms of the high error score for omissions, reference can be made to attention factors. When a numeral is inserted into a text it is necessary to adopt a different strategy in order to comprehend and translate it successfully. For this reason, two different kinds of memory have to be concurrently activated: the semantic one for the text and the literal one for the numerals. The effort required to accomplish this operation can lead to an overflow and thereby loss of information (omission). There are two types of omissions: deliberate omission, i.e. when the interpreter decides deliberately to omit a problematic part of a textual segment, and omissions due to the exhaustion of the cognitive resources allocated for the listening and analysis phase.

Finally, this result is in line with the previous studies, where omissions also proved to be the most common error.

The category which showed the highest error score in relation to the number of items it included was category B (numbers with 4 or more digits read in two blocks), which could well be due to the word-length-effect on WM. Longer words are more difficult to retain after a brief exposure to information and the memory span decreases when the words to recall are long. Moreover, sub-vocal repetition, intended to refresh the mnemonic trace, does not take place in SI because of articulatory suppression. This could account for the high error score found in numbers belonging to category B, the longest and the most difficult to retain. Deloche and Seron (1982: 125) also proved that errors increase according to the length of the numeral, stating that *the error rate increases continuously as a function of the number of words in the numeral. A purely quantitative analysis thus indicates that the length of the numeral is a pertinent difficulty factor.*

Concerning the word-length-effect on SI, Ellis (1992) stated that the time necessary to utter a numerical expression influences the ability, even of a native speaker, correctly to recall the number and that the memory span thus further decreases when numbers are expressed in a language whose verbal codification requires more time. The results of this study, however, diverge slightly from this conclusion. A number expressed in the German verbal phonological code requires more time to be articulated than the same expression uttered in English, as it is composed of more or longer syllables. However, in this study, large numbers were affected more or less by the same error score in both languages. The word-length-effect on SI was therefore significant when dealing with B category (numbers with 4

or more digits read in two blocks) compared to C (numbers with less than 4 digits), but not from a cross-linguistic point of view.

The prevalence of transposition errors in German can primarily be ascribed to the incidence of classical inversion errors in this category. It can be assumed that the inversion of numerical expressions causes a higher degree of difficulty in their transcoding as far as non-native speakers are concerned. For instance, it is harder to acquire the habit of codifying a number system that does not follow the decreasing ordering of magnitude present in the numbers (...tens, teens, units – which is the case in German) on the basis of a linear system already acquired (which is the case in Italian mother tongue speakers), as this means changing from linearity to non-linearity.

8. Final remarks

8.1 About the methodology: innovations of the present study

The present experiment was especially set up to investigate the differences and similarities of a SI in the context of a speech dense with numbers from German into Italian and of the same speech from English into Italian.

The methodology adopted showed some innovations compared to previous studies as a *cross-linguistic* analysis with categorization of numbers and error typologies was previously untried.

The classification of the number categories used stemmed largely from an empirical observation: if it was true that big numbers caused more problems in SI, it was necessary to further specify what "big numbers" meant: for instance, there are numbers that need five digits to be represented in the Arabic code, but contain many more lexical elements to be transcoded into the phonological code, and other numbers which also require five digits in the Arabic code but fewer lexical elements (i.e. 39,000 and 39,754: they are both represented by five digits in the Arabic code but the first one requires five lexical elements to be transcribed in the German verbal phonological code – "neun-und-drei-ßig-tausend" – and four lexical elements in the English one – "thir-ty-nine-thousand" –, whereas the second number requires eleven lexical elements in the German verbal code – "neun-und-drei-ßig-tausend-sieben-hundert-vier-und-fünf-zig" – and ten in the English one – "thir-ty-nine-thousand-seven-hundred-and-fif-ty-five"). This aspect could not be neglected when setting up the number categorization which led to the distinction made between categories A (4 or more digits read at once) and B (4 or more digits read in two blocks) – with reference to the pause in correspondence to the multiplicator "thousand", which for the first numeral indicates its end and for the second one indicates the beginning of a new functional unit.

Concerning the classification of error typologies, a special category was set up for this study: that of "transposition of the digits", or "position errors". This stemmed from the cross-linguistic dimension of the present study and from the observation of errors which could not be categorized either as lexical errors or classical inversion errors.

Finally, the study participants could freely choose whether or not to take notes when interpreting simultaneously. However, the general degree of inaccuracy for numbers is rather similar to other studies where this was partially forbidden in some trials, suggesting that there are no specific strategies that can ensure a definitive solution of the problem.

8.2 Conclusions

Data collected from the experiment suggest that inaccuracy for numbers by student interpreters was rather high both in the SI from German into Italian (40.6%) and in the SI from English into Italian (41.2%). This confirms the theory that numbers are disruptive elements in SI. The Student's t-test conducted on these values stated that the difference was not significant and that the difficulty is *language-independent*. The hypothesis according to which the *language factor* is relevant can so far be rejected.

However, starting from similar conditions, the breakdown of the error typologies did represent a main difference in the results and this led to a partial re-evaluation of the outcomes.

The significance of the Student's t-test as far as the errors of transposition of the digits in German were concerned represented the most significant aspect. This result was counterbalanced by the preponderance of other types of errors in English, most of all by approximations, which seemed to be due to external causes. As pointed out previously, however, approximation errors in English did not represent a severe mistake, at least not from a semantic point of view – unlike transposition errors, which were much less significant for the English-Italian language pair.

Several patterns were accounted for by external factors: factors linked to the particular textual nature, clusters of numerals in certain parts of the text and so on. In German, apart from these aspects, there was an additional hurdle represented by the intrinsic internal difficulty posed by the inverted numerical system, which required even greater concentration.

Given all the conditions described in the previous paragraphs, the study has hopefully contributed to shedding light on this particular aspect of SI, which is still under debate and rather controversial.

The degree of accuracy for numerals was quite low; there does not seem to be any real solution to this problem, apart from practical expedients

such as note taking and the help of the booth mate. Perhaps the problem should be solved at the origin and, as Pearl suggests:

> [...] speakers would be well advised before using figures to reflect on whether their point could just as well be made by giving an order of magnitude, such as: 'much', 'little', 'few', 'a tremendous amount', 'sufficient' etc. (1999: 21).

In addition, specific training in this kind of text typology could help coping with the problem: as Baddeley (1990) says, "practice makes perfect!"

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Interpreter Mediated Medical Encounters in North Italy: Expectations, Perceptions and Practice

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate expectations and perceptions regarding the figures who mediate between healthcare personnel and foreign patients in Italy. The objective is to explore the distinction – seemingly unique to Italy – between the two terms "interpreter" and "mediator" and the reasons behind this separation. Healthcare providers and interpreters/mediators were questioned about their respective opinions through questionnaires and interviews. Both categories worked in local health units of a Northern Italian region, predominantly in the Emergency Departments. Special attention was paid to the following aspects: interpreter/mediator's roles and tasks, invisibility versus active participation and the use of personal pronouns and indirect speech. In order to examine the level of consistency between perceptions and practice on these topics, 26 mediated encounters were observed according to prearranged parameters. These consultations involved the same subjects who had previously participated in the questionnaires. Four sessions, which proved to be particularly relevant for the purposes of this research, were subsequently transcribed and examined from a qualitative point of view. The method of the case study, herein adopted, allowed for the analysis of the subjects' behaviour from different points of view, in line with the overall objective of providing a holistic view of the themes investigated. Drawing on Inghilleri's suggestion of "interpreting" as a "zone of uncertainty" (2005), the paper also refers, in particular, to Leanza's new typology of roles (2007),

to Davies & Harré's theory of positioning (1990) and to Bot's description of reported speech (2007).

1. Introduction

The need for professionals to enable interlinguistic and intercultural communication is increasingly being felt in medical settings today, as the presence of foreign patients is on the rise. This is not always provided for, however, by national health policies, with the exception of numerous Northern European countries and almost all English-speaking countries, such as Australia.

  In the last twenty years, studies on interpreting have consequently paid increasing attention to medical settings as one facet of a new and attractive field of research, known as Community Interpreting,[1] and much has already been written on the identity and tasks of the community interpreter. What all the studies have in common, notwithstanding the country to which reference is made, is the frequent lack of terminological and deontological clarity. The expressions "community interpreting" and "public service interpreting" – together with their hyponyms "medical/healthcare/health interpreting" – are more frequently used abroad to denote the interpreting mode herein examined. In Italy, where research in this field is rather recent, two phrases seem to coexist to designate the same mode, namely "interpreting in the social field" and "linguistic-cultural mediation" (Merlini 2009: 58). Furthermore, the term "mediator" is often coupled with such adjectives as "linguistic", "cultural", "intercultural", "social", "socio-cultural",[2] which indicate that greater attention is paid to either the linguistic or the cultural aspect.

  This paper attempts to detect the "lowest common denominator" among the numerous definitions and explain, insofar as is possible, the reason for such uncertainty and confusion. The distinction between the term "interpreter" and "mediator", which seems to be unique to Italy, has hence intentionally been reproduced throughout the paper by constantly repeating the two terms. The study, which draws on the author's MA thesis, investigates how the role of community interpreters in a medical setting is perceived and understood in Italy by healthcare personnel, with the aim of comparing their expectations and needs with the opinions of community interpreters who work in the field. The results are then analysed with reference to interpreting practices, to highlight possible similarities and/or differences between interpreters and mediators, which may account for the above-mentioned distinction.

1   The term was introduced at the First International Conference on Interpreting in Legal, Health and Social Service Settings which was held in 1995.
2   Bochner (1981) was the first to suggest the term "mediator".

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The starting point for the present investigation is Inghilleri's suggestion of the interpreting profession in public services as a "zone of uncertainty" and the ensuing vulnerability of the interpreter's status (2005: 69, 72). The author draws on Bourdieu (2000), who describes these "zones of uncertainty" as "contradictory and potentially liberatory spaces within a social structure", which may cause conflicting world views and thus upset the relevant *habitus* – the way in which we build objective reality and evaluate the external world through our participation in well-structured social practices. The lack of a clear definition for the public service interpreter is thus explained to a certain extent and justifies the relentless research of those who work in this sector for a better definition of their own identity as against other professions and as against other interpreting modes.

2. Who is the interpreter and who is the mediator?

Without dwelling on the terminological debate, it should be highlighted that this paper proceeds from Roberts' definition of community interpreting[3] (1997: 8) and its three subcategories of medical, legal and public service interpreting. As Pöchhacker observed (1997), each country seems to have a different understanding of the community interpreter's identity, which is reflected in the way they define role, scope and professional status. The difficulty in the emergence of a distinct professional profile and the over-abundance of terms defining this profession,[4] according to Pöchhacker, may be due to the lack of international consensus (Chesher *et al.* 2003: 275). In Italy, the scene seems to be even more complex owing to the presence of numerous calques from English (Mack 2005: 7, Rudvin 2005: 31) and to the addition of terms referring to the mediation field.

The question which must then be explored is the following: according to researchers and to those who work in the field, who is the interpreter and consequently who is the mediator? The main objective is to find out the reason for the attitudes of other countries – and their underlying tenets – compared to Italy. Several authors argue that the community interpreter is, by definition, a mediator as well (Wadensjö 1998: 6-7) and "cultural brokering" is among the factors which distinguish community interpreting from other interpreting modes (Roberts 1997: 12). Mediation is therefore seen as a function of community interpreting and, more specifically, of interpreting in medical settings (Bochner 1981) or as one of the roles which

3   The expression will be used hereafter as a hyperonym referring to both interpreters and mediators.
4   For an exploration of the terms most frequently in use in this field, see Riccardi (2001: 82-84), Napolitano (2005: 28-29) and Mack (2005: 3-10).

the interpreter is called upon to perform (Weiss & Stuker 1999: 258). This ability should also be desired in the attempt to deliver a better performance (Meyer *et al.* 2003: 78). Interestingly, the two concepts are frequently associated by researchers, who use expressions such as "interpreter-mediated interaction" and "interpreter's mediation" (Wadensjö 1998: 62) – hence the choice of the title (interpreter-mediated medical encounters).

In Italy, on the contrary, there appear to be two different figures who are entrusted with the task of interpreting in medical settings, as confirmed by the figure described in the healthcare structures of a Northern Italian region: if the local health units in the seaside resorts of Jesolo and Caorle and in Portogruaro make explicit reference to the profile of "administrative assistant-interpreter", the hospitals of Bussolengo (Verona), Feltre (Belluno), Mestre (Venice), Montebelluna (Treviso), Montecchio (Vicenza) and Padua, just to mention a few examples, have introduced a mediation service aimed at foreign users who are not familiar with, or fluent in Italian. The distinguishing feature does not seem to be the role performed, but rather their ethnic belonging to a minority culture and a migrant community (Favaro 2001, Belpiede 2002). Italian policy-makers have not been able to provide a better and clearer definition of who the mediator is at either national or regional level (Mack 2005: 8-9, Belpiede 2008). This contributes to the coexistence of the terms "interpreter" and "mediator" to designate the profile of those who work in medical settings. One may therefore question the reason for this peculiarity which is not to be found anywhere else.

2.1 Community interpreter users: immigrants and tourists

At the first international conference on community interpreting, its recipients were described as "those who are not fluent speakers of the official language of the country" (Roberts 1997: 11). According to Pöchhacker (2007: 37), it is an accurate definition, since it includes tourists and business professionals. This argument holds true for medical interpreting too, as a subcategory of community interpreting: reference is then made to all foreigners who do not have full command of the official language spoken in one country, regardless of their nationality or the reason for their presence there.

Numerous authors, however, tend to associate this interpreting mode with migrant users. The hallmark of community interpreting, according to Collard-Abbas (1989: 81), resides in its goal to assist immigrants who are not native speakers and to help them have equal and full access to the services provided by law. Gentile *et al.* (1996: 9) maintain that liaison interpreting – and consequently medical interpreting – traces its origin back to the first migration flows. Riccardi (2001: 83) and Martinsen (2002:

257) are of the same view when they identify immigrants as the main users of this form of interpreting, while Tomassini (2005: 116) highlights that it was immigration which brought about the problem in Italy of ensuring full access to services for all those who could not speak Italian fluently. This gave birth to a new profile, i.e. "the social interpreter" or "linguistic-cultural mediator" in the healthcare system. Lack of recognition and the lower status of community interpreting – if compared to conference interpreting – are hence ascribed to the origin of its users and seem to explain the great confusion which reigns in this field, with regard to role and identity and which does a disservice to the emergence of a well-defined profession. When reference is made to the "mediator", the same position may easily be found: according to Dallari *et al.* (2005: 190), the main function of mediators consists in facilitating migrants' access to social and health services.[5]

The weak position of social interpreting, however, which allows for non-professionals – relatives, friends or nurses – to be employed as community interpreters, could become an opportunity to enable those who work in the field to define a role which corresponds to their true identity and thus assert "who they are" and not "who they must be" (Bourdieu 2000, cited in Inghilleri 2005: 82).

2.2 Roles and tasks of medical interpreters: recent studies and new approaches

The need to overcome the discrepancy between the abstract and real roles of community interpreters (Pöchhacker 2007: 243) has led to numerous empirical studies, especially in Northern European and American countries. These studies aim to identify a common frame of practice and compare interpreting theories with perceptions and feelings of those who work in the field, including healthcare personnel.

In the course of time, following the increasing attention devoted to medical interpreting as one of the main branches of community interpreting, three approaches may be distinguished, ensuing from the application of new linguistic discoveries to the interpreting field. The first approach stems from *conversation analysis* (Drew & Heritage 1992) and examines discourse organisation and asymmetries in mediated encounters (Wadensjö 1998, Roy 2000, Bot 2007, Merlini & Favaron 2007), whereas the second gathers studies on *discourse analysis* (Mason 2005). More recently, researchers have focused on the interactional role of interpreters, closely tied to pre-determined normative models and to constant realignments of the subjects during interaction (Inghilleri 2005, Merlini 2009: 62).

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5   For a detailed list of authors who take a similar stand, see Allaoui (2005: 44).

The role of medical interpreters has consequently been examined on a regular basis through different research methods. Pöchhacker (2002) offers a comparative description of the most relevant studies carried out up to the 1990s, according to the method of research they implemented – surveys, experiments, corpus-based analyses and case studies.

More recent studies, following the same methodological patterns, have resorted to questionnaires (Pöchhacker 2000, Angelelli 2003, Chesher *et al.* 2003, Creeze 2003, Tomassini 2005) or interviews (Bot 2003, Allaoui 2005), or have analysed recordings of mediated encounters (Bot 2003, Meyer *et al.* 2003, Meyer 2004, Bot 2007, Dubslaff & Martinsen 2007, Merlini & Favaron 2007, Valero Garcés 2007). On certain occasions, an integrated analysis has been carried out and questionnaires or interviews have been compared to "real" practices (Bot 2003, 2007, Leanza 2007). Other authors have favoured an illustrative point of view, as has Dallari *et al.* (2005), who described the interpreting practices in the local public services of an Italian region.

Each study contributes to a deeper understanding of medical interpreting by exploring one of its features – the interpreter's role (Leanza 2007, Pöchhacker 2007), degree of visibility (Angelelli 2003), impartiality (Valero Garcés 2007) and use of personal pronouns and indirect speech (Bot 2007, Dubslaff & Martinsen 2007), their knowledge and command of medical terminology (Meyer 2004) and their positioning and alignment, which are reflected in the privileged pattern of turn-taking and topic control (Merlini & Favaron 2007). Expectations and opinions of healthcare personnel and/or interpreters outline an interesting profile with regard to interpreters' main tasks, qualities and responsibilities (Allaoui 2005, Tomassini 2005) and stress the importance of ethics and personal attitudes to work in this sector (Chesher *et al.* 2003). The same approach has led Creeze (2003) to the conclusion that cultural differences – one of the main obstacles to smooth communication – are responsible for a different understanding of the concept of health and disease and consequently determine diverging expectations in users and medical personnel. Expectations also proved to act as a tool to investigate whether the interpreter's profile is deemed – by the health services of Bologna – more or less suitable than the mediator to satisfy their needs (Dallari *et al.* 2005).

With the view to carrying out an integrated analysis and exploring the behaviour of the same subjects from different perspectives, the research herein presented is based on the methodological approach of the "case study", which Pöchhacker (2002: 105) recommends, since it combines different techniques of analysis – surveys (questionnaires or interviews), participant observation, study of text corpora and document analysis. A holistic view and a wider perspective of the subject are thus achieved, if compared to all the other methods when taken individually.

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3. The theoretical framework: positioning, zones of uncertainty and roles

The comparison between expectations and opinions on the one hand and real practices on the other hand draws on the theory of discourse analysis in terms of identity and "positioning". The latter concept was first introduced by Davies & Harré (1990: 48) and is the reference point for this study: whenever people speak, they tell – more or less explicitly – one or more personal stories and by doing so they position themselves (reflexive positioning) and the others (interactive positioning) and make sense of their world experience. From this point of view, discourse is seen as a multi-faceted process through which meanings are dynamically and gradually shaped.

Positioning is more flexible than the concept of role, since it implies the joint participation of all interlocutors in the creation of identities, which are deeply linked to the position taken by each participant during the conversation. Positions themselves may vary in the course of the same interaction and may sometimes be in contrast with "dispositions" (Inghilleri 2005: 70), which is the case when reality and expectations differ, for example. This holds true especially for ill-defined professions, whose fields are rather uncertain with regard to the position occupied by interlocutors in the social space. The *habitus* – the way objective reality is built – may, as a result, be destabilised, which calls for an intervention to define or redefine one's own social position. Only occasionally do significant social transformations occur, which subvert the existing order, whereas the overall tendency is towards re-establishing the previously existing social/interactional stability (Inghilleri 2005: 71-72).

Interpreting falls within the category of ill-defined professions: representatives of well-established professions (in this case doctors) tend to project their own perceptions of reality onto interpreters (Inghilleri 2005: 73). As a result, completely different expectations and opinions coexist on the identity of the interpreter/mediator – especially in medical settings – and the tasks they are called upon to perform:

> Interpreters must respond to numerous and sometimes contradictory expectations, and everyone, including the interpreter, has his or her own idea of what an ideal interpreter should be. (Chesher *et al.* 2003: 274)

The uncertain position and the ensuing contradictions which characterise interpreting, however, may favour a re-definition of practice and professional profile, for interlocutors to be positioned within new patterns established by the interpreters themselves. This requires a direct observation of mediated encounters and an investigation of the linguistic behaviour and role of interpreters/mediators in real cases. Inghilleri's suggestion about defining interpretation as "a pedagogic discourse" (2005:

72) is therefore legitimated, as is the choice of this paper to adopt the research method known as "case study" (Pöchhacker 2002: 105).

The identities projected while speaking reveal the role played by interlocutors in that precise moment. Despite being rather static in comparison to "positioning", the concept of "role" is useful to examine the interpreter/mediator's position from their point of view and from that of healthcare personnel. Among the numerous studies carried out on the topic, this paper draws on the new role typology advanced by Leanza (2007: 11-34) as an integration of Jalbert's taxonomy (1998, quoted in Leanza 2007: 13-14), since it offers the advantage of not contrasting interpretation and mediation. According to Leanza, the roles perceived by doctors, interpreters and patients are an indication of the interactional process at stake.

The five categories identified by Jalbert[6] are *translator, cultural informant, culture broker/cultural mediator, advocate* and *bilingual professional*. These correspond to a gradual increase in the interpreter/mediator's active participation and solidarity with either the user or the institution. The five categories are resumed and expanded by adding four new roles: *active translator, monolingual professional, welcomer* and *family supporter*. The reason for this integration is explained by Leanza with the need to account for interpersonal factors, such as the relation between doctors and interpreters, and for a more complex reality where roles may frequently intertwine and overlap and where participants' expectations may not always coincide. Observation of mediated encounters reveal that the presence of interpreters tends to maintain the asymmetry between healthcare providers and patients.

Without dwelling on Leanza's definition of each role, it should only be underlined that they indicate a more or less active position of interpreters and their preferred alignment with either patients or medical/nursing staff. Leanza goes even further in proposing a new organisation of the above mentioned roles, according to how cultural differences are tackled by the community interpreter, who may act as:

1. A *system agent*, when she[7] is aligned with the institution (*monolingual* and *bilingual professional*);
2. A *community agent*, when cultural differences are recognised as having equal importance (*cultural informant, culture broker* and *advocate*);
3. An *integration agent*, when migrants are assisted throughout their integration in the receiving community (*welcomer, family supporter*);
4. A *linguistic agent*, when she only provides a linguistic contribution and maintain an impartial attitude towards the other participants (*translator*).

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6   For a comprehensive definition of each role, see Leanza (2007: 13-30).
7   In this paper, the feminine pronominal forms have been used to refer to interpreters and mediators.

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It is interesting to note that even here the role of cultural mediator is immediately associated to immigrants: Leanza suggests that the community interpreter becomes a *community agent* when "the minority (**migrant**) norms and values are presented as potentially equally valid" and acts as an *integration agent* when she "finds resources to help **migrants** (and people from the receiving society) to make sense, negotiate meaning and find an 'in-between' way of behaving".[8]

This paper aims at responding to Leanza's invitation to investigate the role of community interpreters so as to increase data available and provide more detailed information on what happens during mediated encounters in various medical settings.

4. Research field and data collection

The present research was carried out in the Northern Italian region of the Veneto, which, as a popular tourist destination, has the third highest presence of foreigners in Italy. The Veneto region also has a unique network of both public and private social and healthcare services: 61 public hospitals divided into 21 Local Health Units (Ulss), which all enjoy extensive autonomy.

It was therefore deemed necessary to define further the boundaries of the research field: out of seven provincial administrations, three provinces were selected as the main object of the analysis, namely *Belluno, Padua* and *Venice*. These areas satisfied the prerequisites laid down by the author: a wide and increasing presence of foreigners, of a permanent (migrants) or seasonal (tourists) nature; pure geographical symmetry, to include a seaside and a mountain resort, a city of art and a centre attracting a workforce; and a high demand for English and German in interpreting/mediation services. The latter requirement responds to the objective of observing collected data directly. The distinction between migrants and tourists has also proved essential, since the healthcare assistance provided in Italy to foreigners differs greatly according to their nationality.

For the sake of data comparison and in an attempt to concentrate the analysis on units with a large turnout of foreigners, the choice was made to privilege mediated encounters in Emergency Departments, which better highlight the need to communicate with patients immediately and effectively, owing to the "emergency" nature of the event. Good communication is nonetheless of the utmost importance in other wards where the number of foreign patients is on the increase, in particular Gynaecology, Obstetrics, Paediatrics and Infectious Diseases.

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8   The emphasis was added by the author of this article.

As far as *Belluno* is concerned, data was collected in the city hospital – which registers a high percentage of migrants due to the important industrial pool surrounding the city – and in the two healthcare units of Agordo (ski resort) and Feltre, a city with an increasing migrant population. In the provincial administration of *Venice*, attention was focused on Mestre, owing to its large migrant community, and Jesolo, a seaside resort which is highly appreciated by tourists from Austria, Germany and from Northern European countries (especially Denmark, Sweden, Norway). With regard to *Padua* – a city of art which attracts many foreign workers – the investigation focused on its main hospital and on health services distributed across the territory.

As may easily be inferred from the following chart (Table 1), which summarises the main features of the interpreting/mediation services operating in the above-mentioned structures, encounters with non-native speakers are not always mediated by the presence of dedicated staff – as is the case in Belluno and Agordo – and interlinguistic services are often coordinated by cooperatives. Qualification and training of personnel are consequently entrusted to cooperatives, such as "La Frontiera" in Padua, or to private institutions, for example ENAC in Feltre (Istituto Nazionale Canossiano), to the detriment of an objective evaluation and comparison of the skills and expertise of interpreters/mediators. In the case of Mestre, a draft agreement was signed between the Municipality, which avails itself of an external cooperative, and three services of the Local Health Authority (Ulss 12). These services comprise Family Planning clinics, the Department of Hygiene and Public Health and the Department for Infectious Diseases, which is also where the Outpatients' clinic for immigrants is located. Mediators are only available by appointment.

Direct recruitment of interpreters only occurs in Jesolo, where they are selected through a yearly competition and employed on a temporary contract from May to September, owing to the substantial number of foreign tourists who visit the area in summer. A seminar is held at the beginning of the season to train interpreters on administrative aspects, since they are required to perform administrative duties as well. They work shifts and a telephone interpreting service is guaranteed during the night. Out of a total of fifteen to twenty interpreters recruited every summer by the Local Health Authority no. 10 (Assl 10), four of them work in the Emergency Department of Jesolo and two in the Healthcare Service for Tourists (Medicina Turistica), opposite the Emergency Ward. Another interpreter is responsible for translating all the documents regarding hospitalisations, relations between the hospital and the respective sickness funds of each patient and other relevant economic aspects. All interpreters wear white coats and are therefore frequently mistaken for medical personnel, although their qualification is indicated in Italian on the breast pocket. Interpreters in the Emergency Department, however, are required never to leave the side of medical or nursing personnel,

whereas in the Healthcare Service for Tourists, which is similar to outpatients' clinics, interpreters may also welcome patients and collect their personal data and information on symptoms, which may explain the reason why the interpreters tend to report the case to the doctor at the beginning of the consultation. This greater autonomy enjoyed by interpreters in the Healthcare Service for Tourists might be justified by the relatively lower severity of its patients' conditions, since more complex cases tend to be referred to the Emergency Department.

The mediation service introduced in 2003 in Padua, a city with a strong reputation for its hospitals and academic tradition in the medical field, is contracted to an external cooperative which provides mediators to both the Hospital Trust and the Local Health Authority no. 16. The service may be activated on call by all departments and healthcare services, by forwarding their request to the relevant Public Relations Offices, which then contact the cooperative.

As far as the linguistic aspect is concerned, the greatest demand in Padua is for classical Chinese and Arabic, while Belluno and Feltre have a higher percentage of requests for Arabic spoken in Morocco and classical Chinese. Mediations in Albanian, Romanian, Chinese and Bengali are the most frequent in Mestre, whereas Jesolo and Agordo mainly deal with German and English. It is worthwhile investigating the correspondence between the languages spoken and the designation which each structure has chosen for the linguistic service, since it confirms the positions and views which have emerged from the interviews and questionnaires.

4.1 The case study as research method

The initial project of a semi-structured interview was reviewed to respond to the need for higher comparability in results (Corbetta 1999: 135, vol. 2). A questionnaire was tailored to meet the needs of a greater number of subjects participating in the research, who often had a scant amount of time available. The choice for the most suitable research method implied an in-depth analysis of the principles of social research, whose description is beyond the scope of this paper.[9] The aim is to investigate the expectations and needs of healthcare personnel regarding the interpreter/mediator's role in medical settings and then compare them with opinions and perceptions of interpreters/mediators in the field.

An integrated analysis proved to be the best way to pursue the above mentioned objective, since the behaviour of interviewed subjects is studied from several points of view, thus providing a more complete and

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9   On this, see Corbetta (1999, vols. 2 and 4) and Pittarello (2009: 62-63).

Structure	Coordinating internal service	Interpreters/mediators' hiring procedures	Name of the Service	Tasks & Functions	Type of work relationship	No. of collected questionnaires
ED – Belluno Hospital (Ulss 1)	None	None. The Municipality or the Questura (= police H.Q.) are occasionally contacted and they contact mediators in turn	Occasional linguistic-cultural mediation	Only mediation	–	5: 2 ED doctors, 3 ED nurses
ED – Agordo Hospital (Ulss 1)	None	None	–	–	–	5: 2 ED doctors, 3 ED nurses
ED & Obstetrics – Feltre Hospital (Ulss 2)	URP (Public Relations Office)	Mediators are directly hired	Linguistic-cultural mediation	Mediation & Translation	Direct. Work relationship: occasional work with on call pay	4: 3 midwives, 1 ED nurse
ED, Paediatrics, Gynaecology, Burn Centre, Infectious Diseases – Padua Hospital Trust	URP (Public Relations Office)	Mediators are indirectly hired through a cooperative	Linguistic-cultural mediation	Mediation	Agreement with a cooperative. Mediators work for the cooperative on the basis of an occasional work contract or a per project contract	8: 4 ED doctors, 2 ED nurses, 1 paediatrician, 1 social worker in healthcare
"S. Antonio" Hospital & Family Planning Clinics of Padua (Ulss 16)	URP (Public Relations Office)	Mediators are indirectly hired through a cooperative	Linguistic-cultural mediation	Mediation	Agreement with a cooperative. Mediators work for the cooperative on the basis of an occasional work contract or a per project contract	9: 1 EW doctor, 5 EW nurses, 1 paediatrician, 1 gynaecologist, 1 nurse
ED & HST – Jesolo Hospital (Ulss 10)	4 interpreters in ED & 2 in HST. 1 interpreter available for all the other wards	Interpreters immediately available in ED & HST; immediate availability in wards after phone call; phone availability in the night	Interpreting	Interpreting, admission duties, collection of patients' data, administrative functions related to reimbursement of expenses	Seasonal personnel hired by the Local Health Unit as "Administrative Assistant – Interpreter"	7: 2 ED doctors, 5 ED nurses
ED – "Umberto I" Hospital of Mestre (Ulss 12)	None	None. Occasional hiring through the Municipality, which contacts a cooperative	Occasional linguistic-cultural mediation	Mediating & accompanying patients to local health services	Agreement between some wards and the Municipality. Mediators' work relationship regulated by the cooperative	17: 4 ED doctors, 9 ED nurses, 4 social workers in healthcare

Table 1. Organisation of the mediation/interpreting services in the healthcare units involved in the research[10]

10 Questionnaires were also distributed to two social health workers of the Department of Hygiene and Public Health of Mestre and to three volunteers of the Padua Green Cross.

holistic frame. Pöchhacker's proposal (2002: 106) to resort to the case study as preferred method of research was welcomed and the project was structured into four different stages: a *questionnaire* was followed by the opportunity to expand on a specific question or further to comment on a certain topic during an *interview*, which would be expressly recorded and transcribed. Results were subsequently compared to reality through the analysis of mediated encounters which the author observed directly (**participant observation**). The encounters which proved more relevant to the objectives of this paper were transcribed and commented from a qualitative point of view (**corpus-based analysis**).

   The subjects involved in the four steps of this project were to a large extent the same, consequently respecting the fundamental requirement of the case study method. With the exception of one case, all interpreters and mediators who participated in the encounters had previously filled in the questionnaire and, on certain occasions, had also granted an interview. The same holds true for the healthcare personnel involved.

4.2 Questionnaire

A total of 85 questionnaires were completed by interpreters/mediators (25 – of whom 9 were interpreters and 16 were mediators) and healthcare personnel (60) between 30th April ad 16th July 2008 in the healthcare units mentioned in par. 4. All the questions were worded and organised following the main principles of the quantitative research method (Corbetta 1999, vol. 2, Favero 2003).[11] It should be underlined that for the sake of clarity and in order to avoid any misunderstanding which might have hindered the comparability of results, the author preferred personally to explain each question to every respondent. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, two addressing all the subjects and two distinguishing between the two categories of respondents (interpreters/mediators and healthcare staff). The first section targeted the profile of the interviewed subject, whereas the second (19 questions) sought subjects' opinions on interpreting in general and on interpreting/mediation in medical settings. There followed a section (5 queries) designed for healthcare personnel and, to conclude, a specific part for interpreters and mediators only (14 questions). Out of a total of 39 questions, excluding the first section, there were 30 multiple-choice questions and 9 open-ended questions.

11   As a reasoned choice approach was used, the comparison between results only provides an indicative evaluation of the emerged trends and has no intention of justifying the statistical representativeness of data. Furthermore, the interviewed subjects were selected according to specific characteristics and not in a probabilistic way (Corbetta 1999: 35, vol. 4).

Without discussing each query at length, a few words should be spent on the main themes investigated, which aimed to confirm or controvert previous research in the same field. The second part explored respondents' opinions as to whether there is any difference between interpreting and mediation and the distinguishing factors between the following: competences, interpreter/mediator's nationality, user's nationality, presence of operators during the encounter, education and training, role, status and prestige. Interviewed subjects were subsequently asked to provide a definition of the terms "interpreter" and "mediator" and to focus on the main roles they play, according to Leanza's classification (2007). The following questions were primarily concerned with respondents' personal experience in the medical field and their views on whether interpreters/mediators should be a 'visible' or 'invisible' presence, the factors enhancing the quality of their performance and the importance of training courses aimed at interpreters/mediators themselves and/or at healthcare providers.

In the fourth section, interpreters and mediators were interviewed about, among other things, their perceptions regarding the social position and the level of recognition of their profession, the relationship they normally establish during the encounter with the other participants and their preference for a neutral position or their solidarity with either of the two parties. The subsequent question was closely linked to the principle of "impartiality", since it investigated the pronouns used when reporting to the doctor and to the patient, which required a great amount of awareness of their own preferred style.

4.3 Interview

Subjects who were willing to expand on a specific feature were interviewed immediately after completing the questionnaire. All interviews – which followed the semi-structured interviewing method – were recorded and transcribed, in order to examine the underlying reasons which might have led to a specific response in the questionnaire. A total of 15 interviews were held, 9 of which were granted by medical and paramedical personnel and 6 by interpreters and mediators.[12]

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12 On two occasions, two subjects participated in the same interview. Another 3 preliminary conversations with medical and administrative representatives of the healthcare units concerned or of other local services were included. Although they were not directly involved in the survey, they provided remarkable insights and thoroughly illustrated the interpreting/mediation needs in their own local units. The total number consequently rises to 18 interviews. Each of them was given an ascending number, which reflects their chronological order. In order to retain interviewees' privacy, no reference was made to the names of people or places.

The main themes which were explored were the distinguishing factors between interpreters and mediators, the mediator's nationality which is deemed more suitable to accomplish the tasks required in medical settings, concerns and uncertainties regarding training courses for interpreters/mediators, professionalism, the factors which affect the quality of performance and the use of personal pronouns.

4.4 Participant observation

The desire to compare the questionnaire responses with real practices required the author's participation in mediated encounters, with the view to verifying the degree of coherence between expectations and opinions on one side and the verbal/non-verbal behaviour of interlocutors on the other. A further objective was to examine possible similarities or differences between interpreters and mediators in Italian medical settings.

Two of the healthcare facilities involved were selected, since they offer a linguistic service for foreigners. For the purpose of this research, the choice fell upon a medical centre offering a "mediation" service –Padua Hospital Trust and Local Health Unit no. 16 – and a unit recruiting "interpreters" – Jesolo Hospital (Assl 10).

A total of 26 encounters – 8 with the participation of mediators and 16 with interpreters – were observed from 16th June to 27th August 2008 and subsequently commented on the basis of an Observation Sheet, which draws on previous research (Favaron 2002, Napolitano 2005). A major difference – and advantage – was in this case the authorisation to record the encounters, which proved useful to the analysis of features which would have been otherwise difficult to evaluate. Each encounter was then given an ascending number, according to their chronological order.[13]

In the main hospital of Jesolo, all the encounters observed took place in either the Emergency Department (10) or the Healthcare Service for Tourists (8), while in Padua a wider range of departments were involved in the project: Paediatrics (2), Gynaecology (1), Birth Registration Office (1), Burn Centre (1), Outpatient Clinic (1), Obstetrics Clinic (1), Department of Infectious Diseases (1).

13 The main characteristics of each meeting were briefly outlined in a chart, to which reference is made (Pittarello 2009: 143). Anonymity requirements have led to the renaming of both medical and paramedical staff on one side and of interpreters and mediators on the other. For the purpose of straightforward identification with their roles, the fictitious names begin with the letter "D" for doctors, with "I" for interpreters and with "M" for mediators. A brief description of interpreters and mediators' profiles was provided in order to contextualise their performance in the light of the training they received.

As far as the Observation Sheet is concerned, it comprised five main sections: four of them correspond, to a large extent, to the structure and terminology of Favaron's model (2002: 74-75)[14], whereas the addition of a fifth part was aimed at highlighting the most significant aspects featuring the encounter. In the introductory section, *general information* about the session was reported, followed by a list and description of the interlocutors and by a part concerning *purpose* and *content* of the encounter and the physical *position of participants*.[15] The second section focused on features of **verbal interaction**, such as *accent* and *speech rate* (phonology), *use of personal pronouns*, which is one of the most relevant aspect of the present research, and *role* played by the interpreter or the mediator, on the basis of Leanza's typology (2007: 11-34).[16] The following section concentrated on **non-verbal interaction** and – more narrowly – on participant's behaviour in terms of *visual contact*, while the fourth part referred to the main characteristics of the encounter, including *register*, presence of *technical terms, status, body language* and *turn-taking control*. The concluding section, as previously mentioned, summarised the most striking aspects of each encounter.

4.5 Corpus-based analysis

Out of the 26 observed encounters, four were selected to be transcribed and investigated as they better illustrated the most relevant results which were attained. For the sake of coherence with the overall objectives of this research, the analysis regarded two encounters involving a mediator and two interactions mediated by interpreters. The first two encounters took place in the Department of Infectious Diseases and in the Burn Centre of the Padua Hospital Trust and were mediated by the same person, who was asked to translate respectively for a Tunisian patient (T.I)[17] and for a

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14 For a comprehensive description, see Merlini & Favaron (2003: 216-217).

15 The latter three parameters were borrowed from Napolitano's Observation Sheet (2005: 55).

16 Only the Italian rendition was examined for mediations involving languages which were not familiar to the author and which could not be recorded (4 assignments). When recording was available (3 encounters), the phonological traits of the unfamiliar languages were nevertheless analysed thanks to the invaluable contribution of two interpreters of French and two Arabic mother-tongue speakers, who translated the turns and commented on the phonology.

17 The transcriptions follow, to a large extent, Atkinson & Heritage's graphical conventions (1984). Each transcription was identified by a Roman numeral preceded by T, to avoid confusion with the Observation Sheets. For the first two encounters (T.I & T.II), two independent qualified native speakers of Arabic were recruited to help with the translations, which were then compared. They were subsequently asked to provide an explanation for the few divergent renditions. Hence, the analysis only regarded the Italian translation, without considering the typical traits of the spoken language.

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Moroccan woman, whose three-year-old child suffered severe burns (T.II). The last two interactions occurred in the Emergency Department (T.III) and in the Healthcare Service for Tourists (T.IV) of the Jesolo Hospital and were mediated by different interpreters for two Austrian patients.

The conversations were not analysed from a quantitative point of view, but rather offered a wider perspective since they explored the interactional dynamics which were embedded in the linguistic behaviour. Consequently, each encounter was examined in its entirety, so as to evaluate the level of coherence that emerged from translation choices.

Specific aspects to be investigated were the prevalent *role* played by the interpreters and the mediator, their preferred *alignment* (as revealed by the *use of personal pronouns, address forms* and *reported speech*), *conversational initiative, active participation* opposed to *invisibility* and the *relationship* established with the other primary interlocutors.

5. Discussion of results

The prevailing trends emerging from the results obtained will be illustrated in the following discussion, which concentrates on those findings and parameters which turned out to be the most significant.

As a preliminary remark, it should be highlighted that the case study method, adopted herein as a form of integrated analysis offering a holistic view of the topic under examination (Pöchhacker 2002), has proved to be the most appropriate tool to indicate the frequent divergence between expectations and reality. This can be seen from the contrasting results of questionnaires and surveys – which both focused on expectations, opinions and perceptions – if compared to the outcomes of the participant observation and corpus-based analysis – which aimed at investigating real practices.

5.1 Perceived profile of interpreters/mediators

Interestingly, an overall trend toward a convergence of ideas between the healthcare personnel and interpreters/mediators was noticed in the way the interviewees responded to the questionnaire. In case of divergent views, doctors and nurses often seemed to have a clearer position on the matter. For the sake of clarity and brevity, the two groups of respondents will be hereafter referred to with letter *a* for the medical/paramedical staff and letter *b* for interpreters/mediators.

5.1.1 Factors of distinction

As far as the profession of interpreters and mediators is concerned, two different profiles emerged from both questionnaires and interviews. The majority of respondents believed that the concept of interpreting differs from mediation especially in the following factors, which are nevertheless listed in a different order: *field of application* (67.87% of responses in group *a* and 65.21% in group *b*), *training* (64.29%, group *a*; 69.56%, group *b*) and *role* (40.07%, group *a*; 82.60%, group *b*). The subsequent factor was the nationality of both interpreters and/or mediators (30.36%, group *a*; 47.48%, group *b*) and that of users (37.50%, group *a*; 21.74%, group *b*). Interestingly, interpreters and mediators were more inclined than healthcare providers to recognise foreign nationality as a prerequisite for the profession of mediators. The importance attached to nationality emerged clearly from other responses and from the interviews, where respondents seemed to identify mediators with foreigners who have deep knowledge of the foreign culture and language.

Moreover, there was an overall trend throughout the survey to distinguish between two categories of foreign users – tourists and immigrants – and to underline the need for interpreters to deal with the first and for mediators to communicate with the latter. It is no coincidence that the selected structures which registered a higher percentage of foreign tourists unconsciously chose to designate – or referred to – the service offered to foreign patients as "interpreting" (Agordo and Jesolo, see par. 4), while those healthcare centres where immigrant patients were numerous tended to speak about "mediation".

To conclude, *prestige* (10.71%, group *a*; 8.69%, group *b*) and *status* (19.64%, group *a*; 21.74%, group *b*) turned out to be of minor importance, thus contradicting Ghiazza's suggestion (2002: 106) that the main difference between the concepts of interpreting and mediating lies in the dissimilar level of social recognition attained and not in the training they received.

5.1.2 Interpreter and mediator: definition, role and tasks

With specific reference to medical settings, the majority of the healthcare staff – rather surprisingly – tended to define interpreters as "professionals of language and culture" (57.14%) and mediators as "tools to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers" (58.93%), whereas interpreters and mediators privileged the second definition for both profiles (respectively 43.49% of interpreters and 43.48% of mediators). This result is in contrast with Leanza (2007: 20), who noticed doctors and nurses' difficulty to recognise the professionalism of interpreters.

Both interpreters and mediators, however, pointed out that their activity differed in that the first mainly deal with linguistic problems, whereas the

latter are more frequently confronted with cultural differences. This specification, shared by medical staff, is in line with the responses given to the subsequent question and concerning the principal role played by interpreters and mediators during the encounter. According to both categories of respondents, interpreters should almost exclusively be assigned the task of translating (*a*, 76.78%; *b*, 69.56%), compared to mediators, who are seen first and foremost as Cultural Informants and Culture Brokers (around 80-85% of responses in both groups).[18] They should therefore help both healthcare providers and patients better to understand each other, thanks to their knowledge of the foreign culture. The second task they are called upon to perform is to be a point of reference for patients (*a*, 64.29%; *b*, 69.56%). Despite not being recognised as pivotal, the role of Advocate, which implies coming to the defence of patients, was indicated by a considerable percentage of respondents (*a*, 46.42%; *b*, 52.17%). In this regard, it is worthwhile recalling the opinions of the German interpreters interviewed by Favero (2003: 129), who did not include this role among their tasks, thus leading the researcher to the conclusion that "advocacy" should not be considered a possible role of interpreters in the social field. Her position is shared by Leanza (2007: 20), who maintained that in the observed medical encounters doctors were not prone to acknowledge this role, since they mainly regarded interpreters as "instruments for obtaining or translating information". In the collected data, instead, translation becomes of minor importance if compared to other tasks: only 7.14% of doctors/nurses and no interpreter/mediator chose this heading. It may consequently be inferred that if interpreters in the social field are also allowed to act as mediators, doctors are ready to recognise the pre-eminence of other factors to the sole translation. This is in contrast with what emerged from Meyer *et al.* (2003: 78) and Leanza (2007: 28), who noticed that doctors expected that interpreters in medical settings only translated what was said.

The analysis of real practices (26 encounters), however, showed that both interpreters and mediators played several roles simultaneously and actively translated the turns of speech (active translation – 22 cases). On several occasions (14), they also took the initiative, for example by posing questions to patients, which were then reported to the healthcare provider, thus taking on the role of Bilingual Professionals (Leanza 2007: 14). In fewer cases (9), they also conveyed their personal points of view to the medical staff on aspects which they considered relevant to the

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18 In this specific case, the two roles identified by Leanza (2007: 14) were analysed from a different perspective: reference was made, in two subsequent posts of the questionnaire, to the mediators' ability to explain cultural differences to the user or to the healthcare provider, since the purpose being pursued was further to detect the alignment of interpreters/mediators with either the represented institution or with patients and the expectations of medical/nursing staff in this respect.

consultation – acting therefore as Monolingual Professionals. Interestingly, the task of "welcoming" patients was carried out by both mediators (4) and interpreters (7), although the latter were not required to do so. At the end of the encounter, interpreters (5) and mediators (6) explained to patients where a specific department, pharmacy or shop was located and consequently acted as Family Supporters (Leanza 2007: 21). It was also observed that both categories fulfilled the function of Cultural Informants (4 mediators and 7 interpreters), yet for different addressees: while interpreters explained to patients administrative aspects concerning the service delivered, mediators tended to address doctors and nurses to illustrate specific features of the patient's culture which could have been relevant to the success of the consultation/treatment. To conclude, the roles of Culture Broker and Advocate were almost exclusively the mediator's prerogative (respectively 4 and 5 cases), since only one interpreter took on both roles during the same encounter, to 'mediate' in a situation of conflict between the primary interlocutors.

Hence, with regard to roles and tasks, no clear distinction was noticed in the practice between interpreters and mediators, who both participated actively and did not limit themselves to solely linguistic translation.

5.2 Invisibility or active participation? An uncertain position

A much debated question is whether interpreters and mediators in medical settings should be "invisible" (Angelelli 2003: 16) or whether they should actively participate in the encounter. In this specific case, a high percentage of respondents (41.67%, group *a*; 48%, group *b*) admitted that it depended on the circumstances and only few pronounced in favour of the interpreters' invisibility (*a*, 21.67%; *b*, 20%). The interpreter's active participation was desirable, however, for a great amount of those questioned (respectively 35% and 28%), who seemed to privilege an interactive model of interpreting (Wadensjö 1998). Once again, results are at variance with the marked preference for interpreters' invisibility as emerged from the interpreters' responses in Favero (2003: 129) and from the expectations of healthcare staff in Leanza (2007: 20). The same findings, however, confirm the opinions of patients interviewed by Bot (2003: 31) and the outcomes of Angelelli's survey (2003: 24), who noticed that interpreters in medical settings believed they were more visible than interpreters working in other fields.

According to respondents, the active participation of interpreters and mediators was more desirable when cultural explanations were necessary or during simple sessions, such as anamnesis, examination and illustration of the informed consent. It was also advisable to create empathy with patients or to make them feel at ease, which is the case with children. Interpreters/mediators should instead remain neutral and

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invisible when the diagnosis is delivered or when patients are in severe conditions (for example dressing of wounds and resuscitation).

As far as the part specifically addressed to interpreters and mediators is concerned, an interesting result was that the overwhelming majority (72%) – of whom more interpreters (77.78%) than mediators (68.75%) – expressed their uncertainty with regard to their social position. In confirmation thereof, 68% of those questioned believed that the recognition of the profession was inadequate and 84% (more interpreters than mediators) said their category was not sufficiently protected by law.

5.3 Impartiality, personal pronouns and reported speech

Interpreters and mediators' uncertainties are reflected in the unclear perception of their own role and alignment with the primary interlocutors: most of the interviewed felt solidarity with foreign users (60%), whereas 8% of them declared they were closer to the healthcare staff and another 8% specified that they were closer to whichever party who needed empowerment, be it the user or the healthcare provider. A small percentage (28%) believed they were absolutely impartial. Results are hence in contrast with what emerged from Favero's survey (2003) on the concept of "neutrality" of interpreters in the social field in Germany, where the overwhelming majority (72.5%) believed they were impartial.

As a further indication of interpreters and mediator's insecurity, they were convinced they used personal pronouns in a consistent and systematic way to report information to the other participants: a vast majority (64%) stated that they resorted to the third person singular when they addressed the medical staff, while none of the respondents seemed to report information provided by patients in the first person singular. Another 36% admitted that they varied their choice according to the circumstances. A similar outcome emerged when subjects were questioned about how they reported what was said by patients to the healthcare personnel: the third person singular seemed to be the preferred option for a larger group of respondents (80%), whereas 4% declared that they always translated in the first person singular and 12% specified that their choice depended on the circumstances. Interestingly, an interpreter replied that she resorted to the first person plural.

The subsequent comparison between these responses and the practice highlighted a certain degree of inconsistency in the pronominal use, which denoted a continuous change in the position of interpreters and mediators during the encounter and therefore confirmed Dubslaff & Martinsen's studies on the discrepancies between perceived preferences and practices of interpreters who did not receive any training and the underlying reasons (2007: 53-76).

The use of personal pronouns and specific address forms is a useful key to understanding the alignment of interpreters and mediators with either of the parties: if the third person singular indicates detachment and intention to deny all responsibility for the utterance, the use of the first person may either suggest a cooperative attitude and the endeavour to share the responsibility about what is being said (Amato 2007: 126) or express a strictly personal view and consequently the highest degree of autonomy and detachment from the original utterance.

Shifting from one pronominal form to the other, therefore, tends to signal a different level of involvement, which might be influenced by one's personal story, sensitivity and sharing of opinions. The interpreter/mediator will decide – often unconsciously – whether to speak *on behalf of* (first person) or *about* (third person) the interlocutors. Resorting to the first person, moreover, may also indicate an autonomous intervention of the interpreter/mediator, who becomes a full participant.

What was said also applies to reported speech, which confirms the further attempt to detach oneself from the source of the utterance. An experimental study on the roles played by interpreters in the medical field has recently underlined the limited use of the indirect mode in their renditions (Amato 2007: 109-125). For the sake of clarity, the terminology hereafter adopted refers to the description of changes in the perspective of person provided by Bot (2007: 85), who draws on Haaruis' taxonomy (2003):

Perspective Reporting verb	Perspective unchanged	Perspective changed
Yes	1. Direct representation *he says I went to school*	2. Indirect representation *he says (that) he went to school*
No	3. Direct translation *I went to school*	4. Indirect translation *he went to school*

Table 2. Taxonomy of change of perspective of person
(original utterance: "I went to school")

Interpreters may consequently employ four different strategies, depending on whether they use reporting verbs (1. and 2. above) and the same perspective of person (1. and 3.) or not, as illustrated by the following examples:

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Example 1 (Direct Representation)

D[19]:   dovrebbe essere Lei a dirci cosa può prendere, non noi
You[20] should tell us what You can take, not us

I: was können Sie nehmen? Dass...Sie wissen besser als der Arzt, **sagt er**
what can You take? As...You know it better than the doctor, he says

Example 2 (Indirect Representation)

P: das juckt noch ein wenig
it is still itching a bit

I: questo qua **gli** prude un po' meno, gli fa meno prurito, **dice**
this is itching a little bit less, it makes it itches less, he says

Example 3 (Direct Translation)

D: misuriamo la Sua pressione
we take Your blood pressure

I: erst messen **wir** die [sic] Blutdruck
first we take the blood pressure

Example 4 (Indirect Translation)

P: welche Tabletten kann ich nehmen?
what medicines can I take?

I: che genere di medicinali **deve**...
what kind of medicines does she have...

The opposite change may also take place, as was the case when doctors/nurses referred to the patient in the third person singular while the interpreter/mediators' rendition adopted the English pronoun "you" or the German polite form "Sie". Bot (2005: 181) defines this change as "reverse rendition", since the perspective in the rendition of the interpreter/mediator is more 'direct' if compared to the original:

Example 5

D: chiedi se è diabetica
ask her if she is diabetic

I: sind Sie Diabetiker? [sic]
are You diabetic?

In the following example, the doctor explicitly asks the interpreter to translate the utterance and refers to the patient in the third person

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19 The initials D., P., M. and I., in the quoted examples, refer respectively to Doctor, Patient, Mediator and Interpreter and indicate the turns of speech. Features of interest are shown in bold.

20 To differentiate formal tokens of address from informal ones in the English translations, the first will appear with capital letter (e.g. German Sie/Italian Lei = You; German du/Italian tu = you). All the excerpts from transcripts of interpreter performances are both left in the original forms – language mistakes have, therefore, not been corrected – and also translated in English.

singular. In the interpreter's rendition, the reporting verb is added and the patient is addressed directly. The use of the reporting verb may be justified by the potentially conflicting content of the utterance: in doing so, the interpreter clarifies that she is not responsible for what she says.

Example 6
D: e dille che... lei ha sottovalutato troppo quel discorso delle macchie sulla lingua
and tell her that... she has underestimated that subject of the spots on the tongue too much

I: **der Arzt meint Sie** haben das Problem auf der Zunge auf diesen Flecken untergeschätzt [sic]
the doctor means You have underestimated the problem on the tongue on these spots

As emerges from the examples above, Bot's concept of "inverse rendition" involves the inverse change in the perspective of the person described in Table 2 (Example 5), which may be associated with the use of a reporting verb (Example 6). The author of this paper suggests using the expressions "inverse indirect translation" and "inverse indirect rendition" to describe respectively the first and the second strategy.

In most of the encounters examined, interpreters and mediators tended to report information provided by patients to the healthcare staff in the third person singular, predominantly without reporting verbs (indirect translations), whereas the data collected by Bot (2007: 92) showed a widespread use of representation forms. A wider range of pronominal forms were instead employed when translating to patients: questions were mainly rendered as indirect translations/inverse indirect translations; diagnoses and treatments were chiefly explained in the form of direct translations/inverse indirect translations or as indirect representations; potentially conflicting or embarrassing information were mostly provided as indirect representations/inverse indirect representations. The frequent lack of consistency in the pronominal choice was often noticed within the same turn:

Example 7
D: allora, adesso sentiremo l'ortopedico. Probabilmente questo dito resterà sempre così
well, we will now ask for the orthopaedic's advice. This finger is likely to stay forever like this

I: okay. Now **we** talk with the orthopaedic and **the doctor says** that maybe the finger will remain always, forever like this

At this point, it should be stressed that the strategies adopted by interpreters and mediators may frequently have been influenced by the linguistic behaviour of the healthcare staff, who tended explicitly to invite them – in the imperative form – to translate what they were going to say

("dille/digli che" – *tell her/him that*; "se vuoi chiedergli" – *if you want to ask him*; "chiedi(le/gli) se" – *ask (her/him) if*; "gli spieghi che" – *explain to him that*). What is more, a doctor, predominantly expressed himself in the first person plural ("adesso misuriamo la Sua pressione" – *now we will take Your blood pressure*). Interpreters and mediators may have perceived this attitude as an invitation to act as fully recognized participants, which might explain the reason why they too used the first person plural. The following example well illustrates the alignment of the interpreter with the medical class:

> Example 8
>> D: gli prescrivo i farmaci... intanto **io** gli prescrivo qualcosa
>> *I prescribe him medicines... in the meantime I prescribe him something*
>> I: **wir** verschreiben Ihnen ein Medikament
>> *we prescribe You a medicine*

It was also noticed that both interpreters and mediators actively participated in the conversation, by adding personal comments and frequently taking the floor (turn-taking control). On these occasions, they were more likely to use the first person plural, which further emphasised their strong identification with healthcare providers. Patients seemed to be aware of the interpreter/mediator's full participation, as demonstrated by a patient in the Emergency Department, who complimented the interpreter at the end of the encounter by saying: "sehr gute Ärztin" (*very good doctor*). The interpreter/mediator's recognition as fully ratified participants (Bot 2003) is clear in an encounter where the patient apologised for her complaints by explaining to the interpreter that she was the only one who could understand her language. The interpreter therefore becomes a point of reference and a more sympathetic and caring figure to whom patients are encouraged to express their own mood (Merlini & Favaron 2003: 226, Merlini 2007: 434). This illustrates the patient's emotional dependence on the interpreter/mediator, which is of extreme importance in medical encounters and, consequently, in the relation established between the primary interlocutors.

The widespread use of the first person singular frequently indicated autonomous interventions aimed, for example, at giving advice to patients. When addressing the healthcare staff, personal comments were mainly used to summarise a rather long turn, provide cultural explanations or highlight aspects which were not said by patients, but deemed important to be conveyed. Cultural details were mainly given by mediators who translated for Moroccan and Tunisian patients, to explain to the doctor, for example, some distinctive features of the emotional rapport between mothers and children in the Arab world.[21]

21 Only one interpreter was faced with a cultural problem, owing to the difficulty in converting the Anglo-Saxon weight system. For more details, reference is made to the author's MA thesis (Pittarello 2009: 152, 183).

The use of the indirect speech, as already mentioned, was not frequent and tended to be limited to specific cases, especially to express detachment from an original utterance which had a potentially conflicting or embarrassing content, as in the following example:

Example 9

D: se posso dare un consiglio, che farà bene anche per la pressione... di perdere qualche chilo
if I may give some advice, which will be also good for the blood pressure... to lose some kilos

I: **der Arzt empfichlt** so einige Kilo abzunehmen... **persöhnliche Empfehlung des Arztes**
the doctor suggests losing some kilos... doctor's personal advice

In this case, the interpreter reported the doctor's advice in indirect speech and stressed that the doctor was the real source of the utterance. On other occasions, the interpreter/mediator's personal comment made explicit reference to the doctor without the use of a reporting verb. This occurred, for example, in two encounters: in the first, the interpreter felt the need to apologise to the patient complaining for the long wait by underlining that it was necessary for her to be visited by the doctor who was present there; in the second, the mediator explained to a patient who was feeling threatened that the doctor's advice was only aimed at helping him.

6. Conclusions

A number of relevant findings have been yielded by the study reported in this paper. The analysis of questionnaires and interviews identified the coexistence of two terms in Italy to describe the figures who mediate between healthcare providers and foreign patients in medical units. "Interpreters" are seen as professionals whose main task consists in a purely linguistic translation, whereas "mediators" are described as instruments to overcome cultural barriers, who generally perform several tasks simultaneously. This distinction of roles is at variance with previous studies on medical interpreting. Although skills, roles and training were considered the main distinguishing factors by both categories of respondents (healthcare staff and interpreters/mediators), in other responses and during interviews special attention was attached to nationality. Moreover, the healthcare units with a high turnout of tourists from Central and Northern European countries tended to adopt the term "interpreting" to designate the linguistic service aimed at foreign patients, whereas the word "mediation" was preferred by medical centres dealing with immigrants. This is in line with the Italian literature pertaining to the topic, whereas the international trend is toward a distinction between different fields of the same profession, ie. "interpreting".

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With the view to investigating whether this typically Italian distinction was justified, opinions and expectations were compared to interpreting practices, which highlighted that both interpreters and mediators were frequently playing several roles at the same time and that they were almost never confining themselves solely to "translation". Their renditions revealed some inconsistency in the use of pronominal and address forms, which were on certain occasions affected by the linguistic behaviour of healthcare providers. The indirect mode of interpreting (third person singular) was preferred when rendering patients' turns, while the first person singular was predominantly used to mean *self* and not *other* (direct mode) and to express personal comments. The frequent autonomous interventions and turn-taking control confirmed the active participation of both interpreters and mediators during the encounter and their attempt to separate their own identity from the source of the utterance. On many occasions, however, they both adopted the first person plural to render the doctor's speech, which may indicate their identification with the institution, thus contradicting their belief in a greater solidarity with patients, as emerged from questionnaires. Reported speech (direct/indirect representation) tended only to be used in case of embarrassing or potentially conflicting contents and confirmed the need for both interpreters and mediators to distance themselves from the words they rendered.

The above-mentioned trends demonstrated that interpreters and mediators were fully ratified participants in the encounters and were recognised as such by the primary interlocutors, who tended to address them directly. Healthcare providers, in particular, frequently invited them to translate by adding reporting verbs in the imperative form, thus revealing that they did not take the translation task for granted. This contradicts what had been previously stated in the questionnaire.

The discrepancy between perceptions and practice with regard to pronominal forms, roles and preferred alignment and the frequent personal comments shed light on the interpreters and mediators' scarce awareness of their own position and identity, while no great difference was observed in the strategies and attitudes adopted by the two profiles. Instead of focussing on the divergent features, it would be more profitable to investigate expectations and needs of those who work in the field, in order to plan targeted training courses and raise their awareness on the issue. A useful tool to enhance this professional position would be to analyse further the behaviour of the same subjects from different perspectives in other case studies, thus contributing to self-reflection and self-definition. In conclusion, the data collected suggests that "mediator" and "interpreter" should be considered as expressions of the great versatility of the same interpreting profession, whose various modes are all worth receiving further attention by researchers.

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The Interpreter's General Knowledge

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Abstract

The present work contains a select biography of recommended short readings for interpreters training to work from English. The material selected includes institutional, literary and historic texts, many of whose contents have become an integral part of national and international language heritage.

The insistence of professional interpreters, including those working with the European Union, upon interpreting students' "general knowledge" has always left the present writer uncomfortable, reminding him of the early days of his own interpreting career when his request for information about the subject of a forthcoming conference met with the answer "something to do with culture". Whereupon, he promised to read a book. He has, in fact and for different reasons, spent most of the rest of his life reading books, but is still not sure which of them have been most influential in preparing for the task of interpreting.

Clearly, the term "general knowledge" is inadequate; even the writer's traditional proposal "the history of Europe since 1945" is incomplete. The question has to be raised which texts and for what reasons the young interpreter would be well advised to study. The recommendations to follow are designed for the young interpreter whose mother tongue is not English and who will not, therefore, have absorbed at school, at University

or elsewhere during his formative years the information therein contained but who, yet, wishes to arm himself to tackle the challenges of interpretation from English. Many of the speakers he will be called upon to translate will take for granted a knowledge of such information. Vague indications are superfluous, only specific texts and the reasons why a given text has been included are of use.

The guideline has been the choice of texts containing concepts and formulae which have passed into national life and, thence, into everyday language usage. An interpreter with a degree in Economics may be a better interpreter than one without, but Mr. Micawber's economic theory: "Income one pound. Expenditure nineteen and sixpence. Result happiness. Income one pound. Expenditure one pound and sixpence. Result misery." is more familiar to an educated Anglophone public than the works of Adam Smith, Schumpeter and Galbraith together. Hopefully, the currency transactions will lend themselves to translation into euros in the not-too-distant future. Time and place play, as ever, a vital role.

The 1946 British vintage was brought up on radio broadcasts before passing to television, hence its insistence upon "proper" pronunciation, Queen's English and the like, now, fortunately, less significant. Its representatives also grew up reading books and newspapers rather than glued to a computer screen; it is perhaps the last exclusively text-based generation. Knowledge of the Bible, the central text of Western civilisation for the devout, the indifferent and the hostile, alike, was transmitted through the study of the Authorised Version of 1611, rather than through the New English Bible or any subsequent translation. That generation will always prefer "riotous living" to the horrors of "loose livers" (conjuring up the image of floating kidneys), though there is more justification for explaining Jacob's short-changing of his elder brother with "a dish of lentils", as the other European languages known to the author do, than with "a mess of potage".

The present paper will deal with written texts in the traditional sense and not with computer jargon, a knowledge of which has also become advisable in the meantime, and will divide them into three categories – institutional, literary and historical. The Bible will be dealt with in a category of its own.

1. Institutional texts

Following the very sound principle that a gentleman's name only appears in the newspapers on three occasions (on two of which he is unable to read it), the institutional texts could well begin with the christening, marriage and funeral ceremonies of the Anglican Church. There is no covert establishmentarianism here; it is simply that the formulae of the Church have permanently influenced the language. The promise to "love, honour

and obey" may be modified according to individual female taste, but its origin and style must be recognised. Men will still, I imagine, be fairly enthusiastic about "with my body I thee worship", though possibly less so about "with all my worldly goods I thee endow". The ritual, but none the less beautiful for that, phrases pronounced on Remembrance Day could also be included: "They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old", as could the text of at least one of Her Majesty's Christmas Day Broadcasts to the Commonwealth. The Christmas Day speech of 2002 after the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth , the Queen Mother, is particularly moving. The present writer is neither monarchist nor Anglican, but simply acknowledges the forces which have contributed to influencing his language patterns. The oath that witnesses are called upon to take in a Court of Law before the "good men and true" (i.e. the members of the jury) and the Hippocratic oath are also essential.

2. The Bible

The influence on the language of the translation of the Bible commissioned by King James I is as great, if not greater, than that of the works of Shakespeare. Catholic friends are frequently surprised by the familiarity of those born and brought up in the Protestant world with the sacred texts. A Non-Conformist education was/is unthinkable without regular Sunday School study of the scriptures. The writer's generation can only regret that their successors have not been exposed so thoroughly to the prose splendours of the Authorised Version, but rather to the New English Bible and subsequent translations. Hence, the recommendation that the interpreting student wishing to familiarise himself with the formulae that have, over five centuries, become an integral part of the Anglophone's language heritage opt for the 1611 translation.

The whole of the first Chapter of Genesis is essential. For syntax reasons, it provides an object lesson in the difference between an adverbial phrase "in the beginning" and any kind of prepositional phrase "at the beginning (of the lesson)" and a perfect expression of third person imperatives "Let there be light". The phrase "in the beginning" is much loved by some of those who wish to give lectures on interpreting, though the beginning involved is the "In the beginning was the Word" which opens the Gospel according to St. John. The association is only acceptable to the Pentecostal school of interpreting studies. The rest of us know only too well that the "Word" like every other form of human activity is the product of centuries of evolution. "In the beginning was the deed" from Goethe's "Faust" makes much more sense, though the devastating opening of the "Edda" has an even more powerful impact: "In the beginning, there was nothing there at all".

The second Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke (verses 1 to 22) contains the story of the Nativity, while the most complete account of the

Passion and Resurrection, including references to doubting Thomas, is to be found in Chapters 19 and 20 of the Gospel according to St. John. Chapter 5 of the Gospel according to St. Matthew contains the Sermon on the Mount and the necessary reminder that "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God", while the ten Commandments with the terrible solemnity of the "Thou shalt not" imperative are listed in Chapter 5 of Deuteronomy.

Other passages could be recommended according to taste (environmentalists would not wish to be deprived of the rescue of the animal world from the waters of the flood contained in Genesis, Chapter 8 and pessimists would echo Job's curse in verse 3 of Chapter 3: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man child conceived"), but let the following references suffice: Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my Shepherd"), Isaiah Chapter 40 ("Comfort ye, comfort ye my people") extending the reading until verse 15 to be reminded that the "Nations are as a drop of a bucket" and, finally, the hymn to charity in Chapter 13 of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. The temptation has been resisted to quote passages from the Scriptures containing the term "Interpretation", not only for the reason that it most frequently refers to text exegesis rather than the transposition of a text from one language into another. Scholars, who have written doctoral theses on the use of the term "nature" in "King Lear" and "honest" in "Othello", would certainly find a wealth of material here!

3. Literary texts

What criteria are to be applied for a selection of reading matter from the boundless material available from literature for an Anglophone public? As might be expected from a citizen of Napoleon's "nation of shopkeepers", philosophical reflections upon the nature of "life" have been eschewed in favour of specific comments on specific societies at specific times. Hobbes' description of human life ("nasty, brutish and short") will undoubtedly meet with general approval, though the writer has a decided preference for the Anglo-Saxon metaphor comparing our passage through this Vale of Tears to "the flight of a sparrow straying into a hall at a time of feasting – a brief passage from darkness through light, warmth and company, out into darkness again". The only other references to "life" and, even there, in the context of widely-used metaphors, will be found in the paragraphs on Shakespeare.

So where to start? Well, compendia of English Literature rarely contain much material before the end of the fourteenth century, also because Anglo-Saxon and the various transitional phases of Norman French cannot be considered instantly accessible. It is with "The Canterbury Tales" that an autonomous English literature bursts onto the world stage. The

delights of the prologue are readily comprehensible today. Anti-clericals will revel in the sheer abundance of material – well-fed monks going riding in expensive fur cloaks and pardonners ruthlessly fleecing the gullible with "pigges' bones" passed off as relics. The presence of the humble clerk attentive to the needs of his parishioners and deaf to the blandishments of court and society is a comforting counterweight. One single character chosen for interpreters must be the Nun, firstly, because, like many of her successors, she spoke French with the accent of Stratford-atte-Bowe and, secondly, because of the conviction expressed engraved on the pendant worn round her neck: "Amor vincit omnia".

Determined not to let the paragraph on Shakespeare upstage the other authors quoted, the writer proposes six well-known passages, justifying the wry assertion that the works of the Bard are "full of quotations", one less familiar passage and two sonnets. "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (Sonnet 130) is an ironic descant upon "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" (Sonnet 18) and a warning against an excess of uncritical, romantic zeal. Hamlet's reflections upon suicide (Act 111. Sc.1. verses 56-88) are too familiar to require further justification, as is Mark Antony's funeral oration ("Julius Caesar" Act 111. Sc.11. verses 79-256). Macbeth's monologue upon the futility of life ("a walking shadow, a poor player" Act V. Sc. 1V. verse 20-28) and Prospero's comparison of human existence to a stage pageant ("Our revels now are ended" – "The Tempest" Act 1V. Sc. 1. verses 146-158) have both passed virtually in their entirety into the repertoire not only of the lettered, as has Jacques' Seven Ages of Man ("As You Like It" Act 11. Sc. V11. verses 138-166). Shylock's impassioned plea for the rights of ethnic minorities in "The Merchant of Venice" ("Hath not a Jew eyes?" Act 11. Sc.1 lines 62-78) will strike as vibrant a chord now as it did at the end of the sixteenth century. The extraordinary scene from the third part of "Henry VI" (Act 11. Sc. V. verses 1-120), with the King sitting on a molehill after the Battle of Towton, the bloodiest ever on English soil, observing a father who has killed his son and a son who has killed his father fighting on opposite sides in the civil war, is not proposed as tribute to the quality of the poetry – quite a lot of it is, in fact, routine if not doggerel – but, rather, as a blow to the solar plexus of those who would still presume to send their subjects to war, with the echo of the Commandment destined for their ears: "For I have murdered where I should not kill".

Leaping o'er the vast stretch of time between the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre and the early novels of more than a hundred years later is, obviously, a dangerous operation justified only by the need to "turn the accomplishment of many years into an hour-glass". A hint at Donne's "No man is an island", at Francis Bacon's worldly wisdom in short, sharp barks ("The higher the ape climbs, the more he shows his arse"), a glance at the cast list and the toponymy of "Pilgrim's Progress" (Giant Despair, Vanity Fayre and the Slough of Despond) with a sprinkle of Malapropisms from

Sheridan's "The Rivals" ("The allegory on the banks of the Nile") will, hopefully, whet the appetite. A look at nursery rhymes, some of which owe their origins to the Great Plague and the Great Fire ("Ring a Ring of Roses" – being the most famous) will also fill language gaps. Children remember the rhymes they learned from their grandmothers. Adults acquiring a second language do not share the same experience.

Any selection of passages from novels must begin with a tribute to the great women novelists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first paragraph of "Pride and Prejudice" is a perfect introduction to Jane Austen's humane and perceptive irony, whereas the dialogues between hero and heroine in Elizabeth Gaskell's "North and South" see the increasing mutual respect and comprehension of the two interlocutors accompanied by each adopting the syntax patterns of the other. Thereafter, Dickens, already present with Mr. Micawber's economic theories, could be represented by Oliver Twist asking for more (the law of increasing expectations?), though preferably not by Mr. Bumble's prophecy of his future destiny ("that boy will be hanged"!) or by the latter's contempt for the law ("the law is an ass"!). The first paragraph of "Bleak House" ("Fog everywhere"), originally intended as a metaphor for the slow, relentless machinations of the legal system, is equally applicable to burocracy today. His description of Coketown (Manchester) in "Hard Times" expresses the quintessence of the pollution and alienation attendant upon industrial society – rivers running purple with evil-smelling dye and the pistons of the machinery moving up and down like "the heads of elephants in a state of melancholy madness".

A Thomas Hardy addict will be forgiven for adding the epic struggle between light and darkness at dawn and sunset over Egdon Heath in the first paragraph of "The Return of the Native" and the mirage of Christminster (Oxford) shimmering through the mists seen by young Jude the Obscure, only to elude his gaze immediately as education and social recognition will for the rest of his days. Leaving the novel for other literary genres, the whole of Wilde's "The Importance of Being Ernest" (in haste – Act 11, set in the country where "flowers are as common as people are in London") will introduce that particular cold, detached brand of British humour which bewilders and attracts at the same time. Two essays by other great humourists will serve the same purpose: William Hazlitt's "On Getting up on Cold Mornings" and Charles Lamb's "On the Origin of Roast Pork". A particular delight in the latter is the description of the great leap forward in Chinese civilisation made possible by the realisation, after hundreds of years, that the same result could be obtained, not by setting fire to the whole sty, including the sow. after the latter had farrowed, but by selecting individual piglets from the litter.

The literature of the twentieth-century is, perhaps, more familiar, as the weird Distopian societies of "Brave New World", "Animal Farm" and

"1984" now appear regularly on school syllabuses everywhere and their contribution to the language with "double-speak" and some animals being "more equal than others" is as readily identifiable as were quotations from the Authorised Version in the seventeenth century. Perhaps here, too, the proposal to present what has passed, often unrecognised, from the literary world into everyday language usage has outlived its usefulness, since the texts have become a permanent feature of contemporary life and the author's intention has been that of providing a guide to more distant sources of information and inspiration. For the same reason, he has not even broached the great themes of twentieth-century emancipation such as womens' rights or celebrated the greatest day in the history of the European Parliament on which it decided that no citizen could be discriminated against on account of his racial origin, political or religious convictions or sexual persuasion – all of which themes are part and parcel of our everday reading and conversation. The "deconstruction" of agrarian and industrial societies has, in any case, been taken over by the need to "deconstruct" the world of mass-media and computer society and contemporary literature has already begun to devote itself to the task.

4. Historic speeches

The remaining category of texts recommended is that of "historic" speeches. The collection of historic speeches collected and published in "The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches"(1995) edited by Brian MacArthur is a mine of information. With the exception of Lincoln's Gettysburg address, all the speeches recommended by the present writer can be listened to as well as read, the rhythms and the rhetorical devices resorted to being an essential component. The radio recordings of King George VI's declaration of war ("His Majesty's government has no alternative but to declare war on Germany") and, even more so, his announcement of the end of World War II ("Our hearts are overflowing as are yours"), stammered and stuttered in defiance of all the laws of rhetoric, are no less effective than all Churchill's carefully rehearsed spontaneity. Notwithstanding, the latter's "blood, toil, tears and sweat" (13/5/1940) and "This was their finest hour" (18/6/1940) are essential. Add his tribute to British airmen after the Battle of Britain ("Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many by so few") in conjunction with Henry V's exhortation to his troups before the Battle of Agincourt ("We few, we happy few, we band of brothers" – Act IV. Sc. 111 verses 20-67) to reach the melancholy conclusion that, as far as waging war is concerned, nothing has changed under the sun. Harold Wilson's tribute to Churchill in the House of Commons (24/1/1965) reveals the modesty of a man of talent acknowledging a man of genius ("the meanest of us is touched by greatness"), while Blair's finest hour was his tribute to the Princess of

Wales" broadcast after her untimely death ("the people's princess" – 31/8/1997). Funeral oratory is a speciality of British rhetoric as are famous last words (immortal those of the nineteenth-century Staffordshire poisoner, William Palmer, about to step onto the trapdoor of the gallows, who turned to the hangman and asked "Hey – is this thing safe?") and no list of recommended reading would be complete without them.

The Penguin volume recommended also includes great American speeches as a corrective to the Eurocentric perspective of the present work. Lincoln's Gettysburg address ("Government of the people, by the people, for the people" – 19/11/1863) and Kennedy's new generation of Americans ("Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" – 20/1/61) are crucial. It also glosses over anything and everything pronounced by Margaret Thatcher, whose only lasting contributions to the language were, after all, "I want my money back", "there is no alternative" and "there is no such thing as society; only people and their families" and who even managed to make St. Francis of Assisi sound mawkish and banal. Cross, rather, the Atlantic again for a breath of fresh air and compare and contrast Obama's speeches for the inauguration of his presidency and for the acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize. The former, inspired by and with copious reference to his great predecessor, Abraham Lincoln, reveals the idealist, conscious of his historic mission as The United Staes of America's first black president. The latter astonishes the world making it perfectly clear that the Nobel Peace Prize in no way commits the Commander-in-Chief of America's Armed Forces not to deploy them, but only to do so in the service of ethically justifiable operations.

Which is, possibly, the most suitable conclusion for the present work. The interpreter must be aware of how speakers manipulate language, of the explicit and implicit repertoire upon which they draw to do so and with what purposes in mind. The vaster the interpreter's reflections and the deeper his analysis of the examples provided by history, the more faithful his rendition of the text will be. The ordinary citizen, not committed by professional ethics, is allowed to draw more daring conclusions in his perpetual quest to escape from the mesh of rhetoric and information by which he is surrounded, rejecting, as Walt Whitman so beautifully puts it, whatever is "repellent to his soul".

L'évaluation sommative de l'interprétation simultanée : une réflexion sur les objectifs, les critères et sur les risques d'erreur

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Abstract

L'évaluation de l'interprétation simultanée en fin de parcours constitue encore aujourd'hui un défi tant au niveau théorique qu'au niveau de son application didactique. La définition du niveau de compétence requis en fin d'études par rapport au niveau professionnel représente le cœur du processus d'évaluation en interprétation. C'est en effet à partir de la notion de compétence qu'il sera possible d'identifier les critères et les instruments spécifiques pour la codification et la formulation des résultats des prestations et enfin pour la «certification» de cette compétence.

1. Introduction

L'évaluation de l'interprétation simultanée (IS) dans un contexte pédagogique constitue depuis longtemps un important sujet de réflexion au niveau de l'enseignement et de la recherche ; il faut cependant remarquer que les études sur l'évaluation se sont concentrées surtout sur les phases de sélection des candidats et sur l'élaboration de tests d'aptitude ou sur l'évaluation (*assessment*) en cours de formation. Cette étude porte en revanche sur l'évaluation sommative de l'interprétation simultanée, celle qui intervient au terme du processus de formation universitaire en

interprétation de conférence. Cet intérêt surgit de l'impression, dérivée de l'expérience personnelle, que certains aspects méthodologiques liés à ce type d'examen méritent une réflexion approfondie au niveau de la recherche et de la didactique en vue d'en rendre plus efficace et adaptée l'évaluation. A partir de la définition et des caractéristiques du processus d'évaluation, on veut essayer d'approfondir certains aspects liés aux objectifs de l'évaluation des prestations des étudiants en fin de formation. La réflexion portera ensuite sur les critères à adopter et sur les démarches pratiques et opérationnelles susceptibles de contribuer à améliorer la formulation des résultats et à réduire la subjectivité des jugements portés par les évaluateurs.

2. Une définition de l'évaluation

L'évaluation constitue toujours un processus de comparaison. Ce processus se base sur les données collectées, sur le cadre théorique des évaluateurs et sur leur expérience professionnelle en tant qu'enseignants (Trinchero 2002: 407). Il s'agit d'interpréter les concordances ou les divergences entre une situation observée et une situation attendue. C'est cette interprétation, qui implique l'attribution d'une valeur aux attributs spécifiques des objets de l'évaluation, qui doit déterminer si la situation observée est différente par rapport à la situation attendue. Ceci en relation avec les objectifs des évaluateurs et leur système de discrimination entre les éléments admis et les éléments non admis. Voilà pourquoi une évaluation suppose un système de référence défini à priori, un système qui explique la situation attendue et les critères de jugement qui orienteront le processus d'évaluation (ib.: 408).

3. Quels objectifs pour l'évaluation sommative en IS?

Le succès de l'évaluation est déterminé en premier lieu par la définition d'objectifs clairs et identifiables ; des objectifs génériques, non vérifiables ne peuvent pas être détectés et donc ne peuvent pas faire l'objet d'une évaluation. Il s'agit donc d'identifier ces objectifs et le niveau de compétence attendu et, pratiquement, de vérifier si ce niveau correspond au niveau observé. Avant tout, il faut se demander à quoi correspond ce niveau attendu. Pour le définir et le délimiter, un système de référence est nécessaire. Mais dans le cas de l'IS est-il possible de compter sur un système de référence bien défini, un système qui permette d'établir d'une façon claire et univoque le niveau attendu, les compétences, ou, plus précisément, le niveau de compétence requis aux étudiants interprètes en fin de formation? Etant donné que l'évaluation sommative offre, en cas de succès, la possibilité d'accéder au marché du travail et d'exercer la

profession d'interprète, on peut chercher à identifier le niveau de compétence attendu au niveau professionnel. Les résultats des recherches conduites, surtout à partir des années 1980, (Bühler 1986; Kurz 1993; et, pour une overview, Kellet Bidoli 2000) semblent mettre en relief une certaine disparité à propos des réactions et des attentes de la part des utilisateurs des services d'IS et donc l'impossibilité d'établir des critères uniformes surtout du point de vue de leur pondération.

> Sur le marché du travail, les normes d'acceptabilité sont essentiellement déterminées par les utilisateurs des services de traduction et d'interprétation, ce qui peut impliquer plusieurs ensembles de normes, selon l'environnement professionnel concerné (Gile 2001 : 387)

On peut se demander, en l'absence d'un système de référence fixe et donc de critères détaillés et pondérés selon une échelle d'importance partagée au niveau du marché du travail, s'il est possible, en vue de l'évaluation sommative, d'établir un cadre plus général qui précise les caractéristiques essentielles, c'est-à-dire de base, d'une IS professionnelle de "qualité". A cet égard on peut prendre comme référence la notion de "optimum quality" proposée par Moser-Mercer (1996: 44) :

> Optimum quality in professional interpreting implies that an interpreter provides a complete and accurate rendition of the original that does not distort the original message and tries to capture any and all extralinguistic information that the speaker might have provided subject to the constraints imposed by certain external conditions.

A partir de cette notion de qualité il est nécessaire de définir où généralement se situe le niveau de compétence d'un étudiant en fin de formation, une nécessité reconnue par Moser-Mercer (ib.: 52) : "The quality of student performances cannot be assessed in a vacuum […]. Just like researchers, teachers need to know what they are looking for, what level of quality they are expecting." Le paramètre semble donc rester la qualité de la prestation et cela même en phase de formation (ib.) :

> We don't usually think of quality when assessing students, it is nevertheless what we are implicitly looking for. As novices move on to become experts we are constantly assessing them along the lines of the only parameter that seems meaningful: the quality of the interpretation as an indicator of a student's progress.

Il faut donc réfléchir sur les aspects qualitatifs qui établissent un écart entre une prestation professionnelle et celle d'un étudiant. A ce propos, il est possible de faire référence aux études menées par Kalina (1994) et Riccardi (2002), qui mettent en évidence certains aspects qui distinguent l'approche à l'IS des professionnels par rapport à celle des étudiants.

Kalina (1994: 226), dans une étude sur l'utilisation des stratégies employées par les interprètes professionnels et par les étudiants interprètes, avance l'hypothèse selon laquelle (ib: 229) :

> We found that the strategies of professionals seem to be at a higher level. As regards monitoring, for example (a term which refers not only to output control and repair operations but also to planning and aspects of semantic equivalence, namely all components of an interpreting process), professionals face fewer interference problems, have a lower correction rate for minor errors and a higher correction rate for significant errors. They are also more user-oriented, as can be observed in increased cohesion or connectivity.

Sur la base de cette hypothèse, à savoir qu'on enregistre des différences évidentes, Kalina (ib.: 232) donne des indications intéressantes à propos de l'étude et de la didactique de l'IS :

> Students must be motivated to continue checking the quality of their performance even when they have finished their training and have achieved a professional level.

> Teaching must therefore not concentrate on ideal conditions and artificial settings alone, but must prepare students to cope with all the problems and difficulties of professional interpreting.

Ainsi les prestations des interprètes professionnels peuvent en général se distinguer par rapport à celles des étudiants à la fin de leur formation au niveau de l'approche générale à l'interprétation qui, chez les professionnels, est plus orientée vers une modalité top-down alors que, chez les étudiants, est plutôt de type bottom-up. Le professionnel en particulier, en se basant sur de fortes compétences linguistiques et traductionnelles exploite au mieux la technique d'interprétation par rapport à la "manipulation" des mots et au sens qu'ils véhiculent. Il exploite aussi ses connaissances extralinguistiques, le cotexte précédent, les anticipations. Bref, il utilise d'une manière efficace des habiletés procédurales qui, chez les étudiants, même à la fin de leur formation en IS, ne semblent pas encore parfaitement assimilées.

Ces écarts semblent suggérer que les résultats qu'on peut attendre d'une prestation d'un étudiant ne seraient pas comparables à ceux des professionnels, en particulier au niveau des compétences procédurales. Les objectifs de l'évaluation en fin de formation doivent donc trouver une délimitation. En effet, le niveau de compétence semble se situer à un stade susceptible d'être dépassé seulement avec l'étude et l'expérience directe au niveau professionnel. Cette constatation semble suggérer la nécessité de réfléchir sur l'opportunité de dresser un bilan en fin de formation quant au degré d'acquisition des compétences requises pour la profession[1]. Par compétence on entend ici (Cerri 2007: 54-55) la capacité de mobiliser ses propres ressources en fonction d'une tâche déterminée. Ces ressources

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1   Une telle définition des objectifs et des résultats attendus devient fondamentale pour une autre raison encore, c'est-à-dire pour programmer l'évaluation *in itinere* et pour élaborer des tests d'aptitude en phase de sélection.

incluent les *connaissances*, c'est-à-dire les faits et les idées acquis grâce à l'étude et à l'expérience, sans considérer leur utilisation en fonction d'une tâche à accomplir ; les *habiletés*, c'est-à-dire les capacités d'utiliser les connaissances acquises pour l'exécution de tâches.

Or, même dans le cas spécifique de l'évaluation des prestations des étudiants d'interprétation en fin de formation, il s'agit d'évaluer des compétences. Ces compétences incluent sans aucun doute (Riccardi 2003: 235-237) des compétences linguistiques et extralinguistiques. Certaines connaissances, comme par exemple la maîtrise de la langue de départ et de celle d'arrivée, constituent une condition préalable pour l'interprétation qu'il faut néanmoins perfectionner pour atteindre un niveau professionnel. Ces connaissances, linguistiques et extralinguistiques, ainsi que leur application et "manipulation" au niveau de l'IS, peuvent être vérifiées à partir du produit de la prestation. Ce type de connaissances peut être contrôlé plus aisément par rapport aux habiletés, c'est-à-dire les composantes de nature procédurale qui permettent de gérer les connaissances d'une façon efficace dans l'IS. Au moment de l'évaluation, il s'agit, en effet, de reconstruire le processus qui a abouti à certains choix et il faut avouer qu'il n'est pas toujours possible, pour différentes raisons, de définir la nature de ce processus et donc de vérifier avec certitude l'acquisition des compétences procédurales. C'est un élément de difficulté dans la phase d'observation du produit de l'IS, un élément qui exige une interprétation qualitative, à un certain niveau, hypothétique, de la part des évaluateurs.

4. Quels critères d'évaluation?

Dans le but de définir des critères d'évaluation, à partir d'un objectif qu'il faudrait établir sur la base d'un cadre de référence spécifique et délimité pour les étudiants à évaluer en fin de formation, il faudrait identifier les "dimensions (Cerri 2007: 140), c'est-à-dire les traits généraux qui identifient le type de compétence pris en considération. Pour essayer d'identifier, par exemple, les dimensions de la qualité dans l'IS on peut faire référence à Riccardi (2003: 222) qui voit dans la *forme linguistique* et le *contenu informationnel* les deux pôles autour desquels les recherches sur la qualité se sont toujours concentrées. Evaluer signifie donc d'une part, établir dans quelle mesure un texte est *compréhensible* et compatible avec les normes linguistiques ainsi qu'avec les conventions communicatives de la situation où l'interprétation est produite. En même temps, évaluer signifie reconnaître les relations d'*équivalence* entre le texte original et le texte interprété. Un premier problème réside dans le fait qu'il est difficile d'observer en même temps et en temps réel ces deux dimensions. Gile (2001: 388), à ce propos, semble être indirectement d'accord quand il mentionne les deux méthodes suivies d'habitude dans l'évaluation de l'IS,

des méthodes "à l'évidence insuffisantes pour une évaluation fine de la fidélité" et où l'évaluation se fait :

> Par rapport à la cohérence interne du discours d'arrivée, et par rapport à sa cohérence avec les connaissances de l'auditeur. Si le discours semble incohérent par sa logique interne, ou si l'interprète dit des choses que l'auditeur sait fausses, ce dernier est alerté à la possibilité d'une erreur.

> Par échantillonnage, en écoutant des segments de phrase ou des phrases courtes de l'original, puis en les comparant à leur version en langue d'arrivée, mais ponctuellement, segment isolé par segment isolé, et non pas en continu sur l'ensemble du discours.

Afin de parvenir à une réduction des problèmes liés à une méthode qui sépare l'observation des deux dimensions de la *compréhensibilité* et de l'*équivalence* (lesquelles identifient une compétence générale) on pourrait chercher, peut-être, à identifier les attentes à partir d'une connaissance approfondie du contenu du texte original. Le texte original pourrait être, par exemple, présenté aux évaluateurs à travers une sorte de liste contenant une description synthétique de chaque séquence information-nelle, accompagnée parallèlement des détails les plus importants contenus dans la séquence. Ceci même dans le but d'éviter d'investir des ressources excessives dans le contrôle ponctuel de type comparatif et pour éviter de perdre de vue l'ensemble de la prestation. Il faut tenir compte, en effet, qu'une sélection des informations et une écoute "organisées" sont fondamentales pour bien comprendre globalement le sens des différents phénomènes observés, ainsi que leur interrelation.

On peut envisager de prendre en considération la dimension représentée au niveau de la compétence par l'étiquette "compréhensibilité" du texte produit. Cette dimension devrait mettre en évidence (dans son ensemble et dans ses composantes) le niveau de compétence pour ce qui est de la langue, de la cohérence interne et de la plausibilité. L'autre dimension à observer et à évaluer pourrait être identifiée par l'étiquette "équivalence" (ou "fidélité") au texte original.

Pour définir les composantes de ces deux dimensions en termes opérationnels on pourrait faire référence aux exemples fournis par les fiches d'évaluation élaborées par Schjoldager (1996) et par Riccardi (2002).

Schjoldager (1996: 187) base sa proposition sur la constatation que "Though a detailed explication of assessment criteria seems to be a prerequisite for teaching, I *know* of no such explication in the field of interpreting". Elle présente, en particulier, un *feedback sheet*, c'est-à-dire l'explicitation des critères qu'elle utilise dans la didactique de l'interprétation simultanée. Cet instrument (destiné tant à l'évaluation en cours de formation ou aux examens qu'à l'auto-évaluation des étudiants) permet d'aborder l'évaluation du texte interprété selon deux perspectives celle de la personne qui écoute et celle de l'orateur. Dans une prestation idéale (ib.: 190)

(1) The listener can understand what the interpreter is saying and can bear to listen to the interpreter. (2) The interpreter's language is adequate. (3) The interpreter's rendition is coherent and plausible. (4) The interpreter is a loyal communicator of the speaker's message."

D'après Schjoldager, les personnes qui écoutent ne perçoivent pas la qualité de la même façon, mais elle estime qu'il existe un accord général sur le fait que "an interpreting performance should be comprehensible, pleasant to listen to, linguistically and terminologically acceptable, as well as coherent and plausible". Sur la base de ces caractéristiques, la fiche élaborée par Schjoldager se présente divisée en quatre sections. Les trois premières sections suivent la perspective de la personne qui écoute et évaluent la compréhensibilité et la présentation, la langue, la cohérence et la plausibilité, tandis que la quatrième est consacrée à la perspective de l'orateur à savoir, à la fidélité du texte interprété au texte original. Du point de vue de l'orateur, Schjoldager (ib. :189), reprenant Harris, soutient l'idée que les interprètes devraient "re-express the original speakers' ideas and the manner of expressing them as accurately as possible and without significant omission, and not mix them up with their own ideas and expressions".

La fiche élaborée par Riccardi (2002) comprend une série de paramètres qui concernent d'une part les compétences linguistiques et textuelles et de l'autre les compétences communicatives et interprétatives. Les compétences linguistiques et textuelles sont essentiellement formulées en négatif puisqu'elles sont évaluées à partir de leur violation, c'est-à-dire sur la base des fautes commises ; les compétences communicatives et interprétatives sont identifiées sur la base du niveau de compétence qu'on estime que l'étudiant a atteint.

Par rapport à la fiche de Schjoldager, qui part d'une perspective pragmatico-communicative et qui est orientée vers l'acceptabilité de la prestation par la personne qui écoute et par l'orateur, celle de Riccardi est plus orientée vers l'interprétation en elle-même et vers les facteurs qui la caractérisent.

Ces deux exemples d'instruments qui essayent d'expliciter les critères sur la base desquels recueillir des données en vue d'une évaluation soignée des prestations en IS, pourraient peut-être constituer une base pour réfléchir sur la construction d'instruments pratiques pour l'évaluation sommative de l'IS qui présente des caractéristiques et des exigences particulières. A cet égard, on pourrait proposer une perspective qui mettrait plutôt l'accent sur le degré d'acquisition de la compétence de la part de l'étudiant et renoncer à l'évaluation des compétences de base qui auraient dû être acquises et évaluées au cours des phases de formation précédentes. Ceci comporterait une reformulation des critères d'évaluation et donc une simplification de la fiche d'évaluation. En particulier, pour ce qui est de l'évaluation des compétences à l'intérieur d'une hypothétique dimension de la "compréhensibilité" du texte

interprété en tant que texte autonome, certains phénomènes (par exemple au niveau phonologique, phonétique, prosodique et des pauses) pourraient être synthétisés en un «critère-compétence» dénommé "capacité de production linguistique" et mesurés au niveau qualitatif à travers une échelle (insuffisant, suffisant, bon).

Dans la construction d'une fiche d'évaluation il serait utile de faire référence aux propositions de taxonomies des erreurs au niveau de l'IS (Barik 1994; Altman 1994; Russo-Rucci 1997; Falbo 2002). Malgré les différentes perspectives adoptées et qui ont débouché sur des catégorisations différentes d'erreurs, on estime qu'elles peuvent néanmoins fournir des indications précieuses pour la description, en négatif, des critères-compétences. Les fautes sont là uniquement pour signaler un manque de compétence ou un niveau de compétence insuffisant.

Les contributions de Schjoldager (1996) et de Riccardi (2002) peuvent sans aucun doute offrir, pour reprendre les mots de Schjoldager (ib.: 194), "an explicit, systematic alternative to intuitive assessment procedures, whose criteria are not only implicit but also, I fell, arbitrary. Only explicit assessment criteria can be useful to learners".

5. Erreurs d'évaluation

On a souligné l'importance de définir le niveau de compétence requis en fin de formation par rapport au niveau professionnel. Ce niveau de compétence générale permettrait d'effectuer, à travers des critères comme la "compréhensibilité" et l'"équivalence" et leurs composantes, une évaluation adéquate. En l'absence d'un cadre de référence précis et de critères explicites et partagés, il existe le risque d'une sorte de déviation vers un type d'évaluation plutôt basée sur l'intuition. On peut parler de risque parce qu'une telle évaluation peut conduire à des distorsions. Il faut en effet tenir compte qu'en l'absence d'un monitorage de ce qu'il est effectivement nécessaire de contrôler, la tendance est celle de sélectionner les informations sur la base de certaines caractéristiques (Boncori 1993: 8-11). Parmi ces caractéristiques, on peut mentionner, par exemple, la fréquence, l'intensité et le caractère exceptionnel.

En outre, la sélection des éléments à évaluer semble étroitement liée à certaines caractéristiques personnelles de l'évaluateur. Il convient de noter que ces caractéristiques (cognitives et non, permanentes et transitoires ou bien spécifiques d'expériences passées) peuvent affecter même la quantité et la qualité des éléments perçus. Les expériences personnelles peuvent effectivement induire à une sensibilisation qui favorise la sélection de certains éléments à évaluer en dépit d'autres. Cela semble suggérer que, tout en partageant un modèle d'évaluation particulier, les membres d'un jury, en raison de leurs caractéristiques personnelles, peuvent percevoir

d'une façon différente non seulement les fautes mais aussi le nombre et la gravité de ces fautes. A cela il faut ajouter que certaines erreurs en IS semblent plus difficiles à identifier, comme le relève Gile (2001: 387) :

> Certaines erreurs, sur des chiffres ou des noms propres, des contresens, des fautes de grammaire, se déterminent facilement en tant qu'erreurs. D'autres sont plus problématiques. C'est le cas notamment des unités lexicales et structures linguistiques considérées comme acceptables par les uns, et maladroites, voire incorrectes, par d'autres […] Au niveau sémantique, certaines généralisations, certaines explicitations, certaines périphrases sont considérées comme appropriées par les uns et inappropriées par les autres.

En plus des processus de sélection des éléments à évaluer, il est nécessaire de tenir compte des processus d'organisation des éléments sélectionnés afin d'obtenir une structure significative. En effet, l'évaluateur sélectionne d'abord des éléments isolés, ensuite il organise ces éléments en vue de leur donner une structure. On peut supposer que la tendance à produire une vision globale à partir d'une sélection intuitive risque de provoquer de fortes distorsions dans l'évaluation de l'IS.

6. Conclusions

Il est toujours difficile de définir la qualité d'une prestation d'interprétation simultanée. En effet, les variables à considérer sont nombreuses et, sur le marché du travail, les circonstances "externes" ont un impact important. De cette façon, le système de référence auquel s'en tenir lors de l'évaluation sommative de l'IS ne peut pas coïncider avec celui de l'évaluation d'une prestation professionnelle, tant pour les conditions externes que pour le niveau atteint par les étudiants, qui reste à améliorer. Il faut donc établir un cadre de référence adapté à l'évaluation sommative de l'IS, un cadre qui tienne compte des conditions de travail irréelles de la formation universitaire. Pour combler l'écart qui sépare les compétences et l'approche à l'interprétation des jeunes interprètes par rapport aux interprètes professionnels, il conviendrait de réfléchir sur l'opportunité de créer les conditions pour en favoriser l'insertion graduelle sur le marché du travail. À partir de l'évaluation finale, fondée sur la vérification de leurs compétences en fin de formation, de leurs points forts et faibles, il faudrait promouvoir l'évolution des compétences déjà disponibles et fournir, à travers un parcours post-universitaire, les instruments pour orienter et adapter les compétences acquises aux situations réelles de travail.

Pour ce qui est de la méthode d'évaluation sommative, il apparait nécessaire d'élaborer des instruments adaptés à ce type de vérification où il ne s'agit plus d'évaluer *in itinere* étant donné que c'est le moment final, le moment où la compétence en IS est certifiée. L'évaluation, à ce moment-

là, devrait adopter une approche axée sur la compétence générale acquise. C'est à partir de la définition de cette compétence qu'il serait nécessaire d'identifier les sous-compétences qui la composent. Cette compétence générale, ainsi que la définition de sous-compétences, devraient être partagées par tous les évaluateurs, tant au niveau théorique que pratique. Voilà pourquoi il serait fondamental de parvenir à un accord sur la définition et la description des dimensions de la compétence. À partir de cet accord de nature théorique, les évaluateurs devraient vérifier et mesurer leur niveau de concordance au niveau opérationnel, en appliquant les critères d'évaluation partagés sur un certain nombre de prestations des étudiants. Une approche correcte devrait même favoriser la formulation d'hypothèses sur la signification des relations qui existent entre les différents phénomènes observés lors de l'évaluation. Une telle démarche serait sans aucun doute utile pour passer d'une interprétation liée à une approche analytique à une évaluation globale de la qualité du produit. Elle permettrait, en outre, de ne pas tomber dans le piège d'une évaluation intuitive. Ce dernier type d'évaluation conduit souvent à formuler des jugements fortement subjectifs étant donné qu'elle reste liée aux caractéristiques personnelles des évaluateurs. En même temps, elle a toujours un caractère arbitraire car elle est liée à une sélection des éléments à évaluer sur la base des caractéristiques des éléments qui composent le texte pris en considération, par exemple en termes de fréquence et d'intensité. C'est précisément à cause de ce type de sélection des éléments que la reconstruction et l'évaluation finale de la prestation risquent de tomber dans le piège de la subjectivité et de l'arbitraire.

Pour conclure, il faut préciser que la réflexion et les questions soulevées dans cette contribution ne constituent qu'un modeste point de départ vers une définition claire et univoque des objectifs, des critères et des modalités opérationnelles de l'évaluation en fin de formation. La notion principale à partir de laquelle construire un système de référence est la notion de «compétence». L'évaluation des étudiants en fin de formation devrait mettre en valeur le niveau de compétence acquis tout en identifiant les points faibles qui pourraient être renforcés non seulement à travers l'étude personnelle mais plus efficacement à travers un moment ultérieur de formation destiné à favoriser une entrée graduelle dans le marché du travail.

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