

Interpreting from speech to sign: Italian television news reports

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Abstract

The profoundly deaf and hard-of-hearing live and work like their fellow citizens, but constantly have to adjust to sound deprivation in order to communicate in mainstream society. How do they cope with international communication? This paper focuses on one aspect of international communication: global news coverage through simultaneous Italian Sign Language (LIS) interpreting on television. A comparative linguistic analysis of a small multimodal corpus obtained from the transcriptions of video recorded television news bulletins in spoken Italian and a simultaneously interpreted version in LIS, has revealed insights into how and to what extent news related specifically to global conflicts crosses the international 'sound barrier' and has highlighted some of the problems encountered by professional sign language interpreters. This analysis of professional interpreting in a real life working environment (the television studio) has led to findings that can be turned to good use in sign language interpreter training classes.

1. Introduction

Sign language interpreting has developed into a profession at differing rates around the world. It is well established in several countries such as

in the U.S.A. and the Netherlands but is still at a fledgling stage in others (cf. Napier 2009). With an uneven international provision of training, research on sign-language interpreting, unlike spoken-language interpreting studies, can still be considered an emerging topic with much to be discovered. Investigation has been slowly gaining momentum (e.g. Frishberg 1990; Cokely 1992; Solow 2000; Marschark *et al.* 2005; Janzen 2005; Napier *et al.* 2006), but little attention has hitherto been paid to sign-language interpreting in media settings. Studies, mainly in the British Isles, have focused principally on its provision and the description of deaf people's reactions to it with less attention given to the purely linguistic and theoretical aspects of media interpreting (Woll and Allsop 1990; Steiner 1998; Kyle and Dury 2003; Stone 2005). A broad survey of television sign language in 17 European countries has been conducted by Kyle and Allsop (1997) and one on Austrian as well as other German-language broadcasters' services for the deaf and hearing impaired has been undertaken by Kurz and Mikulasek (2004). A description of sign language news interpreting from the point of view of the deaf interpreter is offered by Allsop and Kyle (2008).

The first attempts to transfer information on television to deaf and hard-of-hearing Italians began tentatively in 1986 when the RAI provided subtitling for some films and television series. Today the Italian *Televideo* service, page 777, offers access to a wide range of subtitled pre-recorded programmes (Tucci 2000)¹. However, for technical reasons, live subtitled programmes – such as those featuring real-time political debate or sport – are not yet available. Voice recognition technology is being perfected and occasionally experimented on Italian television to permit real-time subtitling (Eugeni 2006, 2008a, b). At present, the provision of subtitles or Italian Sign Language (LIS – *Lingua dei Segni Italiana*) on television is deemed insufficient by many deaf people who pay a full TV license like other Italian citizens. But it is probably not fully understood and appreciated how complex and costly it is to provide such specialized media translation for a minority audience. There are also differences in opinion on this subject between signers and oralists. Among the former many consider sign language their first 'natural' language and, according to age or education, may not find reading subtitles an easy task. Yet the latter, brought up and educated without sign language, need subtitles.

An encouraging indication for future developments is a contract stipulated in 2007 between the RAI and the Italian Ministry for Communications, endorsing the proposals of the Italian Deaf Association (ENS – *Ente Nazionale Sordi - Onlus*) for more integration and accessibility².

1 Percentages of total, broadcast, subtitled, Italian programme genres: films – 40%; television series – 20%; culture/information – 25%; children's programmes – 15%. (Tucci 2000: 94).

2 See: http://www.storiadeisordi.it/articolo.asp?ENTRY_ID=998 (in Italian, last accessed October 2010).

It includes access by Italian deaf people through subtitling or LIS to at least 60% of all programmes broadcast, with particular attention focused on educational and political information². There is also provision of one daily edition of signed or subtitled TV news on the RAI TG1³, TG2 and TG3 channels.

This paper describes research done in Trieste at the *Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori* (Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators) regarding the simultaneous sign language interpretation of Italian television news flashes. LIS news bulletins can be considered a genrelet within the television news report subgenre belonging to the broad media genre. It is an informative genre, reporting events, facts and figures within a restricted time limit. This research is one of several areas of study being undertaken in an Italian national research project on socio-discursive practices⁴ and a continuation of previous work on sign language media interpreting and subtitling for the Italian deaf community (see Kellett Bidoli 2008a, b, 2009a, b; Kellett and Sala forthcoming). In order to investigate the provision and quality of sign language interpreting on Italian television channels a small corpus of video recordings of daily news bulletins was collected (see Table 1).

TV programme	Items	Bulletins and period of recording
RAI, TG 1 LIS	104	18 bulletins between 20 th Dec. 2006 and 25 th Jan. 2007
RAI, TG 2 LIS	44	9 bulletins between 19 th and 30 th Jan. 2009
RAI, TG 3 LIS	123	23 bulletins between 21 st Nov. 2008 and 30 th Jan. 2009
RETE 4, TG 4 LIS	41	5 bulletins 19 th - 23 rd Jan. 2009
	Total news items = 312	Total news bulletins = 55

Table 1. The 2006-2009 LIS television news corpus

3 From the online ENS bulletin, 19th April 2007 <<http://www.ens.it>>.

4 TG stands for *Telegiornale*, i.e. TV news on the Italian national RAI television network, channels 1, 2 and 3.

5 Research is underway within the PRIN project prot. 2007JCY9Y9, *Tension and Change in English Domain-specific Genres*, coordinated by Professor M. Gotti (University of Bergamo). The author is member of the Turin research unit, coordinated by Professor G. Cortese, dealing specifically with *Genre Migration: Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity across Media*. Research on this news genre began in a previous project, PRIN prot. 2005109911 *Identity and Culture in English Domain-specific Discourse*. See: <<http://www.unibg.it/cerlis/progetti.htm>>.

Although the news was reported in spoken Italian and simultaneously interpreted by professional interpreters into LIS, for the purpose of the research project I was initially interested in looking at manifestations of Anglo-American institutional and political identity in Italian television news reports to see if and how they are transferred through sign language interpreting. Intercultural discourse, identity, genre, domain-specific terminology and anglicisms are all major aspects that have been taken into consideration in this and previous research projects.

I have no knowledge as to the original source of the RAI news reports, though it is highly probable that those related to foreign affairs were obtained from international English-speaking news agencies or directly from English-speaking 24-hour news networks, like CNN, and subsequently translated into Italian. How much of the original news was domesticated or foreignised (Venuti 1995: 81) in the transfer from English to Italian at a macro level, or how much the news was ideologically manipulated, if at all, is impossible to discern.

2. The LIS news corpus

In terms of size, the corpus is small compared with the written corpora collected in language and translation studies, but, because of its complexity (a corpus composed of signs and speech), it is sufficient to start with. The total number of Italian tokens in the LIS TV corpus stands at 19,350 containing 4,516 types. As illustrated in Table 1, 55 news bulletins were recorded from four television channels containing 312 separate items of news and reporting events over two similar winter time spans.

As a channel of communication for deaf people this news genrelet is of multimodal nature. Not only are speech and sign language both present in the corpus but also additional visual semiotics that vary greatly from channel to channel:

- TG1: behind the interpreter viewers can see a wall screen displaying a single static picture related to the news content that does not distract from the signing. A short headline (2 to 4 words long) related to the news item is placed along the bottom section of the screen behind the interpreter, leading occasionally to the first 2 or 3 letters being obscured (which happened on 18 occasions);
- TG2: no images are provided but there are headlines in capital letters;
- TG3: neither images nor headlines are broadcast;
- TG4: dynamic film footage is shown in the larger of two inserts, separated from the headline below. Headlines are slow to appear after the reader has introduced the first words of each item and the film footage is aired.

The main problem for interpreters is the brevity of the bulletins, as illustrated in Table 2. From a rough calculation based on the TV Guide, at

the time of recording there were on average three minutes of news aired once a day with the exception of eight minutes for channel 4, compared to approximately 25 minutes dedicated to regular news bulletins for the hearing (with several editions per day).

	Regular news bulletins per day	Minutes aired	LIS news Flashes per day	Minutes aired
RAI TG 1	11	195	1	3
RAI TG 2	6	115	1	3
RAI TG 3	7 (plus regional news editions)	255	1	3-4
Rete 4 TG 4	4	120	1	8

Table 2. Amount of news aired per day

Clearly, deaf and hard-of-hearing people are provided with a greatly reduced amount of information in LIS, which for many deaf people is their first language. Unfortunately, in March 2010 the Rete 4 TG4, the longest of the four programmes, was replaced by a subtitled edition. This in no way contravenes the 2007 contract, which states that news must be provided in LIS or subtitles, but has led to discontent among the signing community.

The brevity of the news flashes leads to necessary adaptations by the interpreters. There is little space for a long lag-time (*décalage* or voice-hand span). The interpreters have to start and close almost simultaneously with the newsreader so that they are not cut off or keep the newsreader waiting for them to finish. Added to the stress caused by this temporal constraint are the many linguistic features involved in the translation process. Furthermore, whereas the spoken language interpreter normally prepares for a conference assignment by working on a specific topic or subject area (be it political, economic, legal or scientific, etc.), anticipating the content and preparing to use specific terminology and phraseology determined to a large extent by genre, the sign language news interpreter is confronted with a wide selection of topics (from 3 to 10 depending on the channel), presented in rapid succession.

The 2006-2007 Italian recordings were manually transcribed, whereas the scripts of the 2008-2009 recordings were obtained from the interpreters. Regarding LIS, manual conversion was undertaken of signs or units of semantic meaning into glosses/labels of their nearest 'spoken language' equivalents, with the assistance of professional sign language interpreters. Signs are three-dimensional and constantly accompanied by simultaneous gestures, facial expression and mouthings; therefore, the transcription of sign language is extremely arduous. However, it is

possible to vertically align chunks of the original spoken discourse with corresponding ‘glossed’ transcriptions of the sign language (see Kellett Bidoli 2007a). All examples below have been translated for an international readership from the original Italian into English.

I initially analysed the domain-specific source text (ST) terminology contained in the 2006-2007 recordings and manually extracted 861 domain-specific terms (13.89% of total types), sorting them into six broad categories as illustrated in Figure 1, for a closer investigation of features related to identity and genre.

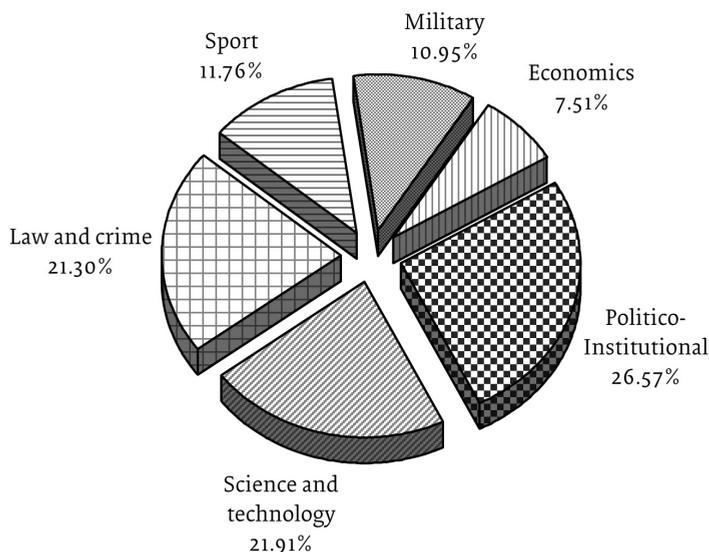


Figure 1 Domain-specific ST terminology in the 2006-2007 recordings (Source: Kellett Bidoli 2009a: 321)

Below follows an overview of findings related to research on three of these terminological categories (in Figure 1): politico-institutional news, news on law and crime and conflict-related news.

3. Politico-institutional news

News reporting Anglo-American realities, selected from the 2006-2007 recordings, comprises 12.5% of total international news items with a dominance of American news, mainly related to the Iraq War (see Table 3. – ‘General international events’ comprise news mainly on international organizations, e.g. UNO or EU). Terms considered culturally-bound identity markers were extracted from the subcorpus. These were terms that mentally evoke images of a politico-institutional nature different from Italian ones or lack equivalents altogether, such as:

- 'White House' and 'Congress' (reference to the principal symbols of American government);
- 'Magistrate', a 'false friend' image of a British juridical figure neither culturally nor institutionally equivalent to the Italian *magistrato* (Kellett Bidoli 2009a: 323).

TOPIC AREA	% of total coverage
<i>Italian news</i>	68.3
<i>International news</i>	31.7
USA	10.6
UK	1.9
Middle East	5.8
Africa	5.8
Cuba	0.9
General international events	6.7

Table 3. Percentage of coverage of topic areas in the 2006-2007 recordings

The names of well-known British or American individuals were also taken into consideration, because in LIS they must be conveyed through fingerspelling as there rarely exists a ready-made sign name for them. Spelling from one mode into another can lead to error, misunderstanding and a slowing down of the interpreting process. Similarly, geographical place names act as culture-bound identity markers not only of their actual geopolitical location, but may evoke 'foreignness' through their pronunciation, spelling or fingerspelling if no official signed translation exists. Sometimes fingerspelling is used to spell out new Italian terms lacking a sign or for terms whose sign the interpreter is not fluent or acquainted with. In the corpus most interpreters use the full fingerspelling of politicians' names or surnames or resort to initializing one of them or both, i.e. they use the letter of the manual alphabet which corresponds to the first letter of the name and/or surname and continue by mouthing the rest of the name in full. This strategy is the least time-consuming solution.

During any translation (written, oral or signed) an intercultural/linguistic migration takes place across two semiotic systems bringing about an inevitable adaptation or hybridisation of the original ST genre in the target text (TT). Hybridisation is not meant here as a text "shifted to another type and made to serve another purpose without completely losing at least some of the properties of the original type" (Hatim and

Mason 1990: 147). It is intended as a cross-linguistic migration resulting in a semantic transfer that is essentially unchanged at a macro level, but at a micro level, lexical, morphological, or rhetorical properties may be altered (or even omitted) to produce a hybridised text to fit the linguistic patterns of the target language and culture. In other words, a 'domestication' takes place (Venuti 1995). However, although Venuti states that, at least in Anglo-American culture, translation "has long been dominated by domesticating theories" (1995: 21), in the news corpus a dominance of foreignisation was detected thus an interpretation was produced that did not always comply with the norms of standardization or normalization of the ST into the TT (*ibid.*: 81). At the lexical level in the corpus, the American and British culturally-bound, identity-related terms were found to pass from the oral to the gestural mode resulting in a migration of the ST genre, but, because these terms were often transferred unaltered into LIS, little hybridization was detected in the TT. Both Italian hearing and deaf target audiences are expected to be acquainted with the British or American culture-bound referents. How receptive deaf people are to Anglo-American realities through the foreignisation of such lexical items in LIS (by maintaining the original in fingerspelling and/or mouthing) is an area for possible future investigation. Many older deaf Italians do not know English at all, although the younger generation now learn it at school and have daily contact with it on the Internet (see Kellett Bidoli 2007b).

Interestingly, it was also found that the morphological and linguistic adaptations made by the interpreters to convey meaning from an oral to gestural mode of communication do not always conform to the grammatical norms of LIS. Several occurrences were noted of the encroachment of Signed Italian, i.e. sign language shadowing the word order and grammar of spoken Italian.

At the macro level, a transfer of predominantly negative undertones embedded in the bulletins was detected. The United States of America was portrayed as a bellicose nation with a powerful President and Britain represented by crime and Royal Family intrigue. Owing to the brevity of the bulletins it is logical to assume that news scriptwriters tend to select only catchy, interesting news items from the original news agency reports during the reporting/translation process from English to Italian before the news reaches the LIS interpreters and subsequently the deaf viewers. (For a more complete report of findings, see Kellett Bidoli 2009a)

4. News on law and crime

Most terminology related to law and crime extracted from the 2006-2007 recordings was found in the national news reports, see Table 4.

TOPIC AREA	% of total coverage
<i>Italian news</i>	68.3
Politics	33.7
Crime	7.7
Culture	1.9
Science	0.9
Sport	11.6
General events	12.5

Table 4. Percentage of coverage of topic areas in Italian news (2006-2007 recordings)

Only one item reported a British crime, the arrest of a serial killer in Ipswich, containing several domain-specific terms (TG1 21/12/06). The toponym was fingerspelled correctly but accompanied by a mouthed mispronunciation: I-P-S-W-I-C-H + “*Iswich*”. The headline ‘Serial killer’, a common anglicism in Italy, was written in English on the studio screen. Another item reported was on Lady Diana’s inquest (TG1 08/01/07). ‘Inquest’ became the more generic sign INVESTIGATION and ‘accident’ was specified by using a clear classifier for CAR to sign CAR-ACCIDENT, although this was not explicitly mentioned in the original. Here the interpreter’s ‘world knowledge’ led her to add information to clarify her signing. All items subsequently analysed in the 2008-09 recordings related to law and crime were on Italian events apart from one on China: the trial of three Chinese citizens involved in a milk contamination scandal (TG2 22/01/09).

The 143 Italian ST tokens in the ‘law and crime’ category (see Figure 1) contain 121 types of which 81 occur only once (56.64 % of total ‘legal’ words). The most frequently occurring Italian lexemes are principally composed of widely understood crime and law-related terms used in standard everyday language (e.g. *carcere* – prison/jail, *omicidio/i* – murder/homicide/s, *pena capitale* – capital punishment, *polizia* – police, *strage* – slaughter). Only a few terms in the Italian ST can be considered specialized lexemes (e.g. *avviso di garanzia* – ‘writ of summons’, *impugnare* – ‘to counterclaim’).

By looking closely at the types it was found that signs referring to ‘arrest and legal procedure’ are the most numerous (50.41 %), followed by ‘crimes committed’ (25.62 %), ‘punishment’ (11.57 %), and lastly ‘generic and statute law’ (10.74 %). The 2008-09 items in the extended corpus still need to be tested to see whether these results reflect a general tendency and, if so, the data could provide a useful indication of the ‘legal’ terminological

fields most likely to be encountered on the job (see Kellett Bidoli 2009b for more detail and examples).

5. Conflict-related news

A closer look at the ‘military’ terminological category was aided by the addition of the 2008-2009 recordings. A subcorpus of items reporting conflict was extracted from the international news. It comprised 17.31% of total news items, containing 1,207 types within the 3,709 tokens. The percentage of news coverage for each channel is illustrated in Table 5.

	TG1	TG2	TG3	TG4	Corpus
International news	31.73	34.09	27.64	41.46	31.73
Conflict related news	19.23	18.18	14.63	19.51	17.31

Table 5. Percentage of coverage of international and conflict-related news

The areas of world conflict reported in the subcorpus are shown in Table 6. They were dominated by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and great tensions between the Israeli government and Hamas.

	TG1	TG2	TG3	TG4	Corpus	%
Africa	5		2	1	8	14.8
India			2		2	3.7
Iraq	8				8	14.8
Middle East	3	8	14	6	31	57.4
USA	1			1	2	3.7
Transnational	3				3	5.6

Table 6. Geographical source of conflict-related news in the subcorpus

This is followed by conflict between Iraq and the USA (reported exclusively in the 2006 TG1 recordings). Thirdly, African conflicts include reports on fighting between various ethnic groups in the Congo, Horn of Africa and clashes between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. Next follows conflict related to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai (November 2008) and hence, military intervention and tension between India and Pakistan. Terminology was included from two reports on ‘American territory’. Firstly, a terrorist attack at the American Embassy in Athens and, secondly,

the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base detention camp where President Barack Obama pledged to end torture by American troops there or anywhere in war. General transnational events related to conflict concern international organizations (e.g. the UNO, EU and NATO).

The Italian domain-specific terminology in this ‘military category’ falls into five terminological subcategories or concept fields as illustrated in Figure 2.

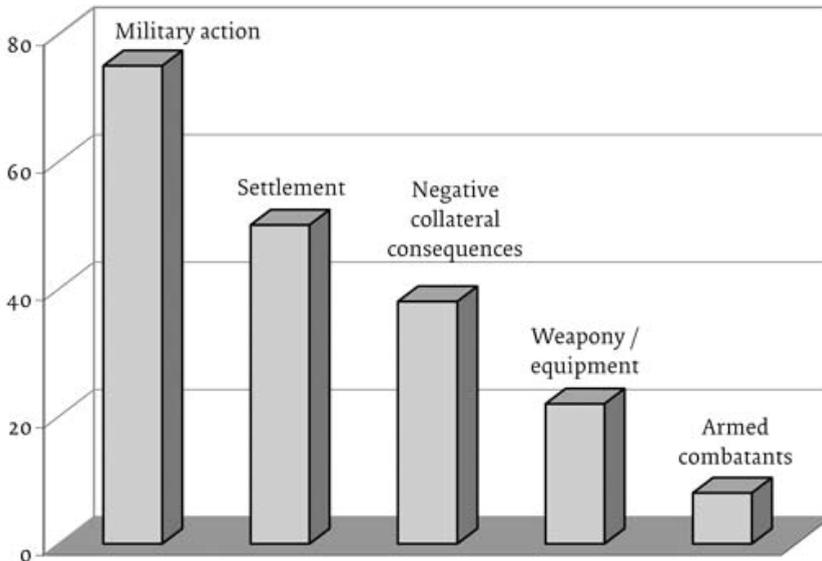


Figure 2 Onomasiological division of conflict-related tokens in Italian ‘military’ terminology

The largest field, related to military action, contains 75 tokens, such as: ‘ambush’, ‘command’, ‘contingent’, ‘clashes’, ‘explosions’, ‘hostility’, ‘incursion’, ‘offensive’, ‘shots’, ‘violence’ and ‘war’. Interestingly, regarding the key words ‘war’ and ‘conflict’ that one would expect to find in a subcorpus of this kind, the former ranked only 9th (with 5 occurrences) and the latter was totally absent.

Terms associated with the settlement of conflict comprised the second largest terminological concept field and, hence, positive developments in conflictual situations, of which three terms rank first in the word count: ‘truce’ (13 occurrences), ‘peace’ (11), ‘withdrawal’ (9), as well as ‘cease fire’ (8) ranking 5th.

The third field is related to the mortal consequences of conflict: ‘death/s’, ‘killed’, ‘massacre’ and ‘victims’, and other negative collateral circumstances, ‘evacuees’, ‘hostages’, ‘refugees’ and ‘wounded’.

Two smaller concept fields contained lexemes for military weaponry and equipment (‘arms’, ‘helicopter’, ‘missiles’, ‘mortar’, ‘tanks’), and referents related to armed non-military or paramilitary combatants (‘guerrillas’, ‘militias’, ‘rebels’ and ‘terrorist/s’).

Having identified the domain-specific ST terminology, attention was turned towards how it was signed. Sign language manages to convey a great deal of detailed information (e.g. movement or the shape of objects) through its particular ‘phonological’ and grammatical characteristics. For example, the Italian verb *dare* (to give) has a sign but it changes according to whom you are giving something to or which object is being given (even its shape, weight, or direction can be conveyed). The general ‘container’ term in LIS for ‘to give’, does not always fit nicely into the interpreted context as a single sign; therefore, the interpreter has to adapt it accordingly to create a verb-object fusion which modifies the ‘basic’ sign. An example of this adaptation in the conflict subcorpus is the verb ‘to strike/hit’ (*colpire* which in Italian is homonymic and also means ‘to shoot’). The ‘strike/hit/shoot’ handshape changes according to whether ‘a man strikes/hits foe or friend’, ‘a missile strikes from the air, land or sea’, or whether ‘shots are from a gun or mortar’. In all these cases the specific shape the hand must assume is different and interpreters have to adjust accordingly very rapidly. It is in these circumstances that the interpreter’s ‘world knowledge’ on current news is fundamental. It might be what s/he remembers from previous news or what s/he has read as pre-broadcast preparation. An example can be found in the following item:

Ventiduesimo giorno di attacco israeliano su Gaza. Colpito di nuovo un edificio dell’ONU. (TG3 on 17/01/2009)

[Twenty-second day of the Israeli attack on Gaza. A UNO building has been hit yet again].

The interpreter uses a closed 5 figure classifier (5-CL) for the sign HIT (COLPITO) as an indication of bombs falling from the sky. Although this was not explicitly stated in the item, she knew that the building was not hit by a gas explosion, a concealed bomb or sea-to-land strike, but by an air strike.

Examples of nouns in the subcorpus that have different synonymous signs in LIS are ‘truce’ (*tregua*) and ‘cease-fire’ (*cessate il fuoco*). In the bulletins they are interpreted by various signs glossed as: PAUSE, WAR-SUSPENDED, SUSPENSION, or FIRING-ENOUGH/SUFFICIENT. Often the signs used to interpret ‘truce’ are identical to those used for ‘cease-fire’. However, when both terms are present in the same item of news, the interpreter is forced to make a split second decision whether to use a synonymous sign or omit one of them. News interpreters need to be acquainted with an extremely wide range of signs to cover the numerous concept fields encountered. Sometimes fingerspelling has to be adopted as in the case of ‘white phosphorous’. There is no sign in LIS for ‘phosphorus’ so it is fingerspelled and followed by the sign WHITE (F-O-S-F-O-R-O + BIANCO).

Proper and institutional names, place names and nationalities are particularly common in the conflict subcorpus owing to the international

nature of conflict and the parties involved. For proper names the initial letter or full or partial fingerspelling with mouthings comes into play again (as described in section 3), e.g. Williamson – “Williams” O-N; Mubarak – M-U “Barak”; Olmert – O-L “mert”.

Fingerspelling is adopted 71 times for institutional references composed of 21 types referring to international organizations, seats of government and diplomacy, political parties, factions, militias, religious groups or institutions, tribunals, a television network and particular locations such as a hospital or the hotels and Jewish centre involved in the Mumbai terrorist attacks. The most frequent term is ‘ Hamas’ (14 occurrences) followed by ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (9), related to various countries.

Toponymic reference causes problems in LIS as signed television news reporting in Italy is recent and signs have not yet developed for the less common names. Sign names exist for European countries or major states and continents like ‘China’ or ‘Africa’ but even these may evolve over time to accommodate political correctness (see Kellett and Sala, forthcoming). The range of toponymic types is very extensive, 58 in all with 169 occurrences (tokens). Interpretation of toponyms follows similar choices to those described for proper names, i.e. recourse to fingerspelling (the whole word or initial letter) or the use of existing (biblical) place sign names (e.g. ‘Israel’, ‘Egypt’ as well as the city of ‘Jerusalem’). For the names of Arab states most interpreters resort to full or partial fingerspelling because no sign names exist for them in LIS (e.g. G-A-Z-A fingerspelled in full or preceded by the LIS sign for ‘strip’: STRIP + G-A-Z-A). Likewise, the manual alphabet is adopted for 99 occurrences of nouns and adjectives denoting nationality (composed of 20 types).

In sign language facial expression conveys important grammatical and semantic information. A sentence can be rendered interrogative through a brow raise. The widening or narrowing of the lips can indicate the size of an object. In most cases, prosody, speed and emphasis are indicated through particular facial expressions, but to date little research has been done in this area on LIS. Correct management of facial expression is problematic for sign language interpreters as it is not natural and spontaneous in hearing people (unless they were brought up by deaf parents). It is particularly important when conveying news on conflict where emotions, reactions and the intensity of conflict have to be transmitted in some way. For more detail on the conflict subcorpus see Kellett and Sala (forthcoming).

6. Foreign loans

Anglicisms are common in regular spoken Italian news reports, have become part of the Italian language and are found in all genres. Several

appeared in the main corpus. Some have entered LIS acquiring recognizable signs (glossed below in English) like:

Film – FILM

Goal – GOAL

Leader – HEAD

A LIS sign does exist for LEADERSHIP borrowed from American Sign Language, but it is not used in the corpus. Some anglicisms have no corresponding sign but a solution is sought to convey the meaning:

Fan – WHO LOVE

Raid – AEROPLANES BOMBING

Others, if not so common, have to be conveyed by finding logical, clear, solutions on the spur of the moment made from the combination of an existing sign in LIS and the mouthing of the term in English:

Cargo – TRANSPORT + “*cargo*”

Container – BOX + “*container*”

Manager – BAG-CARRIER + “*manager*”

Pacemaker – HEART + “*pacemaker*”

*Test Anti-doping*⁶ – BLOOD-EXTRACTION PILLS + “*test doping*”

Unabomber – 1 BOMB + “*bomber*”

Yet others are fingerspelled:

OK – O-K

Pop – P-O-P

Another solution is partial fingerspelling of the English word plus mouthing of the English:

Provider – P-R-O + “*provider*”

One anglicism was mixed including a LIS sign, initialization of the place name, as well as its English mouthing, which turned out to be an Italian phonetic pronunciation of the spelling.

Scandalo Watergate – SCANDAL -W- + “*Watergate*”

‘OK’ and ‘pop’ are widely used English loans in both Italian and LIS. ‘Stop’ is another commonly used anglicism in Italian but has distinct signs in LIS according to whether it means ‘enough’, ‘come to a halt’, ‘bring to an end’ etc. ‘Big’ was also found but it is a loan only in Italian and hence probably not transparent in LIS as is also the case for ‘*provider*’ and ‘*manager*’.

Other foreign loans used in the Italian corpus are:

- ‘*blitz*’ of German origin, uttered once in the ST but omitted in LIS as rendered redundant by the term ‘*raid*’ preceding it in the same news item;

6 English words but in an Italian word order.

- a word of French origin in the sub corpus is '*bipartisan*', interpreted according to the context by indication of the spatial location of the two parties involved followed by EQUAL;
- a second French loan is the common term '*premier*' interpreted by HEAD like '*leader*', or, if already mentioned in the item, by indication of 'his' previously signed location and interpreted once by FIRST + -M- "*minister*" (i.e. Prime Minister);
- a third gallicism is '*dossier*' rendered FILE + "*dossier*";
- the Arabic word '*rais*' is mouthed three times when referring to Saddam Hussein. It is interpreted once by indication of Saddam's location in the previously signed discourse and twice by the sign 'EX/FORMER' + -R- accompanied by mouthing: EX + -R- "*rais*";
- the biblical Hebrew term '*Shoah*' meaning desolation, catastrophe or disaster, referring to the Jewish Holocaust in items on Middle Eastern events is always fingerspelled in full: S-H-O-A-H.

7. Concluding remarks

The comparative linguistic analysis of a small multimodal corpus of Italian news reports signed in LIS has revealed several insights into how and to what extent international and Italian news, related specifically to politico-institutional events, law, crime and global conflicts, crosses the international 'sound barrier': it has also highlighted some of the problems encountered by professional sign language interpreters. This paper has included only a few examples of the linguistic challenges confronting them in the television news studio (more fully explained in Kellett Bidoli 2009a, b; Kellett and Sala forthcoming). It was found that on all four channels the news was conveyed adequately despite the temporal constraints imposed by the medium. In the three domain-specific areas examined so far, eight principle factors challenge the sign language interpreters' cognitive coping strategies. They are mainly linguistic and textual features forcing them to adjust and find suitable solutions ranging from anticipation to reformulation or even omission of terms or chunks of information:

- the time factor (bulletin schedule as well as the speed of enunciation);
- domain-specific terminology;
- the use of 'container' terms and synonyms;
- culture-bound terms;
- home and foreign proper names;
- toponymic reference and nationalities;
- foreign loans;
- emphasis through facial expression.

Apart from the mode of delivery, sign-language interpreting in many ways is not so diverse from simultaneous spoken-language interpreting

(Kellett Bidoli 2002). Similarities in research interests can easily be found but are as yet little explored. One such area is interpreting quality. Some of the output-related quality criteria commonly cited in the literature could be applied also to sign-language interpreting quality such as:

- correct terminology: a criterion highly relevant to the wide variety of ST terms described above and for which the sign language news interpreter must find rapid solutions when ready-made established signs do not exist;
- correct grammar: extremely important in sign language where signed varieties of national spoken languages should be avoided (e.g. Signed Italian);
- fluency of delivery: sign fluency is achieved through the correct use of the four universally recognized parameters: handshape, palm orientation, movement and location;
- lively intonation: the equivalent of this prosodic feature in sign language is emphatic facial expression and gesture. (An interesting experiment could be to sign the news with reduced or no facial expression. Could this be considered the equivalent of monotonous and inexpressive speech?);
- pleasant voice: signing has to be clear but also pleasant and harmonious to watch;
- synchronicity: here synchronicity with the newsreader is of the essence;
- native accent: there is not one universal sign language as many hearing people believe, but as many signed languages and regional 'dialects' as there are deaf communities. This may cause problems of comprehension not only among interpreters but also among signers unacquainted with particular 'signed accents' or signed lexical variants.

As mentioned in the introduction, little attention has hitherto been paid to research on sign-language interpreting in media settings. At the Trieste conference *Emerging Topics in Translation and Interpreting* (16-18 June, 2010) Robin Setton stated that interpreting theory has to be based on observing the interpreting profession followed by categorization, explicit theory, testing, verification and application. This paper falls within the first phase of this chain: observation. Research interest in Trieste has modestly begun to emerge in this area but has a long way to go before analysis of professional interpreting in the television studio passes through the subsequent stages leading to practical applications that can be turned to good use in sign language interpreter training courses. During the training of novice sign language interpreters, time should be set aside to dwell on different settings. On the one hand, like in spoken-language interpreting, there is the conference setting, as deaf people are becoming more aware of their rights and attend conferences on deaf issues. On the other hand, more importantly for the deaf, socially-related settings are those in which interpreters will work more frequently (in hospitals, courtrooms, educational institutions etc.), but a few will be employed to

work in the television studio to provide deaf and hard-of-hearing people with access to national and international communication. Students should be made aware of differences in these working environments and taught the appropriate coping strategies. In the case of news interpreting they must work on many fronts: on signing skills, on how to handle a wide range of domain specific-terminology, on the perfection and rapidity of fingerspelling, on learning to cope with the barrage of proper names, toponyms and numerous institutional and geographical references, on becoming aware of quality criteria and expected standards, on working in front of a camera.

What is learnt through research about how professionals cope in real-life situations can be taught in classroom learning environments where this knowledge is absorbed by trainees. Over time, they will become 'fledgling' interpreters themselves and probably apply the theoretical teaching to a practical amelioration of their own interpreting skills. This in turn will be observed by new generations of researchers to hopefully generate a cyclical improvement of sign language interpreter performance, thus, starting from the interpreting profession, passing to theory, back to the interpreting profession, to theory, to the interpreting profession.

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