

Question/Answer Topical Coherence in Television Interpreting. A Corpus-based Pilot Study of American Presidential Debates

EUGENIA DAL FOVO

ABSTRACT

The chapter outlines a corpus-based analysis of topical coherence in interpreted American presidential debates broadcast on Italian television. It aims at investigating the ways in which dialogue format and question/answer structure are managed.

The first part identifies the types of question and answer in the SL, their Italian equivalent, and the incidence of each type of question. The question/answer classification takes into account syntactical, illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of the discourse.

The second part focuses on question/answer topical coherence in the interpreted versions. It examines whether topical coherence is achieved, and in which ways its achievement is influenced by the type of question and the changes that occurred during the interpretation process, observed through a contrastive analysis of the original and the interpreted version.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper offers a specific example of corpus-based analysis. It is focused on the interpreted versions of American presidential debates broadcast by Italian television networks between 1988 and 2004, and aims at analysing the rendition of the question/answer (Q/A) group in terms of topic reconstruction and topical coherence by interpreters working in an *équipe*. It outlines the first phase of a pilot study aiming at devising and testing the methodological framework in which the final study will be drawn up. This research was developed as a continuation of a study presented in the author's unpublished MA dissertation on the rendition of dialogue format in simultaneous interpretation of American presidential debates (Dal Fovo 2008).

The present analysis focuses on the reconstruction of topic within the interpreted text (IT), as the result of negotiation and cooperation among interpreters working in an *équipe*. Consequently, the aim of this study is highlighting the cases in which coherence is lost or maintained by observing the Q/A group in the IT exclusively. The evaluation will not include any reference to the original text (OT) and the ways in which coherence got "lost in translation".

I shall start by briefly presenting data analysed in the pilot study and the corpus they are collected from, i.e. CorIT – Television Interpreting Corpus (Falbo 2008; Straniero Sergio 2007).

I shall then move on illustrating the methodological approach adopted for the analysis, pointing out the key aspects serving as landmarks for the investigation: IT coherence vs. OT/IT coherence; Q/A group as an adjacency pair; definition of topical coherence with reference to coherence vs. cohesion; classification of Qs and As. I shall conclude by presenting results obtained in this first phase, providing examples and discussing the general outcomes.

Clearly, any observation or conclusion resulting from this phase shall find its counterproof in the second phase of the pilot study (2012), i.e. the OT-IT contrastive analysis.

2. DATA

The data chosen for the analysis are 8 simultaneous interpretations of 5 American presidential debates broadcast by Italian television networks between 1988 and 2004, amounting to ca. 640 minutes of recorded interpreted text.

DEBATE	DATE	BROADCASTER
Bush/Dukakis	26-Sep-88	<i>Speciale TG2</i>
Bush/Kerry 1	01-Oct-04	<i>TG1 (Rainews)</i>
Cheney/Edwards	06-Oct-04	<i>Rainews</i>
Bush/Kerry 2	09-Oct-04	TG5
Bush/Kerry 2	09-Oct-04	Sky TG24
Bush/Kerry 2	10-Oct-04	<i>LA7</i>
Bush/Kerry 3	14-Oct-04	<i>Sky TG24</i>
Bush/Kerry 3	14-Oct-04	<i>TG5</i>

TABLE 1. Data (debates analysed in the pilot study are in **bold**)

All 5 debates and their ITs are part of CorIT, a major television interpreting corpus (cf. Mack 2000, 2001, 2002; Straniero Sergio 1999, 2003, 2005, 2007) covering almost 50 years of recordings of interpretations broadcast on Italian television (Falbo 2009: 105). It originated from the long-felt need in research for a scientific approach to and a close observation of the interpreter's performance in relation to context, and the case for doing so by basing the analysis on real-life data collected in specific corpora. Not long ago Setton (1999: 5) wrote: "so far no attempt has been made at modelling context in relation to a corpus; rather, context and inference have been set aside as impenetrable subjective variables". In recent years "a general consensus appears to be emerging around certain key points", and first and foremost on the fact that "more corpora are needed" (*ibid.*: 45).

CorIT can be defined as a parallel open corpus (Falbo 2009: 107), because it is composed of both original texts and their interpreted versions, and because there is no limit to the number of texts that can be added to the corpus. It is a collection of video and audio files, with their respective transcriptions, for a total of approximately 2,500 ITs. It comprises a range of very diverse OTs, delivered in various source languages (SL) interpreted into Italian, in various interpreting modes, belonging to various television genres.

As far as interpreting modes are concerned, the three main categories found in CorIT are:

- ICNS – Consecutive interpreting without notes¹;

¹ The ICNS is found in dialogal settings in which interpreters share the *hic et nunc* with the primary interlocutors. The ISP mode refers to cases in which interpreters translate given exchanges simultaneously and share the *hic et nunc* with the primary interlocutors; without their contribution, communication would be impossible (cf. Falbo 2009: 116; Falbo 2012). The ISA mode describes all the cases in which interaction takes place in the absence of interpret-

- ISP – Simultaneous interpreting *in praesentia*;
- ISA – Simultaneous interpreting *in absentia*.

ISA is the mode pertaining to the analysed sample, namely presidential debates.

This pilot study concentrates on the first two versions of the second Bush/Kerry debate of October 9th 2004 (Table 1, in bold). They were chosen to outline the main topical-coherence aspects marking the IT as an autonomous text. While these two versions were broadcast live and in their integral form, the La7 debate was cut and edited to fit a frame programme on the following day. During the La7 broadcast, which includes a series of live link-ups with Washington to update the results of the exit polls, there are four interruptions in which the most relevant chunks of the debate of the previous night are shown to the public and guests. The interpreters of the *équipe* working in the studio during the daytime broadcast interpret live, and are the same professionals who provided the interpretation service on the night of the debate. The IT, in this case, is a mere collection of fragments of the original debate, to be commented on by the guests of the frame programme. The incompleteness of this version, and the fact that the interpreters had already heard the debate the night before and were interpreting it for the second time, led to the decision of discarding it – at least temporarily.

3. METHODOLOGY

The following section is devoted to the identification of the key concepts driving the present study, namely IT coherence vs. OT-IT coherence; Q/A group; topical coherence; question occurrences and classification; answer occurrences and classification.

3.1. *IT coherence vs. OT-IT coherence*

The first phase of the pilot study focuses on the analysis of topical coherence in the IT exclusively. The reason behind this choice is two-fold. First of all, the IT is the result of a service provided with the aim of making the OT accessible to the target-language (TL) audience. Topical coherence – or the lack of it – is perceived first and foremost by the TL audience and is, therefore, “situated at the first level of analysis for the simple reason that the listener (analyst), listening to an IT, notices any incongruities between the ideas expressed without having to know anything about the OT” (Falbo 2002: 119). The second consideration that led to this decision is methodological in nature: making the OT-IT contrastive observation

ers and does not depend on their intervention, which has the sole function of making the OT accessible to the TL audience.

the starting point of the analysis might have influenced the final evaluation, diverting the focus from the internal coherence of the interpreted discourse to the level of translation analysis. In order to investigate the IT as objectively as possible, isolating it from the OT and considering it individually, appeared to be the most suitable approach.

3.2. Question/Answer group

The analysis focuses on the Q/A group as an adjacency pair (Schegloff & Sacks 1999: 295). As regards presidential debates, they are marked by a rigid sequential structure and dialogue format (cf. Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1990, 2005; Linell 1998) identifying the degree of interaction in terms of structure, i.e. turn-taking system, rhythm and turn distribution. They display a very low level of local coherence, since:

[...] many questions abruptly introduce new topics and topical aspects [...]. As a compensation for the lower incidence of local coherence links, there is a global coherence supported by some kind of institutionalized framing that defines the activity type as a global communicative project aiming at certain overall goals. (Linell 1998: 252-3)

In this highly structured frame, adjacency pairs represent the very argumentative pattern of each exchange. They provide for an extremely binding element within the communication format, whose pivot is the question:

The asking of unrelated questions in these various [...] frames are somewhat extreme examples of activity-sustained coherence [...]. The general point is that the topic progression type is co-constitutive of the institutionalized communicative genre. (Linell 1998: 253)

The degree of topical coherence is therefore measured in terms of sequentiality and relevance within the Q/A group (see § 3.3).

3.3. Topical coherence

Having established that topical coherence is the result of an activity framing “a global communicative project aiming at certain overall goals” (Linell 1998: 253) and assuming that these goals are primarily related to understanding through constant negotiation – i.e. “joint construction” (*ibid.*: 86), interaction may be described as the activity of interlocutors collaborating “towards coherence, negotiating for the common ground of shared topicality, reference, and thematic structure – thus towards a similar mental representation” (Gernsbacher & Givón 1995: vii). Coherence, therefore, will not be defined as an intrinsic characteristic

of a text, but rather as a matter of degree, i.e. something that “emerges during speech production and comprehension – the mentally represented text, and in particular the mental processes that partake in constructing that mental representation.” (*ibid.*: vii).

There is, however, a need to identify topical coherence IN THE TEXT, as the present analysis starts from and aims at observing real, tangible data. Since, together with actors’ contributions, “it is partly the analyst who makes this coherence visible by selecting properties and discerning patterns in discourse, as part of his or her activity” (Linell 1998: 191), I shall here concentrate on topical coherence from the point of view of the IT thematic structure. This type of coherence is strongly dependent on the adjacency pair structure and its reconstruction, which is always aimed at “making the conversation appear to be planned and goal-oriented with regard to the thematic structure, i.e. for making the conversation appear as a joint and coherent activity” (Wadensjö 1998: 249).

A further clarification of this point is provided by the distinction between COHERENCE and COHESION adopted in the present study. As opposed to Halliday and Hasan (1987), who define cohesion as a macro-category, covering linguistic structure, discourse structure and semantic relations, cohesion – or CONTINUITY OF OCCURRENCE (DeBeaugrande & Dressler 2000: IV) – will here be referred solely to text syntax and grammar, i.e. the way in which the “various occurrences in the text [...] are related to each other [...]. The most obvious illustration is the language system of SYNTAX that imposes organizational patterns upon the SURFACE TEXT (the presented configuration of words).” (DeBeaugrande & Dressler 2000: IV). As regards the semantic connections guiding the logical structure of a text, they are gathered under the definition of coherence, or CONTINUITY OF SENSE: “A text ‘makes sense’ because there is a CONTINUITY OF SENSES among the knowledge activated by the expressions of the text.” (*ibid.*: V).

In adopting this terminological distinction, the analyst cannot disregard the fact that the definition of coherence suggested by DeBeaugrande and Dressler very much resembles the definition of semantic cohesion as the set of semantic relations provided by Halliday and Hasan (1987: 11): “there is one specific kind of meaning relation that is critical for the creation of texture: that in which ONE ELEMENT IS INTERPRETED BY REFERENCE TO ANOTHER. What cohesion has to do with is the way in which the meaning of the elements is interpreted”. If referred to the adjacency pair of Q and A, the suitability of Halliday and Hasan’s definition of cohesion is even more strikingly fitting: “cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it.” (*ibid.*: 4).

By way of conclusion, I shall identify coherence in the IT as the semantic relations that underlie the message conveyed through the Q/A group. In other words, I shall consider thematic structure and topical sequentiality between a specific type of Q and a specific type of A, as argued by Falbo (2002: 120): “coher-

ence is assessed by analysing the logical sequence of ideas expressed in the IT and their understandability". Cases in which a lack of coherence is registered within a single Q or a single A, with no implication for the overall Q/A group coherence, are not taken into consideration.

The following example² illustrates the above-mentioned concept of lack of coherence within an A³, which is not relevant to the analysis. The interpreted version is presented here in its glossed translation into English. Note that the purpose of the glossed translation is that of making the Italian version understandable to the reader, but may not maintain the problematic aspects illustrated in the description of each example, owing to the syntactical differences that exist between English and Italian. In the underlined portion of the interpreted answer there is a visible contradiction in the formulation of the sentence, that was not in the original version: in the IT, the speaker seems to identify with his proposal the solution to the question raised by the questioner – “I have a joint proposal to create a commission to prevent companies from outsourcing their incomes”⁴, only to declare that this very solution must be avoided – “and this must be stopped”. On the other hand, if the focus is placed on the Q/A level, the sequence of imperative question (type 4)/disclaimer followed by a specification of information (2a + 1a)⁵ is perfectly coherent from the point of view of the thematic structure, and not at all influenced by the contradiction illustrated before.

(1)

*Q: questi numeri però torniamo a queste cifre sup- torniamo a come riuscirete a ridurre il deficit del cinquanta percento
these figures let us go back to these figures back to how you will be able to reduce the deficit by 50%*

A: le cifre del presidente erm quelle che lui ha fornito non mi convincono non so chi gliel'ha date che gliel'ha fornite però non sono quelli veri John McCain e io hanno una pro- abbiamo una proposta congiunta (.) per creare una commissione (.) per er per impedire che le società er possano portare all'estero i loro proventi i loro utili e questo dev'essere bloccate nel: ottantacinque io son stato uno dei primi democrats per avere un bilancio in equilibrio e siamo riusciti a farlo (.)

the figures the President presented are not convincing in my opinion, I don't know who provided them but they are not correct John McCain and I have a

2 Each answer is preceded by its question for clarity purposes. Questions are presented in *italics*. Answers are not presented in their integral version: each example contains only the initial portion of the answer. Segments relevant to the classification have been highlighted in **bold**. Questions and answers are followed by their glossed translation into English in *italics*.

3 The segment chosen to indicate a lack of coherence is highlighted in **bold and underlined**.

4 Glossed translation of the IT.

5 See classification in § 3.4.

joint proposal to create a commission to prevent companies from outsourcing their incomes and this must be stopped in 1985 I was one of the first democrats to [put forward] a balanced budget and we succeeded

As far as cohesion is concerned, it will here be considered as the set of syntactical relations organising the message. Lack of cohesion in these terms, namely as syntactical continuity of the set of “lexicogrammatical phenomena of one kind or another” (Halliday & Hasan 1987: 303), does not necessarily jeopardize the understandability of a given chunk, provided that the semantic connections are maintained. In the case of Qs and As – and Q/A coherence – semantic connections are the relations “established between the meanings of two continuous passages of text [i.e. the components of an adjacency pair A/N], such that the interpretation of the second is dependent on the relation in which it stands to the first” (*ibid.*: 308).

In order to establish that a specific combination of Q and A is topically coherent, Qs and As must be clearly defined. As illustrated in the next section, types of questions and the coherent type of answer they are most frequently combined with, rarely depend on their syntactical relation. Rather, they are determined by the functional relation that links them.

3.4. Question occurrences and classification

A chart classifying the types of questions present in the analysed corpus has been devised. Question types are identified on the basis of the question’s nature, composition and incidence within the corpus.

In defining the question’s nature, the present study aims at identifying question types that go beyond a merely syntactical classification, as the one put forward by Hale (2001: 27): according to her distinction, questions can be “those that expect affirmation or negation, as in yes-no questions⁶, those that expect a wide range of replies, as in Information or Wh-questions⁷, and those that present two or more options, as in alternative⁸ or forced choice questions”.

Such distinction does not cover every occurrence in the analysed sample, for a very simple reason. By observing the function of each question – rather than its mere form – and the answer that follows, it is clear that similar structures may serve different semantic purposes. The elaboration of a classification requires,

6 Also Polar questions, i.e. “usually formed by placing the operator, that is, the first auxiliary or form of ‘do’, in front of the subject and generally giving the sentence a rising intonation” (Hale 2001: 27).

7 “Wh- questions are formed by fronting the Wh- word [...]. Generally [...] Wh- questions have a falling intonation” (Hale 2001: 27).

8 “Alternative questions can resemble either of the two classes already mentioned and are formed in the same way with the addition of options at the end” (Hale 2001: 27).

therefore, a reference to the semantic-pragmatic dimension of the question, as highlighted mainly by Maley and Fahey (1991: 5):

In asking questions, two primary options are possible: between questions looking for confirmation, that is, requiring a yes/no answer; and questions looking for information. We have labeled the former confirmation seeking questions (CSQs) and the latter information seeking questions (ISQs).

Hale (2001: 23) quotes Maley and Fahey's work, specifying that these two main semantic groups are in fact macro-categories, under which similar syntactical structures are gathered. The same two groups in Italian are defined open (ISQ) and closed (CSQ) questions (Simone 2001: 253). Other types of questions present in the analysed debates are declaratives, which are "simply statements with a rising intonation" (Mason 2001: 27), and imperatives, which include in their structure a verb requesting an answer in the imperative form.

Opting for the question categories referred to the English language and applying them to the analysis of the Italian IT was a direct result of the above-mentioned approach: by considering the prominence of the question's function over its structure, the functional CSQ and ISQ categories can be applied to both languages, despite the syntactical differences between English and Italian question formulation.

On the basis of the types of questions found in the analysed data, the following semantic-pragmatic classification has been devised:

1. INFORMATION SEEKING QUESTIONS (ISQs):
 - 1 a. Wh- questions
 - 1 b. Modal Polar questions (+/-)⁹
 - 1 c. Modal Declaratives (+/-)
2. CONFIRMATION SEEKING QUESTIONS (CSQs):
 - 2 a. Declaratives (+/-)
 - 2 b. Polar questions/ Yes/No questions (+/-)
 - 2 c. Reported speech declaratives
3. LEADING QUESTIONS (forced choice questions)
4. IMPERATIVES

9 Modal indicates here the *irrealis* structure, namely "all modalities, rather than a statement with positive polarity" (Bülow-Møller 1999: 147): "where [irrealis A/N] are included, an utterance is not used in the canonical fashion to claim that something is the case" (*ibid.*: 145-6), but rather that something is likely to be the case (epistemic modality), should be the case (deontic modality), or would be the case if (counterfactuals). In the case of the question, modality is generally expressed through the verb in the conditional form (see Examples 3 and 4).

Examples for each type of question as found in the IT are provided below¹⁰:

(2) 1 a.

*l'Iran ha sponsorizzato il terrorismo e ha anche delle capacità di mandare dei missili verso Israele e potrebbe attaccare anche l'Europa quindi l'Iran veramente si trova in una situazione di porre una grave minaccia che **cosa farebbe Lei?***¹¹

*Iran supported terrorism and can launch missiles against Israel and could attack Europe as well so Iran is a real threat **what would you do?***

(3) 1 b.

grazie: senatore Kerry Lei s- vorrebbe guardare la telecamera e dire chiaramente dare la sua parola che non: farà nessuna legge per: i più poveri aumenterà le tasse per i più poveri?

Thank you Senator Kerry would you please look straight into the camera and give your word that you will not put forward a bill for: that you will not raise taxes for citizens with the lowest income rate?

(4) 1 c.

*senatore (.) migliaia di persone già sono state curate o comunque sono state trattate grazie all'utilizzo delle cellule staminali oppure le cellule staminali prese dal cordone ombelicale tuttavia nessuno è mai stato curato utilizzando delle: cellule provenienti dagli embrioni **forse potrebbe essere utile utilizzare queste cellule staminali utilizzate senza la distruzione di un embrione***

*Senator, thousands of people have already been cured or are being treated with stem cells or with stem cells found in the umbilical cord but nobody has ever been cured with embryonic stem cells **perhaps cells obtained without destroying the embryo might be useful***

(5) 2 a.

senatore Lei ha parlato della riduzione fiscale per limitare l'outsourcing ma ho letto un documento in cui Lei ha parla di un programma in Cina

Senator, you mentioned fiscal reduction to limit outsourcing but I read a document in which you refer to a programme in China

(6) 2 b.

*signor presidente dal momento che continuiamo ad essere i poliziotti del mondo **vuole mantenere una presenza militare senza: fare un nuovo progetto?***

¹⁰ The portion of each interrogative clause relevant to its classification has been highlighted in **bold**. Each question is followed by its glossed translation into English in italics.

¹¹ Examples provided here are taken from the transcriptions of the ITs of CorIT. Any apparent typing error is simply the unfiltered result of the transcription process.

Mister President, since we [the U.S.] continue to act as the world law enforcement force, do you intend to keep our military presence without making a new draft?

(7) 2 c.

senatore Lei ha sottolineato le preoccupazioni per quanto riguarda l'aumento dei costi della sanità tuttavia abbiamo avuto anche grandi cause nei confronti delle: dei medici

Senator you underlined the alarm concerning the increase in health care costs, and yet there have been numerous lawsuits against doctors

(8) 3.

lei crede che ci sia bisogno dei programmi del cosiddetto affirmative action o non abbiamo più bisogno o non abbiamo più bisogno della dell'usare della razza o il sesso come fattore per essere accettati nelle scuole o nei college?

Do you believe that programmes the so-called affirmative action is still needed or that resorting to race or gender as a discriminating factor in schools and colleges is no longer an issue?

(9) 4.

presidente Bush (.) negli ultimi quattro anni Lei ha preso migliaia di decisioni che hanno avuto ripercussioni su milioni di vite per piacere ci faccia degli esempi in cui Lei si è reso conto di aver preso le decisioni sbagliate e che cosa può fare per correggerle

President Bush, in the last four years you have been making countless decisions with repercussions on countless lives. Please, give three examples of cases in which you realized you made a wrong decision and what you can do to correct them

3.5. Answer occurrences and classification

The following definition by Halliday and Hasan (1987: 206) is an appropriate way of identifying answers in line with the purpose of the present study:

Any observation by one speaker, whether it is a question or not, may be followed by an observation by another speaker that is related to it by some cohesive tie. We shall refer to this very general category of sequel as a REJOINDER. [...] A rejoinder that follows a question will be called a RESPONSE.

The definition is then followed by a very thorough classification of responses, which served as a basis for the analysis of the answer in the present study.

According to Halliday and Hasan, responses can be direct or indirect. Direct responses simply answer the questions they follow and can either have “a form of ‘yes’ or ‘no’, if the question is the yes/no type, or a specification of the informa-

tion asked for by the Wh-element, if the question is of the Wh- type” (Halliday & Hasan 1987: 206).

Indirect responses, on the other hand, do not provide a straightforward answer to any question. They are mostly a diversion from the direction suggested by the question itself and have the form of either a commentary – which comments on the question or describes the speaker’s attitudes towards it; a disclaimer – which denies the relevance of the question or is the way in which the speaker declares his unwillingness to answer; a supplementary response – which gives supplementary information, implying but not actually expressing any answer.

1. DIRECT RESPONSES:
 - 1 a. Specification of information (to Wh- question)
 - 1 b. Yes/No
2. INDIRECT RESPONSES:
 - 2 a. Commentary
 - 2 b. Disclaimer
 - 2 c. Supplementary response

Examples for each type of answer as found in the IT are provided below:

(10) 1a.

Q: *senatore (.) come possono gli Stati Uniti essere competitivi (.) (.) considerando i: salari (.) accettati necessari da parte de:i lavoratori americani per mantenere il loro stile di vita (.)*

Senator how can the U.S. be competitive considering the wages deemed acceptable necessary by American workers for their lifestyle?

A: **ci sono molti modi per essere per essere competitivi (.) di nuovo purtroppo quest’amministrazione non ha sfruttato queste: opportunità un esempio c’è u:na: possibilità una società di S.Louis (.) bo- ha incentivi per trasferire i posti di lavoro all’estero cioè ha degli sgravi fiscali spostando questa la sua produzione all’estero**

There are several ways of being competitive once again unfortunately this administration has not been able to exploit these opportunities for instance a company in St. Louis has the possibility of receiving incentives for relocating that is to say tax relief for transferring its production abroad

(11) 1b.

Q: *(.) senatore (.) gli Stati Uniti stanno preparando un nuovo governo iracheno (.) e ritireranno le truppe americane (.) Lei continuerebbe con gli stessi piani del presidente Bush (.)*

Senator the United States is preparing a new Iraqi government and American troops will be pulled out of the country would you carry on with the plans of President Bush?

A: no Anthony no io ho un piano diverso (.) perché quello del presidente non sta funzionando e lo vedete ogni giorno sulla televisione- sugli schermi della televisione c'è il caos in Irak (.) King Abdullah della Giordania ieri ha dett(o) ha detto ieri o l'altro ieri che non si possono avere elezioni in Irak con il caos che c'è ora

No Anthony no I do have a different plan because the President's plan is not working and you can see it every day on television – on television screens there is chaos in Iraq King Abdullah of Jordan said yesterday or the previous day that there can be no election in Iraq because of the present chaotic situation

(12) 2a.

Q: senatore (.) migliaia di persone già sono state curate o comunque sono state trattate grazie all'utilizzo delle cellule staminali oppure le cellule staminali prese dal cordone ombelicale tuttavia nessuno è mai stato curato utilizzando delle: cellule provenienti dagli embrioni forse potrebbe essere utile utilizzare queste cellule staminali utilizzate senza la distruzione di un embrione

Senator, thousands of people have already been cured or are being treated with stem cells or with stem cells found in the umbilical cord but nobody has ever been cured with embryonic stem cells perhaps cells obtained without destroying the embryo might be useful

A: bene Elisabeth senza dubbio: rispetto (.)rispetto la partecipazione della sua domanda (.) perché: so appunto che si basa su dei principi etici che: rispetto (.) Nancy Reagan e così tanti altri (.) er appunto hanno preso la parola su questo argomento [...]

Good Elisabeth undoubtedly your question deserves my respect because I know that it is based on ethical principles that I too respect Nancy Reagan and many others expressed their opinion on this matter

(13) 2b.

Q: sono er qual- coroso di quello che ha detto ha detto che non è quando ma è se crede che sia inevitabile perché il senso della sicurezza sia fondamentale per tutti in questo paese che sono preoccupati dei loro figli?

You said it is not when but if do you believe that it is inevitable because a feeling of safety is fundamental among citizens who worry about their children?

A: ma il presidente e i suoi esperti hanno detto (.) all'America che non si tratta er di una questione di se ma di una questione di quando ora [...]

But the President and his experts told their country that it is not a matter of if but when

(14) 2c.

Q: signor presidente (..) Lei: al senato di fronte alla maggioranza repubblicana (.) non è riuscito a porre il veto sulla spesa (.) soprattutto per tutte quelle spese per l'Irak e l'Afghanistan sci- ci sono state settecentomila settecento milioni di dollari non sostenuti dalle tasse come pensa di poter coprire queste: spese

Mister President, before the Republican majority in the Senate you were not able to veto expenses especially those for Iraq and Afghanistan seven hundred thousand seven hundred million dollars could not be covered by the tax revenue how do you intend to cover them?

A: sì grazie (.) noi abbiamo un deficit (.) deficit perché questo paese è andato in recessione (.) vi ricordate che: il mercato della borsa è cominciato a crollare sei mesi prima che io entrassi: alla Casa Bianca e poi c'è il problema er di quello che c'è costato questo e in secondo luogo siamo in guerra e io e so quanto sapete quanto costa molto di più di centoquaranta miliardi di dollari perché noi dobbiamo addestrare le truppe dobbiamo abbiamo bisogno di denaro per le munizioni di pagare i soldati [...]

Yes, thank you we have a deficit because our country went into recession do you remember that the stock market started to collapse six months before I became President and this has turned into a liability and secondly we are at war and I know that you know how much this costs more than one hundred and forty billion dollars, because we need to train our troops, we need money for ammunition, to pay our soldiers [...]

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Any observation on this first phase of the pilot study is based on the assumption that the OT is cohesive and coherent. It is possible, of course, that a lack of coherence and cohesion in the IT be directly linked to a lack of coherence and cohesion in the OT. It is equally likely that cases of incoherence and non cohesion in the OT be solved in the IT. Such cases will be taken into consideration during the second phase (OT-IT contrastive analysis), whereas cohesion and coherence in the IT will here be assessed only in relation to the semantic-pragmatic criterion illustrated in § 3.4 and 3.5.

After recording the occurrences and analysing the figures so obtained, data were observed from different perspectives, following four key questions:

- A. Which type of Q is most frequent in the IT?
- B. Which type of A is most frequent in the IT?
- C. Which type of Q/A combination is most frequent in the IT?
- D. If Q type "x" is the most frequent, which Q "x"/A association is the most frequently cohesive and coherent?

In this section, results are presented through a series of figures illustrating the answers to the four key questions. Each answer shall include two figures, one for each debate, preceded by a brief discussion of their outcomes. Question and answer types are identified through a letter and/or a number according to the lists provided in § 3.4 and 3.5.

A. Which type of Q is most frequent in the IT?

The first parameter taken into consideration in the Q observation is the number of occurrences for each Q type. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the majority of Qs in both ITs are of type 1a, namely the ISQ type referred to as Wh- question – 55% and 50% respectively. Furthermore, there is a remarkably broad gap between this first type and the others.

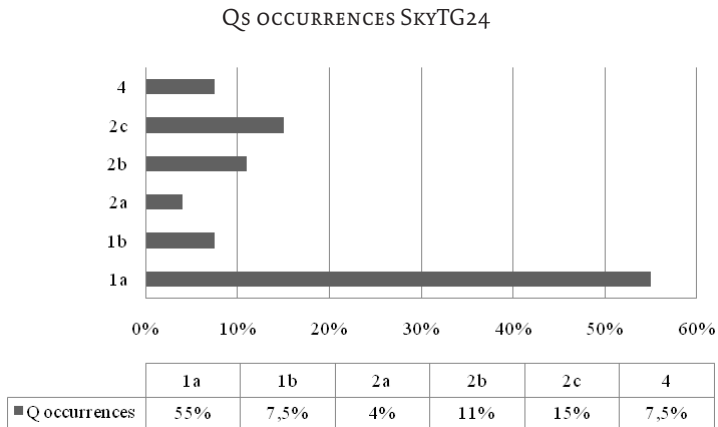


FIGURE 1. Occurrences of each question type in the SkyTG24 debate

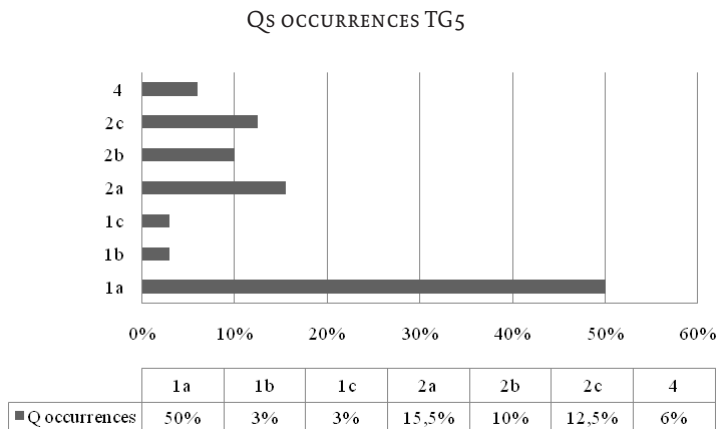


FIGURE 2. Occurrences of each question type in the TG5 debate

The number of coherent occurrences of each type of Q (Figures 3 and 4) appears to be rather high, 100% in most cases, and it is always higher than the respective degree of cohesion. These two parameters were included in the discussion of points A and B for the sake of completeness. They are not relevant to the research question as is the occurrence parameter. They are pivotal, however, in the discussion of points C and D, as shall be clarified in the next paragraphs.

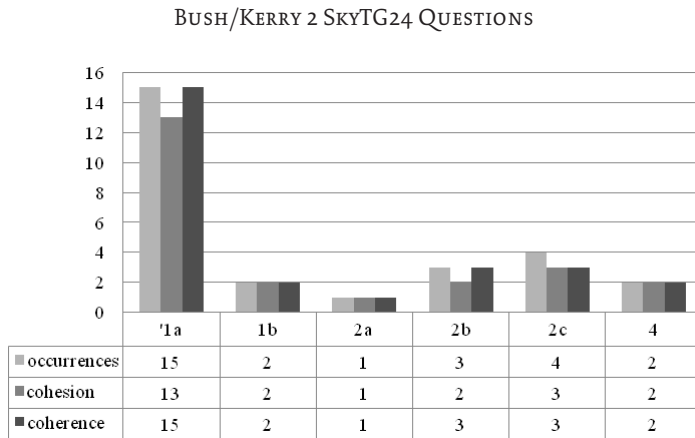


FIGURE 3. Question occurrence, cohesion and coherence (SkyTG24)

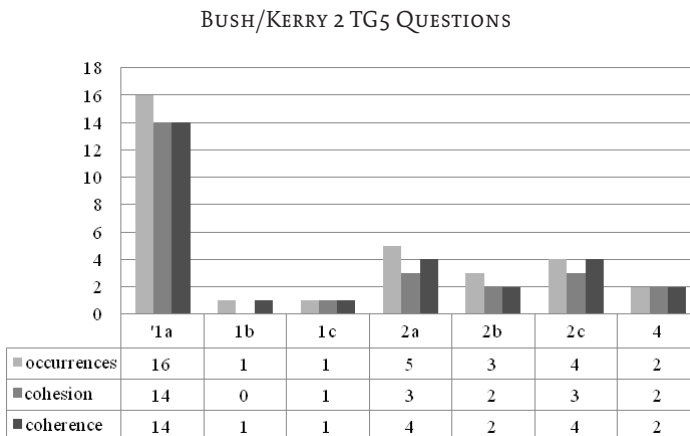


FIGURE 4. Question occurrence, cohesion and coherence (TG5)

B. Which type of A is most frequent in the IT?

As regards answers, most occurrences started as an A of the 2c type, namely a supplementary response – providing further information with respect to the question, thus answering by implication – see Figures 5 and 6. Commentaries (2a) and disclaimers (2b) are also frequent, unlike direct responses, namely specification of information (1a) and Yes/No (1b), which are the least frequent types of answer.

Despite the extremely low number of cohesive occurrences, the degree of coherence almost always matches the occurrence level, with two exceptions: 2c (supplementary information) and 1b (Yes/No) answers in the SkyTG24 debate – see Figure 5.

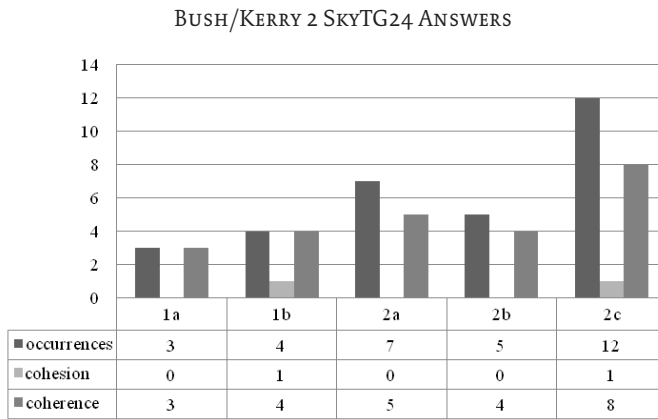


FIGURE 5. Answer occurrence, cohesion and coherence (SkyTG24)

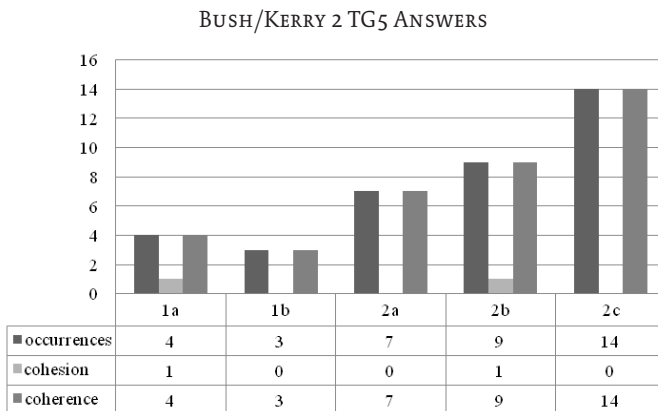


FIGURE 6. Answer occurrence, cohesion and coherence (TG5)

C. Which type of Q/A combination is most frequent in the IT?

By looking at the Q/A group as a whole (Figures 7 and 8) the most frequent combinations appear to match the expectations:

- Q_{1a}/A_{2c} (information seeking question in the form of a Wh- question / indirect response in the form of a supplementary response) – 28% (SkyTG24) and 34,5% (TG5);
- Q_{1a}/A_{2a} (information seeking question in the form of a Wh- question / indirect response in the form of a commentary) – 28% (SkyTG24);
- Q_{1a}/A_{2b} (information seeking question in the form of a Wh- question / indirect response in the form of a disclaimer) – 26% (TG5).

Wh- questions (Q_{1a}) – which, according to syntactical rules, would normally require an answer specifying the information (A_{1a}) requested in the interrogative clause – can be easily answered to by implication, providing facts that are evidence of the information requested in the first place (A_{2c}). Likewise, they can be “disclaimed” (A_{2b}), when the answer denies the question as a whole, or brings about a shift in the focus on the topic, from specific information to polar choice.

A fundamental point emerging from the observation of Q/A combinations is the result regarding the Modal Polar question (Q_{1b}), which confirms the semantic-pragmatic classification as the most appropriate approach. Despite having the syntactical structure of a Polar question, and therefore a CSQ rather than an ISQ, the types of answer it is most frequently combined with are A_{1b} (Yes/No) and A_{2c} (supplementary response). While the first combination (Q_{1b}/A_{1b}) matches the analyst’s expectations in terms of syntactical relevance, the second one (Q_{1b}/A_{2c}) does not, since supplementary responses are typical responses to open questions such as Wh- questions. At least in this first stage of my study, this result suggests that the modal factor – and therefore the semantic-pragmatic function – prevails on the syntax, making a syntactically closed question a semantically open one. This is why the syntactically closed Modal Polar question (Q_{1b}) was inserted in the semantically open group of ISQs in the Qs classification chart.

BUSH/KERRY 2 SKYTG24 Q/A COMBINATIONS

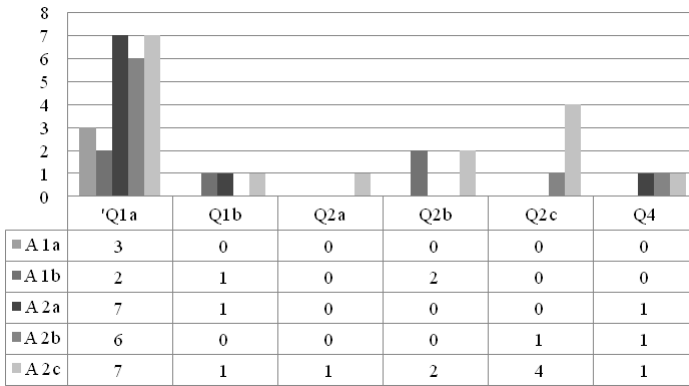


FIGURE 7. Frequency of Q/A combinations (SkyTG24)

BUSH/KERRY 2 TG5 Q/A COMBINATIONS

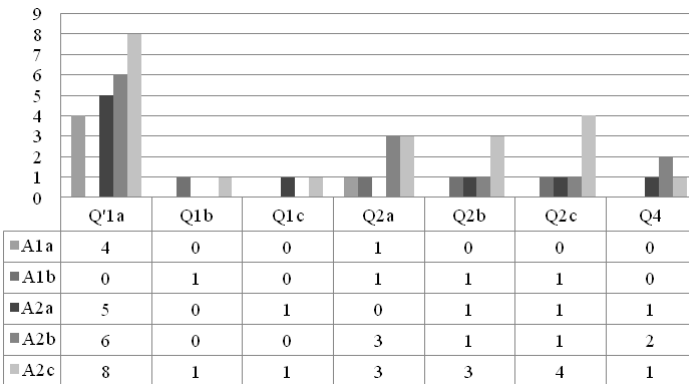


FIGURE 8. Frequency of Q/A combinations (TG5).

D. If Q type “x” is the most frequent, which Q“x”/A association is the most cohesive and coherent?

Having established the prominence, in terms of frequency, of Wh- questions (Q1a) over other types of questions in the IT (see Figures 1 and 2), combinations whose occurrences are coherent and cohesive 100% of the time appear to be:

- Q1a/A1b (ISQ in the form of a Wh- question / direct response in the form of a Yes/No) – SkyTG24;
- Q1a/A2a (ISQ in the form of a Wh- question / indirect response in the form of a commentary) – TG5;
- Q1a/A1a (ISQ in the form of a Wh- question / direct response in the form of a specification of information) – TG5.

Coherence seems therefore to be closely related to the type of question and the type of answer it requires: in the case of Wh- questions (Q1a), which are direct ISQs, direct responses including a specification of information are clearly the most suitable type of answer. The SkyTG24 result, however, was quite unexpected, since Information seeking questions appear to be mostly followed by Yes/No answers (A1b), which, instead, ought to be the typical response to Confirmation seeking questions in terms of syntax and function. As far as cohesion and coherence are concerned, here too, as in the case of questions and answers observed individually, there is in general a higher level of coherence than cohesion. This would confirm the expectations expressed in § 3.3, according to which syntactical relations do not necessarily influence the understandability of semantically coherent chunks.

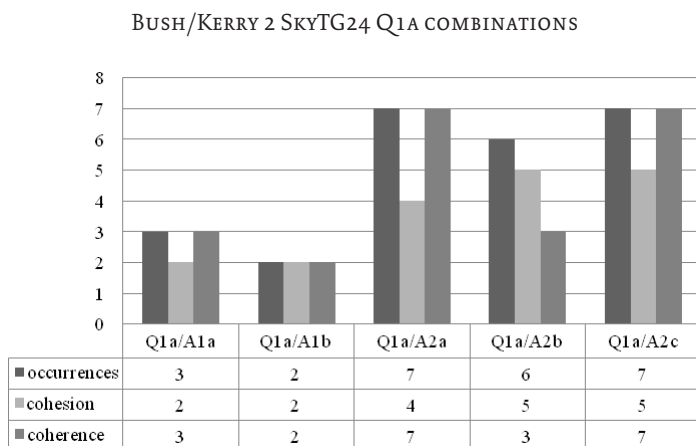


FIGURE 9. Occurrence, cohesion and coherence of Q1a combinations (SkyTG24)

BUSH/KERRY 2 TG5 Q1A COMBINATIONS

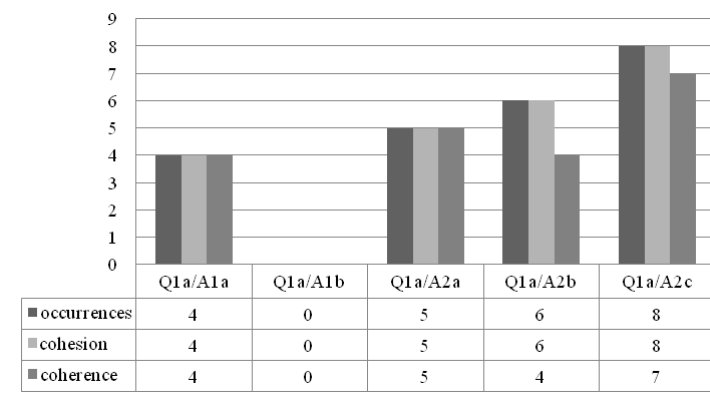


FIGURE 10. Occurrence, cohesion and coherence of Q1a combinations (TG5)

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I started writing this paper by underlining its preliminary nature, its purpose being that of presenting the first phase of a pilot study, which will provide the basis for a more comprehensive analysis of topical coherence. It would, therefore, be inappropriate even to attempt to draw any kind of conclusion at this point. Nevertheless, what emerges from the analysis of the ITs of these first two debates is a very complex and promising picture, a possible miniature example of what the whole analysed corpus might still have in store.

First of all, identification of coherence in the text (§ 3.3) requires a distinction between coherence and cohesion that goes beyond the single-minded perspective of text analysis. Coherence depends on topical as much as structural sequentiality. As a result, the investigation shall include parameters that pertain to other disciplines, such as interaction and conversation analysis, thus considering both surface and function of a text as equal factors and indicators of coherence.

Secondly, the observation of coherence within the Q/A groups of the IT confirmed that a functional approach to Q and A classification (§ 3.4 and 3.5) is more suitable to describe topic reconstruction within the adjacency pair, than a mere syntactical categorisation. Syntactical structure does, actually, provide a useful template for an initial identification of the different types of Qs and As found in the analysed corpus. Yet, an investigation on coherence – particularly in spoken discourse – requires a further step, in which the analyst considers semantic and pragmatic aspects that make a text – i.e. the adjacency pair – hang together,

alongside with syntactical cohesion. This is the only way to describe effectively topic reconstruction and topical coherence between Qs and As. Even if they have different syntactical structures, they frequently form coherent pairs thanks to their semantic and pragmatic function – as in the case of the Modal Polar question (Q1b) in the Information Seeking Questions group, when combined with the supplementary response (A2c).

The next immediate step will be verifying the results here obtained with the OT-IT contrastive analysis as a counterproof and a way of further testing my methodological approach; the analysis will be subsequently extended to the remaining debates. Every step forward in the analysis might very well lead to the surfacing of new issues, providing further chances to interrogate the corpus and include other factors as parameters for the analysis, leading in their turn to other hypotheses to be confirmed or disclaimed.

REFERENCES

- Bülow-Møller, A. M. 1999. Existential problems: on the processing of irrealis in simultaneous interpreting. In *Interpreting* 4/2, 145-167.
- Dal Fovo, E. 2008. *La gestione del formato dialogico nell'interpretazione simultanea dei dibattiti presidenziali americani*. Unpublished MA dissertation. Trieste: Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori, Università degli Studi di Trieste.
- Dal Fovo, E. 2012. Topical coherence in Television Interpreting: question/answer rendition. In Straniero Sergio, F. and Falbo, C. (eds) *Breaking Ground in Corpus-based Interpreting Studies*, Bern: Peter Lang, 187-209.
- DeBeaugrande, R. A. and Dressler, W. 2000. *Introduction to Text Linguistics*. (Original 1982; Digitally reformatted 2000) Retrieved from <http://www.beaugrande.com/introduction_to_text_linguistics.htm> on 27th September 2010.
- Falbo, C. 2002. Error analysis: a research tool. In Garzone, G., Mead, P. and Viezzi, M. (eds) *Perspectives on Interpreting*. Forlì: Clueb, 111-27.
- Falbo, C. 2008. L'interprète dans la communication interculturelle à la télévision. In Proceedings of the Conference *Les enjeux de la communication interculturelle, compétence linguistique, compétence pragmatique, valeurs culturelles*, 27th May 2008. Montpellier 5-7. Retrieved from <http://www.msh-m.fr/article.php3?id_article=386> on 27th May 2008.
- Falbo, C. 2009. Un grand corpus d'interprétation: à la recherche d'une stratégie de classification. In Paissa, P. and Biagini, M. (eds) *Doctorants & Recherche 08. La recherche actuelle en linguistique française*. Milano: Lampi di stampa, 105-120.
- Falbo, C. 2012. CorIT – Television Interpreting Corpus. In Straniero Sergio, F. and Falbo, C. (eds) *Breaking Ground in Corpus-based Interpreting Studies*, Bern: Peter Lang, 157-185.
- Gernsbacher, M. A. and Givón, T. 1995. *Coherence in Spontaneous Texts*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Hale, S. 2001. How are courtroom questions interpreted? In Mason, I. (ed.) *Triadic Exchanges*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 21-50.
- Halliday, M. A. K. and Hasan, R. 1987. *Cohesion in English*. London/New York: Longman.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. 1990. *Les interactions verbales*, vol.1. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. 2005. *Le discours en interaction*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Linell, P. 1998. *Approaching Dialogue – Talk, Interaction and Contexts in Dialogical Perspectives*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Mack, G. 2000. Quale interpretazione per la televisione italiana? In Bollettieri Bosinelli, R. M., Heiss, C., Soffritti, M. and Bernardini, S. (eds) *La Traduzione multimediale. Quale traduzione per quale testo?* Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Forlì 2-4 April 1998. Bologna: Clueb, 111-132.
- Mack, G. 2001. Conference interpreters on the air: live simultaneous interpreting on Italian television. In Gambier, Y. and Gottlieb, H. (eds) *(Multi)media Translation. Concepts, Practices and Research*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 125-132.
- Mack, G. 2002. New perspectives and challenges for interpretation – the example of television. In Garzone, G. and Viezzi, M. (eds) *Interpreting in the 21st Century*,

Challenges and Opportunities,
Selected papers from the 1st Forlì
Conference on Interpreting
Studies, 9-11 November 2000.
Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John
Benjamins , 203-213.

Maley, Y. and Fahey, R. 1991.
Presenting the evidence:
constructions of reality in court.
In *International Journal for the
Semiotics of Law* 4/10, 3-17.

Mason, I. (ed.) 2001. *Triadic
Exchanges - Studies in Dialogue
Interpreting*. Manchester: St.
Jerome Publishing.

Schegloff, E. A. and Sacks, H. 1999.
Opening up closings. In *Semiotica*
8/4, 289-327.

Setton, R. 1999. *Simultaneous
Interpretation. A Cognitive-Pragmatic
Analysis*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia:
John Benjamins.

Simone, R. 2001. *Fondamenti
di linguistica*. Bari: GLF Editori
Laterza.

Straniero Sergio, F. 1999. The
interpreter on the (talk) show:
interaction and participation
framework. In *The Translator* 5/2,
303-326.

Straniero Sergio, F. 2003. Norms
and quality in media interpreting:
the case of Formula One press-
conferences. In *The Interpreters'
Newsletter* 12, 135-174.

Straniero Sergio, F. 2005.
Equivalenza, formato dialogico
e interpretazione. In Kocijančič
Pokorn, N., Prunč, E. and Riccardi,
A. (eds) *Beyond Equivalence*. Graz:
University of Graz: 195-208.

Straniero Sergio, F. 2007. *Talkshow
Interpreting: la mediazione
linguistica nella conversazione
spettacolo*. Trieste: Edizioni
Università di Trieste.

Wadensjö, C. 1998. *Interpreting
as Interaction*. London/New York:
Longman.