

Invisible, visible or everywhere in between?

Perceptions and actual behaviours of non-professional interpreters and interpreting users

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Abstract

The notion of the invisible interpreter, once – and for long – an uncontested principle, has recently started to be deconstructed in favour of the image of the interpreter as an active third party in the interaction. This study aims to contribute to this process through an analysis of interpreter visibility in a prison setting using a corpus of 19 interpreted interviews and pre-interview surveys. It describes the self-perceptions of non-professional interpreters and the expectations of interpreting users about the interpreter role, and contrasts these with actual behaviours during the interpreted event. Results indicate that these interpreters tend to perceive themselves as less visible than they in fact are and that interpreters' visibility in actual interaction is negotiated by all parties through conversational acceptance and rejection mechanisms.

Introduction

Conduit, machine, telephone, channel, language-switching operator, ghost. This has been the popular image of the interpreter for the last few decades. Historically, interpreters were anything but invisible – allies in explorations and conquests, partners in diplomacy and trade, helpers in private affairs. However, with the advent of training and the development of interpreting as a profession, role models such as the ones described through these metaphors took hold. Being invisible allowed interpreters to remain detached from the communicative event

(and thus not responsible for its outcome), dissociating themselves from the decision-making processes of the parties involved, and to earn trust in a profession in the early stages of its making (Angelelli 2004b: 22; Roy 1993/2002: 349-350).

Nevertheless, the idea of the invisible interpreter was grounded in a perception of moral correctness rather than on actual strong empirical evidence (Clifford 2004: 92). Discrepancies between this invisible role, endorsed and enforced through training and professional ethics, and the actual behaviour of interpreters in practice – the interpreter’s paradox (Metzger 1999) – called for a revision of these concepts. Studies examining the role of the interpreter, mostly in community settings, have evidenced the position of the interpreter as a co-participant and co-creator of meaning in the interpreter-mediated encounter. Therefore, visibility is not contested in research circles anymore. Academics “no longer deliberate *if* community interpreters are visible and active participants, but rather *how much* and *with what consequences*” (Jacobsen 2009: 162; emphasis in the original). However, as Wadensjö explains (2008: 187), non-personhood prevails as an inherent element of the social role of the interpreter and both interpreters and interpreting users “are more or less oriented to this specific, culturally established character of the role of interpreter”, at least – I would add – in abstract terms.

Through the analysis of non-professional interpreters’ performance in prison settings, this study sets out to explore two issues: the own construction of role by untrained interpreters (prisoners in this context) and its translation into actual actions; and role expectations on the part of interpreting users (prison officers and prisoners, specifically) and their reactions towards behaviours which meet or fail to meet those expectations.

1. Musings about visibility

The study of the interpreter role has been central to Interpreting Studies, particularly since the inception of community interpreting as a sub-area of research (Pöchhacker 2004: 147). With the contribution of sociolinguistic approaches to the examination of the interpreter-mediated event, the invisibility metaphor suffered a profound deconstruction process across the board (Rudvin 2006: 36).

The main proponents of deconstructing the ‘myth’ of the invisible interpreter (Metzger 1999) challenge the understanding of meaning as a monolithic entity in favour of its constant negotiation in interaction, and emphasise interpreting as a situated practice influenced by interpersonal, institutional and societal factors. In such a situation, the interpreter emerges as yet another participant. As Angelelli (2004b: 45) puts it,

all interlocutors, including interpreters, are key player (sic.) in the co-construction of meaning as they interact with the other parties and juggle the impact of both the institution and the society in which the interaction is embedded.

Discourse and conversational analyses, together with a smaller number of ethnographic and case studies, have been essential in the development of these new approaches. A wide array of linguistic strategies employed (not always conscious-

ly) by professional interpreters in naturally-occurring interaction evidence their agency in the communicative event. For instance, Berk-Seligson (1990) and Hale (2004) show how interpreters' shifts in active/passive voices, politeness forms, discourse markers, question structure, etc., lead to alterations in the pragmatic component of primary interlocutors' utterances in courtroom settings. However, researchers have been mostly concerned with interpreters' visibility through the adoption of a third-party status in the interaction. In fact, it could be said that Wadensjö's (1998) detailed description of the interpreter as a coordinator of talk in community settings served as the foundation upon which this paradigm shift started to be built.

Dialogue interpreting research has yielded compelling results contesting the invisibility myth, in the case of both professional and non-professional interpreters. Interpreters in television talk shows occasionally undertake entertainer functions by creating topic coherence and setting opportunities for applause-relevant comments (Katan/Straniero Sergio 2001), and are even subjected to public criticism for entertainment purposes (Straniero Sergio 2012). Analyses of interpreter-mediated events in business settings or in the workplace have shown interpreters promoting relations between primary parties, helping with arrangements, mitigating face-threatening talk (Gavioli/Maxwell 2007; Harris/Sherwood 1978), prompting ideas or engaging in small talk (Dickinson 2013). Similar examples are also found in community interpreting literature, both for signed and spoken languages – the subfield which has contributed a larger number of studies to this topic (Merlini/Favaron 2005; Metzger 1999; Pöllabauer 2004; Roy 2000; Valero-Garcés/Martin 2008, to name only a few). Angelelli (2004a) shows how medical interpreters move along a continuum of visibility throughout the interpreter-mediated event, from minor visibility in managing the flow of communication or adjusting register to the communicative practices and needs of the interlocutors, to major visibility – and hence high impact – when replacing a primary interlocutor (e.g. giving instructions to a patient on behalf of a nurse). Following up on this idea of the impact of role shifts on communication, Hale (2008) assesses the consequences of five different roles prescribed for or observed in court interpreters – advocate for one or the other party, gatekeeper, communication facilitator and faithful renderer – and concludes that the latter is the most appropriate for the adversarial courtroom, being the one carrying the fewest negative consequences. On the contrary, in her study of interpreters in mental health, Bot (2005) observed that adherence to the conduit model often results in divergent renditions that increase the likelihood of communication breakdown and/or reduce possibilities for repairs to be made.

Communication breakdown has often been attributed to non-professional interpreters adopting an active third party status, for instance by editing patients' utterances or following their own lines of inquiry (Elderkin-Thompson *et al.* 2001: 1352; Meyer 2001: 100), as they tend to “assume interactional tasks for which they lack training and expertise and which are liable to clash with the interpreting function entrusted to them” (Pöchhacker 2004: 152). Negative consequences of the blurring of role boundaries are even more noticeable in the case of dual-role interpreters (i.e. participants who act as ratified primary interlocutors and interpreters in the same event): TV hosts interpreting their own interviews

may generate feelings of insecurity among interviewees (Jääskeläinen 2003), and police officers interpreting during questioning may manipulate suspects into producing a confession (Berk-Seligson 2009). However, despite the common assumption that the degree of visibility of the interpreter is inversely related to his/her degree of professionalism, empirical evidence has shown that both professional and non-professional interpreters fluctuate between minimal participation and full-fledged intervention, although at different levels (utterance vs. event) and with different goals (Pöchhacker 2012). Indeed, studies focusing on young bilinguals (Valdés 2003) evidence a similarity with professionals in terms of strategies employed in interpreting tasks, as well as successful visible interventions aimed at handling asymmetries of power and face-threatening acts.

Throughout interaction, the interpreters' shifts in participation status may be triggered by a variety of factors (Angelelli 2004a: 77). Users' expectations and requirements may become an important source of tension, even for trained interpreters, in their definition of role. Research has not only shown that public service users and providers may favour different degrees of visibility and agency (see Kuo/Fagan 1999 in healthcare; Hale 2006 in court), but it has also evidenced conflicting views within the same user group in the same setting (e.g. Miller *et al.* 2005), as user expectations may also be defined by individual preferences and previous experiences.

Finally, studies about interpreters' self-perception of role have shown that the interpreter's paradox is still notably prevalent in the profession. The academic and professional ideology in favour of the conduit model still remains notably unchallenged, even in the minds of interpreters themselves, despite growing evidence about its limitations. Angelelli's research on interpreters' views of their own agency revealed that even when they assume a certain degree of visibility, their dominating discourse, especially in conference and court settings, still frames invisibility and absolute neutrality not only as possible but also as desirable, even imperative (Angelelli 2004b: 77-79). However, it does create internal conflict among interpreters, who recognise the importance of these principles in training and codes of ethics, but experience difficulties in applying them to their actual practice without feeling that they are endangering effective communication (Angelelli 2004a; Hsieh 2006; Schouten *et al.* 2012).

In light of this literature review, a study about how all parties to the interaction conceive the interpreter role and act on and react to it emerges as a potentially fruitful path to explore. On the one hand, non-professionals' lack of exposure to the invisibility discourse during training or professional activity may shed light on constructions of one's own interpreter role which are more based on actual interactional and interpersonal factors than on acquired norms, and hence devoid of the – sometimes unconscious – pull towards invisibility that most trained interpreters seem to experience. On the other hand, whereas studies on the interpreter's role have traditionally analysed either interaction or participants' and interpreters' views, the potential gap between desired behaviour and actual behaviour and reactions to it has largely been overlooked. Establishing connections between those and analysing the causes and consequences of consistencies and inconsistencies may prove to be a valuable tool to understand interpreters' participation and agency in broader terms.

2. Analysing visibility in non-professional interpreters

2.1 The setting

In many parts of the world, prisons are notably diverse environments. In the last fifteen years, the Spanish prison system – the setting for this study – has witnessed a move away from a relatively homogeneous prison population mainly comprised of middle-aged white Spanish males towards the heterogeneity that comes along recent migration flows and the application of increasingly restrictive procedural law and sentencing policies for foreigners, among other factors (García García 2006: 253-254). The proportion of foreign nationals in Spanish prisons currently stands at 30.1%, whereas the overall proportion of foreign population in the country is 9.6%.¹

This overrepresentation of foreigners within the prison system poses a wide array of challenges, including language-related ones. When direct communication (through broken Spanish or another vehicular language such as English or French, often combined with body language) is not successful, interpreting is needed. However, interpreter-mediated communication inside a prison is not restricted, as one may initially think, to client-attorney interviews, where professional interpreters may be brought in, as their fees are defrayed by prisoners themselves rather than the prison system. The reality of prison interpreting is wider and richer. Foreign language-speaking inmates need to interact with different members of staff in a variety of situations which differ greatly from one another in terms of frequency, conceptual complexity and associated emotional stress. A non exhaustive list would include admission procedures, random informal conversations (such as requests for basic information), medical and mental health visits, legal advice sessions, security processes (e.g. searches), disciplinary and parole hearings, education/training/job-related exchanges, treatment programme sessions and external communications. In order to enable these exchanges, as is also common in many countries (Martínez-Gómez 2014), prisoners with a certain level of competence in the languages involved are requested to interpret between the primary parties.²

2.2 Description of the study

This study was conducted in two Spanish prisons (C.P. Mallorca and C.P. Castellón I) as part of a larger project focusing on interpreting quality of non-professional interpreters' performance. The corpus consisted of 19 naturally-occurring inter-

1 Data retrieved from the Secretariat General for Prisons <<http://www.institucionpenitenciaria.es/web/portal/idioma/en/documentos/estadisticas.html>> and the National Statistics Institute <http://www.ine.es/en/inebaseDYN/cp30321/cp_inicio_en.htm> as of January 1, 2015.

2 The terms 'primary participants/parties/interlocutors' are used throughout this article for ease of communication, despite the implicit notion of the interpreter being thus a 'secondary participant', which is in no way intended or endorsed here.

views between a prison staff member (no.=8) and a foreign language-speaking male prisoner (no.=19) mediated by another male prisoner who acted as an interpreter (no.=13) between Spanish and one of the following languages: English (8), Romanian (6), Arabic (3), French (1) and German (1). Both primary participants and a team of external interpreting experts (trainers and practitioners) answered expectation and assessment questionnaires about interpreting quality – the former also including a question about the interpreter’s role.³ The interpreters were asked to complete a questionnaire about their role before their interpretations.

This part of the study focusing on interpreter role construction and perception of visibility aims to analyse (a) whether non-professional interpreters performing their duties in a prison setting see themselves as visible participants in the interactions they mediate in; (b) whether primary participants expect these interpreters to remain invisible or to exert certain degrees of agency; (c) whether the interpreters’ actual actions match their beliefs or contradict them; and (d) whether certain interpreter behaviours trigger positive or negative responses from the parties in the interaction. For these purposes, three sets of data were used: answers to the interpreters’ questionnaires, answers to the expectation questionnaires by primary participants, and transcripts of the interviews.

The interpreters’ questionnaire was based on Angelelli’s Interpreter’s Interpersonal Role Inventory (IPRI) (2004b) and covered the five visibility subcomponents identified therein. However, given the notable differences between target informants in both studies, a simplification of this instrument was deemed appropriate in three main areas:

- The number of items was reduced from the original 38 to 18 due to time constraints in the administration of the survey.
- Item phrasing was simplified and explanations were added to accommodate literacy limitations and ensure understanding.
- Likert scales were replaced with dichotomous questions after unsuccessful piloting of scales. Items were paired under 9 questions. Each question addressed a particular subcomponent of visibility, with one item representing a visible alternative and one item representing an invisible alternative (a reversed IPRI item).

The final questionnaire for the interpreters included:

- a. An informed consent form.
- b. Nine dichotomous questions, totalling 18 IPRI items, distributed as follows among the five original IPRI visibility subcomponents:
 - Alignment with the parties: questions 4, 5 and 8 include IPRI items 5, 38, 9, 22, 28 and 21.
 - Establishing trust/facilitating mutual respect between the parties: questions 1 and 2 include IPRI items 35, 11, 16 and 13.
 - Communicating affect as well as message: question 7 includes IPRI items 17 and 29.

3 For further details about this methodology, see Martínez-Gómez (2015).

- Explaining cultural gaps/interpreting culture as well as language: questions 6 and 9 include IPRI items 36, 14, 20 and 33.
 - Establishing communication rules during the conversation: question 3 includes IPRI items 7 and 23.
- c. Eight questions addressing socio-demographic factors and previous interpreting experiences and training.

The questionnaire results were analysed quantitatively in order to shed light on non-professional interpreters' perceptions of their role in terms of visibility/invisibility. Both overall perceptions of visibility and each visibility subcomponent were examined considering all interpreters as a group, as well as by individual interpreter.

The second set of data used in this study was the responses to the primary participants' expectations questionnaire, which were analysed quantitatively at the group level. The relevant question was a multiple choice one where informants had to select the most appropriate interpreter's role description, according to their views. The four roles considered for these descriptions were conduit, communication facilitator, cultural broker and advocate, following Roy's taxonomy (1993/2002),⁴ and were phrased according to the expected literacy levels of the two groups of informants.

Finally, the interpreter-mediated interviews were transcribed (and translated when necessary) and analysed qualitatively after coding the transcripts manually using the software tool ATLAS.ti. This coding followed a top-down method in order to identify instances of interpreter visibility in each of the five IPRI subcomponents. If the primary participants expressed some type of verbal reaction to these visibility instances in the exchange itself (e.g. from reprimand to implicit/explicit acceptance), this was also noted.

3. Non-professional interpreters' visibility in prison interviews

3.1 Visibility in abstract terms

The first issue that this study set out to explore was the views on interpreters' visibility and its appropriateness to the prison context by both (non-professional) interpreters and primary interlocutors. In line with previous studies (see section 1), these interpreters agree that there is a certain degree of visibility to their role. As a group, they seem to position themselves in middle ground within the visible/invisible continuum, although they tend to gravitate slightly towards agency in turn-taking management and in the facilitation of trust and mutual respect. A closer look at the factors constituting the five visibility subcomponents, which were made explicit in the questionnaire, shows that these interpreters do not

4 Although I agree with Knapp-Pothoff/Knapp (1986: 153), among others, that the interpreter's role is a "continuum between that of a mere medium of transmission and that of a true third party", four different roles were made explicit in order to facilitate informants' responses.

hesitate to intervene as third participants in order to balance power differentials and establish trust between inmates and prison officers. These views support the notion of interpreting as situated practice and the influence thereupon of social and institutional factors: when power differentials and mistrust are almost inherent to the nature of the institution where communication is taking place, none of the members of the communicative triad are immune to them; and these interpreters, possibly given their understanding of the system and its norms, exert their agency to ensure that communication is not threatened.

Interestingly enough, however, when their intervention is depicted in more explicit terms (e.g. expressing their own voice, supporting one of the parties, or minimising a cultural conflict), these same interpreters seem reluctant to become visible. Two hypotheses may explain this discrepancy. The first one lies in the fact that the discourse of interpreters' invisibility is not restricted to academic and professional circles, but also permeates society at large. Often, interpreting users stress their need for an interpreter who 'just translates'. These prisoners are not certified interpreters, and as such they need to ratify their competence constantly in front of the primary participants. One of the ways they may do so is by accommodating to expected societal norms, such as the interpreter as a code-switching machine, given that, as Angelelli indicates, "invisibility earns trust" (2004b: 22). The second hypothesis has to do, again, with the particular interpersonal dynamics of the prison setting: showing support for one of the interlocutors or trying to mediate in any type of conflict may be understood by the unsupported party as a declaration of animosity. In a system where allegiances can be such a delicate issue, it comes as no surprise that the interpreters – prisoners themselves – would try to avoid disrupting the established fine balance.

Visibility subcomponent	Invisible	Visible
Alignment with the parties	54%	46%
<i>Interpreter's own voice (question 4)</i>	85%	15%
<i>Support for one party (question 5)</i>	69%	31%
<i>Balancing power differential (question 8)</i>	8%	92%
Establishing trust/facilitating mutual respect	31%	69%
<i>Facilitating respect (question 1)</i>	54%	46%
<i>Establishing trust (question 2)</i>	8%	92%
Communicating affect as well as message (question 7)	46%	54%
Explaining cultural gaps/interpret culture	42%	58%
<i>Explaining cultural differences (question 6)</i>	23%	77%
<i>Minimising cultural conflicts (question 9)</i>	62%	38%
Establishing communication rules (question 3)	38%	62%
Overall position	44%	56%

Table 1. Interpreters' self-perceptions of visibility by subcomponent

An individual analysis of each interpreter's perception of his positioning within the communicative triad reveals a variety of approaches within the same prison

setting: whereas four interpreters seem to remain in the middle ground, three lean towards the invisibility end of the spectrum, and six towards the agency side. Previous studies have considered social background factors as a possible explanation for this diversity of opinions. Angelelli (2004b: 68-70) found statistically significant correlations between the degree of reported visibility and self-identification with the dominant or subordinate group, age and income, and a weak correlation in the case of education level (not limited to interpreting). Social background data were collected in this study with an aim to test this hypothesis. Education level, experience in interpreting inside and outside the prison, frequency of those interpretations and specific training in interpreting or intercultural mediation were considered relevant for these purposes. Only the amount of experience in interpreting outside the prison (over two years for 46% of informants) yielded a significant direct correlation (using Spearman's correlation coefficient) with the degree of self-perceived visibility ($r_s(13) = .680, p = .044$).⁵

Interpreter	Invisible	Visible
ML01/02	78%	22%
ML05/06/10	44%	56%
ML08	22%	78%
ML09	78%	22%
ML13	44%	56%
ML16	67%	33%
ML18/19	33%	67%
ML20	33%	67%
CS01	22%	78%
CS03/04	44%	56%
CS05/06	44%	56%
CS08	22%	78%
CS10	33%	67%

Table 2. Overall perceptions of own visibility by individual interpreters⁶

These results point to the potential influence of institutional and societal factors on interpreters' construction of their own role – an issue which has already been suggested in the literature (*inter al.* Angelelli 2004a, 2004b; Berk-Seligson 2009; Valdés 2003; Zorzi 2012), and which seems to hold true as well in the case of non-professional interpreters acting in prison settings. Given these influenc-

5 During fieldwork, I became aware of overstatements in responses about interpreting experience and frequency inside the prison (possibly due to a social desirability bias). This, together with the small size of the sample, requires careful consideration of the results.

6 Interpreters are identified by the code assigned to their interview(s).

es, a study on interpreters' visibility would be incomplete if the expectations of the primary parties to the interaction were not accounted for. Table 3 shows that allophone prisoners and prison staff in this study tend to prefer interpreters who place themselves near the most visible end of the spectrum: whereas prisoners favour the culture broker role, staff favour the advocate role (understood as advocating on their behalf, as a 'helper' of the prison worker). Still, a non negligible number of prison officers support the concept of the (almost) invisible interpreter.

Role	Prisoners	Prison staff
Conduit	11%	13%
Communication facilitator	11%	25%
Culture broker	47%	6%
Advocate	32%	44%
No answer	0%	13%

Table 3. Role expectations by primary participants⁷

3.2 Visibility in practice

The second goal of this study was twofold: to analyse whether the views expressed by these non-professional interpreters about their role match their actual behaviours, and to describe the reactions these behaviours (especially instances of visibility) trigger in primary participants. Two interviews have been selected for these purposes, each of them mediated by a different interpreter who reported different degrees of visibility in their interpreting practice.

The interpreter who mediated interview ML16 identified himself better with the description of an invisible interpreter. He admitted, however, that he enters the interview as a ratified third participant, expressing his own voice at some points; and that he intervenes when he feels the need to explain a cultural difference or balance the power differential between inmate and officer. Indeed, a good number of instances of visibility detected in his interpretation seem to be related to cultural items and power/knowledge imbalances, as can be seen in excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1⁸

O: Cincuenta y tres. ¿De dónde eres? ¿Dónde naciste?

Fifty three. Where are you from? Where were you born?

I: Où est-ce que t'est né?

Where were you born?

P: En France. Nanterre

In France. Nanterre

I: Francia, Nanterre. **Es una ciudad cerca de París**

7 Two prison staff members selected two roles as their preferred ones. In those cases, each role selected accounted for 50% of the informant's response.

8 See transcript notation guidelines in appendix.

- France, Nanterre. *It's a city close to Paris*
- O: Mhm. ¿Y cuánto tiempo llevas viviendo en España?
Mhm. And how long have you been living in Spain?
- I: Ça fait combien de temps que t'habites en Espagne? **En fait, t'as jamais habité en Esp-**
And how long have you lived in Spain? In fact, you've never lived in Sp-
- P: J'ai jamais habité en Espagne
I've never lived in Spain
- I: Nunca ha ha llegado a vivir en España. **Es que la policía lo ha arrestado en Francia y le ha extraditado**
He has never lived in Spain. The thing is that the police arrested him in France and extradited him

Firstly, in his second utterance, the interpreter handles a cultural item by providing a short geographical explanation of the location of the inmate's hometown for the benefit of the prison officer – a strategy that he would use again later to clarify a reference to a French liqueur, Ricard. Secondly, when the interpreter follows up the officer's question about how long the prisoner has lived in Spain with a potential suggestion for an answer, he may be using his own voice to correct what he may see as a power imbalance. The allophone prisoner is relatively new to the prison and this is the first interview that the prison psychologist is having with him, whereas the interpreter is an orderly in the admissions wing, who performs as an interpreter in this type of interview when a new French-speaking inmate enters the facility. The interpreter's knowledge of the information that may be relevant to the psychologist and his awareness of the prisoner's unfamiliarity with the system may have triggered this intervention, together with a willingness to portray himself as cooperative with the prison officer, as will be discussed below. Finally, he may also have identified a potential ambiguity in the officer's question of how long the inmate had lived in Spain, which derives from the prisoner's personal situation. The interpreter assumes that the officer does not know about his arrest in France and consequent extradition, and perhaps fears that the prisoner may respond mentioning the time he has been *in prison* in Spain, without specifying so, thus creating a miscommunication problem that may go unnoticed by the officer. By inducing the prisoners' response, he is trying to elicit this important background information from the prisoner, which he in fact completes himself when the prisoner fails to provide the full story.

There are other instances of visibility by this interpreter, however, that do not seem motivated by cultural items or power imbalances, and in a way contradict his own responses about his self-perception of his role. In excerpt 2, the interpreter adds information about the inmate's family situation that may be easily elicited by the officer should she deem it necessary. In any case, she does not seem to notice it or be troubled by it.

Excerpt 2

- O: ¿Tus padres viven?
Are your parents alive?
- I: Tes parents sont en vie?
Are your parents alive?

- P: Mon père est décédé, ma mère est encore vivante
My father passed away, my mother is still alive
- I: El padre ha fallecido. La madre está viva, **vive en París**
*The father passed away. The mother is alive, **she lives in Paris***

Despite the fact that both interlocutors stated in their questionnaires that they prefer a conduit interpreter, none of these deviations from such a position into the visible end of the role spectrum are contested. One may argue that some of them may go unnoticed by the parties. This “opaque visibility” may occur with less obvious interventions (expanded or substituted renditions in Wadensjö’s terms, 1998), which take place at the expected turn of talk for the interpreter and do not differ notably in length from the original utterance, such as the one in excerpt 2. Cases of “transparent visibility”, i.e. where the interpreter’s assumption of a primary participant role is obvious, may, however, trigger certain reactions among the interlocutors. Excerpt 3 offers an example of contested “transparent visibility”.

Excerpt 3

- O: Mh, ¿y qué has estado haciendo el tiempo que llevas aquí?
Mh, and what have you been doing since you got here?
- I: Elle te demande ce que ce que ce que tu fais depuis que t’es là, c’est-à-dire.
El tema es que este señor no puede salir de aquí
*She is asking you what what what you do since you got here, that is. **The thing is that this gentleman cannot leave from here***
- O: **Ya. Deja que lo explique**
*Yes. **Let him explain it***

Factors affecting primary participants’ reactions to interpreters’ visible interventions may vary and would require further explorations. For instance, in excerpt 3, the officer intervenes in order to control interpreter behaviour which does not match her expectations and may also be counterproductive to her communicative goals. As will be discussed in relation to interview ML13, the purpose of these interviews, both led by psychologists, may not be limited to gathering factual information about the foreign language-speaking prisoner, but also includes gaining insight about his emotional state through his factual responses. Having the interpreter intervene in such a way may be detrimental for this latter goal.

Interview ML13 is also a ‘first contact interview’ between an allophone inmate and a prison psychologist. In this case, unlike interview ML16, the inmate had already been in this prison for over two years, but the psychologist was recently assigned to his residential block and had not interviewed him yet. The interpreter is brought in by the prisoner: he is his cellmate. In his answers to the questionnaire, the interpreter positions himself in middle ground within the visibility continuum, but denies acting as a primary participant or aligning with any of the parties. However, his visibility becomes evident in multiple instances when he answers questions directed to the allophone prisoner, as can be seen in excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4

- O: ¿Pero tiene otros?
But he has more?

- I: Diez**
Ten
- O: ¿Diez hijos con otra mujer?
Ten children with another woman?
- I: Sí.**
Yes
- P: ((laughs))
- O: ¿Con otra o con otras?
With another one or with several?
- I: Otras, eh, diferente mujer**
Several, er, different woman
- P: Diferente, diferente**
Different, different
- O: ¿Y dónde están los niños?
And where are the children?
- I: En Inglaterra con sus eh madres**
In England with their er mums

Such participation patterns on the part of the interpreter clearly contradict his abstract understanding of his role before entering the interview. Throughout the corpus, examples of interpreters answering for the foreign-language-speaking prisoner are very common. A tentative explanation may be purely pragmatic in nature: the interpreter may believe that communication is more efficient if he answers himself, as the officer will be getting the correct information and less time and effort will be spent. However, communication may turn out not to be effective if the officer's goals differ from getting accurate factual information (see excerpt 6). Furthermore, as suggested above, these behaviours may stem from a willingness to be seen as cooperative by the prison officer, and thus the institution. As explained by Angelelli (2004b: 2, 85), the interpreter brings the self to the interaction and cannot be immune to the interplay of social factors affecting other interpersonal relationships. In the prison setting, the power differential between inmates and officers also affects the interpreter, who may see these tasks as an opportunity to improve his social image. Establishing a positive relationship with the staff may, in turn, play in his favour in the long run, when applying for training or work programmes within the facility or other privileges (e.g. furlough, parole, family visits, etc.).

More often than not, these visible actions do not trigger any particular reaction in the interlocutors, who seem to assume that this is part of the interactional dynamics of this type of encounter. In fact, they are at times ratified by the parties, as can be seen in excerpt 4, when the prisoner first laughs at one of the interpreter's interventions and then corroborates one of his answers ("Diferente, diferente"). Still, despite the language barrier, interactional cues such as length and position of turns within the 'adjacency trio' (Merlini/Favaron 2005: 271), and partially transparent language constellations (see Meyer 2012 for details on this concept), among others, often allow interlocutors to monitor interpreter visibility and exert a certain degree of control over it if, for instance, they feel it is hindering accomplishment of their communicative goals or harming their face in any sense. Excerpt 5 shows how the prisoner, thanks to some understanding of

Spanish and recognition of cognate terms, corrects the interpreter in an attempt to save face and provide accurate information about his drug use history.

Excerpt 5

- O: ¿Y qué fue lo que consumió?
And what did he have?
- I: What did you first have? Weed, huh?
- P: Weed, hashish.
- I: Pone, empezó con hashish, después anfetamina, [eh], éxtasi and cocaína
So, he started with hashish, then amphetamines, [eh], ecstasy and cocaine
- P: [Pastillas]
[Pills]
- P: Not until I was 23 I had coca.**
- I: Hasta tener 23 años, después 23 años empezar cocain fuerte
Until he be 23, after 23 he start cocain strongly

Once the prisoner's drug use history has been discussed and he has admitted to being clean for two and a half years, only smoking hashish occasionally, the prison officer asks him whether he thinks he will use drugs again after being released. In excerpt 6, when the interpreter answers for the prisoner, the prison officer redirects his behaviour by clearly showing her disapproval of this instance of visibility in her next turn – a behaviour that she had accepted at the beginning of the interview (excerpt 4). What makes these two excerpts different is the communicative goal that is being prioritised by the psychologist: in excerpt 6, she is probably not looking for factual information anymore but for more subtle hints about the prisoner's former drug abuse problem and potential for relapse.

Excerpt 6

- O: Hachís sí consumes ahora. ¿Y cuando salgas a la calle tú crees que nunca más vas a volver a consumir?
You smoke hashish now. And when you get out, do you think you'll never smoke again?
- P: No, no, no quiero.
No, no, I don't want to
- I: No, él no quiero consumir más droga fuerte
No, he don't want to do hard drugs anymore
- O: ¿Y porros?
And weed?
- I: Di- di- depende. Él dicho cuando salida bebe una cerveza, posibilidad de fumar un porra.
De- de- depends. He said when exit drink a beer, possibility of smoking a joint
- O: Eso no te lo ha dicho él. Eso te lo lo estás diciendo tú.**
He didn't say that. You are saying that
- I: Porque es mi compañero de celda. Yo saber fa- fa- when you get out.
Because he is my cellmate. I know...

This is yet another example of how situational factors specific to the encounter at hand also affect role negotiation. This case illustrates how a shift in communicative goals within the same interview forces the psychologist to redefine the boundaries of the role of the interpreter for that particular fragment of the con-

versation. In an informal discussion with the team of psychologists at the prison C.P. Mallorca, where this interview was conducted, about the use of prisoner-interpreters for mental health evaluation, another psychologist expressed her concerns about this issue as follows: “Sometimes how they say things tells you more than what they say. When the interpreter answers for them, that disappears. You get the facts but nothing else”. This duality of communicative purposes and the resulting adaptation of roles that seems to happen organically in this interview are also evidenced by the psychologist’s statement of her preferred interpreter role: she checked two answers – communication facilitator and (officer’s) advocate.

4. Conclusions

The notion of the invisible interpreter, once – and for long – an uncontested principle, has recently started to be deconstructed in favour of the image of interpreters as active third parties who exert their agency in order to help to achieve interactional goals, be it through the organization of talk or by participating with their own voices. Still, the discourse prevalent in training and professional circles, and embodied in codes of ethics, advocates the idea of the interpreter as a neutral non-person. In the study of interpreters’ visibility, resorting to non-professional interpreters as research subjects may allow researchers to overcome such normative assumptions. Their lack of exposure to these principles may prevent them from experiencing the interpreter’s paradox, and thus act more freely on the institutional, interpersonal and conversational features of the situation at hand. For instance, young language brokers have been found to understand the potential effects of certain exchanges mediated by them on their family lives, and thus to become deliberately visible in order to make family interests prevail (Valdés 2003: 97-98).

The non-professional interpreters in this corpus, however, tend to describe their behaviours as only slightly visible – in the middle ground within the continuum, but still with a strong invisibility component. In his definition of native translation, Toury (1995: 241-256) explains that, in these cases, the acquisition of translational skills is based on observation, experience and exposure to socially accepted norms. And non-personhood is still a socially accepted norm – the general popular understanding of how an interpreter should behave.

Nevertheless, their agency in interaction is more present than they realise or acknowledge. In the cases described here, interpreters seem to be prompted to participate with their own voice in order to accomplish the communicative goals that they assume true, i.e. the gathering of factual personal and penitentiary information from the prisoner. As Zorzi (2012: 233) states when finding similar examples in her healthcare interpreting corpus, “the activities initiated by these non-translatorial tasks constitute goal oriented institutional talk”. For such purposes, these prisoner-interpreters volunteer information and/or orient prisoners’ answers, although to different degrees. Whereas ML16 seems to intervene only in order to make cultural information available or to make sure that important information about the prisoner’s penitentiary and immigration status is not left out, ML13 seems to intervene more systematically. Interpreting experience

in this setting may be shaping these behaviours, which may have been ratified by tacit/explicit acceptance not only in the past but also – as seen in excerpt 4 – by the interlocutors themselves in the situation at hand.

A higher-order influencing factor may be related to the dynamics of the correctional institution itself. As Merlini (2013: 268) explains with regard to politeness and face work, the interpreter's interactional behaviour not only has consequences for the particular encounter at hand, but also "an additional image of self is at stake during the communicative event". In a prison setting, where information is power and the sharing of information with the institution may be regarded as a collaborative move on the part of any prisoner, such dynamics can easily permeate the interpreted event and guide the interpreter's behaviour towards providing information unsolicited from him.

Examples of non-professional interpreters speaking for their users have also been found in other settings, and have drawn sharp criticism, given their potential adverse consequences:

the natural inclination is to speak for the patient, with whose situation one is familiar, rather than interpreting for them. When a situation as such arises, the patient is excluded from the interaction and becomes the subject of discussion for two people who are speaking about them in a language they do not understand, thus rendering the patient powerless (Hale 2007: 46).

However,

what is important for me is the patient and his condition, and therefore, to give an accurate diagnosis. And it is easier to give an accurate diagnosis if someone helps the patient to explain to me what is wrong, or if that person saw him get sick, if he is his cellmate and can explain to me in detail what is going on. If communication is "yes, no, ooow!", the diagnosis may not be accurate (Physician at C. P. Alicante Cumplimiento. Personal communication, July 2008. My translation).

No single stance is universally flawless. Research has shown that static prescriptions and descriptions of role are unrealistic. Interpreters' visibility and agency are subject not only to a wide array of societal, institutional and interpersonal constraints (Angelelli 2004b), but also to constant negotiation between the parties to each particular interaction. Interpreters move between different provisional 'identities' (i.e. roles) within one single event, which are co-constructed among all participants according to the relevant conversational tasks at stake in each moment (Zorzi 2012: 247). Although the interpreter normally assesses the situation and decides on the relevant 'provisional identity', the parties can use different conversational mechanisms to trigger, reaffirm or redirect them (see excerpts 3-6 above) in a process of collaborative building of interpreters' behaviours.

The limitations in size and scope of the corpus in this study require much caution in the analysis of results. Even though conclusions cannot be drawn about the co-construction of the interpreter's role throughout the interaction other than that it occurs, certain issues emerge as deserving further examination, such as factors influencing self-perception of role, patterns in its dynamic negotiation by all participants, causes and consequences of shifts in 'provisional identi-

ties', etc. Certainly, overcoming normative approaches about role may open the door to a broader understanding of the co-construction of interpreter-mediated events at the textual, communicative, interpersonal and institutional levels.

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Appendix

Transcript notation:

O	officer
I	interpreter
P	prisoner
[]	overlap
-	syllable cut short
(())	transcriber's comments
bold	turns discussed
<i>italics</i>	author's translation of original utterances (they attempt to reflect original grammatical/lexical errors)