CHAPTER 3

The Interpreter’s Role in Dialogue Interpreting on Television: A Training Method

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Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to present a three-phase training course designed for the training of talk show interpreters. In the last few decades, Television Interpreting (TI) has been gaining momentum, as both professional practice and a research field. The great variety of communication modes, and their relevant interpreting modes, offered by interpreter-mediated televised communication has triggered an on-going discussion on the appropriateness of interpreters’ pragmatic behaviour within the TV environment. Capitalizing on studies conducted on CorIT—Television Interpreting Corpus (Straniero Sergio 2007, 2011; Falbo 2009, 2012; Straniero Sergio and Falbo 2012) and corroborating each point with examples of real-life interactions, the following training phases will be presented: in the first phase, major aspects distinguishing interpreter-mediated face-to-face interaction on TV from other forms of interpreter-mediated interaction are presented to the class, underlining the pragmatic elements that distinguish talk show interpreters’ role and behaviour, namely interpreting as performing, face work and multiple discourse identities. In the second phase, examples of real-life interpreter-mediated talk shows are viewed and discussed, encouraging trainees to identify the pragmatic elements listed in the first phase in the praxis. Finally, in the third phase, trainees are asked to take part in a two-step role-play training experiment: firstly, an interpreter-mediated talk show interview is simulated, with students interpreting in consecutive mode and being video-recorded. The interaction proceeds in parallel to a real-life monolingual interview, being played step by step after each exchange has been translated, following Stokoe’s (2011a, 2011b, 2013) CARM model. Secondly, students are asked to interpret the self-same interaction simultaneously, this time with the class divided into two groups, representing the Italian- and the English-speaking audiences respectively. Finally, students’ performances are discussed in terms of pragmatic behaviour and its (in)correct application, with the aim of operationalizing the feedback into a series of training cues, which later on may serve as a basis for the development of a new TI training paradigm for talk show interpreting.
1 Introduction

This paper analyses the interpreter’s role in interpreter-mediated face-to-face interaction on television, and illustrates a three-stage training curriculum for talk show interpreters. Such a training programme was inspired by Straniero Sergio’s (2007) seminal work on talk show interpreting and was tested during my media interpreting training for MA students at the Department of Legal, Language, Interpreting and Translation Studies (IUSLIT) of the University of Trieste.

Interpreter-mediated face-to-face interaction on television is a specific kind of media interpreting (MI) (Dal Fovo 2015a), typically applied to the talk show broadcasting format. The main characteristics of talk show interpreting (Dal Fovo 2015b) may be summarised as follows: first of all, interpreters are generally present—both physically and vocally—on screen; the consequence of their presence on the TV set is twofold. Firstly, their professional exposure, extremely elevated on TV due to the public nature of any broadcast content, reaches its peak, and their performance takes place during events displaying a distinctively interactional format—i.e. in dialogue-like settings. Secondly, the presence of the television medium significantly influences the norms guiding talk show interpreters’ behaviour, particularly in terms of the goal of the interaction. Traditionally, interpreters intervene in institutional interactions to allow communication between primary interlocutors speaking different languages and having the communicative goal of “obtaining information, testing the knowledge or the skills of interviewees or constructing accusations” (Katan and Straniero Sergio 2001, 214). Although television interaction may be considered a fully-fledged institutional type of interaction, primary interlocutors interact not so much to communicate, as to entertain viewers in front of the screen, who are the real intended addressees of the message. The ethics of entertainment is the overarching principle guiding each and every action performed on-screen (interpreter’s actions included) and representing the ultimate goal of every TV communicative event, which “must first and foremost be entertaining” (Katan and Straniero Sergio 2003, 133), that is, please the audience.

1 Typically, talk show interpreters are on the TV set, sitting next to the foreign guest, rendering the host’s statements or questions in whispered simultaneous mode and using consecutive interpreting to translate the guest’s turns aloud. However, there are broadcasters that favour the use of simultaneous interpreting (SI) for talk show interviews (see Section 2).

2 See Section 2.

3 Intended here in its pragmatic dimension, namely talk as a form of speech act within a given social and communicative situation (Beccaria 2004).