Addressing Methodological Challenges in Interpreting Studies Research

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Edited by

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In memory of Miriam Shlesinger

Miriam liked to think of herself as a 'hedgefox', a portmanteau she coined to reflect her duality as a specialist (hedgehog) who refuses to play the game of academic specialists, and her more eclectic, playful nature (fox). This is well reflected in her supervision of theses in multiple fields. Two of Miriam's former students collaborate in this volume (Chapter Five) and combine three research fields she worked on: interpreting studies, community interpreting and corpus-based translation studies. This piece of interdisciplinarity is part of Miriam's heritage.

Although she is sadly missed, we all thrive on her inspiration.

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INTRODUCTION

A major breakthrough in Interpreting Studies was made after investigating community interpreting in greater detail and the inherent high degree of participant interaction in that type of interpreting (Wadensjö 1998, Metzger 1999, Roy 2000). After looking at dialogue interpreters, as they have come to be known (Mason 2000), cast away from the carpeted walls of sound-proof booths and deprived of the spotlighted lectern-podium position at high level fora, it has become clear that the interpreter's invisibility, not to mention their neutrality, is uppermost in the minds of both users and providers in terms of expectations. Among all the participants in any 'mediated' communicative situation, it is the interpreter who is exceedingly visible and potentially most influential in shaping and coordinating the ongoing exchanges.

We propose in this volume that a similar view be applied to researchers engaged in interpreting research, especially in empirical investigations. Different forms of 'interaction' between researchers and the data in their studies are inevitable. This applies to every stage of their work, ranging from all the pre-analysis activities (e.g. research design, data collection, transcription, and so on) to the analysis itself (regardless of the approach adopted) and the post analysis stage, in which results are disseminated in the research community and, possibly, the target population (Napier 2011).

In descriptive and empirical studies, analysts establish contacts with speech communities, interact with them, and the results of their work ultimately influence communicative practices. In order to study interpreter-mediated interactions, researchers need to be well acquainted with methods that allow them to interact successfully with subjects, to proceed scientifically with the data collected and proactively with the results obtained.

This book is a selection of papers presented at the International Conference *Interpreter-mediated Interactions: Methodologies and Models*, held on 7–9 November 2013 at UNINT University, Rome, in memory of Professor Miriam Shlesinger. Professor Shlesinger was one of the most prolific scholars in Interpreting Studies. Her work ranged from research on cognitive processes in simultaneous interpreting (particularly on attention and working memory), court interpreting, corpus-based interpreting studies, community interpreting, sign language interpreting, translators and

interpreters' self-perceived roles and interpreter training. When she prematurely passed away, the newly-constituted LARIM research group (UNINT University, Rome) decided to organise its first conference in her memory. Given her broad range of interests and overarching methodological insights, many other Translation and Interpreting scholars have been inspired by this leading figure, who was a professional translator and interpreter, trainer, and researcher at the same time, i.e. a 'practisearcher' (Gile 1994).

The conference provided a forum for discussing interdisciplinary approaches to research on interpreter-mediated interactions. Interaction is a fundamental feature of not only mediated communication *per se*, but also of methodological practices, as these need to be addressed with regard to the role of all the participants, including both the interpreter and the researcher, in the speech community considered. Indeed in "[…] scientific research, which progresses on the basis of numerous inputs and their interaction, the absence of such interaction could only result in a relative impoverishment of results" (Gile 1994: 153). In this sense, interpreting is "particularly susceptible to a constructivist epistemology that combines an engagement with empirical data with interpretive procedures that are necessarily relative to situational contexts, settings and socio-cultural backgrounds" (Pöchhacker 2011: 22).

This volume is not intended as representative of proceedings of the above mentioned conference. Rather, the collection of papers/chapters proposed here is a 'natural' selection of those works that indeed lean on strong theoretical platforms, while at the same time offer practical accounts of how methodological challenges have been tackled in Interpreting Studies research.

Present at the conference commemorating Miriam Shlesinger, Daniel Gile drew a distinction between basic and applied research: the former is designed to explore reality, the latter is designed to change reality. Very aptly put, he described the parallel between exploring research and using a spotlight to look at reality, the spotlight can be positioned in different places and with different angles. But he also invited us to consider the question, what kind of filters are we applying (and thus excluding)? He portrayed analysts as also obtaining shadows when they point a spotlight; these may be phantoms, we see things that might be different if looked at from another perspective, reminding analysts that more than one projector could be used by applying different theories (Gile 2013).

Research methodology is a series of techniques for investigating phenomena, acquiring new knowledge, correcting and integrating previous knowledge. When working with contrastive data, specifically, methodology

brings to the fore a myriad of challenges that are never fully apparent, as most scholars know. It is in this vein that we are pleased to offer the readership yet another volume on methodology, a subject–it seems–that is never quite beat into the ground, reflexively offering up renewed issues to examine, details to perfect, and analytical procedures to fine tune.

We here first briefly review other volumes that have dealt with methodological concerns in order to pay tribute to these works and, at the same time, distinguish our volume as to what it has to further offer analysts. We then paint an overall picture of the volume and present each chapter individually. At the end of this introduction we 'spotlight' what we feel requires further attention in future, 'angles' which are still in the 'shadows' but fully complement the analyst's work when applying 'filters' and communicating both their theoretical stance and findings.

Around and About Methodology in Interpreting Studies

Over the last two decades, the tremendous increase in translation and interpreting research output has gone hand in hand with a proliferation of training programmes, from undergraduate to doctoral level. In many cases, interpreter education has been supplemented with theoretical reflection, and trainees are required to engage in a research project, write a final report or dissertation upon completion of their curriculum. In addition to the supervisors involved in this process, previous generations of scholars have also contributed to expand the horizon of interpreting research, adopting a variety of approaches to address the multifaceted nature of interactions mediated by interpreters in different settings. A need for methodological guidance has clearly emerged and the interdisciplinary character of most approaches to the study of translation and interpreting demands constant adjustments, revision, and updating. So it is not surprising to find a number of contributions entirely focused on research methods or debating the affinity between translation and interpreting research (e.g. Gile 1995, Olohan 2000, Gile *et al.* 2001, Hermans 2002, Schäffner 2004, Hansen et al. 2008, Nicodemus and Swabey 2011). In fact, translation research came first in offering scientific scaffolding to both beginners and experienced researchers (Hatim 2001), including some specific hints at interpreting research as well (Williams and Chesterman 2002: 21–23). It is interesting to note that, according to Williams and Chesterman (*ibid.*: 2), "[b]efore you embark on research it is essential that you have some practical experience of translating, whether in the translation classroom or in a professional setting", a belief that is well in line with the notion of practisearcher (Gile 1994) further discussed in

chapters one and three of this volume. Building on the seminal work by Williams and Chesterman, Saldanha and O'Brien (2013) have addressed further developments in research methods (e.g. those involving the use of new technologies) and bring broad methodological areas closer to the translation scholar's perspective, thus providing more targeted examples while highlighting relevant points of cross-fertilisation with other disciplines. Particular attention has also been given to research methodology as part of translation and interpreter training within higher education frameworks, for example in PhD programmes offered at various universities (Gile *et al.* 2001, Mason 2009). More recent developments in training programmes, e.g. for community interpreting with a focus on issues concerning ethics, gender, and intercultural challenges, are becoming strong drivers in translation and interpreting scholars' methodological choices, in that new topics in translation and interpreting that fuel on other disciplines "require new strands of theory from other fields/disciplines to be implemented into the field of community interpreting" (Kainz *et al.* 2011: 7). The same perspective has been upheld to reframe the dichotomy between conference and community interpreting, whose research communities are increasingly intertwined with consequent cross-fertilisation, as testified by the first attempt to provide a resource book entirely dedicated to interpreting research methods, authored by Hale and Napier (2013; see Seeber 2015 for a review), two scholars particularly active in the study of sign language and community interpreting. Cross-fertilisation is also the keyword with reference to the latest major work on translation and interpreting research methods to become available at the time of writing this introduction. Angelelli and Baer (2016) have compiled a comprehensive collection of contributions, covering both translation and interpreting, that address several research questions and strands. They outline the main concepts, theories, and approaches that may have been adopted to a different extent in both disciplines but are surely relevant to both areas of mediated communication[1].

Ours is neither a resource book, nor an exhaustive overview of methods applied in all spheres of interpreting activity. Rather, it offers readers a view as to how analysts (and practisearchers) take stock of their position *vis-à-vis* the research context and how–at the same time–they mediate their own role into, and out of, the social community in which their work is embedded.

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[1] A similar volume, but with a specific focus on quantitative research methods, is due to follow in 2016 (Mellinger and Hanson forthcoming).

A bird's eye view of the volume

The volume is divided into three parts. The first two reflect procedures common to all areas of research; the last part opens an area of discussion that goes beyond data analysis, i.e. critical discourse analysis, ideology and power. Ideally, this is a realm where we ourselves may critically view our own work as analysts and start to realize how our methodological choices both condition the work we do and the nature of the findings that emerge.

There are several threads that run throughout the volume: the widespread use of ethnographic methods (is there ever enough written about ethnography?), the experimental approach, narrative theory, the corpus-based approach, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), ideology and power.

We open the volume with a section on **Data collection** (Part 1), which is generally thought to be a process of gathering, weighing and measuring information on variables of interest, in a systematic fashion that enables us to answer research questions, test hypotheses, and assess outcomes. **Data analysis** (Part 2), or interaction with data, is the process of systematically applying quantitative or qualitative methods and logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and abstract, examine and evaluate data. Analytical procedures "provide a way of drawing inductive inferences from data and distinguishing the signal (the phenomenon of interest) from the noise (statistical fluctuations) present in the data" (Shamoo and Resnik 2003: 32). **Beyond data analysis** (Part 3) there is, of course, the entire universe of interactions that make up the very meat of our research context, i.e. interaction with target communities and society at large. We have included this section to emphasize the importance of critically assessing both our work as analysts and how the results of our research may find voice.

Part 1: Data collection

The issues of data sampling and representativeness are at the core of empirical research irrespective of the model of Translation taken into account, be it comparative, process or causal (Chesterman 2000). In particular, this holds true in corpus-based studies (Biber 1993, Halverson 1998) where inclusion/exclusion criteria must be defined and meta-data annotation is required for a corpus to be "put together in a principled way" (Zanettin 2000: 107). More generally, both description and definition of the object of our investigations are of the essence in order to arrive at

meaningful results, but these processes are profoundly influenced by the analyst's methodological choices throughout every stage of their research, including how data are taken from relevant populations.

In **Chapter One**, **Claudio Bendazzoli** presents the challenges (and possible solutions) experienced in fieldwork when collecting data from conference interpreting and sign language community interpreting. Despite the inherent differences between the two scenarios under consideration, the ethnographic approach raises similar questions, especially with reference to the position of the researcher and their role as observers and/or participants. In particular, the role of the practisearcher (Gile 1994) is discussed, highlighting advantages and limitations of direct involvement as evidenced in this and other studies from different disciplines. Drawing on anthropology, ethnography and sociology, the discussion highlights the moves in position from observation to participation, and from participation to observation, that can be appreciated in these disciplines and in interpreting research respectively.

There is a radical shift from analysts defining inclusion/exclusion criteria in their data, to an analyst being included/excluded from a setting depending on its confidentiality, thus putting them in a position of 'taking' data when they are not 'given' (see Chesterman and Arrojo 2000). In **Chapter Two**, **Claudia Monacelli** discusses data collection in confidential settings where classified data is off-limits to analysts, even when they have an ingroup relation with respondents. The chapter applies Critical Discourse Analysis methodologies, specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, Wodak 2001), to the study of these settings. She puts forward a model of context that both allows for discursive practices to emerge and makes it possible to evince the power structure and ideological stance in place while–at the same time–it reveals the interpreter's role as framed within the power structure, yet unveils their role in propagating a genre chain of unclassified texts. In order to account for gatekeeping in this context, she complements her theoretical platform with Goffman's dramaturgy (1990) so as to account for interpreters needing security clearance before being admitted as a 'performer'. The first part of her study–empirical data taken from semi-structured interviews with interpreters from the Ministry of Defense (MoD), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and the Ministry of the Interior in Italy–led to the formulation of interpreter-mediated fields of action and genres in confidential settings. Then, on the basis of further empirical data taken from interviews with current and former MoD translator/interpreters, professionals are depicted as assuming varying degrees of responsibilities in generating, disseminating and recontextualising

texts in a military-diplomatic situation, where the ideology of inclusion and exclusion reflects the power structure within the MoD.

Ethnography has been practiced as a specific epistemological approach, as a method for collecting particular types of data in context and as description, i.e. an account of facts, experiences and communicative practices in specific speech communities (Agar 1995, Gumperz 1968, Hymes 1972). In terms of interpreting research in an authentic, situated environment, ethnography is based on interaction between the researcher and the observed subject(s), therefore fundamentally subjective in nature. In **Chapter Three**, **Marta Biagini** revisits ethnography for dialogue interpreting research. The chapter illustrates how an ethnographic approach provides dialogue interpreting research with a critical lens to capture both the complex nature of this activity and the multiple voices of people involved. The author illustrates some fundamentals of an ethnographic approach by, on the one hand, reviewing significant literature about ethnography, both as epistemology and method and, on the other, by focusing on fieldwork-based research and its three sequential stages (prior, during and after fieldwork). Emphasis is placed on different methods for collecting data on the field: observations, field-notes, recordings, and interviewing (emerging narratives). The author focuses on data collection in court settings in Italy and highlights how ethnography, although a time-consuming procedure, results in being a flexible methodology and adapts to different contexts and objectives in dialogue interpreting research.

Part 2: Data analysis

Among all research methods, the experimental approach has an appeal in that, if done right, a cause-and-effect relationship can be established between the investigated variables–a powerful attribute that no other research methods can achieve. In **Chapter Four**, **Minhua Liu** illustrates how experimental research comes with many strings attached: some variables have to be made observable and measurable, while others are tightly controlled in a carefully thought-out plan. As she herself tells us, what to control and how to observe or measure are seldom guided by intuition alone and often involve some degree of thinking outside the box and clever manipulation, guided by a specific research question, which, in turn, is solidly grounded in thorough background thinking. Studies using the experimental approach to study interpreting are often a step ahead of themselves when adopting this approach, that is, asking 'why' or 'how' before the 'what' is known. What is seen are experiments done for experimenting's sake. The method itself becomes the purpose and focus of

the study, while the research question appears to be an afterthought. Minhua Liu offers examples of independent variables from interpreting studies, in relationship to the research questions from which they derive. These independent variables are further analysed in terms of manipulation and control, the two most important elements in experiments. She also gives examples of dependent variables in terms of their appropriateness as the measure for a specific independent variable and the level of precision of what is needed to sufficiently reflect the effect of the independent variable.

In **Chapter Five**, **Tanya Voinova** and **Noam Ordan** explore the potential of combining corpus-based methodology with a narrative approach in the study of self-representations of community interpreters. The work comprises three areas of Miriam Shlesinger's research: translators' and interpreters' self-perceptions, community interpreting, and Corpus-based Interpreting Studies. The case study focuses on narratives of students participating in a community interpreting course, which can be seen as a site of identity construction for student-interpreters from different ethnic, linguistic, cultural and gender backgrounds volunteering in various settings. Sources are statements made by student-interpreters in their weekly reports and end-of-year course assignments. The 288,000 word overall corpus has been annotated for Hebrew morphology and for metadata including such variables as ethnicity, gender and interpreting setting. The chapter provides a preliminary corpus-based analysis using a narrative (thematic) approach. While the narrative approach focuses on the themes, structure and style of self-presentations, the electronic corpus-based tools are instrumental in tracking the commonalities between the narratives and in teasing apart the differences between them according to the metadata variables. The empirical quantitative corpus-based findings are interpreted qualitatively and set the ground for a further in-depth (qualitative) narrative analysis.

Methodological challenges in consecutive interpreting research are discussed in **Chapter Six** by **Cynthia J. Kellett Bidoli**. She highlights that consecutive interpretation (CI) has traditionally entailed the use of pen and paper to take notes of a source text in one language followed by the transfer of the same information into another language. The complex nature of interpreting, in any modality and mode, renders analysis of the many processes involved an extremely complicated and challenging task. Technological innovation has provided researchers with numerous digital tools to collect data in the form of corpora composed of real-life interpretations which can be analysed with appropriate software to examine various linguistic and prosodic features. However, indecipherable

hand-scribbled consecutive notes distinct for each trainee interpreter or professional practitioner in their cognitive construction and graphic form have continued to deter investigation because of the laborious, painstaking work involved to transcribe them. The invention of digital pen technology has led to a new dimension in note-taking (Orlando 2010, 2013, 2014). Based on three years' experience teaching CI with the aid of digital pen technology that combines the video recording of CI notes with synchronized sound input, the author discusses some of the major challenges with regard to CI research methodology (note-taking in particular) and how today it is possible to rapidly collect a digital corpus of consecutive notes synchronized to the source language which helps decipher the notes more easily during transcription. By audio recording the interpreted target language, a parallel corpus can be transcribed and aligned with the former in order to identify and analyse linguistic, semantic and pragmatic features of the interpretation for both didactic and research purposes. CI research with the aid of digital pens is promising, as clearly shown in this chapter, and their full potential deserves to be explored more extensively.

Part 3: Beyond data analysis

In **Chapter Seven**, **Sara Bani** examines cultural mediation strategies adopted by participants (Spanish-speaking guests, Italian-speaking chairperson, simultaneous interpreters) in three debates held during the journalism festival of the weekly magazine *Internazionale*, by using tools from Critical Discourse Analysis. All festival guests were bloggers, journalists and people related to the news world. The audience was non-expert, who read the magazine which publishes translated articles from the international press, covering topics and places that are usually neglected by the Italian media (such as Latin America) and proposes a discourse that is sometimes alternative to the dominant one. The audience would then expect debates that, like the magazine, offer an understandable and ideologically alternative discourse (in content and form) to the one that dominates in the Italian mainstream media. Considering the central role translation holds in the magazine and the vast presence of non-Italian speaking guests, linguistic and cultural mediation becomes an essential feature in the festival. This chapter analyses how participants build a culturally understandable discourse about information that is not well known to the Italian audience or that is part of a dominant discourse; it also takes into account collaborative interaction strategies (especially chairperson ↔ guests and guests ↔ audience) and examines how these are

communicated in the target texts produced by the interpreters, highlighting specific challenges when working between two cognate languages such as Spanish and Italian.

In a recent overview of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Wodak and Meyer (2009) stress the need to embrace approaches from cognitive sciences, such as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), within the CDA theoretical construct. While **Chapter Eight** by **Michael Boyd** is a further attempt at cross-fertilisation, it also extends these constructs to simultaneous interpreting. The chapter specifically aims to demonstrate the added value of adopting theories and methodologies from both CDA and CMT for the analysis of both source text and simultaneously interpreted target text (into Italian) of political discourse. The empirical data are taken from the third 2008 US presidential debate between Barack Obama and John McCain, focusing on turns which mention 'Joe the Plumber'. Although based on a real person (Joe Wurzelbacher, from Ohio), the figure was invoked to varying degrees as an embodiment of two, opposing worldviews shaped by the liberal and conservative ideologies of the two candidates. Lakoff (2002) maintains that US political divisions are shaped and subsequently framed by competing interpretations of family-based moral systems realised through the 'nation as family' conceptual metaphor. These practices create fundamentally different moral models with which conservative and liberal politicians articulate their values and worldviews in their discourse practices. It is further argued that, while the use of these metaphors create a certain textual coherence that reflects 'a systematized ideology' (Chilton and Schäffner 2002), pronominal use further consolidates this conceptual coherence (Boyd 2013). The notions of power, ideology, genre and context, crucial to all CDA-based approaches, are also considered and applied to the analysis. The chapter aims to demonstrate the various cognitive, contextual and pragmatic factors that may trigger certain linguistic choices at a pronominal level (Wales 1996), especially in relation to the 'moral action as fair distribution' metaphor. The Italian data aim to demonstrate the complications involved in the remapping of these often conflicting realisations of the source text, forced by both linguistic differences and a divergent application of the 'nation as family' conceptual metaphor. Using the source language video and transcript from the debate and the target text into Italian, the author provides further empirical evidence for the existence of these two, distinct models of morality in the English source text as well as the interpreted Italian target text.

The issue of ideology and interpreting has increasingly become a topic of research within interpreting studies in recent years. This is possibly due

to the influence of research in community interpreting, which has explored issues affecting the role of the interpreter, such as invisibility, intervention and impartiality. Such issues had not previously been widely questioned or studied with regard to conference interpreting. As mentioned, interpreting has begun to be understood as situated interaction in which the interpreter can affect the outcome in numerous ways. In **Chapter Nine**, **Anne Martin** discusses how ideology in interpreting has been dealt with by scholars in different ways, broadly falling into two categories: its manifestation as a textual phenomenon and as an extra-textual phenomenon. Miriam Shlesinger herself dealt with this issue (Shlesinger 2011) in an inspiring paper which explores how interpreters' values inevitably impinged on their work during a Tel Aviv terrorism trial. In this chapter the author reviews research carried out on this topic, with special attention to the methodological frameworks and approaches used to study it, ranging from the narrative approach adopted by Boéri (2008) to the Bourdieusian stance of Inghilleri (2003). She refers to different types of interpreting including conference, legal and community interpreting, in addition to interpreting in conflict zones. She draws conclusions about common trends in methodological approaches, the appropriateness of those approaches used and their applicability to training, professional practice and further research.

Et Sequentia...

The various paradigms of Interpreting Studies are, for the most part, shaped by frameworks that existed before the discipline charted its own scientific territory, and by cross-fertilisation from other disciplines, as reflected in particular in cognitive approaches, discourse analytical approaches and sociological approaches. These multiple disciplinary perspectives on interpreting, and the multifaceted nature of the object of study, with its different modes and settings, have given rise to a vast array of models as well as diverse theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. Though questions of epistemology (i.e. the nature of knowledge and ways of acquiring it) have received little explicit attention in Interpreting Studies, the discipline's epistemological basis has also been constructed by the way the research community has valued different types of methodology (Monacelli 2015).

If it has not yet become apparent, we here clearly state (admit?) that we espouse a 'reflexive turn' in Interpreting Studies research. By definition, the 'reflexive turn' was a figurative look in the mirror by anthropologists, a modern phenomenon in cultural anthropology that began in the early

seventies. The reflexive turn put anthropologists in the position of telling the story of their integration and interactions within the community they were studying. This challenged anthropologists to not let their story reveal only an impartial view of the culture they examine (Ruby 1982). Even if, overall, changes in the epistemological stance taken within interpreting studies, from introspective to empiricist to constructivist, have emulated the paradigm shift under way in several branches of science that are concerned with socially situated human intellectual activity (*ibid*.), we do hope we have contributed to holding up the mirror to researchers in this discipline.

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PART I

DATA COLLECTION