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Backstage conditions and interpreter's performance in live television interpreting: quality, visibility and exposure

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Abstract

Live television interpreting has increased in recent years and is commonly seen as one of the most difficult and stressing forms of interpreting. However, both the actual difficulty and stress involved highly depend on the physical and technical conditions the interpreter has to face in every particular situation. The main goal of the present paper is to examine a corpus – which partly draws on the author's professional experience in various international events broadcast in the media – of digital video recordings of live interpretations from Spanish and international TV channels to discuss the backstage conditions of the interpreting assignments. Backstage conditions (a new concept introduced in this paper) are understood as a factor affecting quality according to two salient variables: visibility and exposure. Since they will determine the quality standards achievable in each particular case, and the quality of the interpreter's performance will thus be negotiated and assessed accordingly, awareness of all actors involved in the process shall be raised with regard to their relevance. Further stages of the current project will expand the corpus into a more comprehensive one that will eventually become STICor (Spanish Television Interpreting Corpus).

Introduction

Television (or TV) interpreting, media interpreting, and broadcast interpreting are different terms used to describe an important field of specialization that is

increasingly gaining relevance within Interpreting Studies. Most of the literature on the topic has been published under the heading of those three terms, although some other related ones, such as *telecast simultaneous interpreting* (Darwish 2009, 2010) also fall within its scope.

According to both researchers and interpreters, interpreting for live TV broadcasts is almost unanimously regarded as more stressful than other forms of interpreting (Stolz 1997; Kurz 2002), the main reason being that interpreting for a mass audience entails a much bigger exposure in case of failure than the one felt in conventional conference settings. Although the impact exercised not only by stress but also by other (mainly technical) constraints on TV interpreters is frequently examined in the publications that are increasingly being published on the topic – especially in the last decade –, hardly any of them are aimed at resolving the conflict that this poses for such professionals. The recent explosion of TV interpreting research provides us, for instance, with analyses on particular thematic fields such as legal discourse (Amato 2002), or sports (Straniero Sergio 2003); on specific TV channels (Darwish 2009) or programmes (Niemants 2007); and even establishes comparisons between different TV channel approaches (Shibahara 2003; Tsuruta 2008). On a more detailed scale, only regarding linguistic aspects, we find studies on proper names (Hanaoka 2002), compensatory strategies (Al-Khanji *et al.* 2000), rhetoric (Kwak 2007; Neuberger 2010), coherence (Dal Fovo 2011) or prosody (Moritz 2010). However, the question of how to reconcile the constraints imposed by this special interpreting modality remains unsolved.

The author of this paper can actually confirm the intrinsic difficulty of this form of interpretation, having interpreted events broadcast by Spanish international TV for a potential audience of many million viewers. Living this experience in the backstage of the event provided valuable insights into a complex phenomenon that deserved further research. As a result of that research, this paper presents a corpus of digital video recordings from live interpretations for Spanish and international TV channels. The 41 videos included in the current corpus are divided in two different sections: the Prince of Asturias Corpus (PAC) (23 videos) draws mainly on the 5 year experience in one of the most important cultural events worldwide: the Prince of Asturias Awards, presented every year by Prince Felipe of Spain. The Supplementary Corpus (SC) (18 videos) has been compiled to complete the PAC by resorting to recordings from various Spanish and international channels.

The main goal of the present paper is to use these corpora to analyze the backstage conditions of the interpreting assignments as a factor affecting quality according to two salient variables: visibility and exposure. The framework proposed here intends to draw on the corpora to compile, systematize, and discuss a number of examples of authentic TV interpreting performances, so that awareness of all actors involved in the process is raised with regard to the relevance of those backstage conditions. They will determine the quality standards achievable in each particular case, and quality will thus be negotiated and assessed accordingly. Further stages of the current project will expand the

corpora into a single, more comprehensive corpus that will eventually become *STICor* (Spanish Television Interpreting Corpus)¹.

1. Backstage conditions

In an attempt to clarify the specific nature of TV interpreting, comparisons have been established with other forms of interpreting: conference (Kurz 2002), film (Russo 2005), simultaneous and delayed simultaneous (Lee 2006) interpreting are interesting examples of such comparisons. However, one of the most recurring topics, both in those particular analyses and in the body of research as a whole, is the fact that media interpreters are confronted with additional difficulties, constraints and challenges in a much harder working scenario than conference interpreting in general. This favours the appearance of resounding headings to describe the complex nature of the task: "translation doubly constrained" (Viaggio 2001), "a high-wire act" (Kurz 2003), or even "a different sort of world" (AIIC 2004).

In considering the need for a new job profile, "media translators/interpreters", Kurz (1990: 173) suggests, following Laine (1985: 212), that "the media require a new breed of translator/interpreter: a hybrid – someone who is a successful translator, interpreter, and editor, all in one" and this profile should include "flexibility, speed, a wide general knowledge and a complete lack of fear when it comes to using new equipment". Being open to technological changes is indeed a must for today's media interpreters, but the impact of multimedia communication technologies on interpreting is certainly manifold (Braun 2006), and it is worth underlining that concrete implications for media interpreting have a lot to do with areas such as remote (Moser-Mercer 2005; Mouzourakis 2006; Roziner/Shlesinger 2010) and videoconference (Jiménez Serrano/Martin 2003; Jiménez Serrano 2003) interpreting, which represent a common challenge that has to be faced by interpreters in general.

In the literature, there are constant references to the problems faced by TV interpreters, regardless of the label employed by the scholar in question (*problems, challenges, working conditions, drawbacks*), and this generates a lengthy list of elements that should be taken into consideration by prospective interpreters before embarking themselves upon such a venture; to the point that, according to Mack (2001: 130), the job of TV interpreters (at least in Italy) is "extremely risky and stressful". At the same time, several adjectives have also been used in various studies to arrange these problems into more general fields for methodological purposes. However, although Kurz's publications are frequently quoted, there is no standard classification available. *Logistic, technical, medium-related, emotional, or psychological* are some of those adjectives, but this paper only finds evidence to establish two groups that are presented in the following paragraphs, the full list is a summary based on various publications, notably Cheng-shu (2002), Kurz (1990, 1997, 2002), Kurz/Pöchhacker (1995), Mack (2001, 2002) and Viaggio (2001).

1 The name draws inspiration from CorIT (Italian Television Interpreting Corpus), as described in Straniero Sergio (2007) and Falbo (2012).

Firstly, those aspects where the interpreter may find at least some (even if slight) room to manoeuvre, that is, where different degrees of response will be seen depending on the interpreter's ability to cope with such conditions. This still makes it possible to find professionals that are (again even if slightly) more suitable for the job. Amongst these requirements we may find: maximum coordination when revoicing or matching speech with images; reduced *décalage*; matching speaking skills to those of TV professionals; meeting high expectations on the part of the viewers, who see interpretation as part of the product they are watching; having to cope with typical TV time management, since things happen at a very high speed; additional stress if failure, due to media exposure; interpreting late at night or on short notice, therefore, not having time to prepare the assignments; having to deal with a large number of topics, a variety of formats and structures, numerous participants and various viewpoints; not having time to get used to a particular accent or speaking style; having to meet different and high expectations from both the participants, the audience and the employers.

In this regard, the situation in Italian television seems to show an increasing tendency "towards a hybridisation of roles with leading journalists and showmen/women acting (also) as interpreters and professional interpreters becoming (also) primary communication partners" (Mack 2002: 204). This is apparently creating a conflict between "old style" or "traditional" interpreters, that do not seem to be suitable for this kind of job; and those who use their power as mediators to respond to the special needs of the media environment. Mack's (2002: 212) warning in this regard is that "failing to recognise and react to these different circumstances could result in an increasingly frequent substitution of traditional interpreters with other mediators, who prove more adaptable".

Secondly, we have those conditions that will affect all interpreters in practically the same way, because there is nothing they can do to mitigate them: not being able to communicate directly with either the speakers or the listeners; feedback from the interpreter's own voice; problems stemming from original sound being audible in the background (the audience may check the performance); no direct view of the speaker, having to rely on monitors; booths being located in rooms other than those where the interpretation is actually taking place; no sound-proof booths, or even no booths whatsoever; poor sound quality; technicians not being familiar with the work of the interpreter; inadequate headphones; no volume and/or mute control.

These circumstances only test the interpreter's physical and psychological ability to work under truly extreme conditions. This is a feature presupposed, only to a reasonable extent, in every interpreter, but obviously not to such degree. The immediate solution to these problems would be to improve the technical and physical environment in which TV interpreting is carried out. It certainly seems paradoxical that, in spite of the existence of directives aimed precisely at regulating this environment – the famous AIIC "do's and don't's" (AIIC 1999) – they are hardly ever enforced.

A consolidated list including both types of handicaps would become so overwhelming that, as it was mentioned earlier, not only a "new breed of professional" shall be found for the job; but, as Kurz (1997: 198) rightly points out, someone who is very special amongst those who are already special (conference

interpreters) will be required. It does seem hard to explain that, after more than forty years of history in this particular type of interpretation, professionals still find themselves working in such conditions, especially if we take into consideration the amazing technological development achieved in the same period.

This is even more striking if we take into consideration their prototypical significance for the profession. Viaggio (2001: 29), for instance, suggests that "the media interpreter takes on the heavy burden of incarnating the profession before the general public, who witness and judge it and its practitioners exclusively by him". Although the use of "exclusively" might be an overstatement in this particular opinion, television undoubtedly plays an important role in shaping the image of the interpreter, since a big part of the audience may only have access to live interpreting performances through the ones they watch on TV, as we read from Jääskeläinen (2003: 14) through the case of Finland where "for ordinary Finns who do not attend international conferences" this form of interpreting "may be the only kind of interpreting they ever come across". We also learn from the web page of AICE (Spanish Association of Conference Interpreters), that the biggest landmark in the history of interpreting in Spain is the appearance of simultaneous interpreters in a TV programme, *La Clave*, back in the 1970s. Their performances became so influential that – as any interpreter who has been working in the Spanish market for more than twenty years may confirm – it actually conditioned the so-called "interpreting tone" used for many years by most Spanish professional interpreters (the specific university training received by less senior ones has fortunately changed this pattern), in an attempt to imitate the one of those working for *La Clave*, who practically became role models for the profession. The prototypical role of TV interpreters for a mass audience is closely related with two crucial aspects for this paper, visibility and exposure, which will be dealt with further on.

So if TV interpreters have to face considerably more hostile conditions, are not protected in the practice by existing directives, and constitute a role model for the profession in the eyes of the audience, a few questions may then be posed: how can any interpreter cope with the aforementioned demands, who would like to face those extremely challenging working conditions anyway, and can quality be guaranteed in such conditions?

These questions suggest that the issue of *quality*, which is a key element within Interpreting Studies in general, becomes even more relevant in this particular context. Although some research is being published on the topic such as Straniero Sergio's (2003) account of interpretations in Formula One press conferences, few studies have been devoted specifically to the issue of quality in TV interpreting, but the findings obtained by those who did examine it (Kurz/Pöschhacker 1995; Kurz 1997) seem to show that media professionals' expectations and demands regarding the performance of TV interpreters are at least similar, and frequently even higher, than those of ordinary conference interpreters.

These conclusions seem to be contradictory with the conditions that have been described in detail in previous paragraphs. One would certainly expect that, in view of the peculiar difficulties faced by TV interpreters, quality standards should be less and not more demanding than the ones expected from ordinary

interpreting performances. Along this line, Straniero Sergio (2003: 171) believes that "interpreters cannot be held totally responsible" for the achievement of quality objectives and that "quality standards should be adjusted to concrete SI situations" of this kind. In his opinion "we should, therefore, frame the conditions in which the interpreter has to translate a particular text, and, consequently, consider and decide the achievable quality of the interpretation". Following this proposal and in an attempt to answer the questions that were posed above, it would seem reasonable to consider that if the quality standards that may be achieved by the interpreter (from a realistic, and not an ideal perspective) are previously established and agreed upon according to the particular working conditions of the assignment, the actual interpreter's task (although still quite challenging) would become considerably more bearable.

In connection with this, the present paper proposes a common label for all the elements in the previous list (and all the other similar ones that could be part of it). The term is *backstage conditions*, which is borrowed from the world of theatre. It is used here to describe a wide concept that covers all the elements constraining the interpreter's work, which mostly belong to the world behind the TV camera. The media environment where TV interpreting takes place favours the use of a term of this kind, since it evokes the existence of a big divide between the audience as recipient of the final interpreted message, and everything else *on the other side* that is unknown to the viewer but has a tremendous influence in the quality of the final output. An output that, as opposed to many other forms of interpretation, will be most likely recorded and replayed. *Quality*, the big word for interpreters, would then be flexible and adjusted to those particular *backstage conditions* of the TV interpreting assignment. Likewise, expectations on the part of viewers, other participants in the communicative process, employers and even *interpreters themselves* (the most demanding ones with regard to quality) should also be built accordingly. Two important variables would also affect *quality*, and shall therefore be taken into consideration, within this framework: *visibility*, the manifestation of the actual presence of the interpreter in the TV broadcast; and *exposure*, understood beyond that of the live broadcast because it would also include, if it were the case, retrospective examination of the recorded product.

Visibility is negotiated in many diverse ways depending on the particular backstage conditions involved in every TV interpreting assignment. Sometimes we hear mainly the voice of the interpreter in voice-over mode with the voice of the original speaker simultaneously in the background; or we can also just hear the interpreter instead of the original speech; or a consecutive interpretation once the speaker has finished. In some occasions we may even physically see the interpreter in the TV studio or other settings, normally working in consecutive mode; and sometimes the role of the professional interpreter might surprisingly be adopted by the TV host resulting in performances that can range from positive to disastrous.

These last two options are becoming increasingly more popular in some countries, and as a result of this we find some studies dealing specifically with the issue of TV hosts as interpreters (Chiaro 2002; Jääskeläinen 2003), or others suggesting that "the interpreter's physical presence helps shape a shared image of him as someone *just translating*" (Wadensjö 2008: 184). In countries like Italy,

where television is an important employer of interpreters according to Katan/Straniero Sergio (2001: 213-214) between 100 and 200 days are offered each year, these issues are being analyzed in detail by interpreting scholars. In this context, these authors believe that "the visibility of the interpreter is creating a new model of ethics, based on management or mediation between partners and the assumption of a multivariate role". In the specific case of talk shows, the interpreter "enjoys a flexibility that is almost inconceivable (and ethically unacceptable) for other dialogue interpreters", but fellow interpreters are not particularly happy with this approach adopted by some colleagues and "a number of influential members of the Italian Interpreter's Association have expressed their unhappiness with this trend toward visibility" (Katan/Straniero Sergio 2001: 234).

The following sections will make use of a professional corpus to illustrate and discuss the manifold implications of the new concept of backstage conditions proposed in this paper. As it has been explained in this section, visibility and exposure will also be considered as two fundamental variables influencing quality within this context.

2. Towards a Spanish Television Interpreting Corpus

The Prince of Asturias Awards are a series of annual prizes awarded in Spain by the Prince of Asturias Foundation to individuals, entities or organizations from around the world who make notable achievements in the sciences, humanities, and public affairs, according to the following categories: Letters, Sports, Social Sciences, Communication and Humanities, Concord, International Cooperation, Scientific and Technical Research, and Arts.

The Awards are presented in Oviedo, the capital of the Principality of Asturias, at a ceremony presided by Prince Felipe, heir to the throne of Spain. When commemorating the 25th anniversary in 2005, the Foundation received its most international support by UNESCO, which recognized the "extraordinary work done by the Foundation to promote and celebrate the exceptional achievements of humanity in the fields of culture, science and the humanities" (UNESCO 2004). The award presentation ceremony is regarded as one of the most important cultural ceremonies in the world, and the awards are considered the Spanish-speaking world's equivalent of Nobel Prizes. In fact, prestigious media such as *The Financial Times* refer to them as the "Spanish Nobels" (Crawford 2008).

Every year by the end of October, the Prince of Asturias Foundation requires a team of interpreters working from and into various languages, depending on the ones spoken by the specific laureates. On 2006, the author of this paper joined that team for the first time to work from English into Spanish and Spanish into English, and has also been part of it since then. With a view to carrying out an eventual analysis of the interpretation of the award-related events (which is presented now in this paper according to the elements described in the previous section), systematic recording of those events was started from October 2006 either directly from the live source, or by retrospectively resorting to either the Foundation's web page media channel, or the specific station's web page. The

corpus was obtained from three sources: the regional TV station, Televisión del Principado de Asturias (TPA); Spanish national public station TVE 1; and TVE 24h, Spain's public channel for worldwide broadcasting. After five editions (2006-2010), 22 videos have been incorporated to the corpus to illustrate the interpreter-mediated events that take place in this setting. The corpus includes 23 videos because Stephen Hawking's acceptance speech from 1989 was added for comparative purposes that will be explained further on.

The interpreter-mediated events were divided into five categories: acceptance speeches, press conferences, talks, interviews and conferences. What follows is a description of the 23 videos included in the PAC.

Prince of Asturias Corpus (PAC)

CODE	SPEAKER	TYPE	DATE	LENGTH	SOURCE
AS1	Stephen Hawking	Acceptance Speech (Consecutive)	Oct 22 1989	20:46 m	TVE 1
AS2	Paul Auster	Acceptance Speech	Oct 20 2006	6:57 m	TVE 1
AS3	William H. Gates	Acceptance Speech	Oct 22 2006	4:29 m	TVE 1
AS4	Al Gore	Acceptance Speech	Oct 26 2007	11:18 m	TVE 1
AS5	Margaret Chan	Acceptance Speech	Oct 23 2009	8:39 m	TVE 1
AS6	Zygmunt Bauman	Acceptance Speech	Oct 22 2010	5:56 m	TVE 1

Table 1. Acceptance Speeches

CODE	SPEAKER	TYPE	DATE	LENGTH	SOURCE
PC1	William H. Gates	Press Conference (excerpt, newscast)	Oct 20 2006	18 sec (6:57 m)	TVE 1
PC2	Margaret Chan	Press Conference	Oct 22 2009	27:53 m	TVE 1
PC3	Norman Foster	Press Conference (full)	Oct 23 2009	22:59 m	TVE 1
PC4	Norman Foster	Press Conference (excerpt, newscast)	Oct 23 2009	19 sec (1:23 m)	TVE 1
PC5	Norman Foster	Press Conference (excerpt, newscast)	Oct 23 2009	19 sec (1:35 m)	TVE 24h
PC6	Transplantation Society	Press Conference	Oct 21 2010	24:38 m	TVE 1
PC7	Richard Serra	Press Conference	Oct 22 2010	23:56 m	TVE 1

Table 2. Press Conferences

CODE	SPEAKER	TYPE	DATE	LENGTH	SOURCE
T1	Paul Auster, Pedro Almodóvar	Talk (summary)	Oct 19 2006	11:04 m	TPA
T2	Alain Touraine, Zygmunt Bauman	Talk (summary)	Oct 20 2010	8:49 m	TPA
T3	Richard Serra	Talk (summary)	Oct 21 2010	11:27 m	TPA

Table 3. Talks

CODE	SPEAKER	TYPE	DATE	LENGTH	SOURCE
I1	Paul Auster	Interview (newscast)	Oct 20 2006	2:56 m	TVE 1
I2	Margaret Chan	Interview (newscast)	Oct 23 2009	3:40 m	TVE 1
I3	David Attenborough	Interview (newscast)	Oct 23 2009	3:35 m	TVE 1
I4	Yelena Isinbayeva	Interview (newscast)	Oct 23 2009	3:30 m	TVE 1
I5	Richard Serra	Interview <i>Informe Semanal</i> (weekly programme)	Oct 23 2010	2:07 m (14:26 m)	TVE 1

Table 4. Interviews

CODE	SPEAKER	TYPE	DATE	LENGTH	SOURCE
C1	Bill Gates	Conference	Nov 11 2006	29:38 m	TVE 24h
C2	Bill Gates	Conference (excerpt, newscast)	Nov 11 2006	35 sec (1:45 m)	TVE 1

Table 5. Conferences

The recordings are grouped in five categories according to the various types of communicative situations that were faced by interpreters within the period described. The selection of videos was performed for each category according to three criteria: 1) availability in any of the three sources (in further stages of the project, the corpus may be enhanced by virtue of an eventual agreement with the Foundation); 2) interest for the goal of this paper, that is, discussing the relevance of backstage conditions with regard to quality, visibility and exposure; and 3) when possible, preferably direct, or otherwise indirect, participation of the author. In this context, direct participation means that the interpretation was solely or jointly performed by the author, and indirect participation means that the author was part of the team but did not perform the interpretation personally. In both cases, for obvious reasons, more data on the backstage requirements are obtained this way. Fifty seven per cent (13/23) of the videos meet the first criterion, and thirty nine per cent (9/23) meet the second.

Award acceptance speeches are the type of assignment that entail the highest degree of interpreting visibility and exposure, since millions of viewers will be watching live the interpreter's performance in voice-over mode worldwide. The award presentation ceremony represents the culmination of a whole year of hard work for the Foundation. After 30 editions, they have taken its organization close to perfection. We hear several voices in this ceremony, there is a female master of ceremonies who introduces the laureates every year, a male speaker who announces the Awards (both working for the Foundation), a TVE 1 journalist hosting the event, the interpreters (always matching male and female voices, which is a must), and of course the laureates.

With regard to the interpretation itself, the author has never had any interpreting assignment as meticulously prepared by the client as this event. The speeches have to be in the hands of the Foundation's team of translators well in advance, so that they are fully translated for the ceremony. There are two groups of translators: those who translate the various foreign speeches into Spanish for

the mass audience, and those who translate both speeches by Spanish-speaking laureates and Prince Felipe's speech into English for non-Spanish-speaking attendants at the impressive venue, Teatro Campoamor, in Oviedo. The interpreters taking part in the live broadcast can resort to both the original speeches and their corresponding translations as support to perform the simultaneous interpretation that will be enjoyed in Spanish as live voice-over with the original speaker still audible in the background. But the surprise comes when they reach the theatre's underground floor where the monitors and the booths are awaiting (the ceremony is followed by TVE 1 signal through monitors placed in front of the booths), and learn that instead of providing simultaneous interpretation, they are actually expected to read aloud the translation they have in their folders.

Clips AS2, AS3, AS5 and AS6 are examples of this situation performed by three different interpreters. These videos are useful to analyze the quality standards of the performance from the point of view of how well the interpreter simulates the simultaneous mode by reading as naturally as possible, with adequate intonation and *décalage*. Preliminary surveys of these videos on the matter with both undergraduate and postgraduate interpreting students show significant differences in this regard, even to the extent of collecting comments such as "this one is being read, but this other one is being interpreted".

AS1, the only video in this corpus where the author did not directly or indirectly participate, has been included because it is an odd exception to the rule. The laureate was scientist Stephen Hawking, who had to speak through his adapted computer device, so it was decided to provide the interpretation in consecutive and not simultaneous mode. In this particular occasion, the ceremony's speaker read the official translation and there was no professional interpreting involved in the process. The most salient consequence of this change is that the speech is much longer than all the other ones, and this alters the traditional dynamic nature of the event.

AS5 is an example of how unexpected events may alter the broadcast dynamics, since Margaret Chan, Director General of UNESCO, found out when she was about to start speaking that she had not been given the right speech. When she tells the assistant about the mistake and later confirms that the second time she has been given the right one, the interpreter translates her words into Spanish for the audience as required, but the journalist hosting the broadcast (probably unaware of this translation) decides to speak simultaneously so as to clarify what is going on, and the three voices therefore overlap. As both Queen Sofía and Prince Felipe smile, this situation, together with an ironic sentence used by Chan before she actually starts reading "This is not an accident. It's planned", changes the tone of an otherwise extremely formal (and, as we have explained, carefully rehearsed) event.

AS6 would appear to be a perfect example of an ordinary speech within the ceremony's dynamics to those who were not involved in the preparation. However, an analysis of its backstage conditions reveals an important translation problem. When the author was given the translation into Spanish of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's (2010) speech, he observed a problem in the translation of the word "curtain". Bauman referred with this word to a book by Milan Kundera, *The*

Curtain, where Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was mentioned "Cervantes sent Don Quixote to tear up the curtains patched together of myths, masks, stereotypes, prejudgments and pre-interpretations". The term "curtain" has several meanings in Spanish depending on the context, but in this case the author's opinion was that "telón" (as in the case of theatre) was the correct one; the translation provided by the Foundation, however, opted for "velo" (veil). In a metaphoric sense and within a different context, this might have been an option, but in this particular case "telón" was the best choice, and veil was not only incorrect, but could even raise controversy because of its Muslim connotations. In the author's opinion, in this particular occasion it was worth going against the general rule through which the exact translation provided (with no changes by the interpreter) is read and, after a negotiation with the Interpreting Team Leader, the author's opinion was preferred: "telón" was used instead of "velo" in the ceremony. Once the event had finished, the author was pleased to confirm by a web search that Kundera's book had actually been translated into Spanish as *El telón*. The interpreter had been seriously exposed by using a translation in the ceremony that was different from the one proposed in the text officially handed out to the media (press, TV, etc.), and in spite of "telón" being the correct one, most of the press preferred to reflect the incorrect written version (the one with "velo") in their chronicles.

Finally, in AS4 former US Vice-President Al Gore was the only laureate who refused to provide a speech beforehand in five years. That meant there was, of course, no translation available this time, and the mode had to be changed to a truly simultaneous interpretation. It is an ideal opportunity to compare Al Gore's simultaneously interpreted video with the other four *apparently simultaneous* ones, on the grounds of both performance as such, and stress due to mass media exposure. Within an overall good interpretation, we hear some of the usual minor problems found in most simultaneous interpretations (hesitations, false starts, changes in fluency under pressure, pauses, repairs). A couple of more serious problems were that "the earth's crust" becomes "*la costra de la tierra*" instead of "*la corteza terrestre*", and the question "Why were you deaf, dumb and blind to the consequences of what was being done to the truth, of what was unfolding?" is interpreted as "*¿por qué de pronto os enceguecisteis* (a word that does not even exist in Spanish) *frente a las consecuencias de lo que se estaba haciendo?*" However, several newspapers failed to notice, and actually repeated, the most serious interpreting mistake (even if it was a matter of just one letter), because they resorted to the interpreted version of the speech and included a reference to a famous writer, M. Scott Peck, who wrongly became "Ian" Scott Peck. What would normally remain unnoticed as a minor, and even typical, spelling mistake in an ordinary interpretation, is magnified by the enormous media exposure of this kind of event.

In view of the description of this group of videos, the ability to compare those which follow the pattern deliberately established by the organizers (AS2, AS3, AS5 and AS6) with the exceptions to the rule (AS1 and AS4) enables us to illustrate that voice-over is a much more dynamic option than consecutive (AS1); and that when a true interpretation is required because the speech is not available in advance (AS4), the pressure exercised by a very high degree of both visibility and exposure implies a renegotiation of our quality expectations.

Press conferences by the laureates are broadcast live by Spanish public TV and this gives them a high degree of exposure as well. Interpreting is performed simultaneously and this type of event is similar to any press conference from other contexts. The interpretation, as in the case of the ceremony, is presented in live voice-over mode with the original speaker still audible in the background, so visibility is also high again. Excerpts of the full conference are often included in Spanish prime-time newscasts, which provides additional exposure to these performances: PC1, PC4 and PC5 are examples of this kind.

PC1, however, is the most relevant video in this group. William H. Gates had to do his press conference in the consecutive mode due to a mild hearing impairment. The author had to sit by his side to do consecutive interpretation into Spanish for the audience and whispering interpretation into English for Mr. Gates. A small excerpt of the press conference was broadcast in the 03:00 pm newscast, which has maximum audience. For only eighteen seconds, the interpreter could physically be seen by the audience, and this provided more nationwide visibility than all the rest of the work for the Foundation in five years. In line with the references to maximum stress involved in TV interpreting from previous sections, it becomes obvious that much more pressure is felt by physical than by voice-only visibility. The level of stress perceived by the author in this particular conference was subsequently much higher than in the other assignments of the same type, since being on-screen or off-screen makes a big difference in this regard.

Talks are organized by the Foundation to bring the laureates closer to the citizens of Asturias. They are a peculiar form of interview/chat/conference with a chairperson who moderates the event, interpreted in simultaneous mode and only seen through the regional TV station. Their much lower degree of media exposure makes them similar to regular conference settings as far as stress levels are concerned. However, some excerpts reach bigger media if the laureate is interesting enough for the general public. That was the case of T1, which obtained much more exposure due to the fact that film director Pedro Almodóvar is a true celebrity in Spain. In any case, since this particular aspect cannot be anticipated and the atmosphere of the setting is usually less formal and more relaxed, the pressure felt by the interpreter is far from the one experienced in the other interpreting scenarios: acceptance speeches, press conferences or interviews.

Interviews are broadcast live every year for a peak audience in the 09:00 pm public newscast during the night of the award presentation ceremony from the courtyard of the hotel where both the laureates and the Royal Family stay, Hotel de la Reconquista, a famous venue that was used, for example, by Woody Allen as the location for some of the scenes of his award-winning film *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (clips I1, I2, I3 and I4 belong to this category).

Backstage conditions become extremely relevant in this particular type of assignment, because in spite of the glamorous venue where the broadcast takes place, the interpreter is actually performing his translation alone in the passenger seat of a mobile unit parked by Spanish public television in the back street of the hotel. A tiny monitor and a pair of headphones are the only equipment to perform

an interpretation that will be part of one of the peak prime-time events of the season. Since there is no communication with the technicians, and live interviews have a completely different dynamics from the one of the ceremony (there are no rehearsals, they are much shorter, and turn taking is very fast), voice-over control becomes difficult as well as essential. It is not surprising, therefore, that technical problems occurred in two of the five videos: I1 and I4. The supposedly hidden version into English was broadcast in both videos, generating problems with the host, particularly in I4. Yelena Isinbayeva had some problems in understanding the translation into English of one of the questions asked by the journalist through her earpiece. He assumed that the interpretation was not working (he was not using the earphone to hear the translation), and decided to perform the interpretation himself, even though he was not particularly fluent in English. Something similar occurred with I1, although this time the journalist did not decide to become an improvised interpreter. The technician apparently had some problems in managing channels into English and into Spanish, and this left the audience with no translation of a great part of one of Auster's answers; while the interpreter's version into English of one of the questions, that was supposedly for Auster's ears only, was also heard by the audience. Therefore, I1 and I4 are excellent examples of a worst-case technical scenario for the interpreter regarding both visibility and exposure.

I5, however, is different from the other four videos. As a part of the various assignments involved in the Awards, the author interpreted an interview with sculptor Richard Serra for TVE 1. A half-hour interview was recorded with the interpreter hidden from the camera behind the sculptor and in consecutive mode, supposedly to be shown by this channel as part of the coverage of the Awards. Instead of that, what was finally broadcast in a weekly programme, *Informe Semanal*, was only a 2:07 minute excerpt as part of a 14:26 minute general documentary on the Awards. However, in this version the interpreter's live voice was replaced by a recorded studio version where the translation was read aloud. Final visibility and exposure were therefore completely different from the expected ones when the assignment was originally recorded.

Conferences are not common in the Awards. These two videos, however, illustrate an exception that took place only because Bill Gates could not make it to the ceremony in October and visited Oviedo three weeks later to personally thank Prince Felipe for the award. C2 is a short live connection with the conference for the 9:00 pm newscast. This 35-second excerpt is only a little fragment of the half-hour conference chosen by TVE 1 at random to cover a quick live feed, but received maximum media exposure in Spain, since the average national audience is much higher in the TVE 1 evening newscast; but the full conference had a much bigger impact worldwide, due to the international dissemination of TVE 24h.

This interpretation was performed by the author of this paper, who had in advance what was supposedly going to be the speech delivered by Bill Gates, thus reproducing the dynamics of the interpretations carried out in the award presentation ceremony. Unfortunately, Bill Gates unexpectedly decided to change his speech completely at the last minute and the effects of this change can be perceived during the first few minutes of the performance (proliferation of

hesitations, false starts, backtracking, etc.). After a couple of minutes, though, once the new situation (that of a regular simultaneous interpretation in a conference setting) is assumed by the interpreter, the quality perception goes back to normal. Being aware of these details about the particular backstage conditions enables us to realize the significance of the actual fragment selected by the channel for the live feed, as the previous paragraph has explained.

The description of these five groups of videos shows that these recordings become useful to further illustrate and discuss both backstage conditions, quality, visibility and performance in future stages of the project (and according to the rationale explained in previous sections). However, a more detailed and accurate analysis may be provided if the corpus is completed by resorting to recordings of other different interpreting scenarios (that is, outside the formats of the Awards) from various Spanish and international channels. To achieve this goal, 18 new videos are included in the Supplementary Corpus (SC, cf. table 6).

The Supplementary Corpus (SC) intends to complete the PAC through 18 videos (5 groups and 3 independent videos). Only 11% (2/17) are interpreted by the author; the rest by TV hosts or fellow interpreters, some of them actually frequent booth mates (which also guarantees better access to backstage conditions). However, those situations in which the information on backstage conditions was not so comprehensive in advance (that is, if the interpreter is not the author or a frequent booth mate) have been submitted to further research in order to homogenize the data available on the whole corpus.

Group 1 clips belong to Sarkozy/Royal's presidential debate (which is also analyzed in Falbo 2012). DEB2 matches the male/female voices (just like AS videos in the PAC), whereas DEB1 does not. At a certain stage, the discussion turns sour when Sarkozy mentions handicapped children, and the candidates constantly and aggressively interrupt each other for a while. DEB1 becomes an interpreting nightmare in this particular passage, because the two candidates and the two journalists (two male and two female voices) speak simultaneously, and since the two interpreters are women (and the interpretation is presented in voice-over mode), it becomes impossible to identify who is speaking. Although the difficulty of the situation remains, DEB2 solves the problem much better with different gender interpreting voices.

Group 2 includes three Formula One press conferences. When GP1 and GP2 were recorded, Tele 5 channel had the rights to broadcast Formula 1 and the host, who became a celebrity in Spain, carried out all the interpretations (press conferences, live radio, interviews) himself during those seasons. The quality delivered was of course far from professional standards, but the audience seemed to accept that. Interestingly enough, a professional interpreter was hired for the last race of the championship, as an exception for the special occasion. GP2 in particular is an amazing video where he became so stressed with the interpreting task and the variety of accents in English (by British, Finnish and Spanish drivers) that at a certain stage he shouted live (in Spanish) what we could translate as: "Wow, give me a hand, these dudes are going like the clappers", asking his colleagues to help

CODE	SPEAKER	TYPE	DATE	LENGTH	SOURCE
DEB1	Segolene Royal Nicolas Sarkozy	Debate (Presidential Elections)	May 2 2007	9:42 m	CNN +
DEB2	Segolene Royal Nicolas Sarkozy	Debate (Presidential Elections)	May 2 2007	(4 clips) 8:08 m 3:30 m 5:47 m 9:10 m	TVE 24h
GP1	Fernando Alonso Lewis Hamilton Felipe Massa	Press Conference (Montecarlo GP) (excerpt)	May 27 2007	2:30 m	Tele 5
GP2	Fernando Alonso Nico Rosberg Lewis Hamilton	Press Conference (Singapore GP) (excerpt)	Sept 28 2008	4:20 m	Tele 5
GP3	Sebastian Vettel Fernando Alonso Mark Webber	Press Conference (Shanghai GP) (excerpt)	Apr 19 2009	1:04 m	La Sexta
EV1	Various speakers	Exhibition coverage in newscast (Everstill Exhibition)	Nov 24 2007	1:14 m	Cuatro
EV2	Various speakers	Exhibition coverage in newscast (Everstill Exhibition)	Nov 27 2007	1:06 m	TVE 1
AW1	Various speakers	Awards Ceremony (Golden Globes) (excerpt)	Jan 17 2009	27:45 m	Sony
AW2	Various speakers	Awards Ceremony (Spanish Film Academy Awards)	Feb 14 2010	37:05 m	TVE 1
AW3	Various speakers	Awards Ceremony (MTV European Music Awards)	Nov 7 2010	132 m	MTV Europe
ES1	Mats Wilander Annabel Croft Kim Clijsters	Interview (Game, Set and Mats)	Dec 12 2010	6:	Eurosport
AH1	Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Ana Pastor	Interview	Mar 15 2011	30:17 m	TVE 1
MV1	Vicky Martín Berrocal Jordi González Anne Germain	Talk show (Más allá de la vida)	Dic 5 2010	15:00 m	Tele 5
H1	Jorge García Pablo Motos	Talk show (El hormiguero)	April 20 2009	3:02 m	Cuatro
H2	Will Smith Pablo Motos	Talk show (El hormiguero)	Jan 12 2009	10:58 m	Cuatro
H3	Novak Djokovic Pablo Motos	Talk show (El hormiguero)	May 11 2009	6:53	Cuatro
H4	Justin Timberlake Jesse Eisenberg Andrew Garfield Pablo Motos	Talk show (El hormiguero)	Nov 6 2010	9:11	Cuatro

Table 6. Supplementary Corpus: sub-corpora

him with the translation. This peak moment of visibility and exposure of the (amateur) interpreter is one of the highlights of the corpora.

It is interesting to contrast these two videos with GP3, because in 2009, when la Sexta channel obtained the rights to broadcast Formula One races, a professional interpreter was hired for the job and broadcasts have been offered this way since then. The result is that the interpretations enjoyed by the audience are far better now, as we can confirm by comparing this video with the other two.

Group 3 shows coverage of *Everstill*, an art exhibition that brought together many international artists in Federico García Lorca's home in Granada. Famous British duo Gilbert and George were the stars of the exhibition with a piece that was actually a picture of themselves in Lorca's bed. The author interpreted their interviews for several TV stations. In EV1, the interview was subtitled and the interpretation was not used at all.

In EV2, however, we can see that TVE 1 decided to use for their quick one-minute report on the exhibition the author's live interpretation of the original interview, which was several minutes long; but the only part used from the original was an isolated shocking sentence by the duo (in reference to their picture in Lorca's bed): "It is a great opportunity to indulge in necrophilia without going to prison". The interpreter was heard in the prime-time newscast only for a couple of seconds and only to reproduce such a controversial statement. Therefore, a sentence that appeared much more in context within the whole interview seemed totally deprived from it for the sake of media dynamics.

Group 4 includes three awards ceremony broadcasts, which are usually a challenge for interpreters because of the amount of unexpected things they have to deal with (unlike the speeches in the PAC awards ceremony, as we have seen). Ceremonies of this kind are often very hard to prepare as well: live interpretation of the Oscar's, for instance, also means dealing with a 200 pages script (Cf. Carantoña 2011). In AW1, when receiving his award during the Golden Globes, actor Colin Farrell said: "They must have done the counting in Florida", in a reference to the 2000 US presidential election, and the interpreter turns mute in the Spanish interpreted version at this stage. The actor's Irish accent is hard and he refers (with a peculiar sense of humour) to something that took place nine years earlier, which makes the task of the interpreter even harder than the average one in this type of assignment (usually full of acknowledgments and jokes not present in the script), but silence is always difficult to justify on TV. Unlikely as it may seem, having this type of comment in the booth in advance would make the life of the interpreter much easier, and the interpreted event much richer.

In the 2010 edition of the Goya Awards (the Spanish equivalent of the American Academy Awards), as we can see in AW2, three speakers thanked the Academy in English and one in Italian, no interpretation whatsoever was provided into Spanish. It seems difficult to explain why a prime-time event with massive audience did not provide interpretation of those acknowledgments into Spanish.

AW3 is a two-hour clip with the full broadcast of the 2010 European Music Awards (EMA) by MTV. The event takes place in Madrid but English is, of course, the main language, so live interpretation is provided into Spanish. The use of

slang, incredibly fast comments, local US references and even dirty language is quite frequent and highly problematic for the interpreter in this kind of show; and this clip is a good source of examples. One of the most difficult ones came when the host, actress Eva Longoria, introduced singer Ke\$ha (who uses her name with a dollar symbol instead of an "s") this way: "I am not sure how you pronounce her name in euros. Where I come from, we call her Ke\$ha". The translation provided was a more or less literal one, and this made no sense in Spanish without time for an explanation of the dollar issue. Likewise, all through the broadcast we hear too much English into Spanish from the interpreters (the acronym for the name of these awards, for instance, is pronounced in English instead of Spanish all the time); and the translation of slang and swear words in particular (which is frequently used in events mainly directed to young people) sounds too predictive and artificial.

ES1 is an interview in a tennis tournament where the host provides simultaneous interpretation for every speaker. His performance is far from acceptable, but he does not seem to be worried about the exposure. He introduces jokes of his own, makes personal comments here and there, and summarizes or eliminates information as he pleases. The version of the programme into Spanish is therefore much different from the original one in English, and visibility is magnified to the extent that the host becomes the protagonist. This type of behaviour is sometimes seen in talk show interpreting, but a sports programme is certainly an odd example.

AH1 is an interview with Iran's Prime Minister Ahmadinejad by a Spanish female journalist that became a world trending topic in twitter a few months ago, the reason being that the journalist's scarf slipped to the back of her head and her hair was uncovered during part of the interview. The video, interpreted from Farsi into Spanish and Spanish into Farsi, achieved a lot of media exposure worldwide. The interpretation is full of both technical and linguistic problems of all kinds (misinterpretations of the questions, important omissions, problems in the voice-over mix, and even strange noises apparently coming from the booth). Dozens of comments could be read in the Internet about the poor translation, which actually became one of the most frequently mentioned aspects together with the scarf issue.

Both MV1 and the next group of videos are some of the best examples of TV interpreting visibility in Spain. MV1 belongs to *Más allá de la vida* (Beyond Life), a bizarre programme where spiritual medium Anne Germain connects with dead people who are friends or family of TV celebrities. The host makes interpreting become part of the show, since he performs all the translation from and into Spanish in consecutive mode himself. The programme reproduces the same scheme used in Portugal (the programme is called there *Depois da vida*) with a female TV host and improvised interpreter. Interpretation into Spanish by the host in examples such as MV1 (which is used prototypically, since all programmes are quite similar) is frequently discussed in Internet fora (mainly the quality of the interpretation, or whether he is being assisted by a professional translator through the earpiece, etc.). There is even an article in Spain's most important newspaper, *El País*, by novelist and TV celebrity Boris Izaguirre (2011) wondering how those we love suddenly speak English when they die.

Group 5 has incorporated interpretation as an essential part of the show. *El hormiguero* (The Anthill) is a talk show (which has now moved from Cuatro to Antena 3 channel) where more than a hundred international celebrities have enjoyed the humorous atmosphere of the programme's ironic and self-exposing approach. When foreign visitors come to the programme, interviews are rehearsed with both the guest and the interpreter in advance (or guests are at least shown a script before they go on air, so they have some idea of the tone of the show) to anticipate problems and make jokes work smoothly. The interpreter has therefore become so famous that she even has a fan group in Facebook. To illustrate the visibility of the interpreter in this particular programme, we have an H1 clip where, in a situation hardly ever seen on TV, a whole minute of valuable prime-time is spent to show the guest how to go backstage and get to the interpreter's booth to meet her, and see her waving at the camera from there. The interpreter's visibility is also magnified in H2, where actor Will Smith jokes about the sexy voice (and body according to his gestures) of the interpreter; and H3, where tennis player Novak Djokovic, with a sudden and wild gesture, gets rid of the earphone to prove that he needs no translation because his Spanish is very good.

However, maximum exposure was achieved by the so-called *Isenberggate*, illustrated here by H4 and H5. Jesse Eisenberg, protagonist of the *The Social Network* blockbuster (and other two co-actors), was expected to join in the fun of the show like any other guest, but he apparently did not. A few days after his performance in the show, he strongly criticized it in Conan O'Brien's US late night show, saying he had been "humiliated" in Spain: "the audience laughs, and you listen to the translation and realize that yes, they are laughing at you. But you do not have time to answer, because they have moved to something else in Spanish". O'Brien found an interesting topic there and continued to ask Eisenberg about his terrible experience, to the point that he even said that Spaniards were "ungrateful for what we did for them in World War II", the problem being that Spain, of course, did not take part in World War II.

The controversy was widely reflected in the Spanish media and, in line with the tone of the programme *El hormiguero*'s host, Pablo Motos, spent a good part of the November 22 programme (H5) building a reply to Eisenberg's performance in the US. He decided to subtitle his words in English (as if Eisenberg or O'Brien were directly viewing it), apologized to Eisenberg, but explained that more than a hundred international guests had enjoyed the program (and celebrities such as Mel Gibson, Hugh Jackman or Will Smith were shown actually joining in the fun and having a great time), and finally challenged O'Brien in a funny mixture of English and Spanish.

International media also echoed the translation controversy, as we read in *Associated Content* (Wakefield 2010) "it is a pity that nobody translated the show to Eisenberg before he complained to O'Brien because he would have realized that he was not being laughed at"; but translation seems to be in the eye of the hurricane once again: "The one thing that could have and should have been better is the translation. The translators did a terrible job and should be the ones to blame for the lack of sync between guests and host". Unfortunately, in spite of all

their efforts and usually good performances under pressure, TV interpreters receive more criticism than praise in the media.

3. Conclusions

After establishing the current relevance of TV interpreting as a field of research, this paper has highlighted the role of backstage conditions for professional TV interpreting performance. By means of an observational, descriptive, comparative, and retrospective approach, the audiovisual content of the corpora has underlined the significance of such concept for TV interpretation performed by professional and amateur interpreters in Spain. Visibility and exposure parameters have proved to be essential to model a new concept of flexible quality that is required in this highly constrained environment. Quality expectations on the part of all actors involved (media professionals, audience and interpreters themselves) must be negotiated according to the standards that may reasonably be achieved in view of the specific backstage requirements of each assignment.

As it has been explained, this is only the first stage of an ongoing project that should eventually lead to the construction of STICor, a Spanish Television Interpreting Corpus. To pursue this more ambitious and comprehensive instrument, recording of as many interpreter-mediated events as possible will be performed, so that the body of videos integrating the expanded corpus reflects the manifold events of the Spanish market TV interpreting reality.

The preliminary analysis of the two corpora introduced in this paper is therefore an initial proposal of a new framework that intends to facilitate the aforementioned negotiation of quality standards by illustrating a wide range of communicative problems and their subsequent consequences for interpreting performance, by resorting to as many relevant authentic examples as possible. The material presented, both in the corpora used here and in those to be compiled to build the future STICor, will hopefully contribute to better frame and understand the true value of the mediating task of TV interpreters.

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