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Studies in Intercultural Communication

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Dialogue Interpreting

Special Issue

Guest Editor
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THE TRANSLATOR

STUDIES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Volume 5, Number 2, 1999

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THE TRANSLATOR

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Dialogue Interpreting

Guest Editor: Ian Mason, UK

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Transcription conventions

[]	Simultaneous or overlapping talk
,	Continuing intonation (rising or level tone)
.	Terminating intonation (falling tone)
?	Questioning intonation (rising tone)
...	Open-ended intonation (fading or ambiguous tone)
e: or e:::	Long or lengthened vowel sound
(.)	Short pause
(2)	Two-second pause
+	Un-timed brief pause
/	Abandoned utterance
(looks up)	Non-verbal feature
boldface	Emphasis, stressed syllable or loudness
" "	Uttered quietly or as an aside
(xxx)	Inaudible
→	Line in transcript referred to in discussion
<i>italics</i>	English back-translation of talk in other languages

NB – Contributors make use of few, many or all of these conventions, depending on the relative delicacy of transcription needed for the analysis.

The Interpreter on the (Talk) Show *Interaction and Participation Frameworks*

FRANCESCO STRANIERO SERGIO

University of Trieste, Italy

Abstract. This paper analyses dialogue interpreting in the context of the televised talk show. In the first part I examine some basic issues related to broadcast talk. Among these are the television speech context, the distinction between on-screen and off-screen participants, the function of the presenter, the use of language and the goal of communication. In the second part of the article – using a framework which draws on conversational analysis, and taking data from a large corpus of Italian talk shows – I explore how the interpreter's role and identity are interactionally constructed by participants. I argue that the talk show features a greater visibility and involvement of the interpreter in terms of meaning negotiation, topic management and turn-taking behaviour, all of which calls for extra competence as compared to other institutional settings. Finally, I point to the need for research to adopt a sociolinguistic approach in order to gear training to the realities of the interpreting profession.

This article, part of a much larger research project, examines the interactional aspects of TV interpreting, and more specifically the talk show. The data for the larger project is partly drawn from the archives of RAI (Italian Broadcasting Corporation) and partly provided by professional interpreters in the form of private video recordings of their past assignments for state and commercial networks. The project is designed to trace back the history of the interpreter on Italian television from the early days up to the present, including such momentous events as the first landing on the moon (1969), Kennedy's assassination (1973), Lady Diana's and Mother Teresa's funerals (1997), and the Anglo-American attack on Iraq (1999). This history will be examined in relation to interpreting modalities, television genres and media events, programme times, and various other parameters.

In the study reported here, I will be using methods and concepts developed by disciplines such as discourse analysis, conversational analysis and ethnomethodology, which view language as action and as an instrument of social interaction. Context in this framework is seen not only as a constraint on the production of talk but also as itself a product of the use of language.

The dynamic character of context means that participants are able to evoke alternative contextual frames during interaction, and the analyst must therefore recognize the mutual role played by language, context and participant cooperation in shaping speech events.

The data analysed in this study consists of a transcript of a talk show where I myself acted as interpreter in 1986. This particular case study is part of a corpus of more than 200 episodes, from more than 40 different Italian talk shows, involving 6 languages and 30 interpreters (working both in simultaneous and consecutive modes). The episode has been selected because it illustrates a number of issues related to the conceptual and methodological approach I intend to adopt for analysing the corpus as a whole. The issues I will be focusing on in the present study are: (a) how the interpreter and the talk show host change their footings (Goffman 1981) in framing their speech activities; (b) how the interpreter manages his face wants (Brown & Levinson 1987); and (c) how the interpreter contributes to the successful outcome of the interaction in terms of topic introduction and management, meaning negotiation and turn-taking behaviour.

1. Talk show interpreting

Media discourse has been described as "techno-communication" (Berger 1992: 8) because it is not based on physical or personal experience and involves no direct face-to-face interaction; instead, "[t]he impression of presence is created through the construction of a shared space [and] of a shared time" (Morse 1986:62). The sender has no direct access to the receiver and the receiver can never directly respond to the sender. Both, however, project their own self images and that of the interactional exchange *into* the text. Communication takes place *through* the text, and speakers' roles are constantly (re)defined through the relationships established between the text and the audience. Broadcast talk has also been defined as talk for (absent) overhearers (Hutchby 1995) and as more specifically "designed to display the orientations of speakers to the 'presence' of a distributed set of recipients" (Hutchby 1997:177).

The talk show is an electronic space which simulates the physical environment and constructs relations of intimacy and confidentiality with viewers via the presentation of an individual's private life. This may be achieved through camerawork, body language, and/or the decor (which duplicates either the typical home or the town square). The audience may variously be referred to as 'the people', 'the consumer', 'electors', 'women', and so on, hence the continuous need to define the participation framework and goals of communication. The fact that there is a tele-viewing audience may be indicated implicitly by audiovisual language (shots and camerawork, decor, posture, voice) that assigns the audience a certain place or positioning in the text; it may also be indicated explicitly, as in the following extract (*Tappeto*

Volante, Telemontecarlo, 7.5.1996), where the presenter (C) is interviewing a French director (O), with the help of an interpreter (I):

- C chiediamo alla cortesia di Josiane di raccontarci per quanto possibile il contenuto di questo film che fa riferimento a un trian/
 O c'est tout public?
 C eh?
 O c'est tout public?
 C sì
 O (*turning towards I*) j'ai demandé si c'est des questions pour tout public je fais des réponses pour tout le public ou je fais des réponses ehm [normales]
 I [ah (.) dice] le le risposte che deve dare devono essere rivolte ad ogni tipo di pubblico oppure ehm a un pubblico partico [lare?]
 C → [sì] dunque noi in questo momento siamo stiamo trasme- se vuole tradurre ehm Rosanna così la mentre io parlo così guadagnamo qualche secondo di tempo dunque noi stiamo trasmettendo evidentemente a quest'ora del pomeriggio abbiamo un pubblico familiare ehm (*titters*) [ora]
 O [je vais faire une réponse [public familial]
 C [ecco per]
 il [pubblico familiare perchè i contenuti sono come dire un po'] ardit per la verità
 I [quindi darò una risposta destinata a un pubblico familiare]

English Gloss

- C we would like to ask Josiane to tell us as far as possible about the content of this film which is based on a trian/
 O is it for any audience?
 C eh?
 O is it for any audience?
 C yes
 O (*turning towards I*) I'm asking if these questions are for any audience I'll make answers for any audience or I'll make my answers ehm [normal]
 I [ah (.) she] says that (.) the answers she is to give (.) are they to be addressed to every type of audience or ehm to a special audi [ence?]
 C → [yes] well right now we are broadca- (*addressing I*) Rosanna (.) would you please translate so that while I'm talking we can save a few seconds (.) so (*looking at O*) (.) well clearly we're on the air at this time in the afternoon (.) we have an audience made up of families (*titters*) [so]
 O [I'll give you a family] [public] answ[er]
 C [here we are] [for] fa [milies since the content of this film is you know] a bit racy I'd say
 I [so I'll give you an answer for family viewers]

The audience of a talk show, moreover, are frequently consulted and questioned by presenters who may even answer the questions themselves, speak

as their interlocutor, act as their spokesman or pretend they are themselves the audience. Viewers participate in an act of communication which is secondary with respect to the primary act, that between the on-screen participants. Theirs is more a matter of spectatorship than of participation. More often than not, presenters have already heard the guest talk, as is evident in references such as "before the beginning of the show you told me ...". The construction of the televisual space then is made up of two discourse levels: "the plan of reporting interaction", which is the relationship between the speakers and the overhearing audience,¹ and "the plan of reported interaction", or the relationship between the speakers themselves (Bondi Paganelli 1990:45-55). This pragmatic feature, peculiar to audiovisual communication, is crucially important for understanding the speech context it creates, since what is being discussed, narrated, (re)presented (the **plan of reported interaction**) is constrained by the frame within which discussing, narrating, (re)presenting takes place (the **plan of reporting interaction**). The televised text is at the same time the object to be communicated and the electronic place of communication which constrains and orients the object to be communicated. This means that in the televised text the narration of an event often turns out to be more important than the event itself.

The talk show, like other TV programmes, is thus a narrating event. The participants talk among themselves and at the same time talk to the audience: what they talk about are narrated events. In this speech context, the interpreter is not the only person to speak through the words of others. At the interface between on-screen and off-screen participants is the presenter who has a dual identity, speaking as an institutional voice and with the voice of the man or woman on the street. The presenter mediates events and people in terms of popular speech, providing his or her "own version of the language of the public to whom talk is mainly addressed" (Hall *et al* 1978:61). This is particularly evident, for example, when the presenter, pretending to be someone from the audience, 'acts out' ignorance, naivety, astonishment, curiosity, etc. It is the presenter who, with his or her discourse register, personality and conversational style, ultimately determines the participation format, the identity and success of this specialized form of talk.

Talk show interpreting requires a specific job profile and special skills compared not only to conference interpreting but also to other forms of dialogue interpreting. Interpreters are increasingly required to translate the discourse of ordinary people rather than experts, people who are invited to share their personal experiences and emotions with a large audience. Moreover, talk shows take on a variety of forms. Some authors make a distinction between "monothematic" and "polythematic" talk shows (Charaudeau and Ghiglione 1997:135), while others, like Dahlgren (1995:62), distinguish between "élite talk shows" and "vox pop talk shows". However, an important characteristic of contemporary television is the hybridization of genres, so

that information, entertainment and opinion are all mixed together. Discourse strategies employed in genres such as the interview, the debate, the testimony, the stories about victims, the reportage, the story-telling or the game all have in common a conversational format. As the study described here will demonstrate, advertising and promotional discourses are also part and parcel of the televised text.

A distinctive feature of the talk show, particularly in multiparty settings, is that there is not necessarily a logical or consequential development of the *content*. Topics continuously shift, and what counts is the development of the *situation*. It is the latter which gives rhythm to the show and keeps viewers glued to the TV screen. Local attention is focused not so much on propositional as on relational aspects: to cause a reaction, to embarrass someone, etc. The same is true for unexpected events: the more unexpected the occurrences (whether technical or human), the better the show. The presenter announces, recalls, describes and comments in a dynamic context of 'things that happen'. This means that disproportionate emphasis is placed on the relational level and phatic communication to the detriment of the referential level. In fact, contemporary television is increasingly turning into meta-television, which is more interested in speaking about the relationship it is establishing with its audience than in speaking about the outside world.

The phatic exchanges between the presenter and the interpreter may go beyond the usual microphone check and become an ad-libbed sketch, as in the following example in which the presenter is about to interview an American pop music band, assisted by the simultaneous interpreter (*Domenica in*, Rai 1, 17.11.1996):

- C Io leggo qui addirittura otto milioni di dischi d'oro venduti nel mondo più (*the compere's assistant approaches C*) ah sì grazie ma tanto ci capiamo lo stesso sapete che io parlo tutte le lingue (*touching her earphone*) non sento il traduttore
- I eccomi Mara
- C eccoti qua (.) come stai?
- I bene grazie e tu?
- C è un piacere sentirti ogni volta
- I il piacere è mio
- C ma figurati non c'è di che vogliamo (*laughs*) parlare con loro?
- I pronti
- C disco d'oro disco d'oro negli Stati Uniti (.) otto milioni di dischi venduti nel mondo

English Gloss

- C I'm reading here eight million gold records sold throughout the world and also (*the compere's assistant approaches C and fits her out with the earphone for the translation*) ah yes thank you but anyway we understand each other you

- know I can speak any language (*touching her earphone*) I can't hear the translator
- I here I am Mara
- C oh there you are (.) how are you?
- I fine thanks and you?
- C it's always a pleasure to hear you
- I the pleasure is mine
- C oh come on don't mention it (.) shall we (*laughs*) talk to them?
- I I'm ready
- C gold record gold record in the Unites States (.) eight million records sold throughout the world

Small talk sequences of this type are consistent with the playful macro-function performed by television. The rules of this form of interaction (including current affairs or journalism talk shows involving politicians and experts) seem to require "serious political talk not to be sustained for more than a few seconds without being 'lightened' by humour" (Fairclough 1995: 172). Moreover, given that entertaining can be seen as "the supraideology of all discourse on television" (Postman 1985:8), the talk show may be said to share many of the features of "talk-as-play", where "the main goal ... is the construction and maintenance of good social relations, not the exchange of information" and "[t]he second goal ... is that participants should enjoy themselves. The fun of talk arises as much from *how* things are said as from *what* is said" (Coates 1995:85).

No wonder then that broadcasting organizations expect interpreters not just to have the relevant linguistic skills but also to be good 'performers'. The presence of the interpreter is a contextual resource utilized for introducing new topics and providing vignettes, with ad-libbed sketches often playing on elements of farce, all of which exploits the fact that the event is 'live'. This means that the interpreter must be aware that the 'text' he or she delivers can become a form of pre-text for the presenter (and other participants) to develop and manipulate – in short, 'mediatize'. Even such a private form of interpreting as chuchotage can be transformed into a public visual event. Close camera shots of the interpreter in chuchotage mode are sometimes used to stage a sort of 'chuchotage show'. At the level of register, an interpreter who expresses something in an unmarked language may find it being reformulated by the presenter in a more colloquial and television-friendly way. The interpreter's text may also go beyond the limits of the event itself and become part of the media discourse in general. Not only are interpreters' performances commented on, (mis)quoted, praised and criticized in the press, but their blunders, facial expressions or gestures, individual utterances, unwitting comic or bizarre situations in which they may find themselves, are also re-contextualized into comic TV collages through skilful editing. There are even now comedians who mimic interpreters in satirical programmes. More recently, these events have become more personal, with one comedian in Italy impersonating a popular TV interpreter.

2. The case study

In 1986, when the Berlin wall had not yet collapsed, a Bulgarian family sought political asylum in Italy. Thanks to the Italian Radical Party and the Italian Embassy in Sofia, the refugees were allowed to come to Italy. The woman, with her two small daughters, were invited to participate in *Buona Domenica* ('Have a Good Sunday'), a typical afternoon infotainment programme broadcasted by Mediaset, the largest Italian private television company. In order to help the refugees settle down in Italy, a fund-raising campaign was mounted and some corporations were asked to contribute and participate in the show with the Bulgarian woman, ostensibly to publicize her predicament but in reality, as we shall see, this was a mediatized performance, a platform to publicize the companies' products.

Five fragments of this episode will be examined, where Maurizio Costanzo (MC), the most popular of Italian TV-show presenters, meets three commercial representatives. The setting in this programme is such that there are always two parallel speech activities, which are also spatially marked: the main action takes place at the centre of the studio (stage), where the presenter welcomes the commercial representatives; the other, on which the camera occasionally focuses, takes place at the sofa (backstage), where the interpreter and the Bulgarian woman are seated.

2.1 Footing and interactional identity

The term **footing** refers to "the alignments that people take up to each other in face-to-face interaction" (Goffman 1981:67), "the alignment we take up to ourselves and others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance" (ibid:128); different footings "provide contrast to what the text itself might otherwise generate" (ibid:174). As noted above, the presenter acts as a narrator and as the person responsible for the narrative construction of the interactional identity of those who appear on the screen, including the interpreter. This task may be accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, through identification and (self)-presentation rituals, as well as modes of address and the use of pronouns, which have important interactional values in terms of footing. Let us start with the first extract in which the host is talking to the sales manager of Cirio, a famous Italian food company. *MC* stands for Maurizio Costanzo (the host), *I* for the interpreter and *FR* for the food company representative.

Extract 1

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 13 | MC | E quale è stato il prodotto leader in questi mesi in questo anno? |
| 14 | FR | Beh diciamo che il nostro prodotto di punta al di là dei pelati che sono |
| 15 | | un prodotto tradizionale senz'altro la passata verace Cirio che è il |

the interpreter, MC ratifies his participation. The effect is that instead of being carried out unnoticed (and in parallel with the main action), the interpreter's work is highlighted. The prompt to translate in 18 can only be understood in terms of the sequencing of speech activities, because the interpreter is already translating (in *chouchotage*). So MC is simply creating a new frame, and the injunction to translate is not to be taken literally. The imperative mode could be interpreted as an overt expression of authority, but the accompanying metamessage signals that the utterance is to be interpreted in a "play frame" (Bateson 1972, Goffman 1974), where the move "I'd like to have a bit of fun here" actually means "I want the audience to have a bit of fun". MC temporarily discontinues the exchange with the food company representative (lines 13-17) to directly address the interpreter. In uttering "Hang on a moment" (line 18), he turns his body and gaze towards the sofa, where the interpreter is seated. This action is also captured by the movement of the camera. Line 18 then represents a boundary of an interactional unit (Philips 1986) or a discourse juncture (Goffman 1974).

The distinctive participation mode (or talk format) created by line 18 is also conveyed by prosodic traits. The utterances from line 18 to line 25 are pronounced with a mischievous, ironical, Roman dialect. The structure of role relationships is embedded not only in the language but also in the spatial organization of interaction. Spatial positioning and alignments are influenced by and reflect communicative roles enacted in public institutional scenes. The person controlling and regulating the activity faces those whose participation is being regulated (Philips 1986:229). Coded spatial arrangement, together with the personality and status of the presenter, are important pragmatic elements in the televised text.

So, when MC talks to the interpreter he initiates an exchange, and this is marked by a shift in his position. When the interpreter assumes the speaker's role, he turns towards the centre of the studio. Positional changes are used as "framing devices" (Goffman 1974) to convey to participants that a juncture is occurring in the ongoing interaction. They are "motivated by changes in the role relationship among those present in the same speech situation" (Philips 1986:232). At 18 MC inserts himself in the exchange between the interpreter and the Bulgarian woman, who are having a sort of parallel and private conversation. MC, whose role is to regulate the communication flow and monitor the interaction, asks the interpreter to "stage" his translation for the benefit of the overhearing audience.

Once again, the utterance "as you are speaking in Russian" (line 19) is a metamessage which means something like "you are participating in the show, aren't you?"; it is a remark that conveys "in-frame activity" (Schiffrin 1993:250) or rather the plan of reporting interaction. The information it conveys is already known to the interlocutors, its inclusion can only be understood as audience-directed. The whole sequence "as you are speaking in Russian

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with the lady/yes, in Russian as she speaks it perfectly" (lines 19-20) is more phatic than topical, in the sense that the exchange is not focused on discussing a particular topic but serves to maintain the footing both among participants and, above all, with the overhearing audience. Through continuous prompting and challenging activities MC projects his role as a bystander who watches the scene with the audience. On the other hand, these conversational moves, including backchannelling moves of the type in line 24, are also aimed at preventing extended silences (dead air); even the normal few seconds of silence that occur in ordinary conversation are intolerable on TV.

MC grants and at the same time denies the interpreter the authority to translate: "translate ... I'd like to see how you say ... don't mess about ... how you say in Russian?". The interpreter responds by appealing to the extralinguistic context: "you are not giving me the time to translate" (line 26). He refers to the rules of the game, to the procedures regulating interpretation, focusing attention on an expectation which his interlocutor has failed to comply with, i.e. he should be given the time to satisfy MC's request, which he seems to perceive as a face-threatening act. The notion of **face** has to do with our sense of identity, the image of our self we wish to project during interaction. According to Goffman's definition (1963:5), face is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish between a **positive face** (in Goffman's sense) and a **negative face**, which has to do with our need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed upon by others. The interpreter's negative face is therefore threatened when he is challenged in his work. MC does draw the interpreter into the interaction, but he does so by encroaching upon his territory and forcing him to defend himself. Indeed, the interpreter's "you're not giving me the time to translate" (line 26) is accompanied by a strained smile, suggesting unease and nervousness, and may be seen as a 'counter-face-threatening act'.

The 'teasing framework' described above could also be seen as a means by which MC intends to build a complicity alignment with the interpreter (and the audience). The face-saving act accomplished in line 29 ("not bad though, eh?") serves this purpose. By praising the interpreter's work in his presence and addressing his comments to the audience, MC is apparently excluding the interpreter from the conversation (the interpreter is treated as an unaddressed recipient). In fact, third-person reference is used by the speaker to sustain the footing with the audience. On the other hand, through the presenter's affiliative assessment, the interpreter becomes the object of discourse and thus even more involved in the ongoing interaction.

Provoking and teasing are part of the narrative structure of the talk show, with the interpreter being both the subject and the object of narration. In this sense, we can apply Propp's narrative theory (1975) and Greimas's narrative

semiotics (1985) and look upon the interpreter as playing the narrative role of the hero, who is requested to accomplish an action the outcome of which is approved or disapproved by an acknowledged authority (the presenter). Thus the process may be described according to the three phases which characterize narration: reference is made to the subject's Competence (Manipulation), and that Competence is acted out, put to the test (Performance) before being accepted (Sanction). All three phases are reflected in the position attributed to the viewers, whose participation format in the interaction consists of enjoying the interpreter's performance.

At another point in the show, soon after the manager of a bottled mineral water company has offered the Bulgarian family a free crash course in Italian, MC adopts the same teasing practice, again using the third person with reference to the interpreter, who responds non-verbally this time. In the following two extracts, *B* stands for the Bulgarian woman and *MW* for the managing director of the mineral water company.

Extract 2

- 1 MC Aspetti un attimo (*turning to the sofa*) ecco Straniero gli ...
- 2 I (*is already translating into Russian*)
- 3 MC loro s'impegneranno a frequentare la scuola seriamente?
- 4 I (*whispers in Russian*)
- 5 MC eh?
- 6 B oh
- 7 MC sì eh?
- 8 B sì (*in Italian*)
- 9 MC perchè poi fra tre mesi dovete venire a parlare italiano qui
- 10 I (*translates into Russian*)
- 11 B (*laughs*)
- 12 → MC contento l'interprete ma insomma eh
- 13 I (*shrugs*)
- 14 MC no no no ma per dire non si preoccupi

English Gloss

- 1 MC Hang on a moment (*turning to the sofa*) ah Francesco transla ...
- 2 I (*is already whispering his translation in inaudible Russian*)
- 3 MC they will make sure that they'll really attend the school won't they?
- 4 I (*whispers his translation in inaudible Russian*)
- 5 MC eh?
- 6 B oh
- 7 MC will they?
- 8 B Yes (*in Italian*)
- 9 MC because in three months you'll have to come back here and speak Italian
- 10 I (*whispers his translation in inaudible Russian*)
- 11 B (*laughs*)
- 12 → MC the interpreter won't be so happy but anyway
- 13 I (*shrugs*)
- 14 MC no no no don't worry just joking

Both the compliment in line 29 in extract 1 ("Not bad though eh?") and the joke in line 12 above ("the interpreter won't be so happy but anyway") are part of a positive politeness strategy, the aim of which is "to soothe the other party's needs for association [...] to minimize social distance, as the speaker wants to come closer to the listener by showing solidarity and in-group relationship" (Villemoes 1995:302). The "no no no don't worry just joking" in line 14 responds to MC's own provocative remark in line 12 ("the interpreter won't be so happy but anyway") and testifies to the strength of the emerging relationship between the two interlocutors.

Third-person reference, together with the teasing activity in line 14 ratify the interpreter's interactional identity. These conversational moves signal involvement, familiarity and complicity. Furthermore, considering the asymmetrical relationship between the two speakers (MC besides being the host is the interpreter's employer), in uttering "don't worry" (line 14), the presenter is actually projecting his institutional identity to reassure the interpreter about future assignments. Like "I'd like to have a bit of fun" (line 18 in extract 1), "just joking" (line 14 above) frames the intent to provide the public with an opportunity to enjoy themselves. Lines 12-14 above highlight the intersubjective nature of interaction and how the construction of a single turn is the product of cooperation among participants. The current interactional identity of participants is being signalled not only through language but often through gaze, gesture and posture. Linguistic behaviour is not the only way to accomplish an interactional move; as Goffman (1971:151) explains, "it is not communication in the narrow sense of the term that is at the heart of what is occurring. *Stands* are being taken, *moves* are being made, *displays* are being provided, *alignments* are being established".

Frequent metadiscursive references to the interpreting setting are typical of this type of interaction. In this episode, MC always keeps the two discourse levels separate, marking the shift from stage to backstage both with prosody and body movements and with paralinguistic means, as in lines 11-12 of extract 3 below.

Extract 3

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1 | MC | Il centro studi Sangemini offre 10 milioni e un soggiorno da stabilire la durata del |
| 2 | | medesimo in un albergo di (<i>looks questioningly at MW</i>) Sangemini |
| 3 | MW | Sangemini alle terme di Sangemini |
| 4 | MC | ecco alle terme di Sangemini quindi possono fare anche un periodo di riposo la |
| 5 | | famiglia Filipov dopo ehm gli stress di questa attesa gli stress [di della] |
| 6 | MW | [gli suggerisco in |
| | | [modo=] |
| 7 | MC | [prego] |
| 8 | MW | =particolare verso l'autunno verso settembre |
| 9 | MC | ecco verso sett [embre] |
| 10 | MW | [che è] il periodo più bello in quella zona |

- 11 → MC Va bene (*turning towards the sofa and lowering the tone of his voice*)
verso settembre
12 Straniero dice che è meglio stare là (*turning again to MW*) ehm parliamo
di
13 questo centro studi della Sangemini di cosa di occupa?

English Gloss

- 1 MC The Sangemini centre is offering 10 million lire and holiday dates to be
finalized
2 at a Sangemini hotel (*questioningly looking at MW*) Sangemini
3 MW Sangemini at the Sangemini health resort
4 MC Ok at the Sangemini health resort so the Filipov family can also have
some time to
5 relax after ehm the stress of waiting the stress [of of the]
6 MW [I'd strongly recommend=]
7 MC [yes?]
8 MW =around autumn around September
9 MC there we are around Sep [tember]
10 MW [which] is the best period in that area
11 → MC Ok (*turning towards the sofa and lowering the tone of his voice*) around
September
12 Francesco (.) he says it's the best to stay there (*turning again to MW*) so
ehm let's
13 talk about this Sangemini centre (.) what's it all about?

As in line 18 in extract 1 ("Francesco, translate this into Russian ..."), lines 11-12 above are semantically redundant but interactionally important. They are whispered in a confidential manner, as if the speaker were saying "we will have to remember this". The relation in which the interpreter is cast by this mode of address is not that of the man in the middle, the neutral link, who doesn't side with either party, but that of an assistant, someone who collaborates with the presenter. In fact, when introducing the guests at the beginning of the show MC referred to the interpreter as "our interpreter", followed by first name and surname. In this case the interpreter apparently belongs to the talk show cast.

2.2 Repair and story-telling

Repair and meta-discourse are important interactional resources for maintaining, restoring and monitoring mutual understanding among participants. Unlike "substantive acts [which] provide the substance or essence of conversation" (Hellspong 1988:47), they are "regulatory acts" (ibid) which perform a coordinating function in dialogue (see also Wadensjö 1993).

It is important to note that unlike the conference hall, the courtroom or the police station, the talk show is basically a showplace which features a very special form of monitoring. Translation is not the exclusive right of the interpreter, but is a (meta)discoursal activity, an interactional space open to

all participants, who can at any time shift roles and temporarily act as competing mediators; they may bypass, question or even ridicule the interpreter in order to entertain the audience or themselves. Moreover, translational strategies such as omissions, additions, semantic and communicative equivalence, etc. are not pre-established categories but are locally and interactionally managed moment-by-moment during the exchange. Before the beginning of the show, the interpreter may be instructed to make the guest's words 'more interesting'. Guests are often nervous on television and it is up to the interpreter (besides providing psychological support) to 'clean up' or 'polish' their utterances by leaving out hedges, self-corrections, hesitations and false starts, or to 'embellish' or complete what the guest cannot say or articulate. As our corpus appears to indicate, interpreters tend to add textual material and, at times, even improve upon the original style in terms of lexical choices and register. This is clearly different from interpreting in other settings, such as the police station or the courtroom, where the interpreter is expected to translate verbatim.

A further point concerns the interpreter's choice to retain or explain an ambiguity in the source utterance. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for talk show interpreters to follow the recommended protocol for court interpreters, namely that in the case of ambiguity "the interpreter should state "Your Honor, the question/answer is ambiguous and the interpreter cannot proceed without clarification" (González *et al.* 1991:485), "ask the court permission to inquire with the witness", or "call the matter to the court's attention by requesting a side-bar conference" (ibid:487). For, as already noted, metalinguistic activity means first and foremost phatic communion and sociability. In a talk show setting, where there is no "side-bar conference" to retreat to, the 'right' interpretation of an ambiguous term would be negotiated by participants themselves, who may even play with the very ambiguity of the word. We must also remember that controversy and disagreement are often fictionalized on television, and participants argue for the sake of arguing, being well aware that they are actors playing 'on the stage'.

Here is an example from extract 3 (which starts with line 29 at the bottom of extract 1), where the presenter and the interpreter engage in a defining activity.

Extract 3

- 29 MC Però è bravo eh?
 30 I (*turning towards MC and speaking aloud*) [ha capito benissimo]
 31 MC [che le ha detto scusi?]
 32 → I Le ho detto che è una vera autentica perchè verace vuol dire poi vera
 33 autentica [] passata di pomodori che è quello che poi [è il suo]
 34 MC [eh] [ecco]
 35 I non era poi tant [o]

- 36 MC [sì] è che a Napoli insomma verace vuol dire [proprio=]
 37 I [verace vero]
 38 MC =sincero
 39 I sincero
 40 MC ecco since:ro

English Gloss

- 29 MC Not bad though eh?
 30 I (turning to MC and speaking aloud) [indeed she understood perfectly]
 31 MC [Sorry what did you tell her?]
 32 → I I told her that it is ehm real authentic because verace actually means really
 33 authentic [] tomato purée which is actually [it's]
 34 MC [huh] [there we are]
 35 I =actually it wasn't [so]
 36 M [yes] but in Naples "verace" means [exactly=]
 37 I ["verace" true]
 38 MC =sincere
 39 I sincere
 40 MC there we are since:re

The meaning of *passata verace* becomes the topic of the exchange and the object of negotiation. Because of its strong connotations, 'the taste and feel of 100% genuine Neapolitan tomato pureé', *passata verace* may be considered a culture-bound term. The expression conjures up the image of Mediterranean sunshine and typical (Southern) Italian cuisine. After a first explanation given by the interpreter, aimed at responding to the request made by MC and managing his face wants, the host insists on the difficulty of translating *verace* by locating a problem in the interpreter's previous talk. Put in conversationalist terms, the hearer redefines something the speaker has already said as 'incomplete', i.e. he treats his action as 'repairable'; a request for clarification of meaning is always a bid for repair (White 1997).

MC attempts to 'other-initiate' a repair ("yes but in Naples ...") but then, since he cannot find the right word to define *verace*, he 'self-initiates' a repair which is 'other-completed' by the interpreter ("verace, true"), with overlap between the two (lines 35-39).³ The two speakers compete for the right definition, but they both accept each other's suggestions. Interruptions are supportive, being perceived as reinforcing communication. The fragment under analysis is characterized by a double **repair format** (Schiffrin 1987) which shows a division of responsibility for the information management task.⁴

In line 40, MC and the interpreter apparently reach an agreement on the meaning of *verace* as synonymous with *sincere* on the basis of their shared knowledge and as a result of a joint negotiation process. However, the interpreter subsequently self-selects for the next turn (line 41 in extract 4 below) with a marker ('but') which prefaces a new interactional move.

Extract 4

- 40 MC ecco sinc [ero]
 41 → I [bè] ma in russo c'è un aggettivo stupendo perchè il russo è
 una lingua ricchis
 42 [] sima e quindi c'è un aggettivo che esattamente indica autentico
 vero reale=
 43 MC [si]
 44 I =anche di qualità per cui proprio:
 45 MC in russo?
 46 I verace
 47 MC [questo aggettivo?]
 48 I [nastojasij] [nastojasij]
 49 MC [com'è?]
 50 I NASTOJASIJ
 51 MC nastojasij (*everyone laughs*) vabé quando volete aprire il il mercato
 (*laughs*)
 52 FR (xxx)
 53 MC ecco il mercato in Russia allora dice:
 54 FR nastojasij
 55 MC nastojasij poi Gorbaciov mi sembra ha dato un nuovo corso [quindi al
 contrario]
 56 FR [appunto quindi]
 57 MC [questa=]
 58 FR [non è detto che] si possa sfruttare
 59 MC =passata nastojasij servire calda (*everyone laughs*)

English Gloss

- 40 MC there we are sinc [ere]
 41 → I [but] in Russian there's a really great adjective because
 Russian is a
 42 language really rich [] and so there's an adjective which exactly means
 authentic=
 43 MC [yes]
 44 I =also quality so it fits exactly:
 45 MC in Russian?
 46 I "verace"
 47 MC [this adjective?]
 48 I [nastojasij] [nastojasij]
 49 MC [sorry?]
 50 I NASTOJASIJ
 51 MC nastojasij (*everybody laughs*) Ok whenever you want to open the market
 (*laughs*)
 52 FR (xxx)
 53 M I mean the market in Russia you say:
 54 FR nastojasij
 55 MC nastojasij also I believe that Gorbachev has opened up a new direction
 [so I guess]
 56 FR [exactly so=]
 57 MC [this=]
 58 FR [=we may] take advantage of it
 59 MC =nastojasij purée serve hot (*everyone laughs*)

The interpreter initiates an action of controlling the topic of discourse with a metalinguistic explanation which means 'I am the linguistic expert'. He thus foregrounds his 'interlinguistic' authority with respect to the host's institutional authority. The move can be understood as a form of "authority display" (Schiffrin 1987). By choosing a favourable topic, the interpreter secures the possibility of presenting his arguments, placing MC in the position of assuming that the interpreter is speaking knowledgeably, and that MC does not have the competence to challenge what is said.

The word *nastojasij* ('authentic') uttered by the interpreter twice in line 48 above and repeated in line 50 is repeated in the successive moves both by MC (51, 55, 59) and by the food company representative (54). Unlike other settings, where repetition may be aimed at preventing potential or actual misunderstandings, repetition here serves to ratify the interpreter's contribution, i.e. his participation (Tannen 1989:59-74). Besides performing a topic-setting function at the beginning of each speaker's turn, the repetition of the Russian adjective also establishes a sense of affiliation between the three speakers by their echoing of each other's use of the word. This type of alignment work between speaker and hearer is a form of "cooperative topic building" (Schiffrin 1987:240). Moreover, code-switching here is a conversational strategy. The word *nastojasij* takes on an exotic meaning, in tune with the entertainment goal of the ongoing interaction. In line 51, MC incorporates the foreign word into his own discourse "in order to savour it" (Tannen 1989:64); in line 55, he goes back to the firm representative and shifts the topic to Gorbachev and marketing strategies. Finally, in 59, he appropriates the word to crack a joke, make the audience laugh and close the exchange in order to call the next guest.

The sequence in lines 41-50 is structured as typical storytelling. The story is preceded by specific moves by both the teller (the interpreter) and the recipient (the presenter). The interpreter provides a preface, offering to tell the story, while the presenter makes a request to hear the offered story. The utterance in line 41 anticipates a new developing content. Like all pre-formulations, it has a topic-fixing property (Heritage and Watson 1980:255). Once again, the collaborative nature of the interaction emerges, where conversational tasks are managed through a process of hearer participation, expressed not only through body-stance, head-nodding or eye-contact but also through backchannelling signals such as 'huh', 'yes' and 'that's ok'.

2.3 Turn-taking and agenda policing

Unlike other institutional settings characterized by a rigid question/answer format, the talk show has a relatively more flexible structure in terms of topic and turn-taking organization. It is similar in some respects to natural, spontaneous conversation, even though, being a form of institutionalized chat,

speaking turns must be adjusted to the specific requirements of television. Depending on the presenter, and the type and rhythm of the programme, the interpreter may be requested to translate utterance by utterance or perform a form of simultaneous translation without headphones. In some cases, if the interpreter delays the delivery to listen to longer portions of the source utterance the presenter may explicitly ask him or her to start translating. In other cases the interpreter may be asked to postpone, speed up or summarize because of commercial breaks and other time restraints.

Roy (1996) analysed the different strategies adopted by the interpreter in deciding who should have priority in case of overlapping and showed that this turn-mediation function is a result of sociolinguistic choices made by the interpreter on the basis of his or her understanding of the ongoing social situation. She explains that "both speakers and the interpreter create unique kinds of pauses, lags, overlaps and turns. Turns taken by the interpreter [are] shown to be a mixture of the interpreter's decisions as well as the primary speakers' tacit agreement to accept those decisions" (ibid:63). The last fragment (extract 5) will illustrate further aspects of turn-taking and topic management.

Extract 5

- 1 MC dottor Vivaldi noi ci rivediamo a fine trasmissione ancora per un saluto
- 2 però la settimana prossima [ancora]
- 3 MW [va bene] spero di essere presente io stesso
- 4 grazie
- 4 MC ma faccia il possibile
- 5 MW [senz'altro]
- 6 MC [faccia il possibile] per esserci ricordo che (*turns to the sofa*)
- 7 → I voleva dire una cosa sull'acqua minerale
- 8 MC che ci ha qualcosa da ridire?
- 9 I anzi voleva dire [] mi stava raccontando una cosa
- 10 MC [no ecco]
- 11 B kogda my delali pervuju zabastovku my posovetovalis' c doktorom kakuju
- 12 vo [du nado pit' on skazal Sandzemini]
- 13 I [allora quando hanno fatto lo sciopero della fame] il dottore gli ha consigliato
- 14 di bere l'acqua Sangemini l'acqua Sangemini
- 15 MC ecco io mi augur [o]
- 16 MW [diciamo] che quella è una cura dimagrante un po' drastica
- 17 però anche per le cure dimagranti va bene
- 18 MC io voglio sperare che nessun nostro simile (*turning towards sofa*)
- 19 B (xxx)
- 20 I (*translating*) perchè le qualità dell'acqua sono buone per questo allora
- 21 B [dlija detej]
- 22 I [per i bambini va benissimo]
- 23 MC [ecco io voglio dire] apprezzando la Sangemini e la Ferrarelle voglio
- 24 veramente che nessun nostro simile debba bere Sangemini o Ferrarelle

- 25 perchè sta
25 facend [o lo sciopero della] fame
26 MW [apposta apposta]
27 MC questo lo dico proprio (*turning towards sofa*)
28 I l'ha conosciuta in quell'occasione
29 MC l'ha conosciuta in quell'occasione adesso invece la conosce in
 un'occasione
30 assolutamente lieta
31 MW un tantino più lieta
32 MC ch ah ma molto più lieta

English Gloss

- 1 MC Mr. Vivaldi we'll meet again at the end of the programme to say goodbye
2 but next week [again]
3 MW [*fine*] I hope to be here myself
4 MC do your level best
5 MW [no doubt about it]
6 MC [you'll do your level best] to be here I just want to remind you that (*turns to the sofa*)
7 → I she wanted to say something about mineral water
8 MC she's got something to complain about?
9 I no on the contrary she wanted to say [] she was telling me something
10 MC [that's ok]
11 B when we started our first hunger strike we asked the doctor which
12 water [to drink and he said Sangemini]
13 I [well when they were on hunger strike] the doctor advised them
14 to drink Sangemini mineral water Sangemini mineral water
15 MC well I sincerely ho [pe]
16 MW [let's] say that that's a slightly drastic diet
17 but it's also good for diets
18 MC I don't want any of us (*turning towards the sofa*)
19 B (xxx)
20 I (*translating*) because the properties of the water are good for this so
21 B [for children]
22 I [for children it's perfect]
23 MC [now let me make it clear that] I know we like Sangemini and Ferrarelle
 but I don't
24 want anybody to drink Sangemini or Ferrarelle just because
25 they're on [hunger strike]
26 MW [absolutely] just what I said (xxx)
27 MC Actually I say this because (*turning towards the sofa*)
28 I she tried it at that particular time
29 MC she tried it at that particular time but now she can drink it at really
30 happy moment in time
31 MW just a teeny bit happier I'd say
32 MC come on now much happier by far

In line 7 the interpreter considerably expands his turn-allocating role, going as far as interrupting the presenter at a crucial discourse juncture. MC is

taking his leave of the mineral water representative. By interjecting, the interpreter challenges two important institutional prerogatives of the presenter: the power to sanction the closing of the exchange and to allocate turns. The act of interrupting is set within spatial factors peculiar to this type of video communication. MC has indeed no direct visual access to the interpreter and the Bulgarian woman, seated on the sofa. Thus the interpreter decides to draw the host's attention by aurally signalling that the guest wishes to intervene ("she wanted to say something about mineral water").

Line 8 contains two moves: the first is a response to the interpreter's summons, the second formulates a request aimed at eliciting a justification for the interruption. Lines 21, 22 and 23 are characterized by overlapping talk: the woman speaks in Russian, the interpreter begins to translate and MC interjects with 'now', signalling his intention to claim the turn. Although the interpreter's and MC's interruptions are both competitive in nature, the aim of the first is to let the woman speak, turn opportunities for the woman being very limited. Thus the interpreter takes a turn to allocate a turn, but MC steps in to re-assert his role as the controller of verbal initiatives, all of which suggests that interruption is indeed "a construct, a category which participants can make use of to deal with currently prevailing rights and obligations in actual situations" (Bennett 1981:176).

The Bulgarian woman's story about her drinking 'Sangemini' water during her hunger strike is perhaps not the best advertisement for the company. It is clued by MC as a threat to the positive face of the company and, more generally to the frame in which the show is embedded. The act through which the host expresses his authority is marked by explicit performatives ("I don't want", "I do hope", "I know", "let me make it clear"), that allow him to regain control of the exchange and decide what topics are appropriate to the agenda.

Note how in lines 16-17 ("let's say that that's a slightly drastic diet but it's also good for diets") the mineral water representative topicalizes the hunger strike in terms of slimming diet, thereby accomplishing a face-saving act, aimed at toning down the conflictual import of the woman's utterance. Thus the episode is emptied of all political meaning. Ironically, it was the hunger strike which brought the Bulgarian family to television, making it a human rights issue. The confrontational nature of the exchange is further evidenced in lines 28-29 above, where the interpreter sides with the woman, attesting the truthfulness of her story (and his translation). MC, on the other hand, echoed by the commercial representative (line 31), foregrounds the new 'happier' television experience the woman is having at *that* moment. In particular, the repetition in line 29 takes on a special interactional meaning; as Orletti (1994:177) explains, repetition followed by negation tends to signal conflict or disagreement.

3. Conclusion

Activities such as facework, topic management, repairing, interrupting, disagreeing, glossing and backchannelling reflect the jointly negotiated identities of interlocutors and play a crucial role in shaping the emerging talk-show. As the interaction unfolds, the host and the interpreter work out their social relationships in relation to the audience and to their conversational goals.

The interpreter's role is dependent on that of the presenter. His conversational behaviour throughout the interaction is determined by the alignment work accomplished by the host. As a speaker, the interpreter alternates between the role of animator (speaking for the Bulgarian woman) and that of author, shifting between self and other. The act of speaking for himself takes on different interactional meanings, as a result of the participation framework created by the presenter, who makes speaking power available to guests. In regulating (and policing) access to speaking time (and speaking modes), the presenter too is an animator who constructs participants' identities, thereby contributing to shaping a positive or negative image of a participant in the minds of viewers. In animating his guests' words, MC performs his interactional task (and institutionalized footing).

As the present study has demonstrated, the presenter of a talk show is actively involved in interaction, playing, to use Heritage's terminology (1985), not only the role of 'report elicitor' but also that of 'report recipient', as indicated by his backchannel behaviour. The interpreter, on the other hand, is not simply the animator of the spoken-for person and, contrary to widely held assumptions about 'neutrality' and 'invisibility', does not refrain from making unsolicited comments. The context of the talk show requires the interpreter to abandon any attempts at maintaining a low-profile, behind-the-scene footing and assume a different participation status in the management of the interaction.

The 'being-ignored-can-be-bliss' principle (apparently the title of a book by Fink, reported in Frishberg 1986) no longer works, if it ever did. What is needed is a new awareness of the interpreter's social competence, i.e. how his or her communicative competence is enacted in the form of appropriate conversational behaviour. For this to happen, a shift from cognitive to sociolinguistic research is necessary. It is only through the empirical observation of regularities of situations and behaviour that it is possible to create corpora which, in turn, enable the determination of norms (in Gideon Toury's sense), a major lacuna in the field of interpreting. The study of authentic interpreted discourse helps lay bare not only some of the normative taken-for-granted principles of interpreters' behaviour but also the 'hidden' assumptions about the nature of the interaction in which interpreters are involved. To this end, ethnographic vs. experimentally produced data have the advantage of avoiding the inevitably controlled laboratory conditions in which research is limited

to those variables preselected by the researcher.

One of the objectives of this research project is to elaborate, on the basis of description rather than prescription, 'interpreter profiles' in terms of such parameters as communicative style, interactional capacities, teamwork organization, translation strategies, reaction time, turn-taking, meaning negotiation and cooperation, conflict management, use of register and vocabulary, and so on. In the case of television interpreting, recording interpreters' performances does not influence their behaviour, since recording is an intrinsic feature of this electronic and public means of communication. The findings of the research project should therefore prove useful and reliable in terms of designing teaching modules and materials, allowing students and their teachers to analyse and evaluate authentic texts produced in authentic contexts and demonstrating genuine interpreter performance in action.

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Notes

1. The definition of 'overhearing audience' applies both to viewers and to the studio audience who, like the jurors in a trial, are physically but not interactionally present. In most talk shows, the audience is made up of walk-ons. Interactivity is often a form of disguised manipulation. An extreme example of how television organizes the participation of viewers is pre-recorded laughter in sit-coms or cartoons.
2. In Italian, the use of a surname ('Straniero' in line 18 of the original) can be informal and friendly, as in this case, whereas the effect in English would be quite different. I have therefore opted to replace it with the first name 'Francesco' in the English gloss.
3. On the structural organization of repair techniques see Jefferson (1974), Schegloff *et al.* (1977), Goffman (1981), Schegloff (1981) and White (1997).
4. Self-repair is a very common practice in interpreting *tout court*. In our corpus, numerous cases have been found in which the repair is initiated by the presenter, a participant, or even the foreign guest when the latter knows some Italian and realizes that the interpreter has omitted or mistranslated something. The repair is always self-completed by the interpreter in his or her next turn.

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