Editorial
A dialogue on dialogue
interpreting (DI) corpora

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The use of corpus methods to study interpreter-mediated communicative situations has been increasing significantly over the last two decades. Curiously enough, due to a series of unplanned twists in my academic life in the last couple of years, I have found myself dealing with a considerable *corpus* of investigations based on this research paradigm. Part of these are included in the present issue of *The Interpreters' Newsletter*. Other contributions have been collected in a volume and in a forthcoming special issue of another translation and interpreting journal, which I co-edited with Mariachiara Russo and Bart Defrancq (Bendazzoli *et al.* forthcoming; Russo *et al.* 2018).

Whether machine-readable or not, interpreting corpora have lent themselves to both qualitative and quantitative approaches across different interpreting modes and settings (Bendazzoli 2015). However, the development of electronic corpora, allowing for automatic extraction of occurrences and text-sound/video alignment, has been favored in certain areas more than others on account of greater availability of data (e.g. from public institutions such as the European Parliament) and the more convenient management of monologic speech compared to what is the case in more sensitive settings (such as hospitals, courts, corporate events) and with dialogic interaction. Nevertheless, there are now examples of fully-fledged corpora of dialogue interpreting too, such as the TIPp corpus of criminal court proceedings (Orozco-Jutorán 2017, Orozco-Jutorán forthcoming), and the Community Interpreting Database (Angermeyer *et al.* 2012), bearing witness to the fact that some ways to address and overcome part of the methodological challenges in corpus development have been found (e.g. in transcription and annotation, see Ruhi *et*

al. 2014). In fact, it looks as if major obstacles are hard to die upstream, i.e. at the stage of gaining access to data, collecting them, and then making them available to other scholars. As mentioned by Valero Garcés back in 2006 (86-87):

> [...] there are often serious difficulties in gathering corpora of authentic data. The interest that providers (governmental agencies, private institutions, or non-governmental organisations (NGOs)) as well as the users-clients have in keeping the information confidential, contributes to this shortage of data and studies. This situation is often compounded by the fact that it is usually necessary to prepare very detailed reports for those organisations or institutions that do agree to participate in CI [community interpreting] research, to carefully explain the purpose, the use and protection of the data being solicited, only to be rejected dozens of times. In order to be able to carry out CI research, one needs to gain the trust of providers, clients and interpreters often through written authorization in different minority languages so that the clients are able to understand the researchers' aims firsthand and can sign the forms granting permission to observe and possibly record the sessions as long as their anonymity is preserved.

These obstacles often lead to the creation of small size corpora or limited collections of data for which manual analysis apparently remains the only sensible option. And yet even small corpora can be annotated and analyzed through automatic retrieval of occurrences (e.g. Castagnoli/Niemants forthcoming), which can then be quantified as well as investigated qualitatively, the two options being not mutually exclusive (Pöchhacker 2006: 152; Pallotti 2016).

Other often-mentioned challenges to interpreting corpora development concern transcription and annotation. In fact, technological advancements in speech recognition software solutions along with the potential of Web 2.0 are easing up the transcription process (Bendazzoli 2018). Similarly, software tools for corpus-supported linguistic analysis are becoming more user friendly and more easily accessible than in the past (e.g. Corpus Workbench, ELAN, EXMARaLDA, Sketch Engine to name some of the most familiar to interpreting scholars). Nevertheless, technology and research methods are useless without data. And data, whether big or small, are the fundamental ingredient to create a corpus.

Before introducing the contributions gathered in the present issue of *The Interpreters' Newsletter*, I shall propose some reflections on the implications inherent in corpus-based dialogue interpreting research. To this end, I engaged in a dialogue with expert voices from the field. Their views may help gain insight into some of the practices in data collection and the future developments of this line of enquiry (DI research), which I contend should not be limited to community settings.

1.   Dialogue interpreting: beyond community and public service settings

Translation and Interpreting scholars share a variety of labels to refer to what interpreters do and where. According to the description proposed by Pöchhacker (2004), there are different interpreting modalities (depending on whether spoken, signed or written language is involved), modes (simultaneous and consecutive interpreting with all the relevant sub-modes) and settings. When these three factors are considered together it is possible to identify types of interpreting, e.g. conference interpreting, court interpreting, business interpreting and so on.

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When it comes to 'dialogue interpreting', Merlini (2015, 2007) rightly points out that in this case the focus is placed on the interaction format and not on a collation of contextual and translational features. Though this label is commonly used to reference interpreting activities in community settings, in fact dialogic interaction can also be found in other situations, and consequently in other types of interpreting. Consider, for instance: conference interpreting with simultaneous interpreters at work during debates, question and answer (Q&A) sessions, or press conferences (Sandrelli 2015, 2017)[1]; TV interpreting with simultaneous interpreters *in absentia* translating for a secondary audience or interpreters *in praesentia* (Dal Fovo/Falbo 2017: 164-167), e.g. whispering the translation of an exchange between other guests in the same show; film interpreting (Russo 1997), with individual simultaneous interpreters or teams of interpreters translating the dialogues in a movie.

Besides the interpreting modality and mode (with the interpreter either visible or only audible), the degree of confidentiality and spontaneity can be considered distinguishing features along a continuum between two poles. In fact, interpreter-mediated dialogues may be more or less confidential and sensitive, which has a bearing on the possibility to record them and distribute them for research purposes. Similarly, interpreter-mediated dialogues can be more or less spontaneous, where turn-taking is pre-arranged to different extents or follows more or less established procedures which determine the sequential development and the unfolding of the interaction[2]. This applies to situations with or without power asymmetries between participants (as in a doctor-patient encounter or in a business negotiation) and may prompt the interpreter to boost

1   According to my field observations and professional experience, in order to better manage dialogic exchanges (with possible overlapping between different interlocutors) alternative practices may be enacted. For instance, one simultaneous interpreter (in a team of two) only translates the questions while the other interpreter takes care of the answers. This way the different voices should also help service users identify more precisely what is being said by whom. In case of fast exchanges between primary interlocutors, interpreters may even decide to keep only one microphone on, without needing to keep switching on and off their microphones when taking the floor. This way, even the interpreters themselves can produce overlapping speech in the booth. On the other hand, consecutive interpreters may find themselves in a situation where more answers are provided to the same question by multiple speakers without waiting for each answer to be translated individually. In these cases, the interpreter would need to add explicit contextual and interactional references (e.g. the question was..., guest X's reply is...).

2   In developing the Directionality in Simultaneous Interpreting Corpus (DIRSI-C) (Bendazzoli 2010, 2012), Q&A sessions were eventually excluded from the corpus due to the radical differences between the dialogic interaction therein and the monologic interaction of other conference sessions (e.g. opening sessions and paper presentation sessions). Despite the presence of the chairperson managing the floor and the need of participants to use the microphone one at a time to permit simultaneous interpreting of each speech event, frequent instances of overlapping speech were registered (especially when negotiating turn-taking and producing back-channeling during one's reply). The transcription method and annotations adopted for that corpus could not process these features efficiently.

their coordinating role, thus managing the interaction in ways that do not conform to the idealized pattern L1 speaker > interpreter > L2 speaker > interpreter and so on (Baraldi/Gavioli 2012).

As interpreting scholars we are well aware of how prominent the interaction management function becomes, alongside the translational one, when interpreting in a dialogic situation. Let us be also aware that the same interaction format is not exclusive of face to face communication with direct involvement of the interpreter. Further understanding of this kind of interpreter-mediated communication can be beneficial to interpreters themselves and, above all, to service users alike.

2. Expert voices from the field

In order to find out more about current and future challenges in dialogue interpreting research, three experts with long-standing experience in the field were interviewed. The semi-structured interviews were run via Skype and were based on three questions which were sent in advance to the interviewees along with more general information about the main theme of the special issue I was invited to edit. At the beginning of the interview the three questions were presented and expanded to let the interviewees free to express themselves on the main points raised:

1) Considering the persisting methodological obstacles in data collection (i.e. in gaining access to the data and permission to use and distribute them, much more than transcription and tools for analysis), in your experience, what are the best practices or ways to deal with these methodological challenges? What are the best sources of data?
2) The corpus-based approach is pushing research from micro-analysis of case studies to larger data sets (quantitative analysis supplementing qualitative analysis). What can quantitative analysis tell us that qualitative analysis has failed to tell us?
3) What are the areas in particular need of being investigated in dialogue interpreting?

Since many of the answers provided by the three experts overlap to some extent, their comments have been grouped together and are presented below.

2.1 Data collection

Two challenges in particular were mentioned by the three experts concerning data collection: time and trust building. Gaining access to data sources, i.e. interpreter-mediated communicative situations, requires time as in ethnographic research. Even if one can count on inside champions or is sponsored by senior colleagues and university departments, reaching an agreement (possibly a long-

term one) to be allowed to record data, study them, and share them with other scholars or stakeholders takes time. In the opinion of one of the experts, at least 18 months are needed to get the ball rolling, and in some projects it was only after ten years of collecting data that a comprehensive agreement to disseminate them for research purposes was eventually reached. In fact, in sensitive settings one is sometimes required not to disseminate the data, which makes the whole corpus development enterprise quite hard to take. Anonymization is often required and this is also time-consuming besides 'altering' the primary data.

A number of successful strategies were mentioned by the three experts to address these issues. For example, relying on MA or PhD students collecting data for their theses, as well as interpreting students involved in internships has been a way to boost data gathering initiatives in some community and business settings, provided that an agreement is in place between the university and the institution providing the data. Although large datasets can be created this way, interpreting scholars then need to pick and choose their data to ensure a sufficient degree of representativeness. Moreover, restrictions may apply in re-using the data or disseminating them in the form of an open-access corpus (thus limiting access to research conducted by a closed group of scholars). The establishment of international research networks sharing similar data-gathering practices could provide the long-term support necessary to create and disseminate large corpora.

Marketing strategies can also be used to promote one's research and convince stakeholders to open their doors, e.g. highlighting that research results could improve their services. In this vein, businesses may even require not to keep the data anonymous in that they are willing to show how good they are in their quality assurance initiatives. In public service settings, the need to address particularly topical issues may favor research endeavors to the point of gaining permission even to disseminate the data. This has been the case in legal interpreting (e.g. the TIPp corpus mentioned above) and in health care interpreting with a special focus on migrant patients.

A more creative and lateral thinking-oriented approach is recommended when trying to identify the best interlocutor who has the power to greenlight data collection for research purposes. Oftentimes it is complex to reach the person who is entitled to make such a decision within the articulated structure of certain institutions, such as hospitals. Managers at various levels may express genuine interest but, at the same time, pass the baton to somebody else with a higher decision-making power. Researchers run the risk of ending up in a catch-22 situation and waste their time chasing the wrong persons. That is why focusing on a different perspective may be more fruitful, e.g. contacting associations of mediators already working inside a clinic.

Further interesting comments were made by the interviewees about the use of consent forms. There is no standardized format internationally and requirements change between and within countries. In Italy, for instance, the privacy authority confirmed that in medical settings it is not necessary to have the consent form signed when recording data. It is sufficient to have an audio consent so as not to keep any track of the name of the patient. However, in other countries consent forms must be signed, especially in the case of video recording; if the

aims of one's study are described in detail, this may narrow the scope of data exploitation and hinder future developments.

Additional challenges in transcribing data were also raised during the interviews. First, multilingualism can be a major obstacle due to the lack of knowledge of certain languages, which limits the researcher's ability to analyze interactions. Second, notwithstanding greater interoperability afforded by different software tools (e.g. ELAN and EXMARaLDA, which are among the best to manage and represent dialogic interaction based on their partitur format and allowing to link transcripts to audio/video recordings), the way transcribed data are structured and organized still has a strong impact on the extent to which researchers can actually use multiple tools. That is why more shared (general) standards would be highly desirable, not so much in the annotation of specific attributes, but at least in how extra-linguistic data are structured. In this respect, greater added value can be found in software tools whose source code can be modified by the developers (or by users themselves) to adjust it to one's research needs.

Besides audio/video sources of data, good value also comes from participant observation (while recording the data). In fact participant observation enables researchers to connect all the dots when looking at corpus query results (see Angelelli's contribution in this issue for more reflections on the same topic). However, some settings are hard to access for data collection for practical reasons (e.g. emergency wards, though there are examples of fieldwork in this setting with the use of smartpens to take notes while audiorecording interactions at the same time), especially if they have less structured communicative practices but, above all, are highly sensitive. It is easier to collect data in situations where there are well-established pre-planned activities (e.g. standard procedures to deal with patients in maternity wards, vaccination programs, and so on). In addition, the documents used in a communicative situation are useful to inform one's analysis of the interaction. The more the sources from which data are gathered the better, though triangulation is then needed to obtain the full picture and be able to make sense of it.

2.2   Quantitative analysis

All three experts found the second question somewhat provocative in the way it was formulated, as they think that the two types of analysis, quantitative and qualitative, are not exclusive and they mutually inform each other. Even small, microanalysis can be quantitative, so a large corpus is not a prerequisite for counting occurrences. Quantification may better respond to the need for greater awareness (in terms of communication practices) in certain settings, such as in legal interpreting, because of the crucial consequences implied. Also, automatic retrieval of occurrences as a basis for quantification can certainly lead to more accurate queries than can be done counting each occurrence manually. For instance, specific occurrences at the lexical level are easy to find, regardless of the many variants involved. When it comes to annotating their functions or discourse indicators these can be expressed in many different forms, so the anal-

ysis begins even before the annotation stage to account for all the variants. In dialogic interactions, discourse functions are expressed in many different ways and would need such a level of coding that would push forward the analysis too much at the annotation stage, at least as long as the size of interpreting corpora remains too small to take advantage of computer-assisted searches. However, there are also lexically 'empty' phenomena, e.g. looking at what happens at the beginning of each turn, and these can be studied by means of automatically retrieved occurrences more easily.

A quantitative approach is now fundamental for obtaining research funding. Numbers count a lot in the language of the other interlocutor (e.g. funding agencies) and are essential when measuring the impact of a certain phenomenon. In fact, often the result is not different or new compared to what is found in qualitative studies, nevertheless other disciplines are much more interested in the quantitative side (e.g. medicine). This should not be underestimated when setting up interdisciplinary research teams whose members are not familiar with Interpreting Studies.

2.3 More research

In addition to each expert's personal research interests based on their academic background, some common topics in need of further scrutiny emerged from the interviews. For example, comprehensive descriptions of DI communicative situations, particularly of the participants involved and especially those who work with the interpreter, were voiced by all the interviewees. In-depth studies (not necessarily on large quantities of data) would also be needed to show convincing examples to stakeholders in medicine, psychology, etc. Similarly, it would be useful to publish DI research papers in other outlets to have greater impact and receive more attention, not just from the community of translation and interpreting scholars. Comparing and contrasting different settings would also be useful to examine different interactional patterns and the extent to which these are arranged in advance. For instance, in legal interpreting there are pre-established sequences, interaction is highly structured in several situations (in terms of who takes the floor to say what and when). It would seem that the interpreter must follow these sequences and structures quite closely. On the other hand, in healthcare settings, it has been observed that the mediator/interpreter often takes the floor to explain, expand, communicate with the patient and these exchanges are not renditions of previous turns. Given that multiple non-renditions are nearly always present in data from healthcare settings, is this the case also in other settings with less functional discourse? In business settings, evidence of many multilingual sequences is found along with zero renditions (e.g. in the initial introductions among participants) and these would seem to be absolutely fine, as probably it would be embarrassing to translate these exchanges.

Interpreter training is another area worthy of greater research attention to fill the gap between description and didactic applications. Examples of new teaching proposals envisage the use of research data in class, though interpreter trainers

may not be competent enough to manage research data or may not be interested in them. Moreover, there may be skeptical attitudes towards analyses of interpreter-mediated interactions: is a particular interpreter skilled and professional enough to be taken as a model? Focused selection of interactions is fundamental to be fully aware of what interpreter trainees should be exposed to.

3. Issue 22 of *The Interpreters' Newsletter*: Corpus-based dialogue Interpreting Studies

The small number of contributions to the present issue of *The Interpreters' Newsletter* should not be taken as a sign of scant interest in corpus-based DI studies. In fact, an increasing number of research projects have been undertaken within this paradigm over the last two decades, and even more so on DI more generally (see e.g. Dal Fovo/Niemants 2015; Cirillo/Niemants 2017). As mentioned above, other editorial projects run in parallel and absorbed some valuable works that would have fit perfectly in this issue on corpus-based DI research. Nevertheless, the proposed papers cover multiple aspects of this line of enquiry, ranging from theoretical reflection to empirical research and didactic applications, and echo many points raised in the expert interviews reported above.

In "Can ethnographic findings become corpus-studies data? A researcher's ethical, practical and scientific dilemmas", Claudia V. Angelelli critically examines fundamental issues involved in setting up a DI corpus using data that had been collected for other research aims through fieldwork and ethnographic research. This paradigm shift and the resulting implications for the analyst in having access to primary or secondary data pose thought-provoking dilemmas, which may also be considered valid in more general terms. The four major issues considered constant, i.e. complying with data protection-related norms, ethics, time, and cost, were also voiced in the dialogue with the experts reported in the previous section.

In "A multimodal corpus approach to dialogue interpreting studies in the Chinese context: towards a multi-layer analytic framework" Fei Gao and Binhua Wang also draw on theoretical reflections concerning the role of multimodality in DI. Given that the analysis of linguistic annotations alone falls short of explaining translational shifts in distant language pairs, such as Chinese and English, a fuller picture can be obtained by including further layers (written transcript, auditory properties, visual semiotics, and context). The proposed analytical model is illustrated together with data sources that are likely to be more accessible for interpreting scholars in China in the near future – an encouraging piece for more data and better data.

Simo K. Määttä's paper "English as a lingua franca in telephone interpreting: representations and linguistic justice" is an example of DI research based on a small size corpus, which was indeed analyzed manually but which was also informed by quantitative analysis. Määttä investigates the impact of English (used as lingua franca) on participants' mutual understanding and discourse organization during an exchange mediated by a telephone interpreter in a legal setting. Convincing examples of possible cases of (linguistic) unfairness are presented

from a critical discourse analysis perspective and can be used to generate hypotheses to be tested on larger data sets.

One way to overcame difficulties in data gathering is to simulate interactions. Five bilingual moot court cross-examinations interpreted by interpreting students constitute the corpus analyzed by Xin Liu and Sandra Hale in "Facework strategies in interpreter-mediated cross-examinations: a corpus-assisted approach". This study clearly shows the potential of a tagged corpus and responds in a way to the worry raised by one of the experts in §2.2 about the methodology (and the related effort) needed to code attributes that go beyond the lexical level (i.e. facework strategies). The detailed analysis of a particular episode or activity type (in Levinson's terms, 1979) within the constellation of legal interpreting communicative situations is also in line with the areas in greater need of being investigated mentioned in the expert survey.

Finally, in "Using Corpus Linguistics as a research and training tool for Public Service Interpreting (PSI) in the legal sector" Cinzia Spinzi proposes a compelling example of how to combine different kinds of corpora (a learner corpus of simulated interactions, a monolingual corpus of real life speech in legal settings, and a parallel corpus of written legal documents) to generate useful resources for interpreter trainees, scholars and professionals.

If the contributions to issue 22 of this journal were transposed into a corpus, it would be quite small in size and lack representativeness in many respects: it would cover only four languages (English is the only language cutting across all the studies, Chinese comes second followed by Italian and Finnish); just one interpreting mode (consecutive, both face to face and over the phone); only two settings (mostly legal settings, but also health care). As for methodology, the first two contributions are largely reflection and theoretical pieces, while out of the three empirical studies one is based on manual counting of occurrences and only two are assisted by corpus methods proper. For once, such a low degree of representativeness can be looked at with enthusiasm. Indeed, all these works are evidence of the wide range of disciplines and research lines that can revolve around corpus-based interpreting research. Most importantly, they show that interpreting corpora are first and foremost language resources to be used for research, educational, and professional purposes. In recalling Miriam Shlesinger's (1998) visual metaphor for corpus-based interpreting studies, the *offshoot* continues to grow.

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Corpus Workbench http://cwb.sourceforge.net/
ELAN https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/
EXMARaLDA http://exmaralda.org/en/
Sketch Engine https://www.sketchengine.co.uk/

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