

Researching TV interpreting: selected studies of US presidential material

FRANZ PÖCHHACKER

Center for Translation Studies, University of Vienna

Abstract

This paper presents a selection of empirical studies of television interpreting in the Austrian context. Following an introductory review of the unique features of TV interpreting and the rationale for studying it, the main methodological options, ranging from observational to experimental approaches, are briefly discussed. The paper then reports empirical analyses, several of them conducted in the framework of recent MA theses completed at the University of Vienna under the author's supervision. These examples serve to demonstrate the significant potential of research using corpora of authentic high-exposure interpreting and highlight the great variety of issues to be investigated, which range from the distinction between different target-language varieties to product-oriented analyses of rhetorical devices and to experiments eliciting TV interpreting consumers' preferences and attitudes.

Introduction

Within the field of interpreting studies, the subject of media interpreting has slowly become established as a domain of research. Early contributions to the literature, not least by veteran Austrian media interpreter Ingrid Kurz, date back to the 1980s (e.g. Kurz 1985), mainly describing the special challenges and constraints faced by interpreters working in media settings. Since then, the volume of work in these settings has expanded and become more diverse (e.g.

Kurz 1997). Indeed, what is referred to and investigated under the heading of media interpreting is now characterized by fuzzy boundaries in several respects: to begin with, interpreting in the media has become acknowledged as a specialization in its own right rather than as an aspect of “conference interpreting”. Moreover, as telecommunications technology has advanced, the typical features of media, or broadcast interpreting (such as working from a screen for a “remote” mass audience) have spread to webcast media content and videoconferencing and hence to the “new media” of the 21st century that have come to compete with the early 20th-century medium of television. On a broader level, media interpreting has been seen and studied not only from the perspective of professional interpreting but also as a particular mode of language transfer in the media within the fast-developing field of audiovisual translation (AVT) studies that also includes such innovative approaches as respeaking-based subtitling.

Against this background of new developments in media and mass communication, television interpreting might well be seen as the most “traditional” type of media interpreting. After all, the first widely publicized simultaneously interpreted media events go back to the 1960s (e.g. Nishiyama 1988). The assumption that TV interpreting may not be the locus of exciting new developments holds true to some extent but must be qualified with regard to the increasing diversity of televised content involving interpreters of various kinds. As described by Mack (2002), a major distinction should be made between on-site scenarios that involve interpreters in a studio-based communicative event, with or without the presence of an audience, and simultaneous interpreting of broadcast events occurring in a remote location. In the former case, interpreters may be “on the set”, facing the interactional challenges typical of dialogue interpreting in the short consecutive mode; in the latter, the focus is on simultaneous interpreting (SI), more often than not of speeches with a high level of information density as a result of careful preparation or scripting. It is this type of “high-exposure” TV interpreting scenario that is the subject of the present paper, which will discuss some methodological issues arising from this choice of focus before presenting selected examples of empirical research.

1. TV interpreting as an object of study

As stated by way of introduction, the kind of TV interpreting under study in this paper is nothing new. Nor can it claim to be of overriding importance in terms of the volume of work done in this setting. Compared to the amount of simultaneous interpreting done in international organizations like the EU or UN institutions, TV interpreting assignments would seem marginal from a professional point of view. Admittedly, the practice is more conspicuous and broadly established in some countries, such as Japan, where a special form of previewed news interpreting has emerged (cf. Mizuno in Snelling 1997), or for some broadcasters, such as the Franco-German channel ARTE, but for the most part SI assignments on television are connected with special occasions and limited to only a few language combinations. Why then would one make this practice a focus of empirical research? Aside from the fact that marginal practices

may, by definition, be of great value in exploring the boundary areas of a certain domain of study, I would suggest that the reasons have to do with both the impact of media interpreting and its accessibility, as well as the special challenges it typically holds for the interpreter.

1.1 Exposure

Given the nature of the medium, the performance of a single interpreter can reach thousands, if not millions of viewers and listeners. The quality of a given interpreting performance therefore has a high impact on the audience and is likely to shape public perceptions of interpreting one way or another. Since most members of the general public are familiar with the practice of simultaneous interpreting only or mainly from its use in TV programs, the individual interpreter will project a certain professional image much more so than in other settings, where the number of users is comparatively small. (An interesting exception are the proceedings of the European Parliament, which are made publicly available on the World Wide Web.) This high level of “exposure” felt by the media interpreter was confirmed by Kurz (2002) in a study measuring an interpreter’s stress levels in a live broadcast compared to a conference interpreting assignment. As indicated by her measurements of heart rate and skin conductance (perspiration) levels, even a seasoned professional is likely to experience considerably more stress when working for a mass audience in a live broadcast than during a highly specialized gathering of experts.

While public exposure is thus one of the key challenges in media interpreting, it is greatly exacerbated by the various pressures and constraints typically associated with TV broadcast assignments. As described by Kurz (1990), interpreters may be called at very short notice (as in the case of emergency coverage and press conferences) and need to work at unusual times of day – or night – when events are carried live from different time zones. Poor sound and image quality may be additional inconveniences, but perhaps the crucial challenges in many assignments have to do with the nature of the source speech. Unlike studio-based talk-show scenarios, the speeches delivered at events that are broadcast live from remote locations can be assumed to have special significance. They are, by definition, high-status originals whose content and wording, particularly in the political and diplomatic realm, are carefully chosen and crafted. Consequently, such speeches are likely to be delivered from a script to which TV interpreters in distant locations may not have access, so that aggravations such as a fast delivery and the high level of information density resulting from the syntactic and lexical choices typical of scripted speech are concurrently present. This kind of source material thus exposes the TV interpreter to a high level of objective difficulty with which s/he has to cope in a situation of high public exposure that also stems from the degree of exposure and significance of the original speech.

As evident from this account of a prototypical off-site TV interpreting assignment, the special challenges involved can be met only by interpreters with a correspondingly high level of expertise. Such premier-league interpreters can

be expected to deliver (simultaneous) interpreting at its best, or rather, “as good as it gets”, considering the special challenges mentioned above. This makes TV interpreting particularly valuable as a benchmark in interpreting studies, indicating the level of professional performance that is feasible under a given set of conditions.

1.2 Access

Research on TV interpreting is highly attractive also for another reason that can be related to the notion of public exposure, namely the accessibility of public broadcasting content for the purpose of recording-based analysis. This helps overcome one of the main and most lamented obstacles to corpus-based empirical research, namely access to and scholarly use of authentic performances. This advantage is eroded to some extent by the widespread practice of broadcasting interpreted speeches in voice-over mode in a single audio channel. When the original is only barely audible, source–target comparisons are possible only if an original-language broadcast is available for transcription. The latter is typically the case with speeches by world leaders (often US presidents) that are broadcast by CNN, as in the examples described in this paper. With the crucial problem of access thus resolved, interpreting researchers, also and especially at the level of Master’s theses, can turn to questions of methodology and study design, which will be discussed in more detail below.

2. Methodological issues

Thanks to sources such as the European Parliament and, albeit to a lesser extent, the media broadcasts under consideration, corpus-based studies of simultaneous interpreting have made great strides. Even so, the observational approach to studying authentic interpreting data “from the field” is not the only option available, and survey or experimental strategies, or combinations thereof, can be and have been adopted in studies of interpreting on television.

Based on the three-fold distinction of overall research orientations, or “strategies”, proposed by Robson (1993), research on TV interpreting is usually conceived as “fieldwork”, relying on observational techniques for the analysis of the raw data available in the form of a video recording. Such investigations are often referred to as case studies, but as such they are rather limited in terms of data sources – unless the researcher can actually be present as an observer and/or interviewer at the TV station. An ethnographic approach to TV interpreting is thus uncommon.

So is experimenting, one might think, since broadcast interpreting would be difficult to (re)create in a laboratory setting. And yet, broadcast interpreting lends itself quite well to what can be viewed as natural experimenting. In one of the earliest such studies, Stolz (2000) compared the performances of two highly experienced Austrian interpreters working under comparable conditions from the same (English) source speech. Using data gathered at around the same time,

I analyzed three versions of the 1992 US Presidential Debate interpreted into German (Pöchhhacker 2007), and Amato (2002) studied the team interpreting efforts on the occasion of President Clinton's deposition with the Grand Jury on four Italian TV channels.

Among the variables whose effect can be examined in such studies is the placement of the interpreting team members: turn-taking overlap is common in multi-party events when interpreters are assigned to a given participant and placed in an individual booth; in contrast, overlap is avoided when interpreters sit next to each other. Another key variable is the availability of a script, as in the case of one of the analyses reported below.

Considering the large target population, TV interpreting would also seem to lend itself very well to survey research approaches as used in studies among users of conference interpreting (e.g. Kurz 2002/1993; Moser 1996). Surprisingly little work of this kind has been carried out, however, which may also indicate a lack of interest in such audience studies among TV executives.

Where audiences have been involved in studies on spoken-language TV interpreting (for signed-language interpreting, see e.g. Steiner 1998), the approach has been experimental, with researchers confronting audiences recruited for the purpose with samples of media interpreting to be assessed for various criteria. A well-known example in German-speaking countries is the study by Elsagir (2000), who had 57 respondents to a questionnaire on TV-interpreting-related expectations assess two samples of interpreting in German talkshows. While the study mainly builds on user expectation research in conference interpreting, it also exhibits parallels with what I would call the Granada paradigm, contrasting an audience's generic expectations with responses to an actual interpreting performance. Indeed, the approach pioneered by researchers at the University of Granada (e.g. Collados Aís 2002/1998), who presented their subjects with experimental stimulus material in the form of a video-filmed speech with voice-over SI, is even better suited to TV interpreting research, as it closely approximates authentic reception conditions.

The motivations and methodological choices outlined above are exemplified in the selection of TV interpreting research presented in the following section. I will draw on some of my own work but also report on empirical studies by Master's students who designed and completed their theses under my supervision. Making these research efforts at the University of Vienna more widely available in this manner should be in line with the tradition of *The Interpreters' Newsletter* that has made many an MA thesis written at the University of Trieste and elsewhere a part of the published literature in interpreting studies.

3. Selected topics and findings

The recordings of live broadcasts with simultaneous interpretation that form the basis of the studies reported below were made from Austrian television (ORF) and other German-language broadcasters between 1992 and 2009. All of them involve the presidency of the United States of America and thus interpreting from English into German. The material discussed here includes two presidential debates (1992

and 2008) and the inaugural address of President Barack Obama on January 20, 2009.

The first three sections review analyses of US presidential debates, followed by an audience experiment with two German versions of President Obama's inaugural speech. The latter is investigated further with regard to rhetorical devices and their fate in simultaneous interpretation. The methodological approaches showcased in these studies include computer-linguistic corpus analysis, text-based qualitative comparisons as well as the elicitation of feedback from an experimental audience.

3.1 Idioms

In 1992 I collected a corpus of TV interpreting performances recorded from three German-language broadcasters. The event in question was the first of three televised debates among the three leading candidates in the 1992 US presidential election – George Bush, Bill Clinton and Ross Perot. The availability of three sets of English-German simultaneous interpretations by highly professional media interpreters working under comparable conditions allowed for comparative analyses with regard to such problem triggers as high speech rate, proper names and numbers as well as culture-specific items. Even though none of the candidates read from a script, source speech rates were close to 190 words per minute and thus markedly higher than those measured, in syllables per minute, for the corpus of SI at the 1991 Conference of the International Council for Small Business (Pöchhacker 1994).

Under these difficult conditions, interpreters had to cope in particular with source-language expressions that are highly idiomatic and/or specific to American culture. A systematic analysis of the various types of “culture-bound elements” in the 15,800-word source-text corpus, including names of US institutions and policies, person and place names, has been presented elsewhere (Pöchhacker 2007). For further illustration I will mention three items that proved especially difficult. All three were introduced by independent candidate Ross Perot, by far the most unconventional of the three debaters.

Perot's assertion that he was “not playing Lawrence Welk music”, that is, not intending to soften his message about the need for tough political measures, has no counterpart in any of the three German interpretations. In one case it was omitted entirely, and in another it was rendered rather obscurely as “not playing [to] the large world” (*spiele hier nicht äh f der großen Welt*). In the third version, the interpreter similarly obfuscated the speaker's intention, suggesting that he was “not being loudmouthed” (*keine großen Töne spucken*).

In a remark about people with drug money who are in fact too poorly educated to hold down the most menial job, the latter was expressed as “couldn't get a job third shift in a Dairy Queen”. Two of the interpreters omitted this phrase entirely, one of them talking vaguely about people unable to do the job (of solving social problems). The third interpreter came closer to rendering the source-text meaning but spoke about those not *willing* to take on low-level jobs (in a “dairy” rather than the fast-food-style ice cream store Perot was referring to).

More striking still is the way the notion of “bully pulpit”, which was used three times in the debate, was largely lost in the televised translation. It was introduced by Perot in connection with family policy: “And I think you can use the White House as a bully pulpit to stress the importance of these little children.” Luckily for the interpreters, the expression as such was not essential to grasping the meaning of Perot’s statement. One of them made do with “pulpit” and correctly talked about using the White House as a “rostrum” (*Pult*) for “preaching about the importance”; another avoided the image and simply mentioned the “need for the White House to stress the importance...” The third interpreter, in contrast, was evidently non-plussed by the expression and likened the White House to a “cradle” (*als Wiege verwenden*).

When the expression was used again in Perot’s next turn in the debate, that same interpreter changed the image to that of a “cell” from which something could grow (*Keimzelle*) whereas the sense of “bully pulpit” – as a position of authority that gives the officeholder an opportunity to speak up and be listened to – was completely lost in the other two versions. When the expression was taken up by Bush in his response to Perot, the three interpreters assigned to that candidate exhibited different ways of dealing with the notion of “bully pulpit”. One of them succeeded in rendering it as a pulpit (*Kanzel*); in the other two versions the image was omitted.

As indicated by these few examples from the 1992 US Presidential Debate corpus, even the most proficient TV interpreters find it difficult or even impossible to render idiomatic usage in German when source speeches are fast-paced and presumably well rehearsed. A replication of this finding in a different debate corpus would be desirable but has not been carried out to date. Rather, the third debate in the 2008 US presidential elections (Obama vs. McCain) was made the subject of an idiom-oriented analysis of a different kind, as described in the following section.

3.2 Varieties

The 2008 Presidential Debate corpus, compiled by Sandra Märzluft (2010) for her MA thesis, comprised two sets of simultaneous interpretations, recorded from Austria’s public broadcaster ORF as well as the German ARD. The two parallel versions also prompted the basic research question – the extent to which the two sets of interpretations into German pertain to discernibly different varieties of that language as manifested in systematic lexical and syntactic differences. Bearing in mind that the interpreting services of the European Union make no allowance for different national varieties and offer a single German version regardless of nationality, it is clearly of interest to examine the nature and extent of linguistic differences that would justify the production of separate German versions at considerable effort and cost.

The most obvious difference one would expect to see, or rather hear, in the two German versions relates to the sound of the two linguistic varieties. Indeed, the phonetic and phonological analysis carried out by Märzluft (2010) yielded numerous examples that serve to underpin the impression of a different German

“accent” in quantitative linguistic terms. Among the most typical features are contracted forms of such high-frequency function words as indefinite articles, negation particles and verbs. The German indefinite article *ein/e*, for instance, occurs in the corpus over a hundred times; its clipped form (*'ne/n*) is heard 25 times in the ARD version but not a single time in its Austrian counterpart. A similar pattern obtains for the negation particle *nicht*, whose contraction to *nich* is absent from the ORF version but heard nine times in the ARD subcorpus. By the same token, the third-person singular form of the German verb *sein* (*ist*), which is commonly used as an auxiliary verb, is used in the ORF and ARD versions 115 and 124 times, respectively. Whereas the shortened form *is* is pronounced only once by an Austrian interpreter, there are 33 occurrences of it in the ARD subcorpus. Finally, frequent verb forms such as *habe* (the first-person form of German “to have”) and *gesagt* (the past participle of German “to say”) reflect the same pattern of more colloquial usage: the interpreters on ORF use the clipped form *hab* in only two out of a total of 48 cases, whereas ARD interpreters use *hab* nearly as often (24 times) as the standard form *habe* (29 times).

In the broader lexical and syntactic dimensions, the two German varieties can also be distinguished by the use of modal particles such as *doch* and *mal*. The former is used more than twice as often in the ARD version (17 vs. 7 times); in the latter case, the difference is even more striking: while *mal* is entirely absent from the ORF version, it is heard six times from interpreters on the ARD team. Another syntactic difference between the two linguistic varieties is the use of reflexive verbs, which is more common in Austrian German. This is confirmed in the corpus-based analysis, with Austrian interpreters using reflexive verb forms 20% more often than their German counterparts.

On the lexical level, too, the corpus analyzed by Märzluft (2010) reflects many of the differences that have been described as distinctive features of the German and Austrian varieties of German. To begin with, a quantitative analysis using the “WordList” function of WordSmith Tools yielded a significant difference in the number of lexical tokens and types in the two subcorpora. The Austrian version was found to contain 11,376 tokens and 2,315 types, compared to 12,592 and 2,622 in the ARD subcorpus. This difference is also reflected in the interpreters’ speech rates. The team producing the interpreted version on Austrian TV spoke at an average of 126 words per minute, whereas their German counterparts delivered nearly 140 words per minute. This finding is significant in itself and may be indicative of a difference in strategic orientation, that is, a preference for a “saying it all” vs. a more concise approach.

With regard to specific lexical items, some of which may be regarded as tell-tale forms, the analysis by Märzluft (2010) confirmed preferences in usage for such alternative forms as *Pensionist* vs. *Rentner* to refer to a pensioner or retiree in Austria and Germany, respectively, and *Budget* vs. *Haushalt* to denote the (national) budget. A more surprising difference was found between the respective renditions of “small business(es)” in the English source speeches. Whereas the ARD team mostly used the direct German lexical counterpart *Kleinunternehmen*, the ORF interpreters often resorted to the acronym *KMU*, which stands for the German equivalent of “small and medium-sized businesses”, abbreviated in English as “SMBs”.

A significant example in this context is the much-discussed figure of “Joe the Plumber”, which became part of the campaign rhetoric after a videotaped question by one Samuel Joseph Wurzelbacher addressed to Barack Obama in connection with his tax policy for small businesses. The German rendering of “Joe the Plumber” therefore has particular significance, and it is this high-visibility item that also serves to clearly differentiate between the German and Austrian versions of the debate in simultaneous interpretation. Although the two German terms denoting a plumber – *Installateur* and *Klempner* – are equally possible in either linguistic variety, the interpreters’ preferences clearly reflect preferential usage: while the ORF team uses only *Installateur* (eight times), their German colleagues prefer *Klempner* in a ratio of seven to three.

An interesting difference was also established for the German terms corresponding to the largely synonymous adjectives “nuclear” (*Kern-*) vs. “atomic” (*Atom-*). Whereas the Austrian interpreters mainly used the former, their ARD colleagues preferred the latter, even though no such distinct preference for the two varieties has been described in the literature. Whether this finding has to do with the interpreting teams in question and their interaction during the assignment would need to be established in further fieldwork studies.

3.3 Audience preferences

The study by Märzluft (2010) on the distinctive features of simultaneous interpretation into German for TV audiences in Germany vs. Austria shows TV interpreting to be highly user-oriented: broadcasters presumably offer SI in the language variety most familiar to their audiences. However, the study stops short of investigating how such interpreting performances are received and whether different versions are found equally acceptable. An experimental study with this kind of audience orientation was carried out by Schwarnthorer (2010) for her Master’s thesis. Using material collected for a larger corpus-based media interpreting study (Pöchhacker forthcoming), Schwarnthorer drew on the questionnaire developed by Elsagir (2000) to query a group of 44 laypersons from different walks of life about their expectations and opinions regarding simultaneous interpreting on TV. She then elicited the participants’ judgments of two sample interpretations of President Obama’s inaugural address.

The audience members (25 women and 19 men), with an average age of 39 years (min. 17, max. 56), were all native speakers of German with more or less regular exposure to simultaneous interpreting on TV. Asked about the relative importance of output-related features of a simultaneous interpreting performance, the respondents gave the highest ratings – on a six-point scale verbally anchored between “unimportant” (=1) and “very important” (=6) – to “logical cohesion” (5.55), followed by “completeness” and “fluency” (4.59 each), with the criterion of “correct grammatical usage” (4.23) ranking fourth, just before “pleasant voice” (4.05). Their list of major irritants in an interpretation was topped by frequent corrections and repairs, followed by voiced hesitations (“uhms”) and monotonous intonation.

After they had filled in the first part of the questionnaire relating to their expectations, the participants listened to a five-minute sample of SI (taken from the initial part of the speech) as recorded from an Austrian broadcast channel and gave their assessment of the various aspects of performance quality on a reversed six-point scale (verbally anchored between 1 = “very good” and 6 = “very bad”). This was repeated with a second five-minute sample, taken from the final part of the speech, as recorded from a broadcaster in Germany. Both interpretations were of very high quality, with no systematic overall differences regarding correctness and completeness, as established through a prior transcription-based analysis. This was largely confirmed by the audience ratings. Only minor differences were found for such aspects as completeness (1.84 vs. 1.91), correct grammar (1.84 vs. 1.93) and fluent delivery (1.93 vs. 2.00), all of which reflected a slightly poorer assessment of Sample 2. The only exception to this trend was logical cohesion, less favorably in Sample 1 (2.02 vs. 1.95). Notably different, however, was the audience assessment of the two samples with regard to the criterion of pleasant voice, for which Sample 2 scored only a mediocre 3.05 (compared to 1.91 for Sample 1).

In an effort to corroborate these ratings, Schwarnthorer (2010) repeated the study in a group of 33 advanced students of interpreting – and found largely similar trends. Again, the ratings tended to be somewhat poorer (i.e. further away from the positive anchor “1 = very good”) for Sample 2. The only exception was “completeness”, which yielded a 0.21 difference in favor of Sample 2. More importantly, though, the considerable discrepancy with regard to voice quality in Sample 2 was confirmed (1.70 vs. 2.85).

In a final step of her experiment, Schwarnthorer (2010) proceeded to ask her experimental audience(s) for their overall preference. In line with the trend established through the criteria-based ratings, a majority of respondents (52%) expressed a preference for Sample 1, whereas only 32% liked Sample 2 better. (16% of respondents found both interpretations equally good.) Among the reasons for this preference, participants mentioned the interpreter’s pleasant voice (7 times) and familiar accent (twice) in Sample 1. More contradictory were the comments regarding the interpreter’s better understanding of the source message: four participants said this about Sample 1 and six about the interpreter in Sample 2. In a similar vein, four respondents preferred the interpreter in Sample 1 for not sounding unduly emotional, whereas six explained that Sample 2 was better precisely because of the interpreter’s lively and emotional style of delivery.

As demonstrated by Schwarnthorer’s (2010) study, TV interpreting performances lend themselves well to audience experiments along the lines of the Granada paradigm of research on interpreting quality. Subjective judgments as reflected in criteria-based ratings appear to be quite reliable and consistent, in lay audiences as well as those with a background in interpreting. The preference established in Schwarnthorer’s comparison between two highly professional German interpretations of President Obama’s inaugural address appears to be rooted in nonverbal (vocal) features, once again confirming previous findings (e.g. Kurz/Pöchhacker 1995) regarding the special importance of prosodic and voice-related qualities in the media setting.

3.4 Rhetoric

The speech delivery characteristics investigated in the experimental study discussed above are part of the broader subject of rhetoric, the art of using language effectively that has been studied since ancient times. Among the five canons used since Roman times to categorize the main components of oratory they would come under “*pronunciatio*” and “*actio*”, that is, the effective use of vocal resources. However, these aspects of public speaking have not been given as much attention as those that apply to rhetoric regardless of (spoken or written) modality. These include “*inventio*” and “*dispositio*” as the development and structuring of the speaker’s argument as well as “*elocutio*”, which broadly refers to issues of style. The latter includes so-called figures of speech as a particularly salient feature of rhetoric, and it is this aspect of oratory that suggests itself as an object of study when investigating the inaugural address of President Barack Obama, whose skills as a public speaker have won him great acclaim.

The inauguration of America’s first black president on January 20, 2009 was a worldwide media event broadcast live in a number of countries, and I used this occasion to compile a corpus of simultaneous interpretations into German comprised of recordings from six different channels – three in Germany, two in Austria and one in Switzerland. This material was made available to several Master’s students for their thesis projects (including the study by Schwarnthorer presented above). An analysis focusing on rhetorical devices and their fate in simultaneous interpretation was carried out by Neuberger (2010), independently of a study of my own (Pöchhacker forthcoming). Both will be discussed in more detail below.

Neuberger (2010) used five of the six German versions of President Obama’s 18.5-minute speech and examined them for the interpreters’ handling of a broad range of rhetorical devices. For the purpose of her qualitative analysis, she selected 25 examples illustrating different figures of speech (only a few of which can be discussed here for reasons of space).

Among the minor but nevertheless intriguing challenges for the interpreter faced with rhetorical devices is the speaker’s use of alliteration. Unlike the translator, the simultaneous interpreter has little time, if any, to select appropriate renditions of the speaker’s meaning with the added concern for similarities at the level of (initial) letters. Indeed, given the axiomatic focus on sense rather than words, one would not even expect the interpreter to notice the translation problem, let alone manage to resolve it, as in the following examples. The alliterative link between the two adjectives in “We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on earth” is lost in all five interpretations, as there are no suitable alternatives in German for the standard lexical correspondences (*wohlhabend, mächtig*). The same holds true for “the price and the promise of citizenship”, for which none of the interpreters managed to come up with a rhetorically effective German counterpart in the face of the standard equivalents (*Preis, Versprechen*). The fact that successfully rendering alliteration in SI depends on the existence of readily available lexical correspondences is shown in another example, in which the three-fold alliteration in Obama’s reference to “old friends and former foes” is preserved in only two of the five versions (“*mit ... Freunden und*

früheren Feinden”). The other interpreters chose alternatives that express the meaning (“*und ehemaligen Gegnern*”) without attention to form, which means that the mere existence of suitable equivalents does not necessarily result in their effective use under the difficult processing conditions of SI.

There are a number of rhetorical devices that pose relatively little challenge to the interpreter. Indeed, figures of speech that involve repetition would in fact come as a welcome relief by introducing redundancy (which the interpreter may or may not choose to render). Examples in the Obama corpus include anadiplosis (“And yet at this moment, a moment that will define a generation”); anaphora (“new threats that demand even greater effort, even greater cooperation and understanding”; “... the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm...”); and epiphora (“Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new.”) In the case of these devices, the interpreters generally noticed and took advantage of the repetitive elements in the source text and retained the repetition in the target language.

A similar approach is possible for asyndeton and polysyndeton, that is, the lack or repetition of conjunctions within a series of coordinate words or phrases. Thus, the polysyndeton in “these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw” is retained by four out of the five interpreters analyzed in Neuberger’s corpus (e.g. “*haben diese Männer und Frauen gekämpft und Opfer gebracht und ihre Hände wund gescheuert*”). Interestingly, the remaining version shows a replacement of the polysyndeton by an asyndeton, as the interpreter renders the three predicates without any conjunctions (“*haben diese Männer und Frauen gekämpft, Opfer gebracht, gearbeitet bis ihre Hände so aufgeraut waren*”). This example clearly shows that this interpreter (and presumably all others as well) can identify the rhetorical force of the original and will seek to preserve it in the target language where possible, sometimes even by using an alternative device.

A particularly impressive example of the interpreters’ awareness of the original’s rhetorical effect, and of their resourcefulness in recreating it, is found in connection with a passage toward the end of Obama’s speech that exhibits great pathos. The rhetorical device at work is a tricolon, that is, in this case a series of three parallel clauses: “The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood.” Of the five interpreters analyzed by Neuberger (2010), none retained the syntactic parallelism in the three sentences, but three used an asyndetic rhythmic pattern that approximates the original’s rhetorical force. Much more effective still, however, is the solution found in the sixth version that is included only in my own analysis (Pöchhacker forthcoming).

The interpreter on one of the Austrian channels rendered the paratactic set of three clauses as only two clauses, dropping the middle one. Moreover, he translated “The capital was abandoned” as “*Die Hauptstadt lag in Trümmern*” (The capital lay in ruins), which is more than was said in the original. And yet, listening to this German rendition, one is struck by the sense of gravity and rhythm emanating from the interpreter’s words: “*Die Hauptstadt lag in Trümmern, der Schnee war voller Blut*”. (The capital [lay] in ruins, the snow was full of blood.) As indicated by the underlined stressed syllables (and the omission bracket in the English back-translation), Obama’s three prose sentences were rendered by the simultaneous interpreter in perfect iambic verse.

two pairs (Pöchhacker forthcoming). In each of these, one of the two series of data points (Interpreter 2 and Interpreter 6, resp.) shows distinctly lower values, as

	INT-1	INT-2	INT-3	INT-4	INT-5	INT-6
AVG. P SCORE (in percent)	82	54	93	83	87	62

confirmed by the average overall P scores by interpreter (Table 1).

Table 1. Average P scores by interpreter (in percent)

As indicated in Table 1, there is a set of four interpreters whose average P scores are at a comparable high level, ranging from 82% for Interpreter 1 to 93% for Interpreter 3. The other two, Interpreters 2 and 6, have distinctly lower P scores, at 54% and 62%, respectively.

The explanation for these uneven scores is not hard to find. As established through various inquiries immediately after the live broadcasts, Interpreter 2 and Interpreter 6 are the only two who were not provided with a script and had to interpret the speech without textual support. Although working in audio-only mode may have allowed these interpreters to adopt a more detached, autonomous style, they clearly had more difficulty in coping with the density and structural complexity of the speech, as manifested in various types of rhetorical structures. These quantitative findings for the fate of rhetorical devices in simultaneous interpretation, together with the qualitative analysis in the study by Neuberger (2010), show that the interpreters in this corpus managed a highly professional performance but found it difficult to cope with the density of Obama's scripted speech, especially when not provided with an advance copy of the speech.

4. Conclusion

Based on corpora drawn from recordings of live-broadcast simultaneous interpreting on German-language channels between 1992 and 2009, the present paper has sought to demonstrate the potential and value of TV interpreting as an object of study. Analyses of material relating to the US presidency, some of them carried out by MA students for their thesis under the author's supervision, have highlighted both the wide range of methodological options and the great variety of topics that may be investigated. Methodological strategies and techniques include the use of corpus-linguistic tools and manual source-target comparison as well as listening experiments employing self-administered questionnaires to elicit audience judgments. Likewise, the topics under study range from the rendering of culture-specific elements and alternative varieties of the target language to audience expectations and preferences and the fate of rhetorical devices in simultaneous interpreting. Ideally, this selection from the "Vienna Workshop" can motivate further empirical work in this domain of professional interpreting, which is of interest because of its high degree of exposure but also because of the advantage of public access. As long as different (German-language) broadcasters maintain their policy of making live English content available in a

simultaneous interpretation of their own, TV interpreting could be the subject of further corpus-based and experimental studies, if not “natural experiments” that allow for direct comparisons among the performances of highly experienced and skilled professionals.

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