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(Article begins on next page)

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To Kill or not to Kill: Metaphors in Simultaneous Interpreting

Nicoletta SPINOLO
Christopher John GARWOOD
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies on Translation, Language and Culture
(SITLeC) University of Bologna - Forlì

Biosketches

Nicoletta Spinolo is a research assistant at SITLeC (Department of Interdisciplinary Studies on Translation, Language and Culture) at University of Bologna – Forlì. She is currently working on the development of the EPIC project, directed by Mariachiara Russo. She also works as a freelance conference interpreter and translator.

Christopher Garwood is a research fellow at SITLeC (Department of Interdisciplinary Studies on Translation, Language and Culture) at University of Bologna – Forlì and teaches simultaneous interpreting at SSLMIT (the University of Bologna's School for Translators in Forlì). He is currently carrying out research on court interpreting in Italy.

Résumé

Ce qu'on enseigne souvent aux étudiants en interprétation de conférence c'est que face à des métaphores, l'approche la plus sûre consisterait à utiliser une paraphrase plutôt qu'à maintenir l'expression figée. En effet, les métaphores sont normalement liées à la culture du pays d'origine et ont rarement un équivalent dans la langue d'arrivée. De plus, les interprètes en simultanée n'ont qu'une poignée de secondes pour repérer la solution et fournir une traduction, ce qui ne suffit généralement pas pour décoder la métaphore dans une langue et l'encoder dans une autre. Mais est-ce que les interprètes professionnels adoptent cette même approche lorsqu'ils travaillent? Est-ce la meilleure méthode pour traduire les métaphores en interprétation simultanée ? Cette étude cherche à répondre à ces questions à travers l'analyse des performances d'interprètes professionnels dans un contexte de travail réel. Nous utilisons, à ces fins, le corpus d'interprétation du Parlement Européen (EPIC), à savoir un corpus trilingue – Anglais, Espagnol et Italien - contenant les transcriptions et les enregistrements des discours prononcés au cours des sessions plénières du Parlement Européen en 2004 ainsi que de leurs interprétations dans les trois langues.

Keywords/ Mots-Clés: Simultaneous interpreting, metaphors, interpreting strategy, perlocutionary force, interpreting corpus.

I. Introduction

1. Studying metaphors

An incredible amount of literature has been written on metaphors over the past two thousand years, from Aristotle to Max Black, and in fields as diverse as philosophy, rhetoric, literature, psychology and linguistics (Kövecses, 2002). The exact definition of what a metaphor is depends on the approach taken to the topic. According to Prandi

(2008) there are no wrong theories in metaphor, only partial theories, each of which focuses on one of the possible outcomes of the transfer of meaning from the literal to the metaphorical meaning.

Attempting to summarise the various definitions of metaphors, Prandi (2008) describes metaphors as an extension of a meaning, a substitute, or the interpretation of a conceptual conflict. An idea of the complexity of metaphors and the intrinsic difficulties in their translation is provided by Paivio and Walsh:

> For the student of language and thought, metaphor is a solar eclipse. It hides the object of study and at the same time reveals some of its most salient and interesting characteristics when viewed through the right telescope. The object is linguistic meaning. Metaphor obscures its literal and commonplace aspects while permitting a new and subtle understanding to emerge. (Paivio & Walsh, 1979, p. 307)

2. Types of Metaphors

An element common to most approaches to the study of metaphors is the distinction between live metaphors, which are 'new' metaphors, invented by the speaker or writer, and dead metaphors, such as idioms and lexical catachreses. Metaphors can, therefore, be placed along a *continuum*, with live metaphors and dead metaphors at its ends, and, along this *continuum*, 'intermediate' metaphors, that is, metaphorical concepts.

According to Prandi (2008), when an object is transferred from a 'source' conceptual field to a 'target' conceptual field, it can either adapt, that is, lose its original literal meaning and fully acquire its metaphorical one, thereby becoming a dead metaphor (lexical catachresis or idiom), or trigger a conflict. Live metaphors are based upon a conflict:

Live metaphors are open and creative projections, on which a whole world of new metaphors can be built. Prandi (2007) uses an example from Alcman's *Nocturne*: "They sleep, the mountain peaks" (Prandi, ibid., p.85). So if we say that "the mountain peaks sleep", we can also say that they think, cry, etc.

Prandi (1999) divides dead metaphors into two different classes: lexical catachreses and idioms. In both cases, the meaning of these dead metaphors has become so deeply-

rooted in a language that the metaphorical meaning has now become its literal meaning. Prandi (2008) gives the example of 'wing', meant as the 'wing of a building': a potentially conflictual element ('wing' originally belongs to the conceptual field of 'birds') adapts to a new conceptual field ('building'), thereby becoming a lexical catachresis. An idiom, on the other hand, is not the adaptation of a single word but, rather, of a wider expression, such as 'to rest on one's laurels'. The main characteristic of both catachreses and idioms is that, unlike live metaphors, they no longer trigger any kind of semantic conflict (Prandi, ib.).

Metaphorical concepts share common features with both catachreses and live metaphors. Like catachreses, they are characterised by a certain logical consistency, as they are shared within a given language and, as a result, no longer trigger any kind of conflict. Metaphorical concepts, on the other hand, like live metaphors, are projective in nature (Prandi & Caligiana, 2007). If we take, for example, the source field of 'building' and the target field of the 'European Union', we can say that we "lay the foundations of foreign policy", "build a better future for Europe" or "open our doors to solidarity". The projectability of metaphorical concepts is limited, however, by the constraints of consistency: we cannot metaphorically "fix the roof of the EU" or "paint the walls of the EU".

II. Metaphors and Simultaneous Interpreting

Conference interpreters are fully aware of the difficulty in translating metaphors. Yet, strangely, very little research has been carried out in Interpreting Studies on the topic of metaphors. Trainee conference interpreters are often taught that the safest way to deal with a metaphor is to "kill the metaphor", that is, to use a paraphrase rather than attempting to preserve the figurative expression. The problem with this suggestion is that there are many different kinds of metaphors, each of which presents a different kind of challenge for interpreters.

Live metaphors are by definition created by the speaker and will not therefore be familiar to the interpreter, who only has a few seconds to think of a possible translation. They may often be extremely culture-bound, such as those related to sports: a British

speaker, for example, might metaphorically talk about cricket, while a speaker from the United States will probably choose baseball or American football[1].

Catachreses and idioms, on the other hand, are so deeply rooted and frequently used in a language that interpreters are almost certain to have encountered them on numerous occasions and will therefore be familiar with them. One might assume, therefore, that translating such metaphors would not be a problem and that metaphorical concepts, with which the interpreter may be more or less familiar, would be somewhere in between.

A study into the translation strategies of a group of translators (who could translate without any time limit) and a group of interpreters (who had to do a sight translation) (Jakobsen et al., 2007) revealed that both translators and interpreters took longer to process sentences containing idioms (translators 40% more and interpreters 30% more). As regards the different translation strategies they adopted (translating a text containing 12 idioms from English into Danish, their mother tongue), the first choice among translators was usually substitution, while among interpreters it was paraphrase, followed by substitution and, finally, literal translation.

The aim of this study is to see how experienced professional interpreters deal with metaphors, and try and understand what kinds of metaphors create the greatest problems for interpreters and why. And is it true that all metaphors should be "killed"?

III. Metaphors and politics

The language of politics is aimed at trying to persuade people that certain ideas are better than others for their collective good. And it is the ability to persuade people that gives politicians power. In their description of political language, Beer and De Landtsheer write:

Metaphors are part of the political struggle for collective meaning, the interpretation of the forms or patterns of human political life. Metaphorical politics are about the meaning of power, how power is interpreted. They are also about the power of meaning, the persuasive consequences of such interpretation. (Beer & De Landtsheer, 2004, p. 7)

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[1] See, for example, Herbeck (2004).

According to Lakoff and Johnson's cognitivist theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1981), we have a metaphorical way of understanding the world, and so metaphors often help us understand complicated or obscure concepts. The importance of metaphors in politics is also highlighted by Beer and De Landtsheer, who state that metaphors are "significant rhetorical tools that affect political behaviour and cognition" (Beer & De Landtsheer, 2004, p. 6).

Metaphors, therefore, have a very important role in political speech and have the ability to influence the way listeners feel and act:

> Metaphors and metaphorical language have a central role to play in political communication. In general, metaphors can assist in the explanation of complex political arguments by reducing such arguments to a metaphorical form. They may be employed for connotative or emotional purposes in arousing emotions and reinforcing particular perspectives, and they can be used to elicit absurd images which can then be employed for the purpose of ridiculing one's opponent. (Wilson, 1990, p. 104).

Austin (1962) in his speech act theory distinguishes three forces that every utterance possesses. The locutionary force is its literal meaning; the illocutionary force is what the speaker is trying to get done with the utterance; and the perlocutionary force is the effect that the utterance actually has on the listener. According to Phelan (2009), figurative language in general and metaphors in particular carry an intrinsic perlocutionary force which is used to further impress, move or strike the listener. Moreover:

> [...] what distinguishes metaphors from literal utterances is that, in the case of a metaphor, a speaker also means to affect her audience with a particular, intended, and distinct propositional interpretation of her utterance *which she does not generally also mean to endorse*. [...] metaphors are not distinctive because they have a distinct kind of meaning, rather they are distinctive because speakers, in uttering these, attempt to achieve their ends in a distinctive way. (Phelan, 2009, p. 17)

It is clear, therefore, that the perlocutionary force contained in metaphors is of fundamental importance in political speech and something the interpreter must attempt to convey.

1. Source fields of metaphors in politics

In their introduction to *Metaphorical World Politics*, Beer and De Landtsheer (2004) categorise the main source fields of metaphors in politics, based on their quantitative research. These categories are: the 'body' (with words such as "life", "death", "birth", etc.), 'sports' (politics is often described in terms of a competition), the 'family' ("founding fathers", "motherland"), 'medicine' ("healing power of good governance"), 'theatre and drama' ("backdrop", "set the scene"), 'nature' ("the seeds of violence", "the roots of a crisis"), 'buildings' ("to build a better future", "to set the foundations"), 'technology' ("a locomotive for growth").

A number of other categories, not mentioned by Beer and De Landtsheer, were found in the EPIC corpus used for this study. Two frequently encountered categories were 'war' ("to attack the EU policy", "to see their general quality of life under attack on many fronts") and 'travel' ("there is a series of steps to be taken", "we are at a crossroads").

2. The language of the European Union

The language used in the corpus analysed for this study is influenced by the EU setting and, as a result, many terms, idioms and metaphors are specific to this particular institutional setting. The rhetoric of the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) is, therefore, not only characteristic of political discourse in general and the MEPs' local and national culture in particular, but also of the specific language and culture of the EU. Moreover, this European rhetoric is being used to try and create a new European identity among the citizens of Europe:

> The rhetoric of 700 delegates (directly elected since 1979) to the European Parliament in 1996 is affected by their national culture [...] or their identity [...]. Nevertheless, delegates are influenced by the growing power of the European Union. [...] The parliamentary territory itself functions as an integrating factor [...]; the European Union created a new European culture. Rhetoric certainly is an essential feature of culture [...]European parliamentary rhetoric informs one about common

culture and common identities. Political rhetoric, itself, of course, plays a role in creating national (or other) cultures and identities. (De Landtsheer, 1998, p. 129).

The importance of metaphors in political rhetoric has already been highlighted and the EPIC corpus used in this study contains many examples of metaphors that are characteristic of this new European rhetoric. The aim of these metaphors is to create, maintain or reinforce the idea of a European culture and identity. One such example is the metaphorical concept of the EU as a building:

// the existing Community network for surveillance and control of communicable diseases **is a solid basis on which we can build to** enhance cooperation between the Member States the Commission and international organisations in particular the World Health Organisation // (EPIC, 10-02-04-m-033-org-en)

[...] in order to have a **stable framework in place for the next Parliament and Commission to build upon //** (EPIC, 12-02-04-m-031-org-en)

// the process of change is unavoidably difficult // however we can **build a better future** for the citizens of our Union and of our enlarged Union // (EPIC, 25-02-04-p-042-org-en)

IV. Corpus-based analysis

1. Corpus description

The aim of this study is to analyse and compare the translation strategies of professional simultaneous interpreters (from different countries and, therefore, different cultures and different metaphorical worlds) when translating metaphors. The corpus chosen for this analysis is EPIC (European Parliament Interpreting Corpus)[2], a parallel, trilingual (Italian, English and Spanish) corpus of European Parliament speeches (plenary sessions) and their interpretations.
The following materials were analysed:

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[2] EPIC was created by a multidisciplinary research group coordinated by Mariachiara Russo at the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies on Translation, Language and Culture (SITLeC) of the University of Bologna at Forlì (Monti et al. 2005, Bendazzoli & Sandrelli 2005 and 2007).

English Source Texts (STs): 17,810 seconds (about 297 minutes), and their interpretations into Italian and Spanish.

Italian Source Texts (STs): 3,493 seconds (about 59 minutes) and their interpretations into English and Spanish.

Spanish Source Texts (STs): 5,590 seconds (about 93 minutes) and their interpretations into English and Italian.

The speeches delivered during the plenary sessions and their interpreted versions were recorded and transcribed, using the following conventions:[3]

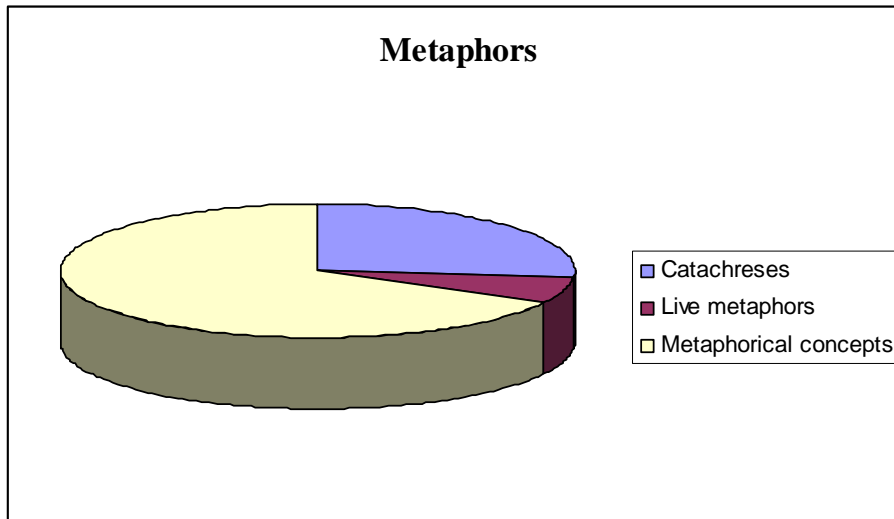| SPEECH FEATURE	EXAMPLE	TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTION
Word truncations	propo pro posal	propo- proposal /pro_posal/
Pronunciation Disfluencies	Parlomento	Parlamento /Parlomento/
Pauses	(filled / empty)	ehm ...
Numbers	532	five hundred and thirty-two
Figures	4%	four per cent
Dates	1997	nineteen ninety-nine
Unintelligible		#
Units	based on syntax & intonation	//

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[3] See http://sslmitdev-online.sslmit.unibo.it/corpora/additionalpages.php?path=E.P.I.C.&source=project&content=transcription_conventions.desc

This corpus made it possible to analyse interpreting performances in a real-life context. The European Parliament is a perfect setting for Interpreting Studies not only as interpreting is "an integral part of the work in the European Parliament" (Vuorikoski, 2002., p. 21), but also as, "The level of professional competence among interpreters may be assumed to be close to a given standard, as the recruitment of interpreters is carried out in a more or less standardised way". (Vuorikoski, 2002, p. 23)

2. Analysis

The metaphors found in the STs were first classified (live metaphors, catachreses and metaphorical concepts), as follows:

	Catachreses (lexical catachreses and idioms)	Live metaphors	Metaphorical concepts
English STs	43	10	84
Italian STs	5	2	38
Spanish STs	10	2	24
TOTAL	58	14	146

The metaphors were then aligned with their two interpreted versions. The interpreted versions were also classified and divided into literal translations (T),[4] substitutions of the metaphor with another metaphor (S), paraphrases (P), omissions (O). Given the small amount of ST metaphors in Italian and Spanish, only the interpreted versions of metaphors whose source language (SL) was English were used for statistical purposes.
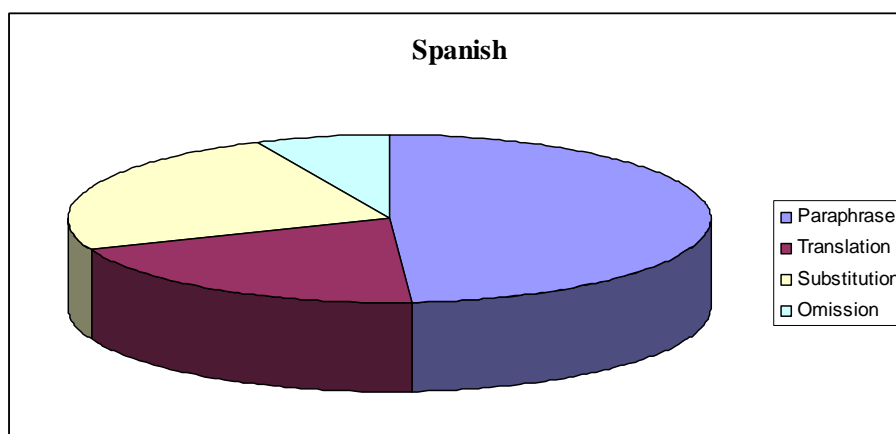
2.1 Catachreses

The translations provided by the Italian and Spanish interpreters of catachreses and idioms revealed the following pattern:

	Italian TTs	Spanish TTs
P	21	22
T	13	9

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[4] It should be noted here that, in some cases, a literal translation overlaps with the equivalent metaphor in the target language, as in the case of 'to rest on one's laurels', 'riposare sugli allori', 'dormirse en los laureles'.

S	8	11
O	3	3
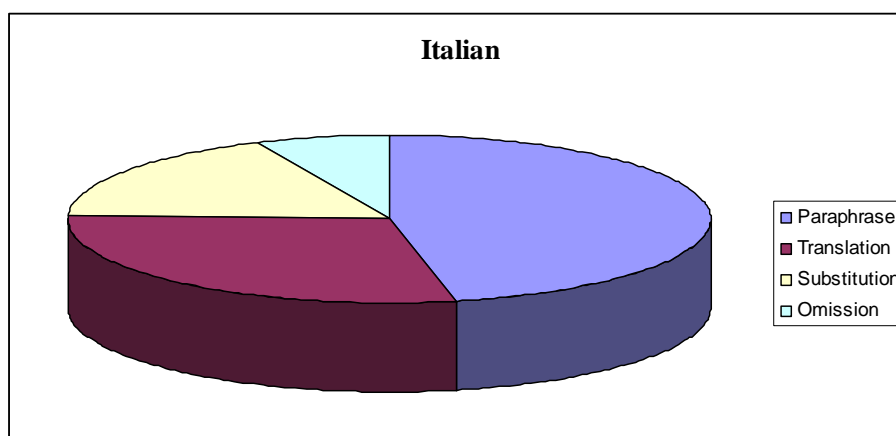
Italian

Spanish

There is a net prevalence of paraphrases among both the Spanish and Italian interpreters. This is probably due to the fact that idioms and catachreses are, by definition,[5] typical of a certain culture and/or language, and so in order to translate them,

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[5] The definition of 'idiom' given by the OED is: "The form of speech peculiar or proper to a people or country; own language or tongue […]; A peculiarity of phraseology approved by the usage of the language and often having a signification other than its grammatical or logical one".

it is often also necessary to explain them[6]. Finding a similar idiom in the TL in the few seconds that simultaneous interpreters have in which to decide on their translation is extremely challenging, especially as idioms can have so many different shades of meaning, making it is easy to get the wrong nuance.

The strategies adopted to translate the metaphors in the EPIC corpus did vary, however. Some of the metaphors are so frequent and consolidated in the SL that they are translated almost automatically without any difficulty at all:

> // as time is an important factor the Commission services at all levels are in continuous dialogue with the World Health Organisation the FAO and World Organisation for Animal Health and local authorities to share our experience and expertise in disease control as rapidly and **with as little red tape as possible** // (EPIC, 10-02-04-m-005-org-en)

"Red tape" is an extremely common metaphor in English and both the Italian and Spanish interpreters paraphrased this metaphor in exactly the same way without the slightest hesitation. There is no equivalent metaphor in either Italian or Spanish, but "burocrazia" and "burocracia" both have the same negative connotation as 'red tape':

> [...] per contribuire con le nostre esperienze con la nostra esperienza nel controllo della malattia con la massima rapidità e **con la minima burocrazia**[7] //

> [...] para compartir nuestros conocimientos en el la lucha contra enfermedades y **con la menor burocracia posible**[8] //

Other idioms have almost exact equivalents in the TL, so the interpreters usually opt for a literal translation:

> // **now we can sit back on our laurels** and we can wait and see // and before this ban is lifted again Commissioner I would like your assurance that you will do

---

[6] Paraphrase was also the predominant strategy among interpreters when faced with idioms in the study carried out by Jakobsen et al. (2007).
[7] "with as little bureaucracy as possible".
[8] "with as little bureaucracy as possible".

everything that our inspections our veterinary inspections in the Far East in w- w-where the outbreaks took place is of the that highest quality and we accept no excuses // (10-02-04-m-017-org-en)

This was translated into Italian with:

// **ora possiamo forse magari sederci sugli allori**[9] ma prima che venga revocato questo divieto vorrei che il Commissario assicurasse che si farà tutto il possibile in termini di ispezioni veterinarie nel sud est sud est asiatico ehm sottoponendo gli impianti in quelle regioni all- ad un'analisi estremamente scrupolosa //

And into Spanish with:

// **podemos descansarnos en nuestros laureles**[10] y esperar // pero hasta que esta prohibición se levante de nuevo quisiera su garantía de que usted hará todo lo posible para que los ex- inspectores veterinarios en el Lejano Oriente o donde sea sean de la más alta cualidad y que no aceptemos excusas //

Certain idioms, which are specific to the source language (SL) culture and therefore have not exact equivalents, caused problems for the interpreters, even though these idioms appear to be equally well known:

// but I'm worried about the security situation in Afghanistan and might be **money just has been thrown down the drain**[11] if the situation reverts back to where it was ehm a couple of years ago under the Taliban // (EPIC, 25-02-04-p-035-org-en)

The Italian interpreter's translation is extremely hesitant, with several false starts:

// e quindi se non c'è un seguito alle nostre azioni probabilmente i **f- i finanziamenti dell' dell'Afgf- dell'Afghanistan saranno ehm stati sara- andranno perduti** [12]//

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[9] "now maybe we can sit on our laurels"
[10] "we can rest on our laurels"
[11] The idiom 'to go down the drain' is classified as "colloquial" by the OED: "Colloq. fig. phr., 'to go (etc.) down the drain', to disappear, get lost, vanish; to deteriorate, go to waste".

The Spanish interpreter is also in difficulty in trying to translate this idiom:

> // pero quizá la seguridad en ese país hace que **quizá hayamos # </pleado/> nuestros recursos financieros ehm en la situación que estamos** [13] tras el el derrumbe de los Talibanes //

The speaker used the verb 'throw' with this colloquial expression, implying that somebody should be held responsible for the waste of resources (and therefore adding political content and controversy to the expression): money was not 'lost', but 'thrown away'. Although this is a very common idiom for English speakers[14], both interpreters had difficulty in translating it, as can be seen from their false starts and filled pauses. The solution eventually provided by the Italian interpreter does not substantially alter the message contained in the metaphor, but it does lose some of the force of this colloquial idiom being used in such a formal context and there is no longer the attribution of responsibility for the wasting of funds. The solution provided by the Spanish interpreter is very difficult to understand, and the original message is not conveyed at all. One can only assume that the difficulty for the interpreters was not the meaning of the idiom, with which they must be familiar, but how to achieve the speaker's desired perlocutionary effect with this blame attributing, colloquial idiom.

Given that, ideally, an interpreted speech should establish the same relationship with the TL audience that the speaker establishes with the SL audience (Viezzi, 1999), an interpreter should also try and reproduce the perlocutionary effect of the ST. While translating the basic meaning of 'to throw something down the drain' is fairly straightforward, obtaining the same perlocutionary effect is anything but straightforward. Is this what created the problems for the interpreters?

[12] "The funding for Afghanistan will be lost"
[13] "Maybe we used our financial resources... in the situation where we are after the toppling of the Talibans".
[14] A simple search on Google produced 2,310,000 hits for the idiom "going down the drain" and 31,700 for the variant "throwing down the drain".

2.2 Live Metaphors

Let us now look at the strategies adopted by the interpreters when translating live metaphors:

	Italian	Spanish
P	3	4
T	5	6
S	3	2
O	1	0
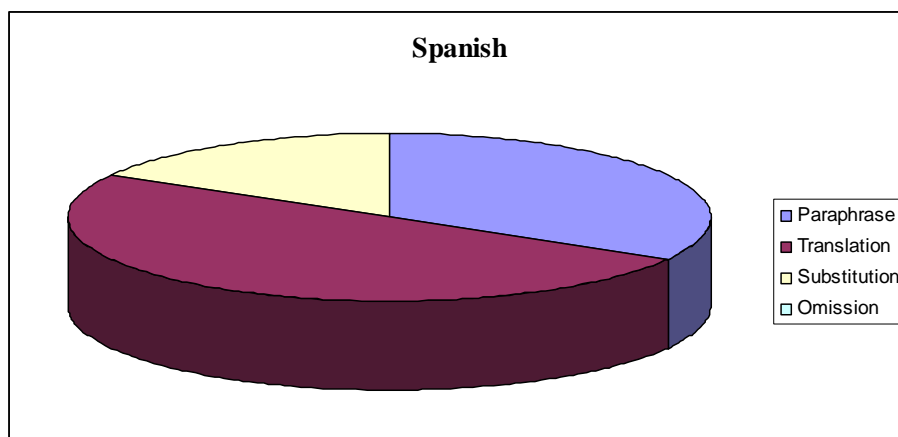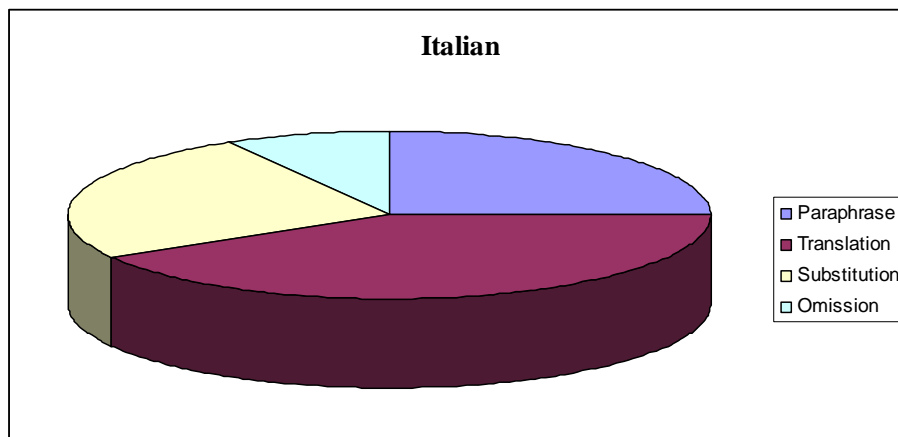
Although the number of live metaphors in the corpus was quite small, a prevalence of literal translations can still be noted among both the Italian and Spanish interpreters. This is not really surprising since live metaphors are new metaphors, created by the speaker, and do not have a codified meaning. A good way of preserving the message and perlocutionary force of such a metaphor is often to translate the metaphor exactly as it is, leaving the task of decoding the metaphor to the listeners (which is the speaker's intention). Indeed, paraphrasing the metaphor may be more risky as the interpreter only has a few seconds to 'interpret' the live metaphor and paraphrase it in a way that listeners will understand. Clearly, this will not be the case for live metaphors that are highly culture-bound.

The following is an example of a creative metaphor in the corpus:

// but **stop boxing in the shadows** // **come out into the open** and let me transparently deal with substantive and transparent allegations if substance indeed there is to any of those allegations (19-04-04-p-008-org-en)

The basic meaning of this live metaphor is quite clear: the speaker means that things should be done explicitly, in the open, and not covertly, in the shadows. Although the expression 'shadow-boxing' is well known, it has nothing to do with the metaphor here. Shadow-boxing means "to box (against) an imaginary opponent, as a form of training" (OED). This metaphor created problems for both the Italian and Spanish interpreters, both of whom chose a substitution:

// ma ehm sennò è inutile **lancia- ehm sparare nel mucchio // ehm bisogna essere trasparenti**[15] e presentare delle accuse precise se ci sono accuse precise da fare

// pero para ello de alguna manera necesito pruebas **hay que salir de la oscuridad a la luz abierta pero con las pruebas sobre la mesa**[16] // si realmente existen esas pruebas que fundamenten esas críticas que se han hecho

---

[15] "It is pointless shooting into the crowd, we need to be transparent".
[16] "It is necessary to come out of the darkness, into the light, but with the evidence on the table".

The Italian interpreter, after much hesitation, chose the Italian idiom "sparare nel mucchio", an idiomatic expression (literally 'to shoot into the crowd') that means 'to accuse indiscriminately, also involving those who are not responsible'[17]. The speaker actually mentions "allegations" in the ST, but what he said is that such allegations should be made by naming those responsible, and not indiscriminately. The Italian interpreter clearly alters the speaker's communicative intentions.

The Spanish interpreter also chose a substitution, but adopts a different strategy, using an inversion. The first metaphorical expression is translated by saying that the person must "come out into the open". This gives the interpreter more time in which to better decode the metaphor "stop boxing in the shadows", which is then translated with "with the evidence on the table". Although this Spanish idiom successfully renders the idea that something should be done overtly rather than covertly ("shadows"), it loses some of the perlocutionary force conveyed by the verb "boxing".
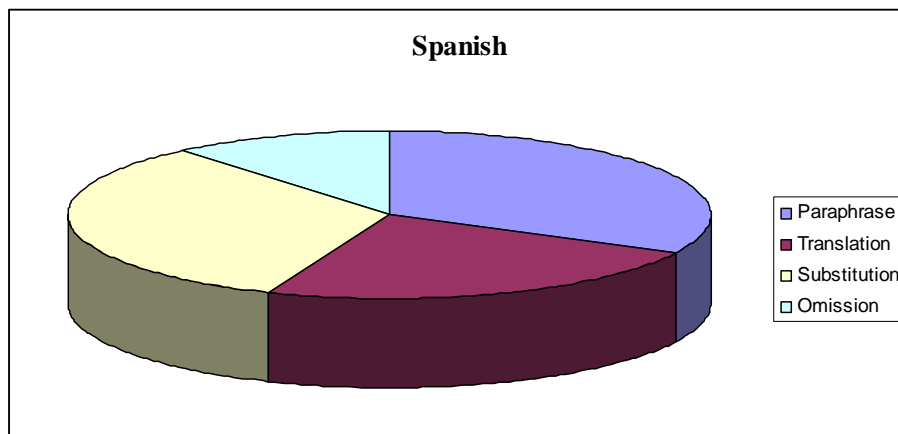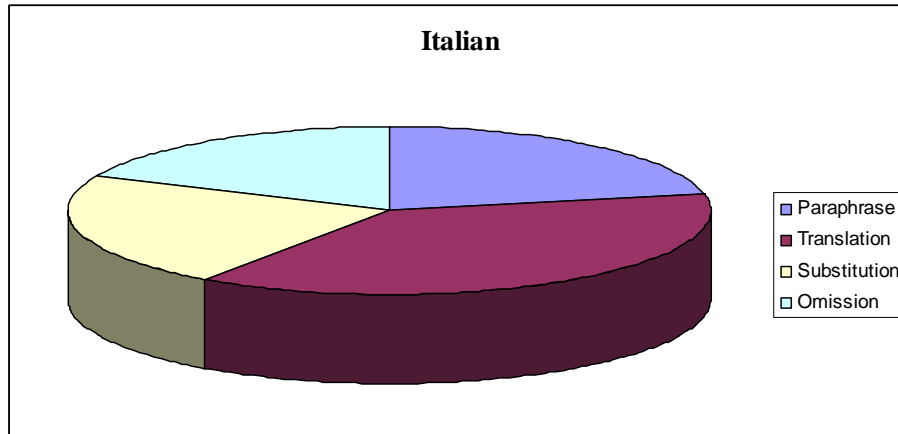
2.3 Metaphorical Concepts

The metaphorical concepts, which are by far the most frequent type of metaphors in the corpus, were translated as follows:

	ITA	SPA
P	19	29
T	33	21
S	19	29
O	16	10

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[17] Turrini et al., 1999.

Italian

Paraphrase
Translation
Substitution
Omission

Spanish

Paraphrase
Translation
Substitution
Omission

The results concerning metaphorical concepts are harder to interpret than those for catachreses and live metaphors. Different strategies were chosen, depending on the context and situation, to translate these metaphors, which are situated somewhere along the *continuum* between live metaphors and catachreses.

Many of the metaphorical concepts are shared beyond linguistic borders, as in the example of political actions being compared to building actions, which makes them easier to translate. The way they are expressed linguistically may, however, differ slightly from one culture to another. They may also be idiosyncratic, as shown by Prandi and Caligiana (2007) with their example on the concepts of 'desire' and 'dream', which are treated differently and supported by different verbs in Italian, French and English.

Here is an example involving the lexical field of the body, a primary source of metaphorical concepts, as it is something shared by all speakers and listeners:

> // you just have to look at its neighbourhood to see how important it is ehm and you just have to look at its neighbourhood to recognise that we can't have a credible policy for the wider Middle East that doesn't **embrace ehm and include** ehm Iran // (12-02-04-m-131-org-en)

The speaker uses two verbs, one of which ("embrace") is a metaphorical concept. Although the two verbs, "embrace" and "include", are more or less synonymous, the verb "embrace" carries more force here. The translation of the metaphorical use of "embrace" is not straightforward in either Italian or Spanish and neither interpreter even attempts to translate the extra force of this verb:

> e guardate quali sono i suoi vicini e ehm vedrete che non possiamo avere una politica credibile per il grande Medio oriente senza **includere**[18] l'Iran //

> y ver nada más observar la v- la región para ver lo importante que es y mirar los alrededores para reconocer que no tenemos que no podemos tener una política creíble para esa zona que no **incluya** a Irán[19] //

Another frequent source field of metaphorical concepts is that of sports:

> // while we have much to do and ehm the benefits for our citizens of our implementing the Lisbon strategy effectively will be very considerable // **the prize is a great prize** // (25-02-04-p-042-org-en)

The speaker talks about a "prize", meaning the positive consequences of an action. The Spanish and Italian interpreters choose two different strategies. The Italian translation maintains the same lexical field of a prize in sports, with an almost literal translation:

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[18] "...without including Iran".
[19] "[a policy] that does not include Iran".

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// abbiamo molto da fare e i benefici per i nostri cittadini che deriveranno dall'applicazione della strategia di Lisbona saranno consistenti // **il premio è veramente grosso**[20] //

The Spanish interpreter, on the other hand, chooses to use a metaphor, but from a different source field:

// aunque nos queda mucho que hacer los beneficios para nuestros ciudadanos en la aplicación de la estrategia Lisboa será considerable // **el precio es un precio que se merece pagar**[21] //

Why does the interpreter decide to change the metaphor completely? A possible explanation is an initial misunderstanding ("price" for "prize"), which the interpreter resolves by using a new metaphor.

Nature is another frequent source field for metaphorical concepts:

// all of these things will be challenges for our our institutions and we seem still **to be bogged down**[22] in ehm our our fo- fo- focusing purely and simply on competitiveness </compepepetitiveness/> which of course I don't deny is important but it is only one half of the story // (25-02-04-p-066-org-en)

Here, too, the Italian and Spanish interpreters choose two different strategies. The Italian interpreter chooses a paraphrase:

// tutte queste cose saranno delle sfide per le nostre istituzioni // **siamo invece bloccati**[23] e ci concentriamo solamente sulla competitività e che anch'io non lo nego è una cosa importante ma è solo un aspetto della medaglia //

The Spanish interpreter, after a series of long pauses, opts for a substitution:

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[20] "the prize is really huge".
[21] "the price is a price that is worth paying".
[22] 'To be bogged': "to be sunk and entangled in a bog or quagmire" (OED)
[23] "Instead, we are stuck".

todos esos cambios van a ser desafíos para nuestras instituciones y **de momento ... continuamos ... obcecados ...**[24] con la competitividad algo que no niego que sea importante pero que sólo es la mitad de la imagen general que deberíamos tener en mente //

Despite the interpreter's search for a suitable translation, revealed by the three long pauses, he considerably alters the speaker's communicative intentions with the solution provided[25].

Metaphorical concepts involving the source field of 'building' are very frequent in the language of the EU:

The [...] construction metaphor of the European house, which symbolizes the unification process of Europe, was started by Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission, at the French Bishops Conference in Lourdes, October 27, 1989: "We have laid the economic foundations and started on the ground floor. But the first and second stories still have to be built, and it will take more than one architect to see the project through". (De Landtsheer, 1998, p. 132)

The interpreters in this European Parliament corpus normally translated these 'building' metaphors without difficulty – often literally, as the same metaphors are used by Italian and Spanish speakers in the EU. Take the following example:

// on this basis I'd call on the Parliament to give full support to a speedy extension of the regulations before this Parliament is dissolved **in order to have a stable framework in place for the next Parliament and Commission to build upon** // (12-02-04-m-031-org-en)

The Italian interpreter provides a literal, but only partial translation of the source text:

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[24] "At the moment, we are still blinded"

[25] *Obcecar* means "impedir cierto estado de ánimo apreciar con claridad o exactitud una cosa" (María Moliner Dictionary). *Estar obcecado* means "to be blind", "not understand clearly".

> // tanto è vero che esorto il Parlamento ad appoggiare una proroga rapida del regolamento prima dello scioglimento della Camera in modo tale d'avere **una buona struttura per ehm poter operare**[26] //

"A stable framework" is translated more or less literally with "una buona struttura", while "for the next Parliament and Commission to build upon" is for some reason paraphrased with "per poter operare", losing the idea of 'development' contained in the original metaphor.

The Spanish version is a literal translation although, here too, "build upon" is not translated with the Spanish "construir", but with a more generic "trabajar":

> por eso hago un llamamiento al Parlamento Europeo para que dé el visto bueno rápidamente a este reglamento antes de que se disuelva este Parlamento a fin de disponer de **un marco estable con el que puedan trabajar**[27] el futuro Parlamento y la futura Comisión //

An extremely interesting example in the corpus belongs to the source field of technology, more specifically, of automobiles:

> **// Europe is stuck in second gear // as America accelerates as a resurgent Asia pulls into the passing lane Europe is trailing behind // [...] if Europe is picking up speed it has more to do with the slope of the road than with the state of our engine //** (25-02-04-p-048-org-en)

This is a very complicated series of metaphorical concepts, all of which belong to the source field of cars and roads. There are five metaphors: (1) "Europe is stuck in second gear"; (2) "as America accelerates"; (3) "as a resurgent Asia pulls into the passing lane"; (4) "Europe is trailing behind"; (5) "if Europe is picking up speed it has more to do with the slope of the road than with the state of our engine". The fifth metaphor is particularly complicated. The interpreters had, therefore, to deal with a whole

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[26] "to have a good structure to be able to work".
[27] "to have a stable framework to be able to work".

metaphorical image made up of five elements. Both interpreters have problems in dealing with the entire metaphorical group:

> **// e noi siamo bloccati in la l- s- siamo in seconda siamo in seconda mentre gli gli Stati Uniti sono ehm sono avanti // noi siamo il fanalino di di di coda e ehm dobbiamo e e- eventualmente se c'è ci sono progressi non è perché cambiamo marcia ma è soltanto perché la strada è in discesa //**[28]

Although there is some hesitation and a few false starts, presumably due to the difficulty in decoding this chain of metaphors, the Italian interpreter manages to maintain the conceptual field and the meaning of the original. He carries out a more or less literal translation, except for the fourth metaphor, which he cleverly substitutes with a well-known Italian metaphor from the same lexical field as the ST ("siamo il fanalino di coda"). He completely omits, however, the third metaphorical concept concerning Asia, presumably as a result of the effort involved in trying to maintain the same metaphorical structure.

Interestingly, something similar happens in the Spanish version, with the Spanish interpreter completely omitting the second metaphor concerning the United States:

> **// estamos digamos en un impasse // Europa va a la zaga mientras Asia se introduce en en la en la en el en el en el esquema y estamos retomando pero la verdad es que es por otras circunstancias //**[29]

The Spanish interpreter initially also makes an attempt to maintain the same lexical source field in the first two metaphors with "impasse" (literally a "blind alley"), which is not too far in meaning from "we are stuck in second gear", and "va a la zaga", which also renders "trailing behind". The other three metaphors are translated with an incorrect paraphrase, a generic paraphrase and an omission, highlighting the difficulty

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[28] "we are stuck in second gear we are in second gear while the Unites States is ahead we are the tail light (an Italian idiom that means "to be last of a group") and we have to if necessary if there is there are any improvements it is not because we are changing gear but only because of the slope of the road".

[29] "We are so to say in an impasse Europe is behind while Asia enters the scheme and we are picking up again but the truth is that it is due to other circumstances" .

in dealing with a whole series of metaphorical elements, even when they are from the same source field.

Another frequent source field of metaphors is that of travel. It was noted in the EPIC corpus that interpreters often choose to paraphrase or substitute this type of metaphorical concept. Although the source field is used in all three languages, it tends not to be used in exactly the same way and so a literal translation can often sound strange and sometimes be quite misleading:

> moreover the Commission intends to publish a working paper on pandemic influenza preparedness and response planning which sets out a series of **steps to be taken** by Member States and the European Community to address the threat of an avi- avi- avian in- influenza pandemic // (10-02-04-m-005-org-en)

In this case, both interpreters choose to paraphrase:

> // inoltre la Commissione intende pubblicare un documento di lavoro sul preparazione alla pandemia e l'influenza e al- replica **delineando i provvedimenti da prendere**[30] degli Stati membri e a livello della Comunità europea per far fronte alla minaccia di una pandemia di influenza //

> // la Comisión va a publicar un documento de trabajo sobre ehm **la planificación**[31] para responder a esta enfermedad y las medidas que toma que tienen que tomar los Estados miembros y la Comunidad si hubiera una epidemia de gripe aviar //

Although there are similar metaphors in Italian ('fare passi avanti') and Spanish ('dar pasos adelante'), their meaning is different from that of the ST. The "steps to be taken" are a series of necessary measures that have to be adopted one after the other, while 'fare passi avanti' and 'dar pasos adelante' only give a general idea of progress and improvement.

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[30] "Defining the measures to be taken".
[31] "The planning".

V. Conclusions

The European Parliament Interpreting Corpus (EPIC) was used to analyse the translation strategies adopted by simultaneous interpreters at the European Parliament when they encounter metaphors. The results of this study highlighted a general tendency to use paraphrasing for catachreses and idioms, and literal translations for live metaphors. There was no consistent pattern, however, as regards the translation of metaphorical concepts.

What emerged fairly clearly, however, is that metaphors (whether they are catachreses, live metaphors or metaphorical concepts) often seem to cause problems for interpreters. There are numerous examples of false starts and both silent and filled pauses in the translations of the interpreters when encountering a metaphorical element. A further indication of the problematical nature of metaphors is the presence of hedging phenomena in the interpreters' linguistic output. According to Scarpa (2001) and Garzone and Viezzi (2001), hedges are elements that mitigate the validity of statements with which the speaker does not completely agree (such as "so to say", "de alguna manera"[32], "sort of", etc).

Although it cannot be stated with absolute certainty that these hesitations (false starts, and silent and filled pauses) and hedges on the part of the interpreters are due to the presence of the metaphors, they are still statistically significant. Indeed, the interpreters' translations of 27 of the 116 catachreses analysed (23.3%) contained hesitations and the interpreters used hedges on 4 occasions (3.4%). Their translations of 11 of the 30 live metaphors (36.6%) also contained hesitations and hedges here, too, were used on 4 occasions (13.3%). Finally, there were hesitations in the translations of 71 of the 290 of the metaphorical concepts (24.5%) with 11 hedges (3.8%).

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[32] "In a way".
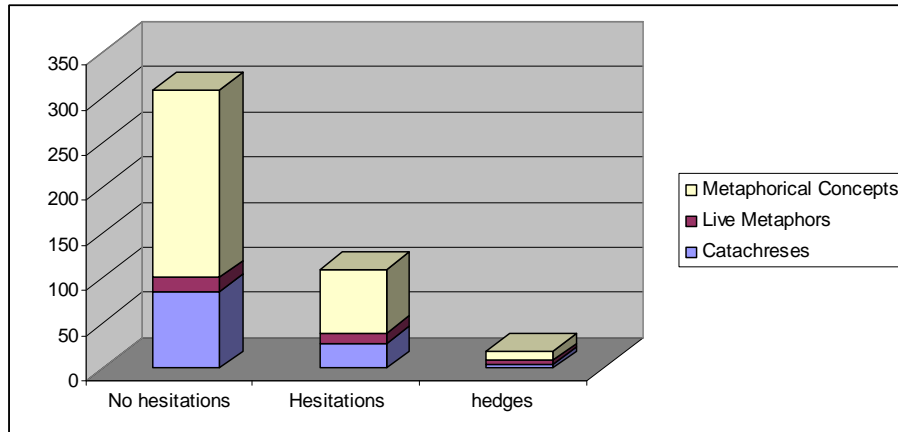
Given the renowned professionalism and expertise of EP interpreters and the fact that catachreses are codified by definition, the difficulties often encountered by the interpreters when translating metaphors cannot have been due to their not knowing or understanding them. Yet, while nominal idioms such as 'red tape' or 'in the light of' did not cause any problems, more complex, culture-bound idioms (such as 'to throw something down the drain') led to hesitations and translation difficulties.

Although interpreters seem to prefer paraphrase when translating idioms, the problems they encountered may perhaps be explained in part by the 'unconscious urge' noted among translators not 'to kill the metaphor': "[Fernando and Flavell (1981)] claim that there is 'a strong unconscious urge in most translators to search hard for an idiom in the receptor-language, however inappropriate it may be'". (Jakobsen et al. 2007, p. 224).

In the case of live metaphors, although the sample is quite small, there seems to be a definite tendency to translate these metaphors literally. Since live metaphors are creative, produced by the speaker and not codified, this is perhaps the best way to maintain the speaker's communicative intention and the perlocutionary force added by the presence of the metaphor, leaving the task of interpreting the metaphor to the listeners (exactly what the speaker does with her/his audience).

There appears to be no main tendency in the way interpreters translate metaphorical concepts. The interpreters are obviously familiar with the main lexical source fields and are flexible as regards the strategies they choose to deal with them, usually coping quite

easily. However, hesitations and false starts were also noted in the presence of this kind of metaphor.

Why does the translation of metaphorical elements seem to create problems for interpreters, even when, given their level of expertise, they can have little difficulty in understanding the metaphors? Why does it take interpreters more time to process an utterance containing a metaphor? According to Phelan:

> A speaker's aims in speaking metaphorically include that of producing certain psychological effects in her audience. Salient instances of metaphorical language [...] are clearly intended to occasion effects of amusement, anger, sadness or aesthetic effects in general. As shorthand, I will refer to such effects as ways of *striking* the audience. (Phelan, 2009, p. 16)

Our hypothesis is that the difficulty in translating metaphors is due to their intrinsic perlocutionary force, which is often difficult, if not impossible, to maintain using paraphrase. It may be assumed, therefore, that interpreters hesitate when translating a metaphor as they are striving to find a solution that is as powerful as the ST in order to respect the speaker's communicative intentions and achieve the same perlocutionary effect. Clearly, more research needs to be carried out to confirm the validity of our hypothesis. It must involve not only other languages, but also interviews with the interpreters themselves and questionnaires.

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