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Criminals interpreting for criminals: breaking or shaping norms? **Aída Martínez-Gómez, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York**

ABSTRACT

The concept of norms has been applied in Interpreting Studies to achieve a greater understanding of the principles regulating this activity in close connection to each particular context and its specific features. In less explored settings, such as prisons, a norm-based analysis can become a useful tool to describe a partially unknown reality. This study aims to explore the degree of compliance to norms by non-professional interpreters in prison settings. For these purposes, the main norms of interpreter behaviour (as defined in codes of ethics) will be examined through the lens of a corpus of 19 interpreted prison interviews, as well as users' and interpreting experts' reactions to them. Results will show that, on occasion, non-professional interpreters challenge relevant norms (accuracy, impartiality, confidentiality...) in a conscious or unconscious manner. Such deviations may be due to lack of translational competence, voluntary moves to improve one's own or a fellow inmate's face before the prison administration, or adjustment to users' expectations, among others. The reactions they trigger among users and interpreting experts vary depending on the norm challenged, the role of each stakeholder or their communicative goals.

KEYWORDS

Norms, prison settings, non-professional interpreters, codes of ethics, role, impartiality.

Introduction

Community interpreting still is an emerging profession. In a yet-to-be regulated market, the participation of non-professional interpreters, who have traditionally been the key linguistic and cultural brokers in these settings, seems unavoidable. Immediate availability, lack of funds, parties' unawareness of resources at hand or preferences based on interpersonal grounds (e.g. trust) may be some of the reasons why these untrained bilinguals continue playing an essential role in a wide array of public services throughout the world.

Correctional facilities are one of the settings which rely more heavily on the cooperation of non-professional interpreters. When foreign-language speaking prisoners and prison officers need to communicate and non-mediated strategies prove unsuccessful, non-professionals (prisoners or, in fewer cases, officers) are most commonly resorted to in order to bridge the language and culture gap. A few prison systems engage the services of professional interpreters on a regular basis, but only for particularly complex and confidential exchanges (e.g., induction and disciplinary procedures, medical treatment and legal advice). This evidences the prevalence of the use of prisoner-interpreters and the position of

professional ones as a complementary — and not alternative — communication strategy (Martínez-Gómez *forthcoming*).

In prison settings and elsewhere, non-professional interpreting has traditionally been chastised by academics and practitioners alike. By perpetuating unregulated practices, market structures are threatened and professionalisation is held back. However, the greatest concerns relate to the inconsistency of standards and the potential for communication breakdown and its consequences (legal, clinical or otherwise). Despite these interpreters' limitations in linguistic and translational competence, most alterations and disruptions tend to be caused by their shifts in participation status — a transgression of the 'normative space' allocated to the interpreter within the communicative triad (see section 1 below).

This study aims to explore which types of norm deviations by non-professional interpreters are common in prison settings, some possible causes and the reactions they trigger in both the primary interlocutors and experts in the field of interpreting. For these purposes, a corpus of 19 interpreted interviews between prison officers and foreign prisoners are examined and their interaction patterns are contrasted with the relevant basic tenets of interpreter behaviour, as defined by some codes of ethics published thus far. A qualitative approach has been selected for this analysis as its ultimate goal is to explore whether potential areas of disconnect exist between the established codes of ethics for community interpreting in general and the norms expected to be followed in prison settings. Future quantitative studies encompassing larger corpora and broader geopolitical scopes could offer relevant data on the frequency of some of these deviations, from which more solid generalisations could be made.

1. Interpreting and norms

Since Toury put forward the notion of norm as applied to Translation Studies in the late 1970s, the search for these patterns of behaviour within translational activities has been widely applied as a methodological tool in different domains. Understood as "the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community — as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate — into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations" (Toury 1995: 55), norms emerge as a potentially successful mechanism to analyse interpreter-mediated encounters, given their intrinsic dependence of each particular setting. Whereas norm-based research in Interpreting Studies has traditionally focused on conference interpreting (Shlesinger 1989, Schjoldager 2002[1995], Gile 1999), community interpreting appears as "one of the communication processes where the complexity and multi-functionality of norms that operate at different levels and that influence aspects of total —

not just translational — social behaviour can be most clearly perceived” (Toledano Buendía 2010: 14).

In a complementary definition of norms, Hermans (1999, quoted in Inghilleri 2006: 58) emphasises the nature of norms as “internalized behavioural constraints”. The process by means of which interpreters acquire these behavioural patterns often entails their “being trained, even conditioned, in professional or academic training institutes” (Toury 1999: 27). However, when training is not feasible, they “pick up the conventions and norms pertinent to their job through a process of initiation within the culture itself,” probably involving environmental feedback, sanctions/rewards from the parties at hand, the development of some kind of internal monitoring mechanism and the final full internalisation of a set of norms (*ibid.*). In the case of community interpreting, where there is still a vast majority of self-taught interpreters, the latter process tends to be prevalent. In such cases, however, and also in the case of trained interpreters, conflict may arise, among others, from inconsistencies in the environmental feedback received by these untrained interpreters from the different parties to the communicative event, who enter the interaction with individual goals and expectations, which are often different from one another and sometimes incompatible (Toledano Buendía 2010: 18). This, in fact, may explain, among other reasons, the discrepancies in the discourses on norms between “the grassroots and the more established segments of the profession” (Marzocchi 2005: 94).

Research has shown that expectations by the primary interlocutors in a community-based interpreter-mediated event are often at odds with what has traditionally been understood as norms for interpreting in these settings, especially in terms of the role of the interpreter. For instance, whereas impartiality is foregrounded as one of the key norms in interpreting practice, several studies (Pöllabauer 2004, Edwards *et al.* 2005) indicate that community interpreting users sometimes support behaviours in which interpreters move beyond their neutrality position in order to help the parties meet their goals or intercede on their behalf. It is, however, these transgressions of the ‘normative space’ assigned to the interpreter (in terms of participation status and degree of agency) which have proven problematic and even shown to lead to communication breakdowns, as identified by researchers (Cambridge 1999, Pöchhacker and Kadric 1999, Elderkin-Thompson *et al.* 2001, Flores *et al.* 2003).

Although traditionally used as a tool for a descriptive approach to the translation act, norms’ overall natural role in society is to prescribe. Chesterman (1999: 94) draws attention to the effects of the application of or deviation from translational norms: acceptance or rejection of a translation (or interpretation) by its target audience will depend mostly on the degree of conformity to relevant norms, including its experience-based expectations about what a translation ought to be (expectancy norms in

his words). Quality, therefore, can be described as a corollary of the intersubjective (sometimes intuitive) perception of conformity to norms. As Garzone (2002: 110) explains for interpretation,

[t]he concept of quality in interpretation can thus be defined as a construct embodying the norms which are deemed appropriate to guarantee the intrinsic and extrinsic properties considered ideal for an interpretation performance in a given social, cultural and historical situation.

Such intersubjective perception, as clarified by Garzone, stems from a negotiation process involving the “pertinent groups” (in Pym's terms, 1999: 110–111), i.e. initiators of the interpreting act, clients, speakers/delegates and recipients (Garzone 2002: 116). Generally in the case of community interpreting, and in the prison setting in particular, more often than not all these roles eventually merge into the two primary interlocutors, who are initiators and clients as well as ST-producers and TT-receivers throughout the interaction. In societies where the profession of community interpreting is still widely under-regulated, and thus no expert group is recognised as needed or even existent to perform interpreting tasks, it is common that these users fail to have clear experience-based expectations about what interpreting should be (Toledano Buendía 2010: 17). It is in these cases where the inclusion of expert groups (in the form of training institutions, professional associations, etc.) in this negotiation process seems paramount, as yet another mechanism for the advancement of professionalisation (cf. Pym 1999 for a relevant reflection on the concept of negotiation).

So far, expert groups' participation in these negotiation processes has materialised in the development of codes of ethics. Indeed, as Marzocchi (2005: 96 ff.) indicates, although norm-based approaches were first applied in Interpreting Studies in an attempt to refine understanding of cognitive processes, a “thicker” conceptualisation of norms relates closely to the issue of ethics, from the broader sense of “any discourse relating translatorial choices to socially shared values” to the concrete expression of codes of ethics or standards of practice (cf. Bancroft 2005 for the differences between codes of ethics and standards of practice), where the institutions where interpreting takes place play a fundamental role in shaping the relevant norms (e.g. the verbatim requirement in court interpreting) (Marzocchi 2005: 96–97).

Within the array of codes of ethics and standards of practice available for the interpreting profession, two types can be differentiated: codes framed broadly for encompassing large sectors of the profession, e.g. translation and interpreting in general (AUSIT), conference interpreting (AIIC) or community interpreting (NRPSI); and codes focusing on specific settings, e.g. health care (NCIHC) or court interpreting (NAJIT). This duality probably responds to what could be considered the most relevant risk in the codification of norms into standardised guidelines: overlooking the fact

that general foundational norms (initial norms, in Toury's terms), as the notion of accuracy, may indeed have different manifestations in different settings. In an illustration of the "undefining potential" of the concept of norms, Marzocchi (2005: 96) claims that

pretending that it is possible to formulate norms at the level of "conference interpreting" as a whole, and only at that level, means neglecting all the elements of each specific setting (institutional status and goal, membership, specific language policy a.o.) that enter, within the boundaries of the setting, into a systemic relationship with interpreting.

In the specific case of community interpreting, notoriously different realities are shaped not only by the heterogeneity of settings and their particular dynamics and (institutional) constraints, but also by the varying degrees of professionalisation experienced across sectors and geographical locations. Toledano Buendía (2010: 17) argues that the uneven development of the profession leaves "the community interpreting sector [...] without a system of coherent and unified professional norms." The question of how attainable such uniformity could really be without reducing our conception of norms to a superficial approach is yet to be answered.

2. The (prison) interpreter's normative space

Community interpreting, still a profession in the making, has developed a few codes of ethics that reflect, in broad terms, the 'normative space' where interpreters are expected to position themselves, among other issues. As explained above, some of these codes have an overarching nature (NRPSI) whereas others target specific settings (NCIHC, NAJIT). No code, however, has yet been designed to regulate interpreting practice in prison settings.

Baixauli Olmos, in his 2012 study, is the only author known to date to have explored the issue of professional ethics in prison interpreting. In order to do so, he examines seven widely recognised codes of ethics and standards of practice in community interpreting and uses the principles enshrined in them to depict the reality of interpreting in prison settings. Firstly, he conducts text-based (macro- and micro-structure) and semantic analyses of the codes at hand, and, secondly, he compares those results with field-work information gathered via interviews and questionnaires answered by prison administrators, prison officers and inmates in one Spanish prison, and public service interpreters with experience in prison settings working in different parts of the world, mainly USA, given the lack of professional interpreters working in Spanish prisons. He concludes that the general deontological framework allows to describe "uncharted" specific settings, but not without limitations, as key features remain unaccounted for, such as — in the case of prisons — time- and space-related factors stemming from security processes or the

physical and psychological challenges posed by the environment (2012: 419–422).

The points from his analysis which are relevant for this paper relate to the core ethical foundations of the codes, which can be considered an expression of the norms operating in this interpreting context. The 'normative space' of the prison interpreter, therefore, is structured around the following principles¹:

- Accuracy: interpreters are expected to relay the full semantic and pragmatic content of all utterances (including paralinguistic and non-verbal information). Omissions from and additions to the core message would be sanctioned unless their purpose is to clarify cultural or comprehension issues. This principle is relevant in prison settings both for security purposes and in terms of ensuring equal opportunities for treatment and rehabilitation for all inmates.
- Impartiality: interpreters are expected to avoid filtering information, participating on their own behalf, and speaking on behalf of any of the parties. They are expected to make sure their own opinions or reactions do not interfere with the message transfer, and to avoid being in touch with the parties outside the interaction. They are also expected to inform about potential conflicts of interest or personal relationships with the parties if they are to affect their ability to remain impartial. Potential tensions between parties or party-interpreter allegiances expected or presumed by the primary interlocutors might lead to impartiality-related dilemmas for prison interpreters.
- Confidentiality: interpreters are expected to protect the information shared during the event and to avoid introducing information obtained outside it. In the particular case of prisons, conflict may arise when confidentiality clashes with the protection of a prisoner's health (e.g. suicide attempts) or with security issues.
- Respect: interpreters are expected to treat both parties equally and politely, and to safeguard their agency and their decision-making power. They are expected to intervene, with the appropriate strategies, to prevent abuse or mistreatment.
- Professional role: despite controversies about this issue (cf. Baixauli Olmos 2012: 238–244; 299–300), it appears to be agreed that interpreters are expected to promote direct communication between the parties while limiting their tasks to interpreting and avoiding personal involvement in the situation. In prison settings, the interpreter may be subject to role-related endogenous and exogenous pressures (cf. Baixauli Olmos 2012: 403–407).
- Professional behaviour and competence: interpreters are expected to have the required competence for the task and to reject assignments they are not qualified for. They are expected to conform to the profession rules (appearance, protocols, ethics), to act with integrity

and collegiality, and to contribute to the development of the profession.

From the descriptions above, albeit brief, it becomes obvious that many of these principles overlap in actual practice (for more details and examples of such overlapping, cf. Baixauli Olmos 2012: 316–320). Despite the blurry borders between principles, however, this taxonomy seemingly provides a structured framework to analyse actual interpreted events and the performance of interpreters according to what would be expected of them.

3. Description of the study

This study aims to explore the degree of compliance to the abovementioned norms by non-professional interpreters in prison settings (in Spain in particular). For these purposes, 'textual sources' (in Toury's terms, 1995: 65), i.e. actual interpreted interviews, will be confronted with two types of 'extratextual sources': (a) descriptions of the 'normative space' of the community/prison interpreter as envisaged in different codes of ethics (see section 2), and (b) users' and interpreting experts' reactions and assessments to that small corpus of interpreted events.

The corpus used for this study consists of 19 interviews between 19 foreign prisoners with very little, if any, knowledge of Spanish and 8 Spanish-speaking officers conducted in two Spanish prisons in 2011. The interviews, led either by a psychologist or an educator², tend to be fairly homogeneous in nature: they deal with the personal situation of the interviewees, both outside and inside the prison — background, family, education and work experience, etc., as well as their criminal background and sentence status. The main goal of most of the interviews is to get to know the prisoners better and try to identify potential needs or concerns.

Given the language barrier, 13 other prisoners, fluent in Spanish and a relevant foreign language, acted as interpreters in these interviews. These prisoner-interpreters have different degrees of proficiency in the languages involved: none of them speaks Spanish as their mother tongue, and 5 out of 19 speak the foreign prisoner's language as a second language as well. They also have variable experience interpreting for their peers (for one of them it was the first time he was interpreting).

The interviews were transcribed and analysed qualitatively for deviations of the traditional 'norms' in community interpreting as applied to prison settings (see section 2 above). The qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti facilitated the coding, which was done manually following a top-down approach. Using the framework adapted from Baixauli Olmos (2012), the six principles conforming the 'normative space' of the prison interpreter were identified as the thematic units for the coding, and

examples of their presence were sought in the transcripts. Excerpts conforming to one or more thematic units were assigned the appropriate code from a previously defined list, which allowed for later retrieval of segments according to code for further scrutiny.

Reactions to the interpreters' performance were gathered in a quality assessment study which aimed to involve all possible stakeholders, in an attempt to account for both the users' perspective and expert analyses. On the one hand, the primary participants in each interview completed evaluation questionnaires about the interpretation after the communicative event. On the other hand, six teams of two external experts also assessed each interpretation using an audio recording and a more comprehensive rubric-based tool. Each team consisted of a professional interpreter and an interpreter trainer. Eight of the twelve experts had between 1 and 15 years of experience in community interpreting (average 8.9 years), whereas the remaining four had experience only in other interpreting modalities (conference, business/diplomatic), averaging 7.1 years of experience in the field (ranging from 2.5 to 10 years). (For further details on the quality assessment methodology, see Martínez-Gómez Gómez 2011.) As will be seen in the next section, some of the reactions by the primary participants are also extracted from their own utterances in the interviews (e.g. if they openly agree or disagree with an instance of norm deviation).

Trying to derive normative generalisations from the available codes and using them as the basis for the analysis of interpreter-mediated events in a very particular setting is not exempt from limitations. Firstly, by using generic codes of ethics or those developed for other settings (given the lack of such instruments specifically designed for prison settings), issues relevant only to the prison setting might be overlooked. Secondly, this might be exacerbated by applying a top-down process for analysis, instead of a bottom-down one, which could potentially shed light on certain specific features. Thirdly, whereas norms, theoretically, arise from actual practice, codified standards have gone through the filtering process of their issuing body. This might entail an unbalance in the degree to which the views of different kinds of stakeholders are reflected in these norms (e.g. professional associations vs. interpreting users).

Evidently, this study aims to be solely an approximation to the issue of norms in prison interpreting, given not only the limitations above but also those stemming from the methodology itself (corpus size, geographical/institutional constraints, etc.). More research would indeed be necessary to determine whether there are specific norms governing interpreting in prison settings and, if so, to describe them and assess degrees of adherence to them.

4. Norm adherence and deviation by non-professional prison interpreters

Of the norms described above regulating prison interpreting, the most obvious one for both uninitiated interpreters and primary participants to the interaction is probably accuracy. Acknowledging the variable manifestations of such a broadly expressed norm (cf. Marzocchi 2005: 102), the corpus offers a vast number of examples where these non-professional interpreters seemingly adhere to this norm:

Example 1 (ML19)

- O: ¿Cuánta condena tienes?
[How long is your sentence?]
I: How long are you sentenced for?
P: Four years
I: Cuatro años
[Four years]
O: ¿Por qué? ¿Qué delito?
[Why? Which crime?]
I: Why? What crime?
P: Eeh, ss- sexual agresion
I: Eeh, agresión sexual
[Eeh, sexual assault]
O: ¿Agresión sexual? ¿Es tu primer ingreso en prisión?
[Sexual assault? Is it your first time in prison?]
I: Is it your first time in prison?
P: Mh
I: Yes
[...]
O: ¿Tus padres viven o han fallecido?
[Are your parents alive or did they pass away?]
I: Your parents are alive or they passed away?
P: Alive. Still alive.
I: Siguen vivos
[They're still alive]³

A certain degree of leniency is exerted by the primary interlocutors, and even the experts assessing these interpretations, in terms of correct language use which accompanies accuracy — in an example of those slightly different ways in which a “bona fide honest spokesperson” may perform in different settings (using Marzocchi's phrasing, 2005: 102).

Example 2 (ML16)

- O: Mh. ¿Y cuánto bebías?
[And how much did you drink?]
I: Yy combien tu combien de boire tu tu bois quand tu prends ?
[How much you how much drink do you you drink when you drink?]
P: Eeh, deux, trois, et après on mange, ein ? [laughs]
[Uhm, two, three and then one eats, huh?]
I: Tres o cuatro y **luego hay por la comida también**

- [Three or four and **then there is for lunch too**]
 O: Mh. Tres o cuatro, ¿qué?
 [Three or four, what?]
 P: C'est Ricard generalmente
 [It's usually Ricard]
 I : Ricard. Es una... **Ricard es un alcohol, es un licor.** Tres o cuatro chupitos de licor.
 [Ricard. It's a... **Ricard is a spirit, a liquor.** Three or four liquor shots]

Furthermore, in example 2, the interpreter's clarification of a cultural element, although an addition which could be frowned upon in other settings (e.g. courts) as a threat to accuracy, is celebrated by the interpreting expert as a mechanism to enable communication:

Overall, I believe the interpreter's performance is excellent. The fact that his Spanish is faulty does not affect communication at all [...]. [H]e adds things, but always with a clear goal in mind: helping to avoid doubts. He knows that there will not be language-related doubts, but when cultural items come up, he systematically tends to explain them (Expert 9. ML16).

Lack of accuracy, however, is also a constant in the corpus. In example 3, the interpreter fails to translate what could be considered a relevant piece of information, i.e. a reference to multiple previous convictions. Shortly thereafter it becomes evident that, by missing that information, the prison officer (psychologist) assumes a shorter criminal record (two convictions: a first time in the UK and currently in Spain).

Example 3 (ML13) [talking about previous convictions]

- O: ¿Cuándo?
 [When?]
 I: When was you in prison?
 P: Uf, I don't know. I can't tell you dates.
 I: Many years ago?
P: Eeh, on and off since I've been 23. 21. First time was 21.
I: Cuando tener veintiún años él en- entró preson preso por tres meses cuando tener 21 años.
[When he be 21 he entered prison prisoner for three months when be 21]

This evidences, as Baixauli Olmos (2012: 407) explains, the relevance of adhering to an accuracy norm in prison settings, given its potential consequences on the prisoners' treatment program. In this particular case, the prison psychologist is conducting an initial assessment interview of the inmate, which would be taken into account to determine the course of his treatment moving forward in his sentence. Whereas her records from the interview will show that the prisoner stated having been to prison only once before, his file will indicate otherwise about previous convictions. Given that such an intervention by the interpreter might very easily go unnoticed by the psychologist, who is only able to rely on indirect indicators to assess accuracy (Garzone 2003: 28) (e.g. probably

in this case, length of discourse and plausibility of the answer), this could be interpreted as untruthful and uncooperative behaviour by the prisoner and could have consequences on the decisions made about him by the treatment board.

Nevertheless, it is very difficult to determine whether that breach of the accuracy norm was intentional or not. Whereas it could be explained as a corollary of limited translatorial competence (e.g. related to problems in comprehension, production or short-term memory), it could also be motivated by a voluntary move by the interpreter to improve, in his own terms, the social image (or face) of his fellow inmate. By omitting that information, he is not only challenging the accuracy norm but maybe also the impartiality one, which triggers more critical reactions. As one of the interpreting experts explains,

The parties get filtered information, regardless of what his [the interpreter's] reasons are to do that. They do not get an impartial translation by an external party [...]. This is why I rated it as "basic": I believe that the interpreter interferes with communication to such an extent that the message does not reach the parties properly, but is always accompanied by the interpreter's perceptions and comments, which is what has to be avoided in every interpretation. The interpreter speaks Spanish fairly well and tends to convey ideas correctly, but I believe he is too involved to get a better overall rating than "basic" (Expert 6. ML13).

In fewer examples, breaches of the impartiality norm are much more obvious to all parties, when the interpreter explicitly brings his own judgments into the conversation and shifts his footing (in Goffman's terms, 1981) to that of primary participant. Example 4 is a clear illustration of such phenomenon, which could be also considered a manifestation of the adoption of an advocate role by the interpreter. In an attempt to cast a positive light on his fellow inmate, the interpreter not only praises him but also minimises his involvement in the crime to the extent of seemingly exonerating him from all responsibility:

Example 4 (CS10)

O: ¿Tienes interés en quedarte aquí en España o...?

[Do you want to stay here in Spain or...?]

I: Bleibst du in Spanien oder... was machst du in Zukunft?

[Do you stay in Spain or... what do you do in the future?]

P: Ich weiss nicht.

[I don't know]

I: No está seguro de qué va a hacer. Está un poco... la situación... porque él está... está per una cosa que no la ha hecho. Es que resulta que su caso... es que en su caso resulta que él se ha emborrachao y cosa de eso, y entonces alguien de su entorno mate una persona. Y él no es, pero resulta que le metieron en la cárcel porque estaba en el entorno y no... Y resulta que esta persona, después de un par de semanas en el hospital, murió. Ha sido una puñalada, cosa de eso, no sé, que me ha contaó él. Pero resulta que él es prácticamente inocente y le ha tocao... Está un poco en choque sobre el asunto. Imagínate, te despiertas de una borrachera y te ves la cárcel por por ser detenido porque has matao a alguien.

Es un choque, ¿no? Él no es una persona violenta. No es una persona... eeh... es una persona, es una buena persona, es una persona culta en general [unintelligible] Habe gesagt du bist eine gute Person, hast du nicht gemacht diese Sache und alles, weißt du?

[He's not sure about what he is going to do. He is a little... the situation... because he is... he is here for something he hasn't done. The thing is that his case... in his case, it happened that he got drunk and so, and then someone from around him killed someone. And it wasn't him, but it happened that he was jailed because he was around and not... And it happened that that person, after a couple of weeks in the hospital, died. It was a stabbing, that was, I don't know, what he told me. But the thing is that he is basically innocent and he's got this... He is a bit in shock about this. Imagine that, you wake up one day after getting drunk and you find yourself in jail for being arrested because you killed someone. It's a shock, isn't it? He is not an aggressive person. He is not a... erm... he is a person, he is a good person, he is an educated person overall [unintelligible] [In German] I have said that you are a good person, that you didn't do this thing and all, you know?

P: Das ist nicht ganz richtig. Ich kann nicht mich erinnern was ich in der Nacht gemacht habe.

[That's not right. I cannot remember what I did that night]

I: Que él no se acuerda prácticamente lo lo que ha hecho, prácticamente lo que pasó. Hasta que me ha contao él, na más.

[That he basically does not remember what what he did, basically what happened. That's what he told me, no more].

In this example, the interpreter shifts his footing from animator (interpreting) to author (relaying information about the night of the crime) to principal (expressing his opinion of the allophone prisoner) while engaging in an utterance of his own which is perfectly evident to the parties, and therefore less likely to be confused by the officer as the prisoner's stance. Despite that, the German-speaking prisoner intervenes to clarify the boundaries between his own version of the events and the interpreter's description. Thanks to the interpreter's summary of his utterance to him, he is able to monitor the interpretation and to reject the adoption of an advocate role by his fellow inmate.

Example 4 also foregrounds the blurry dividing line between the different norms outlined in section 3. Breaches of the principles of accuracy (significant addition), impartiality (speaking on someone's behalf and introducing own opinions), role (personal involvement), confidentiality (sharing information obtained outside the event), and respect (challenging the primary participant's agency) coexist in one single turn by the interpreter. Such overlaps are also common in other cases, which could be labelled primarily as deviations from the interpreter's normative role, but which encompass breaches of several other principles. In this corpus, they take the form of (a) guiding the prisoner's answers, (b) answering questions on behalf of the prisoner, (c) engaging in other tasks outside the conversation, and (d) discussing their own issues as a primary participant. Due to space constraints, most cases described here belong to the second category, which is the most commonly found deviation in the corpus:

Example 5 (ML09)

O: ¿Tiene hijos?

[Does he have kids?]

I: No. Yo contesto porque él lleva un año conmigo en el chabolo y...

[No. I answer because he's been with me for a year in the house (cell) and...]

O: Claro. Muy bien. ¿Sois compañeros?

[Sure. Very well. Are you cellmates?]

I: Sí, mi compañero de chabolo. Buen chaval

[Yes, he's my cellie. Good guy.]

O: Muy bien. ¿Eres musulmán?

[Very good. Are you a Muslim?]

On occasion, this type of interventions appears to be triggered by the primary participants' conversational behaviour. In example 5, the prison psychologist poses the question directly to the interpreter, opening the space for him to provide his own answer. Other times, however, these shifts seem to stem from the interpreter's pragmatic understanding of communication efficiency: he may consider that, by answering the questions himself, time is saved, less effort is made and the officer receives correct information anyway (personal communication by prisoner-interpreter at C.P. Mallorca, 2011). A close relationship between inmates usually makes the interpreter believe he is in a position to do so, as can be inferred from their own comments (examples 5 and 6). Furthermore, these interventions might also stem from the interpreter's attempt to portray himself as a collaborative inmate, and thus improve his own image before the officer, which might benefit him in the future, when applying for certain types of privileges (individual cells, jobs, parole, etc.) (personal communication by educator at C.P. Alicante Cumplimiento, 2008, gathered for a previous study described in Martínez-Gómez Gómez 2009), even if it sometimes means threatening his fellow prisoner's face:

Example 6 (ML13) [talking about potential drug use once the prisoner is released]

O: ¿Y porros?

[And joints?]

I: Di- di- depende. Él dicho cuando salida bebe una cerveza, posibilidad de fumar un porra

[De- de- depends. He said when out drink a beer, possibility smoke a joint]

O: Eso no te lo ha dicho él. Eso te lo... lo estás diciendo tú.

[He didn't say that. That you... you are saying that]

I: Porque es mi compañero de celda. Yo saber... fa- fa- when you get out...

[Because he's my cellmate. I know...]

Despite controversies on the definition of the community interpreter's role both in academia and in professional circles, most interpreting experts disapprove of these role-related norm deviations:

The interpreter knows the prisoner and he often answers for him or adds information that the prisoner did not provide. I do not think that this behaviour safeguards the legal rights of the prisoner. He may not want to share that information with the officer (Expert 3. CS10).

As far as officers are concerned, their reactions seem to be influenced by several factors. On the one hand, when the information provided directly by the interpreter is objective and specific, their judgments tend to be more lenient (example 5) than when it involves more subjective attitude-based comments (example 6, where the officer explicitly reprimands the interpreter for overstepping the role expected of him). On the other hand, the officers' contractual roles — and therefore their interaction goals — also appear to affect their reactions: educators in this corpus (example 5) tend to be less troubled by these role violations than psychologists (example 6).

Sometimes how they say things tells you more than what they say. When the interpreter answers for them, that disappears. You get the facts but nothing else (Prison psychologist, C.P. Mallorca, 2011).

Prisoners' reactions are more challenging to read, as their assessments tend to be very positive in general. Out of 19 interpretations, only one prisoner rated his as "very poor" and two as "OK"; the remaining ones considered them "good" or "very good" (see appendix). Whereas the poorest assessment did not seem to relate to norm deviations but to a personal conflict between the prisoners (leading to a lack of trust on the interpreter by the inmate), the "OK" evaluations coincide with interpretations where norm breaches are made evident by some of the stakeholders. In the case of interview CS01, one interpreting expert provides a very illustrative concise summary of the most troubling norm transgressions that he observed:

The interpreter answers himself on behalf of the inmate. He enters into value judgments. He negotiates personal favours with the interviewer. Side conversations between the interviewer and the interpreter. [...] He acts as the prisoner's advocate... It is an awful interpretation (Expert 2. CS01).

In the case of interview ML13, both the officer (example 6) and the prisoner (example 7) feel the need to intervene to correct some of the interpreter's behavioural patterns which deviate from their expectations of his 'normative space'. In example 7, the prisoner's even limited understanding of Spanish allows him to monitor the interpretation and recover from a face threat initiated by the interpreter's provision of additional information on his own accord:

Example 7 (ML13) [talking about drug use, which the inmate started at 15]

O: ¿Y qué fue lo que consumió?

[And what did he have?]

I: What did you first have? Weed, huh?

P: Weed, hashish.

I: Ponee, empezó con *hashish*, después anfetamina, eeh, éxtasi and cocaína.

[Soo, he started with hashish, then amphetamines, eeh, ecstasi and cocaine]

P: **Not until I was 23 I had coca.**

I: Hasta tener 23 años, después 23 años empezar cocain fuerte

[Until he be 23, after 23 he start cocain strongly]

One last example of role deviation which is also commonly found in prison settings involves the interpreter undertaking other tasks in interactions which are 'peripheral' to the interpreted event. Similar cases have been reported in a variety of settings, triggering disagreement on the part of scholars and professionals, although the parties to the interaction would expect (and maybe encourage) such behaviours (Pöllabauer 2004; Edwards *et al.* 2005). Prisoner interpreters in this corpus respond to these expectations voluntarily and seem not to be conflicted about them, nor do the primary participants or the interpreting experts. Close relationships between inmates (and a sense of identification with one another against the prison system) and the interpreter's lack of training (and thus contact with normative assumptions about the role) might explain this behaviour:

Example 8 (ML02)

P: I need to do the *instancia* for the [unintelligible].

I: Pero igualmente tiene que hacer la instancia.

[But he has to file the application anyway]

O: Yo lo haría, sí.

[I would, yes]

I: Yeah, she'll she'll you if she had been you, she'll do the *instancia*. **We'll do it together.**

5. Concluding remarks

In light of these examples, it could be argued that the 'normative space' assigned to interpreters in prison settings is occasionally challenged either in a conscious or unconscious manner by those prisoners undertaking a language brokering task. Whereas 'opaque' norm deviations — i.e. not obvious to the parties — may have undesired consequences (see example 3), more 'transparent' ones enable the parties to the interaction to judge on their tolerability and determine an appropriate course of action. In a similar manner to what Kolb and Pöchhacker (2008) observe in the context of asylum processes, here both parties — when they can monitor part of the interpretation — can set certain limits to interpreters' freedom in framing their 'normative space'. As seen in examples 6 and 7, the primary participants use conversational dynamics not only to redress potential wrongs but also to reset the boundaries of the role expected of the interpreter.

In the case of non-professional interpreters, such mechanisms are essential, as Toury (1999: 27) explained, given that environmental

feedback lays the foundation of their own monitoring processes. However, the fact that such environmental feedback might be subject to individual goals and expectations from parties who have rarely been exposed to professional interpretations, has led some scholars to agree with Toledano Buendía (2010: 19) that

[i]f no action is taken in light of a lack of specific interpreting norms, we run the risk of normalising practice and behaviour that do not provide any guarantees of professional service, which in turn legitimises deprofessionalisation, and the practice of a profession without adequate training.

Some of the examples above evidence, even at a small scale, that what could be considered “professional service” — i.e. behaviour compliant with norms — does not always match users’ expectations, and that behaviour deviating from norms does not necessarily challenge successful communication (example 8). As discussed in section 2, norms, by their very nature, are dependent of their setting. However, in the early stages of the development of a profession (e.g. community interpreting or, more specifically, prison interpreting), it seems to be tempting to incur in a “blind transfer” of standards (to use Angelelli’s words, 2000: 580) by dismissing users’ ‘alternative’ perceptions as exceptions to the norm — or even as misguided (e.g. the well-known quote by Shlesinger *et al.* 1997: 127, “Do our clients know what's good for them?”).

Norms cannot be understood in a vacuum nor in isolation from one another. What is more, they also seem to be dependent on specific interaction goals. Even within one same setting, they might be variable according to circumstances (examples 5 and 6). When interlocutors and goals are different, norms which seem to be true in general for that setting may be slightly bent without adverse consequences. On the one hand, that can stem from the pertinent groups’ compromise between “norms that ideally ought to be applied and more realistic norms which are materially applicable in consideration of the real conditions under which the interpreter works” (Garzone 2002: 117) — in this case, the fact that the interpreter is not a professional, may be consciously biased, or may be bringing his own agenda to the encounter, among others. On the other hand, however, it can be that parties expect such norms to be slightly bent in these circumstances (e.g. example 8).

In a given interpreting context, distinctive, contradictory or conflicting *habitus* operating amongst the relevant participants, including interpreters, suggests the likelihood of some degree of negotiation over the social/interactional space (Inghilleri 2003). [...] Ultimately, norms of community-interpreting training and practice are realised within interpreted events which are, as suggested above, complex and ill-defined social/interactional spaces in which linguistic and cultured meanings are rarely static and under frequent negotiation (Inghilleri 2006: 60–61).

As Inghilleri (2006: 60–61) also explains, such negotiation processes have been evidenced in multiple settings through micro-interactional analysis of

interpreter-mediated communication. However, she rightly argues that “there is much inconsistency in this research with regard to the various implications of its findings — it is not always clear whether interpreters are being blamed by researchers for too little or too much subservience.” Further explorations on the negotiating process of shaping norms, with an emphasis on the particularities of each setting, the potential variability between its interactions and the positioning of interpreting users, might contribute to clarifying these issues.

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Appendix

	Prisoner	Prison officer	Expert 1	Expert 2
Question asked	<i>How was the translation overall?</i>	<i>Rate your degree of satisfaction with: Overall assessment of the translation</i>	<i>How would you rate [...]: Overall assessment?</i>	
Options given	<i>Very good Good OK Poor Very poor</i>	<i>Very satisfied Quite satisfied Little satisfied No satisfied at all</i>	<i>Excellent Appropriate Basic Flawed</i>	
ML01	Very good	Very satisfied	Appropriate	Appropriate
ML02	Very good	Very satisfied	Appropriate	Appropriate
ML05	Good	Very satisfied	Appropriate	Basic
ML06	Very good	Very satisfied	Basic	Basic
ML08	Very good	Little satisfied	Flawed	Flawed
ML09	Very good	Quite satisfied	Excellent	Basic
ML10	Very good	Very satisfied	Basic	Appropriate
ML13	OK	Quite satisfied	Basic	Basic
ML16	Very good	Quite satisfied	Excellent	Excellent
ML18	Good	Quite satisfied	Excellent	Appropriate
ML19	Good	Quite satisfied	Appropriate	Excellent
ML20	Good	Little satisfied	Appropriate	Basic
CS01	OK	Very satisfied	Appropriate	Flawed
CS03	Good	Not satisfied at all	Basic	Basic
CS04	Good	Quite satisfied	Appropriate	Basic
CS05	Very good	Quite satisfied	Appropriate	Excellent
CS06	Very good	Quite satisfied	Appropriate	Excellent
CS08	Very poor	Quite satisfied	Excellent	Basic
CS10	Good	Very satisfied	Basic	Basic

Table 1. Ratings for the interpretation (overall impression) by stakeholder group

Biography

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¹ Descriptions of the principles are based on Baixauli Olmos (2012: 211–255; 407–408), but a few modifications have been made: (a) the ‘culture’ principle has been omitted as it relates to the management of particular content and not to behavioural issues, as the author himself acknowledges; and (b) not all elements included in his descriptions for each principle have been reproduced here (in some cases, because of disagreement about the appropriateness or relevance of their inclusion under a particular principle).

² The so-called educators (*educadores*) are staff members who serve as the main link between prisoners and the institution in Spanish prisons. They must be aware of the personal situation of inmates and are responsible for dealing with their queries and needs, either personally or by referring them to other professionals.

³ O: officer; I: interpreter; P: prisoner. The translations of utterances attempt to reflect grammatical/lexical errors made by the parties. Experts’ comments are only presented in translation. All translations provided are the author’s.