TRIANGULATION AND TRUSTWORTHINESS —ADVANCING RESEARCH ON PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETING THROUGH QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY METHODOLOGIES. / TRIANGULACIÓN Y CONFIABILIDAD —AVANZANDO LA INVESTIGACIÓN EN LA INTERPRETACIÓN EN SERVICIOS PÚBLICOS CON METODOLOGÍAS CUALITATIVAS DE ESTUDIO DE CASO.

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Abstract: This paper discusses a research methods approach to investigate phenomena in interpreting studies based on a triangulation of qualitative methods. It discusses the concept of triangulation, as developed in the social sciences by Campbell and Fiske (1959), with an emphasis on the process of combining and integrating multiple methods. It reviews previous applications of triangulation in translation and interpreting studies and describes the advantages of systematic triangulation for empirical research. The implications of this approach for future research in public service interpreting concerning the trustworthiness of the interpretative nature of qualitative inquiry are also discussed. To demonstrate the practical application of triangulation in public service interpreting settings, this paper draws on a case study conducted by the author where triangulation of participant observation, focus groups and audio-recorded interaction was employed. The integration of the different research methods utilized, as well as the findings derived by triangulation, are illustrated through examples from this study.

Keywords: Public service interpreting; Triangulation; Trustworthiness; Qualitative methods.

Resumen: Este artículo presenta un enfoque metodológico basado en la triangulación de métodos de investigación cualitativos y el cual facilita el estudio de fenómenos de la interpretación en los servicios públicos. Se analiza el concepto de triangulación desarrollado por Campbell y Fiske (1959) y se hace énfasis en el proceso de combinación e integración de múltiples métodos. Se revisan aplicaciones de la triangulación dentro los estudios de traducción e interpretación y se describen las ventajas de la triangulación sistemática para la investigación empírica. También se tratan las implicaciones que tiene este enfoque para futuras investigaciones en interpretación en servicios públicos con respecto a la confiabilidad de la tarea interpretativa que desarrolla el investigador en los estudios cualitativos. Para demostrar la aplicación práctica de la triangulación en este campo, este artículo se basa en un estudio de caso realizado por el autor en el que se utilizó la triangulación de observación participante, grupos focales y grabaciones en audio de eventos interpretados. La integración de los diferentes métodos de investigación utilizados, así como los resultados derivados de la triangulación, se ilustran a través de ejemplos de este estudio.

Palabras clave: Interpretación en servicios públicos; Triangulación; Confiabilidad; Métodos cualitativos.

1. Introduction

As the field of translation studies has progressed, it has become increasingly interdisciplinary to accommodate new research interests and examine new areas of translatorial practice. Translation and interpreting studies (from now on TIS) scholars have turned to other disciplines in search of alternative research methods and theories that help explore the complex tasks of the translator and interpreter. The application of concepts, methods and theories from other disciplines to achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation has turned translation studies into a vibrant interdiscipline, intersecting with other areas of knowledge such as philosophy, linguistics, cultural studies, literary studies and language engineering, among others (Rojo López and Campos Plaza, 2016). Furthermore, the growing interest among TIS scholars to understand the social role of translators and interpreters —the social structures where mediated interaction takes place, their impact on interpreters' behavior, and vice versa— has led to the adoption of new theoretical and methodological frameworks (Mason, 2000). Specifically, interpreting researchers are constantly searching for innovative research designs that help them overcome the challenges of observational studies investigating interpreter-mediated interaction which are often hampered by the size of the data set collected and/or the scope of the findings. Although there is no "universal best-way of combining methods" to achieve rigor and trustworthiness in interpreting research (Hansen, 2009: 387), triangulation can provide a broader understanding of one's subject matter, reveal different dimensions of an area of interest, and corroborate findings by putting methods in dialogue with one another (Breitmayer, Ayres and Knafl, 1993: 238). Triangulation can assist researchers in the construction of stronger research designs.

This paper fills a gap in the literature on interpreting research methods and broadens knowledge on triangulation as a rigorous methodological strategy to enhance research quality (Flick, 2011: 38-54). Section 2 draws attention to the lack of methodological inquiry into triangulation and points out the conceptual and epistemological inconsistencies within TIS scholarship. It provides an overview of translation studies research that has drawn on triangulation and explores the way that translation scholars have employed this strategy while critically analyzing its different conceptualizations. It then explores triangulation specifically within interpreting studies, where it has been less frequently utilized, and highlights the extent to which this methodological strategy is misunderstood as an ad hoc practice. Section 3 provides a thorough background of triangulation within the social sciences. It explores the epistemological evolution of the concept, its definition and methodological value. It also demonstrates the advantages of triangulation and its relevancy for interpreting research. Section 4 discusses how authors can employ triangulation to guide their inquiry logic toward a coherent research design and extend the insights and knowledge produced by their study. Finally, it offers a detailed description of the author's case study on volunteer interpreting in healthcare settings which employs a triangulation of three qualitative methods; the purpose is to demonstrate a concrete pathway for researchers wishing to employ triangulation in case study methodologies for interpreting research.

2. Epistemological issues around triangulation in translation and interpreting research

There is a consensus among TIS scholars about the value of combining multiple methods to explore the complexity of interpreters' and translators' social realities (Hild, 2015). In

particular, triangulation has gained popularity in the past few decades as more scholars have implemented it in their research designs. Triangulation, depending on the epistemological perspective of individual researchers, can add rigor, increase validity, enhance research quality, and provide a broader understanding of complex phenomena (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Some TIS scholars have explored the methodological underpinnings of triangulation and addressed the epistemological foundations that guide its different purposes. Still, in most cases, the term *triangulation* is often used as a synonym of *combination* of multiple or mixed methods and applied without justifying how it contributes to construct validity and trustworthiness (Hammersley, 2008).

2.1 Triangulation: A methodological wildcard in translation studies

For a few decades now, translation studies scholars have employed mixed-methods approaches (i.e., a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods) to the triangulation of different data sources and methods in process- and product-oriented translation research (see Jakobsen, 1999; Alves, 2003; Alves and Vale, 2009; Alves and Gonçalves, 2013; Robert, 2014). Alves's edited volume centers around triangulation as a response to "the need to apply several instruments of data gathering and analysis in their attempts to throw light on the nature of the process of translation" (2003: vii). Authors employ different types of triangulation (e.g., methods, data, and theories) to explore translatorial processes, and, in some cases, they briefly explain its specific contribution to the study in question (see Barbosa and Neiva, 2003; Hansen, 2003). The terms *triangulation* and *combination* are employed as synonyms across the volume to refer to the application of multiple methods of data collection within a single study. A majority of authors do not provide evidence of how triangulation contributes to address their specific research goals. Furthermore, few of these authors explore the epistemological foundations or the methodological implications of triangulation (i.e., does triangulation enhance validation?, does it increase replicability?, does it provide complementary insights into the subject?, does it contribute to the corroboration of findings?, does it contribute to a broader understanding of the subject matter?). So, despite its major contribution to advancing knowledge of translation processes, this volume does not clarify the ambiguities, disagreements, and misconceptions regarding the concept.

To date, few translation scholars have engaged with the term triangulation and explored its value for translation research. Munday (2009: 237) defined triangulation as a "multi-methodological perspective which aims at explaining a given phenomenon from several vantage points combining quantitative and qualitative methods". This definition frames triangulation as a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive view of translators' social contexts. Carl (2009: 225) defined triangulation as "the application of combined research methodologies, theories, or data sources to double (or triple) check scientific results," employing this approach to understand human translation processes. Hansen (2003, 2009, 2010) used triangulation of process- and product-oriented methods such as questionnaires, interviews, translations, revisions and retrospective protocols to study different translation processes. She adopts both terms combination and triangulation to discuss the application of multiple methods to ensure validity and replicability. Although she emphasizes the need for methodological systematization of triangulation and keeping combination and triangulation apart, she does not establish a clear distinction between these two terms (Hansen, 2010: 207). Saldanha and O'Brien (2013: 5) recognized "methodological triangulation to be the backbone of solid, high quality research". Unlike Munday, they view triangulation as a strategy for validation purposes by "cross-checking the results one set of

data provides with results from another set of data" (23). However, in reviewing other authors who have employed triangulation, their views of the term appear inconsistent as multiple definitions are introduced without addressing the epistemological foundations to support these variations (Meister, 2018: 7). Robert (2014) uses the term triangulation in the title of her article "Investigating the problem-solving strategies of revisers through triangulation." However, she does not discuss triangulation in the body of the paper nor can we find evidence of its contribution to her study, which is not to say that it does not.

Both Malamatidou (2018) and Meister (2018) provide extensive explorations of triangulation. Malamatidou discusses the various purposes of triangulation and describes her interests as validation and replicability. She explores triangulation in translation studies and provides evidence of her application of corpus triangulation. She argues that to conduct corpus triangulation, it is necessary to develop a clear rationale for the application of triangulated data. She explains that combining research methods is not, within itself, sufficient to justify the use of triangulation, a strategy that requires a coherent integration of methods and a careful process of reflection on the research goals. Meister also contributes to the literature on research methods in translation studies by discussing different epistemological perspectives on mixed methods. She situates triangulation within the larger methodological framework of mixed-methods and discusses the use of triangulation for corroboration purposes. Furthermore, she argues that the variety of epistemological perspectives found in translation studies requires a consensus among translation scholars.

Finally, in a special issue on news translation, Davier and Van Doorslaer (2018) employed a mixed-methods approach to triangulation of text analysis, interviews and non-participant observation. They address the complementary value of triangulation for their study and consider how it may be used to overcome the methodological limitations. Furthermore, they situate their perspective on triangulation within a broader epistemological framework. Although this special issue centers around the discussion on methodological approaches to news translation with an emphasis on triangulation, various authors employ triangulation as a synonym of combination and/or mixed methods, thus contributing to the ambiguity of the term (see Davier, Schäffner, and Van Doorslaer, 2018; Manfredi, 2018). Triangulation thus means different things to different researchers. By using triangulation to refer to different methodological strategies, techniques or frameworks without acknowledging individual epistemologies, researchers strip this term of its meaning. Empty signifiers tendentially "'become everything' to represent numerous demands" (MacKillop, 2016: 190), and triangulation, in translation studies, has gradually become an empty signifier; a sort of a methodological wildcard to refer to the combination of multiple methods in TIS research without a clear underlying rationale. For this reason, researchers must justify the use of triangulation and explicitly state its purpose(s) in a research study.

2.2 Triangulation: An unexplored ally in interpreting studies

In interpreting studies, the necessity to investigate the complexities of interpreting processes and practices has increased researchers' interest in multi-methods approaches (Angelelli, 2004; Merlini, 2009; Angelelli, 2011; Liu, 2011; Pöchhacker, 2011). Unlike translation studies, access to, and collecting large corpora of, naturally-occurring data may be comparably difficult due to the delicate nature of interpreted events and issues of confidentiality and privacy, especially in the public services (i.e., medical consultations, business negotiations, court proceedings, etc.). The size of the corpus can greatly limit the scope of the study and hamper the usefulness of findings. Accordingly, interpreting scholars

have begun to employ multiple research methods to access different views and gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Liu, 2011). Attention to research design and employing a coherent and carefully thought-out combination of naturally occurring data (e.g., recorded interaction, observations), researcher-generated data (e.g., focus groups, interviews, and/or questionnaires) and/or a variety of data sources (e.g., service providers, service users, and interpreters) such as triangulation should be a key goal among interpreting scholars (Hild, 2015).

The value of triangulation, however, has not yet been widely explored in interpreting studies. Angelelli (2004), in one of the earliest examples of triangulation in interpreting studies, employed triangulation of audio-recorded interaction, observations, interviews, and other artifacts to examine the interpreter role. She provides a detailed exploration of triangulation for corroboration purposes and demonstrates a coherent research design which enhances the quality and trustworthiness of her research. With the rising interest in multi-methods approaches, Gile (2005) advocates for the triangulation of mixed methods to ensure the validity of findings. However, he does not provide a pathway for implementation. To explore interpreters' role in healthcare settings, Leanza (2005) triangulated two data sources (participants and interpreted interaction) and two methods (interviews and observations) to enhance validation and capture different views of the subject matter. However, he does not elaborate on the implementation process. Hild (2007) employed triangulation of protocol statements, TL output, and observation notes to examine expert discourse processing in simultaneous interpretation. She provides a thorough exploration of triangulation and provides evidence of how it contributes to validation and methodological rigor. Davitti and Pasquandrea (2014) triangulated recorded classroom interaction and questionnaires to assess the suitability of conversation analysis as a tool for interpreter training. Yet, they do not discuss the methodological contribution of triangulation for their study. Kaczmarek (2016) used triangulation of interviews with service providers, service users and interpreters to gain a comprehensive understanding of the interpreter role. He provides a brief overview of interpreting research drawing on a combination and/or triangulation of methods to examine the interpreter role, thus treating triangulation and combination as synonyms. He does not elaborate on the concept of triangulation and its value for his study remains unclear. In their examination of interpreters' attitudes towards video remote interpreting, Seeber et al. (2019) triangulated three data sets obtained through questionnaires and structured interviews collected at three different points in time (before, during and after the event). However, their methodological account does not explain the contribution of triangulation for their study or shed light on the implementation process. Furthermore, triangulation and mixed methods are presented as interchangeable practices.

As discussed, most TIS scholars that use the term triangulation in their work do not discuss the inquiry logic at the base of their research design which organizes the triangulation of methods nor do they explain how each method contributes a piece of the puzzle (Malamatidou, 2018). If triangulation is to be employed as a strategy to address the complexities of interpreting processes and practices with rigor, credibility and the possibility of replicability, we must begin by gaining a clearer understanding of its epistemological foundations, and its relationship with quantitative and qualitative research in terms of its value to increase research quality beyond its basic conceptualization as a combination of methods.

3. Triangulation in the Social Sciences: An evolving concept

The groundwork of triangulation in social science research was laid by the work of Campbell and Fiske (1959: 101) who developed a mixed-methods approach to increase the validity and reliability of qualitative research findings. This strategy was a response to the limitations of single-method approaches that were being employed by qualitative researchers, since "no single research method will ever capture all of the changing features of the social world under study" (Denzin, 2015: 2). The use of qualitative methods was widely perceived as concerning among positivist social scientists regarding data interpretation. Concerns about bias and subjectivity called into question qualitative researchers' interpretations of social practices as representations of reality (Silverman, 2017). Under the positivistic belief that there could be a singular, definite account of the social world, they argued that when data obtained through a mixed-methods approach yielded comparable results, the uncertainty of data interpretation and researchers' biases could be reduced, making findings more valid (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). This mixed-methods approach was coined by Webb et al. (1966) as triangulation and further operationalized by Denzin (1978). The key to triangulation, as viewed by Webb et al. (1966), was to strengthen the effectiveness of mixed-methods strategies, since quantitative methods could help offset the weaknesses of qualitative methods and, consequently, validate qualitative results through confirmation and corroboration (Reiss, 1968). Furthermore, for Denzin (Denzin, 1978: 304), understanding a social phenomenon within a qualitative paradigm requires an investigation from a variety of perspectives, and triangulation can provide access to different versions of such phenomenon "by playing each method off against the other so as to maximize the validity of field efforts". Accordingly, he took the concept of triangulation even further and expanded it beyond its initial mixed-methods approach. He redirected it towards research design to involve the combination of several theories, data sources, research methods, researchers, or even different points in time and space within a single study to explore the same phenomena from different viewpoints. Clearly, positivist epistemologies, based on the belief that objective reality exists independently of individual perception, played a central role in this early conceptualization of triangulation (Flick, 1992). Hence, social scientists who employed triangulation for confirmation purposes in search of objective truth during the mid-Twentieth Century were concerned with validation, reliability, and replicability of findings in line with quantitative research (Duffy, 1987). In triangulation for confirmation purposes, qualitative and quantitative methods are viewed as complementary —rather than competing— ways to collect data.

Towards the 1980s, researchers using triangulation for confirmation purposes —with results validation at the center— were increasingly accused of subscribing to a naive realism associated with positivism (Flick, 1992). Even early supporters of triangulation for confirmation purposes (see Denzin, 1978) reconsidered this conceptualization and declared that "triangulation is not a tool or a strategy for validation, but an alternative to validation" since confirmation of the *truth* as a purpose does not make sense (Denzin, 2015: 1). The reorientation towards social constructivist epistemologies in the social sciences drove an important shift in the way *reality* was perceived. Constructivism suggests that reality is *constructed* through processes of social interaction, including the relationship between researchers and participants and, therefore, *truth* is a flawed notion that is relational and dependent on researchers' perspectives (Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault, 1998). While, scholars such as Fielding and Fielding (1986) promoted postmodernist criticisms of validity by explaining that there is no singular reality against which results can be verified or falsified, others raised concerns about the reliability of qualitative data since it is impossible

to replicate the same natural reality with its unique features in different settings, or even in the same setting at a different point in time (Bryman, 2011). Therefore, validity and reliability are unrealistic goals in qualitative research since the variables are intertwined and cannot be measured or controlled (Stenbacka, 2001). However, all researchers, whether they subscribe to positivism, critical realism, social constructivism or other epistemologies, must demonstrate that their studies are trustworthy and valuable. Trustworthiness, according to quantitative-oriented methodologies, can be generally achieved by measuring discrete concepts, which can ensure the validity and reliability of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this sense, if validity and reliability —at the center of positivist paradigms and their search for objective truth— are achieved through measuring tools employed by quantitative researchers, how can qualitative researchers establish that their findings are *trustworthy*? Although there are different philosophical positions regarding the trustworthiness of qualitative research and what criteria should be applied to achieve this, some qualitative researchers have proposed credibility and transferability as alternative criteria to validity and reliability (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). Credibility in qualitative research is understood as accuracy or "the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings" (121). To enhance credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that qualitative researchers must endeavor to minimize their subjectivity and ensure that their interpretation of the data is based on participants' original data and participants' own views and not influenced by their own research objectives. They propose an "audit trail" —a pathway of a researcher's decisions concerning data collection methods, processes of data analysis and interpretation, or theoretical framework— as a way to facilitate future research and enhance transferability (310).

As a result, the concept of triangulation was redefined to accommodate this new approach to capturing social reality. Fielding and Fielding (1986) introduced the goal of *completeness* as an alternative to *confirmation* in triangulation since they understood that qualitative researchers were not concerned with validity. This approach to triangulation as a strategy for *completeness,* which seeks to employ a variety of lenses to capture varied dimensions of the same phenomenon, is more concerned with research design than with measuring instruments. Furthermore, triangulation for *completeness* purposes can offer researchers the opportunity to shed light on the context, therefore achieving a more complete understanding of social reality (Breitmayer, Ayres, and Knafl, 1993). With this conceptualization, triangulation offers scholars the possibility to conduct research and to advance knowledge by adding richness and complexity to their investigations, more so than pursuing an objective account of reality. The triangulation of different methods, data sources or theories might help to identify contradictions, tensions and shortcomings of the data yielded by individual methods, thus enhancing trustworthiness. Findings produced by various methods can be synthesized and analyzed, and differences and similarities may be identified among different data sets, thus enhancing credibility through the convergence of evidence. The interplay between findings, whether corroborated or refuted, can then be analyzed to produce richer and more holistic accounts of social phenomena under investigation.

Finally, there is a key point that must be emphasized when operationalizing triangulation as a research strategy in the broader social sciences as well as in interpreting research: to achieve *completeness* through a triangulated approach, researchers must be clear about their research goals and be able to demonstrate, through a well-articulated research design, the transferability of the resulting findings (Breitmayer, Ayres, and Knafl, 1993). This requires that triangulation should not be an object within itself, but rather a careful and reflexive process on one's own biases and preconceptions, on the impact of the researcher on

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the subjects and objects of their study, and on how researchers perceive their role in the production of knowledge.

4. Triangulating three qualitative methods in case study research

Choosing an appropriate methodological framework can enhance the quality of a study and the trustworthiness of its findings. In interpreting studies, due to the emphasis on investigating interpreters' social realities and the difficulties in collecting a large amount of data, researchers often adopt case study methodologies. With case studies, researchers can investigate not only people, events or places, but the relationships that develop between participants and institutions and the complexity of the dynamics that ensue (Yin, 2009). Case studies are especially valuable in practice-oriented fields such as interpreting studies because the results can be employed to shape policy, procedures, and future research (Merriam, 2001). Through case studies researchers can gain in-depth insight into contemporary phenomena within their social contexts by narrowing down the focus of their research to one single phenomenon (Susam-Sarajeva, 2009: 37). Because case studies tend to focus on one single individual, group or community bounded in time and space, findings are often confined to the specific phenomenon under investigation and may not generalizable. On the other hand, despite scope limitations, findings obtained through case study research can be relevant to understanding phenomena elsewhere (through contrast as well as comparison) when clearly setting empirical and theoretical limits (Goertz and Mahoney, 2009). Case studies can respond to 'how' and 'why' questions and can examine the contextual conditions of real-life events. They can be flexible and open-ended and thus require an extensive descriptive, analytical and interpretative task by the researcher (Baxter and Jack, 2008). For this reason, case studies should be built on multiple data sources and/or research methods that must be brought together through "converging lines of inquiry" (Yin, 2009: 115).

Triangulation can play an important role in case study research. It can bring data sources together and increase credibility by integrating multiple methods so that the strengths of some methods can offset the weaknesses of others (Flick, 1992). It can contribute to corroborate or refute findings by including the theoretical constructs that guide the description, analysis and interpretation of data in the triangle and identifying evidence convergence patterns among datasets, and provide an internally coherent pathway that facilitates the transferability of the results to conduct further case studies (Yin, 2009).

4.1 Research design and data collection

As a doctoral researcher interested in examining authentic interpreted interaction in healthcare settings in the Andalusia region of southern Spain, I faced several methodological challenges that impacted my planned research design and endangered the continuation of my research (Aguilar-Solano, 2012). Accordingly, I reassessed my research plan with attention to three major concerns:

a) The limitations of the setting under research. After more than a year of continuous correspondence with the directors of the seven major public hospitals, I was only granted access to two hospitals, both of which had in-house interpreting services

provided by a non-profit organization of volunteer interpreters (from now on "the Organization")[1].

b) The limitations of participants' profile. The hospitals' management only granted permission to interview interpreters.

c) Timeframe limitations. I was only able to spend two months in Spain for fieldwork and data collection because of the delays in gaining access to the setting.

Considering these limitations, it was essential to plan a detailed research design that would increase the credibility and trustworthiness of my findings through a well-planned methodology. The design of the methodology was steered by the following research questions:

Q1. What are the institutional structures supporting interpreters and what influence do they have on the social dynamics among different agents (e.g., interpreters, doctors, patients, nurses, administrative staff, etc.)?

Q2. What roles can interpreters adopt, want to adopt or are forced to adopt in these settings, and under which conditions?

Q3. How do these interpreters' practice compare to the practice established by professional organizations and standards of practice?

To address these questions, a descriptive case-study methodology was employed based on the triangulation of three qualitative methods (i.e., participant observation, audio-recorded interaction, and focus groups) and Bourdieu's theory of cultural production (i.e., *field* and *habitus*) (see 1994). This theoretical framework guided me during the analysis and interpretation of the different data sets to explore positions imposed onto, or adopted by, volunteer interpreters and examine the external (i.e., institutional and users' expectations) and internal (i.e., interpreters' predispositions) structures that shaped them. In the research design, special emphasis was placed on ensuring the credibility of findings through a mutually informative combination of methods. This methodology led to a holistic understanding of this setting through the triangulation of interpreters' perceptions with interpreters' actual behavior. Accordingly, triangulation in this study contributed to the *confirmation* and *completeness* of the dataset. The weaknesses and strengths of methods, as well as their appropriateness to address the research questions, were explored, and the analysis and interpretation of data were guided by the comprehensive contextual portrayal provided by the convergence of different data sources. Moreover, through triangulation I was able to capture concrete examples of professional activity and knowledge of participants' modes of action and routines, to understand the social trajectory of individual participants and the degree of legitimization of the organization, and to gain an in-depth understanding of their code of conduct.

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[1] The Organization was founded in 2002. The volunteer interpreters are predominantly retired professional translators and interpreters and foreign language teachers living in Malaga but born outside of Spain, and who are native speakers of other languages. The Organization has been providing interpreting services at the two hospitals (a major regional hospital and a local hospital) in Malaga since then. They are highly institutionalized and recognized by the regional government as "interpreters" as stated in their identification cards provided by the public healthcare service. They provide their own in-house training and have their own code of conduct. Interpreting services are coordinated with the hospitals' management offices and interpreters are provided with the necessary equipment to carry out their tasks.

The data included 32 observations of interpreted events and interpreters' routine visits to patients, three audio-recorded interpreted events (29 min.), two audio-recorded patient-interpreter interactions (7 min.), and four focus groups with interpreters (360 min.). All focus groups and interpreted events were audio-recorded using a manual digital device, fully transcribed using Transcriber 1.5.0 for segmentation and labeling, manually color-coded and analyzed using deductive and inductive qualitative content analysis (QCA) (see section 4.4). Participants were recruited on a voluntary and availability basis from the two hospitals from both the morning (9 to 3 pm) and afternoon (3 to 9 pm) shifts. Two focus groups were organized at each hospital, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Focus groups took place in the interpreters' meeting rooms. A total of 17 volunteer interpreters participated in the focus groups distributed in three groups of 4 and one group of 5.

4.2 Participant observation

Despite the difficulty of carrying out participant observation of public service interpreting, some interpreting scholars have adopted multi-methods approaches combining participant observation with other methods (Berk-Seligson, 1990; Brennan and Brown, 1997; Angelelli, 2004; Leanza, 2005). Participant observation is appropriate in research areas where access to the setting and opportunities for recording field interaction are limited for ethical or other reasons, as is the case in public service interpreting settings where service users' confidentiality and privacy can be threatened by our presence (Carnevale et al. 2008). The purpose of participant observation is to observe what participants actually do, as opposed to what they say they do —as in the case of focus groups (as discussed below). Participant observation is a qualitative method of data collection that requires the researcher to become involved by engaging with the main activity of the field through informal conversations and establishing a relationship with participants (Jorgensen, 1989). Spradley (1980: 56) recommends that researchers adapt their behavior to that of participants to maximize naturalness and avoid exercising undue influence as an external observer. It is also important to find a balance between a researcher's degree of participation and the observational intent of this methodology (67). One must remember at all times that researchers are both insiders and outsiders and must find ways of recording their observations throughout. For instance, to conduct participant observation in this setting, I became a member of the Organization for two months. This meant that during my visits to the sites I was asked to perform as an interpreter and assist other interpreters. Although this opportunity gave me a direct insight into the dynamics between interpreters, patients and doctors, wearing the interpreter/researcher hat meant that, despite keeping a detailed journal of observations, there were many occasions when taking extensive notes was not possible. Triangulating this data source with focus group and audio-recorded data was essential to gain a holistic view of the social context and validate the findings.

Triangulating participant observation

Participant observation data provided responses to questions Q1, Q2 and Q3. A high degree of institutional legitimacy of volunteer interpreters was observed through analyzing aspects of interpreters' daily routines such as (1) the availability of an interpreters' meeting room; (2) the provision of artifacts such as beepers, hospital identification cards, patient lists, white gowns, office supplies, and staff food vouchers; and (3) interpreters' access to all areas of the hospitals (Q1). As a participant-observer, I was also provided with a white gown to

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accompany interpreters. Through the analysis of these data, I ascertained that these volunteer interpreters were perceived and treated as institutional agents and members of the healthcare team, thus attributing them a high degree of autonomy and institutional power with which to adopt various positions beyond that of the professionally established *conduit* (Dam, 2017) (Q3).

Further analysis of participant observation data, such as examples of interpreters' professional activity, revealed three positions adopted by volunteer interpreters (Q2): *patient advocate* (Merlini, 2009), *co-provider* (Hsieh, 2007) and *patient navigator* (Crezee and Roat, 2019)[2]. Table 1, below, shows some examples of professional activity recorded through fieldnotes and the corresponding interpreters' positions assigned. The labels employed to code the data regarding interpreters' positions were drawn from the aforementioned terminologies developed in interpreting studies.

Patient advocate	Co-provider	Patient navigator
(1) requesting information on treatment, medication, pending appointments or tests on behalf of patients. (2) negotiating discharge date and time with the administration office on behalf of patients; (3) initiating service complaints on behalf of patients.	(4) visiting and supporting patients to inquire check on them and offer help; (5) supporting patients' families (providing them with information on the patient's status, take them to patients' rooms); (6) welcoming newly-admitted patients without the presence of a healthcare professional; (7) recording information regarding patients' health conditions, problems, requests and/or pending items in the interpreters' official logbooks.	(8) accompanying patients to different offices and consultation rooms; (9) knowing the terms of different health insurance policies and dealing with insurance paperwork; (10) explaining patients about the healthcare system in Spain and any other information they may require.

Table 1. Professional activity recorded through participant observation

Cross-checking fieldnotes and case-study documents (e.g., interpreters' code of conduct and logbooks) revealed how volunteer interpreters adhere to the ethical principles of sympathy, compassion and understanding (established by the code of conduct) in their professional activity (see Table 1, items (1), (2), (4), (5) and (6)). These ethical principles, as well as some of the activities recorded through fieldnotes, were further corroborated by data from focus groups and audio-recorded interaction. Preliminary findings from participant observation provided the first piece of the puzzle and shed light on volunteer interpreters' practice and professional conduct and the extent to which these differed from professional ethics (Q3).

While the positions as *patient advocate* and *co-provider* were confirmed by data from both audio-recordings and focus groups, the position as *patient navigator* was only revealed through the analysis of fieldnotes. Although participant observation allowed me to capture a rich picture of volunteer interpreters' social contexts, interpreters' interaction with other actors, and the interactional dynamics that ensue and their impact on interpreters' activity, participant observation presented various limitations which were addressed through the

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[2] In exploring the positions of volunteer interpreters, five categories were extracted from the literature on the interpreter role: *conduit* (Dam, 2017), *gatekeeper* (Davidson, 2000), *patient navigator* (Crezee and Roat, 2019), *co-provider* (Hsieh, 2007) and *patient advocate* (Merlini, 2009). These categories were employed across all three sources of data to code and guide the analysis and interpretation tasks.

triangulation strategy. While fieldnotes hinted at the positions of *conduit* and *gatekeeper*, this data alone would have not allowed me to present these positions as trustworthy findings without the triangulation with audio-recorded data (see Section 4.3). Furthermore, since participant observation relies heavily on researchers' descriptions and interpretations of fieldnotes, which are bound to be shaped by researchers' worldviews, the credibility of fieldnotes analysis could be put into question (Silverman, 2017). Further concerns could be raised in terms of the reliability of participant observation data since it cannot be replicated. Focus groups and audio-recorded interaction thus provided additional context to guide my interpretation of the data and to corroborate or refute my observations. This contributed to minimizing bias and increasing the trustworthiness of my findings.

4.3 Audio-recorded interaction

Recorded naturally-occurring data has been widely used by researchers in interpreting studies (see Wadensjö, 1998; Davidson, 2000; Angelelli, 2004; Hsieh, 2007). Audio-recorded interaction provides dense linguistic information and is especially useful to answer research questions that are inductive through a detailed analysis of the transcript to detect patterns or themes to reach general conclusions (Hale, 2007: 230). One of the major difficulties of recorded interaction is gaining access to a research site while holding a recording device, which is the reason why interpreting researchers tend to employ researcher-generated data such as interviews or focus groups (Vargas-Urpi, 2017). For instance, despite persistent effort to record interpreted interaction during fieldwork, I was only granted permission to record three doctor-interpreter-patient interactions and two interpreter-patient routine visits. Another disadvantage of recorded interaction is the disruptive effect of the researcher's presence on the credibility of the data (Wadensjö, 1998). For this reason, very frequently, researchers are not present during the audio-recording of the sessions, since they can later transcribe them and analyze them without interfering with the interaction. However, Wadensjö (1998) argues that individuals in this type of encounters have a very specific agenda and expectations, and hence it is unlikely that the interaction is affected to a detrimental extent by the presence of the researcher and the recorder. Meyer and Schareika (2009: 19) refer to recorded interaction as "participant audition" and explain that this is the only methodology where "the ethnographer influences the data produced as little as possible", especially if we consider that the type of encounter under investigation already features an external agent, the interpreter, who is not perceived as a primary interactant. Moreover, even though the presence of the researcher may have drawbacks, not being present raises even more problems for research. For instance, in the case of audio-recordings, the lack of behavioral data such as non-verbal clues can impact researchers' interpretation of data, which is why contextualizing the data through other tools such as participant observation and focus groups can increase credibility. Both participant observation and focus groups can contextualize human behavior in a way that allows researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior (Silverman, 2017). In this study, the triangulation of audio recording with participant observation and focus groups contributed to realize a more accurate interpretation of the data, thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the analysis. Especially, my role as a participant-observer contributed greatly to code and interpret audio-recorded data more accurately.

The five audio-recorded events were fully transcribed and manually color-coded by reading the transcripts, highlighting relevant stretches with colored marking pens and inserting the predetermined categories (Mayring, 2019). They were analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), an analytical tool employed by anthropologists which

"focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content of contextual meaning of the text", and allows the researcher to analyze selected texts to respond to specific research questions, thus converting raw data into categories or themes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1279). The broadness of this analytical approach allows researchers a large degree of freedom in examining the data, which can help to identify patterns that may not belong to their preconceived categories. According to Mayring (2019), the first step is to identify an initial set of key concepts that will be used as coding categories for the analysis of texts and to operationalize those concepts according to the theoretical framework adopted. For this study, five categories were identified in the literature to conceptualize interpreters' positions observed in the transcripts: *conduit*, *gatekeeper*, *patient navigator*, *co-provider* and *patient advocate* (see Davidson, 2000; Hsieh, 2007; Merlini, 2009; Dam, 2017; Crezee and Roat, 2019).

Triangulating audio-recorded interaction

Audio-recorded data provided answers to Q2 and Q3 and corroborated two of the three positions identified in the participant observation dataset, namely *patient advocate* and *co-provider*. Excerpt 1 shows one of the audio-recorded interpreters' daily routine visits. In this interaction, the interpreter is visiting an English-speaking patient. Nobody else was in the room. It is not clear from this excerpt whether the interpreter had met this patient before.

> *Excerpt 1 (Interpreter-Patient interaction during a routine visit)*
> 1   Interpreter: Hello, I've just come to see how you are.
> 2   Patient: Yes, I'm fine.
> 3   Interpreter: More or less? More or less good?
> 4   Patient: Yes. No, it's quite good today.
> 5   Interpreter: Your family came to see you?
> 6   Patient: They are coming tomorrow.
> 7   Interpreter: Ok, are they living far away?
> 8   Patient: No, in Fuengirola, so...
> 9   Interpreter: Well, you speak some Spanish or not?
> 10   Patient: Yeah, *un poquito.*
> 11   Interpreter: *Poquito*, you get by with the nurses?
> 12   Patient: Yeah. Sometimes it's difficult.
> 13   Interpreter: If there's any problem you can always ask for us.
> 14   Patient: Yes.
> 15   Interpreter: So, if you need anything you ask for an interpreter.
> 16   Patient: Yeah, and that… the doctor here is speaking a little English also.
> 17   Interpreter: That's fine. Get better soon then.
> 18   Patient: Yeah.
> 19   Interpreter: Ok. Goodbye!
> 20   Patient: Bye, bye.

A close analysis of this Excerpt 1, contextualized by fieldnotes, case-study documentation and focus group data, reveals two positions, namely *co-provider* (lines 1 to 12) and *patient advocate* (lines 13 and 15) (Q2). As *co-provider* the interpreter positions herself as a member of the healthcare team whose role is to ensure the wellbeing of the patient within boundaries of their own skills and knowledge. In the interpreter's case is to ensure that communication does not affect the treatment or the patient's health improvement and that the patient is taken care of by all the team (i.e., healthcare staff and interpreters). Towards the end of the excerpt, the interpreter reiterates her position as *patient advocate* on two occasions to ensure the

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patient, who seems "to get by" (lines 11-12), recognizes her in this position should he need help. The analysis of Excerpt 1 also corroborated interpreters' adherence to their own code of conduct, which establishes that interpreters may visit patients to offer help and linguistic mediation, on the one hand, and emphasized volunteer interpreters' major deviation from the traditional *conduit* role established by professional standards of practice, on the other (Q3).

Audio-recorded data revealed two additional positions that were only hinted at in the analysis of fieldnotes but could not be confirmed. The positions of *gatekeeper* (Davidson, 2000) and *conduit* (Dam, 2017) emerged by closely analyzing the transcribed interaction. These two positions were identified in all three transcribed interpreted events by identifying instances where interpreters (1) fully translated doctors-patients conversations; (2) controlled the communication flow between doctors and patients; (3) had side conversations with other actors (i.e., doctors, patients and family members) without relating this information back; and (4) decided what information to translate and when. These positions further corroborated the high degree of institutional legitimacy observed in the participant observation data, which transfers onto them the autonomy, ability and power to shift between positions. Findings obtained through participant observation and focus groups concerning interpreters' legitimacy provided essential contextualization to accurately describe and interpret audio-recorded data lacking visual cues. For example, participant observation was essential to interpret healthcare professionals' nonverbal cues of approval and acceptance of interpreters' adopted positions.

4.4 Focus groups

Focus groups have been of increasing interest for interpreting researchers (see Hsieh, 2004; Angelelli, 2007; Tipton, 2010). One of the main features of focus groups is researchers' possibility of promoting interaction between participants, rather than between participants and the interviewer, an aspect that presents several advantages for researchers: (a) the researcher is placed in a less powerful position than in individual interviews as the conversation happens among participants themselves and so the data obtained is less prone to researcher's bias; (b) access to interpersonal communication can highlight (sub)cultural values or group norms and may encourage participants to (re)evaluate their own understanding of such norms; and (c) group communication facilitates the collection of a large amount of data in a short period as compared to individual interviews, which can be helpful in settings with limited access and/or when the nature of the topic, setting or subjects do not allow for large scale studies (Kitzinger, 1995). This last aspect of focus groups is an important advantage for scholars interested in examining interpreted settings, since focus groups can provide easy access to the phenomenon under investigation when access to naturally occurring situations is not a possible (Böser, 2016). Furthermore, focus-groups are helpful to explore participants' attitudes, feelings and beliefs on a particular topic —including their position within a field— and allow researchers to understand why people behave or believe the way they do. On the other hand, while focus groups generated data can be rich in participants' beliefs and accounts of their activity and provide an insight into what participants think they do, they do not allow access to what participants actually do and therefore are not a substitute for naturalistic observations. Finally, focus groups, as researcher-generated data, can suffer from general validity concerns that findings could be manufactured instead of resulting from the phenomenon under investigation (Morgan and Spanish, 1984). Despite these limitations, focus groups can be very helpful to contextualize

naturally-occurring data such as participant observation and audio-recorded interaction as part of a triangulation approach.

Triangulating focus groups

Focus groups data provided answers to Q1, Q2, and Q3 and corroborated some of the findings obtained through participant observation and audio-recorded interaction as discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3. An analysis of focus group data confirmed interpreters' position as *co-providers* and *patient advocates* (Q2). In Excerpt 2, interpreters are asked to describe a regular day at work, explain the different tasks they perform and how they go about it.

> *Excerpt 2 (FG 1)*
> 1 Dorothy: Yes, here is the list that we get every morning […], so we write down the name of the
> 2 patient, where they are —this is the room [*interpreter points at the list of patients in front*
> 3 *of her*]— and whether they are by the window or by the door, and we write down a list,
> 4 then we write in our book, so...
> 5 Salvador: We all do our little notes about each case for the next interpreter, sometimes, they are for...
> 6 Dorothy: So, this is really for the next patient that comes in —I mean next interpreter— so they
> 7 know what's been done and also if there's problems.

In this excerpt, Dorothy (in line 1) talks about the list of patients they receive from the hospital every morning. The importance of this list and the confidentiality of its contents demonstrate several aspects discussed in the previous sections. On the one hand, it corroborates the high degree of institutional legitimacy observed in the analysis of participant observation data; the list serves as an artifact to the legitimacy and trust placed in interpreters (Q1). Furthermore, in this excerpt, interpreters discuss the interpreters' logbook (see Table 1, item (7)): "we write in our book" (lines 4), "little notes about each case" (line 5), and "what's been done" (line 7). The centrality of the logbook-keeping activity was corroborated through the triangulation of participant observation and focus groups. Fieldnotes and case-study documents revealed that interpreters routinely visited patients to offer help and used notes entered in the logbook by other interpreters to check on patients, a task that was corroborated by focus group data. Interpreters' access to patient lists and their use of shared logbooks emphasize their institutional legitimacy, but also corroborates the degree of internal organization of interpreters and their position as *co-provider* ensuring that patients are well cared for (Q2).

In Excerpt 3, interpreters are asked to discuss the major difficulties or challenges that they face as volunteer interpreters.

> *Excerpt 3 (FG 1)*
> 1 Cordula: The worst is when old people come in on a Friday afternoon into the observation ward, and
> 2 they don't want keep them in and they just chuck them out, and then you have to fight with
> 3 the doctors [uhm] and tell them that there's nobody at home, OK? They say that this is not
> 4 a nursing home, I do understand that, but we don't have a social worker. During the week
> 5 there's a social worker, but we have Friday afternoon to Monday morning, and that's three
> 6 days, so those people cannot be in front of the door, and it's us at the weekend, we have to
> 7 fight with the doctors and they really hate us sometimes because…
> 8 Julianne: They see you coming, and there's a problem.

In this excerpt, interpreters complain about the treatment of elderly patients in the absence of social workers, and how they have to act on behalf of patients to ensure they are

allowed to stay until a nursing home is found by the hospital social workers. The whole excerpt strongly corroborates interpreters' position as *patient advocate*s and reinforces interpreters' institutional legitimacy. This is evidenced not only in their positioning but also in terms of their stance against hospital rules, both of which are guided by the ethical principles of sympathy, compassion and understanding. This segment confirms several findings from other datasets, including volunteer interpreters' ethical stances in comparison with professional ethics. In this sense, the rich data collected through focus groups provided an insight into interpreters' worldviews and further illustrated their positions within the hospitals and their relationship with doctors, nurses, patients and administrative staff, and offered additional context to corroborate the relevant findings of this case study (María Aguilar-Solano, 2015).

As observed in Figure 1, while the positions of *co-provider* and *patient advocate* emerged consistently across all data sources, those of *conduit* and *gatekeeper* were corroborated by two data sources, namely participant observation and audio-recorded interaction. The position of *patient navigator* was only revealed through the analysis of fieldnotes. Overall four out five positions were confirmed by at least two data sources, thus presenting a high degree of trustworthiness. While the position of *patient navigator* could raise some concerns regarding credibility, the concrete examples of professional activity recorded through participant observation cross-checked with case-study documents counteract some of these concerns.
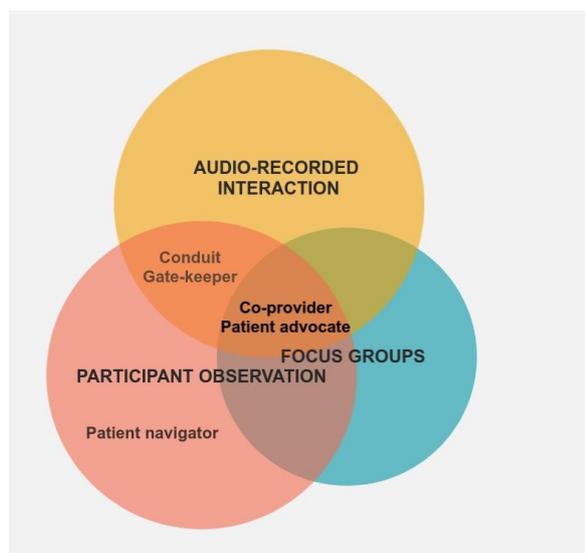

Figure 1. Triangulation of interpreters' positions

Within this study, focus group data provided rich narratives of interpreters' own truths —thus minimizing my own impact on their responses—, while an analysis of fieldnotes, case-study documents and audio-recorded interaction allowed for greater engagement with interpreters' actual behavior. The triangulation of focus groups, participant observation and audio-recorded interaction offered a detailed insight into this organization of volunteer healthcare interpreters and the context within which they operate. Carefully studying the strengths and weaknesses of each method and analyzing how each method could respond to individual research questions, I was able to corroborate findings across and between three data sets.

5. Conclusion

This paper explores the concept of triangulation, its epistemological foundations and how it may be utilized as a robust, multi-method approach in interpreting studies through its application in the author's original research design and execution. While the findings of the author's case study are specific to a particular institutional and geographical setting, this paper provides a broader context to demonstrate how such an approach can be integrated strategically to produce rigorous and theoretically informed research through engagement with longstanding discussions within the social sciences. Building on this foundation, the highlighted case study broadens understanding of the value of triangulation as a research approach in translation and interpreting studies. It addresses some of the common shortcomings of, and inconsistencies in, the application of triangulation among translation and interpreting scholars. These tend to stem from the lack of systematization of methodologies in research design, and from a broader lack of engagement with epistemological debates about the nature of knowledge, especially regarding concepts such as validity, replicability, reliability, credibility, and/or transferability. I argue that all of these goals could be loosely classified under the category of trustworthiness and that researchers must be clear about the criteria on which they base the rigor of qualitative research and how their research fits into this model.

Furthermore, while triangulation has gained some recognition among translation and interpreting scholars as a strategy to examine the complexities of translators' and interpreters' social realities (Meister, 2018), this concept continues to be largely misunderstood as an ad hoc practice equivalent to a combination of multiple methods. A key argument of this paper has been that triangulation must begin from the process of research design itself; it cannot simply be a label that is applied post hoc to imply multi-method rigor. Though there is inconsistency in the way that triangulation is understood within translation and interpreting studies, it is nevertheless clear that there is an overall consensus within the field that multi-method approaches have the potential to provide richer insight into the social complexity of interpreting settings. Engaging in multiple methods of data collection in interpreting research can lead to a thorough understanding of how interpreting scenarios are socially constructed, what dynamics are at play between different agents of the triadic event, and how these shape the role of the interpreter. Triangulation can be an essential strategy to enhance the trustworthiness of interpreting research, provided that methodologies are carefully devised in a way that they are complementary and contributive to one another, and attention is paid to the research design in terms of both the combination of methods as well as the theoretical constructs that guide the interpretation of the data. Accordingly, those employing triangulation in their research design must self-reflexively consider these issues in devising their research methods, justifying how such an approach fulfills the ultimate goals in the pursuit of their research goals. Through well-laid research design employing triangulation, researchers may be able to more fully exploit limited datasets and carry out fine-grained analysis, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings through the examination of the same social phenomena from a variety of angles.

Enhancing the trustworthiness of case study research in interpreting studies can be an achievable goal through the triangulation of qualitative methods. There are longstanding and vibrant discussions within the social sciences regarding the value of triangulation for qualitative case study research; interpreting scholars could more meaningfully engage in these conversations and the development of innovative research designs. The example I have

offered of my own utilization of triangulation in a multi-methods case study research design demonstrates one way that this approach can yield rigorous, detailed results. For the field to develop further in this direction, we must focus on comparative case studies across geographical and/or social contexts in which methodologies are shared and offer the possibility of replicability elsewhere, and the potential transferability of results. While there can be no perfect comparison between disparate social contexts and phenomena, this would nevertheless serve to develop the depth and trustworthiness of translation and interpreting research.

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