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Taking Stock of the COVID-19 Working Conditions on the Performance of the Interpreters: Rendering the Numbers in the 2020 American Presidential Debates[1]

COVID-19 Çalışma Koşullarının Sözlü Çevirmenlerin Performansları Üzerindeki Etkisini Analiz Etmek: 2020 Amerikan Başkanlık Münazaralarında Sayıların Çevirisi

Araştırma/Research

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the rendition of numbers in the first American Presidential Debates from English into Turkish for two broadcasting institutions. Comparing the source and target texts, we examine the rendition of numbers under the COVID-19 working conditions. In an attempt to address this question, semi-structured interviews with the interpreters of the Presidential Debates are corroborated with corpus analysis. The findings seem to suggest that numbers were either omitted or misinterpreted to a large extent in an atmosphere different from face-to-face working conditions. In conclusion, the paper shows that the interpreters' inability to assist each other exacerbated the error rate as the interpreters did not prioritize numbers over other components of interpreting.

[1] Drawn from the M.A. thesis entitled "Reframing Through Simultaneous Interpreting: The 2020 Presidential Debates in the Shadow of a Pandemic" submitted to Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, Social Sciences Institute.

Keywords: interpreting, numbers, American presidential debates, broadcast interpreting, interpreting numbers.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada 2020 Amerikan Başkanlık Münazaralarının ilkinin iki televizyon kanalı için Türkçeye yapılan çevirilerinde sayıların çevrilmesi incelenmiştir. Kaynak ve erek metinler karşılaştırılarak COVID- 19 pandemisinde geçerli çalışma koşullarında sayıların nasıl çevrildiği değerlendirilmiştir. Sayıların çevrilmesi ve çalışma koşulları arasındaki ilişkinin aydınlatılması amacıyla, Amerikan Başkanlık Münazaralarını çeviren çevirmenler ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Çalışmada, yüz yüze çalışma koşullarından farklı bir ortamda sayıların büyük oranda değiştirilerek ya da eksik çevrildiği saptanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, görüşme ve bütünce analizi bulguları çevirmenlerin birbirlerine yardımcı olamamalarının sayıların yanlış çevrilme oranını artırdığını ve çevirmenlerin sayıları sözlü çevirideki diğer unsurlara kıyasla öncelik verilmediği iddia edilebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: sözlü çeviri, sayılar, Amerikan başkanlık münazaraları, medya çevirisi, sayıların çevrilmesi.

1. Introduction

Rendition of numbers is a topic that has been studied in the literature, mostly in terms of analyzing interpreters' performances. However, no conclusive result has been reached so far regarding the percentage of errors in rendering numbers. Several studies have relied on experiments rather than real interpreting instances (Braun and Clarici 1996; Desmet, Vandierendonck, and Defrancq, 2018; Frittella, 2019; Korpal and Stachowiak-Szymczak, 2020; Mazza, 2001). In one of the first studies on the subject, Braun and Clarici (1996) conducted an experiment on twelve students and found that omissions accounted for half of the incorrect renditions of numbers. In another study, Mazza (2001) analyzed the performances of 15 students and found an error rate of around 40-50%. Collard and Defrancq (2019), however, found an error rate of around 18% in their analysis of the interpreting instances collected from the European Parliament, arguing that the low rate may be attributed to booth collaboration. For Desmet, Vandierendonck, and Defrancq (2018), the substantial difference between the results of different studies stems from their being experimental studies rather than real interpreting instances. For their part, in experimental studies, the interpreters tend to perform on their own, without relying on a boothmate, resulting in a higher error rate (Desmet, Vandierendonck, and Defrancq, 2018, 15). In real settings, however, since the boothmate may easily take down the numbers, it follows that the accuracy rates step up on such occasions.

Numbers, which traditionally pose a problem for even experienced interpreters, seem to have caused a major disturbance during the COVID-19 pandemic based on the personal experiences of the conference interpreters, with the emergence of social distancing and changing working conditions. The interpreters, in line with AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters) and TKTD (Turkish Conference

Interpreters Association), guidelines, had to either be seated in separate booths or be seated 2 meters away from each other. In an attempt to grasp the extent to which the interpretation of numbers has been affected by the interpreters' lack of proximity to one another, the present study focuses on the interpretation of the first 2020 American Presidential Debate. The study is based on an analysis of the transcriptions of two interpretations on two broadcasters as well as the results of open-ended semi-structured interviews made with the interpreters who were assigned to interpret the debates. The study, derived from the master's thesis of the second author, is an initial attempt to make sense of the effect of COVID-19 conditions on the performance of the interpreters as well as their evolving priorities in light of changing working conditions.

The aim of the study is to reveal the extent to which numbers have been prioritized by the interpreters in peculiar COVID-19 conditions. The classification of the errors has also been made to serve this goal. The analysis is contextualist in that the errors in the rendition of numbers are contextualized in light of the interviews made with the interpreters performing the interpreting of the analyzed data. The study will first present the results of previous studies that have addressed the processing of numbers in simultaneous interpreting. This discussion will be followed by a presentation of the study and data collection. We will then discuss the findings of the study, corroborating textual findings with the interview findings. The recurrence of different types of errors will finally be discussed in light of the current literature and interview findings. The goal of the paper, however, is not to assess the quality of interpreting but to offer an insight into the interplay between the changing working conditions caused by COVID-19 and the interpretation of numbers.

2. Processing Numbers in Simultaneous Interpreting

Interpreting, a highly intensive cognitive task, requires effort on a variety of fronts and can be analogized to walking on a tightrope, as one attempts to strike a balance between these competing pressures (Gile, 2009). Accordingly, listening and comprehension effort, memory effort, and production effort need to be operationalized simultaneously (Gile, 1995). The difficulties surrounding interpreting include complex syntax structures, speed, the density of input, and the presence of numbers (Gile, 1995). In light of these difficulties, the interpreters make use of multiple interpreting strategies such as anticipation, chunking, compression, and stalling (Gile, 2009).

In the case of numbers, however, the above-mentioned strategies are of no avail. Numbers alongside technical terms, names, and enumerations, considered interpreter-external factors, have been thought of as one of the root causes of difficulties in the interpreting process (Braun and Clarici, 1996; Dam, 2001, Desmet, Vandierendonck, and Defrancq, 2018; Mazza, 2001; Pinochi, 2010). Numbers, within the interpreting context, pose a variety of challenges. They can come in endless combinations and are impossible to anticipate or substitute. They thus have low-predictability, low redundancy, and high-informative content (Mazza, 2001), and are

thus not to be paraphrased as in the case of sentences (Jones, 2002, p. 117). In the case of words, for instance, if two words have the same meaning, the interpreter may compress the words, a case referred to as redundancy. Given this difficulty, it is not surprising that numbers are more difficult to process than words (Seeber, 2015, p. 86). Since numbers constitute an inherent difficulty in interpreting, it follows that the interpreter has to be more vigilant in interpreting numbers, allocating more cognitive resources to them. Consequently, the processing load on the brain increases in interpreting numbers (Seeber 2015; Kajzer-Wietrzny et. al., 2021). In light of the inherent difficulty of interpreting numbers, interpreters resort to form-based interpreting, also called transcoding, rather than meaning based interpreting (Dam, 2001).

The inherent difficulty of interpreting numbers has been addressed in a number of scholarly works. There is a growing body of research concluding that the quality of simultaneous interpreting shrinks immensely in segments with numbers (Mazza, 2001; Pukova, 2008). The effect of long numerical expressions (Pinochi, 2010), the effect of several numbers being close to each other (Kajzer- Wietrzny et. al.), the role of exceedingly fast delivery (Korpal and Stachowiak- Szymczak, 2020; Plevoets and Defrancq, 2016), and the difficulties related to the types of numbers, such as four-digits, decimals, and ranges (Mazza, 2011) are some of the aspects from which rendition of numbers has been addressed in the literature. In a recent study, Kajzer-Wietrzny et. al. (2021), reporting on the results of the European Parliament corpus, concluded that inaccuracies in the rendition of numbers might be accounted for by the high cognitive load of processing numbers, whereas omissions may be explained by the interpreters' need to reduce the cognitive load and may even be a conscious strategy, as previously suggested by Plevoets & Defrancq (2018). Conversely, Frittella (2019) concluded that rendition errors related to numbers may be accounted for by idiosyncratic factors, underscoring the subjectivity of interpreting numbers.

Research also suggests that the difficulty of rendering numbers, moreover, may be compounded by the different syntax between the source and target languages (Pinochi, 2009). A case in point could be the Chinese-English language pair. Cheung (2009) found that in interpreting from English to Chinese, students need special interpreting strategies. Pinochi (2009), however, studying a different language pair, concluded that interpreting from English and German into Italian does not cause a significant difference in the accurate rendition of numbers. Consequently, the impact of different syntactic features and directionality on rate of accuracy in rendering numbers is still a controversial issue. It must, however, be noted that the interpreters participating in this study did not have a boothmate.

The literature offers a number of solutions to decrease the error rate in interpreting numbers. In simultaneous interpreting, it is advised to note down numbers alongside proper names or other terms that are difficult to keep in short term memory (Mazza, 2001). Another important component of tackling numbers is constant practice.

Only by doing so will the cognitive demand required by numbers be reduced and cognitive space made available for more important functions (Liu, 2012). In a study demonstrating the importance of practice in interpreting the numbers, Korpal (2018) compared the performances of professional interpreters with student interpreters and found that professional interpreters perform better than the students.

One more practical solution for interpreting numbers accurately is to have one's boothmate write down the numbers for them. In this case, the interpreter will not have to allocate cognitive load to write down and interpret the numbers accurately and will have more resources to attend to the rest of the input. Another method would be to increase the ear-voice span, meaning the time lapse between the speaker's utterance and its reproduction in another language (Pinochi, 2009).

Yet another useful solution could lie in switching to literal hearing in the sense of paying attention to the items *per se* rather than attempting to draw inferences from the context, as suggested by Pinochi (2009) following Seleskovitch (1975). One must, however, keep in mind that modification of listening and production strategies gives way to the "interruption of the mental activity performed to transmit the overall meaning of a message from the source language into the target language" (Braun and Clarici, 1996, p. 88). A safer and more guaranteed way, however, would be to have a copy of the speech to be interpreted or projection slides (Mead, 2015). It therefore stands to reason that the external factors such as visual input and the boothmate's assistance appear to increase the accuracy rate in rendition of the numbers.

There is some evidence that when numbers are displayed on a screen through the use of AI, the rate of accuracy in rendering the numbers increases (Desmet, Vandierendonck, and Defrancq, 2018). In an experimental pilot study employing ten interpreters, Desmet, Vandierendonck, and Defrancq (2018) concluded that the accuracy of rendering numbers increased by two-thirds with the support of technology. Therefore, there is good reason to suggest that technological tools displaying the numbers as they are pronounced could substitute the boothmate as well as visual display such as a copy of the speech or presentation slides.

However, in distance or remote interpreting, which has become a part of our lives with the COVID-19 crisis, the above-mentioned solutions, especially the first one - with the exception of AI - may not be plausible. Considering that COVID-related restrictions require that interpreters either sit apart from each other at a distance of two meters or be placed in different booths, the traditional solution of writing down the numbers for one's boothmate might not be viable. AIIC considered this issue in its document entitled "AIIC Covid-19 Distance Interpreting Recommendations for Institutions and DI Hubs". The document recommends that interpreters be co-located in the same place in an attempt to prevent additional cognitive load and "support booth partners when numbers, acronyms and proper names are read out at speed and support

booth partners when unfamiliar or technical terms are used."[2] It follows that AIIC, in light of the multifaceted linguistic challenges in these unprecedented times, finds it imperative for the interpreters to be co-located and assist each other in rendering numbers, thereby decreasing the additional cognitive load.

Having considered the difficulties in the rendition of numbers in simultaneous interpreting, study design and data collection will be elaborated on in the following.

3. The Study and Data Collection

American presidential debates, of particular importance for American presidential elections, have traditionally been aired on news outlets since 1960. In time, they have turned into the most watched and studied political TV program (Isotalus, 2011, p. 31). The debates are aired live and draw a large viewership, especially when a conflict arises between the two sides (Schroeder, 1996, p. 57-59). The goal of the debates is twofold: to offer a space to the candidates where they can voice their opinions in a comfortable way and to educate the citizens (Schroeder 2016, p. 41).

Interpreting these debates, which are unscripted performances (Schroeder 2000, 95), has drawn scholarly interest in interpreting. In one such study, Dal Fovo analyzed the questions and answers in the 2004 debates (Dal Fovo, 2004). Pöchhacker (1994), analyzing the rendition of the 1992 US presidential debates on three German broadcasters, concluded that proper names, high speech rate, numbers, and culture-specific items pose a challenge in rendering the debates. Pöchhacker (2011), moreover, drawing on a corpus of US presidential debates between 1992-2009 recorded by German-language broadcasters, conducted a meta-analysis of the studies made under his supervision and revealed that audience expectations, varieties of renditions, rendition of culture specific elements, and rhetorical devices have been studied in analyses of presidential debates so far. Pöchhacker concluded that proper names, high speech rate, numbers, and culture specific items are the most challenging parts of interpreting the presidential debates (2011). Colucci (2011) analyzed the renditions of five US presidential debates between 1984 and 2008, examining the Italian target texts with the English source texts comparatively. He concluded that the omission or substitution of modality markers resulted in either a toning down or up of the target text, shifting the pragmatic effect of the text, thereby shaping the politicians' TV-mediated profile. Arzık Erzurumlu (2019), analyzing the interpretation of the 2016 US presidential debates by two Turkish broadcasters and corroborating the textual analysis with interviews conducted with the interpreters, found that repetitions, a marked characteristic of Trump's political discourse, were omitted in the renditions. Her results suggested that interpreting shaped the TV-mediated profile of Trump and the Turkish

[2] https://aiic.org/document/4839/AIIC%20Recommendations%20for%20Institutions_27.03.2020.pdf

audience found a Trumpese that was closer to the political discourse expected from an ordinary politician - unlike the real "Trumpese".

The 2020 US presidential debates, however, were exceptional in the sense that they were heavily marked by the pandemic. For one thing, pandemic had an impact on the questions entertained. To cite an example, the topic of foreign relations, which normally occupies a large space within the debates, went unmentioned. It looked as if the entirely singular problem the country and the entire world had to solve was the pandemic. Secondly, the pandemic impacted the organization of the debates. As former American President Donald Trump became infected with coronavirus between the two debates and did not want to join the second debate online, the second debate was canceled. Because of this, the debates, which are typically held three times, were only held twice. Overall, the impact of COVID-19 was not only felt on the topical level but also on the organizational level.

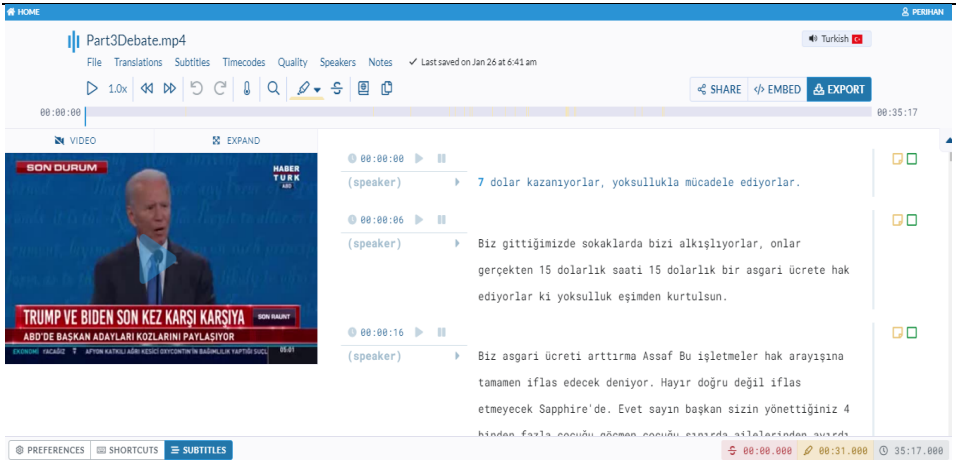
Turkish media has shown great interest in airing the American presidential debates live with simultaneous interpreting, especially in recent years. Airing the debates, somehow, is an indication of prestige for the big media outlets. The 90-minute debates were aired by three news outlets in their entirety. Two of these outlets hired two interpreters each to perform the interpretation. The third news outlet, however, aired the debate for only one hour since it shied away from hiring a second interpreter. Two of these news organizations, the latter outlet and one of the former outlets, granted the researchers access to their interpreting transcripts.

It is against this background that this study attempts to shed light on the way numbers were rendered in the interpretation of the 2020 US presidential debates. The research question the study addresses is "How and to what extent were numbers interpreted in the midst of the pandemic, given the shifted working conditions in TV interpreting?". To find an answer to this question, first both the American presidential debate and its rendering in two different news outlets are analyzed. The interviews made with the interpreters are then instrumentalized to illustrate the findings and shed further light on the working conditions of the interpreters in the midst of the pandemic. The overarching goal of the study is to make clear the ways in which interpreters' priorities change as their working conditions change since they cannot help each other when isolated from one another due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In analyzing the corpus, three different tools, namely InqScribe, Sonix.ai, and AmberScript were employed for automatic transcription and then the texts were edited manually borrowing the transcription method of Wadensjö (1998) simplified after Sacks et. al. (1978, pp. 731-733).

Figure 1

Screenshot from the automatic transcription of the presidential debate: Example of Sonix.ai



In categorizing the errors, Pinochi's (2009) categorization adopted from Braun and Clarici (1996) are employed: The examples are subcategorized as omission, approximation, lexical mistakes, transposition, syntactic mistakes, and phonological mistakes.

In what follows the findings of our analysis will be presented. Then, it will be followed by a discussion of our results.

4. Findings and Discussion

Our findings indicate that interpreting numbers is one of the most important and challenging elements for the interpreters in light of the COVID-19-related precautionary measures. There are several instances in which the numbers were either omitted or erroneously interpreted in the data. Furthermore, the findings of the data analysis seem to be supported by the interview findings. First, selective instances of interpretation of the numbers will be offered. Then, the interview findings will be presented to set the scene and offer deeper insight into the reasons why such omissions and misinterpretations occurred.

4. 1 Textual Analysis

The textual analysis will offer examples drawn from the comparison of the first debate's transcript against the target text, meaning the interpretations of it on two news outlets. It appears that there are many instances in which the numbers were either omitted or misinterpreted due mainly to the reasons elaborated above. The findings of the textual analysis will be grouped in line with Pinochi's (2009) classification, adopted from Braun and Clarici (1996). Accordingly, selective examples will be presented under the categories of omission, approximation, lexical mistakes, transposition, syntactic mistakes, and phonological mistakes. The study does not provide a frequency or a ratio

of the correct renditions of numbers since the presidential debates are characterized by repetitions as the following sentences of the former president Trump manifest: "…but a President is elected for four years. We're not elected for three years. I'm not elected for three years." As the interpreters may not have rendered such repeated numbers and may have preferred to omit them knowingly, offering a ratio of correct renditions without isolating such cases would not yield meaningful results.

4.1.1. Omission

Omission refers to numbers being missing or substituted by a very general expression (Braun and Clarici, 1996; Pinochi, 2009). Our analysis shows a high incidence of omissions.

In the example below, the number 250 is omitted in one media outlet whereas it is mistranslated in another one. Interestingly, the below data displays that a similar misinterpreting instance occurred in both channels.

Example 1

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**	**Target Text (NO2)**
As far as the church is concerned and as far as the generals are concerned, we just got the support of 250 military leaders and generals, total support. Law enforcement, almost every law enforcement group in the United States. I have Florida. I have Texas. I have Ohio. I have every… Excuse me, Portland, the sheriff just came out today and he said, "I support President Trump."	ıı Kiliseye baktığınız zaman ya da başka taraflardan gelen(.) raporlara ıı baktığınız zaman bu kişileri siz süper predatör dediniz ıı vee:: ıı Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki her(.) bir(.) ıı ıı (..) kolluk kuvvetlerinde(.) bunu görüyoruz. Iı Portland, Ohio, Michi-(inaudible). Zaten(.) ıı mesela(.) bugün(.) ıı şerif(.) ı-geldi ve dedi ben ıı (.) Trump'a oy veriyorum.	Kilise konusunda da generaller konusunda şunu söyleyebilirime:: ki 2-50 askeri lider ve generalin desteği bizimle. Kolluk kuvvetleri, neredeyse bütün kolluk kuvveti grupları ABD'deki(.), Florida, Teksas(.), Ohio, (...) afedersin Portland. Oradaki şerif de açıklama yaptı vee:: Başkan Trump'ı destekliyorume:: dedi.

Back Translation (NO1) When you look at the church or reports coming from other sides, these people you called super predators and we see this in each law enforcement. Portland, Ohio, Michi-. Actually, for example, today the sheriff came and said I vote for Trump.

Back Translation (NO2) I can say the same about the church and about the generals. That the support of 2-50 military leaders and generals are with us. Law enforcement,

almost every law enforcement group in the US, Florida, Texas, Ohio, excuse me Portland. That sheriff made a statement and said, "I support Trump."

In some instances, however, there are differences between the two media outlets.

Example 2

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)	Target Text (NO2)
The top 10 cities and just about the top 40 cities are run by Democrats, and in many cases radical left.	ıı ve buralarda birçok ıı demokratların olduğu yerde ra-dikal solcular(.) ıı var.	En- üstteki 10 Şehir-en fazla olan- 40 şehir demokratlar tarafından yürütülene::, çoktan radikal solun elindee::

Back Translation (NO1): and where there are many democrats here, there are radical leftists.
Back Translation (NO2): The Top 10 Cities—the most—40 cities run by democrats are already in the hands of the radical left.

The example above suggests that although the working conditions are harsh due to the pandemic, there are still idiosyncratic differences in rendering the numbers accurately.
The following examples also manifest instances in which the numbers were totally omitted.

Example 3

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
Number two, there are 20 million people getting healthcare through Obamacare now that he wants to take away.	Zaten Obamacare sağlık sigortası sistemini de kaldırmak istiyor.

Back Translation: Anyway, he wants to eliminate the Obamacare healthcare system.

Example 4

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
Because you know what? There's nothing smart about you, Joe. 47 years you've done nothing.	Iı Çünkü seninle ilgili akıllı diyebileceğimiz herhangi bir tarafın yok.

Back Translation: Because there is nothing smart about you.

Example 5

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
This guy paid a total of $750 in taxes.	Bakın, (.). Vergi ödemelerine bakın.

Back Translation: Check out his tax return.

Example 6

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
When the stock market goes up, that means jobs. It also means 401ks.	Borsalara bakalım, borsa yükseldiği zaman bu istihdam demektir.

Back Translation: Let's have a look at the stock market. When the stock market rises, it means employment.

Example 7

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
We've had no negative effect, and we've had 35, 40,000 people at these rallies.	Dünya nüfusunun büyük bir(.) kısmına sahibiz(.) ama o yüzden, biz bu sebepten dolayı Paris İklim Değişikliği Antlaşmasına geri katılmalıyız.

Back Translation: We have a big part of the world population. Consequently, we need to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement.

The examples above may also be considered as an indication of the on-the-spot decisions made by interpreters. Though the reason why such omissions were made is not clear, one reason may be attributed to the fact that interpreters were alone in the booth and/or did not have a boothmate to write down the numbers.

Below is an example in which the second number was omitted but the sense of the number was conveyed.

Example 8

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
We have the old slugs out there that are 10, 12 years old. If you did that, the car would be safer. It would be much cheaper by $3,500.	Eski araçlar var orada 10 12 yıllık. Eğer bunu yaparsak arabalar daha güvenli olurdu, çok daha ucuz olurdu(.).

Back Translation: There are old cars over there which are 10-12 years old. If we do it that way, then cars would be much safer, much cheaper.

Though the number is omitted, the sense of the sentence is conveyed. It may be argued that this example is a solid manifestation of the self-report of Interpreter3 in that he/she admits that omission and that moving on is a strategy he/she resorts to, adding, "I will try to keep it understandable, not pull it out of context, completely".

Overall, it is reasonable to argue that the instances offered are indicative of the priorities of the interpreters under the COVID-19 working conditions. Since the interpreters prioritized the content over the numbers, it follows that the number of incidences in which numbers were omitted may have increased when compared with the pre-Covid era. Yet again more data is needed to make such a strong claim.

4.1.2. Approximation

Approximation denotes rounding the numbers up or down. Approximation thus can be considered an interpreting tactic in an attempt to balance the high cognitive load of interpreting (Braun and Clarici, 1996; Pinochi, 2009).

The textual analysis of the interpreting versus the original text revealed that a high number of approximation instances were operational.

Example 1

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
And that ended when we, in fact, passed the Affordable Care Act, and there's 100 million people who have pre-existing conditions and they'll be taken away as well. Those pre-existing conditions, insurance companies are going to love this	Eğer sigortalanmadan önce var olan hastalıkları varsa hamile kadınlar^ bile^ ek ödeme yapmak zorunda kalacaklar. O yüzden uygun ba-kım yasası ıii milyonlarca kişi için çok önemli sigortalanamadan önce ıı mevcut hastalığı olan milyonlarca kişi için önemli.

Back Translation: If they have any pre-existing conditions- even the pregnant women will have to make additional payment. Therefore, the affordable care act is highly important for missions of people. It is important for people with pre-existing conditions.

Example 2

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
The bigger problem that you have is that you're going to extinguish 180 million	O yüzden (swallowing) uygun ba-kım yasası milyonlarca kişi için çok önemli.

people with their private health care, that they're very happy about this.	Sigortalanmadan önce III mevcut hastalığı olan milyonlarca kişi için çok önemli.

Back Translation: Therefore, the affordable care act is highly important for millions of people. It is highly important for millions of people who have preconditions.

Example 3

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
40,000 people a day are contracting COVID. In addition to that, between about 750 and 1000 people a day are dying. When he was presented with that number, he said, "It is what it is."	Günde yaklaşık 40 bin kişi Covid'e yakalanıyor. Ve binlerce kişi ölüyor.

Back Translation: Approximately 40000 people are dying of Covid. And thousands of people are dying.

Example 4

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
14,000 people died, not 200,000.	Binlerce kişi öldü.

Back Translation: Thousands of people died.

Example 5

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
Again, two million people would be dead now instead of… Still, 204,000 people is too much.	Kapatmasaydık şu anda 2 milyon kişi ölürdü. İkiyüzbin aslında çok daha düşük bir rakam.

Back Translation: If we did not shut down, 2 million people would have died by now. 200 thousand is actually a much lower figure.

Example 6

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
We had 10.4 million people in a four-month period that we've put back into the workforce. That's a record the likes of which nobody's ever seen before. And he	Dördüncü ayına (.) geldiğimizde bile 10 milyondan fazla kişi istihdama erişmiş durumdaydı ki ona kalsaydı II tekrar kapatırdı, ülkeyi mahvederdi.

wants to close down the… He will shut it down again. He will destroy this country.	

Back Translation: When we hit the fourth month, more than 10 million people had reached employment. If it were up to him, he would have shut down the country, he would have destroyed the country.

Example 7

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
You have 91 companies federal, I mean, the fortune 500, who don't pay a single penny in tax making billions of dollars.	Fortune 500 şirketlerine baktığımızda MİLYARLARCA DOLAR KAZANIP TEK KURUŞ VERGİ ÖDEMEYEN BİR SÜRÜ ŞİRKET GÖRÜYORSUNUZ.

Back Translation: When we have a look at the Fortune 500 companies, we see many companies that earn billions of dollars and do not pay one single penny.

Example 8

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
But in 2018, in the last midterm election, 31 million people voted by mail-in voting.	Problem şu burada bir şaibenin olması ıı değil ama yüz binlerce oy pusulasının kenara atılması.

Back Translation: The problem is not having a doubt but having millions of voting ballots on the sidelines.

The examples above suggest that the interpreters resorted to approximation quite frequently. Self-reports of the interpreters also seem to support these findings as will be elaborated on in the following parts.

4.1.3. Lexical mistakes

Lexical mistakes refer to the substitution of the components of the numbers (Braun and Clarici, 1996; Pinochi, 2009).

The following example showcases an instance in which "2035" was rendered as "2025" by the interpreter in NO1.

Example 1

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)	Target Text (NO2)

All right, Vice President Biden. I'd like you to respond to the president's climate change record but I also want to ask you about a concern. You propose $2 trillion in green jobs. You talk about new limits, not abolishing, but new limits on fracking. Ending the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity by 2035 and zero none admission of greenhouse gasses by 2050. The president says a lot of these things would tank the economy and cost millions of jobs.	Siz iklim değişikliği(.) ıı siciline-baktığımız zaman Sayın Başkanım, biliyoruz ama siz de 2 trilyon dolarlık bir yeşil istihdam(.)-dan bahsettiniz. Herhangi bir sınır ıı koymadan ıı ve fosil yakıtların kaldırılmasıe:: elektrik üretiminde 2025 yılına kadar(.) vee:: yine sera gaz-ıı-zı salımlarının da ıı yine sıfıra indirilmesinden ıı bahsettiniz ıı ve ıı bu-Sayın Başkan ıı bunun ıı ekonomide birçok(.) istihdamın yok olacağına sebebiyet vereceğini söylüyor.	Başkan Yardımcısı Biden(.), cevap vermenizi istiyorum Başkan'ın iklim değişikliği geçmişine ilişkin ama bir sorum da var size endişelerle ilgili. 2 trilyon dolarlık Yeşil(.) iş yatırımını önerdiniz yeni limitlerden bahsettiniz. Özellikle de kaya petrolü çıkarımında ve fosil yakıtları kullanımında elektrik çıkarılması için 2035'e kadare:: ve sıfır net salınım için 2050'ye kadar. Sayı-Sayın Başkan bunların çoğunue::n ekonomiyi batıracağını ve milyonlarca iş kaybedeceğini söylüyor.

Back Translation (NO1): When we have a look at your climate change record, Mr. President, you have mentioned 2 trillion dollars of green employment. You have mentioned a range of issues from not putting any limit to fossil fuels and generation of electricity until the year 2025 and making greenhouse gas emissions zero. Mr. President says that this will lead to the elimination of a high number of jobs in the economy.

Back Translation (NO2): It is about the climate change record of the President. However, I have a question for you regarding the threats. You have mentioned 2 trillion dollars of green employment along with the new limits. Especially in fracking and the use of fossil fuels until 2035 and until 2050 for net zero emissions. Mr. President says that this will disrupt the economy and eliminate a high number of jobs in the economy.

The above example manifests that the interpreter working for NO1 made a lexical mistake in that the order of the magnitude seems correct; however, some of the components have been altered and 2035 was rendered as 2025. The interpreter assigned with interpreting for the second broadcasting channel, however, interpreted the number accurately.

By the same token, below is an example in which "53" was rendered as "52" by the interpreter working for NO1.

Example 2

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)	Target Text (NO2)
I think as a party issue, you can bring in a couple of examples but if you look at Chicago, what's going on in Chicago where 53 people were shot and eight died, if you look at New York where it's going up, like nobody's ever seen anything.	Bence kesinlikle parti ile alakalı bir soru. Birkaç tane örnek vereyim hemen. Chicago mesela, Chicago'da olanı ele alalım. Burada 52 insan vurularak öld- sekizi öldü, 52'si vuruldu, sekizi öldü.	Bence partiyl-e alakalı bir ıı mesele. ıı Chicago'ya bir bakın, Chicago'da olup biten olaylara bak-ın. ıı Burada üç-otuz beş ıı 53 kişi(.) ıı vurularak hayatını kaybettie::, 8 kişi vuruldu, 8 kişi hayatını kaybetti.

Back Translation (NO1): I think it definitely is a party-related issue. Let me give you a couple of examples immediately. Chicago, for instance. Let us take the rate in Chicago. 53 people were shot and 8 died.

Back Translation (NO2): I think it is a party-related issue. For instance, have a look at Chicago. Have a look at what happened over there. 35-53 people were shot to death, 8 were shot, 8 died.

In NO1, the interpreter rendered "53" as "52". In NO1, it appears that the interpreter changed the digits and transformed "53" into "35" in the first trial. A couple of seconds later the right number came out. The reason why this happened may be accounted for by the fact that the interpreter had no one to help him/her but had to rely on either the number he/she jotted down or short-term memory instead of the boothmate. Though it may have made sense to inquire into it in the interviews, we chose not to, since we did not have the chance to interview all the interpreters assigned with interpreting the presidential debates due to COVID restrictions and their unavailability at that time.

Example 3

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)
His own head of the CDC said if we just wore masks between now, if everybody wore a mask and social distanced between now and January, we'd probably save up to 100,000 lives.	Maskelerle ilgili olarak hastalık kontrol ve önleme merkezi dedi ki ıı Ocak ayına kadar maske takan ve sosyal mesafe kurallarına uyan insanların sayısı artarsa yüzbin kişiden fazla hayat kurtarabiliriz dediler.

Back Translation: With regard to the masks, CDC said that if the number of people wearing masks and abiding by social distancing rules increased until January, then we could save more than 100 thousand people.

The above example illustrates an instance in which the number "up to 100 thousand" was rendered as "more than 100 thousand". It may be argued that the interpreter, trying to catch the numbers in such a culturally-loaded text rendered the number in the right way, however, confused "up to" with "more than". A similar mistake seems to occur in the rendition of the first number in the example above.

Example 4

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
You propose more than $4 trillion over a decade in new taxes on individuals making more than $400,000 a year.	Yaklaşık 4 trilyon dolarlık yeni ıii… vergilerden bahsediyorsunuz kişiler üzerine şahıslar üzerine ve şirketler kurumlar üzerine.

Back Translation: You are talking about new taxes of around 4 trillion dollars on people and on companies.

It appears that the interpreter, confusing "more than" with "around" missed the second number uttered by the speaker.

Example 5

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
In 47 months, I've done more than you've done in 47 years, Joe.	Ben 48 ay içerisinde, ıii senin 47 ay içerisinde senin 48 yıl içinde yaptığından daha fazlasını iiii yaptım.

Back Translation: In 48 months, I have done more than you have done in 47…. 48 years.

It is safe to assume that the interpreter got confused as to whether the number uttered in the source text was 47 or 48. He/she therefore, uttered both versions and in the end decided that it would be "48" instead of "47".

Transposition

Transposition suggests changing the order of the numbers such as 47 becoming 74 (Braun and Clarici, 1996; Pinochi, 2009). We have found only one single instance of

transposition in our analysis of the transcription of the first American Presidential Debate.

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
I paid $38 million one year, I paid $27 million one year.	Ben bir yılda 38 milyon dolar ödedim. 70 küsur milyon ıı dolar ödedim.

Back Translation: I paid 38 million dollars in one year. I paid more than 70 million dollars.

It appears that the interpreter mistakenly interpreted 27 million as 72 million, resulting in the production of "more than 70 million".

4.1.4. Syntactic mistakes

The literature suggests that syntactic mistakes occur when the order of magnitude is erroneous although the right components are present (Braun and Clarici, 1996; Pinochi, 2009). 45 becoming 450, for instance, would be a typical example of a syntactic mistake. We offer examples in which syntactic mistakes occurred in our analysis of the data below.

Example 1

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
Joe, you've had 308,000 military people dying because you couldn't provide them proper healthcare in the military. So don't tell me about this.	Sen de askeriyede ıı orduda uygun ıı sağlık hizmetleri veremediğin için 3000'den fazla kişi öldü.

Back Translation: Since you could not offer the proper healthcare in the military more than 3000 people died.

Concerning the above example, it is plausible to argue that both approximation and syntactic mistake occurred simultaneously.

Example 2

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**

We're going to build an economy that in fact is going to provide for the ability of us to take 4 million buildings and make sure that they in fact are weatherized in a way that in fact they'll emit significantly less gas and oil because the heat will not be going out.	Ekonomiyi yeniden inşa ettiğimizde öyle bir fırsat verecek ki bize 4 milyar (.) binanın doğru iklimselleştirebildiğinden emin olacağız. Böylece çok daha az salınım ve petrol harcayacaklar ki ısı kaybı olmasın.

Back Translation: It will give us such an opportunity when we rebuild the economy that we will ensure that 4 billion buildings are climatized in the right way. Therefore, they will generate less emission and oil so that heat will not be lost.

The interpreter, apparently, confused "4 million" with "4 billion" in his/her rendition.

Example 3

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**
Not 15 bucks an hour, but prevailing wage, by having a new infrastructure that in fact, is green.	Milyonlarca iyi ödeyen iş kazandıracak, saatte 50 dolar, 15 dolar değil ve daha fazla (.) maaş verecek ve altyapıları yeşilleştirdikçe daha iyileşecek.

Back Translation: Millions of good paying jobs will make us earn. Not 50 dollars, 15 dollars per hour but more wages will be offered, and things will get better as infrastructure gets better.

As the above example demonstrates, there may have been some instances in which the interpreters apparently self-corrected.

4.1.5. Phonological mistakes

Phonological mistakes come out when phonological confusion occurs in the source stimulus (Braun and Clarici, 1996; Pinochi 2009), such as 15 becoming 50, as in the example below.

Example 1

Source Text	**Target Text (NO1)**	**Target Text (NO2)**
When we were in office there was 15% less violence in America than there is today. He's	ıı Şiddetin artması ile ilgili olarak(.) biz görevdeyken bugün olduğundan yüzde 50 daha az ıı şiddet vardı(.) Amerika Birleşik	Şiddet konusundaysa biz-bizim hükümetimiz görevdeyken şiddet yüzde 50 daha azdı ABD'de bugüne kıyasla. Şu anda

President of the United States. It's on his watch.	Devletleri'nde. daha da artmış durumda.."	Şimdi(.)	ABD başkanı o ve bu onun sorumluluğunda ve(.)

Back Translation (NO1): Regarding the escalation of violence, there was 50 percent less violence when we were in office than there is today in the United States. Now, it has increased even more.
Back Translation (NO2): As for violence, when we and our government were in office, the violence was 50 percent less in the USA compared to today.

Interestingly, interpreters working for both channels have misinterpreted the figure and have made a phonological mistake as defined by Pinochi (2009). To Pinochi, a phonological mistake may be accounted for by phonological confusion, such as 14 becoming 40, as further detailed in Desmet, Vandierendonck, and Defrancq (2018). This phonological mistake may reflect that the interpreters opted to channel their energy on conveying the overall sense rather than interpreting the number correctly.

A similar mistake seems to have occurred in the example below.

Example 2

Source Text	Target Text (NO1)	Target Text (NO2)
And the fact of the matter is, violent crime went down 17 percent, 15 percent in our administration. It's gone up on his watch.	İdaremizde yüzde 15'inden yüzde 17 sinden bahsediyoruz insanların ıı ve bu rakam onun yönetiminde arttı, başkanın yönetiminde arttı.	Ve işin aslı şu şiddet-şiddetle suçların oranı yüzde elli a-zaldı, %70 azaldı bizim hükümetinize onun gözleminde arttı. ARTTI. Hayır, hayır kabul etmiyorum bunu. ARTTI.

Back Translation (NO1): We are talking about 15%, 17% of people in our administration. and this number has increased during his administration, has increased under the administration of the president.
Back Translation (NO2): And the fact of the matter is that the rate of vio-violent crime has decreased by 50 percent, decreased by 70 percent, to our government, it has increased on his watch. INCREASED. No, no I do not accept that. INCREASED.

The interpreter working for NO2 seems to have made a phonological mistake whereas the interpreter assigned with interpreting in NO1 did not commit such a mistake. The fact that such subjective differences do exist in the data my indicate that

not only the working conditions but also the individual ways that different interpreters render the numbers plays out in the rendition of the numbers.

4.2 Interviews

The interview questions, therefore, were formulated after the data was analyzed and were instrumentalized to explore the data in depth. The interviews were conducted online in English, which is the B language of the interpreters, over Zoom, and transcribed through the automatic transcription feature on Zoom. The selection of the interviewees was conditioned by their having interpreted the 2020 American presidential debates live. Thus, convenience sampling was employed. A total of four interpreters, working for three different media outlets, were selected for the interview. All the interviewees had majored in Translation and Interpreting, and had at least ten years of experience, except the case of Interpreter3, who had been working as a staff interpreter for a news outlet for more than one year. Two interviewees are members of the Turkish Conference Interpreters' Association, while Interpreter3 is a candidate. All but one of the interpreters are within a similar age range. Interpreter1 is 42 years old, Interpreter2 is 36 years old, and Interpreter4 is 38 years old. The exception was Interpreter3 who is 25 years old. The duration of each interview varied, ranging from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. The interview questions may be found in Appendix 2.

The interview findings are indicative of the working conditions under which the interpretations were perpetuated in the COVID era.

Example Excerpt (7) from Interviews with NO1 Interpreter1

> I was able to interpret in the same room, not in the same booth, but in the same room in the same studio, actually, with my partner. They had arranged for a different setting, and we convinced them and also technically explained to them that it's feasible, that we can use the same device. We just needed two earphones. So we were in a big studio, and we were given a very big table. The device, the interpretation device, the console was between us but we were able to sit at a distance. So, we were able to keep the social distance. That's why we were able to remove our masks.

In NO3, however, working conditions were totally different. The interpreters, working for NO3, were asked to perform in different studios, physically isolated from each other.

Example Excerpt (14) from Interviews with NO3 Interpreter4

> We wouldn't be able to sit in the same booth, due to the pandemic. We got seated in different booths, we could hear each other only through the earphones. So, what we did was that it would be like a voiceover, I mean, I would be hearing the speaker louder, but I would be hearing my boothmate

> with a lower sound in my ear, so it makes things really difficult, extremely difficult I must say.

As to the effect of this challenging setting upon the performance, Interpreter4 attests to the difficulty of the hearing she experienced.

Example Excerpt (15) from Interviews with NO3 Interpreter4

> The thing is American presidential debates are marked by overlapping voices, sounds because people speak simultaneously and you need to choose who you're going to interpret mainly. But the thing is, if my boothmate is speaking in my ear, then I can't hear the original speaker. It happened to me many, many times, so I couldn't hear Biden.

Given the challenging working conditions, it is no surprise that interpreting numbers were not easy for the interpreters. In light of the challenging working conditions that are not conducive to the interpreters' helping each other out, the interpreters maintain that they resorted to omission at times. As the below excerpt manifests, this strategy may have stemmed from a conscious effort to prevent "saying something wrong".

Excerpt from Interview with NO1 Interpreter1

> […] I sometimes heard the numbers, but I wasn't sure, because in the context that didn't make sense. So instead of saying something wrong, like saying 18,000. I, because I wasn't sure maybe he wanted to say 1800, but he mispronounced it. If I wasn't sure, I totally omitted it, and sometimes again, I couldn't catch it, and my partner was too far away to write it for me, so I totally chose not to interpret, and maybe the ones I said were wrong.

It is along the same lines that Interpreter2 also reports that they may have mistranslated some of the numbers.

Excerpt from Interviews with NO1 Interpreter2

> […] you know I said we have to sit a bit apart from each other, so it was not that easy for one another to see what our colleague was writing down. Yes, we still helped, tried our best to help in terms of those numbers, but sometimes it was not possible because the speaker was getting carried away, carried away when he was mentioning all those numbers. So, maybe as we misinterpreted some figures, maybe we could not catch some or could not- Sometimes I, we can't also read our colleagues' handwriting.

By the same token, another interpreter working for a different broadcaster offers a similar explanation. He/she argues that approximation or rounding up the numbers are strategies that may have been employed in the rendition of the debates.

Excerpt from Interview with NO3 Interpreter4

> […] people speak at a rapid pace, it's marked by overlapping talk, and it's not that easy to interpret the numbers in the correct manner. We just say, for instance, what I do is that I just say, "8 milyondan fazla" [more than 8 million] kind of. If the speaker says 8 million and two hundred blah blah blah. It's more than 8 million, that's what I say, that's all I can do. I can't give the exact number at such a pace… This year, we couldn't help each other. It was the biggest problem, I think. I must confess that I paid no attention to numbers at all, because numbers are not my priority at all in this debate. I'm alone, come on, I'm alone in the booth….

Interpreter4 also adds that his/her not prioritizing numbers might be accounted for by the fact that the interpretation of the debates was marked by COVID-related restrictions.

Similarly, Interpreter3 mentions that since the debates are not scripted, the numbers mentioned during the talks are very much prone to be missed.

Excerpt from Interview with NO2 Interpreter3

> I probably had misunderstood the wrong numbers or whatever. At that point I try to just, I try to stick to the original speaker, but if I can't, I sometimes, I omit, right, if I feel as if I'm going to stop. If I feel as if the number is not coming. Then I just omit that part and move on. For example, many times, somebody would say like "beşyüz bin oy da çalınamaz artık" [five hundred thousand votes cannot be stolen] I would interpret that as "Bu kadar da oy çalınamaz artık" [that many votes cannot be stolen] So, I will try to keep it understandable, not pull it out of context, completely….

Our findings suggest that in the absence of an institution shaping the working conditions of TV interpreters, the free-lance conference interpreters assigned with rendering the debates into Turkish in the midst of the pandemic had to find their own way through it. As such, they showed agency, drew on the distance interpreting guidelines prepared by AIIC and TKTD and shaped the working conditions.

The interview findings, furthermore, display the stance of the interpreters. Since the debates were held in the midst of the pandemic (as mentioned above, the second presidential debate was cancelled as the Republican candidate Donald Trump

was tested positive for COVID-19), it follows that the interpreters prioritized health and safety. The working conditions under which the debates were rendered seem to confirm the contention of Jimenez Serrano when he observed that the circumstances surrounding TV interpreting test the interpreter's physical and psychological ability to work under extreme conditions (2011, 118). Considering the working conditions, such as sitting two meters away from each other or sitting in different interpreting studios, all interpreters acknowledge that they may have misinterpreted the numbers. Overall, it may be argued that the interpreters' not being able to assist one another as they could prior to the pandemic, shaped the interpretation and as such impinged on the quality of the interpreting to some extent.

5. Conclusion

The present study was designed to reveal the interplay between interpreting numbers and interpreting in the COVID era with strict restrictions in place around the working conditions. The study set out with the aim of taking stock of the importance of working conditions in interpreting numbers. In an attempt to reveal this interplay, the interpretation of the 2020 US presidential debates was examined. The findings of the corpus were corroborated with the findings of the interviews made with the interpreters perpetuating the interpretation in the presidential debates.

Based on the empirical findings, it may be argued that working conditions impinged on the misinterpretation or omission of numbers. Yet again due to the limited data this consideration needs to be exercised with caution. While previous studies addressed individual factors operational in the errors, the results of the present study reveal the interplay between working conditions and errors in rendering the numbers, thereby adopting a more contextualized perspective. In particular, it may be argued that interpreters, no longer having the chance to sit side by side and assist each other in interpreting numbers, missed the numbers to a large extent. The findings further support the findings of previous literature in that numbers are difficult to interpret and require extra cognitive effort for some interpreters. Our findings, moreover, are in agreement with the findings of Gile (1995) in that the interpreters are like tightrope dancers in that they have to prioritize certain interpreting elements at the cost of others. It appears that in the case of interpreting the 2020 debates the interpreters prioritized interpreting the content over the numbers they encountered. Secondly, the different renditions on NO1 and NO2 seem to support the findings of Frittella (2019) in that the subjective variables play a key role in the interpretation of numbers.

The present study makes several noteworthy contributions to the interpreting literature, enhancing our understanding of both TV interpreting and remote interpreting. Though the setting analyzed in this paper is television and the form is TV interpreting, the setting resembles distance or remote interpreting more in that the

interpreters perform either two meters away from each other or are in entirely different locations. Though this setting stems from the restrictions put in place because of COVID, it appears that these social distancing rules will remain with us for some time. In light of this information, it would be worthwhile for training programs to emphasize the way numbers are to be interpreted for the future interpreters-to-be. The research as such will serve as a base for future studies and allow us to think of innovative ways to enable the accurate interpretation of numbers in stretches of language at such a fast pace. The evidence from this study also suggests that interpreters, in particular, while working away from each other, may be in need of an artificial boothmate. The use of InterpretBank, for instance, which assists interpreters in interpreting the numbers could be one of the tools to be employed in such settings.

Finally, a number of limitations need to be considered. First, a corpus analysis tool could be used to conduct quantitative analysis, and the percentage of cases in which numbers were misinterpreted could be offered. Secondly, the data is limited to the corpus taken from two media outlets. To reach comprehensive results, a larger data set could be used. A larger dataset could also offer evidence as to whether the interpreters in the study made such mistakes prior to the COVID era. Thirdly, as the debates are marked by overlapping talks, the results should be evaluated with caution. NO1 Interpreter1 articulates this difficulty as follows: "you have to make the decision. I mean you, you have to omit certain parts, because it's not like you are talking all the time. You have to wait for the other person, and then you have to start. You can't interrupt your partner just like Trump was interrupting Biden. Sometimes we had to do it because there were exchanges of nasty words as I said so."

In future studies the findings of this research could be compared with the findings of previous corpora. One study, for instance, could compare the extent to which numbers were missed with that of the 2016 US presidential debates. A quantitative comparison could thus be made between the interpretation of the 2020 and 2016 debates. A further study with a larger set of data might be done in an attempt to generalize the findings of this study.

Overall, the findings of this study, lying at the crossroads of TV interpreting and remote interpreting, enhance our insights into the difficulties faced by interpreters in COVID era. It appears that possible solutions to these challenges deserve more of our attention.

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Appendix 1: Conventions used in transcriptions (adopted from Wadensjö 1998, p. 102 who simplified after Sacks et. al. 1978, pp. 731-733)

Symbol	Meaning
[[ ]]	overlapping talk
e::	long consonant/vowel
(.)	short silence, pause
(..)	longer pause
-	Sudden cut-off the current sound, stammering

()	non-verbal feature
Boldface	words spoken with emphasis
ıı	filled pauses
BOLDFACE	words spoken with emphasis and a very loud voice
??	unclear

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

I. Personal Background & Occupation

1. Could you explain your experience as an interpreter? Do you have a prior training on Translation & Interpreting Studies? - age- gender- education level

II. Institution & Interpreting Environment

1. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, working conditions have been changed as a result of several precautions. Considering the previous conditions, what were your observations in the working environment? (Were you allowed to interpret with your partner in the booth or not? etc.) How do you think the Covid -19 measures framed the simultaneous interpreting process? (in terms of quality)

III. Interpretation

a. Preparation

2. How do you prepare for an assignment? Were you able to prepare for the interpretation of the debates? In line with your answer to the question, in what ways the preparation process has an impact on the interpretation?

b. Interpreting Practice

3. Could you elaborate on the simultaneous interpretation of this year's debates? What kind of challenges did you encounter? As an interpreter, do you think the presidential debates in 2020 and the election process overall were different? What is your take on it?

4. Were there any factors that shape your interpreting process? (e.g. TV audience, political environment, the person you interpreted) Do you think you modify the interpretation considering the audience, the institution, or any other factors?

5. Taking the debates into account, how do you decide on the strategies you adopt while interpreting? Do you think some elements become more salient or invisible during the interpretation? Do you compress or generalize the information in order to enhance the effect of the interpreting?

c. Challenges

6. The debates this year were challenging in many ways. One challenge was the overlapping talks among the candidates. Considering the simultaneous interpretation, what is your take on it?

7. In the first debate, you were interpreting both the moderator (Chris Wallace) and the president (Donald Trump). The speakers interrupted each other constantly and sometimes you had to interpret both candidates at the same time. In such cases, how did you decide on who/what to interpret first in such a short time? How did you determine what should be interpreted or what should be omitted?

8. Besides interrupting each other, the candidates sometimes used an impolite language. What was your attitude towards such a case? Do you think you tone down while interpreting? Could you elaborate on the lexical choices?

9. During the debates, the candidates mentioned numbers too often. In the interpretation, those numbers sometimes omitted or misunderstood. What is your take on it? Do you think that interpreting alone in the booth had an impact on mis-rendering or did you prioritize other items which might seem more important than rendering numbers while interpreting?