



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Interpreter Roles

***What is an interpreter and how can he or she gain from a
typology of interpreter-mediated even***

Ritgerð til B.A.-prófs

Sunna Jónína Sigurðardóttir

Maí 2012

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Enska

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*What is an interpreter and how can he or she gain from a
typology of interpreter-mediated events*

Ritgerð til BA í ensku

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Interpreting is a young academic subject which is constantly developing. In the last century it has evolved and changed more than in the hundreds and thousands of years before that because of technological developments and by receiving an academic status. A great deal of research has been conducted and that has affected the view of the roles of the interpreter. Training has developed and taken shape in these years as well. New strategies for training reflect the changing reality of the modern interpreter. Interpreting is now required in a vast variety of official settings, creating great opportunities for interpreters.

There are many sub categories of interpreting. The most basic distinction is mode of delivery; simultaneous or consecutive. There is however a great deal of different things which affect the interpreter and change his perception of the event. Bistra Alexieva has put together a simple typology, applicable to all interpreted events, which can aid in assessing the type and difficulty of the event at hand. This typology can therefore be a great tool for interpreters. I look into some of the different sub categories and what differentiates them. The culture aspect of an interpreted event is also discussed as an impactful aspect.

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1. Introduction

My colleagues and I are the first group of students to go through MA level conference interpreter training at the University of Iceland. We are completing our first year and have often during this year had discussions about the subjects and methods of teaching used by our teachers such as whether to teach interpreting studies theoretically or simply focus on practical training, the order of assignments and which tasks best serve to improve our skills. These lively discussions are to a degree the foundation for my thoughts and research presented in this dissertation. It is my aim to introduce to my reader the world of interpreting, what it is, how interpreting is performed, who performs it, and what affects the process. First I will focus on the outside aspects like the origins of modern day interpreting studies, interpreter training and different ideologies. I will then go into explaining different categories of interpreted events, using Bistra Alexieva's *Typology of Interpreter Mediated Events* as a way of breaking down the possible scenarios. The typology will also serve to aid in an assessment of what makes interpreting tasks challenging and what an interpreter should expect to encounter in a situation given that he asks the right questions, found in the typology, beforehand.

2. What is interpreting?

Interpreting is essentially a verbal form of translation. It entails taking ideas and words spoken in one language and rendering them in another language. It may sound simple enough but more often than not this is a complex task. It requires extensive understanding of source and target language, and of the culture of both. Otto Kade, a groundbreaking researcher on interpretation said that

Interpreting is a form of Translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language (Pöchhacker 11).

Interpreting is not only a verbal translation but also an immediate one. The immediacy may vary to a degree in the different settings but it is always a factor. The interpreter must re-render the utterance in the target language without interrupting the flow of the event he takes part in. This aspect separates most distinctively between interpreters and translators and often a person's ease in such circumstances determines which profession people choose. It is arguably a different skill to be able to delve into a text and spend great time and effort on finding the exact equivalent meaning and feeling of a text that can hold up to the original on print, than it takes to form an utterance quickly and accurately without dwelling on detail.

2.1 History of interpreting studies

Interpreting studies are a recent academic subject, emerging first in the 20th century as a formal university subject. The first university in Europe to start teaching interpreting was the University of Mannheim, Germany in 1930. Several schools were founded in different cities in Europe the following years -including Geneva, Vienna and Paris. There was a great awakening in terms of professional interpreting in the following years. The Nuremberg trials, in the aftermath of World War Two, were events which made big impact. The whole trial was interpreted into 4 languages with

simultaneous interpreting by the use of electronic equipment. This was a groundbreaking event for conference and court interpreting and opened up new possibilities for interpreting and interpreters. It introduced the importance of interpreters to the whole world because this important, historic event could not have worked out in the same way without interpretation (Vander Elst).

In 1953 the AIIC, International Association of Conference Interpreters, was set up. That is the most influential interpreter association to this date and it has had much impact on the profession. Training and professionalization of interpreters was included in their policies and their work resulted in improved working conditions and wages for professional conference interpreters (Pöchhacker 28).

The United Nations (UN) and The European Union (EU) are highly influential, multinational organizations that rely heavily on interpreting. The two have thereby promoted the work and value of conference interpreters and are to date also the largest individual workplaces for European interpreters. They are in the lead when it comes to salaries and work conditions. Due to these ideal work conditions they attract some of the best interpreters as well. Competitions are held to test the interpreters before they are hired as to further ensure that they hire only the cream of the crop. These organizations deal with official matters, governments and peace negotiations and are well respected for their work world wide.

However, liaison interpreting did not benefit from this development. Liaison interpreters were not given the same professional status until several years later, and are still in many ways lagging behind. The gap between these different spheres of interpreting may partly be explained by the vastly different circumstances that they interpret in. Liaison interpreters, also known as community interpreters, work in very different settings than conference interpreters mostly in places like hospitals, social worker's offices and with other public service providers. They often work for only one customer at a time and are called out on jobs on short notice. Their customers include immigrants, asylum seekers etc. and not too many high-ranking officials or respected scientists.

Research on interpreting and interpretation became a popular subject of research in the latter half of the 20th century and researchers were mainly neuro- and cognitive linguists and psychologists. They mainly focused on conference interpreters in the easily controlled environment that the booth provides. These experiments and research lead to new ideas on interpreter roles and the interpreting process.

All of the above has taken place in the past century. Yet, interpreting is a very old trade. Even primitive tribes used interpreters to negotiate between two or more parties in trade as well as wars. Mighty rulers used translations and interpreting to get messages to their various colonies and multilingual subjects. Interpretation and other forms of translation have been essential to humans because we rely heavily on communication. In an increasingly globalized world our need for inter-lingual communication has only increased and will probably continue to increase in the coming years.

In this new and lively academic subject much research was conducted in different countries and universities. This has been an important part of the professions development and will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.2 Ideas in interpreting studies

Like any other subject which is continuously subject to scientific research, ideas on interpreting are always evolving and changing. This has lead to many different ideas or “memes” on what happens in the interpreting process. Memes are like cultural genes; ideas, practices and inventions that have passed on in our culture and influence the way we see and understand things (Pöchhacker 51). Memes are capable of change and evolving and many different memes have influenced the way we see translational activities. Pöchhacker explains interpreting theories to a large extent by using the idea of the meme. Some of these ideas are in sharp contrast to others where as some have a closer connection and some similarities. The following is nowhere near being a complete list but gives some ideas of the development, relations between different sets of ideas and how they have influenced one another.

Ideas on interpreting are usually connected with certain universities and periods of time. At first, ideas on roles of the interpreter often included a view of the interpreter as a pipeline. He was told not to have an opinion or effect on what was said, only perform language switching. This would mean that there were words and/or phrases in every language that had a direct equivalent in another language. Of course, that is not the case. This was especially influential when it came to sign language interpreters and to date there are still traces of this way of thinking in sign language interpreter training. Acquiring an official language status, and providing more professional training for sign language interpreters changed things for them to a degree.

One of the people that leaned towards this idea was R. Bruce W. Anderson (Perspectives on the Role of Interpreter 211). He did groundbreaking research on liaison interpreting and raised awareness of that form of interpreting. In his mind, the best interpreters are “true bilinguals”, which would have the same level of language and culture proficiency in both languages and, most importantly, therefore stay faithful to both speaker and listener. This was especially relevant in political negotiations where objectivity in word choice is crucial. But as he admits himself, this is almost impossible. In another article from 1978, Anderson describes his findings after interviewing 17 interpreters. (R. Bruce W. Anderson, “Interpreter Roles and Interpretation Situations”211) There he questions the interpreter’s faithful rendition of the original utterance in cases where the interpreter personally disliked the speaker. He interviewed both community and conference interpreters, who admitted to events where they had a personal objection to the speaker and/or words that they had to interpret and suggested that their opinions, had without doubt affected their performance.

It is unconceivable that any human performance, like interpreting, can be fully neutral or void of some human filtering. The skopos theory rejects the idea of neutrality completely, but asks instead what the purpose of the interpreting or translational act is. Hans J. Vermeer, who was a forerunner for this line of thought, introduced this idea in the 80’s. In his mind decisions about word choice and such

things in the target language must be colored by the culture and understanding of the target audience.

Another influential meme was “making sense”. According to this meme, the role of an interpreter was defined as making sense of what the speaker was saying and then producing an utterance with the same intended sense or message in the target language. This gave the interpreter power; he or she was not just an instrument or machine but a person of understanding and special skills to transfer messages. The interpreter who focused on making sense was therefore not bound by words or phrases but had the freedom to choose his own words and phrases to communicate the original meaning.

The role of an interpreter has developed in stages from being a “non-person” in the early days, who had the role of a machine and neither could nor should have an impact in the communication, to being a “communication facilitator” in the 80’s where as in the 90’s they came to be described as “culture brokers” and lastly in 2000’s interpreters had become “advocates” and “visible agents” (Pöchhacker 147-149). With time then, the interpreter no longer had the role of a translating machine but needed to use his own rationality to be able to bridge the gap between speaker and addressee. Or, as Yves Gambier, Daniel Gile and Christopher Taylor have put it: “the interpreter not only translates, but interprets and is thereby a participant in the conversation” (Conference Interpreting: Recent Trends in Research 55-6).

2.3 Interpreting Today

Today, interpreting is taught in hundreds of schools all across the world. As a young discipline, it is still gaining ground and working towards more professionalization. Salaries vary greatly between nations, continents and categories of interpreting. Improving these conditions should be a common goal for interpreters but unfortunately the tendency is often to fight only for a limited group at a time, not to try and facilitate progress in the market for all types of interpreting. There are those

who do try to make a difference for the whole of the profession and hopefully this attitude will change over time (Interpreting is Interpreting – or is it?).

Interpreting is used in so many places in modern society. Increased globalization means that more people live in countries that are foreign to them and many do not speak the local languages. In some cases people can use some sort of 'lingua franca' to communicate, mostly in informal settings though. When discussing more serious matters interpreting is usually required, or preferred. This means that there is a great need for interpretation, and translation, all across the world. There is no reason to suspect that this will change in the near future but rather we can expect to see the profession grow even further if things keep evolving the same way that they have in the last years.

3. Who interprets?

Interpreting and translation are performed in every conceivable setting and society in the earth. For example, interpreters are needed in public service settings for immigrants, in courts where foreigners are prosecuted and in conferences and seminars with international audiences. In many cases untrained individuals with knowledge of more than one language perform the interpretation and in many situations that is all it takes. But the more sensitive the subject and the more formal the situation, the more professionalization is needed. What I mean to say is that interpreting to grandma what her grandson's foreign girlfriend wishes to express to her can easily be interpreted by the grandson, whereas the same girl should get a professional court interpreter, rather than her boyfriend, to interpret for her if she faces criminal charges.

3.1. Bilinguals vs. Interpreters

It is an idea, repeatedly presented, that the best interpreters are bilinguals, and another much related idea, that interpreting is like second nature to bilinguals. But what is bilingualism and does it even exist? Many scholars claim that it does indeed not exist, or in any case, that it is very rare. To be a true bilingual, one would need to acquire the two languages simultaneously and understand both equally well. This would mean that the understanding of one language would not have been filtered through the other by re-learning names of objects and words in a second language, after having first learned the equivalent in a "first" language (Pöchhacker 114). R. Bruce W. Anderson takes this a step further and says that if an interpreter needs to interpret for two parties he should ideally be able to "be pulled equally in both directions", that is, he should be equally able to identify with both sides. This is virtually impossible. Yet there are many people worthy of being called bilinguals, people who grow up using two (or more) languages having an equal role in their home and/or community. These people, by the strictest standards are only bilinguals to a

degree, if they have acquired both languages at a very young age (before puberty) (Pöchhacker 114).

A Canadian research, discussed in the article “Comprehension during Interpreting: What do Interpreters know that Bilinguals don’t?” was performed to test the myth that says interpreting is a natural occurrence for bilinguals. Half the test subjects spoke French and English in their every day lives; close to 50% of their every day discourse was performed in each language. None of these people had any interpreter experience. The other half were trained English-French interpreters. All subjects were given the same audio recording of a short text on an unfamiliar topic, which they had to interpret from English into French. The results showed that the trained interpreters had a clear advantage, although it was somewhat less distinctive than expected. The comprehension process was different between groups, reproduction was slower for the untrained but in essence, however, to the amazement of many, the study showed that simultaneous interpreting is not so much an acquired skill as it is a natural byproduct of bilingualism (Dillinger 155-186).

3.2 Interpreter training programs

University level interpreter training, as before mentioned, started in Europe in the latter half of the 20th century. Training is different between institutions both in length and form. The difference is often due to the different aims of this training; some programs focus on conference interpreting, others on healthcare interpreting, court interpreting etc. There are naturally other variables but in essence the training is mostly based on the job requirement that graduates should fulfill when leaving the training program and entering into the field. Another factor is how much is expected of the trainee upon entrance into the program. Shorter programs generally require a higher level of proficiency to be acquired before the beginning of the course because a longer program gives more room for improvement over time. The competence must then be evaluated before students are accepted.

Many interpreter programs start with an entrance examination. This exam is supposed to separate between the trainable subjects with the core ability to interpret as well as determine sufficient language proficiency in the two or more languages that the subject wants to use as working languages. In addition, subjects are tested on general knowledge and personality traits (Barbara Moser-Mercer: "Aptitude testing for conference interpreting"). Daniel Gile says three main factors must be in place at the beginning of training: Interpreters (and translators) need to have good command of their active working languages, have sufficient knowledge of the themes and subject-matters addressed by the texts or speeches they Translate and have both declarative and procedural knowledge about Translation (Gile 8-9).

Gile, who is a very well respected scholar on interpreting, acts on the assumption that formal training for interpreters helps them to "enhance their performance to the full realization of their potential" and to improve their performance and skills more rapidly than without formal training (Gile 7). Most university level training programs are between 2 and 4 years. Three to four year programs are generally speaking at the under-graduate level but two year long ones more commonly at post-graduate level. Shorter and intense forms of training are sometimes available, mostly these are taught at institutions that use interpreter services, such as the United Nations (Gile 11).

End term exams are not evaluated the same way as entrance exams. Different factors are measured and the standard is quite different. Jieun Lee, interpreter trainer from Australia, has looked into the evaluation of interpreting performances and in her study she sought to set up a good model for evaluation. She performed an experiment to assess the assessment tools at hand, that is, her aim was not evaluating the performance itself but a specific form of grading interpreting performance. She used 9 experienced interpreters, some teachers, some not, to test if the analytic assessment of the (student) interpreter performance was the appropriate form of assessment. She found that it is. Her model measured: Accuracy (40-50% of grade), Target Language Quality (20-40% of grade) and Delivery (20-30%).

3.3 Basic aspects of training

It is hard to generalize or find comprehensive material on how interpreter training is performed worldwide. Therefore, I will focus on the material at hand, which is on conference interpreter training. Roderick Jones, staff interpreter and in-house interpreter trainer for the EU in Brussels, has written a textbook structured in the way EU interpreters believe that conference interpreting should be taught.

Consecutive interpreting comes first. Training consecutive interpreting should help develop skills to understand and analyze the original speech. It is desirable that the interpreter realizes how a speech is structured, what the links between ideas are and what the main ideas of the speech are. Practicing consecutive interpreting is of course a memory practice as well and in the beginning, students are not given permission to note anything down.

In the second level of training note taking is introduced and students are trained to realize what to note, when to do it and how. This also includes teaching symbols and a certain way of writing on the page. It is important that the structure is accurately presented and that ideas are separated clearly. Furthermore, conference interpreters are expected to use a special kind of notebook to note in consecutive interpreting; lined pages, bound together at the top –preferably with a spiral. This enables them to move quickly from one page to the next and continue reading the bottom of a page while starting to move over to the next. Generally, the page is divided into two or three columns where the first one is always meant for connectives and/or the subject of an idea, the second for the verb or the “what” and the third for the object. Like this:

Subject

Verb

Object

When an idea ends it is clearly marked with a line going across the page underneath the object line.

Simultaneous interpreting training is usually not recommended until the consecutive has been trained for a while. In the conference interpreter training in the University of Iceland this model of training is followed. The first semester focuses only on consecutive interpreting and simultaneous is introduced in the second semester. The students start interpreting from their B-language into their A-language, that is, from a foreign language that they can speak actively and into their mother tongue. Later, the training goes on to include interpreting from A into a B-language and from C-language(s) into A -or mother tongue (Jones and Kennsluskrá).

4. Typology of Interpreter Mediated Events

Various factors contribute to the complexity of an interpreted situation or event, as the Bulgarian scholar Bistra Alexieva discusses in her article first published in 1997 “The Typology of Interpreter-Mediated Events”. Many of these are not taken into account in traditional definitions of interpreted events. Alexieva suggests that the traditional categorization is too simple and argues for six factors that should be assessed to fully define the nature and difficulty of an interpreted event. She takes into account her own experiences and research as well as a quite well known, simpler, typology set forth by Salevsky back in 1982 (Alexieva 218).

Salevsky’s typology started with the best known separation, that the event was interpreted either consecutively or in the simultaneous form. Consecutive interpreting was then divided in to two; with or without note-taking. Simultaneous interpreting was divided into four categories; simultaneous “proper” performed in a booth, simultaneous with a written text also performed in a booth, the third is simultaneous in an open space without the use of any electronic equipment and finally “chuchotage” or whispered interpretation. Alexieva finds Salevsky’s typology useful and quite inclusive, but too specific and somewhat insufficient. She suggests that this type of typology relies only on one parameter but wishes to include more than one. Therefore, Bistra Alexieva suggests that we ask these questions:

- Who is speaking?
- To whom?
- About what?
- Where?
- When?
- Why? (and what is the aim?)

Such an analysis helps the interpreter assess his or her role, and this can prove very beneficial, especially if he/she is able to do that before entering the situation. This typology does not enable us to categorize interpreted events very specifically but

rather enables us to put them into groups, which Alexieva likes to call “families”. Some interpreted events than are a merger of two or even more of the classic categories.

The basis for Alexieva and Selevsky’s typologies are founded on the same basics and in the next sub chapters I will go into those in some detail.

Basic form	Where	When	Why (with what aim)	About what	Who is Speaking	To whom
Simultaneous						
Consecutive						
Short Consecutive						

Putting Alexieva’s questions into table like this could aid in assessing the event.

4.1 Simultaneous Interpreting

Simultaneous interpreting, as the name implies, is performed at (almost) the same time as the original speech.

Performing simultaneous interpretation requires diverse simultaneous acts. First of all the interpreter must hear the original speaker’s output, and, it generally helps if he or she can see the speaker as well in order to better absorb the text and the speaker’s unspoken connotations. Secondly, the interpreter must process the input; fully understand it and “un-code” it’s original form. Then he/she must produce an equal utterance in the target language. He, or she, must then speak out that re-coded message and at the same time monitor the output, in case it needs any kind of improvement or correction. By the time the interpreter has verbalized his or her first utterance the speaker has of course continued his speech so the monitoring of the output is unpreventably performed at the same time as the interpreter takes in the next utterance of speaker output.

Ideal simultaneous interpreting usually requires technical equipment. That may include items such as headphones, microphone and transmission equipment. Usually it

is performed inside a soundproof booth, relying on the original speech being transmitted into the booth, reaching the interpreter through a set of headphones. The output from the interpreter is transmitted to the listeners by the use of a microphone and relevant transmission equipment, reaching the audience most commonly through a headset that they wear. In this setting the listeners can sit wherever they like in the hall. It has many benefits over other methods of interpreting for the interpreter. For one, the interpreter stays in his own enclosed space, free of any outside interruption. This setting is often, and ideally also one where there are more than one interpreters at hand to do the job and the booth lets them bring in documents and other relevant aid which they can use both individually and cooperatively. Furthermore, having a colleague at ones side is incredibly helpful if the interpreter cannot find the right words or even panics completely and is unable to continue. The colleague is then able to step in and provide the word or phrase, or take over if necessary.

Some international conference settings offer interpreting into many different languages. Then the conference participants are given equipment; which can be tuned into different channels to hear the different languages provided. Each interpreting booth provides simultaneous interpretation into one language at a time and sends out one signal. The same booth, and even the same person, might at another time in the meeting send out interpretation into a different language. The interpreter would then need to change channels on his transmission equipment to reach a different target group. This could for example be an instance where the opening speech is given in English. The booth in question would provide Estonian interpretation on channel 1 for Estonian speaking audiences. The next person speaking at the meeting might then be the Estonian delegate who gives his speech in his mother tongue. The Estonian booth would then provide interpretation into English, sending out the interpretation on channel 2 to the English speaking audience (and possibly other interpreters giving relay interpretations into other languages).

Interpreting events can also take place with the aid of less, yet some, technical equipment. Usually that would mean interpretation without the use of a booth, and possibly also without the interpreter wearing headphones. In these cases the

interpreter might have to rely on output coming to him through a speaker sound system or simply airborne. This is less ideal because the interpreter can more easily get disturbed or distracted because he/she does not hear the speaker properly; either because the speech is not loud enough or because of other sounds or distortion in his environment. This will of course have a negative effect on the output. Yet this method can be useful in some situations like on guided tours or when only a small number of participants need interpretation.

The third form of simultaneous interpretation is performed without any equipment, as “whispered interpretation” or chuchotage. That requires the interpreter and his listener to stay physically close. In a conference hall the interpreter would ideally sit next to, or behind, his listener. In such close proximity the interpreter does not need to speak very loud in order to be heard. If he speaks quietly he is also less likely to interrupt others in the room. Ideally the interpreter and his listener should sit to the side or in the back to create some distance from other audiences and minimize interruption. This form of interpreting is less than ideal because of its obvious limitations. It is hard to speak in a hushed voice for a long time and, in some cultures, the closeness between the audience and interpreter is considered inappropriate and would cause need to invade their personal space thereby causing discomfort.

Sight translation is sometimes included in the listings of simultaneous interpreting acts. Sight translation is when an interpreter has a written text which he or she interprets into another language while reading it in the original language. This form is probably one of the rarer ones and mostly used in informal settings and community interpreting when handling documents and forms.

The modern interpreter is surrounded by more technical equipment than ever. It seems inevitable that in the future the role of technology will increase even more in interpreted events. The most predictable development, which is already a reality for some, is that of remote interpreting. A recent EU interpreter’s summit discussed this topic and it seems that it is already in use for many meetings that these interpreters work in. The best form of remote interpreting for the interpreters is when the meeting is video recorded by multiple cameras, showing the speaker, audience and key people

in the room. This allows the interpreters much of the same privileges as being in the same room.

A less ideal form of remote interpreting is used in some community interpreting situations where the interpretation is done over the phone. Losing visual and spatial contact with the speakers most likely has a negative impact on the quality of the performance. It is desirable that the hospitals, social workers, courts etc. which need to rely on remote interpreting would update their equipment so that both sound and visual would be transmitted to the interpreter.

4.1.1 Simultaneous Interpreting in the EU

Simultaneous interpretation is commonly used in larger meetings, international committees and conferences. One of the biggest forums of this kind in the world is the European Union. It has 23 official languages. Within the union, all the official languages of member states have the same status and in most instances this means that larger, formal meetings and parliamentary sessions offer interpretation into all relevant languages. Each of the member states has the final say about interpretation into their mother tongues and choose not to have theirs provided. This is common for Ireland for instance, because most Irish delegates either prefer or make do with English rather than Irish. Some smaller countries may also choose not to offer interpretation into their native languages for some of the meetings they take part in, often for financial reasons or because the delegates believe that they are strong enough in one of the other languages to speak and listen in that language.

In EU settings, conditions for interpreters are the best possible. The interpreting is performed and transmitted through all the relevant and state-of-the-art equipment. Being one of the biggest providers for interpretation in the world has also resulted in an environment where understanding and appreciation of the value of interpreters is high. The entire operation revolves around intercultural and inter-lingual communications and much is at stake. Often the subjects of discussion are sensitive and highly political and the need for highly professional and accurate

interpretation, and translations, is great. This is also why the EU is in the forefront when it comes to setting standards for time constraints and booth designs, they simply cannot afford to mistreat their interpreters.

This multilingual policy has been in effect since the coal and steel alliance was first formed. As the community of nations expanded and new states joined, their languages were added.

4.2 Consecutive Interpreting

Consecutive interpreting is to a large extent reliant on memory. It is performed after the original speaker has rendered his speech, or the part of his speech he wants interpreted at the time. This can sometimes be done with the use of notes that the interpreter takes while he listens to the original speech and sometimes it needs to be done without note taking. Commonly, longer renditions are more likely noted down while shorter ones are memorized. As there is very limited time to write, interpreters use a note taking technique with symbols and abbreviations and only write out in full the most important things like names and numbers. This is taught in many formal training programs. Looking at a skilled consecutive interpreter's notebook can be quite fascinating; the technique and limited number of "words" and symbols required to give a long speech is remarkably small. This technique requires skill and practice and takes up a considerable amount of time in consecutive interpreter training.

Consecutive interpreting is used in settings such as round-table-meetings, community interpreting (often aiding immigrants in visits to professionals like doctors, social workers etc.) and in some conference settings. In some of these circumstances note taking may be possible, i.e. the round-table-meetings. The speeches or speaker output varies greatly in length but is known to get several minutes long. It goes without saying that the longer the speech, the greater the need for notes.

In community settings note taking is usually not possible and the interpreter generally needs to interpret for two parties and, thereby, into both languages

involved. This can mean an enormous amount of stress and confusion. It does not help that many people that use this kind of service do not know how it should be used.

Community consecutive-interpreting poses a number of difficulties. Most of these are related to the lack of understanding and respect for the role of the interpreter. It can be for instance that a police officer questioning a suspect phrases his questions like “tell him to tell me what happened that night”, instead of asking a direct question. Or when one of the parties has some knowledge of words or phrases in the other language and either tries to use these fragments when expressing him- or herself, or, questions the interpreters abilities because he finds fault with the interpreters choice of words (despite only understanding some of what is said and therefore lacking context). Other problems include renditions too long to memorize when speakers do not pause for the interpreter, extended sessions too long and demanding for the interpreter to function fully and missing out on what is said because speakers interrupt one and other and more than one of them speaks at the same time. (R. Bruce W. Anderson, “Perspectives on the Role of Interpreter”211)

It is evident when reading literature on interpreting and conversing with interpreters that many community interpreters feel unappreciated, underpaid and disrespected. It is also quite common that instead of hiring professional interpreters to aid in these circumstances family members, like children of immigrants, are asked to interpret. Unfortunately, this has even happened in situations where children should be nowhere near, like in doctors visits or important meetings with government agents (Leskopf).

The first years of interpreting studies, liaison interpreting was ignored almost completely. It seems that the same lack of respect community interpreters’ face in their working environment is shared by their own profession. In recent years this has improved greatly and scholars like Wadensjö and Pöchhacker have done a great deal of research on community interpreting. Acknowledging sign language as the mother tongue of the deaf as well as granting immigrants more rights when it comes to public service has also been important. Increased rights for those who require interpretation has lead to more formal education for interpreters. Better education generally means

better pay, more confidence and more respect. More might still be done and that is definitely the case in Iceland. This is reality is discussed in a recently published Master's thesis by Steinunn Haraldsdóttir.

4.3 Short Consecutive

One form of interpreting seems completely neglected and I would suggest that it deserves a place on its own here. This form is hardly mentioned by scholars and always as a form of consecutive when it is. It can be called "short-consecutive" and is a hybrid form of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting.

One of the reasons why this form has been overlooked may be that it is commonly performed by non-professional interpreters. Much like the community interpreters in the past they are not given equal standing with the formally trained members of the profession. I dare say however, that this form of interpreting is widely used. Examples are Christian "free" churches all over the Nordic Countries and evangelistic meetings held by foreign missionaries in third world countries. I also have information from a colleague, Birna Imsland who has interpreted many seminars on homeopathy in Iceland over the past few years using this form of interpreting.

I disagree with putting it down as only a form of consecutive because of the immediacy of the event. The interpreter has often almost as little time to transform the original message into his target language as in simultaneous interpreting because speakers generally don't pause for very long (even if their segment of input was quite long). The immediacy results in a similar stress as simultaneous interpreting, but the physical space does not provide the distance from the audience as the booth allows. Instead, the interpreter is in front of his audience directly and must not only give an oral but also a physical performance while doing his job. This set up also prevents the interpreter from looking directly at the speakers face, and in some settings (in my experience more often than not) the interpreter is expected to follow the speaker's moves; whether he walks around, gestures with his hands or jumps of the platform.

The audience for events like these often has some, or even great, understanding of both languages and because every one hears both renditions these

bilinguals can easily criticize the performance. Also keep in mind that the interpreter may need to look them in the eye and cannot prevent perceiving their criticism, which is commonly made evident through facial expressions.

Surely liaison interpreting can sometimes rely on the same immediacy and perhaps the stress factor that this short and quick form of communication creates, might be an excellent topic of research.

4.4 Culture and other important factors

Cultural assessment is probably the most important aspect in assessing difficulty of an interpreted event. Culture refers to any ideas or vocabulary that are linked to a certain community or shared heritage of a specific group. This may include pop culture, folklore and public figures that are known in one community or language group but is unfamiliar to others. When a speaker, who is being interpreted into another language, uses culture sensitive vocabulary or references it may well require explanations. In the worst-case scenario, if the interpreter does not feel that he can explain an expression/utterance sufficiently, he must somehow avoid the cultural reference and “re-write” the sentence.

Pöchhacker uses Alexieva’s article and sets up this list to define seven factors that she discusses in her article and, in her opinion, determine how likely a person is to use cultural references:

- 'distance' vs. 'proximity' (between speaker, addressee and interpreter);
- 'non-involvement' vs. 'involvement' (of the speaker as text entity);
- 'equality/solidarity' vs. 'non-equality/power' (related to status, role and gender of speaker and addressee, as well as the interpreter in some cases);
- 'formal setting' vs. 'informal setting' (related to number of participants, degree of privacy, and distance from home country);
- 'literacy' vs. 'orality';

- 'cooperativeness/directness' vs. 'non-cooperativeness/indirectness' (relevant to negotiation strategies);
- 'shared goals' vs. 'conflicting goals' (Pöchhacker 90-91).

To relate this to realistic situations, we can say that it is not very likely that there is much use of culture-specific vocabulary if the topic of the interpreted event is a clearly defined scientific or professional subject, that is a subject the participants in this particular event share a common understanding of. There, on the other hand, the interpreter can be expected to use jargon that relates to their mutual profession or professions. In this situation it is more likely that jokes and references will refer to the participants' shared knowledge but less likely that they would allude to folklore or literature in their mother tongues -unless they would explain it properly to the international audience. Idioms are often culture sensitive and to some extent untranslatable. They are perhaps the most common culture specific phrases that speakers use in international settings. When a speaker uses such expressions it is most important that the interpreter understands that they are indeed culture specific and secondly that he understands what the idiom in question means. For the most ideal outcome, the interpreter should be able to find an idiom in the target language and use that in his speech. That may not be possible in the short amount of time that he/she has before he must start speaking. For example the speaker might say that the baby he is examining is "cute as a button" or a conference interpreter at the EU might speak of the "bread and butter" languages. Direct translations of these words would not bear the same meaning in Icelandic for instance.

If a speaker is close to his audience, speaks to a small group of listeners, has not prepared a written speech and/or is in some sort of informal environment he is more likely to use culture specific terms as if by accident. By contrast, if the two parties don't see each other as equals or they have conflicting goals, culture specific vocabulary can become a "weapon" to underline the difference and create a gap between speaker and addressee. Alexieva gives examples of interpreters that have interpreted the same speaker in his or her own home country and then on another occasion abroad. The interpreters then noticed that the speakers tended to use a lot more culture-specific

vocabulary if they were close to home, even if they knew they were being interpreted into other languages on both occasions.

The most stressful situation she draws up is that of political negotiations where the topic is something as important as peace and war. Then cultural references and sensitive subjects are like a minefield that the interpreter must dance through without triggering any unnecessary bombs while getting across.

5. Conclusion

This essay has spanned a variety of topics linked to interpreting. The subject has gained momentum from the mid 20th century and been an increasingly interesting subject of study in this time. Not only have interpreters themselves initiated these studies but also various other scholars, including psychologists and linguists, sought to make interpreting the focus of their experiments. This interest from scientists along with more availability of formal training has helped promote professionalization in the field. Organizations like the International Association of Conference Interpreters, AIIC, and large institutions like the EU and UN have also played an important role.

The interpreter has developed a great deal too, moving from the pipeline with no control over the situation into becoming a culture broker who both leads and facilitates the communication. These different views of interpreter roles have had a big impact on the profession as such, giving the interpreter more confidence to take the lead and aim higher in his profession. In some situations however, the “interpreter” is a person who speaks more than one language but has no formal training. This is a very natural occurrence and not likely to change at all. Friends and family of “foreigners” or non-native speakers of any given language will continue to act as intermediaries as long as the people of earth don’t all speak the same language. However, interpreters both should and will be required in more official settings to secure accurate and non-partial interpretation.

When it comes to interpreter training, there are many options. Professionals can be made in many different settings and different styles of training may be suitable depending on the individual as well as the type of interpreted events each person should be able to perform.

Bistra Alexieva put forth a decent tool for interpreters with her typology, allowing the interpreter to prepare for the task at hand by figuring out the most impactful things that would influence their performance. I believe also that approaching interpreter-mediated events from her perspective can help bring the professionals, involved in different subcategories of interpreting, closer together.

Looking at the different subcategories of interpreting and the processes it requires is fascinating and gives a greater appreciation of the act. Interpreting still has a lot of aspects worthy of research and examination.

Interpreting is a diverse and exciting subject which opens up possibilities for otherwise impossible communications. It is an entreaty topic of research and an even more interesting profession. Hopefully, interpreters will continue to join forces and promote their profession in every shape and form because the globalized world needs interpreters. Every part of our multi cultural societies and international meeting places require interpreters and it should be a cause of celebration to interpreters how diverse the field is. It will be exciting to see where new research and professional development will lead us in the future and how the past and current ideas on interpreter roles will evolve in the years ahead.

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