100 Years of Conference Interpreting
A Legacy

Edited by Kilian G. Seeber

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To Ashley, Josephine and Amelie,
for they help me interpret the world around me.

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Time to Take Stock: 100 Years of Conference Interpreting

Kilian G. Seeber

Outside the realm of international meetings, conference interpreting remains a profession shrouded in mystery. Conference interpreters, bound to strict professional secrecy by their code of ethics, are usually invisible and rarely make the news – even less often perhaps than their counterparts working in the field, in courtrooms or in hospitals.

On the occasion of 100 years of conference interpreting, therefore, this volume pays tribute to a profession that is deeply intertwined with – and often considered a catalyst of – the world of multilateral diplomacy. It does not aspire to provide an exhaustive account of an entire century of interpreting history. Instead, it was conceived as a collection of scholarly articles and opinion pieces illustrating what different stakeholders make of this profession one hundred years on: how they see its past, its present and its future.

The contributions to this volume were collected at a two-day event held in Autumn 2019 that was co-organized by the University of Geneva and the International Labour Organization with the support of the International Association of Conference Interpreters. Beyond a star-studded line-up of speakers and a highly diverse list of attendees, this event also boasted an unconventional format geared towards participant interaction, with the bulk of the meeting dedicated to discussions and exchanges in the guise of interactive panel discussions and a town hall.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, this volume's format is similarly unconventional, with the official opening and closing addresses to the conference providing a frame for a series of scholarly articles along with a set of questions addressed, in any of the event's three working languages (English, French and Spanish), by different stakeholders in opinion pieces and direct replies.

Our 100-year journey begins at the ILO, whose Director General, Guy Ryder, reminds us of how, from its inception in 1919, conference interpreting has allowed this international organisation to fulfil its mission, by allowing discussions between different stakeholders to be held on an equal footing regardless of their foreign language skills. In Ryder's words, "…when the interpretation stops, the discussion stops". The Director-General reminds us that, while Paris was the birthplace of conference interpreting, Geneva, and more specifically, the ILO, was the birthplace of simultaneous conference interpreting. Close cooperation with the professional association (AIIC) on one hand and universities on the other, argues Ryder, will ensure that the professionals in the booths can act as a "comfort blanket" for delegates who know that "however incoherent or illogical they may be speaking in their own language, somebody in the booth is going to make a bit more sense of it somehow".

What the beginning of this journey looked like at the ILO is visually documented in Jesús Baigorri-Jalón's lead article, in which the 'chronicler of the profession' takes a closer look at the birth of simultaneous interpreting. Using photographic evidence from the Organization's historical archives, he vividly describes how this new, or at least repurposed technology came about, how it was implemented, and how the first interpreters having to use it were selected and trained. Baigorri-Jalón makes the point that, although the first-ever simultaneous interpreting course was organized by the ILO in early 1928, "the real interpreting system was not the electrical setting but the interpreters' brains and vocal cords". This point is probably not lost on a profession profoundly affected by the technological changes brought about by the pandemic that engulfed the world only a few months after the centenary celebrations.

Against the political-historical backdrop sketched in the lead article, in the first two chapters a total of eight scholarly papers address a selection of topical issues relating to the practice of conference interpreting as well as the training of conference interpreters.

Franz Pöchhacker and Monika Stögerer look back over a half a century of research on anticipation in conference interpreting – in other words, the interpreter's seemingly magical ability to predict what speakers are about to say. Replicating methodology approaches already used some 25 years earlier, they revisit the hypothesis that anticipation might be linked to interpreting directionality in a small-scale experiment on interpreting students, finding corroborating evidence for an "into B" advantage that might, however, be mitigated by a proficiency disadvantage.

Maya de Wit, Onno Crasborn and Jemina Napier take look at interpreters' need to predict what speakers will say from a slightly broader perspective and compare how sign language conference interpreters' preparation strategies are affected by the type of sign language they work with (i.e., national sign language or international sign). Their qualitative analysis of a naturalistic event substantiates the idea that interpreters use the same materials to prepare for conferences regardless of sign-language typology. These materials, however, seem to be used rather differently, suggesting that *how* rather than *what* interpreters prepare is indeed conditioned by target language and by extension, target audience.

Andrei Kalinin and Maria Mikhailovskaia look beyond the traditional multilingual conference rooms of international organisations and analyse the impact of different settings on the simultaneous interpretation of political press conferences. A comparison of corpora of simultaneous interpretations provided (in situ) at diplomatic settings with those provided (remotely) at media settings suggests that setting type might indeed condition interpreters' preference for form-based vs. meaning-based approaches.

In the last contribution to this chapter, Carlo Eugeni and Rocío Bernabé address the somewhat provocative question of whether the future of simultaneous interpreting might be written. To do so, the authors provide a contrastive process analysis of simultaneous interpreting and real-time subtitling. In their discussion, they touch upon sociolinguistic and psycho-cognitive elements of both tasks before providing a comparative skill analysis, coming to the conclusion that respeaking might not only be cognitively comparable to interpreting, but also allow interpreters to broaden their skillset and increase the added value of their service.

Skills are also at the centre of Lucía Ruiz Rosendo and Marie Diur's contribution, which opens the chapter on conference interpreter training with an analysis of the skills conference interpreters need in today's (institutional) professional environment. Their overview of skill acquisition, the development of expertise and current approaches to conference interpreter training leads them to a critical discussion of the employability of conference interpreters in international organisations, in which they especially highlight the ever-increasing speed at which speeches are read and the importance of adjusting interpreter training accordingly.

Carmen Delgado Luchner and Nathalie Loiseau take us through the ABCs of conference interpreters' language combinations in their in-depth discussion of language performance descriptors. In doing so, they go far beyond the now somewhat worn-out question of whether interpreters should work primarily into or from their dominant language. Instead, they provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of a corpus of formative feedback on trainees' performances to identify different parameters of language competence.

Another novel question is raised by Alicja Okoniewska, who explores and analyses the merits of adding critical discourse analysis to the training of conference interpreters as a means to hone budding interpreters' analytical skills and their understanding of political discourse. She presents the results of a pilot study carried out in a naturalistic classroom environment using focus groups to better understand how students implement the theoretical concepts presented and practiced in a series of seminars and concludes by highlighting the potential of this training approach.

The discussion of novel training approaches continues in Joshua Goldsmith and Michelle Hof's contribution, the last one in this chapter, in which they present a survey-based comparative analysis of the perception of tutor-student and peer-to-peer interaction in different online conference interpreter training courses. Contrasting training programs for different target groups, including MA students and trained professionals, they discuss the hallmarks of four different interaction scenarios with a view to ascertaining different training programmes' scalability potential.

The introduction to chapter three, the interactive part of this volume, which collects opinion pieces and replies around a set of six questions about the present and the future of conference interpreting, was penned by the co-founder and honorary president of the International Association of Conference Interpreters, Christopher Thiéry. The contributor who has witnessed the largest part of the profession's centenary introduces the discussion by providing examples of how the profession has changed, but at the same time reminding us that change is not pre-determined but can be influenced and guided.

In her reaction to the first question: "*Who are these conference interpreters and who manages them?",* Marie Muttilainen addresses the critical importance of preparation (in French), while Ian Newton discusses the strengths and weaknesses of different language service manager profiles. Replies by Marc Orlando and Raluca Droahna.

The second question: "*Who listens to conference interpreters anyway?",* comprises opinion pieces by Javier Hernández Saseta on the importance of assessing and addressing user needs and expectations (in Spanish) as well as a call for more and better public relation work by Jonathan Downie. Replies by Evelyn Moggio-Ortiz and Maha El-Metwally.

Under the heading: *"How should we train conference interpreters?",* I share my views on what it takes to train conference interpreters who can readily be deployed, while Monica Varela Garcia asks the not merely rhetorical question whether in-house training might be the answer. Replies from Helen J. L. Campbell and Gillian Misener.

The fourth question: *"What role will research play in conference interpreting?",* elicited response from Bart Defrancq, who discusses what research can and cannot deliver and how, and Ebru Diriker, who highlights the potential of ethnographic studies to answer open questions. Replies by Daniel Gile and Karin Sibul.

"What is and will be the impact of remote conference interpreting?" became extraordinarily topical only a few months after the event took place. Here, Matthew Ball warns of the potential risk of alienation and Uroš Peterc wonders to what extent the profession is faced with revolution or merely evolution. Replies by Rawdha Cammoun-Claveria and Sophie Hengl (both in French).

The final and most far-reaching question: *"What is the future of multilingualism?",* is addressed by Florika Fink-Hooijer, who talks about the need to shape the future as a global community, and by Agnieszka Walter-Drop, who glimpses the future to outline the conference of the future. Replies by Kim Ludvigsen and Robin Setton.

The epilogue by the Deputy Director-General of the ILO and my concluding thoughts complete the volume. Greg Vines almost prophetically submits that conference interpreting will continue to evolve and face challenges, reminding us to "always see the people at the centre of this profession", while in my own remarks I briefly recall the backdrop against which many of the contributions were written and consequently, the historic testimony they represent.

PROLOGUE

GUY RYDER

Let me say that I have attended many meetings in this room. Practically all of them have operated because of the conference interpretation services which have been available to them. But this is, to my knowledge at least, the first meeting here dedicated precisely to the issue of conference interpretation. And you might think it's about time that we turned our attention to you!

It is a particular pleasure to welcome you all to the International Labour Organization in the ILO's centenary year. And we are absolutely delighted to co-host this conference with the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Geneva. Let me say, it seems, to me, very appropriate that we are meeting here at the ILO, because we share common origins. The ILO, as we know, was born out of the Treaty of Versailles, the Conference of Versailles of 1919. It gave birth to our organisation, but it also gave birth to the profession of multilingual, multilateral diplomacy, and hence of conference interpretation – because as I'm sure the historians amongst us are aware, and as we will hear later on, no doubt, at that point, English was attributed the same authority in international affairs as French had had until then.

Of course, things have got somewhat more complicated, but these are the origins. As I say, with the Versailles peace process came the birth of a new profession, your profession. The profession of Conference Interpreter. I've often thought that Queen Victoria said it was the place of children to be seen and not heard. You're sort of in the opposite situation, you are often heard, but not so frequently seen. So, it's great to *see* you all on this occasion. I'm tempted to say, although it's not really true for those of us who know you and your profession, that interpretation services are sometimes taken for granted. You tend to get noticed, the interpretation function tends to get noticed, when something goes wrong, which it doesn't do frequently, I must say. But we all know that when the interpretation stops, the discussion stops. When the interpretation is not there, the progress grinds to a halt. If interpretation is not of the quality that we need, and that's never the case at the ILO, but I know from other places, the work suffers. And when interpretation is at the levels of excellence and reliability that we get here, then our organisation benefits in consequence.

In addition to the coincidence of our centenaries, I think it's worth reflecting on the fact that the histories of the ILO and of conference interpretation have remained closely intertwined ever since. Some may not be aware that the International Labour Organization was the very first user of simultaneous interpretation, and in fact it's here that the means of making it happen was invented. Ours is a tripartite house: some of you are sitting in the government seats, some of you are the employers, and some of you are the workers. You may not know it and you may wish to change seat as a consequence! So, ours is a tripartite house, but what does that mean? It means that many of the people who come to the ILO are not the diplomats, not the government representatives who may have more language skills than a trade unionist or an employer might have. And it was in 1925, I understand, that one of the employer representatives, Mr Edward Albert Filene, considered that the consecutive interpretation of all of the statements made into two languages was simply too time-consuming, and he looked for an alternative. I actually have some evidence from what I believe was the second International Labour Conference that took place in 1920 in Genoa. It was a Maritime Labour Conference and absolute chaos reigned in the meeting for a number of reasons: it was a hot day, it was a hot conversation, and nobody could hear the interpretation. And so, we needed to look for better ways to get the job done.

Together with a British officer, Alan Gordon Finlay, who was an engineer by profession of origin, and at the time a translator at the ILO, Filene repurposed existing telephone equipment to develop a system which allowed conference participants to listen to the interpretation as the speech unfolded – in real time, I guess, as we would say today. And this they called telephonic interpretation. The system was then further developed by IBM, whose director at that time was a friend of Edward Filene. Then, in 1927, with the green light of the very first Director-General of the ILO, Albert Thomas, the system was used during our annual International Labour Conference. For the first time, all participants had the opportunity to receive and hopefully to understand the message that was being given, simultaneously with its delivery, and this was particularly important for the ILO, owing to its tripartite nature. Thus was born simultaneous interpretation. It later, of course, came to be used by other bodies, and well-known, I would say notorious, because we see it so frequently in the newsreel from the Nuremberg Trials, and I understand that an exhibition of interpretation at Nuremberg is currently open to the public at the University of Geneva.

Now, it's important for all of us, of course, to remember that your profession is work. The ILO, in addition to the coincidence of our origins, has a particular responsibility to all professions to ensure that work is undertaken in decent conditions, and that your terms and conditions are decided by appropriate industrial relations processes. And that is why we value very highly our relationship with AIIC. I think it's not surprising and it's certainly entirely appropriate that the ILO has subscribed to the agreement of the *Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence* and the UN Common System from the very start. This agreement is a unique example of negotiation in the United Nations system as a whole, of a collective agreement regulating the conditions of self-employed professionals. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate that the ILO is wholly committed to respecting that agreement and to continuing our very positive relationship with AIIC in the future. This is simply a matter of coherence with the ILO's own mandate and agenda, but it is also because ensuring decent working conditions and fair practices is a precondition and a guarantee of the quality of the services that we receive from you. I would add that the ILO is the largest United Nations single-agency employer for freelance interpreters within the system. In 2018 alone, more than 8,000 interpreter days ensured the provision of high-class services in all languages that we cover, and during our annual conferences, and we're still recovering from the rigours of our centenary conference in June. More than 6,000 delegates from all over the world communicate and work together thanks to the work that you do.

It's not surprising, given all of the circumstances that I have briefly outlined, that Geneva is a very busy hub for interpreters: in a country of peace, Geneva has been a place for dialogue. It has been all along, and the ILO as a house of dialogue has found a natural home here, and has been pleased to work closely with the University of Geneva for the training of future generations of conference interpreters. In 2017, our cooperation was formalised with a Memorandum of Understanding, and thanks to it, aspiring interpreters at the University of Geneva learn about the nature of multilingual, multilateral diplomacy in the only tripartite organisation of the UN system.

In this, our centenary year, the ILO has taken a look back at its history of 100 years. We're proud of that history, it's a rich history, but we're also looking forward, as I'm sure you are, to the future of work, which raises so many questions in our societies and amongst our populations. And of course, we will be reflecting on the future as I'm sure you will be reflecting today and tomorrow, on the future of the interpretation profession. I think the most frequently asked question, the issue which is most quickly addressed when it comes to the future of work is the impact of technology, and I suspect that will be in your minds. We've seen it from the wonderful exhibition that's set up outside this room: I think we can all see how interpretation has benefited – and I would underline the word *benefited* – from the application of technologies over the last hundred years. It's been an extraordinary story of advancement, and I think we can see how technology has contributed to improving the work experience of interpreters and improving the quality of the services delivered. Of course, we're looking at some new issues now. To what extent can technology in the future be applied not just to facilitate established processes, but to change them? That is to say the application, the possible application, of machine services in the act of interpretation. I remain, but you know much more than I do, somewhat sceptical about the impact that this will have. It seems to me (and I've been a consumer of your services for three-and-a-half decades, and the word interpretation gives us some strong hints as to how I see this), you interpret, so the work that you do and the services that you provide are not, perhaps, so easily susceptible to automation in the way that some suggest. Also, I'm old-fashioned enough to believe that something will be lost in terms of the nuance, the meaning, the inflections that we give to our interventions in halls such as this. But we have to, of course, look to what change the future will bring. And we have to ensure that the future of work and the future of interpretation is what we wish it to be, not what some might think can be imposed through interpretation.

Let me close with just a couple of comments, if you'll allow me, of my personal experience over more than thirty years. I first came to this organisation as a rigorously monolingual member of a worker delegation in 1982. And for the first time I came into contact with the experience of simultaneous conference interpretation, and I don't mind admitting I was in awe. This was, to me, magic. How could you put this thing in your ear and listen to the interventions being made in so many different languages? Who were these people in the boxes? What sort of exotica did the booths contain? And over the years, frankly, I've never lost that sense of awe at what I still continue to refer to as the magic of interpretation services. And I want to express my admiration and my gratitude for the services that you have and continue to provide. I'm also conscious of the experience of using your services. I still retain the memories of the great anecdotes of a microphone inadvertently left open in a booth and the entertainment and embarrassment that can sometimes ensue. The fact, and it's a reality, that delegates have that sort of comfort blanket of knowing that however incoherently or illogically they may be speaking in their own language, somebody in the booth is going to make a bit more sense of it somehow – very important added value to us all. Those rather panicked looks from the booths, those urgent requests: "Could you please tell the delegate to slow down a bit?" And we all tend to ignore you and say, "he's doing okay, don't worry about it." But we have to work with these things. And all of this, I think, adds up to the human experience of interpretation. This is important. I cringe, I always cringe, at the moment, and it happens far too frequently, when the delegate who's been caught out in an incoherence, an illogicality, a piece of nonsense, says "yeah, you know, something went wrong in the interpretation." And I cringe on your behalf when this is said. So, I thank you also for your tolerance in the face of this mistreatment from those that you serve.

Finally, I want to say a word of thanks to those who provide the interpretation services or organise the interpretation services in this house. It is a miracle, is it not, and our ILO conference in June proved it, that our interpretation services get the right people to the right meeting in the right room at the right time, without fail. So, I want to end my contribution by expressing my sincere appreciation to our Chief Interpreter, Monica. I hope you all have a great conference; I want to stay and listen and learn from you, and I look forward to consuming your services in the years ahead. Thank you for being here.

Once Upon a Time at the ILO: The Infancy of Simultaneous Interpreting

Jesús Baigorri-Jalón

Introduction

> The trouble is that, until very recently, most of the renowned interpreters were accidents of nature, the children of freak circumstance, the mutants of international evolution: no one had ever given them any formal training for a form of work which somehow just happened. (Nilski 1967, 47)

The current Director General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) recently referred to the "growing scholarly interest in the multilateral system, global governance, and international organisations" and to the idea that many narratives are possible – "there is no one single story of the ILO" (Ryder 2019, viii). My interest in the history of interpreting at that organisation goes back to over twenty years ago, when I began to look into the origins of conference interpreters at the League of Nations (LON) and the ILO (Baigorri-Jalón 1998, 2005, 2006, 2014/2000), just one of those potential narrative threads or stories.

In this paper I will approach the early days of interpreting and interpreters at the ILO, based mostly on unpublished sources and particularly on some photographs recently provided by the ILO Historical Archives, related to the early experiments in simultaneous interpreting (SI) during the second half of the 1920s and the 1930s. The bilingual regime established with English and French as official languages, both at the LON and the ILO, meant that translation and interpreting had to be provided only from and into each of the two languages. The consecutive interpreting of speeches delivered at the conferences or other subsidiary meetings (almost) doubled the duration of the sessions, thus increasing expenses. The ILO is a tripartite organisation where representatives of governments, workers and employers meet to discuss labour issues with a view to regulating the working environment. From the beginning, multilingualism was a major issue at the

ILO, particularly concerning workers' representatives, who were not necessarily conversant in either of the official languages. Edward Filene, an American entrepreneur who used to attend international conferences in the 1920s, directly felt the "friction" caused by the consecutive interpreting system, and the need to provide the regular audience of the ILO conferences with translations into several languages, not just the official ones. Filene's proposal to sponsor tests with a simultaneous interpreting apparatus is a topic I have developed at length (Baigorri-Jalón 2014/2000,133 *et seq.*), so on this occasion I will focus on a few archival photographs and on potential captions that I have assembled in order to highlight certain aspects of the experiment.

The ILO experiment in simultaneous interpreting: an illustrated story

Recent research into the history of interpreting has paid attention to the use of still images, including photographs, as historical sources (Alonso and Baigorri 2005, Fernández-Ocampo and Wolf 2014, Chernov 2016, Baigorri-Jalón 2016a). Having used photographs as primary sources to study the early practice of SI at the United Nations (UN) around 1947 (Baigorri-Jalón 2016b), I intend to apply a similar approach to some ILO photographic records of the early SI experiments. The basic theoretical and methodological background can be summarised in the following points applicable to photographs: 1) they can be used as primary historical sources and as valid historical records, whose interpretation, however, cannot be univocal; 2) they do not usually contain enough information to rebuild the whole story, so they require contextual material that is not always available in captions or other metadata; and 3) they have forensic value, provided that when we analyse the sources, already a complex exercise, we combine what we see (denotation) with what we infer from them as viewers (connotations) (Baigorri-Jalón 2016b, 167-169).

The photographs I recently obtained from the ILO Historical Archives, whose kind cooperation I wish to acknowledge, are digital versions of, I assume, the paper copies kept in their holdings, themselves duplicates of the original negatives. That institutional archive plays here two of its many roles: as a repository of the Organization's own history – in this case, analogue photographs, which someone related to the SI experiment commissioned for the record – and as a vehicle of the dissemination of part of its materials for potential exhibits or research. In the absence of the sensory perceptions of the faded colours or light (the feel, the smell, and even the sound of those paper photographs), since they were printed nearly a hundred years ago, I am unable to experience the "aura" that surrounds these – and any other – sources. In any case, it would be difficult to describe this atmosphere in writing even if I had *felt* the paper photographs. This is a candid recognition of what is lost in the several mediation processes entailed in the analysis of historical sources, including those which are the result of the mechanical reproduction of images, echoing Walter Benjamin's reference to photography (1969/1936). If I talk of mediation process*es* it is because photographs themselves are a device for mediating between reality and the viewers, one whose materiality is attained through physical and chemical methods, and whose interpretation varies according to the viewers' circumstances, including the time and place of their observation.

From a historical perspective, the photographs in this paper are *indelible records* and *mirrors with a memory* (Scharf 1976); they have survived almost a century, thanks to the curatorial role of the ILO Historical Archives, which have thus contributed to establishing the "truth of social remembrance" or the "remembrance of events worthy of presentation" (Bate 2010, 247-248, quoting Bourdieu). These photographs are a small part of the ILO's official photographic heritage. We should perhaps realise that "multiple photographic collections within the same institution" are a reflection of "the paradoxical promises and premises of photography itself" that lead to the "multiplicity of layers and roles" represented or played by photographs (Haberstich 2000, 47). For my research purposes, they preserve the succession of moments through which they were taken, developed and kept, thus possessing a certain longitudinal representation – or layers. At the same time, they hold a figurative value which shows – to the extent possible, because photographs, like any other record, are never neutral – the existence, at the time when the photos were taken, of human characters, devices or *roomscapes* long gone. I see them as raw images or physical evidence, frozen in time, of a historical event, in this case the pioneering experimentation and early use of SI at the ILO – and in the world, as far as we can tell. They are dormant fragmentary sources, footprints of a bygone past, meaningless antiques to a majority of viewers who are unaware of what went on nearly a century ago in Geneva. If these photographs exist it is because they were commissioned by the Organization in order to document the SI experiments, as a way to show – in both a historical recording effort and a publicity exercise – the ground-breaking nature of the new system being tested, intended to improve the efficiency of the deliberations.

It is well known that photographic images were a common means of communicating "reality" in the 1920s and 1930s. Unfortunately, I am not aware of the history of these particular photographs as objects, that is, how they were produced and used, whether or not they were shown and made available to a wide public, or the impact they had on the individual, collective or official memory of the Organization. The scant metadata provided by the ILO Historical Archives provide little information on the photographed subjects or objects. In fact, the lack of comprehensive captions deprives viewers of valuable data on the images, a silence that I wish to interpret here as a symbolic muzzle or a metaphorical "hush-a-phone", that noise inhibiting device visible in some of the pictures in this paper.

A 1935 ILO file (O 304/5, 1935. *Telephonic Interpretation. Creation of an exhibition model*) contains the plan to present an exhibit of the telephonic interpretation system used at the International Labour Conferences. The idea behind the exhibit was to publicise how the system worked and how it facilitated communication in several languages at a time. Besides the model apparatus, which would allow spectators to see the device and how it functioned by offering recordings of original and interpreted speeches, the plan called for the presentation of a series of 13 photographs, with images of the interpreters, the equipment, the delegates, etc. The file does not include a list of the specific images, so it is not possible to tell whether the series I received from the ILO Historical Archives are directly related to the proposed exhibit. However, it seems plausible that some of those images' content fits into the goals pursued by the exhibition, though I cannot ascertain whether it ever materialised. The interrelation between the records from 1935 that I have found and the recently "found footage" gives us a sense of what the SI ecosystem was like while it was being conceived, *ex novo*, in the 1920s and 1930s. This paper would thus ideally add new fragments to the microhistory of early experiments in SI, as an episode of a lengthier history and as a part of History with a capital H, since the SI mode brought about democratisation in multilingual international gatherings, a parallel phenomenon to the one being implemented almost at the same time in another setting, the Comintern conferences in Moscow (Chernov 2016).

The general comments made in that 1935 ILO file are worth quoting at length, as they summarise the whole experiment, and some of the indications on the choice of photographs may also support my own interpretation of the ones I present in this paper:

> According to the method of interpreting adopted, either several telephonic interpretations may be given while the speech is being made (so-called instantaneous interpretation) or they may be given after the speech has been

> made and while it is being interpreted from the platform into one of the official languages. The latter is known as the "simultaneous" method. In practice, direct or instantaneous interpretation raises certain difficulties. It is hard for the interpreter, however well he may be trained, to translate the speech word for word, particularly when the speaker's delivery is rapid and when statistics are quoted. This method is therefore only used occasionally, and telephonic interpretation is mainly simultaneous.
>
> The idea of working out a system of simultaneous interpretation is due to Mr. Edward A. Filene, the well-known Boston business man, who, as early as 1924, informed the Secretary General of the League of Nations that he intended to discover some system for interpreting simultaneously into one or several languages the important speeches made at the League of Nations Assemblies. Mr. Filene thought, quite rightly, that such a system would have a considerable influence on the proceedings by: a) saving time; b) speeding up the debate, and consequently securing increased attention from delegates; c) making it possible for speakers who were not familiar with the official languages to reply promptly and refer to points made in speeches.
>
> In 1925, Mr. Filene offered to instal (*sic*) equipment at his own expense. The first attempts at telephonic interpretation were made during the 1925 Session of the International Labour Conference. By 1928 a complete set of equipment was in operation, and simultaneous interpretation could be heard in six different languages. Except for certain details, the system of interpretation remains the same. The photographs shown below, which were taken during a Session of the International Labour Conference, illustrate the operation of the system. (File O 304/5, 1935 *Collection of photographs illustrating simultaneous telephonic interpretation. Telephonic interpretation during a Session of the International Labour Conference*, pp. 1-2).

The explanation about the two different systems in this "how-to" description is somewhat confusing, in the sense that *instantaneous* interpretation would be what we now call *simultaneous*, whereas what the text calls simultaneous would be a kind of delayed *instantaneous* interpretation into several non-official languages, performed while the original speech (in English or French) was being interpreted into the other official language in the consecutive mode. In this case, time would not be saved compared to the regular system, and its only advantage would be to offer a wider range of languages. I have explained elsewhere that the simultaneous experiment in itself was a challenge that was tackled in several stages, under the early assumption – quite soon proved wrong – that it was impossible for the interpreter to listen to one language and transfer the content of the speech into another while the speaker continued to speak (Baigorri-Jalón 2014/2000, 136 *et seq.*). The assessment, probably made through participant observation, that *instantaneous* interpreters would have more difficulty dealing with fast speeches and those full of statistics makes a lot of sense in retrospect.

The availability of photos with general views of the ILO conference(s) where SI was being tested allows the viewer to see a sort of uniform *roomscape* in which representatives from opposing social classes rubbed shoulders with each other in a sort of coexistence where the "other" could be perceived in close quarters and on an institutionally equal footing. International civil servants with professional status, including interpreters, and delegates from the governments or the other branches are shown in photographs camouflaged in a similar – formal – attire, an important recognition factor for interpreters at a time when their professional category was under construction. In fact, the identity shown by these images is not that of a "conference interpreter" without qualifications – a "work in progress" in the 1920s (Baigorri-Jalón 1998, 2005) – but rather the identity of a "simultaneous interpreter", a totally new specimen in the professional directories, in this case under the umbrella of an international organisation (Sanz 1930). Conference interpreters until then worked in the consecutive mode and were highly visible in the meeting. These ILO photos do not privilege the self, in the sense that most of the photographed interpreters are anonymous, unknown to the potential observers of the images or even to the recipients of their services. When working in the simultaneous mode, interpreters were located outside the view of their users (delegates, journalists, other language-related officials, the public at times), so they were not easily recognised. They can be seen as a metaphor of the coeval second industrial revolution, like cogs in a machine, an idea that pervades some of the comments in the ILO written records, for instance when they compare "oral" translation with "telephonic" translation, as if the latter were not oral but mechanical.

This photo shows British engineer Alan Gordon-Finlay posing while pretending to be using or testing a hush-a-phone, a device which was first manufactured in 1921 (Gordon 1997). It was designed to reduce noise while allowing communication as the user spoke softly into the mouthpiece of a telephone, to which the device was originally applied. Its application to an interpreter's microphone improved the voice transmission without disturbing other adjacent interpreters or the audience.

Figure 1: Telephonic interpretation. Alan Gordon-Finlay, ca. 1927 (courtesy of the ILO Historical Archives).

Alan Gordon Finlay was born in Turramurra, New South Wales, Australia on 8 June 1890. He was brought up in Switzerland and had a good command of French and German. He graduated from the Royal Military College in Sandhurst (UK) and served in Afghanistan (Flerov 2016). His record during WWI, according to his grandson, shows that in 1914 he served in King Edward's Horse 2nd battalion at the front in Ypres and that he was decorated and promoted to captain as a consequence of outstanding action in that theater of operations, where he was a victim of chlorine gas in the trenches and, as a result, sent back to England in 1915 to recover. That year he was assigned to work at William Foster & Co., in Lincoln, in the development of tanks, a job he continued with the French in Paris, in coordination with Foster & Co. Since his childhood Finlay showed great interest in technical inventions – he even wrote a patent at the age of eight – and he was a ham radio fanatic. The latter must have contributed to the development of the engineering abilities he put at the service of the Filene-Finlay SI system concept (Electronic personal communication with Dr. Guy Loftus, Alan Gordon Finlay's grandson, May 2020). According to the League of Nations Search Engine, he was appointed to Inter-Allied and Anglo-American Commissions in Paris during 1918 and 1919. He would serve in the LON

First Division at the Précis-Writer Department with temporary contracts, alternating with other activities outside the LON (League of Nations Search Engine). He married Florence Mary Gallagher and had two children. He passed away in January 1959 in Uckfield, Surrey, England (Flerov 2016).[1] Finlay was responsible for many of the technical specifics of the Filene-Finlay "translator", which would become the system used at the ILO and at other institutions on loan for their conferences. That system was patented by Edward Filene and later used under IBM patent at the Nuremberg Trials, under Colonel Dostert's coordination, where US Signal Corps electrical equipment was also used.

The following are excerpts of the patent application filed by Filene in 1930 for his simultaneous translation system:

> This invention relates to a method and apparatus for use where speeches or the like delivered in one language must be translated into other languages for the convenience or full understanding of persons to whom the subject-matter of the speeches is of interest and importance, and the general object of the invention is to provide apparatus whereby such requirements can be met efficiently. […] The objects of the invention are attained in general in the following manner: All of the translations are made by interpreters suitably positioned with respect to the speaker and their translations are delivered to the audience by telephony. For this purpose each interpreter is provided with an individual microphone connected through an amplifier to telephone receiving instruments installed at various parts of the hall occupied by the audience, each receiving instrument being provided with selector means whereby any one of the translators may be selected for reception. (US Patent Office, Application serial No. 451,814, May 12, 1930, patent 1,874,480, August 30, 1932, p. 1)

The Filene-Finlay system was in fact an electrical installation which allowed for the reception of sound and its distribution through different lines in various languages. However, the real interpreting system was not the electrical setting but the interpreters' brains and vocal cords, a point usually omitted as if technology itself could carry out the oral translation process, perhaps hinting at future machine translation processes. Indeed, machine translation was tested as early as 1951 in an IBM-Georgetown experiment, behind which we find Colonel Dostert (Vasconcellos 2000), an interpreter himself and the architect of the SI mode at the Nuremberg Trials and at the United Nations.

[1] Further information on Alan Gordon Finlay can be found in a recent Wikipedia entry: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Gordon_Finlay.

Figure 2: Telephonic interpretation (left (*sic*) Alan Gordon-Finlay), ca. 1927 (courtesy of the ILO Historical Archives).

The two gentlemen in this image are supposedly listening through stethoscope-type earphones while checking a text, sitting at a table equipped with two additional sets of earphones. Finlay, according to the official caption, is the one on the left, but based on his grandson's observation and a detailed comparison with photo 1, probably taken on the same day, looking at his suit, tie and eyebrows, he is most likely the one on the viewer's right. This image in all likelihood depicts the simultaneous interpreting experiments organised at the ILO, under Filene's sponsorship, to test interpreters' ability to cope with the simultaneous mode. The photograph, probably posed, was intended to show the process of listening to a potential candidate's rendition and comparing his/her delivery with the original or the pre-translated text.

It is interesting to note that in the first SI course ever, which finished in February 1928, five out of the eleven successful candidates were women (List "Telephonic interpretation. Members of the staff who have survived the interpretation test made in February", undated file [actually February 1928] File Filene Experiment, ILO Archives O/304/1/0, p. 60).[2]

Figure 3: General view, International Labour Conference, 11th session, Geneva, June 1928, photo 3 (courtesy of the ILO Historical Archives).

The telephonic – present-day simultaneous – interpreting mode had been experimented with on a limited scale, but with a certain amount of success, in the 1925, 1926 and 1927 ILO Conferences. Lessons were drawn from that experience for a wider experiment in 1928, after the SI course had taken place. The idea proposed by Filene to create a school of practice for simultaneous interpreters after the 1926 tests was a pioneering initiative, and the results at the June 1928 ILO Conference 11th session, shown in this image, attest to some important steps in the development of SI, in social, technical and professional terms. Incidentally, the experiment began with four languages (English, French, German and Spanish) and throughout the session experiments were made with three additional languages: Swedish, Dutch and Japanese (Baigorri-Jalón 2014/2000, 146). These are some of the

[2] One of those five, Mrs. Sallaz, was an interpreter at various sessions of the ILO Governing Council and its Conference (ILO Archives, Personnel File Esther Sallaz, No. 925, and File Application of telephonic interpretation during the 12th session of the Conference, O 304/4/12, ILO, 1929).

conclusions reached by Finlay, through which we can grasp some of the technical, professional and financial issues involved:

> Generally speaking, the Eleventh Conference provided definite vindication of the Filene Telephonic Interpretation System and of the methods adopted for its application.
>
> […] The first effect of the system clearly emerging from the experiments was to enable a relatively large number of Worker delegates and others unacquainted with either of the official languages to take a useful part in the proceedings for the first time, and the political effects of this and its value to the work of the International Labour Organisation are difficult to estimate.
>
> The second effect demonstrated by the experiments, notwithstanding the necessarily partial character of their application pending official recognition of the system, was a saving of time […]
>
> […] In addition to the propaganda value, difficult to estimate, amongst the public and members of the Conference, 117 articles and notices favourable to the International Labour Organisation have up to the present time appeared in 78 journals representing the press of the majority of the countries of the world, cinematograph films showing the new system in use have been shown in various countries and a number of broadcast lectures and commentaries have been transmitted by 21 stations serving approximately 15,000,000 listeners.
>
> […] It was found that, on average, thirty minutes of consecutive work proved to be the maximum during which satisfactory translation could be made, after which the results were liable to deteriorate owing to fatigue. (Alan Gordon-Finlay, Report on the results at the eleventh session of the International Labour Conference, 1928. 30 June 1928, ILO file 0/304/1/0, *Filene Experiment. Special Course. Arrangements and equipment*, 1928, p. 83 *et seq.*)

Rather than a convention of telephone operators, as it would have been described by consecutive interpreters at the UN who, years later, mocked their simultaneous interpreting counterparts as *téléphonistes*, photo 3 looks like a medical convention, showing specialty doctors checking international labour's *wheezing* with their stethoscopes. The same earphones were provided to delegates during the 12th session of the International Labour Conference:

> The delegates were supplied with so-called stethoscopes, that is to say, receiving instruments with oval earpieces to be placed in the ears. Such instruments have not been employed at all for many years, since they were found to be unhygienic and were constructed in such a manner as to be easily

> damaged. In the diplomatic gallery the apparatus which had been installed was similar to the ordinary receiving apparatus but provided with a handle. These instruments were better than the others, but on account of the handle were found to be too heavy. (Note by Dr. Ritter on the Technical Arrangements for the Twelfth International Labour Conference, undated [ca. June 1929] and unsigned, typewritten, p. 31, ILO file O 304/4/12, Application of telephonic interpretation during the 12th Session of the Conference, 1929).

That was also the conclusion reached by the Selection Committee in charge of supervising the use of simultaneous interpreting:

> …we have tested the two types of earphone provided and consider that the type fitted in the diplomatic gallery is both comfortable and more efficient than the stethoscope type supplied to the Delegates. We propose that the latter should be discarded and the former or some modification of it fitted for the whole Conference in the future. (League of Nations, International Labour Conference. Twelfth Session, Geneva. Provisional Record, No. 30, 20 June 1929. Annexes. Seventh Report of the Selection Committee. (Signed S. Yoshisaka, E. Marchesi, H. Muller), p. vii)

The provisional record of the ILO June 1929 session contains the following assessment by the same Committee:

> Out of the 21 plenary sittings of the Conference up to date, oral translations have been wholly or partly dispensed with at 15 sittings. The Conference decided to dispense with oral translations for all general discussions, while retaining them for the discussion of amendments. This procedure seems to have given general satisfaction. Without its use the Conference would certainly have been prolonged by at least three days. We think that the experience of this year shows conclusively that the telephonic system should be definitely adopted as a permanent part of the equipment of the Conference. (League of Nations, International Labour Conference. Twelfth Session, Geneva. Provisional Record, No. 30, 20 June 1929. Annexes. Seventh Report of the Selection Committee. (Signed S. Yoshisaka, E. Marchesi, H. Muller), p. viii)

The Committee members consider the consecutive mode from the rostrum as “oral” translation, as if the interpreting provided through microphones and headphones were not oral but strangely mechanical. That is an interesting way of describing the differences between the two models. Consecutive was preserved for discussion of amendments, notwithstanding that in the June 1929 session a projector (a precursor to the overhead projector) was used to show on screen the amendments proposed by delegates to the text being discussed. A second point is how the committee members touch on the sensitive issue of saving time (no fewer than three days of conference time). Finally, it was truly pioneering for the committee to suggest adopting the telephonic system as a permanent part of the equipment of the ILO Conference, in 1929! It would take almost 20 additional years until the United Nations in 1947 would adopt the simultaneous mode as the preferred one for its meetings, after the method was put to the test at the Nuremberg Trials (1945-46) and in previous experiments at the UN beginning in 1946.

Figure 4: Telephonic interpretation_(ca. 1939)_9 (courtesy of the ILO Historical Archives).

In 1930, consideration was given to the improvement of the headphones, which would eventually be replaced to allow better hygiene and higher quality sound in the interpretation users' ears, as can be seen in the rest of the photographs shown in this research:

> Since there are funds available, I would like to proceed this year to the purchase of new sets of ear-pieces for the telephonic interpretation system. It seems in fact that some members of the Conference are surprised that we have not already altered the stethoscopic apparatus. As far as I am aware,

> we never undertook to do this. What we have done is to fit up a bench – in the extreme corner of the diplomatic gallery – with 9 different types of apparatus which can be procured from local or other firms whose prices we have.
>
> This is a matter which directly affects the delegates and I think there are a great number who take considerable interest in the matter. It is difficult for the Administrative Section to take the responsibility of changing the present apparatus without having ascertained to some extent the views of the delegates themselves. (Minute sheet addressed to Mr. Fleury, Deputy-Director, presumably by Mr. Ellison, June 6 1930 (ILO file O 304/1/9))

On 29 September 1930 the issue of replacing the stethoscopes with headphones was under negotiation with a number of firms, according to the Finance Committee's report to the ILO Governing Body's 50th session to be held in Brussels on 6 October 1930 (ILO file O 304/1/10, 1932, *Échange des écouteurs du système d'interprétation téléphonique*). A few days earlier R. Durel had stated, regarding headphones, that "de tous ceux que je connais, le plus pratique est le système SIEMENS & HALSKE". (*Ibid.* Minute sheet 23 Sept. 1930). This would make sense given the technological developments of the German company (Chernov 2019).[3]

The interpreter in figure 4 seems to be at work, using the new type of headphones to receive the sound from the speaker, and the hush-a-phone attached to a standing microphone, so that his hands are free to hold a text, either that provided by the speaker or the notes he may have taken while listening to the original speech before it was interpreted consecutively into the other official language from the podium. The photo does not allow the viewer to see whether the enclosed zone where the interpreter is located has a direct view of the conference room, though it can be assumed that it does. The requisite of direct vision of the meeting room was not considered as important in these early stages of SI as it would be in the future, even though the layout of many conference rooms today does not allow interpreters to see all the speakers' faces or lips. Some of the early experiments could be likened to a kind of remote interpreting, in which only the sound signal would be received as if coming from a contiguous room.

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[3] In a further report of the same committee to the 52nd Session of the ILO Governing Body to be held in Geneva on 18 April 1931, the Committee authorises the expenditure of up to 15,000 francs, "for the substitution of the stethoscopic apparatus at present in use by earphones and headpieces similar to those utilised in the case of wireless telegraphy" (ILO file O 304/1/10, 1932, *Échange des écouteurs du système d'interprétation téléphonique*, Geneva 15 April 1931).

Figure 5: Telephonic interpretation_(ca. 1939)_10 (courtesy of the ILO Historical Archives).

An anonymous interpreter in action, using the new type of headphones to receive the amplified sound from the delegate who had the floor or from a fellow interpreter, and the hush-a-phone, presumably attached to the microphone, which the interpreter is bringing closer to his mouth with his right hand. The purpose of the hush-a-phone was to mitigate interference of his voice with the development of the meeting and with other interpreters, perhaps located to his left. A minimal partition on both sides delineates the space of a rudimentary booth. The interpreter has a direct view of the conference room and, probably, the speaker. The idea of a totally enclosed booth, with glass panes to dampen the sound while allowing the view of the room, was not considered at that stage. A notepad on the desk may indicate the use of notes of the *simultaneous* – our consecutive – interpreting provided from the rostrum from one of the two official languages into the other. The notes would serve as a basis to improve the quality of the interpreter's rendition.

Figure 6: Telephonic Interpretation_(ca.1939)_2 (courtesy of the ILO Historical Archives).

The direct users of the interpreters' services were primarily the delegates, who needed to understand each other in order to be able to interact in their deliberations. However, the interpreters' translated speeches were also the basis of the written records of the meetings, produced by stenographers, short-hand reporters or précis-writers, who seem to be at work in this photograph, as well as for public information officers and journalists. In that sense, the existence of SI allowed for the evolution of other (written) language-related jobs. Some of the people in the image are taking notes while listening through the headphones. Others are listening directly to the speaker, whose voice and gestural language they can perceive without the need for headphones.

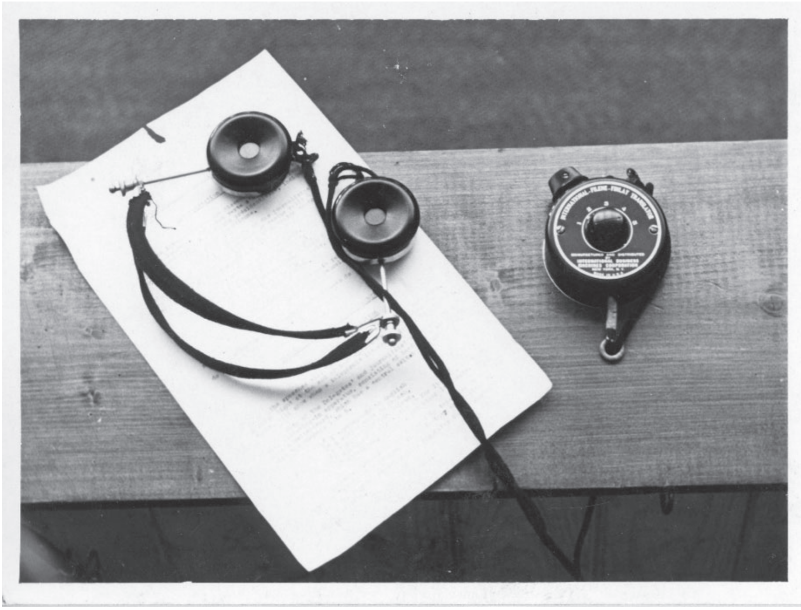

Figure 7: Telephonic Interpretation_(ca.1939)_13 (courtesy of the ILO Historical Archives).

These headphones – placed on top of an illegible sheet of paper, possibly containing instructions for their use – suggest to present-day viewers a meme of a smiling face. The dial to the right of the image bears the name *International Filene-Finlay Translator*.

As early as 1928 the ILO Telephonic Interpretation Development Committee, made up of Mr. H. B. Butler (Chairman), Mr. Edward A. Filene, Major L. Urwick and Mr. A. G. Finlay, stated:

> All patents shall be taken out in the name "Filene-Finlay", but it is hereby agreed by all parties concerned that such patents shall be the exclusive property of Edward A. Filene and any contracts entered into shall make obligatory the stamping of all apparatus, etc. with such name, which shall also appear in all publicity undertaken. (Minute Sheet signed by Edward A. Filene, H. B. Butler and A. Gordon Finlay, 12 September 1928, ILO file O/304/1/4. Telephonic Interpretation Development Committee).

Accordingly, the dial on the right shows that the Bostonian entrepreneur and philanthropist had already patented the system. Filene filed the patent application on May 12, 1930 (serial No. 451,814.). It would be approved by the United States Patent Office on August 30, 1932 (number 1,874,480) (United States Patent Office). The International Business Machines (IBM) company, which would eventually own the patent, gives the following information in its company pages:

> IBM founder Thomas Watson Sr. saw the problems of language barriers first-hand in his early work with the International Chamber of Commerce. In 1927, under his direction, the company developed its first translation system based on the Filene-Finlay simultaneous translator. It was essentially an audio setup of headphones and dials that allowed users to listen to professional translators translating speeches in real time. Installed and first used at the League of Nations (a precursor of the United Nations) in 1931, the system allowed listeners to dial in to their native language and hear pre-translated speeches read simultaneously with the proceedings. The IBM ® Filene-Finlay Translator was later modified and used for simultaneous translations at the Nuremberg war crimes trials following World War II, and at the United Nations. (International Business Machines webpage).

This photograph shows a multi-circuit amplifier, an automatic exchange system, distribution and sub-distribution systems, and a transmission system (to mitigate interference). I find in this photograph a still-life of an era of modern aesthetics. From a metaphoric perspective, it may be seen as a mirror image of the synapses and neuronal circuits of the interpreters themselves, transferring from one language to another and then distributing their rendition through electrical impulses to the audience of a speech uttered in another language by the original speaker or by a fellow interpreter, which would reach the user's receiver apparatus. Or as the patent application submitted by Filene says:

> …to assure the reception of the translation free from interference by the speaker's voice, the transmissions are amplified to a suitable degree before delivery to the audience so that the strength of the reception may always be sufficient to predominate over extraneous sounds and overcome ordinary defects of hearing. […] One line in the output circuit of each amplifier unit is connected by suitable branches with a corresponding contact at each of the receiving stations in the system preferably located at the seats or desks in the auditorium. (US Patent Office Filene-Finlay p. 2)

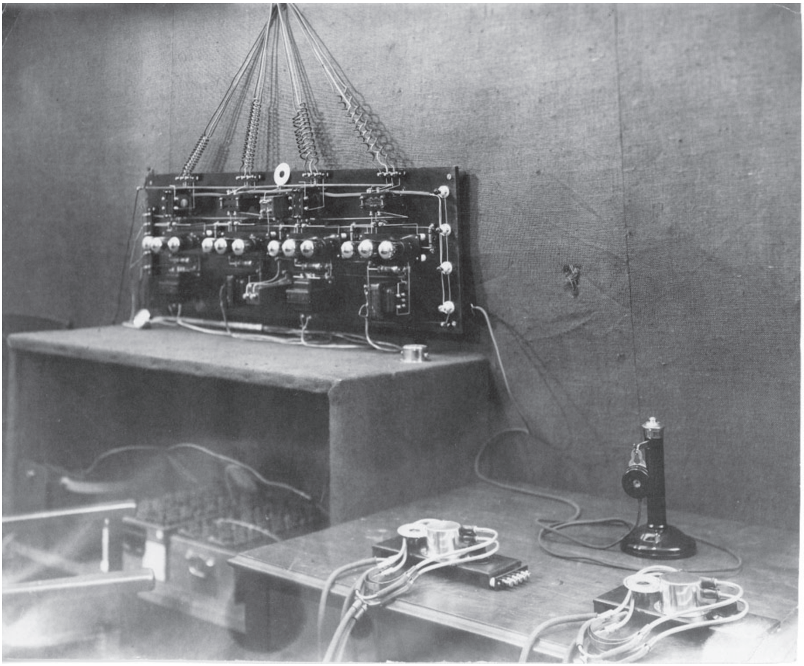

Figure 8: Telephonic interpretation_(ca. 1939)_11 (courtesy of the ILO Archive).

Coda

Simultaneous interpreting allowed the ILO to go beyond official bilingualism, which limited participation in meetings to those proficient in at least one of the official languages. Thus, it brought about a remarkable democratisation of an international organisation which, as observed by Bissière-Whiting (2010, 7), due to its tripartite structure was far more multilingual than its formal bilingualism suggested. Languages other than the two official ones (French and English), including Spanish and German, but also others as seen above, were introduced at ILO Conferences thanks to the use of the established state-of-the-art technology – which the SI experiments contributed to developing. That points to an increasing scientific input in the ILO international bureaucracy, which was built mostly on the French and British respective civil service models, while preserving its melting pot atmosphere and preparing it for the future. Thus, the SI experiment should be seen not only as a technical challenge but also as a means to achieve social and scientific advancement by underscoring the value of time in the management of international meetings and civilised conversation. Its influence was felt in the adoption of the SI system at the Nuremberg Trials and the United Nations, heir to the pre-war international political architecture. It also established the precedent of cross-fertilisation with other organisations, including those under the UN umbrella and the fledgling European Communities, which hired former ILO and LON interpreters.[4]

The consolidation of the LON or ILO interpreters' professional profile, even though the ILO did not have staff interpreters in its ranks in its early days, ran parallel to the development of a series of other specialised profiles within the language professions: translators, editors (including proofreaders), stenographers, précis-writers or reporters in charge of drafting the summary or the verbatim records, etc. Although most of those practitioners were not interchangeable, translators at times played the role of interpreters – a case in point is the 1928 simultaneous interpreting course – and vice versa. Even if the jobs were different, it is clear that they were closely interrelated. Stenographers would take the speeches from the interpreters, and conference texts produced by translators or by précis-writers were based on the interpreters' delivery. These translations and reports, in turn, would serve as a basis for delegates when quoting from previous debates or from decisions or resolutions that had been adopted. Besides, interpreters' renderings were also a source for journalists' stories.

The development of the conference interpreting profession, after SI began to be used at a number of conferences, went along two parallel tracks: consecutive interpreters had gained the upper hand during the early 1920s and continued to prevail in most conferences in the interwar period, including at the League of Nations, whose use of simultaneous was occasional compared to that of the ILO. The new aptitudes required of SI interpreters, quite different from those needed by their consecutive counterparts, were described in detail by Sanz (1930) in one of the earliest extant pieces of research on conference interpreting.

Among the lessons learned from the early SI experiments at the ILO, we can underline the importance of teaching specific SI skills in special courses, the technical improvements made in SI equipment after experience in successive sessions, awareness about interpreters' fatigue (the thirty-

[4] As an example, ILO interpreter Kouindjy accompanied the Director General of the ILO in 1951 to the Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community in Strasbourg (ILO Archive Personnel file nº 1178, Louis Jules Kouindjy).

minute shifts), and the aptitude shown by women in the SI experiments in a still male-dominated profession.[5] However, other lessons were ignored, probably due to lack of awareness or memory. For instance, the mode of interpreting adopted at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal was consecutive because the Tribunal considered that SI between English and Japanese was not feasible (Takeda 2010, 37), even though SI into Japanese had been used as early as the 1928 ILO Conference, as mentioned earlier. Other examples would be the lack of continuity of in-house formal training courses in SI or the fact that the time-saving advantage derived from the use of SI was not fully applied in the ILO regular meetings of different commissions.

Hopefully, this paper will help to underscore the value of historical research in interpreting studies and to foster and broaden the debate on the consequences of technological innovation on societal change, a quite relevant issue both academically and professionally in present-day societies, where old problems may be emerging with different shapes.

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[5] The case of Olivia Rossetti Agresti at the 1919 ILO Washington Conference and at the LON was a noteworthy exception (Baigorri Jalón 2005, 2006).

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Chapter I:

Conference Interpreting Practice

Fifty Years of Research on Anticipation in Simultaneous Interpreting

Franz Pöchhacker and Monika Stögerer

Abstract

Anticipation in simultaneous interpreting (SI) has been the subject of empirical research since the early 1970s. In this paper we review this body of research, tracing its development from its beginnings to some of the most recent contributions. We acknowledge the two principal methodological approaches to research on strategic anticipation (experimental and corpus-based) and then focus on experimental designs linking strategy use to directionality, as pioneered in the 1995 MA thesis by Udo Jörg. With the aim of testing Jörg´s assumption that simultaneous interpreters working into their B language (i.e., in retour) may have an advantage over colleagues working into their A language when it comes to handling syntactic challenges by strategic anticipation, a replication study of SI from German into French was carried out with eight advanced MA students at the universities of Vienna and Louvain. With German-A participants showing more successful use of anticipation in their SI performance into French, the hypothesis is largely borne out, even though the directionality-based competitive edge tends to be undermined by language proficiency issues in student interpreters´ B-language output.

Introduction

Research into conference interpreting is only roughly half as old as its object of study. While mostly following rather than informing developments in professional practice, research efforts since the 1960s have contributed to an ever-broader knowledge base, mainly with regard to the cognitive processes underlying interpreting in the simultaneous mode (see, e.g., Gile 2009; Seeber 2015).

Among the earliest concerns of researchers studying simultaneous interpreting (SI) were temporal parameters such as the time lag between the source speech and its interpretation (e.g., Oléron and Nanpon 1965/2002). Beyond the mere measurement of what she referred to as the "ear–voice span", Goldman-Eisler (1972) also identified patterns in the relationship between the original and the interpreter's rendering. Her observation that some stretches of speech reflected parallelism ("identity") while other target-speech "chunks" appeared to combine ("fusion") or split ("fission") corresponding parts of the original led her to conclude that simultaneous interpreters imposed their own segmentation patterns on the speech material. Such patterns had in fact been described 15 years earlier by Eva Paneth in her pioneering Master's thesis. Among her many observations, she described one instance of "timing" in SI in which the interpreter finished speaking before the end of the corresponding source-speech chunk, explaining that "the interpreter has anticipated the likely conclusion of a grammatical construction" (Paneth 1957/2002, 34).

Aside from this early reference, the impact of grammar and especially of syntactic asymmetries between the source and target languages on the timing of SI did not draw much attention, at least while the focus was on SI between English and French. A noteworthy example of a linguistically oriented account of SI, by a practitioner, can be found in the early essay by Roger Glémet, head of language services at GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade:

> As you are following the speaker you start a sentence. But as you start a sentence you are taking a leap in the dark, you are mortgaging your grammatical future; the original sentence may suddenly be turned in such a way that your translation of its end cannot easily be reconciled with your translation of its start. Great nimbleness is called for to guide the mind through this syntactical maze, whilst at the same time it is engaged upon the work of word-translation. (Glémet 1958, 120–121)

In Glémet's colourful description of the SI process, the interpreter is passively trailing the speaker, left "in the dark" about what will come next. This is one point about which some early scholars of SI came to adopt a radically different view, as will be discussed in more detail below. Another concerns the role of linguistic constituents and structures – words, sentences, grammar, syntax – in the process of SI. With the rise of the Paris School "universalists" (Setton 1999, 53), the relevance of linguistic structures, accepted in the "bilateralist" school of thought (e.g., Kade 1967), was called into question, and (non-verbal) utterance meaning (*sens*) became the centre and pinnacle of the theoretical model to explain SI. The conceptual proximity of *sens* and *vouloir-dire* (the speaker's intended meaning) in the Paris School's Interpretive Theory of Translation points to the importance of meaning expectations in the interpreter's comprehension process. This, in turn, was the fundamental principle on which Ghelly Chernov (1978) built his explanatory model of SI. Chernov's comprehensive view of expectation-based processing will serve as the starting point for our discussion of the phenomenon of anticipation. Having made the appropriate conceptual distinctions, we will go on to review and exemplify the main methodological approaches to the empirical investigation of anticipation in SI. Against the background of corpus-based and experimental studies of anticipation in SI, we will focus on work exploring the relationship between anticipation and directionality, and report a recent replication study as a way of highlighting both the tradition of research on anticipation and its potential for further innovation.

Anticipation

Of all interpreting scholars, Ghelly Chernov (2004) is most closely associated with the notion of anticipation. Not only was his conceptualisation of anticipation in SI the earliest, but it was also the broadest by far. Indeed, Chernov's view was informed by theories of Russian psychologists and neurophysiologists who sought to explain the adaptability of living organisms in general. Rather than mere reflexes (as central in behaviourist psychology), these approaches (such as Anokhin's Activity Theory) envisaged functional systems capable of recording recurrent sequences of stimuli and using this memory to form hypotheses. Thus, human behaviour was seen as relying on the "anticipatory reflection of reality" (Chernov 2004, 91). Based on this theory, Chernov held that prediction was vital not only to the survival of living organisms but also to linguistic comprehension. This means that knowledge already available (i.e., informational redundancy in the input) enables probabilistic anticipation of what is to follow. In SI, Chernov assumed this mechanism to be operating at multiple levels, from syllables and words to utterances and entire speeches. He tested this in an experiment with professional interpreters involving manipulated (Russian and English) source-language sentences (e.g., "He always took me for granite [granted]."). He found a mixed, but largely confirmatory pattern of results for his basic hypothesis that "in the process of listening to the original speech, the interpreter makes assumptions about how the speaker's intention is likely to develop or be completed semantically and verbally" (Chernov 2004, 185).

Chernov's reference to the semantic and verbal development and completion of the source-language utterance highlights that probability prediction may relate to utterance meaning or to linguistic form. This, in turn, reflects the distinction between expectations that are formed on the basis of the interpreter's world or contextual knowledge, and predictions derived from knowledge of the (source) language. Moreover, the expression 'verbal completion', understood in a very literal sense, could even be seen as pointing to the type of anticipation that has been in the focus of empirical research to date, the study reported here included. While any of these manifestations of probabilistic anticipation are highly relevant to the process of SI, only some of them are open to empirical verification. One might invoke the image of an iceberg, most of which is submerged beneath the surface, with only a small part visible. Chernov emphasised the former, broader view of anticipation as a mechanism underlying any linguistic processing, not least in SI, even though this is practically impossible to observe in an interpreter's output. Empirical research on anticipation, on the other hand, has necessarily centred on 'visible' anticipation. In this more specific sense, anticipation is generally defined as the simultaneous interpreter's production of a target-text constituent before the corresponding word or phrase has been uttered by the speaker (see, e.g., Jörg 1995, 5; Van Besien 1999, 250).

Unlike anticipation in the wider sense of probabilistic processing, or expectation-driven comprehension, SI-specific anticipation is primarily used in the case of syntactic asymmetries between the source and target languages. At least in the bilateralist school of thought, such asymmetries confront the simultaneous interpreter with additional challenges as a result of the need for more restructuring than is the case when working between syntactically similar languages. The most extreme challenge in this regard arises when an important source-language constituent appears in sentence-final position. Most typically, this occurs when working from a language allowing a subject–object–verb (SOV) structure into an SVO language, but the sentence-final constituent can also be a negation particle or similar linguistic form. The conference language most famous, or infamous, in this respect is German, but such asymmetries also occur with source languages such as Dutch and Japanese as well as Chinese (see Setton 1999). Anecdotally, simultaneous interpreters working from German often pause and 'wait for the verb'. Though this is possible, to some extent, it increases the load on the interpreter's short-term memory. Waiting for more information while holding current input in memory can easily lead to what Seeber (2011) refers to as the "spillover effect", meaning a "considerable increase of cognitive load" (2011, 193). That is where anticipation as a specific processing strategy comes in. Drawing on prior knowledge of various types (commonly referred to as top-down processing), the interpreter will make an informed guess as to the most likely sentence ending, or use a generic or neutral verb in order to complete the SVO structure and then qualify the meaning where necessary. Amos and Pickering (2020), who suggest that prediction in SI in syntactically asymmetric language pairs (i.e., German to English) takes place on the production level, confirm that cognitive load is reduced when the verb of an SOV language can be predicted (2020, 713).

Two major analytical distinctions can be derived from this account of anticipation as a strategy for overcoming structural challenges in SI: one relates to the type of knowledge used to make the prediction, and the other to the degree of accuracy with which the meaning or even the linguistic form is anticipated. When the prediction relies on familiar linguistic patterns such as collocations or idiomatic phrases, early parts of which serve the interpreter as linguistic cues, most authors speak of 'linguistic' anticipation (e.g., Lederer 1981; Gile 1995; Setton 1999). On the other hand, prediction based on contextual or situational knowledge (or world knowledge in general) is usually referred to as 'extralinguistic' anticipation. With regard to accuracy, one of the earliest classifications of anticipation was proposed by Mattern (1974, 5), who described the outcome as "confirmed", "slightly misinterpreted" or "completely incorrect". Subsequent refinements of this distinction, most notably by Jörg (1995, 1997), comprise an initial choice between "successful" and "incorrect" and then subcategorise successful anticipation as either "exact" or "more general" (or "generic"). This classification in particular has provided the analytical framework for a number of empirical studies in which the effectiveness as well as the prevalence of anticipation as a strategy, or coping tactic (Gile 1995), has been investigated. Such studies, on different language pairs but most often with German as a source language, have taken either a corpus-based or an experimental approach, and this methodological choice will also guide our review of selected studies in the following section.

Methods

Aside from Paneth's (1957/2002) early observation of timing patterns, empirical research on anticipation in SI, in the narrower sense of expressing source-speech meaning in the target language before the speaker has uttered the corresponding source-language word or phrase, began in the 1970s. Mattern (1974) generated data for her MA thesis by asking professional interpreters as well as students to simultaneously interpret several German speeches read to them for the purpose of her study. In the absence of any manipulation of variables, Mattern's was not an experiment in the strict sense, and she mainly examined her data qualitatively to identify the linguistic stimuli serving as anticipation cues. Lederer (1981), by contrast, collected data for her 1978 doctoral thesis in an authentic setting – a 63-minute debate at a meeting on railway equipment financing with French/German SI. She, too, conducted mainly qualitative analyses, with a focus on highlighting sense-based rather than linguistic processing. Though an early example of observational research based on an authentic corpus, Lederer's study also includes interpretations that were subsequently produced, based on a recording of the proceedings, by the respective interpreter who had not done the original turn in the booth. Once again, however, no experimental design was pursued, and no quantification attempted. Rather, insights were generated by qualitative analysis and discussion of selected examples.

It was only two decades later that Lederer's corpus, which comprised 55 minutes of German source speeches, was submitted to systematic analysis. Van Besien (1999) identified a total of 78 instances of anticipation in the 110-minute target-language corpus produced by the two interpreters (i.e., one anticipation every 85 seconds). Although one interpreter produced more anticipations than the other (47 compared to 31), the difference was not found to be statistically significant. In 77 percent of all cases, the source-speech constituent predicted was a verb. With regard to the accuracy of prediction, anticipation was found to be "correct" 63 percent of the time. Of the remaining 29 cases classified as "approximations", four gave rise to a repair. Regardless of the uncertainties inherent in Lederer's corpus, Van Besien's (1999) analysis shows anticipation to be a strategy that is frequently and, in most cases, successfully used in professional SI from German into French. In methodological terms, his study highlights the benefits of systematic quantitative analysis and demonstrates the value of re-analysing existing data sets. This points to the idea of replication, which is hailed as a key principle for ensuring the validity and reliability of empirical research but is not widely practiced, at least in translation and interpreting studies (see Pöchhacker 2011; Olalla-Soler 2020). In fact, research on anticipation is among the few research topics that have seen efforts to replicate previous empirical studies, often in the context of Master's theses. As will be seen, replication, of the exact as well as the extended type (Pöchhacker 2011), is equally feasible and productive in corpus-based approaches and experimental studies.

As access to digitally recorded speech material has improved greatly since Shlesinger's (1998) far-sighted appeal, corpus-based interpreting studies has indeed been “making way” (Russo et al. 2018). Even so, many corpus-based analyses of interpretations are still necessarily ‘manual’ rather than computational, with research on anticipation as a case in point. One of the more extensive efforts in this regard, relying, like many other corpus-based projects, on recorded plenary sessions of the European Parliament (EP), is the PhD thesis by Liontou (2012) on anticipation in SI from German to Greek. Analysing a five-and-a-half-hour source-language corpus comprised of 139 short speeches delivered by 43 German-speaking EP Members, Liontou identified 304 instances of syntactic (SOV) challenges likely to require some strategic response. With 187 cases of anticipation (i.e., one every 105 seconds), the Greek interpreters in her corpus were found to resort to anticipation 62 percent of the time as a strategy for overcoming structural challenges. In only 13 out of the 187 cases (7%), strategic prediction proved incorrect; in the remaining 93 percent, of successful anticipation, interpreters managed either an exact anticipation (56%) or a more general approximation (37%).

Liontou’s (2012) corpus-based analytical approach, including the use of EXMARaLDA as a tool for score-like time-aligned transcription, was adopted in several follow-up studies for different language pairs. In their respective Master’s theses, Götz (2014) found a prevalence of 49 percent (strategic use of anticipation) with 91 percent successful use (50% exact, 41% more general), and Hackl (2016) a prevalence of 44 percent with 96 percent successful use (50% exact, 46% more general) for SI into Spanish, with similar studies conducted by Melotti (2016) for German-to-Italian and by Menyhart (2016) for German-to-Hungarian.

Aside from their potentially huge size and linguistic diversity, EP corpora offer interpreting researchers the advantages of data authenticity and high professional standards. By definition, however, they do not permit more controlled designs focusing on specific variables, such as level of expertise or directionality. This is where experimental research comes in. One recent example is the study by Hodzik and Williams (2017), who compared shadowing and SI from German to English and found that even though interpreters anticipated the verb in only four percent of all instances, 95 percent of these anticipations occurred in cases with constraining contexts, which leads the authors to conclude that anticipations were mostly based on top-down processes. A much earlier contribution is the Master’s thesis by Jörg (1995), whose experimental study can be viewed as a paradigm case in this line of research. Based on data collected from interpreting trainees as well as professionals at the universities of Vienna and Bradford, UK, Jörg (1995) investigated anticipation in German-to-English SI with regard to both expertise and directionality (i.e., interpreting from or into one's A or B language). Jörg asked 12 participants (half students, half professionals, and half German A, half English A) to interpret a highly scripted 17.5-minute German speech which contained 26 sentences likely to require anticipation. With only few differences regarding participants' level of expertise, he found that anticipation was used 52 percent of the time whenever syntactic asymmetry called for a strategic response. In nearly all cases, anticipation was successful (30% exact, 20% more general), with German-A interpreters managing distinctly more exact predictions than English-A participants (35% vs 24%).

As in the case of Liontou's (2012) corpus-based analysis, Jörg's (1995) experimental design was replicated in several Master's theses with advanced interpreting students at the universities of Graz and Vienna (e.g., Kurz and Färber 2003; Grabmayr 2017; Stögerer 2019). Overall, the pattern of results confirmed the frequent as well as successful use of anticipation as a strategy for overcoming challenges arising from syntactic asymmetries in SI from German. Moreover, these experimental findings also corroborate the assumption that anticipation skills may be superior in *retour* interpreting, as also confirmed in the latest such study reported below.

Directionality

A widely held assumption in the Soviet School of interpreting (e.g., Denissenko 1989), the superiority of performing SI from the A language into the B language was mainly seen as a result of more spontaneous and thorough comprehension in the interpreter's native language (see Bartłomiejczyk 2015). The role of anticipation remained rather implicit in this argument, even though Chernov had hinted at it as early as the 1970s. Noting some differences in the performance of the professional interpreters (ten Russian A and one English A) in his experiments, Chernov ventured to suggest that "message development probability anticipation is stronger in the A into B combination than vice versa, even in a highly skilled interpreter" (2004, 195–196). It was not until Jörg's (1995) study that the issue of directionality was brought into focus and Chernov's suggestion corroborated, albeit only as a tendency in descriptive statistics. Not only were German-A interpreters found to produce more exact predictions in German-to-English SI than English-A interpreters, but the latter also anticipated incorrectly in four percent of the cases (see Table 1).

Table 1: Directionality in German-to-English SI (Jörg 1995)

	English A	**German A**
Used (% of cases)	53	51
Exact (%)	24	**35**
More general (%)	25	15
Incorrect (%)	**4**	1

Both Kurz and Färber (2003) and Grabmayr (2017) found evidence in support of Jörg's conclusion that simultaneous interpreters working from their A language (German) used anticipation more frequently and more successfully than those working into their A language. However, these studies were limited to a single language pair, that is, German to English. In a more recent effort, Jörg's (1995) study was therefore replicated with interpreters working into French.

Stögerer (2019) asked eight advanced students with at least one year of training in a Master's programme in conference interpreting (four with German A and four with French A) at the University of Vienna and the Université catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve to interpret a 19-minute German speech, again with 26 sentences likely to require verb anticipation. Using Jörg's (1995, 1997) analytical categories (incorrect vs successful; exact vs more general), participants' renditions were scored for the use of anticipation and broken down by directionality. Stögerer (2019) found that participants working from German as their A language achieved a higher rate of successful anticipation (52.9%) than French-A interpreters (40.4%) and also had higher scores for exact anticipation (see Table 2). Unlike Jörg's (1995) German-A participants, however, the student interpreters in Stögerer's (2019) study showed a higher rate of incorrect anticipation when working in *retour*. This holds true even when one German-A participant who accounted for nearly half of the 15 incorrect anticipations is eliminated from the analysis as an outlier (see Table 2).

Table 2: Directionality in German-to-French SI

	French A (n = 4)	**German A** (n = 3)
Used (% of cases)	40.4	52.6
Exact (%)	20.2	**28.2**
More general (%)	11.5	14.1
Incorrect (%)	8.7	10.3

Closer examination of the data for German-A participants also revealed cases in which the meaning of the target item had been successfully grasped, but the rendition was nevertheless scored as incorrect due to errors in the target-language formulation. An example of this is given in the following excerpt (see Figure 1), which also illustrates the format and usefulness of a score-like transcription (implemented here using EXMARaLDA) for the time-aligned representation of concurrent speech. (English glosses appear in italics).

The German-A interpreter clearly understood the meaning of the source-text utterance and anticipated the missing verb of the German speech at an early stage, saying the French verb *prendre* more than six seconds before the corresponding German verb *unternehmen* was uttered by the speaker. As can be seen in the excerpt from the transcription, the student interpreter anticipated the verb very shortly after hearing the noun *Anstrengung* (effort) and immediately guessed at the missing verb. However, s/he failed to formulate it correctly in the target language, as the corresponding French collocation would be *faire un effort* (to make an effort). Stögerer (2019) therefore concluded that German-A student interpreters could achieve an ever-higher score for exact anticipation if they could count on superior expressive skills in the target language. This is in line with Jörg's (1995) finding that professional interpreters' anticipation performance surpassed that of students due to the former's higher linguistic proficiency. Similarly, Riccardi (1996) had found that professional German-to-Italian interpreters, as well as young graduates with some professional experience, anticipated the correct verb in far more cases than the interpreting students participating in her experiment. Thus, examining anticipation skills in the context of directionality also prompts some critical reflection regarding the nature of B-language proficiency, and the role of language proficiency in anticipation more generally. With regard to interpreters' language combinations, a more fine-grained classification (e.g., B+, B–) would seem desirable when it comes to gauging the impact of linguistic variables on professional strategies and cognitive performance.

	..	132 [10:58.4]	133 [11:51.9]	134 [11:54.6]
ORIG			Wir sollten weiterhin alle	uns möglichen Anstrengungen
EN			*We should continue to make*	*every possible effort*
INT			nous ne devons pas ralentir.	(1,2s) Nous devrions
EN				*(1,2s) We should*

	135 [11:56.9]	136 [11:59.4]	137 [12:02.0]
ORIG	im Hinblick auf die Verbreitung	alternativer Energiequellen	in und außerhalb
EN	*concerning the expansion*	*of alternative energy sources*	*within and outside*
INT	toujours **prendre** tous les efforts	(0,8s) afin de	ähm afin qu'il y ait plus
EN	*still take all efforts*	*(0,8s) in order to*	*uh so that there are*

	..	138 [12:04.8]	139 [12:08.3]	140 [12:47.5]
ORIG	Europas	**unternehmen**. (1,4s) Deshalb		
EN	*Europe.*			
INT		de (::) sources d'énergies alternatives.		
EN	*more*	*alternative energy sources.*		

Figure 1: Time-aligned representation of concurrent speech

Conclusion

Although the problems posed by syntactic asymmetries in SI are more pronounced in some language pairs than in others, the issue has attracted research attention for half a century and served to exemplify the need for acquiring special skills to cope with language-related processing challenges. As highlighted in this paper, the underlying mechanism of expectation-driven (and thus knowledge-based) language comprehension can be observed by examining anticipation, in the narrower sense, in the time course of SI. Beyond the robust finding – from corpus-based as well as experimental studies – that anticipation in SI from German is a frequently used and highly effective strategy, research designs including interpreters' combination of working languages as an independent variable have also yielded evidence to inform the long-standing controversy over *retour* interpreting (e.g., Godijns and Hinderdael 2005). Whereas working from one's A language has been shown to permit more successful and accurate anticipation, these directionality-related benefits can only be reaped at a high level of B-language proficiency. Experimental evidence (e.g., Riccardi 1996; Jörg 1997; Stögerer 2019) suggests that the acquisition of anticipation skills is coextensive with the development of professional experience and expertise – as acquired by systematic training and deliberate practice.

Beyond the conceptual issues discussed and the empirical research summarised and exemplified, our paper has also sought to highlight some broader issues associated with the theme of celebrating a long-standing tradition and reflecting on its continuous evolution. These issues are partly interrelated and include the relationship between professional practice and academic research; the relative strengths of different research methods; the significant contribution to our understanding of interpreting made by research done in the context of Master's degree programmes for interpreter education; the value of replication in promoting scientific progress by checking and incremental knowledge building; and the potential of multicentre collaboration for overcoming methodological and practical limitations. Most fundamentally, we have acknowledged the primacy of professional developments and practices in relation to their scientific investigation while showing that insights gained through research can feed back into professional practice and, in particular, university-level training. Moreover, where interpreter education involves research training that qualifies graduates for academic work, studies done at Master's level, with appropriate guidance and supervision, can yield valuable findings – both by innovation (new designs, tools, data) and by consolidation, as achieved through the replication of existing empirical studies. With regard to methodology, we have shown the benefits of collecting empirical data at multiple comparable sites, such as interpreter education programmes in different countries, even though shortcomings arising from poorly assessed language proficiency levels remain to be addressed. Also, a road that has not yet been taken, but can therefore be suggested here by way of conclusion, is the combining of corpus-based data (e.g., from EP sessions) with – possibly multicentre – experimental designs. This could help ensure the authenticity of source-speech materials and hence ecological validity, whilst permitting more controlled research designs to test the impact of variables such as expertise and directionality on what our professional and research communities have now been interested in for decades – simultaneous interpreters' special skill of using prior and contextual knowledge to overcome syntactic challenges through strategic anticipation.

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Preparation Strategies for Sign Language Conference Interpreting: Comparing International Sign with a National Sign Language

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Abstract

International Sign (IS) interpreting at conferences has been slowly becoming more common over recent decades, while still new within international institutions. However, little is known about IS interpreting. The few studies to date indicate that IS interpreting requires partly different skills and strategies to interpreting into a national signed language. This chapter reports on a comparative study of interpreting strategies between two teams of interpreters. The study analyses the interpreting strategies of a team of IS interpreters, contrasting them with a team of national sign language interpreters (NGT[1] in this case), and looking specifically at how they prepare for an interpreting assignment. A reflexive thematic analysis shows that their preparation methods are very different: the IS team focuses on creating signed concepts whereas the NGT team primarily discusses terminology and using the correct NGT signs. This study provides further evidence that conference IS interpreting requires specific preparation.

Introduction

One hundred years of research into conference interpreting barely referred to sign language interpreting (Baigorri-Jalón 2014). The first research into spoken language conference interpreting appeared in the 1950s (Barik 1969; Gerver 1976; Oléron and Nanpon 1965; Paneth 1957), but research on conference sign language interpreting has only begun to emerge in the last

[1] NGT is Sign Language of the Netherlands, also referred to as Dutch Sign Language

decade (e.g., Sheneman and Collins 2016; Stone and Russell 2014; de Wit 2010; de Wit and Sluis 2016). This chapter focuses on sign language conference interpreting in general and International Sign (IS) – a specific skill in high demand at international conferences.

NGT is the national sign language of the Netherlands and has a conventionalised grammar and lexicon. IS, however, is used transnationally, is not conventionalised and is highly flexible depending on the context and the interlocutors (Kusters 2020). As each country has its own national sign language, and sometimes even regional sign languages, IS tends to be used when signers meet at international events (Quinto-Pozos and Adam 2015). Rather than being a language per se, IS creates visual utterances where the role of the lexicon is downplayed, and shared characteristics of signed languages are foregrounded (WFD 2019; Woll and Adam 2012). Several studies have been conducted on the nature of IS and how it is used by signers internationally. There is no single profile of IS signers (Hiddinga and Crasborn 2011), just as there is no single form of IS (Whynot 2016). IS is unique in that it allows interlocutors in a specific context to create shared understanding by adapting their way of signing and selecting signs from different signed languages.

Until now, very few studies have explored IS interpreting in general (e.g., Best et al. 2016; McKee and Napier 2002; and; de Wit 2010), and only a handful have specifically addressed *conference* IS interpreting (Rosenstock 2004; Sheneman and Collins 2016; Stone and Russell 2014; de Wit and Sluis 2016). A first empirical study has studied the preparation strategies of IS interpreters (de Wit and Sluis 2016) and found that interpreters invest substantially more time and prepare differently when interpreting IS than when they interpret into their national signed language.

The current study focuses on interpreting strategies of IS interpreters, comparing them with interpreting strategies of national sign language interpreters. It aims to answer the following question: what preparation strategies and process reflections does the IS interpreter use differently to a national sign language interpreter in conference settings?

The aim of the study, therefore, is not to measure the equivalence between the original and the interpretation. Rather, the study looks at the interpreter's perspective on audience understanding of their interpretation, and analyses the interpreting teams' preparation processes and reflections. This analysis provides insights into which preparation methods are most conducive to successful interpretation at an international event. Success analysis is a framework in the cognitive model posed by Wilcox and Shaffer (2005) that allows for the evaluation of the effectiveness of interpretation instead of attempting to objectively quantify the accuracy of the interpretation. The model considers the interpreter to be an active maker of meaning based on assumptions of the speaker's intentions, in which the focus is not on the errors and failures of the interpretation but on the successful creation of communication. The model suggests that all communication is subjective, including the message constructed by the interpreter.

This chapter will first briefly introduce the concept of IS interpreting at conferences and the importance of preparing for an interpreting assignment. A detailed description of the study and its results follows. The article concludes with considerations for training and practice.

International sign interpreting

To serve an international deaf audience, international institutions increasingly request IS interpretation. However, there are a limited number of IS interpreters qualified through the WFD-WASLI accreditation system[2] to work in high-level situations. For a first study on the current profile of IS interpreters globally, see de Wit et al. (2021), which supports earlier suggestions that IS interpreters know more than one national sign language (McKee and Napier 2002; Moody 2008). It is important to note that no formal training programme for IS interpreters exists and the current IS interpreters learned their skills in practice (Moody 2008; Sheneman and Collins 2016; Stone and Russell 2016).

One of the essential skills when interpreting at conferences is to effectively cooperate in a team of interpreters (Chmiel 2008; Hoza 2010). Depending on the type and duration of the event, as well as the number and role of the deaf participants, a team of interpreters may consist of two or more sign language interpreters (Sign Language Network 2016). The 'active' interpreter working into IS continuously cooperates with a dedicated member of the team, who monitors the accuracy and clarity of the interpretation (Hoza 2010; Sheneman and Collins 2016; Stone and Russell 2014).

The users of IS conference interpreting services can be very diverse.[3] They may vary from one signer from one specific country attending a local event, to signers from around the globe attending an international deaf event.

[2] https://wfdeaf.org/our-work/wfd-wasli-international-sign-interpreter-accreditation/
[3] https://mobiledeaf.org.uk/

Serving an international mixed audience is considered very challenging for IS interpreters (McKee and Napier 2002; Rosenstock 2004; de Wit and Sluis 2016). Unlike interpreting national signed languages, which have established conventions, using IS forces interpreters to continuously adapt their interpretations. In traditional conference settings, sign language interpreters face the audience while interpreting. They are thus in a position to see facial expressions or signing by deaf participants, and can use this information to monitor audience understanding and adjust their interpretation accordingly (Stone and Russell 2014). It has also been observed that deaf participants support each other in understanding anyone using IS, through 'informal interpreting', i.e., by explaining to each other their understanding of the message (Green 2015).

Preparation

What is preparation?

Before going on an assignment, all interpreters need to prepare. This is part of the professional practice in which interpreters collect content and situational knowledge on the assignment (Diriker 2004; Gile 2009; Napier 2002; Seleskovitch 1978; de Wit and Sluis 2016). This preparation consists of reading materials about the content, such as the latest news on the topic, information on the speakers' background, and frequently used terminology (Paneth 1957). Many spoken language interpreters are trained in using glossaries, which they build and share according to topics (Moser-Mercer 1992). Although there are online national sign language dictionaries that can be used as a resource, there is no common practice of sign language interpreters systematically collecting and building glossaries of signs. This may be due to the absence of an easy-to-use digital platform (Napier et al. 2015) and the lack of an effective written system to document signed languages (Crasborn 2015). Moreover, deaf signers and sign language interpreters tend to exchange signs and agree on the preferred signs in a given context if signs for terminology do not exist (de Wit and Sluis 2016). This is especially true for IS interpreters, as international sign has a small (if any) conventionalised lexicon (Whynot 2016). The added challenge is that an IS sign or concept that is agreed on in one context is not automatically transferred to other contexts as the agreement is between the specific deaf signers and interpreters in a given context.

Why preparation?

Interpreters prepare for an assignment in order to comprehend the source message and deliver an interpretation that is understandable to the audience (Díaz-Galaz, Padilla, and Bajo 2015; Seleskovitch 1978). After all, it has been suggested that the cognitive load of the interpreter is inversely correlated to their background knowledge of the topic (Gile 2009; Leeson 2005; Riccardi 2005).

The interpreters' performance is affected by the style of the speaker, such as their speed, volume, and accent, but also by the availability of background documents (Gile 2009; Seleskovitch 1978; Setton and Dawrant 2016; de Wit 2010). Interpreters often receive preparation materials on the day of the event, sometimes just minutes before the actual presentation. This makes preparation especially difficult for sign language interpreters, who cannot look at papers or online references while interpreting, but must look and maintain eye contact with their deaf audience (Janzen and Korpiniski 2005). In addition, their team interpreter must provide support to and monitor the active interpreter, and can therefore not look at the materials either during the event. This highlights the critical need for preparation for sign language interpreters.

How to prepare?

Interpreters prepare according to their experiences and expertise on the topic of the event. Their ability to predict how much and what they need to prepare increases with experience (Demers 2005; Riccardi 2005), meaning that novice interpreters will likely need more time to prepare (Díaz-Galaz, Padilla, and Bajo 2015; Kauling 2012). Often, interpreters prepare individually and discuss any related issues with their team members only just before the assignment. If the members of the team have not worked together previously, the interpreters also use this moment to discuss their cooperation and support preferences, and decide on specific tactics to use during the interpretation (Hoza 2010).

Depending on the type of conference and the topic, interpreters should consider a special briefing with the presenter(s) (Nolan 2005). In this briefing, interpreters can clarify any questions that they might have on content or specialised terminology. This briefing is often also used to inform the presenter on how to work with sign language interpreters, and the possible strategies for the presenter to ensure understanding by all audience members, deaf and hearing.

In summary, whilst all interpreters prepare before their assignment, a different preparation approach appears to be needed for IS interpreters (de Wit and Sluis 2016). However, not much is known about how exactly IS interpreters prepare for a conference, hence this study.

Aim of the present study

This case study (Yin 1981) aims to identify the salient steps that NGT and IS interpreting teams, serving a mixed audience of deaf NGT and IS signers, use in their preparation process for a specific international event held in English. It was hypothesised that the teams would use different preparation strategies, as one team interpreted into IS, using their linguistic repertoire to make meaning in a non-conventionalised signing system, whilst the other team interpreted into a standardised sign language (NGT). Both teams interpreted for an audience that they did not know, and the preparation steps, as well as their degree of success at this type of event, were retrospectively elicited with each team separately. The actual interpretation output was not analysed in this study.

Methodology of the Study

The event

The basis of this study was a staged event organised in 2019 at Radboud University (RU) in the Netherlands to study multiple aspects of IS interpreting. Two speakers presented in English to an international mixed deaf and hearing audience, a total of 40 people. The presenters, both non-native English speakers, had never worked with sign language interpreters before, and presented on a topic of their choice and expertise. The presentations were each 45 minutes long and followed by 15 minutes of questions and answers. The presenters were instructed to present to a lay audience coming from different countries. The mixed deaf audience, with four different national signed languages, was made up of 28 deaf signers (see Table 1). The deaf audience members were selected based on a pre-defined profile: between 23 and 50 years of age, vocational or college level education and little to no international experience or knowledge of other signed languages.

Table 1: Demographic data of deaf audience members

Country of residence	National sign language	n
Netherlands	NGT	n=15
Belgium-Wallonia	LSFB	n=5
Belgium-Flanders	VGT	n=3
Shanghai, China	Chinese (Shanghai) SL	n=5

Participants

Two teams of two interpreters each were selected to interpret the event, one team interpreting English-NGT and one English-IS. Out of the four interpreters one interpreter has English as a native language (see Table 2). The number of NGT interpreters who have the experience and skills to interpret an academic presentation from English to NGT is limited. For the NGT team, a first interpreter was selected who had never before provided interpretation to the RU research team, and was therefore not influenced by any inside information on the set up of this specific research. The NGT interpreter was asked to propose a second interpreter who she felt confident to interpret with at this event. The IS team members were also not familiar with the RU research team, and were selected on the basis of their interpreting experience and not having a shared sign language with the audience members. Table 2 shows the demographic data of the interpreters.

Table 2: Demographic data of interpreters (n=4)

Interpreters	IS 1	IS 2	NGT 1	NGT 2
Age group (in years)	35–44	25–34	25–34	25–34
professional experience (in years)	20	6	7	2.5
Native languages	ASL EN	ES Basque	NL	NL HU
Sign languages	3 (incl. IS)	2 (incl. IS)	1	1
Formal SLI training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of residence	FR	ES	NL	NL

Interpreters were told that this was a staged event for the purpose of researching interpreting international sign in comparison to interpreting NGT. Both interpreting teams were asked to treat the event as a real interpreting assignment. In addition, they were informed of the participants' background (age range, nationality and level of education), without disclosing their real names. They received the conference materials two weeks before the event and were invited to ask questions like for any another assignment.

The materials provided by the two presenters were quite different (see Table 3). Upon arrival at the venue, each interpreting team was given a room where they could prepare their interpretation of the first lecture. This session was video recorded. Following each team's preparation, both teams were invited to jointly discuss with the presenter any questions or comments that they might have. Each team had up to 45 minutes to prepare for the lecture and an additional 15 minutes with both teams and the presenter. The teams were then guided to the auditorium where the lecture took place.

Table 3: Background materials made available to the interpreters

	Documents
Information provided to interpreters	Schedule, presenters' names, and a general document explaining that research would be conducted before, during and after the assignment
Lecture 1 (45 minutes)	• 2,225-word document containing a brief summary of each slide • Presentation with 67 slides, 60 of which were mainly pictures with one or two sentences • Published article co-authored by the presenter
Lecture 2 (45 minutes)	• Presentation with 27 slides, 25 of which were mainly pictures with one or two sentences • Three published articles written by the presenter

The interpreting teams were positioned one on each side of the presenter, and interpreted each lecture at the same time. Following the interpretation of each lecture, each interpreter was asked individually to respond to five questions on a seven-point Likert scale asking them to assess their how confident they felt about having delivered a successful interpretation, the audience's understanding of the interpretation, the support they provided to their team member, the overall team work, and the team's interpretation success (see Annex 2). Each team was then interviewed by the first author for 30 minutes (video recorded), to gather their views on their preparation and retrospectively how successful it was. The NGT interpreting team informed the researcher in advance that they would prefer to be interviewed by the researcher in their native language, Dutch, which was respected.

The video recorded data set

The recordings resulted in a total of ten videos with an overall duration of five hours, not including the actual interpretation (see Table 4). The preparation of each interpreting team, as well as the meeting with the presenter, were recorded to analyse methods of preparing for the assignment and to explore similarities and differences between the NGT and IS teams.

Table 4: Overview of all video-recorded data

Phase	Video	Duration (min)	
		Lecture 1	*Lecture 2*
Before	IS team preparing NGT team preparing IS & NGT team preparing with presenter	1. 37:01 2. 34:02 3. 14:01	4. 21:27 5. 25:38 6. 20:33
After	IS team interview NGT team interview	7. 34:34 8. 36:29	9. 55:35 10. 33:09

A reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) of the video recordings was carried out by the first author, who is a NGT and IS interpreter herself. This method acknowledges that De Wit brings her social positioning to bear on the data analysis; in her case as a member of the signing community in the Netherlands and internationally and as a practicing NGT and IS interpreter.

Each video was analysed using the multimedia annotation software ELAN (2020). The videos were transcribed in English, and in Dutch for the post-interviews carried out in Dutch with the NGT team (see Figure 1). All videos were also annotated for signs used. These transcriptions were then coded for what the interpreters discussed or agreed upon (videos 1 – 6). For example, the interpreters discussed a specific term and then agreed to use a specific sign or to point to the actual object on the slide. All the codes were put in a spreadsheet and then later grouped by overarching themes (further detail about this method and the categories involved can be found in annex 1). This helped identify specific preparation themes for each team.

Similarly, the recorded interviews after both lectures (videos 7 – 10) yielded themes describing reflections on the preparation.

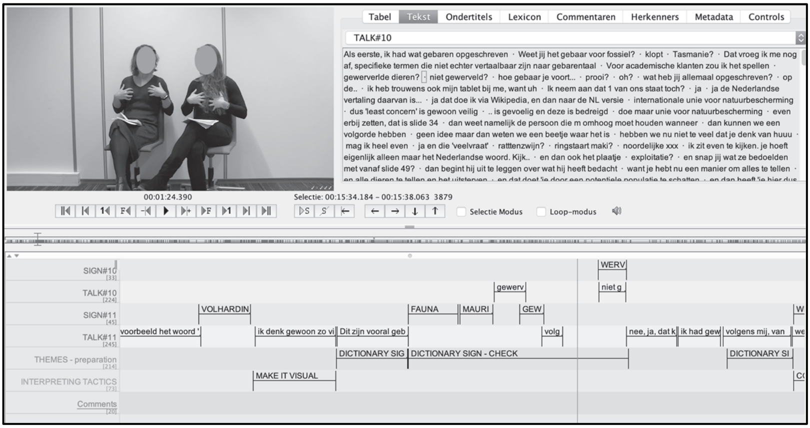

Figure 1: Thematic analysis using ELAN

Results

The full analysis of the ten videos (see Table 4) confirmed the findings of the preliminary analysis of the first two videos, revealing clear differences in preparation techniques between the two teams (see Annex 1). Table 5 shows the identified preparation themes of the IS team compared to the NGT team, and table 6 compares the themes of the joint preparation involving both interpreters and presenters.

Table 5: Identified themes of each interpreting team during the preparation phase

Preparation themes for both lectures – interpreting teams	
IS	**NGT**
1. Trying signed concepts 2. Source concept meaning 3. Identifying salient points 4. Presenter – intent, cooperation 5. Audience understanding	1. Terminology – correct NGT signs, NL translation 2. Source concept meaning 3. Logistics – positioning 4. Presenter – ask, tell, style 5. Audience understanding 6. Support – how to 7. Reflection on individual preparation

Table 6: Identified themes during the joint preparation of the interpreters with the presenter

Preparation themes for both lectures – NGT & IS team with presenter	
Interpreters	**Presenters**
1. Explaining interpreting process to presenter 2. Presenter – ask, tell 3. Audience understanding 4. Background info – feedback on use of slides 5. Terminology	1. Questions on interpreting process 2. Explain content 3. Style of the presentation 4. Referring to slides 5. Logistics – positioning, questions from audience

Overall, during their preparation the IS team focused on producing the target interpretation of concepts and the NGT team on understanding the source text. The IS team did so by concentrating on the salient points and meaning of the presentation, trying out signed concepts, discussing audience understanding, and cooperating with the speaker. Their main concern was how to make their interpretation as visual as possible. To do this they discussed in detail all materials available, showed each other different ways of signing certain concepts, and then agreed on one. While creating the signed concepts they emphasised the need to be understood by the mixed audience, with four national sign languages, different cultural backgrounds and assumed no or little knowledge of English. They also acknowledged that not knowing the presenter and the audience made it more challenging for them to know how to prepare. They agreed they would need to find out the speaker's intent and that they would need to cooperate with the presenter during the interpreting process. Although the IS interpreters had not worked as a team before, during their preparation they did not discuss how they would provide support for each other or what their preferences were on how to be supported.

The NGT team mainly discussed terminology related to the preparation materials provided, which NGT signs to use, how to provide support, and the optimal positioning in the auditorium. They had written down all the terminology in English along with the Dutch translation of each term. The team discussed at length the 'correct' NGT signs to use, frequently referring to the online NGT dictionary.[4] They discussed the English terminology on the slides and materials, and the meaning of each term. The two interpreters had worked together frequently and discussed in depth how to support each other during the interpretation, their needs and preferences, and turn taking. They briefly mentioned before the first lecture that they did not know the audience members and were not sure how much the audience would understand. They therefore agreed that it would be useful to instruct the presenters on the interpreting process during the meeting with them.

In the joint meeting of the two teams with each of the presenters, the most experienced IS interpreter took the lead to explain the interpreting process to the presenter. The interpreter asked the presenter to pause at each slide to allow for the interpreters to make reference to the visuals on the slide before proceeding with the talk. The interpreters also informed the presenter of the challenges they might face in producing a comprehensible message given the complexity of the topics and the audience profile. Although each meeting with a presenter was slightly different, overall, a considerable amount of time was spent explaining the interpreting process to each of them. In addition, the interpreters outlined how the presenter could engage with a deaf audience and allow for questions, as the audience would mainly look at the interpreter and the slides, and not at the presenter.

Following the interpretation of each lecture, each team was separately interviewed by the researcher and asked to retrospectively reflect on their preparation process and interpretation performance. Overall, the less experienced interpreter in each team had spent more time preparing individually prior to the joint preparation with their colleague on site. The more experienced interpreters in each team expressed their apprehensiveness

[4] www.gebarencentrum.nl

on the amount of time that was needed to prepare for this type of assignment (mixed language audience with little or no knowledge of English attending an academic lecture). Both teams flagged the enormous benefit of meeting the presenter before the lecture. This had ensured that the interpreters were actually able to do their work. Moreover, the NGT team emphasised that for similar future assignments they would ask for a prior meeting with the presenter.

Both teams mentioned before the first lecture that it was challenging not knowing the background of the audience members, such as their understanding of English, and thus not being able to finetune their interpretation to the audience's expectations and needs. The NGT team did acknowledge that during the first lecture they recognised and knew some of the NGT signers, but still felt hampered by not knowing the others. They stated that they would be able to better adapt their interpretation to the audience if they knew their background, whilst acknowledging that interpreting for a larger audience almost always comes with audience unfamiliarity. The teams reported thinking that the audience had understood their interpretation overall. Both teams mentioned perceiving visual feedback from individual participants, such as nodding of the head, which they took as a signal to confirm understanding. The IS team also stated that there was no noticeable signing by audience members seeking clarification from other participants, which they assumed meant that they understood the message. The NGT team did notice interaction between participants, but interpreted this as them confirming and sharing their understanding with each other. The NGT team also concluded that the type of questions NGT signers asked the presenter indicated that they had understood the content of the presentation.

As evidenced by their Likert scale answers (see Annex 2) the teams were very appreciative of their supporting colleagues, giving examples of good work they had done. The IS team underlined their smooth cooperation due to their shared perspectives and trust. The NGT team discussed their team support in great deal, emphasising their shared responsibility for a successful interpretation.

In summary, both teams were satisfied with the way they had prepared individually and jointly for the assignment, and would undertake comparable preparation in the future. They were especially pleased with the feeling of equality and trust in each other's capabilities and the team, which ensured effective and smooth cooperation, resulting in their best possible interpreting performance.

Discussion

This paper investigates the preparation process of sign language interpreters interpreting into a national sign language (NGT) and IS. The results of this study support the hypothesis that the preparation method differs depending whether the team interprets into a national sign language or into IS (de Wit and Sluis 2016). It shows that interpreters use the same foundations to prepare, namely familiarising themselves with the programme, its logistical setup, and the background materials of the presentations. However, they use these materials differently according to the target language and audience.

The NGT team is trained and qualified to interpret between NGT and Dutch. In this assignment they interpreted from a non-native language, English, in which they are not formally trained to interpret, into NGT (de Wit 2010). NGT interpreters are generally expected to use the NGT signs from the central online dictionary of the Dutch Sign Centre[5], which they also refer to as 'correct' signs during their preparation session. As NGT uses Dutch mouthings with most signs (Banks 2015), the NGT interpreters will not only need to understand the English but also know the translation of the specific terms in Dutch. Due to this added level of complexity and the infrequency of this type of assignment in the Netherlands, the NGT team confirmed that intensified cooperation was necessary (Sheneman and Collins 2016).

The IS team has a western background and language profile and regularly interprets in international multilingual settings with a diverse audience. However, a combined audience of Chinese (Shanghai) and western European signers was new to them. As IS is not a conventionalised language, they reported that for other IS assignments where they do not know the audience, they normally would aim to informally meet the participants beforehand to get a sense of their signing and background, also noted by Leeson (2005) and de Wit and Sluis (2016). This was not possible in this assignment, so the IS team prepared with this mixed audience profile in mind, realising the extreme challenge of finding and using shared and familiar experiences with such a diverse audience (Hiddinga and Crasborn 2011). We conclude that their preparation time was mostly spent on discussing and creating signed concepts that are highly visual and intuitive. Furthermore, within each team, the interpreter with less experience said they prepared in more detail than those with more experience (Díaz-Galaz, Padilla, and Bajo 2015).

[5] www.gebarencentrum.nl

Finally, as suggested by Nolan (2005), the interpreters found meeting the presenters highly beneficial. It allowed the interpreters to help the presenters understand how to present with sign language interpreters and gave them the opportunity to get used to the presenter's accent and speaking style. A meeting with the presenter appears to be less common with conference spoken language interpreters, but is frequently seen in international and academic conferences with signing participants (Supalla et al. 2010).

Conclusion

Overall, the thematic analysis supports the idea that interpreting into IS requires a different approach to preparation than interpreting into a national sign language. When interpreting into a national sign language, interpreters can use shared cultural and linguistic knowledge to help the audience in their interpretation. In this case, the NGT interpreters made a dedicated effort in their preparation to determine the correct NGT signs.

This study has shown that this is different for IS interpreters as there is neither a large conventionalised lexicon nor a set of shared grammatical conventions. Rather, preparation requires extensive creativity from IS interpreters, such as selecting the most intuitive signed concepts. In addition, the IS audience's knowledge and life experience are more diverse and pose further preparation challenges for IS interpreters. An additional challenge for IS interpreters is not being able to fall back on English written on the slide or on being able to use fingerspelling for terminology. Consequently, IS interpreters are required to create an interpretation that is highly visual and intuitive. These multiple challenges potentially cause additional cognitive load for the interpreter. To reduce this cognitive load IS interpreters need preparation time to explore (together with their team members) possible signed concepts that are highly visual and optimally understandable for a diverse audience. The creation of a user friendly, open-source cloud-based platform for IS signers to share signed concepts could be a possible tool to tap into the rich diversity of IS signing around the world.

Cooperation between the IS interpreters was also shown to be essential. Although not discussed in detail beforehand, the IS team in this case study emphasised that their effective team work was based on mutual trust and shared thinking. It is reasonable to assume that, given the small pool of IS interpreters working at international conferences, they are more familiar with how to effectively support each other in these types of setting.

In summary, this study has provided further evidence that conference IS interpreting requires specific preparation. These skills, which are currently acquired solely through practice, could be taught in a specific training programme for IS interpreters. Not only can these preparation tactics be useful for IS interpreters, national sign language interpreters might also benefit from preparation techniques geared towards a more visual and less literal interpretation. Further research will be needed to confirm this idea. In addition to the specifics of conference interpreting, it can be assumed that additional tactics (Gile 2009) specific to IS interpreting, which exceed the scope of our analysis, could be included in a training programme. Importantly, the establishment of a formal training programme for conference IS interpreters would fill a gap and help educate IS interpreters for this specific practice.

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Annex 1

The codes (1st column) are labels developed during the annotation of the videos. Each code is defined in the 2nd column. More codes were created during the annotation process; if a specific action did not match any of the codes, a new code was added to the list. Following the annotation of all ten videos, the codes were grouped by theme (shown in the table in capital letters) and labelled as such. Each annotation (transcribed text and codes) was downloaded to a spreadsheet, checked, and, if needed, changed to ensure consistency in the coding of similar actions. Annex 1 provides an overview of all final identified themes.

Preparation themes

IS team (both lectures)

THEMES/codes	Description
TRYING SIGNED CONCEPTS	
Trying signed concepts	Interpreter(s) trying to sign a concept and seeing if it works or not
How to interpret	Discussing how to interpret something
Example of how to sign	One interpreter showing the other interpreter an example of how something can be signed
Confirming	Confirming understanding or agreement on how to interpret something
SOURCE CONCEPT MEANING	
Background information	Using background information and materials
Concept meaning	Discussing the meaning of a concept in the source text
Checking understanding	Checking with the other interpreter if they are understanding correctly
Clarifying	Clarifying the concept to the other interpreter

IDENTIFYING SALIENT POINTS	
Identifying important points	Identifying salient points in the source text or presented by the presenter during the preparation time
Reading out loud	Interpreters reading out loud what they read in the source text
Reading materials	Interpreters reading the materials (slides, articles, etc.)
PRESENTER – INTENT, COOPERATION	
Presenter – intent	What the presenter's (assumed) intent is: storyline, content
Presenter – meaning	Discussing what the presenter's meaning is
Presenter – style	Discussing the presentation style of the presenter: how the presentation is built up, giving examples, jokes, showing, etc.
Presenter – ask	Stating that the presenter should be asked about something
Presenter – cooperation	How the presenter will cooperate with the interpreters
AUDIENCE UNDERSTANDING	
Audience understanding	How the audience understand the interpretation
Referencing deaf signers	Mentioning deaf signers' background

NGT team (both lectures)

THEMES / codes	Description
TERMINOLOGY – CORRECT NGT SIGNS, TRANSLATION TO NL	
Agreeing on signs	Agreement between the two interpreters on which sign to use
Correct signs in NGT	Checking and making sure the correct NGT sign is used
Determining signs	Deciding on which sign to use
Dictionary sign-check	Checking in the official sign dictionary if that is the correct sign to use
English word meaning	Figuring out the meaning of the word in English
Example of how to sign	One interpreter showing another interpreter an example of how something can be signed
How to interpret	Discussing how to interpret something
Terminology	Discussing terminology/jargon
Translation into NL	Discussing the translation of a term/word into Dutch
Trying signed concepts	Interpreter(s) trying to sign a concept and seeing if it works or not
SOURCE CONCEPT MEANING – CLARIFYING, EXPLAINING, CONFIRMING	
Background information	Using background information and materials
Checking understanding	Checking with the other interpreter if they are understanding correctly
Clarifying	Clarifying the concept to the other interpreter
Concept meaning	Discussing the meaning of a concept in the source text
Confirming	Confirming understanding or agreement on how to interpret something
Identifying important points	Identifying salient points in the source text or presented by the presenter during the preparation time

LOGISTICS – POSITIONING	
Logistics	Discussing logistical issues
SUPPORT – HOW TO	
Int. Cooperation – reflection	Reflection by the interpreters on how the cooperation between them is going
Support – how to	How the interpreters should support each other during the interpretation
Support – preference	What preference an interpreter has on how to be supported
PRESENTER – ASK, TELL, STYLE	
Presenter – ask	Stating that the presenter should be asked about something
Presenter – cooperation	How the presenter will cooperate with the interpreters
Presenter – intent	What presenter's (assumed) intend is: storyline, content
Presenter – interrupt	Discussing interrupting the presenter
Presenter – meaning	Discussing what the presenter's meaning is
Presenter – style	Discussing the presentation style of the presenter: how the presentation is built up, giving examples, jokes, showing, etc.
Presenter – tell	Interpreters telling the presenter something
AUDIENCE UNDERSTANDING	
Audience understanding	How the audience understand the interpretation
REFLECTION ON INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION	
Reflection on preparation	Interpreters reflecting on how they are preparing or have prepared

IS & NGT team meeting with presenters (both lectures)

Interpreter

THEMES / codes	Description
EXPLAINING INTERPRETING PROCESS	
Explaining interpreting process	The interpreters explain the interpreting process to the presenter
Confirming	The interpreters confirm that the presenter understands them correctly
Example of how to sign	To illustrate, the interpreters show the presenter how a certain concept can be signed
Logistics	The interpreters inform the presenter of the timing and the positioning of the interpreters
PRESENTER – ask, tell	
Checking for understanding	Checking with the presenter if they are understanding correctly
Presenter – ask	The interpreters asking the presenter for clarification
Presenter – cooperation	How the presenter can cooperate with the interpreters
Presenter – intent	What the presenter's (assumed) intent is: storyline, content
Presenter – meaning	Discussing what the presenter's meaning is
Presenter – style	Discussing the presentation style of the presenter: how the presentation is built up, giving examples, jokes, showing, etc.
Presenter – tell	Interpreters instructing the presenter
AUDIENCE UNDERSTANDING	
Audience – understanding	Explaining to the presenter who is in the audience
Audience – interaction	Explaining how the presenter can interact with the deaf audience
BACKGROUND INFORMATION – feedback on use of slides	
Background information	Using background information and materials

TERMINOLOGY	
Terminology	Questions to the presenter on the meaning of certain terms

Presenter

THEMES / codes	Description
EXPLAINING CONTENT	
Explaining content	The presenter explaining the content of the talk to the interpreters
Checking if clear for interpreters	The presenter checking with the interpreters if the concept/content is clear
Confirming	The presenter confirming to the interpreters that it is correct
Giving examples to interpreters	The presenter giving examples to the interpreters during preparation
Important presentation points	The presenter stating what is important during the talk
INTERPRETING PROCESS	
Asking interpreters about process	The presenter asking the interpreters for clarification on how the interpreting process works
Understanding confirmed by presenter	The presenter stating that he understands
STYLE OF THE PRESENTATION	
Intent presenter	What is the presenter's intent during the talk
Style of the presentation	What style or way of presenting the presenter says that he will or should adopt
Introductions	The presenter introducing himself at the beginning of the preparation time
REFERRING TO THE SLIDES	
Slides – referring to	The presenter referring to the visual materials/slides during the preparation

LOGISTICS – positioning, questions from audience	
Audience participation	How the audience will participate during the presentation
Giving examples to the audience	The presenter suggesting giving examples to the audience
Logistics	Question from presenter on the logistics of the talk, e.g., how much time is allocated
Questions to be raised during the presentation	Questions that the presenter wants to raise during the talk

Annex 2

Participant	Post assignment Lecture 1 - Likert scale question for interpreters (n=4)						
	How confident do you feel about *your* interpretation into international sign / NGT?						
	Very insecure	Moderately insecure	Slightly insecure	Neutral	Slightly confident	Moderately confident	Extremely confident
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 IS						■	
2 IS						■	
1 NGT					■		
2 NGT					■		
	How well do you think the audience understood your interpretation?						
	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Very good	Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 IS					■		
2 IS					■		
1 NGT						■	
2 NGT					■		

	How do you feel about the support *you provided* to your team?						
	Very dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neutral	Slightly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Extremely satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 IS						■	
2 IS						■	
1 NGT							■
2 NGT			■				
	How do you feel about the overall teamwork?						
	Very dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neutral	Slightly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Extremely satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 IS						■	
2 IS							■
1 NGT						■	
2 NGT						■	

	How do you rate your team's overall *interpretation success*?						
	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Very good	Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 IS						■	
2 IS						■	
1 NGT						■	
2 NGT					■		

Participant	Post assignment Lecture 2 - Likert scale question for interpreters (n=4)						
	How confident do you feel about <u>your</u> interpretation into international sign / NGT?						
	Very insecure	Moderately insecure	Slightly insecure	Neutral	Slightly confident	Moderately confident	Extremely confident
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 IS						■	
2 IS						■	
1 NGT						■	
2 NGT			■				

	How well do you think the audience *understood* your interpretation?						
	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Very good	Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 IS					■		
2 IS						■	
1 NGT						■	
2 NGT				■			

	How do you feel about the support *you provided* to your team?						
	Very dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neutral	Slightly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Extremely satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 IS						■	
2 IS							■
1 NGT					■		
2 NGT				■			

	How do you feel about the overall *teamwork*?						
	Very dissatisfied	**Moderately dissatisfied**	**Slightly dissatisfied**	**Neutral**	**Slightly satisfied**	**Moderately satisfied**	**Extremely satisfied**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
1 IS						■	
2 IS							■
1 NGT						■	
2 NGT						■	

	How do you rate your team's overall *interpretation success*?						
	Very poor	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Neutral**	**Good**	**Very good**	**Excellent**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
1 IS						■	
2 IS						■	
1 NGT						■	
2 NGT						■	

Simultaneous Interpretation of Political Press Conferences in Diplomatic vs. Media Settings

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Abstract

Simultaneous interpreting was for a long time indelibly associated with international organisations and large-scale multi-language conferences, and thereby widely considered a key element of conference settings. However, since live coverage of major events of global agenda across national and language boundaries has become part of the routine workflow of TV channels worldwide, conference interpreters have been more and more involved in interpreting for television. Nowadays, oral translation for TV, streaming channels and radio (media or broadcast interpreting) has become part of the practice of professional conference interpreters performing on a regular or sporadic basis. This paper summarises and discusses the results of a case study undertaken to pinpoint the peculiarities of simultaneous interpretation outputs in two types of interpreter-mediated press conference settings, namely diplomatic interpreting (on the margins of political talks) and media interpreting (TV live coverage). The research is aimed at identifying and comparing setting-specific global interpreting strategies employed to achieve the required level of rendition appropriateness and usability. The findings further reveal that interpreter status and user type seem to impact the interpreting style and the type of equivalence established between a source speech and its oral translation.

Introduction

The setting is widely seen as the main factor used to differentiate between various types of interpreting (Frishberg 1990; Gentile 1997; Pöchhacker 2004; Hale 2007; Wadensjö 2009; Viezzi 2013; Donovan 2017).

> Interpreting tends to be defined mainly according to the setting in which it takes place. (Donovan 2017, 92).

The term ‘setting’ is largely used to refer to the particular place, time, and circumstances in which a given interpreting event occurs (Grbič 2015).

However, when it comes to the taxonomy of interpretation, the social dimension of a setting, added to its chronological and spatial parameters, brings to the fore the domain and the status of participants of interpreter-mediated interaction.

> In summary, settings can be defined as the socio-spatial contexts of interaction in which interpreting events take place. A specific setting is therefore shaped by the interplay of the agents (including their mental, social and cultural dispositions) and the locations involved (including all physical, material structures), both of which are governed by institutional conditions as well as broader social forces. (Grbič 2015, 371).

Thus, in most research one comes across such labels as *conference interpreting*, *court interpreting*, *diplomatic interpreting, military interpreting, healthcare interpreting*, *business interpreting*, *public service interpreting* and so on. It is abundantly clear that interpreting executed in each setting and/or for each specific purpose has its own constraints, norms (Shlesinger 1989; Harris 1990) and requirements, and should meet the adjacent expectations of users.

At the same time, each setting is characterised by a limited range of communicative situations and a relatively finite repertoire of interpreted content. Consequently, the same type of text can hardly occur in dissimilar settings, which makes it extremely challenging to evaluate the extent to which the setting *per se* determines the choice of interpreting strategies. Hence, if one aspires to retrieve diverging approaches to coping with identical difficulties that could be regarded as setting dependent, one should search for the same textual content interpreted in at least two different settings. It seems logical to point out that such interpreting situations should be real-life rather than experimentally modelled.

Interpreter-mediated press conferences: settings and features

Whatever the setting, interpreters are known to resort to one of the two interpreting modes which, in terms of the temporal relationship between the interpretation and the source text, could be defined as consecutive or simultaneous[1]. Simultaneous conference interpreting, which since the Nuremberg Trials has been in demand well beyond intergovernmental organisations, remains part and parcel of virtually every large-scale international conference or meeting. One of the numerous contexts in which it is used is that of bilateral or multilateral political press conferences, whose format determines the procedure of the event and practical organisation of interpretation services. For instance, conference interpreting at international organisations is provided by interpreters working mostly into their A language and assigned to a particular language booth. Conversely, at bilateral political press conferences simultaneous interpretation is usually carried out by the parties' official interpreters, who have been trained and work as conference interpreters, performing in diplomatic settings which may include not only talks and negotiations, but also news conferences and briefings.

> When an interpreter accompanies a dignitary on a foreign visit, s/he will be expected to officiate in a multitude of situations: speeches, impromptu or otherwise, press conferences… , informal press briefings, TV interviews, after-dinner speeches, etc., requiring full mastery of all the facets of professional conference interpreting. (Thiéry 2015, 108).

At the same time, the spread of simultaneous interpreting and the globalisation of the media sphere have marked the emergence of new trends towards expanding the scope of live coverage of news conferences that entail so-called media (TV) interpreting (Kurz 1990), carried out by interpreters who are normally displaced from the physical core of the event. As a result, simultaneous interpreting for political press conferences appears to be oftentimes performed in two main settings:

1) diplomatic interpreting performed *in praesentia* (thus "sharing the *hic* and *nunc* with the primary interlocutors" (Falbo 2012, 163)) by the official interpreters of delegations, usually staff members of related institutions; and
2) TV interpreting executed *in absentia* (as they do not "participate directly in the event, not sharing the *hic* with the primary interlocutors" (Falbo 2012, 164)), if commissioned by audiovisual media (television or Internet channels).

[1] In this regard F. Pöchhacker points out that some authors identify another mode, the so-called sight translation or interpreting and view it "… as a hybrid mode, given the combination of the written and the spoken (or signed) medium of expression". Pöchhacker (2015, 269).

Hence, one might hypothesise that although interpretation in both scenarios is performed by professional conference interpreters, the type of setting, the degree of formality, the status of the interpreter(s) and the nature of the target audience could substantially affect interpreting strategies, i.e., intentional and goal-oriented procedures for the solution or prevention of problems (Gile 2009, 200), and the rendition. Table 1 contrasts two settings in which the same speeches and dialogical interaction are interpreted (bilingual political press conferences with introductory statements followed by Q&A sessions).

Table 1: Setting-related press conference interpreting features

Parameter	Diplomatic setting	Media setting
Interpreter status	official interpreter (delegation member)	freelance or staff interpreter working for a TV channel
Situationality	performed *in praesentia*	performed *in absentia*
Placement and ergonomics	*in situ*, booth in the conference hall	remotely [2], TV studio booth
Target audience (users)	internal: participants and attendees of a press conference	external: TV viewers
Global strategy Adopted	speaker-oriented	audience-oriented

Further paragraphs will show that some setting parameters may induce the interpreter to choose who to be more loyal to while accomplishing their task, and, therefore, affect the adoption of interpreting strategies.

Obviously, the two settings under analysis differ not only in terms of the location of the interpreters (on site vs. remote), but with regard to their role at the interpreted event. We are dealing with two different interpreter-assisted communicative situations: the interpreters directly performing at the event ensure understanding, on the one hand, between the protagonists

[2] Some authors point out that “physical displacement” of interpreters occurs whenever the latter work in a booth separated from the conference room, even by a pane of glass pan (Donovan 2017, 100), only maintaining acoustic contact with participants via headsets and microphones. However, we do not consider any setting, where a direct view of the meeting room is ensured, as to constitute displacement.

(the heads of delegations), and on the other hand between the latter and reporters (during the Q&A session), i.e., they facilitate the bilingual communication in which the attendees of the event are involved. Interpreters working in a TV booth are not acting as participants of the press conference, with the event evolving independently of them. In fact, the interpreters are performing for a large TV audience, potentially unlimited in number.

Equivalence as a prerequisite for the quality of interpreting

Equivalence seems to be not only the cornerstone of bilingual communication but also one of the most controversial concepts in Translation and Interpreting Studies.

> It is hard to imagine how so many things in society could exist and function without the fundamental assumption that interpreting, just like translation, aims at producing target texts that are equivalent to the corresponding source texts. (Viezzi 2013, 382).

Often considered a prescriptive construct and useful criterion to assess translation quality in the past (Leal 2012), equivalence is still frequently associated with lexical correspondence, syntactic likeness and stylistic compliance between source and target texts, be it written or oral. Since the cultural turn in Translation and Interpreting Studies in the 1980s, the notion of equivalence seems "to have lost much of its vigour" (Leal 2012, 44), if not being totally rejected by many scholars (Snell-Hornby, 1988). Opponents of retaining equivalence as a key concept of translation find it "a much too impalpable, subjective and most importantly worn-out notion to have any serious use" (Leal 2010, 39). However, the essence of translating (and interpreting) is to replicate in renditions (i.e., the target texts) relevant features of source text meanings. In other words, the source and target texts, in their entirety as well as in their constituent parts, should be equal in terms of meaning.

Nonetheless, the concept of equivalence has been qualified over time. Some (e.g., Koller, 1979) oppose lexical and syntactic correspondence as a *langue* phenomenon to translation equivalence as a *parole*[3] phenomenon

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[3] This theoretical linguistic dichotomy, elaborated by Ferdinand de Saussure (Saussure 1972 [1916]), opposes language (*langue*) as the abstract, systematic rules and conventions of a signifying system to speech (*parole*) that embraces the concrete instances of the use of *langue*, including texts.

(textual equivalence). Even when there are few morphological, lexical and syntactic correspondences between source and target texts, in many cases of translation and interpretation it is still possible to talk about equivalence if the relevant meaning and communicative intention of the speaker were conveyed.

> […] equivalence is rethought to embrace what were treated as shifts or deviations from the foreign text. (Venuti 2000, 5).

In the same vein, the Paris School (Interpretive theory) suggests that equivalence is achieved by re-expressing meaning, since interpreting is not about translating words, which "disappear" at the stage of de-verbalisation, but rather about reformulating ideas (Seleskovitch, Lederer, 1984). Further developing this idea, Seleskovitch and Lederer posit a model of interpretation (and translation, in general) which includes two alternate processing routes, labelling them *transcoding* and *reformulation*. The outputs of the transcoding process are utterances in which most words and phrases constitute linguistic correspondences of the source text ones. In contrast, reformulation relies on the mental process of *deverbalisation* by which the interpreter captures the speaker's intended meaning and then re-expresses it in the target language rather than resorting to a linguistic conversion of words and phrases. However, as far as simultaneous interpreting is concerned, Setton (2015) points out the challenges of re-expressing a speaker's message in a different language, and doing so under the constraints of time and mental processing capacity.

Nida, for his part, puts forward a well-known dichotomy of *formal correspondence* vs. *dynamic equivalence* (Nida, 1964), establishing some priorities as guiding principles in translating, the most pertinent of which are contextual consistency, prevalence of dynamic equivalence over formal correspondence, and usage of forms acceptable to the target audience. To be more precise, it is worth mentioning that in his later co-authored works Nida abandoned the term "dynamic equivalence", replacing it with "functional equivalence" (Nida and de Waard, 1986).

The idea of two types of equivalence does not seem to be alien to simultaneous interpretation. Thus, some distinguish between paradigmatic strategies of interpreting: word-based (form-based) as opposed to meaning-based (sense-oriented) interpreting. (Seleskovitch, 1975; Gernsbacher and Shlesinger, 1997; Londsdale, 1997; Dam, 2001).

> Form-based interpreting is generally described as a more or less direct transmission of source text structures to corresponding structures in the target language, i.e., as a procedure in which the interpreter follows the surface form of the source text as much as possible when constructing the target text. In meaning-based interpreting, by contrast, the interpreter detaches him/herself from source text form and produces the target text only on the basis of a conceptual – i.e., a non-verbal or amorphous – representation of the meaning of the source text (Dam 2001, 27).

Leaving aside any further theoretical discussion about translation equivalence, we could assume that most practising interpreters, while carrying out their professional activity, tend to stick not only to their personal interpreting style, but also to the setting framework and presumed users' expectations.

Research corpus and methodology

The present study focuses on comparing and contrasting the interpreters' renditions performed in two scenarios corresponding to conference interpreting and media interpreting settings. The research corpus comprises video recordings of 18 press conferences which follow political talks or international summits featuring high-ranking Russian politicians (see Table 2), whose official statements and answers to the journalists' questions were interpreted from Russian (interpreters' A language) into English (interpreters' B language). This directionality, commonly known as *retour* (Setton and Dawrant, 2016), is not only a practice in diplomatic interpreting worldwide, but is also required by international Russian television networks (this study investigates simultaneous interpreting at Russia Today (RT) English), which operate TV channels broadcasting in Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish, and providing audiovisual online content in these languages. Videos of 18 press conferences and their interpretations were retrieved from open Web-sources. Therefore, no particulars about the interpreters' degree of training or professional experience could be obtained. However, the requirements for staff and freelance interpreters recruited by both the Foreign Ministry Linguistic Service and RT network are known to be strict and rigorous[4].

[4] For instance, to be eligible for a fixed-term contract with the Russian Foreign Ministry an applicant must have a post-graduate degree in interpreting and pass a competitive test.

Table 2: Interpreted political press conferences (PC) included in the research corpus

File Numbers	Date/place of the event	Protagonists	Total Duration
D1/M1	PC at G20 Germany Summit, 07.07.2017 (Hamburg)	Vladimir Putin	31’42’’
D2/M2	Joint PC given by Russian Foreign Minister and UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Syria, 21.12.2017 (Moscow)	Sergey Lavrov, Staffan de Mistura	15’38’’
D3/M3	Russian and UK Foreign Ministers’ PC, 22.12.2017 (Moscow)	Sergey Lavrov, Boris Johnson	37’22’’
D4/M4	PC at Helsinki Summit, 16.07.2018 (Helsinki)	Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump	46’04’’
D5/M5	Russian Foreign Minister’s PC at the UN Headquarters, 19.01.2018 (New York)	Sergey Lavrov	34’37’’
D6/M6	PC following the third round of the Tripartite Summit of guarantors of the Astana process, 07.09.2018 (Tehran)	Vladimir Putin, Hassan Rouhani, Recep Tayyip Erdogan	50’34’’
D7/M7	PC following the meeting of the leaders of Russia, Turkey, Germany and France, 27.10.2018 (Istanbul)	Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron	62’28’’
D8/M8	PC at G20 Argentina Summit, 01.12.2018 (Buenos Aires)	Vladimir Putin	31’07’’
D9/M9	Russian Foreign Minister’s PC at the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, 27.09.2018 (New York)	Sergey Lavrov	56’31’’
D10/M10	Joint PC of Russian and Serbian Presidents, 17.01.2019 (Belgrade)	Vladimir Putin, Aleksandar Vucic	30’13’’
D11/M11	PC following Russian-Turkish talks, 23.01.2019 (Moscow)	Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan	29’30’’

D12/M12	PC after Russian President's working visit to China, 27.04.2019 (Beijing)	Vladimir Putin	37'48''
D13/M13	PC at G20 Osaka Summit, 28.06.2019 (Osaka)	Vladimir Putin	36'17''
D14/M14	Joint PC given by Russian President and Italian Prime Minister, 04.07.2019 (Rome)	Vladimir Putin, Giuseppe Conte	42'11''
D15/M15	PC following Russian-Turkish talks, 27.08.2019 (Moscow Region)	Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan	23'57''
D16/M16	PC following Russian-Serbian talks, 04.12.2019 (Sochi)	Vladimir Putin, Aleksandar Vucic	23'38''
D17/M17	Joint PC following a Normandy format summit, 10.12.2019 (Paris)	Vladimir Putin, Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel, Volodymyr Zelensky	51'48''
D18/M18	PC following Russian-German talks, 11.01.2020 (Moscow)	Vladimir Putin, Angela Merkel	26'27''

It transpired that the interpreters whose renditions were included in the research corpus had interpreted more than one of the corpus press conferences. That is why they were identified acoustically on the basis of a computer analysis of their individual voice features. For 18 press conferences the total number of subjects in the first group (diplomatic interpreters) amounts to 12, whereas the second group (media interpreters) includes seven interpreters.

Accordingly, for each event three audio outputs were obtained and saved as separate Flac files, which made up three sets of spoken data: 1) excerpts from source speeches and remarks in Russian; 2) interpretation of press conferences performed on site by official interpreters in diplomatic settings; 3) interpretation performed remotely for live coverage on TV. In total, 54 audio tracks (18 for each set) were automatically transcribed and then post-edited and partly annotated using the application. Transcripts were further processed using PARACONC, software that allows you to align interpretation transcript lines with source speech transcript lines. Juxtaposing source speech and interpretation utterances is crucial for this study as one of its objectives is to reveal the recurrence of lexical and syntactic correspondences between source texts and target texts. Afterwards, the compiled corpus was subjected to a twofold investigation: linguistic and pragmatic analysis.

Since the empirical material used in this study was gathered from simultaneous interpretation performed into the B language (*retour*), it was deemed appropriate to conduct a survey aiming to estimate to what extent the renditions were natural enough to be easily followed by native speakers. The survey in question involved five English native speakers (members of faculties of English), who were to rate the "naturalness" of each rendition (randomly selected fragments of up to three minutes in length) on a five-point scale, where "5" stood for "absolutely natural-sounding" and "1" denoted "completely unnatural-sounding". In the survey task we deliberately did not specify markers of naturalness (voice quality, intonation, pronunciation, native accent, stylistic appropriateness, "unacceptable or improbable collocations" (Newmark 1981) and so on). Instead, a series of interviews were conducted to obtain the raters' comments justifying their judgements. In these interviews the raters were asked to provide open responses about the reason for having given each fragment fewer than four points. The criteria the respondents identified as naturalness-related are listed in the results section below.

In this research we wondered whether the strategies employed by interpreters could correlate with the setting in which the interpretation is performed. Undeniably, there are multiple ways to explore interpreting strategies. However, we opted for a product-oriented study aiming to compare original speeches with their renditions in terms of lexical and syntactic similarities/dissimilarities, and thereby to establish the degree of interlinear (surface structure) correspondence between (Russian) source texts and (English) target texts. We were aware that in an investigation relying on a relatively large corpus of interpretations (in the present study renditions carried out by 19 interpreters), choice of strategy could be prompted by individual interpreting style and/or particular techniques acquired through training. Therefore, in order to ascertain whether there is a relationship between the type of setting and the propensity to resort to *word-based* vs. *meaning-based* strategies, or whether the choice of strategy is more random, we undertook a statistical analysis to check the validity of the data collected.

Results

The average "degree of naturalness" of the interpreted outputs, as evaluated by respondents, ranged from 2.4 to 3.9 for diplomatic settings (M=3.2, SD=0.56) and from 3.1 to 4.8 for media interpreting (M=4.05, SD=0.12). Many excerpts of diplomatic interpreting outputs were rated as "less natural sounding" in comparison with the fragments retrieved from the media interpreting set.

> *Today's negotiations reflected our joint wish with President Trump to redress this negative situation and the bilateral relationship, to outline the first steps for rehabilitation of this relationship, to restore the acceptable level of trust and going back to the previous level of interaction on all the mutual interest issues.* (Helsinki summit, DI, average rate = 3.6)

> *Today's negotiations revealed our shared wish to reverse the negative trend in the relationship between our countries and to identify the first steps to improve it, so that we could regain a reasonable level of confidence and resume our cooperation.* (Helsinki summit, MI, average rate = 4.5)

It should be remembered that in both settings interpreters were working in retour. Interestingly, the inter-rater reliability of judgements made by the raters about the renditions of the group of diplomatic interpreters was statistically lower, although the subjects in this group were fewer in number (7 vs. 12). Yet, the distribution of "naturalness" rankings was dispersed.

In most cases, the raters associated naturalness of performance with grammatical correctness, stylistic congruence, acceptability of word collocations and phrasal idiomaticity. These data necessitated further linguistic analysis of contrasting renditions. The table below gives two examples of the same segments of speech interpreted in the two aforementioned settings.

Table 3: Excerpts from interpretations of the same speeches by diplomatic and media interpreters

Original statements by President Putin	Interpretation on site	Interpretation on RT channel
Много говорили/ и о региональных кризисах/, не везде и не во всём наши позиции совпадают/, но и пересекающихся интересов/ тоже немало/. Надо искать/ точки соприкосновения/, теснее взаимодействовать/, в том числе и на международных форумах/. Говорили, конечно, и о региональных кризисах/, в том числе по Сирии/. 36 words	*We also mentioned/ the platform of regional crises/, not always that our postures dovetail exactly/. And yet overlapping and mutual interests/ abound/, we have to look for/ points of contact/ and interact closer/. And in a variety of international forums/. Clearly, we mentioned the regional crisis/. For instance, Syria/.* 38 words	*We also talked/ about regional crises/. We don't have same approach to all the crises/ but we still have a lot of shared interests/, we need to be looking for/ points of convergence/, we need to be working together more tightly/, at international forums, as well/. We also talked about regional crises/, Syria in particular/.* 35 words
У нас есть совпадающие интересы/ и мы ищем точки соприкосновения/. У нас есть вопросы/, в которых мы пока расходимся/, и мы ищем варианты, как примирить эти расхождения/, как сделать нашу работу конструктивной/. 29 words	*We do have interests that are common/, we are looking for points of contact/. There are issues/ where our postures diverge/ and we are looking for ways to reconcile our differences/, how to make our effort more constructive/.* 30 words	*…We do have some points of convergence/. And we are looking for shared interests/. Still, there are issues/ that we are not on the same page/, and we are trying to find ways to make our work more beneficial/.* 27 words
Мы можем допустить/ официальных представителей Соединенных Штатов/, в том числе главу этой	*We can actually permit/ even official representatives of the Unites States/ including the members of this very commission headed/ by Mr. Miller/.*	*We can also invite/ US officials/ including members of the Miller probe/, we can invite them to be present at the questioning/. But if that takes place/ then it*

комиссии/, господина Миллера/, присутствовать на этих допросах/. Но тогда в этом случае/ мы, безусловно, будем ставить вопрос о том/, чтобы эти действия были взаимными/. 31 words	*We can let them into the country and they will be present during this questioning/ but in this case/ we will request/that this kind of efforts should be a mutual one/.* 42 words	*must be a two-way street/.* 29 words

With a view to exploring the ways equivalence between source texts and their interpreted versions is established, each transcript was split into elementary chunks of meaning (Lederer 1978). Exemplary chunks of meaning are separated by slashes in table 2. Further comparative analysis was carried out at the level of identified chunks. This stage of investigation aimed at reveal similarities/dissimilarities between the original and both variants of interpretation at the lexical level. In order to describe the relationship between source and target chunks of meaning, we applied the Interpretive approach (Seleskovitch and Lederer 1984), namely the dichotomy of transcoding/reformulation (direct linguistic transfer as opposed to the "triangular" process).

This procedure proved efficient as it allowed all interpreter decisions to be classified into two distinct categories. All the interpreted chunks were thus labelled either "transcoded" or "reformulated" (the latter term refers to *réexpression* as coined by Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer (Seleskovitch and Lederer 1984)). Obviously, the interpreters rely on both methods irrespective of the setting they work in. However, this study showed a definitive tendency in favour of transcoding in conference settings, while reformulation was more frequently observable in media interpreting (see Figure 1).

To refute any possibility that these findings are random and that the occurrence of transcoded vs. reformulated items is setting-independent, (i.e., resulting from individual predilection for one method or the other, such as personal interpreting manner acquired through training and practice), more statistical evidence is needed. Accordingly, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to find out if the preferred translation method correlates with the setting type. Two distinct groups

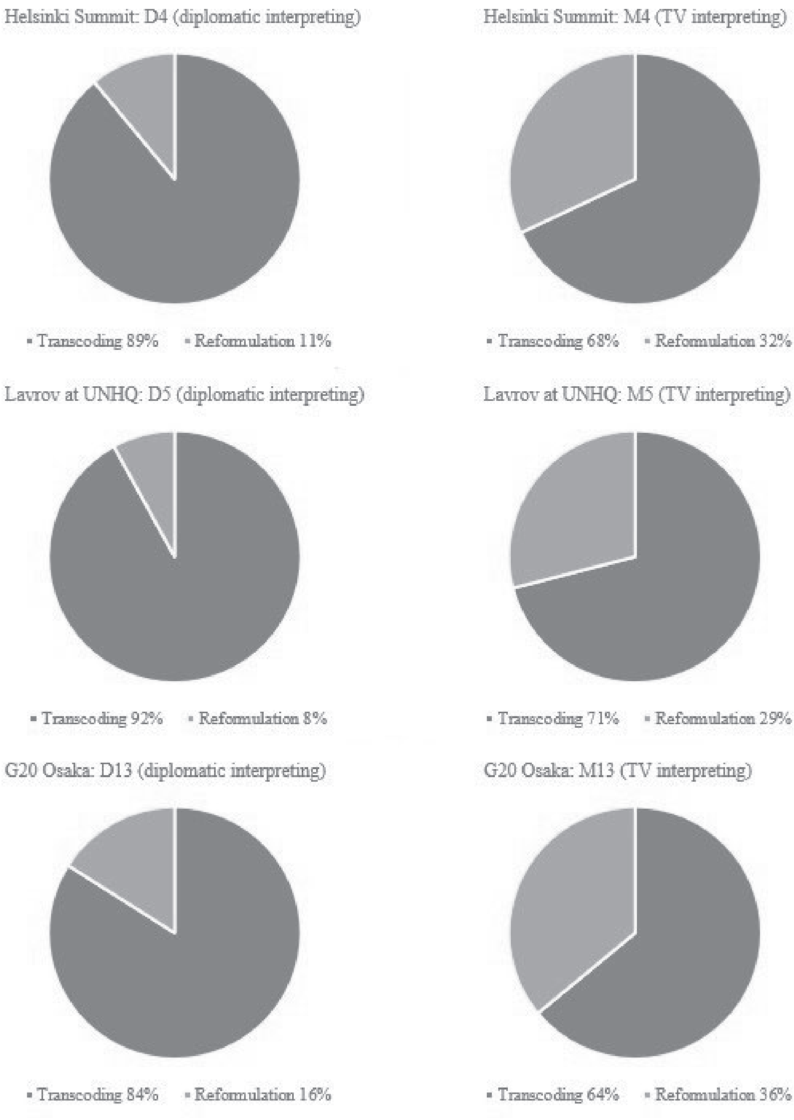

Figure 1: Transcoding vs. reformulation in two interpreting settings of selected press conferences

were set up: the first one comprised diplomatic interpreters, whereas the second was made up of media (TV) interpreters.

The dependent co-variables do not significantly predict the transcoding/ reformulation ratio within each group (F_1 = 3.76; SD_1 = 3.73; F_2=2.731; SD_2 = 5.53; P_1= 0.123; P_2=0.159). By contrast, in this study the setting (diplomatic vs. media) appears to be a statistically significant factor in predicting the preference for either method; the covariance between groups proves to be significant (F=11.842; P=0.004).

Discussion

As has been previously noted, both methods (transcoding and reformulation) are inevitably observable in any investigated setting. However, the results clearly show that interpreters working in a TV setting rely on reformulation more frequently than their colleagues performing on site, who appear to stick to the lexical and syntactic content of the source message, reproducing formal correspondences in their renditions, sometimes at the expense of the “naturalness” and idiomaticity of target text utterances. Consequently, such parallelism is easily traceable, which may create an impression of genuine faithfulness. In this case we are dealing with Nida’s *formal equivalence*, since equivalence is systematically detectable at the lexical level. Here one may assume that official interpreters performing at political conferences seem to feel less free to manipulate the source text, opting for direct (interlinear) transfer of its chunks. Thus, it could be further hypothesised that this interpreting style could be ascribed to staff interpreters of government institutions. Presumably, we can consider this trend to represent a global interpreting strategy proper to political conference settings, which might be attributed, firstly, to the nature of political discourse and, secondly, to the hierarchical relationship between the speaker and the interpreter in this communicative situation.

It is well-known that in political discourse the words often extend far beyond their meaning.

> Political communication is an example of the extraordinary power of words – words used to say and not to say, […] Words used in a political setting may have a value and a sense that go beyond what they apparently refer to; political communication tends to be deliberately vague, abstract and undefined. […] Hence the specificity of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting in a political setting. (Viezzi 2013, 382-383).

Conference interpreters acting in institutional and diplomatic settings, especially when they are to perform for high-ranking officials, assume an enormous responsibility as they have to be extremely prudent with words to avoid any misinterpretation in their renditions. Word-based equivalence is the most logical way for the interpreter not to distort the speaker's communicative intention. In this regard Viezzi highlights:

> […] equivalence may often be realized by translating words because sense is there... It is not the interpreter's role to interfere with the speaker's communication strategy and equivalence of sense is reached respecting the speaker's choices, not clarifying what was deliberately left unclear... (Viezzi, 383).

Moreover, as has been emphasised before, in Russia, like in many countries, interpreters working at political press conferences are usually employees of a government body (e.g., the Foreign Ministry Linguistic Service), hierarchically subordinate to the speaker they interpret. Therefore, they might feel compelled to meet the speaker's expectations, since in this scenario, as a rule, the speaker epitomises "the Client". Hence, the interpreters tend to be retrospective in their approach to the interpreting process, i.e., they aspire to meet the speaker's expectations (as the interpreter perceives them), even if the speaker does not understand the interpretation. This strategy can be deemed *speaker-oriented*.

Conversely, in a media setting the interpreters performing remotely and out of the institutional context find themselves physically displaced from the event. More importantly, they are not in any hierarchical relationship with protagonists (speakers), which may relieve them from "sacralising" the source text. As a result, they might resort more frequently to reformulation as a method of interpretation. The type of equivalence that emerges within the reformulated utterances is not so easily retrievable, because their surface structure might be devoid of interlinear correspondence with the original text. Nevertheless, if lexical correspondences are sporadic, equivalence can still be detected at the level of the whole utterance. This kind of relation between chunks of source and target texts can be called *pragmatic equivalence*, falling within Nida's concept of *functional equivalence*.

A more extended use of reformulation and the pursuit of greater phrasal idiomaticity could be attributed to the fact that the interpreters, free from the expectations of institutional users, strive to make their renditions more palatable to a heterogeneous TV audience. In this regard, their global strategy is *audience-oriented*. Although media interpreters might omit some pieces of information or simplify the speaker's reasoning, such decisions may well be motivated by a desire to produce *user-friendly* renditions and to sound convincing throughout the whole interpretation.

> So, in reality, the norm is that media interpreters are judged not for interpreting a speech correctly but convincingly well. (Straniero-Sergio 2003, 172).

Conclusion

In the present study we sought to uncover the impact of setting features on the type of equivalence produced by conference interpreters working in diplomatic and media environments. For this reason, we attempted to control the factor of interpreted content as much as possible, drawing the evidence from renditions of the same press conferences performed in different contexts. The findings suggest that the setting (diplomatic in situ vs. media remote) informs the interpreters' choice between the form-based (transcoding) or the meaning-based (reformulation) approach. Accordingly, relying on one of these approaches leads to the emergence of dichotomous types of equivalence in the target text. Overall, transcoding produces the effect of interlinear similarity at the lexical level, and can be easily associated with so-called formal equivalence. Reformulation of source text chunks of meaning produces another type of equivalence (functional or dynamic), which goes beyond the word level and can only be established at the level of the whole utterance. The preferred approach seems to vary objectively depending on the interpreting setting and its parameters. Our data suggest that in media settings reformulation is statistically more frequent, which increases the number of instances of functional equivalence. Thus, we are inclined to assume that pragmatic aspects of interpreting setting (the interpreters' status, whether the interpreters prioritise the speaker or the listener as "the Client") seem to impact the choice of global interpreting strategy.

As noted earlier, the current study was designed to explore how in two types of setting different interpreters deal with the same political discourse content. Some conference interpreters are known to work for television from time to time. It may therefore be interesting to examine how the same interpreters cope with their assignment in different settings.

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Written Interpretation: When Simultaneous Interpreting Meets Real-Time Subtitling

Carlo Eugeni and Rocío Bernabé

Abstract

This paper tries to envisage possible repercussions of the fourth industrial revolution on simultaneous interpreting by answering the following research question: is the future of simultaneous interpreting written? This question derives from observing current activities in the arguably related field of real-time subtitling through respeaking[1]. Because respeakers and simultaneous interpreters share similar skills (in particular that of listening and speaking at the same time) and work in similar contexts (conferences and TV), respeaking has become a well-established discipline often taught in translation and interpreting faculties (Robert, Schrijver, and Diels 2019). Moreover, Automatic Speech Recognition technology, which makes respeaking possible, is increasingly being studied as a tool to assist simultaneous interpreters (Fantinuoli 2018), not to mention current attempts to make interlingual real-time subtitling through respeaking a reality (Pöchhacker 2018).

After having illustrated the similarities between simultaneous interpreting and real-time subtitling through respeaking, in sociolinguistic, psycho-cognitive and skill-related terms, our critical discussion will lead us to the conclusion that simultaneous interpreting and real-time subtitling can be seen as two sides of the same coin, and that conference interpreters could, in the near future, be asked to offer real-time interlingual subtitles regularly.

[1] Respeaking, or voice writing, is a fast-writing technique whereby a respeaker listens to a speech and simultaneously repeats or reformulates it orally. An Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) software turns the words of the respeaker into written words, that take the shape of real-time subtitles for the benefit of deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences (Marsh 2006).

Introduction

During the 100 years since conference interpreting first came into being, the world has undergone technical, scientific and technological turns, which have brought simultaneous interpreting (SI) to current quality standards. Today, at the dawn of the fourth industrial revolution, disciplines are fusing thanks to the interaction of technologies across related professional fields. This hybridisation phenomenon has impacted all sectors of our daily lives, simultaneous interpreting included. Consequently, traditional ideas about its nature are being greatly challenged by Human-Computer Interaction (HCI).

In 1992, Hewett et al. defined HCI as the interdependence between humans and technology. While the overall aim was for technology to assist humans, now the roles have apparently switched, with technology even replacing human activity. In translation, this shift has been from computer-aided translation (CAT) – with technology as an assisting tool for translators – to human-aided translation (HAT) – with translators proofreading machine-translated texts – to fully automated translation (AT) (Poibeau 2017).

Simultaneous interpreting is undergoing a similar process, with interpreters benefiting considerably from technology in terms of quality and productivity. The use of such technology in SI is more recent than in translation, but has similarly led to the addition of computer-aided interpreting (CAI) and fully automated interpreting to traditional simultaneous interpreting (Fantinuoli 2018).

The use of technology in real-time subtitling is more recent still (de Seriis 2006; Lambourne et al. 2004; Marsh 2004) and has had a different impact on the profession, with the polarisation being limited to computer-assisted real-time subtitling and automatic real-time subtitling.

Real-time subtitling traditionally aims to provide access to live events (e.g., TV programmes, conferences, parliamentary sessions, daily life events) to persons with hearing loss, who can read what is said by speakers on a screen (Oncins, Eugeni, and Bernabé 2019). For this reason, it is predominantly intralingual and, unlike SI, of a written nature. Moreover, respeaking is not the only technique available: real-time subtitles can also be created through typing on standard or chord keyboards (Lambourne 2006).

Against this background of differences and similarities, and given the recent developments in research and professional practice, with more and more attempts to produce interlingual real-time subtitles being made, this paper aims to answer the research question by exploring whether real-time subtitling can serve a similar function to that of SI. To do so, the first section describes the process of real-time subtitling through respeaking, while the second compares SI to respeaking.

Real-time subtitling through respeaking

Real-time subtitling is one of the most challenging modalities within media accessibility and audiovisual translation (AVT). The International Telecommunication Union defines it as "the real-time transcription of spoken words, sound effects, relevant musical cues, and other relevant audio information" (ITU 2015, 5). Real-time subtitles can be produced through two techniques: typing or respeaking. The former includes different keyboards, such as standard ones, dual-keyboard systems, or chord keyboards, such as the Stenotype or the Velotype (Lambourne 2006).

Respeaking, known as 'voice writing' in the United States, is currently the preferred method of real-time TV subtitling worldwide, with situations changing from country to country when it comes to conferences (Robert et al. 2019). Concerning function, Eugeni points out that "[…] intralingual subtitles were introduced to help deaf and hard-of-hearing people to follow TV programmes and provide them with full accessibility to their content" (2016, 99). However, surveys conducted in the United Kingdom on behalf of the BBC show that 80% of intralingual subtitling users are not deaf or hard-of-hearing. This includes people aged 60 or over who suffer from a form of hearing loss that hinders their access to audiovisual broadcasts, and foreigners with a limited command of English (Ofcom 2015).

Thus, in many ways, real-time subtitling through respeaking is to pre-recorded subtitling as interpreting is to translation, namely a leap from the written to the oral without the safety net of time. Furthermore, interlingual real-time subtitling through respeaking can be seen as a form of CAI, because both use software, with the difference that, for instance, punctuation marks and other features such as speaker identification and sound information are also verbalised (Romero-Fresco and Eugeni 2020).

Eugeni and Marchionne (2014) show that real-time subtitling through respeaking is a nine-step process. We have used these steps to compare it with simultaneous interpreting (see Table 1):

Table 1: Comparison between real-time subtitling through respeaking and SI.

	SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING	REAL-TIME SUBTITLING
SOURCE TEXT (ST)	The speaker speaks	The speaker speaks
	Audio is sent to interpreter	Audio is sent to respeaker
	The interpreter listens, understands and processes ST	The respeaker listens, understands and processes ST
MID TEXT (MT)	The interpreter says the translation into a microphone	The respeaker says a repetition, reformulation or translation into a microphone
	-	ASR software processes MT
	-	ASR turns MT into written words on a screen
TARGET TEXT (TT)	Interpreter or boothmate monitor and correct MT	Respeaker or live editor monitor and correct MT
	-	Respeaker or live editor sends subtitles on air
	Audience can listen to TT with a 2” - 10” delay	Audience can read TT with a 2”-10” delay

From this description, it is easy to understand how real-time subtitling through respeaking – especially interlingual respeaking aiming to produce real-time subtitles in a different language to the ST – and SI share common ground. To envisage a “written future” for simultaneous interpreting, however, we need to go into more detail. Before attempting a detailed comparative analysis, a look at the rare contributions in the field of interlingual real-time subtitling can be of help.

Initially, interlingual real-time subtitling was the result of teamwork, with a simultaneous interpreter saying the translation of the original speech to a real-time intralingual subtitler who would transcribe it (Den Boer 2001). Today, it is mainly accomplished by a single professional. As Marsh (2006) shows, BBC real-time subtitlers directly translate content from Welsh into English. Unlike these computer-aided forms of interlingual real-time subtitling, more recently we have also seen human-aided interlingual real-time subtitling, with machine translation software programmes automatically translating input into several languages. In this case, a live editor ensures that the final result is qualitatively acceptable (Manetti 2018; Eugeni 2020). Fully-automated forms of interlingual real-time subtitling are also common, especially on the Internet, with programmes also offering the possibility of automatically introducing punctuation marks (Eugeni and Bernabé 2019). These forms of interlingual real-time subtitling and their repercussions on software development, teaching, training, and quality have been the object of previous and current international research projects, like EU-Bridge, SAVAS, LTA, and ILSA. The latter, in particular, seeks to identify the skills and profile of the real-time interlingual respeaker, inspired by both research on and practice of SI (https://ilsaproject.eu).

Respeaking and simultaneous interpreting

A glimpse at table 1 shows the many similarities between real-time subtitling through respeaking and simultaneous interpreting. A comparison at a sociolinguistic, psycho-cognitive and skills level will shed more light on the similarities between these two translational activities.

Sociolinguistics

Angelelli (2000) and Mack (2002) analyse conference interpreting from a sociolinguistic perspective based on Hymes's (1974) analysis of communicative events. Eugeni (2008) follows a similar approach to analyse respeaking. The four contributions will be used to underline differences and similarities between the two professions.

Situation

Situation encompasses setting and scene, the former meaning "the time and place of a speech act", while the latter is the "psychological setting" of a communication event (Hymes 1974, 55). Settings and scenes in respeaking and SI can vary greatly, but may also be very similar; respeakers and interpreters can both work in situations like conferences, TV programmes, political gatherings, and one-to-one meetings, either on site in a soundproof booth or remotely through tele- or videoconferencing. Similarly, scenes can be as manifold as genres are and are influenced "[…] by the specific roles and statuses of participants" (Mack 2002, 206).

Participants

Hymes (1974, 54-56) distinguishes between the addressor, i.e., the person physically producing the ST, the intended ST addressee, and the receiver at large, i.e., any person(s) receiving the ST. Both in real-time subtitling and in SI, participants are mainly four. The speaker, the audience understanding/accessing the ST, the audience only understanding/accessing the TT, and the respeaker/interpreter, who are considered both ST receivers and TT addressors. Pöchhacker (1992) adds two more types of participant: the *Bedarfsträger*, being the conference promoter; and the *Besteller*, the conference organisers. In both respeaking and SI, another type is to be added: the live editor, when present, and the boothmate.

Ends

Hymes (1974, 56-57) differentiates between "purpose-goals" and "purpose-outcomes". The first concern participants' main objectives and strategies to reach them, while the latter refer to the outcome of the communicative event as intended by participants. While the outcomes depend on participants' perception and reception of the event and can vary from case to case, the goals of both SI and respeaking are enabling communication through different languages and channels, and being a convenient, and often the cheapest, way to achieve it (Mack 2002).

Act sequences

Act sequences relate to the form and content of the message. In both SI and respeaking, they are established by the addressor. However, the interpreter and the respeaker are called to convey what Halliday and Hasan (1985, 12) call "the mode of discourse": the role participants expect language to play, the symbolic organisation of the ST and the TT, their status, their function in the context, and the rhetorical mode. Sometimes, form is extremely important (e.g., rhetorical and political speeches), sometimes far less (e.g., technical discourse in general). The only difference between SI and respeaking is that the latter delivers the TT through a different channel. For this reason, all-important para- and extra-linguistic features in the ST need to be added.

Key

The key is the set of cues that establish the "tone, manner, or spirit" of the speech act (Hymes 1974, 57). In SI, interpreters "[…] focus on the tone, manner or spirit of the speaker" (Angelelli 2000, 588), while the original background sound contributes "to the sense of authenticity in the translation" (Luyken et al. 1991, 80). Similarly, key in respeaking is made explicit through verbalisation (e.g., fonts, colours, labels, contextual information), while the 'background' effect is guaranteed by residual sound and what is visually accessible (e.g., lips moving, slides). Furthermore, if subtitles are visible to everybody, they also contribute to both key and act sequences.

Instrumentalities

Instrumentalities are the medium of communication, the physical support through which communication is delivered, and the channel (Hymes 1974). They are the main difference between SI and respeaking. In SI, communication is spoken and perceived acoustically through earphones. In respeaking, it is written and perceived visually on a screen. This implies that information conveyed both visually and acoustically in the ST (audio, video, speech) must be transferred through one single support: subtitles.

Norms

Norms are understood as encompassing norms of interaction and norms of interpretation. In SI, norms of interaction are "highly ritualized" (Mack 2002, 210). Although interpreters have little control over the interaction, they are not invisible as they differ from speakers in tone, pitch and volume. Moreover, the TT rapidly disappears. Conversely, respeakers are completely invisible, if they are not physically present in the room, and the TT is more intrusive as it remains visible on screen. As for norms of interpretation, in SI, interpreters must "perceive the meaning [...] of a text/an utterance in its proper context and thus convey its underlying message" to the "intended addressee" as distinct from "mere transcoding [...], or word-for-word translation" (Mouzourakis 2005). Respeakers may be called upon to adopt either a verbatim (word-for-word) or a sensatim (meaning for meaning) approach to producing their rendition of the ST (Eugeni 2020), depending on the country and the situation. In both cases, the need to punctuate the text means that respeakers must understand the ST and cannot limit themselves to transcoding.

Genres

Genre is a set of "instances of conventionalised or institutionalised textual artefacts in the context of specific institutional and disciplinary practices, procedures and cultures" constructed, interpreted and used by members of a specific discourse community to "achieve their community goals" (Bhatia 2002, 4). In this context, the 'use' of the TT is probably the main difference between SI and respeaking. While SI is “constructed, interpreted and used” at a given moment and in a given place (Russo 1999), subtitles created in real time can be recorded as text and reused as such (like SI) or adapted to produce pre-recorded or semi-live subtitles (Marsh 2006), proceedings or reports (Eugeni 2019), or tags for Search Engine Optimisation purposes.

Psycho-cognitive

Gran (1992, 161) summarises different theories of SI and defines it as a process basically consisting of three concurrent phases that overlap without coinciding wholly: the interpreter listening to the message from the source language, ideating the message by subdividing it into meaning units, and producing the TT by reformulating and expressing it in the target language. In this case, the primary characteristic of simultaneous interpreting is a real-time inter-lingual reformulation of the ST. As seen in table 1, real-time subtitling through respeaking seems very close to SI. Although respeaking is mainly used to produce intralingual subtitles for the benefit of deaf and hard-of-hearing people, the psycho-cognitive skill of listening and speaking at the same time that forms the basis of respeaking, especially sensatim, seems to further confirm how related these two professions are. Research further bridges the divide between inter- and intralingual forms of translation; according to Gran, some authors suggest that “choosing a linguistic equivalent in inter-lingual translation is similar to choosing synonyms in the same language or to paraphrasing intra-linguistically” (1992, 169).

The presumed closeness between interlingual and intralingual forms of translation seems to be confirmed by psycho-cognitive studies comparing SI and shadowing. As Manca et al. (2019) show by means of electroencephalography, SI is a cognitively more challenging mental activity than shadowing, but a similar concentration and intensity of brainwaves are involved. Considering the similarities between intralingual respeaking and shadowing, and the emerging practice of interlingual respeaking, it increasingly seems that SI and respeaking are to be thought of as two sides of the same coin; not only does a respeaker shadow, they also interact with the software that processes the dictation to generate subtitles (Eugeni 2008). Analysing the strategies of a respeaker reveals how similar they are to those of simultaneous interpreters. Borrowing from Kohn and Kalina (1996), the respeaker (both intralingual and interlingual), like the interpreter, applies “elaborative inferencing” and “memorising strategies” (respectively allowing them to anticipate or postpone lexicogrammatical and conceptual elements of the ST for a stylistically better rendition of the TT); "monitoring strategies" like segmentation, syntactical reformulation, delay reduction, a posteriori correction, etc; "adaptation strategies" like disambiguation, explanation, semantic reformulation, generalisation, substitution, paraphrase, phonetic reproduction, etc.; and "neutralisation and evasion strategies", allowing both the respeaker and the interpreter to leave something out if not completely comprehended, to retrieve previously translated information if cohesion is needed, and to keep producing an acceptable text if hearing or understanding is compromised.

Moreover, the focus of the respeaker is not only on the ST verbal elements. Punctuation and other formatting need to be considered too. For example, words like 'comma' and 'new line' must be dictated, and voice commands used to indicate a change of speaker or reactions from the audience, in order to provide the best replication of the hearing experience for a deaf or hard-of-hearing user (ibid.). These extra efforts mean that respeakers often need to speak at a faster pace than the speaker they are subtitling in real time, especially if verbatim subtitles are required. In order to better understand the relationship between SI and respeaking, it would be interesting to carry out further research comparing these two forms of translation. Intuitively the hypothesis is that shadowing, intralingual respeaking (both verbatim and sensatim, and similar real-time subtitling techniques), SI, and interlingual respeaking (and similar real-time subtitling techniques) belong to the same continuum, differing in the degree of multimodality involved in the production process (Seeber 2017), which determines how much processing capacity can be devoted to each simultaneous effort (Gile 1985).

Skills

Among the results of the Erasmus+ project LTA is a list of skills the real-time subtitler working in the same language has to possess[2]. If compared with those of a simultaneous interpreter (Christoffels and De Groot 2005; Moser-Mercer 2000; Macnamara et al. 2011), we realise that they are largely the same. This similarity is made even clearer by the ILSA project[3] (2018) which compares the skills of the SI interpreter, the real-time interlingual subtitler, and the pre-recorded subtitler (see Figure 1):

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[2] https://ltaproject. eu/?page_id=101

[3] http://ka2-ilsa.webs.uvigo.es/

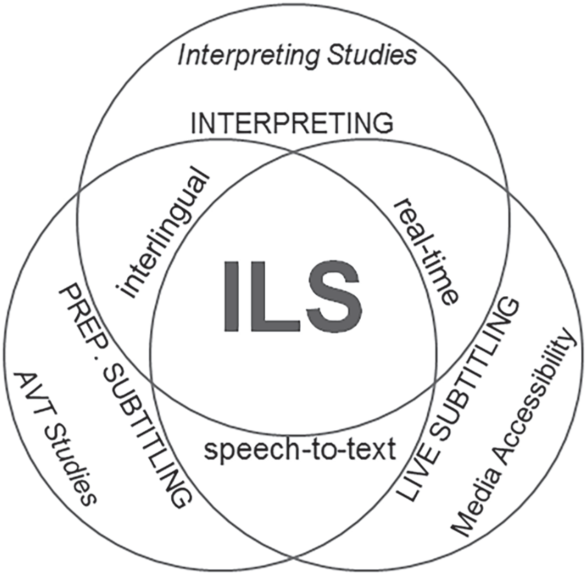

Figure 1: Skills in ILS, or interlingual live subtitling (ILSA 2018; Pöchhacker and Remael, 2019). Used with permission.

The intralingual real-time subtitler's skills can be grouped into three categories: phonetic, editorial, and psycho-cognitive (Eugeni and Bernabé 2019).

Phonetically, respeakers have to articulate each word, avoiding both intentional non-lexical events, like extra sounds, nasalisations, lengthening end syllables, or other excessive prosodic patterns; and non-intentional non-lexical events, such as coughing or sneezing (Savino et al. 1999). Additionally, although speech recognition software is designed to discern minimum meaningful word units depending on the context, homophony can occur and result in a wrong transcription. Therefore, it is up to respeakers to adapt to software peculiarities by pronouncing words as single occurrences, especially when a given text string can be written as both one word or two words (e.g., 'be long' vs 'belong') (Lambourne et al. 2004).

Editorially, like SI interpreters, intralingual respeakers can either repeat word for word (verbatim) or reformulate (sensatim) if necessary. The number of words per minute of an ST varies according to the context, type of text, and above all the speaker. If during a broadcast snooker match, commentators never pronounce more than a hundred words per minute, for example, politicians can even reach 300 words per minute. In order to produce understandable subtitles, respeakers must concentrate on and render necessary meaning units, and avoid padding (Ofcom 2003, 26).

Psycho-cognitively, respeakers must continuously manage their cognitive load, as seen in the previous section. They must listen to the ST, process it and speak at the same time. Moreover, respeakers have to deal with the twofold feedback effect caused by their voice and possible mistakes that can appear on-screen even if the voice input is perfect.

Finally, another skill relevant to respeaking and of great importance for the final product, but rarely considered, is the respeaker's familiarity with a given topic or genre, which also applies for the SI interpreter. The less familiar they are with the topic, the more difficult it will be to understand and reformulate the source text. Familiarity with a specific context is essential for the software programme as well. When it is trained in a specific semantic domain, recognition will be faster and accuracy higher. In this respect, Marsh argues that "[h]owever well prepared a respeaker is before going on air, all manner of unexpected content can arise. If a respeaker does not have the necessary vocabulary trained into his or her dictionary in advance, it is impossible to use it in the subtitles" (2004, 28).

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this article is to answer the following research question: is the future of simultaneous interpreting written? To do so, SI was compared to real-time subtitling through respeaking. Real-time subtitles translate a speech into written text, generally in the same language, for deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences. When they do so in another language, real-time subtitles also serve the same function as SI. By doing so, we believe that this relatively new translation mode may bridge the gap between AVT and SI, especially considering the differences and similarities between SI and respeaking as a technique to produce real-time subtitles.

Concerning the few differences identified, from a sociolinguistic perspective, they arise from the nature of the TT (written vs spoken), the workflow (live editor vs boothmate), the amount of technology involved both in the production of the TT and its reception by the intended audience, and its re-usability. Psycho-cognitively, the similarities underlined by Gran (1992) with regard to cognitive processing and effort in inter- and intralingual translation have not been fully supported by EEG results comparing SI and shadowing. However, considering the multifaceted nature of respeaking (verbatim, sensatim, interlingual, non-verbal and contextual information), it is clear that the cognitive tasks involved go far beyond shadowing. It is therefore reasonable to assume that further research may come to more detailed results. Lastly, regarding skills, respeakers need complementary phonetic and editorial skills to enable mediation through ASR technology. The former facilitate interaction between the respeaker and the software, which ultimately has a double effect: on the respeaker's cognitive load and the accuracy of the output. The latter are necessary to produce understandable subtitles for each working context, given that the audience accesses the TT through reading.

When we look at the many similarities identified, we can clearly state that both SI and interlingual real-time subtitling fulfil the same function, because they provide live translation to people who do not understand the ST. What is more, interlingual real-time subtitling offers even more advantages than traditional SI to many stakeholders. For example, clients can partially or wholly reuse the subtitles for other purposes (proceedings, reports, search engine optimisation, pre-recorded or semi-live subtitles). Moreover, deaf and hard-of-hearing people can access conferences that are usually precluded to them if only traditional SI is provided, thus adding social inclusion to the function traditionally served by SI. In addition, real-time subtitling benefits those who may have problems accessing a conference online because of poor Internet connection; in case of connectivity issues, subtitles convey the content more easily. Finally, interpreters may enormously from learning respeaking, since it would enable them to add many more strings to their bow like interlingual real-time subtitling for the same kind of purposes they already serve, and intralingual real-time subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing people for TV programmes, parliamentary sessions, conferences, and even daily life events. New skills would of course need to be acquired, but the ever-changing world of multilingual conferences may soon request such services, and doubling the cost for providers (SI and real-time subtitling) does not seem to be an option (Robert et al. 2019). Furthermore, the bulk of skills and strategies required in interlingual real-time subtitling are very close to those of SI (ILSA 2018; LTA 2019).

To conclude, despite the need for further research to investigate the many unexplored aspects of real-time subtitling, and the inevitable differences between the two translation modes investigated here; and given the rise of respeaking as a technique to produce interlingual real-time subtitles, the answer to our research question could not be more positive: interlingual real-time subtitling can serve the same function as that of simultaneous interpreting, if only it were more widespread.

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CHAPTER II:

CONFERENCE INTERPRETER TRAINING

CONFERENCE INTERPRETING SKILLS: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

LUCÍA RUIZ ROSENDO AND MARIE DIUR

Abstract

Conference interpreters have traditionally been trained using the apprenticeship model and were expected to have a very specific skillset, including a solid knowledge of their working languages and related cultures, broad cultural awareness, and a series of particular procedural skills inherent to both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. Consequently, training programmes have attempted to teach these skills and made an effort to adapt curricula to different market requirements. In this paper, drawing on our experience as professional interpreters and interpreter trainers, we analyse whether the curricular elements of training programmes reflect the needs of and challenges faced by international organisations (IOs). Our aim is to question whether the skills traditionally addressed in interpreter training are sufficient to meet the current demands of IOs.

A brief history of conference interpreting and conference interpreter training

Up until the early twentieth century, interpreting remained an integral and undifferentiated part of the wider field of translation and language mediation. During this time, interpreting services at international meetings and gatherings were mostly delivered by military officers, diplomats, secretaries and other members of staff with some knowledge of foreign languages (Gaiba 1998). Accordingly, instead of being trained, interpreters relied on language proficiency. The single event that changed the game and marked the birth of modern interpreting was the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 (Baigorri-Jalón 1999), which brought an end to World War I. At the request of US President Woodrow Wilson, English was awarded official status together with French, thus ending the hegemony of the latter in the world of diplomacy. It was there that consecutive interpreting began, within a structured framework and in the context of a real conference (Thierry

2007). Despite the lack of specific training, the interpreters managed to master their assignments and delivered their renditions from and into the two official languages.

Notwithstanding its initial success at the Paris Peace Conference, consecutive interpreting had a major shortcoming, which was the time it took to interpret speeches. In order to expedite the process and, consequently, reduce costs, the American businessman and ILO (International Labour Organization) delegate Edward Filene proposed an alternative method of interpreting to the then League of Nations' Secretary General (Kurz and Bowen 1999). Whilst the League of Nations turned down his idea, it was eventually accepted by the ILO. Subsequently, Filene and his associates funded the first simultaneous interpreting (SI) course for interpreters, and SI was successfully implemented for the first time at the International Labour Conference in Geneva in 1927. However, this shift was not so readily accepted everywhere and the arrival of SI was often met with resistance and even open opposition. At the League of Nations, consecutive interpreters, already comfortable in their visible role at the podium, were concerned about the anonymity that the SI booth generated. Additionally, delegates were somewhat disconcerted by the prospect of SI, which demanded more immediate reactions to interventions. After only sporadic use of SI during the interwar period, the Nuremberg Trials marked the moment when SI was finally seen as technically feasible, timesaving and cost-effective. It was then that SI really took off and marked, as stated by Baigorri-Jalón, "not so much the birth of SI as its coming of age" (1999, 34).

From 1947, when simultaneous interpreting became standard practice at the United Nations and its specialised agencies, the demand for interpreters began skyrocketing (Mackintosh 1999). In that year, brief in-house training programmes in SI became available to interpreters at the UN, to be undertaken prior to the beginning of their appointment at the General Assembly session in September of the same year. Also, even if some schools had been created in the 1940s, such as the Ecole d'interprètes de Genève (EIG) (1941), the creation of the UN spurred the inception of interpreting schools: Germersheim School (1946), the Interpreting School at Georgetown University (1949), the ESIT (École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs) (1957) and the ISIT (the Institut Supérieur d'Interprétation et de Traduction) (1957). In the case of the two Paris-based programmes, the founding of the European Economic Community (EEC) was the event that most probably prompted their inception. The second half of the twentieth century was not only characterised by the rise of interpreting schools but also marked by the creation of the International Association of

Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in 1953. In 1959 this association began to publish recommendations for interpreter training.

The inception of training programmes brought along research into interpreter training. Since the first essays on the subject by Herbert (1952) and Paneth (1957), simultaneous conference interpreter training has advanced and become significantly formalised. An important landmark in conference interpreter training was the development and evolution of what Mackintosh (1999, 70) calls the "ESIT stance". In line with the "triangular words-sense-words doctrine" (Setton 2003, 49) of the interpretive theory pioneered by Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989), this approach dictates that students should master consecutive before being exposed to simultaneous interpreting. The reasoning behind the approach lies in the assumption that skills transfer from CI to SI, that is, from the less to the more complex modality. In other words, consecutive is seen as the unavoidable stepping stone on the path towards achieving proficiency in SI. The main goal of this theory is one of drilling 'deverbalisation' (focusing on the meaning and larger units rather than on small tokens like words) in CI prior to exposing students to simultaneous, where there is an inherent danger of simply repeating words.

Indeed, this formula underlies the curricula of many interpreting programmes. The Paris school of thought has been used by European institutions for their own training programmes (Sawyer 2004) and is at the core of the EMCI (European Masters in Conference Interpreting) curriculum. It is worth mentioning that historically AIIC was very close to the Paris school, and the same could be said of the EU institutions. It remains an influential school of thought despite the fact that no empirical studies have ever been carried out to substantiate the necessity or advantage of teaching CI before SI or on whether skills transfer from one modality to the other. Importantly, consecutive has all but disappeared from the international arena and largely been replaced by the simultaneous modality in many markets, too.

Skill acquisition and the development of expertise

Conference interpreting can be defined as "the rendering of speeches delivered in one language into another at formal and informal conferences and in conference-like settings" (Diriker 2015, 78) and comprises different variants: simultaneous, consecutive or, more rarely, whispered. Of the three categories put forward by van Merrienboër (1997) – cognitive, motor and affective skills –, interpreting is primarily a cognitive skill made up of several subskills (or constituent skills), a set of competencies that reflect what we can do. As such, interpreting has often been examined through skill acquisition and expertise theories (Delgado Luchner 2015). These cognitive skills, according to Bloom (1986), fall into six main categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Traditionally, at interpreter training schools, the preferred model chosen to foster the students' progressive learning is the apprenticeship model, based on theories of skill acquisition and expertise development. According to this model, the learner imitates the trainer, who is not necessarily aware of why or how certain things are done. Related to Bloom's (1986) six categories, the fundamental skills in interpreter training are believed to be active listening, analysis, memory, production and evaluation. Given the complexity of the tasks involved and the limited time allotted to learning a task in interpreter training programmes, it is not uncommon for students to be tested prior to admission so that those candidates with the potential to advance to the expert stage may be detected (Ericsson 2000).

According to Hoffman (1997), there are seven different phases of skill acquisition on the road to proficiency: the starting point is "naïve", when the student knows nothing about the subject; then follows the "novice" phase, when the learning process has barely started; the "initiate" phase, when the student has already gone through an initial learning experience; the "apprentice" phase, when the student becomes more deeply involved in the learning process; the "journeyman" phase, just after the student has passed the final interpreting exams; and, later, the "expert" phase. The seventh and final phase is that of "master", when the student is qualified to teach others. By the time students achieve "expert" status, they have acquired a more comprehensive and inclusive view of the task at hand. They are capable of perceiving information in chunks and detecting patterns within, and have developed a more extensive and better-organised knowledge base (comprised of factual, semantic, schematic and strategic knowledge). As a result, experts display improved reasoning skills and faster information processing (Moser-Mercer, Frauenfelder, Casado and Künzli 2000).

This model is built on the premise that meaningful practice will enable students to reach the level of expert. This practice includes tasks that are sequentially designed, modelled, organised, scaffolded and monitored by more advanced learners or experts, and followed by relevant feedback that facilitates the students' implementation of changes. Students gradually become autonomous through deliberate practice and with the help of meticulously planned scaffolding, where students are guided and supported in the first instance to perform learning tasks that will later be performed independently. This process is based on the existence of a zone of proximal development, defined as "the distance between problem-solving abilities when assisted by or collaborating with more experienced people" (Lave and Wenger 1991, 48). This is the model that has been widely accepted and used by many interpreter training programmes.

Curricular approaches to conference interpreting

The ultimate purpose of any training programme is to teach interpreting skills following said apprenticeship model. The EMCI (European Masters in Conference Interpreting) considers conference interpreting to be a specialised track. The core curriculum's main aim is for all member institutions to adhere to a similar structure. Therefore, the curricula of these member institutions all contain a series of mandatory modules: interpreting theory, interpreting practice, consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, and the EU and international organisations. An important premise of the EMCI is that skills can be transferred from consecutive to simultaneous interpreting. In some cases, this entails CI being mastered before starting SI, a progression that has been advocated by Seleskovitch (1999), Setton (1994) and Setton and Dawrant (2016). For the final exams it is specified that the speeches delivered have to be prepared to a standard commonly encountered by professional interpreters and delivered as if impromptu by seasoned speakers. The final exams serve a double purpose, namely gauging the effectiveness of the training the students have received and acting as a "gateway to the professional interpreting market" (Pöchhacker 2016, 203). This being said, those interpreters who want to work at certain IOs have to pass an accreditation test and prove that they actually have the necessary skills.

The EMCI core curriculum reflects what takes place in interpreter training schools. The most favoured format appears to be a one- or two-year postgraduate degree course that includes a theoretical component with the ensuing requirement of a graduation thesis. As for content and structure, the curricular components of most programmes include main modules in interpreting, both consecutive and simultaneous, and some area studies that allow students to acquire general knowledge. According to Pöchhacker (2016), disagreement exists as to the sequence in which the curricular components should be taught, that is, whether consecutive and simultaneous should be taught simultaneously or sequentially, although it is safe to say that the majority of programmes start teaching CI before SI. A commonality of postgraduate interpreter training programmes is the existence of entry requirements, student selection and aptitude testing, and a lack of consensual methods with which to test potential candidates. Some schools, besides testing oral skills, include translation exercises, while others focus on testing only the candidate's capacity to render a speech from the foreign languages into the main language. The level candidates are expected to achieve in order to earn a place on the programme varies among schools.

One may wonder whether these curricular elements help trainees find their way into the market once they have completed their studies; in other words, whether graduates are employable. Indeed, one of the challenges facing training institutions is the adaptation of training to the workplace.

Employability of conference interpreters in international organisations

The term 'employability' is understood as "a set of skills that enable students to become employable in today's very competitive labour market" (Rodríguez de Céspedes, Sakamoto and Berthaud 2017, 103); "a set of achievements—skills, understanding and personal attributes—that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" (Yorke 2006, 8).

The traditional core-curricular element of conference interpreter training programmes is the teaching of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting skills. Be that as it may, CI is seldom used at IOs. Also, in order to work at most IOs, interpreters will usually be required to pass an accreditation test or will be tested by senior interpreters following internal procedures. This test always consists of a high-level SI exam in the case of the UN and includes a CI exam in the case of the European institutions, although the latter also place great importance on examining SI in that the candidate is invited to complete an online pre-selection test consisting of a 10–12 minute SI task. In most programmes, CI skills are usually taught before beginning SI; consequently, SI cannot be taught during the full length of the training programme. Arguably, one consequence of this approach is that trainees are not sufficiently exposed to the latter mode during training. This, in turn, may disadvantage graduates when they come to sit accreditation exams for IOs. Whilst it is true that some of the skills taught in CI (active listening, analysis and production) will then be necessary in SI, the multitasking inherent to SI is not learned in CI, and requires significant time to be mastered. Therefore, curricula must be designed carefully, with proper time management, in order to make sure that the learning of CI benefits the learning of SI, instead of being at its expense. Along these lines, Diur (2016) attempted to answer the question of why candidates who have received specific training in conference interpreting do not necessarily have the specific competencies and skills necessary to pass the LCE (Language Competitive Examination), the exam taken to become a staff interpreter at the UN. The results of the first survey she conducted with staff interpreters show that although respondents were satisfied with the training they had received, they would have liked to have received more training in SI and SI with text, and the vast majority would have liked the interpreting schools to use real-life materials, as opposed to materials created specifically for the purpose of training. Results of the survey carried out with senior interpreters in charge of marking the competitive examination indicate that, according to the respondents, candidates have had insufficient exposure to the main challenges included in the exam, primarily speed and foreign accents, among others. Although the author focuses on the UN, the conclusions reached might apply to other international organisations as well.

Along the lines of these findings, an important challenge to consider is that nowadays, at least in IOs, impromptu speeches are increasingly replaced by speeches written to be read aloud. While the ability to interpret impromptu speeches is indispensable for any conference interpreter, written speeches are usually denser and more complex, and are usually delivered faster. Barghout, Ruiz Rosendo and Varela García (2015) report speeches from the UN Human Rights Council to be delivered on average at about 150 wpm with peaks just under 190 wpm. Delivery rates seem to be equally high at other UN meetings and in other international organisations, such as the ILO (see Ruiz Rosendo, Varela García and Barghout, 2020), the OECD (see Donovan 2017) and the European Parliament (see de Manuel 2014; and Seeber 2017). These studies show, for example, that the average speed of speeches delivered in IOs usually ranges from what Monti, Bendazzoli, Sandrelli and Russo (2005) refer to as “medium” (up to 160 wpm) to “high” (above 160 wpm). According to Setton and Dawrant (2016), at least in a training environment, they can be considered “challenging” (140–160 wpm) or “difficult” (above 160 wpm).

One could argue that, given the time constraints faced by interpreting schools, trainees are probably not given sufficient exposure to the modalities that are increasingly used at international organisations, such as SI with text and real-time drafting of texts, and whispering through a *bidule* (portable equipment system used at some organisations). Each of these modalities requires a different approach and the learning of new skills, different to those used for SI without text. In the case of real-time drafting of texts, students should develop the skill of listening while finding the fragments of the text that are under discussion and providing a swift sight translation of said fragments. In the case of the *bidule*, the students have to learn how to whisper while moving. It is worth mentioning that the *bidule* is frequently used for encounters that take place during official missions in the field (which presupposes that the delegates will be moving), even if it is also used as an alternative to the traditional whispering when there are more than three delegates in the room. Even if some interpreter training programmes have included SI with text in their curricula and proficiency exams, and the EMCI explicitly includes it in the core curriculum at an advanced stage – once the SI skills have been acquired – there is no systematic approach to teaching SI with text (Seeber and Delgado Luchner 2020). This might seem somewhat paradoxical, given that, as we have seen, SI with text is one of the modalities most frequently used at international organisations.

The same can be said about accents. In a globalised world where English is increasingly used as a Lingua Franca, it would be advisable for training institutions to systematically include non-native accents and different native accents in their exams and courses. The profusion of accents can cause added stress for interpreters entering the profession if training institutions do not confront trainees with different types of accents throughout the curriculum. Among conference interpreters, accents are usually put forward as an important stressor, together with speed; whereas in the literature, some studies have come to the conclusion that foreign accents actually have an impact on the interpreter's performance (Mazzetti 1999; Albl-Mikasa 2010).

Conclusion

Designing interpreting training curricula is a multi-faceted and complex activity that needs to be finely tuned to the ever-changing needs of a professional arena characterised by globalisation and enhanced technological capabilities. In addition to the specific skillset that conference interpreting is understood to require, today's interpreters face challenges related to the characteristics of the speeches that they encounter and the growing presence of interpreting modalities that are not always systematically approached by interpreting schools' curricula.

Undeniably, there has been a consistent effort to adapt and update interpreting curricula. The EMCI includes both theoretical and practical courses aimed at the development and improvement of skills. Traditionally, conference interpreting has been taught according to the apprenticeship model and interpreting curricula have usually followed a sequential acquisition of skills, notably a linear progression from consecutive interpreting (CI) to simultaneous interpreting (SI). Assessment of interpreting performance has thus far generally focused on testing students' ability to perform the CI and SI of prepared speeches delivered as though they were improvised by experienced speakers and, in theory, comparable to those encountered by professional interpreters in the course of their work (this, however, is not always the case). Given the challenges that interpreters currently face, it is our belief that more time should be devoted to learning SI, since it is the modality that will be used almost exclusively at international organisations. Also, one may argue that insufficient time is set aside for the inclusion of the increasingly used new modalities, such as SI with text, as well as for the trainees' exposure to the challenges that they will encounter in the profession, such as speed, different accents and the use of electronic documents.

It is our stance that, while traditional curricula and approaches have a number of strengths, interpreter trainers must lead the way in adapting the curriculum to the characteristics and demands of an evolving market in order to better equip their students with the tools required to carry out their future duties in a professional environment. Even if the skills inherent to interpreting are taught at interpreting schools, more thought should be given to the trainees' exposure to challenges that put a strain on conference interpreters.

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UNDERSTANDING A, B AND C: PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS FOR INTERPRETERS' WORKING LANGUAGES

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Abstract

Proficiency in at least two languages is a prerequisite for enrolling in any interpreter training programme. However, while the level of proficiency required for conference interpreters in both their active and passive languages has been deemed to lie beyond the range of existing language proficiency frameworks – such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) that ranks proficiency from A1 to C2 – this level has not been clearly defined. This paper aims to identify clear criteria to distinguish an interpreter's A from a B and a B from a C language. To this end, we draw on theoretical insights from interpreting, language acquisition and language assessment in order to analyse a large corpus of feedback relating to the language proficiency of interpreting students enrolled at the University of Geneva. Our analysis further develops criteria for language proficiency (such as those of the CEFR) and applies them to the interpreter's working languages. It highlights the sub-components of language proficiency where we find the most salient differences between the C and the B language, or between the B and the A language. These insights offer an extension of the frameworks commonly used for assessing language proficiency that is relevant for interpreter training.

Introduction

In the course of the past 100 years, conference interpreting has become a well-established profession. A multitude of training courses, accreditation exams and institutional selection procedures are now available, and all of these distinguish between interpreters based on their language combination, most importantly their A language. Thinking of their languages as A, B and

C languages has become second nature to interpreters, so much so that these categories are rarely questioned. However, the level of mastery actually required in the different language categories in order to interpret out of or into them remains surprisingly ill-defined. Instead, the field relies on rather general labels, which were undoubtedly necessary for laying the foundations of an emerging profession, such as calling interpreters' A language their "mother tongue" (AIIC n.d.), or on comparative descriptions that emphasise the deficiencies of the B language with respect to the A language (see for instance Déjean Le Féal 2005; Donovan 2005; Gile 2005).

These labels and descriptions, however, are not proper definitions, in the sense that they do not address the level of language performance that corresponds to an A, B or C language. Furthermore, they have not been updated in line with our current theoretical and empirical knowledge on language acquisition and language performance. Therefore, critical engagement with the language classification used in interpreting constitutes a necessary complement to current directions in interpreting research, and provides further elements to the empirical study of interpreting subskills. So far, interpreting researchers have largely adopted a definition that emerged from professional practice and has remained virtually unchanged since the early 1950s, when Jean Herbert, referring to the interpreter's target language stated simply that "[t]he interpreter is under an obligation to be an authority on the language he speaks" (Herbert 1952, 64). Herbert further mentions several cultural and linguistic reference points the interpreter must be well acquainted with, citing Shakespeare and Lewis Caroll as examples for the English language.

However, as the profession of conference interpreting has diversified beyond its mainly European (and mainly male) roots, questions of language 'authority' and even 'mother tongue' have become more fraught: who is to say that an interpreter from Kenya has less 'authority' on her A language than an interpreter from the UK, and what about conference interpreters working into classical Arabic (Al-Salman and Al-Khanji 2002), which is considerably different from the Arabic used as a 'mother tongue' in less formal settings? Even in the West, migration is creating more and more multilingual families, and today's interpreting students come from more diverse backgrounds than in the 1950s. Defining the A, B and C language exclusively in relation to professional expectations, a minimum duration of one's stays in a country where the language is spoken, or abstract concepts like 'authority' makes it difficult for prospective students to identify their language combination. This forces individuals applying to be admitted to interpreter training courses, as well as enrolled students and their trainers, to rely merely on their own intuitions as to "what makes an A language an A language".

The state of knowledge on language acquisition, proficiency and assessment has considerably advanced in recent decades as well, yet the underlying conceptualisation of A, B and C in interpreting has remained largely unchanged. Its opaque nature contradicts an idea supported by research into skill acquisition (Moser-Mercer 2008; 2010) – recent evidence from neuroscientific studies showing that the acquisition of SI skills brings about structural changes in the brain (Babcock 2015; Elmer, Hänggi, and Jäncke 2014; Hervais-Adelman and Babcock 2019; Hervais-Adelman, Moser-Mercer, and Golestani 2011) – and the existence of interpreter training manuals (e.g., Gillies 2007; Setton and Dawrant 2016) or continuing education modules (Seeber and Delgado Luchner 2020): *interpreters are not born but made*. We would argue that the same applies to their language combinations, that A, B or C languages are the result of a process of language acquisition and maintenance that must be opened to scientific scrutiny, rather than implicitly taken for granted in interpreter training. This paper therefore draws on current insights on language acquisition, proficiency and assessment with a view to incorporating these into our theoretical thinking about the A, B and C languages of conference interpreters. Language proficiency refers to the (acquired) ability to use a language in a real-world situation; while interpreting may be viewed as language use for the purposes of a specific exercise, interpreting performance does not reflect only specific, learned and practiced language use but draws on all the elements of language proficiency to various extents, which we will try to specify.

Given that our concern is primarily to provide a clear definition or benchmark that prospective interpreting students can use to gauge whether their language mastery corresponds to what is expected of an A, a B or a C in conference interpreting, our focus in this chapter is on aspects of general language proficiency that can be operationalised during the interpreting process once the proper technique has been acquired, but can also be assessed outside the booth.

Language acquisition, proficiency and assessment

Most interpreter training courses select prospective students through an aptitude test (Timarová and Ungoed-Thomas 2008) that aims, inter alia, to ascertain their level of language competence. This assessment is generally made based on an intuitive understanding, rather than measurable criteria, mirroring the general difficulty associated with objectively assessing performance in interpreting (Clifford 2005; Grbić 2015; Liu 2015; Pöchhacker 2011; Setton and Dawrant 2016; Tiselius 2009).

The rigid distinction between active and passive languages in interpreting is in line with early theories about language acquisition, which assumed that there are differences in the acquisition of "naturally acquired" and "consciously learned" languages and between speaking and merely understanding a language (Krashen 1981). However, rather than reflecting fundamental differences in the cognitive processes involved in first vs. second language acquisition, these theories mainly reflected the way languages were taught for centuries: unstructured immersion for the native language contrasted sharply with dominant methods for foreign language teaching that centred around the memorisation of grammatical rules and vocabulary or aimed to establish links between the native and the foreign language through written translation exercises (for a historical overview of teaching methods see Richards and Rodgers 1986; Richards and Schmidt 2002; Rivers 1981). These methods thus did not allow for the active use (free oral and written production) of taught languages.

These teaching approaches, and the binary distinction at their core, were based on the assumption that the process of language acquisition corresponds to a specific stage in one's life (early childhood, schooling or a language course). However, current research into language acquisition has increasingly questioned this claim; indeed, language acquisition is an open-ended and continuous process, spanning years in the case of a language acquired late in life and the whole lifetime in the case of a language acquired from early childhood (Grosjean 1997; 2010; VanPatten and Benati 2010), and current methods for foreign language teaching, such as the "natural" or "communicative approach" (Richards and Schmidt 2002) aim to emulate first language acquisition. In addition, research into language attrition shows that language learning is neither one-directional nor always incremental (Köpke and Schmid 2004); similar to any other skill, native and non-native language competence can be lost if it is not maintained through use and exposure (Köpke and Genevska-Hanke 2018; Schmid and Yilmaz 2018). The link between age of acquisition and level of competence is therefore more complex and tenuous than statements such as "the A language is the interpreter's mother tongue or its strict equivalent" may lead us to assume – and may help cast light on what is meant by such an equivalent.

Furthermore, evidence from numerous neurological studies on the organisation of a first (L1) vs. a second (L2) language in the brain suggests that the cortical areas and activation patterns involved in the various comprehension and production functions for L1 and L2 largely overlap in spite of certain differences (see meta-analysis by Cargnelutti, Tomasino, and Fabbro 2019). While some differences can be modulated by the age of acquisition (e.g., Berken, Gracco, and Klein 2017), the level of proficiency attained in a language and the frequency of its use are well-established determining factors (see Del Maschio and Abutalebi 2019 for a review). This, in turn, has led researchers to treat language proficiency as a continuous variable (Marian 2008), reverting from earlier approaches that merely distinguish between early and late bilinguals (see for instance Grosjean 1989).

These theoretical developments have two key implications for our understanding of interpreters' language combinations:

(i) A binary distinction between "mother tongue" and "non-native language" does not provide an indication of actual differences in language proficiency.

(ii) Differences in the way active and passive languages are used in interpreting notwithstanding, once a certain degree of proficiency is attained in various languages, performance in any of them can be scaled on a continuum, i.e., performance in the A, B and C language can be assessed using the same scale and the same criteria.

Objective

The aim of this study is to establish a relationship between existing criteria for the assessment of language proficiency and the interpreter's working languages, i.e., to find out what distinguishes an interpreter's mastery of her A language from that of her B and her C language. In doing so, we hope to provide clearer guidance to prospective training candidates signing up for aptitude tests, but also to interpreting students and their trainers.

Language proficiency, i.e., the general level of language competence of an individual, can neither be directly measured nor directly observed. It is therefore assessed using "performance", i.e., the linguistic competence displayed in a specific situation, as a proxy. A set of criteria of linguistic proficiency can be found in existing frameworks, such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the Standards for Foreign Language Learning of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign

Languages (ACTFL). These frameworks aim to provide guidelines for language teaching but also describe what learners must “be able to do as they learn another language” (ACTFL 2012a). Each framework ranks language proficiency on a scale, the CEFR (Council of Europe 2012; 2018) using six levels from A1 to C2, and the ACTFL (2012b) eleven levels from “Novice low” to “Distinguished”.

The level of language proficiency expected from professional interpreters arguably goes beyond what is captured in these scales designed primarily for foreign language learners. Simultaneous interpreting places exceptional demands on the brain (Hervais-Adelman, Moser-Mercer, and Golestani 2011; Hervais-Adelman and Babcock 2020) and the interpreter uses her active languages under highly constrained conditions (Donovan 2004). However, the highest levels on each scale (C2 for the CEF and “Distinguished” for the ACTFL), which have recently been further refined to approximate native language proficiency, seem to overlap at least in part with proficiency expectations for professional interpreters. In addition, the criteria used to describe language proficiency in these frameworks provide useful guidance for developing a scale that is able to differentiate between the interpreter’s A, B and C language.

Method

That is what we set out to accomplish by analysing a corpus of written feedback given to interpreting students and containing references to their working languages. This analysis followed an emergent design, that involved gradually deriving categories from the data itself (empirically grounded coding) and allowed us to identify the subcomponents of language mastery that seem most determining in setting apart the A language from the B language, and the B language from the C language.

The time frame included in the corpus analysis (2008 to 2013) corresponds to a time when either one or both of the authors were teaching assistants at the Interpreting Department of the University of Geneva. In order to take this positionality into account, any feedback data from teaching assistants were removed from the corpus by a third party.

Materials

The corpus consisted of written feedback provided to interpreting students enrolled in the University of Geneva’s Master’s in Conference Interpreting between 2008 and 2013. Feedback was provided in the form of free text, in a variety of languages (namely French, English, German, Italian and Spanish) and was based on both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting performances. The data set included only the feedback provided by trainers who had given their explicit informed consent in writing and was anonymised by a third party before becoming accessible to us. The initial corpus consisted of 4,009 entries and 518,010 words. We reduced its size in several steps, namely by keeping only 'salient' entries relating to the C language (those with a particularly high or particularly low grade) and having entries relating to Arabic as an A language removed given that, for reasons alluded to above, the difficulties associated with this particular language differ from those associated with the other A languages represented in the sample (English, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Russian). We then went through the entirety of the remaining entries and singled out those containing explicit references (positive or negative) to language proficiency, linguistic shortcomings or linguistic prowess. The final corpus contained 431 entries and was subdivided into 3 sub-corpora: an A language corpus (186 entries), a B language corpus (143 entries) and a C language corpus (118 entries).

Analysis

Corpus analysis followed an emergent approach. As a first step, each co-author independently analysed each of the three sub-corpora following a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 2008): references to language proficiency were highlighted and associated with keywords, that were gradually refined into categories. In a second step, we compared both of our categorisations and discussed instances of divergence between our two ratings. During this step, we came up with a consolidated list of categories that we then compared with the ACTFL and CEFR criteria. Each of the categories was then defined and, where necessary, the definition was subdivided into "passive" and "active" components making it relevant for the A, B and C language. The corpus was then re-analysed using these categories.

Based on the corpus, we then identified a set of "implicit expectations" associated with the A, B and C language, which mirror the performance descriptors of the ACTFL framework.

Results

Qualitative analysis

A first finding of this study is that although trainers did not follow a predefined template or set of criteria for their assessments, their comments on students' language performance can be grouped into ten broad categories, i.e., subcomponents of language competence, as follows:

(1) Vocabulary, terminology and lexical precision (active/passive)
(2) Grammar and syntax (active/passive)
(3) Idiomaticity/naturalness, collocations and idioms (active/passive)
(4) Style, richness and flexibility (active)
(5) Register (active/passive)
(6) Cultural awareness, cultural references and metaphors (active/passive)
(7) Interferences (active/passive)
(8) Simplicity, clarity and economy (active)
(9) Fluency (active)
(10) Accent and pronunciation (active/passive)

The categories are listed above in the order in which they were developed, which corresponds to the frequency of their occurrence in the data. With the exception of categories 4 (Style), 8 (Simplicity) and 9 (Fluency), which apply only to active language use and are therefore not relevant for the C language, all categories were used in relation to all languages, corroborating the idea that the A, B and C language can be ranked on one scale of proficiency and evaluated according to the same criteria.

We then carried out a meta-analysis of all the entries pertaining to each of the categories, in order to make the implicit expectations associated with an A, B and C language explicit, as illustrated here by excerpts pertaining to (1) Vocabulary, terminology and precision (see Table 1). These implicit expectations were then rephrased as Performance indicators (see Table 2), analogous in style and level of detail to those found in the ACTFL and CEFR frameworks. The Performance indicators are based on data that relate to the operationalisation of these languages in different interpreting situations (consecutive and simultaneous), but the indicators themselves aim to function independently of this operationalisation, the aim of this study being to facilitate the development of a specific language test that is monolingual and does not involve interpreting tasks. In other words, the general question guiding our analysis is "what does the feedback provided to students reveal about general expectations of language proficiency?".

Table 1: Trainer feedback relating to vocabulary, terminology and precision

A language	B language	C language
Keep working on synonyms, making lists of useful vocabulary and expressions as you read in English.	Ton B est déjà très solide, cherche à augmenter ton vocabulaire actif en travaillant des synonymes pour différents verbes. [You already have a very solid B language, try to enhance your active vocabulary by identifying synonyms for different verbs.] (Authors' translation)	Anglais faible (expressions un peu soutenues ne sont pas comprises mais il y a également des lacunes dans le vocabulaire de base). [Weak English (more formal expressions are not understood and there are also gaps in basic vocabulary).] (Authors' translation)

Table 2: Performance descriptors for the interpreter's working languages

Cat.	A	B	C
(1) Vocabulary, terminology and lexical precision	Interpreters have a wide active vocabulary, possess a range of synonyms and are able to express ideas with a high degree of precision.	Interpreters have a wide active vocabulary, possess some synonyms and are able to express ideas clearly.	Interpreters have a wide enough vocabulary to understand the meaning of speeches on a variety of issues, although their vocabulary might have gaps in certain topic areas or registers.

(2) Grammar and syntax	Interpreters have flawless command of syntax and grammar, enabling them to produce coherent, correct and nuanced speech.	Interpreters have sufficient mastery of grammar, usage and syntactic features to avoid mistakes likely to draw undesired attention to the fact that the language is an acquired language.	Interpreters have enough mastery of grammar, syntax and usage to follow the speaker's reasoning and not be thrown off.
(3) Idiomaticity, collocations and idioms	Interpreters express ideas with perceived naturalness or spontaneity, choosing the most meaningful expressions and non-literal, idiomatic linguistic features in the active language to convey meaning in a convincing way.	Interpreters are able to express ideas with perceived naturalness or spontaneity, supported by a command of meaningful expressions and non-literal, idiomatic linguistic features in the active language, to convey meaning in a clear way.	Interpreters are able to understand ideas even when expressed in an idiomatic way in the passive language, beyond the literal meaning of words.
(4) Style, richness and flexibility	Interpreters are able to express ideas in many different ways, displaying a choice of formulations to suit the context.	Interpreters are able express ideas in different ways and to find alternative formulations to suit the context.	N/A
(5) Register	Interpreters are able to adapt their language to all situations and contexts.	Interpreters are able to adapt to various situations and contexts by choosing an appropriate and consistent level of language.	Interpreters are able to understand various levels of language and to recognise the corresponding context.

(6) Cultural awareness, cultural references and metaphors	Interpreters are able to express ideas in ways that correspond to the target-language (local) culture and to bridge cultural gaps when needed.	Interpreters are able to express ideas in ways that are understood by members of the target-language culture and to bridge cultural gaps when needed.	Interpreters are able to understand culture-specific ways of expressing ideas and to identify literary, historical, and national references.
(7) Interferences	Active: Interpreters are not influenced by the incoming language structure or words in the way they express themselves. Passive: Interpreters recognise when structures and words similar to some structures and words of their other working language are in fact not equivalent.	Active: Interpreters are not influenced by the incoming language structure or words in the way they express themselves. Passive: Interpreters recognise when structures and words similar to some structures and words of their active language are in fact not equivalent.	Passive: Interpreters recognise when structures and words similar to some structures and words of their mother tongue are in fact not equivalent.
(8) Simplicity, clarity and economy	Interpreters are not limited in their ability to resort to linguistic devices in their active languages and are able to express the meaning in a clear way using recognisable and clearly understandable structures.	Interpreters are limited in their ability to resort to linguistic devices in their active language. They are, nevertheless, able to express the meaning in a clear way using straightforward and correct structures.	N/A

(9) Fluency	Interpreters are quick in planning, retrieving and activating the words and formulations they need to express the intended meaning precisely and completely.	Interpreters are quick in planning, retrieving and activating words and formulations which will allow them to express the intended meaning as closely and completely as possible.	N/A
(10) Accent and pronunciation	Interpreters speak the language with a nationally or internationally accepted pronunciation that is influenced by their region of origin but not the result of interference from a third language.	Interpreters may have an accent or pronunciation that is influenced by their A language (or a third language), but this poses no obstacle to comprehension for the listener.	Interpreters understand the language throughout a variety of accents and regional or trans-national characteristics.

Quantitative analysis

The qualitative analysis was then supplemented with a quantitative analysis, aiming to assess the relative importance of each of the ten competence categories for each language category by calculating their relative frequency of application (i.e., the percentage of entries describing performance in the A, B and C language that refer to vocabulary, grammar, accent, etc.).

The results of this analysis allowed us to establish a “profile” of the A, B and C language (see Figure 1). The most frequent categories for the A language were (3) Idiomaticity and (4) Style, for the B language (2) Grammar and (3) Idiomaticity, and for the C language (passive) (1) Vocabulary and (3) Idiomaticity.

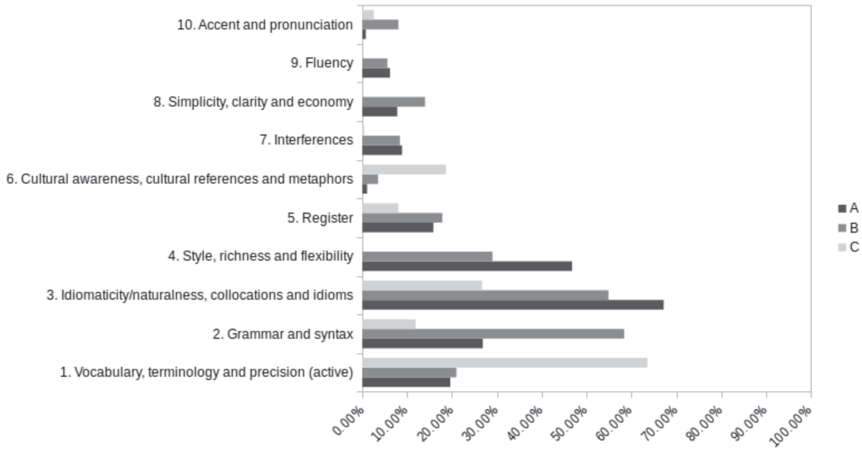

Figure 1: A, B and C language profile

A comparative analysis of the three language profiles further reveals that the most relevant categories to distinguish the B from the C language are vocabulary/terminology, idiomaticity/naturalness, and cultural awareness/background knowledge, while the most important differentiators between the B and the A language are grammar/syntax, style/flexibility, simplicity/economy and accent/pronunciation.

Discussion

Our corpus analysis started from the individual experience-based understanding of the characteristics of an A, B and C language as reflected in the feedback provided by individual trainers. However, given that the corpus contains input from 26 trainers and relates to five different intakes of students, its analysis allows us to look for patterns that transcend individual experience and develop more systematic, objective and measurable performance descriptors for the A, B and C language.

The C language is to some extent ‘the odd one out’ when it comes to proficiency, since it is only used as a source language in conference interpreting. However, given that contemporary methods of foreign language teaching try to mirror first language acquisition and encourage oral and written production (Richards and Schmidt 2002), current generations of interpreters are likely to present a good active command of the C language as well.[1] We would argue that this command is likely to overlap with the higher end of existing frameworks of language assessment (C1 or 2 in the CEFR and “Superior” or “Distinguished” in the ACTFL).

Drawing on recent neuroscientific insights into language acquisition and representation, we decided to attempt to assess the A, B and C language against a single set of criteria. This endeavour was successful, even though the particular way the C language is used in interpreting made it necessary to distinguish between active and passive language use for some of the categories. There is an inherent limitation to this exercise, in that our analysis merely aims to identify the relevant sub-components of language proficiency based on trainers’ feedback. We cannot, however, adjust for the difficulty of the materials used in class.

The resulting descriptors are cumulative; the level of proficiency associated with a B language encompasses and expands upon the skills associated with a C language. This approach mirrors the CEFR and ACTFL, since each level of proficiency is an improvement on the previous level. This is another reason why active language use should be taken into account even when assessing the C language, since this component cannot be suddenly added when training in order to transform a C into a B language as is common practice among professional interpreters.

In addition, the comparative analysis of their relevance for each language allowed us to pinpoint which sub-components of language mastery are likely to be the most revealing when trying to distinguish between an A and B and a B and C language. Our findings do not contradict, but rather expand upon, earlier descriptions of the interpreter’s working languages that were not grounded in empirical data on the language competence of interpreters (see for instance Déjean Le Féal 2005; Donovan 2005; Gile 2005; Setton and Dawrant 2016). These practice-based descriptions present a limitation that our study aimed to transcend through the analysis of a large corpus of performance-related data that allowed us to identify and address all relevant aspects of language competence.

As such, our empirically-grounded performance descriptors for the A, B and C language offer greater detail and granularity than these earlier descriptions and provide the transparency that opaque references to the “mother tongue” (AIIC n.d.) or the speaker’s “authority” (Herbert 1952)

[1] A potential exception are professional interpreters who wish to add a new C language and might prioritise the acquisition of comprehension skills over production skills in order to accelerate their learning process.

lack. They can consequently provide guidance to interpreter trainers and jury members at aptitude exams that aim to establish an applicant's language combination, but also help trainers develop and suggest targeted language enhancement exercises to students whose language proficiency is not considered up to standard.

Conclusion

The performance descriptors and language profiles presented in this paper paint a nuanced picture of the interpreter's working languages and the subtle differences in mastery between three categories of language (A, B and C) that are all situated at the very high end of language proficiency. These elements offer a useful extension to the performance descriptors of the CEFR and ACTFL frameworks, which present a ceiling effect when it comes to assessing the language proficiency of language professionals, including conference interpreters.

The performance descriptors and the ten sub-components of language competence we identified can be a valuable tool for interpreter training, but they also open promising avenues for further research and bridges with other disciplines interested in the underpinnings of language proficiency. We have already pursued one such avenue, by developing a self-administered assessment test for candidates wishing to register for an interpreter training programme and who are unsure of their language combination (see Loiseau and Delgado Luchner, in press). The calibration of this test on native speakers, professional interpreters and interpreting students yielded encouraging results.

Several open questions remain with regard to interpreters' working languages. As the profession embarks on its second century, training institutions, professional associations and organisations employing interpreters will together continue to shape the expectations we place on the interpreter's working languages. As language use evolves, and with the highest number of speakers of some of the largest conference languages now located in the Global South, our understanding of what constitutes a 'standard' accent for a given audience must shift, and the works of Wole Soyinka, rather than those of Lewis Caroll, might come to epitomise the cultural references the interpreter is expected to recognise and render when working from English.

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Critical Discourse Analysis: A Theory-Based Module in Interpreter Training

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Abstract

On the 100th anniversary of the emergence of conference interpreting, this paper considers the role of discourse analysis, and particularly Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), in interpreter training. In the context of recent pedagogical innovations, it is vital to examine whether, and how, CDA can support the development of analytical skills in interpreter training.

This paper presents a pilot study of a CDA-based module conducted in a classroom environment. Discourse-based mental modelling (Kohn and Kalina 1996) underpins the module, blending theory and practice. Theoretical elements of CDA, including ideological discourse strategies (van Dijk 2006) and manipulation strategies (Charaudeau 2009), are introduced to enable students to apply discourse analysis in practice.

The objective of this study was to ascertain whether a CDA-based module could improve students' comprehension of political discourse, as well as their subsequent interpreting of such discourse. Students' perceptions were explored using focus groups (Hale and Napier 2018). The results suggest that CDA has a positive impact on interpreter training. However, further studies of both students' perceptions and the development of analytical skills for interpreting are needed. Additionally, the paper contributes to the literature on the use of theory-based modules in professional training contexts.

Introduction

Interpreting political discourse entails mediating in persuasive communicative interactions between different language communities, which involve cross-linguistic and inter- and intra-cultural face-negotiation (Bartłomiejczyk

2016). The purpose of interpreted political discourse is to persuade the participants (and, possibly, a multilingual audience) in a multilingual debate to adopt a given ideological stance. In that sense, the aim of such discourse does not differ from that of monolingual political debate. Therefore, the discourse strategies used to manipulate (Charaudeau 2009) employed in a monolingual and multilingual debate should be equally persistent.

The training of interpreting students should seek to ensure the permeability of political persuasion in interpreter-mediated discourse. Therefore, before devising training models, it is important to identify the features of this complex communicative situation by exploring which persuasive strategies are used to convey ideological meanings, how they are conveyed in different languages and cultures, how they can be identified, comprehended and conveyed in the target language and whether there are any common, replicable interpreting strategies that can be used to convey specific political meanings.

In this initial study, I sought to consider some of these questions through a pilot study in a classroom environment. The primary objective of the research was to test whether a theory-based module could improve students' comprehension of political discourse. The module was designed to hone students' skills in comprehending and identifying different ideological discourse strategies (Charaudeau 2009; van Dijk 2006) using the socio-cognitive approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Dijk 1997, 1998, 2014, 2018) grounded in the cognitive processing model of interpreting as a goal-oriented communicative process (Kohn and Kalina 1996; Kalina 2007). The secondary objective of the study was to develop a discourse-analysis-based module of interpreter training.

In this paper, I will first describe how discourse analysis has evolved within interpreter training. Next, I will justify why CDA was adopted in this pilot, mentioning briefly the theoretical assumptions that apply to interpreter training. Then, I will introduce discourse-based mental modelling (Kohn and Kalina 1996), which underpinned the pilot study, and discuss discourse comprehension. Finally, I will describe the theory-based module tested in the 2018/2019 academic year.

Discourse analysis in interpreter training

The history of interpreting stretches back to ancient times (Hermann 2002). Initially, those engaging in interpreting activities had no special training apart from "learning by doing" (Kalina 2019, 19). The professionalisation of conference interpreting came about in two waves following World Wars I and II (Pöchhacker 2016; see also Baigorri-Jalón 2000), with interpreter training beginning at a college for business translators and interpreters in Mannheim in 1930 and subsequently transferring to the University of Heidelberg. Following this, various interpreting schools were founded, including the Interpreters' School at the University of Geneva in 1941 and the Institute for Translator and Interpreter Training at the University of Vienna in 1943 (Diriker 2012).

The training of interpreters was driven by the evolving demand for skills in the emerging modes of simultaneous and long consecutive interpretation (Moser-Mercer 2015). The first trainers were mainly experienced but self-trained professionals, which promoted the development of strong master-apprentice relationships (Moser-Mercer 2015). It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that research-informed pedagogy, including discourse analysis, reinforced such practical methods (Pöchhacker 2016, 191). Seleskovitch's Interpretive Theory, which was embedded in practical on-the-job training, relied on practice-based discourse analysis to derive meaning from words (i.e., deverbalising) so that it could be conveyed in a target language (Lederer 2015). Subsequent cognitive and interactional models in the field of interpreting studies have further relied on the assumption that the characteristics of discourse affect the assembly of meaning in the interpreting process, suggesting that discourse analysis is essential to interpreter training (Moser-Mercer 2015; Hatim and Mason 1997; Wang and Feng 2018). Today, discourse analysis, or content analysis, is recognised as a trainable skill and is introduced, for example, in the core curriculum of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI). Process-oriented models of interpreting indirectly integrate discourse analysis by focusing on component skills, strategies or tactics (Riccardi 1998, 2005) and capacity management (Gile 2009; Seeber 2011; Pöchhacker 2016). Furthermore, discourse analysis is the basis of Kohn and Kalina's (1996) discourse-based mental modelling, while Hatim and Mason (1997) draw on discourse theory and its three semantic strands (i.e., texture, structure and context) when differentiating interpreting modes in their triadic model. Beaton-Thome, within a discursive-analytic framework, explores interpreters' use of linguistic representations in the target text regulated by interpreting strategies, which may not be ideologically neutral (Beaton-Thome 2013). Such strategic output regulation may be a response to a specific ideological stimulus expressed in the source discourse and revealed through CDA (Bartłomiejczyk 2016; Okoniewska 2019).

Recently, CDA has been applied to interpreting pedagogy, not only informing the development of training tools (Boyd and Monacelli 2010; Okoniewska 2019) but also precipitating a radical shift in interpreter assessment (Clifford 2001). Boyd and Monacelli (2010) propose using an interdisciplinary, three-layer context model to train interpreting students to identify discursive practices in the source text. Improved identification of discursive practices (Boyd and Monacelli 2010) or strategies (Okoniewska 2019) seems to strengthen students' comprehension of the source text. According to Clifford (2001), interpreting should be positioned as a form of discourse "to assess the interpreter's competences in context" (336). Clifford (2001) proposes an assessment model grounded in discourse analysis, challenging lexico-semantic based assessment, and suggests evaluating students' performance based on deixis (i.e., the features of utterance), modality (i.e., the speaker's intention) and speech acts (the listener's interpretation).

Critical Discourse Analysis

The theory-based module tested in the pilot study discussed in this paper is methodologically rooted in the socio-cognitive approach of CDA and the discourse-based mental model. For the purposes of the module, discourse is understood as "language in real contexts of use", which "operates above the level of grammar and semantics" (Machin at al. 2012, 20). Mental models are integrated into the module as subjective representations that refer to "events and situations that were observed by language users or in which they participated" (van Dijk 2014, 391) and are activated by discourse in the language user's episodic memory, whereas situational models are a type of "mental model that includes specific contextual features" (Padilla and Bajo 2015, 71). Context is a "structured set of all properties of a social situation that are possibly relevant for the production, structures, interpretation and functions of text and talk" (van Dijk 1998, 212). Finally, linguistic representations are the means of expression of the above-defined structures, as well as discourse conventions (Kohn and Kalina 1996). They encompass "grammatical, pragmatic, interactional, stylistic, rhetorical, semiotic, narrative, argumentative or similar forms and meanings" (van Dijk 2014, 392) and are crucial to the interpreting process.

The socio-cognitive approach to political discourse (van Dijk 2018) adopted in the pilot study can provide insight into important pedagogical issues in the field of interpreting. For example, as van Dijk notes,

> If political ideologies are relevant properties of political situations, namely as being shared by participants, then how are they expressed and reproduced by the structures of text and talk? (van Dijk 2006, 734)

This paper posits that the structures of ideological text and talk, if adequately identified and categorised, can improve comprehension (see below), ease the processing of source discourse and possibly decrease interpreters' cognitive load. In the socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis, the cognitive dimension links the processes of language comprehension and production with the participation of language users in social interaction, establishing a relationship between the "mind, discursive interaction and society" (van Dijk 2014, 392). The interpreting process and product occur in the context of such a relationship, and discourse analysis can provide insight into the underlying cognitive dimension. CDA thus allows researchers to explore not only the macro dimensions of society and discourse but also the strategic, functional and structural dimensions of discourse at the micro level. CDA examines discourse structures and meanings to reveal goals, beliefs, norms and values, as well as the conventions and representations of knowledge and ideology that should be conveyed by the interpreter. Another aim of CDA is a "search [for] absences and taken-for-granted assumptions in text" (Machin and Mayr 2012, 4).

To conduct CDA in practice, Charaudeau proposes identifying four discourse strategies used to manipulate: describing evil, describing the cause of evil, glorifying values and calling on the people (2009, 8–9). Identifying these strategies enables interpreters to uncover concealed ideas, aims and wishes. Van Dijk (2006), in turn, proposes a more nuanced analysis of ideological variation using ideological discourse categories that convey persuasive meanings to obtain political goals, which may or may not include implicit or presupposed knowledge. The following discourse categories are used in the pilot study: actor description, authority, comparison, consensus, disclaimer, euphemism, generalisation, hyperbole, implication, irony, metaphor, national self-glorification, norm expression, number game, polarisation, us-them categorisation, presupposition, and victimisation (van Dijk 2006, 735-739).

Discourse-based mental modelling and discourse comprehension

Kohn and Kalina's (1996) model is the second methodological pillar of the theory-based module described in this paper. Discourse-based mental modelling is inspired by the strategic processing perspective of monolingual communication production and reception processes, and consists of the "cognitive-linguistic processes of referential activation, propositional construction, illocutionary orientation and perlocutionary reaction" (Kohn et al. 1996, 121). Thus, interpreting involves the knowledge reference-based discursive processing of meaning in the source language, followed by the communication of such meaning in the target language in a way that maintains the aims, beliefs and wishes conveyed in the source discourse and leads to the same outcome in the target speech. Therefore, interpreters use discourse analysis to decode the speaker's strategically used mental models, which are conveyed via linguistic representations, and encode a goal-oriented mental model in the target language. Interpreters also apply specific tactics to mitigate, for example, their lack of semantic autonomy.

Kohn and Kalina further argue that discourse comprehension and production depend on interpreters having a diverse knowledge base, including both general and linguistic knowledge. Such contextual and situational knowledge enables the comprehension and production of discourse mediated through interpreting.

On this basis, discourse comprehension is an important skill for interpreters. In discourse studies, comprehension depends on the language user's reading, framing, attention and interest (Kress 2012, 43). The reading of a message depends on the language user's knowledge and ability to connect the text to knowledge elements that are integrated into situational models (van Dijk and Kintsch 1983; see also van Dijk 2014, 2018). Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) postulate that language users construct models about the situation denoted by a text, which provide them with crucial information:

> [T]o understand the text, we have to represent what it is about. If we are unable to imagine a situation in which certain individuals have the proprieties or relations indicated by the text, we fail to understand the text itself. If we do not understand the relations between the local facts and global facts to which the text refers, we do not understand the text. (337)

They therefore suggest that the similarity of experience that enables comprehension is based on the fact that many elements of discourse that the language user (conference interpreter) reads in a particular way are already known from subjective experience.

Theory-based module

Research questions and methodology

The purpose of the pilot study, which tests this theory-based module, was two-fold. First, it tested the viability of CDA as a theory-based teaching strategy to improve the comprehension of political discourse through the development of analytical skills. The module strengthens students' comprehension of interpreted discourse, which is an essential skill for interpreters, by teaching them to identify ideological discourse strategies. The secondary purpose of the pilot study was to contribute to constructing a replicable, theory-based module of interpreted discourse analysis that applies to interpreter training.

The theory-based module consists of three seminars based on Kohn and Kalina's (1996) strategic model of interpretation processing and the practical application of CDA to interpreter training. In particular, the module draws on the definition of basic notions proposed by Machin and Mayr (2012), Charaudeau's (2009) definition of discourse strategies used to manipulate, and the ideological discourse strategies identified by van Dijk (2006). The module incorporates both consecutive and simultaneous conference interpreting. During the training, on their own request some students perform brief consecutive interpretation exercises in between discourse analyses to verify the interpretability of discourse strategies. The recordings and transcripts of political speeches that are simultaneously interpreted are, in turn, the subject of CDA exercises conducted by the students. The module includes a limited number of consecutive exercises, and no simultaneous exercises, to focus students' attention on discourse analysis. Such an approach is appropriate given students' progress level before the beginning of the seminars in which the module was delivered. However, the CDA seminars refer strongly to interpreting modes since it was hypothesised that CDA theory and practice might be more attractive if introduced in conjunction with interpreting practice.

In the pilot, students' perception of the attractiveness of such a theory-based module and a potential comprehension enhancement triggered by CDA was verified using analytical exercises and a focus group evaluation. The focus group method is defined by Hale and Napier (2018) as an "open-ended group discussion with a focus on a particular topic" (104). The aim of this research method is, according to Krueger and Casey (2015), "to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, idea, product, or service" (20).

In the course of three focus group meetings of 30 minutes each, I introduced the topics with the following questions:

First focus group

1. What were the discourse strategies that you spotted easily?
2. Do you think they reveal any additional information about the speech and the speaker?
3. Can such information help in discourse comprehension or interpreting?

Second focus group

1. What concealed information is revealed by discourse analysis in the speeches we listened to?
2. Do you think discourse strategies should be rendered in interpreting? Why?

Third focus group

1. Do you think that all discourse strategies are retained in interpreting?
2. Are any strategies eliminated? Why?
3. Which interpreting tactics are used to fully convey the discursive strategies present in the source text?

Each focus group was dedicated to a different aspect of CDA practice: discourse comprehension, the identification of discourse strategies and the interpretation of discourse strategies. I acted as a facilitator and note-taker during the sessions. Saturation was reached after 25 minutes of discussion, as expected.

Sample, material selection and procedure

Data were collected from a convenience sample of the total population of first-year students of the EMCI programme at the Institute of Intercultural Communication and Management (ISIT) in Paris in the academic year 2018-2019. The sample consisted of nine students, which is consistent with the focus group size of 8–10 participants recommended by Hale and Napier (2018). The students began the module at the end of their first semester of a two-year master's-level programme in conference interpreting. The programme is based on the core curriculum of the EMCI. The first year is dedicated to consecutive interpretation and sight translation and ends with a practical exam. The second-year introduces simultaneous interpretation and ends with a diploma exam that assesses students' performance in consecutive and simultaneous interpretation, as well as simultaneous interpretation of a text. Therefore, the students who participated in the pilot module were at intermediate level of progression in consecutive, but had no experience in simultaneous interpreting.

The corpus of discourses that are critically analysed in the module consists of four speeches analysed in class and two during the final assessment exercise in discourse analysis. Some speeches are analysed twice using different CDA approaches. The material for the pilot module was selected based on the difficulty of the discourses therein (the presence of non-salient discourse strategies and an unclear context). The difficulty of speeches increased gradually throughout the course. However, even more complex discourses include easily identifiable discourse strategies, with the context being introduced before the analysis. The module aims to teach students to identify discursive strategies over a relatively short period; therefore, for pedagogical purposes, speeches containing overly complex discursive construction, unknown context or additional stressors were omitted from the module, since not doing so would disrupt the overall flow of a debate analysed.

The seminars are obligatory and aimed at first-year students. The module consists of three seminars of three hours each, as shown in figure 1. In the pilot, the first seminar took place in December (at the end of the first semester), the second in January and the third in February (the beginning of the second semester). Students undertaking the module are expected to have acquired the ability to perform short consecutive interpreting without notes, as well as intermediate notetaking skills. Students can identify separate meaning structures in a discourse, and categorise and note them down in, at least, a rudimentary way. Students reach an intermediate level of consecutive interpreting parallelly, towards the end of their final seminar. This module is introduced during the first year of students' training because it is hypothesised that if students acquire CDA skills early in their training, they can consciously apply CDA over a longer period, including in their second year of training in simultaneous interpreting.

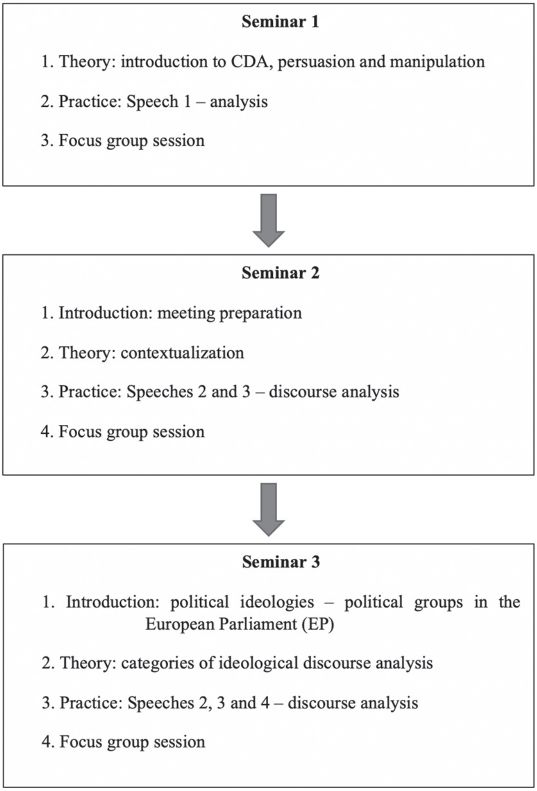

Figure 1: Pilot module seminars.

The first seminar consists of three parts: a theoretical component, a practical component and a focus group discussion. The theoretical component is further sub-divided into three parts. First, the definition of discourse and the main elements of CDA, including mental and situational models and linguistic representations, are introduced. This theory is illustrated using examples of political discourse. Later, students identify the practices and conventions concealed in political discourse in their A and B languages (e.g., 'el ciudadano Felipe' [citizen Felipe], a discourse practice used by the Spanish leftist party to refer to King Felipe VI expressing a call to abolish the privileges of the monarchy).

Secondly, the notion of discursive persuasion as a process of simultaneous signalling of purpose and verbalisation of thought is introduced (Soring

1989). These parallel aims and wishes in the source texts are examined and students are taught that, in interpreting, such aims and wishes should be identified in the input and encoded in the output to guarantee the continuity and coherence of the communication.

The third part of the theoretical introduction aims to provide students with practical tools to identify concealed ideas, aims and wishes. Therefore, Charaudeau's (2009) manipulative discourse strategies (see below for practical examples) are introduced.

Following this theoretical introduction, the second part of the seminar is dedicated to practical discourse analysis. In the pilot of the module, I used former U.S. President Barack Obama's inauguration speech (speech 1) because it was delivered by a well-known political figure in a historical context (i.e., the aftermath of the 2008 U.S. presidential election) that forms part of students' general knowledge. In this exercise, students are instructed to listen to the speech and note down examples of discourse strategies. Below is an example of an analysis of some excerpts of the speech, with relevant discourse strategies identified:

> That we are in the midst of crisis [description of the evil] is now well understood. Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened [description of the evil], a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age [description of the cause of the evil].
>
> Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions, greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction [glorification of values].
>
> America: In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come [call on the people]. (2008)

After the initial results of students' identification of discourse strategies are verified, the students are given the transcript of the speech to complete their analysis.

Next, in the focus group session, the students discuss the comprehension of political speeches and discourse strategies identified. They also consider the interpretability of ideology, manipulation and persuasion in the analysed text and other speeches that they have previously interpreted.

The second seminar includes the same three elements as the first, as well as an introduction. The seminar begins with a practical meeting preparation exercise, which, in the pilot, consisted of a guided reading of the *EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties* report by Fotyga (2016). The report was selected because of its simple subject matter and standalone nature (i.e., it is not a part of a broader legislative process). Additionally, the parliamentary debate on the report contains multiple easily identifiable discourse categories and the speeches of the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are delivered in languages known to both the students and the teacher. The report, which was debated and voted on in a plenary session of the European Parliament (EP) on 23 November 2016, was studied together with complementary documentation, such as a Minority Opinion (Couso 2016) and an Opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (Zdrojewski 2016). The students also used the EP Legislative Observatory website (2016) to retrieve additional contextual information. Such analysis of the structure and content of the documents provides students with an example of how to prepare and analyse parliamentary documentation.

Following that practical introduction, the theoretical notion of context is introduced. Contextual analysis is foregrounded as the first step in further discourse analysis exercises, and serves to establish the context of a communicative situation. For example, in the pilot, I elicited the context of the debate on Fotyga's report to the EP by asking, 'who are the participants? Where and when do they interact? Why?' Finally, students consider the reasons for which such contextual information is important for interpreters.

The third part of the second seminar consists of a practical discourse analysis of speeches, which, in the pilot, focused on the debate on Fotyga's report at the EP (Speeches 2 and 3). The students listen to each speech twice and note discourse strategies used for manipulation. Some students render the speeches consecutively, using their notes containing discourse strategies to verify the interpretability of such strategies in practice. One of the speakers analysed in the pilot, Sean Kelly MEP (2016), had an Irish accent, which may have added a stressor to the analysis. However, the speech was not omitted, since it formed part of the debate and included clear discourse strategies used for ideological manipulation, as seen in the below extract:

> Mr President, I supported this proposal, sharing the rapporteur's belief that combating anti-EU propaganda and disinformation [description of evil] by third countries is essential – in the first place to uphold democratic values [glorification of values] and a united Europe. EU citizens cannot effectively legitimise us, and the work we do on their behalf, if they do not have access to accurate information [description of the causes of evil].
>
> Speaking from an Irish point of view, investing in education in order to equip the public better for critical thinking has long been a priority. As Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. Given the prevalence of disinformation, stemming in particular nowadays from electronic means of dissemination such as social media, it is imperative that we collaborate on deconstructing such propaganda [call on the people]. I therefore welcome the recommendations offered in this report. (2016)

Finally, during the focus group session, the aims and wishes expressed in the source texts and their encoding by interpreters in the target texts are discussed.

The third seminar begins with exercises aimed at identifying the ideologies of the political groups at the EP. The students use written transcripts of the plenary sessions to elicit speakers' ideological stances, as well as reviewing the relevant parties' websites. This includes, for example, Daniel Hannan MEP of the European Conservatives and Reformists and Jonathan Arnott MEP of Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy.

The theoretical component of the seminar consists of the introduction and definition of van Dijk's (2006) categories of ideological discourse analysis. Students are asked to briefly discuss the ideological categories and give examples of each category from mass media. This exercise teaches the students to identify ideological biases in discourse and prepares them for the subsequent discourse analysis.

In the third part of the session, the students perform a practical discourse analysis of brief parliamentary interventions (speeches 2, 3 and 4), which, in the pilot, were drawn from the debate on Fotyga's report (2016). Speeches that were considered in the second seminar are re-examined to enable a more in-depth exploration of persuasion in political discourse. The fact that the students are already well acquainted with the context and content of these interventions enables them to focus on identifying the ideological discourse strategies used by the speakers and assessing the salience of such strategies. The focus group discussion also includes a recording of the plenary session simultaneous interpretation, and students consider the discourse strategies retained in the simultaneous interpretation and their linguistic representations in different languages. For example, the categories of ideological discourse analysis in Sean Kelly MEP's speech included:

> Mr President, I supported this proposal, sharing the rapporteur's belief [consensus] that combating anti-EU propaganda and disinformation [comparison/implication] by third countries is essential – in the first place to uphold democratic values [implication] and a united Europe. EU citizens cannot effectively legitimise us, and the work we do on their behalf, if they do not have access to accurate information [implication].
>
> Speaking from an Irish point of view [example], investing in education in order to equip the public better for critical thinking has long been a priority. As Franklin D. Roosevelt stated [authority], democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely [implication]. Given the prevalence of disinformation [presupposition], stemming in particular nowadays from electronic means of dissemination such as social media [example], it is imperative that we collaborate on deconstructing such propaganda. I therefore welcome the recommendations offered in this report. (2016)

Discussion

The pilot study was conducted within the projected timeframe. However, the fixed, three-part structure of the seminars evolved slightly, with an introductory meeting preparation exercise and study of political groups being added to the second and third seminars, respectively. This minor change meant that the seminars began with practical exercises that complemented the theoretical elements. In the focus group session at the end of the first seminar, the students reported feeling overwhelmed by the theoretical introduction. The sequencing of the remaining elements of each seminar (i.e., theory, practice and reflection) that were repeated with gradually increasing complexity contributed to students gradually growing more confident in discourse strategy identification.

Students learned to identify discourse strategies in source texts from EP debates and the corresponding target texts (i.e., interpretations in videos and transcripts). Students' fluency was assessed in the final, written CDA exercise conducted during the third seminar. Two speeches from Fotyga's debate (2016) were used. All the students in the pilot identified the majority of the discourse strategies. The most problematic strategies appeared to be: disclaimer, presupposition, implication and polarisation, and the easiest to identify: actor description, authority, comparison, euphemism, generalisation, hyperbole, irony, number game, and victimisation. The reasons for this order of acquisition could be further investigated in future. Moreover, during the focus group sessions, the students expressed that they had enjoyed comparing the discourse strategies identified in an intervention with the strategies maintained in a simultaneous interpretation provided by professional interpreters in the plenary session. This comparison enabled students to link their in-class discourse analysis exercises to the interpreting profession and highlighted the need for future reflection on linguistic representations of discourse strategies in simultaneous interpreting. In the future, it would be interesting to further explore the linguistic representations of persuasion in different language combinations.

The selection of material proved adequate. Using easier materials in the initial seminars (i.e., speeches given in a familiar context by well-known political figures) allowed the students to better focus on the identification of discourse strategies. The subsequent use of less familiar subjects, contexts and speakers somewhat slowed students' identification of discourse strategies, but illustrated the importance of prior meeting preparation. Finally, students gradually became more familiar with discourse strategies and were able to identify them more easily. During the subsequent focus group session, they expressed the view that such analytical skills can facilitate interpreting.

As a result, many students wished to re-use analysed speeches to perform short consecutive interpreting exercises. In the focus group discussions, students reported that they wished to verify the interpretability of the discourse strategies (i.e., how such strategies were noted and expressed in the consecutive interpreting conducted after the discourse analysis). This note-taking exercise was a potentially valid means for students to automatise their interpretation of discourse strategies and strengthen their memory. However, it did not contribute to the overarching goal of the module (i.e., to verify the value of CDA in interpreter training). Despite the complementary and improvised nature of the consecutive interpreting exercise, the students were satisfied to see that noting some discourse strategies helped them to produce target texts. Future research could provide further insight by introducing a more purposeful consecutive interpreting verification of CDA training and analysing students' notes over time.

Students' perceptions of their comprehension of political discourse strategies were elicited during the three focus group sessions and then thematically analysed. Since I did not receive permission to record the sessions, the analysis was based on my notes. The lack of recording significantly hindered the subsequent analysis and should be avoided in the future. Additionally, in the pilot, I was both the teacher of the module and the facilitator of the focus group sessions, which may have resulted in bias among the students who may have felt that they were being evaluated. Additional resources should be allocated to future implementations of the module to remediate these shortcomings. However, for the pilot, simple measures were put in place to minimise the risk of bias (e.g., the focus groups were held at a round table to increase students' level of comfort as compared to a typical classroom setting). Additionally, students' performance during the seminars and final analysis exercise was not graded. As a result, a dynamic group atmosphere developed between the participants, triggering spontaneous, interrelated responses. Despite my presence, the students seemed authentically interested in sharing their experience with CDA. Finally, serendipity (i.e., the occurrence of question-independent ideas in a focus group discussion (Hale et al. 2018, 105)) occurred, confirming the appropriateness of the focus group method.

The goal of the subsequent analysis of the focus group sessions was to "analyse the data to identify interesting themes and patterns" as well as to extract representative quotes corresponding to the identified topics (op. cit. 102).

I identified three overarching themes: theoretical elements of interpreter training, discourse comprehension, and interpreting discourse strategies. The students emphasised the difficulty of the theoretical components of the seminar. Student 1 commented:

> Ce genre de séminaire me demande plus d'efforts que les cours où l'on pratique l'interprétation. Néanmoins, il y a des éléments d'analyse que je trouve intéressants, notamment, parce qu'ils désignent des choses que je ressentais instinctivement mais que je n'avais jamais formulées clairement.
>
> [This type of seminar is more demanding than the classes where we practice interpreting. However, there are elements of discourse analysis that I find interesting, especially since they name things that I felt instinctively but I have never clearly formulated].

All nine students confirmed that they had a clearer understanding of political discourse following the seminars. Student 9 reported, "Naturally, we are able to better understand the speaker's intention and point of view (e.g., exaggeration, national glorification etc.), in order to deliver/interpret the speech with [the] same level of intensity/emotionality". Six of the students noted that their improved recognition of discourse strategies could lead to easier encoding in the output, with Student 2 commenting: “Indeed, if we are aware of different strategies that can be used, it is easier to identify them in a speech and then use them in the interpretation”.

The students concluded that ideological discourse strategies decoded from a source text should be maintained in the output. In other words, the goal-oriented use of the categories of ideological discourse analysis must be transmitted in interpreting. Otherwise, the communication between debate participants speaking different languages and listening to their interpretation can either be disrupted or follow a different path from that intended by the participants.

Conclusion

In this pilot, CDA as a theory-based teaching strategy seemed to improve students’ comprehension of political discourses, according to the teacher’s evaluation of the discourse analysis exercises and their own perceptions. However, further verification of the results is needed, especially given that the sample was very limited (nine students), the module was brief (three seminars) and the focus group sessions were not recorded. A fully-fledged study, including recorded and transcribed focus group sessions (see Koskinen 2008), should be conducted. Improvements in students’ comprehension of political discourse could also be verified by a comparative control study of exercises conducted during consecutive interpreting training in students’ language combinations, in addition to eliciting students’ perceptions of their abilities. Finally, note-taking of ideological discourse strategies could be examined comparatively.

Despite the caveats expressed above, it may be preliminarily concluded that constructing a replicable, theory-based module of interpreted discourse analysis applicable to interpreter training is both viable and valuable, under certain conditions. In vocational interpreter training, theory should be blended with practical exercises linked to the interpreting profession (e.g., mock parliamentary meeting preparation). Students are more motivated to understand complex cognitive constructs, such as mental models, if they feel immersed in the interpreting situation. Finally, the benefits of such a discourse analysis-based module would be strengthened if the identification of discourse strategies, analysis of their linguistic representations and exploration of the interpreting tactics required to convey such strategies were reinforced during students’ regular consecutive and simultaneous interpreting classes.

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TUTOR-STUDENT INTERACTION IN ONLINE INTERPRETER TRAINING: JUST PRESS PLAY?

JOSHUA GOLDSMITH AND MICHELLE HOF

Abstract

On the centenary of conference interpreting, this paper considers two novel, fully online approaches to interpreter training: an online course delivered as part of a blended Master's degree in interpreting and an online on-demand course for interpreters. Concretely, it presents the results of two studies and aims to shed light on what tutor-student and peer-to-peer interaction can teach us about online interpreter training for both budding and experienced interpreters.

The paper considers four different delivery modes involving various levels of tutor support. The first study considers online teaching with real-time interaction between tutors and learners and online teaching with asynchronous tutor and peer interaction, while the second examines on-demand teaching materials with asynchronous peer interaction and on-demand teaching materials with no support.

Results stem from a survey of student engagement from an online course that forms part of a Master's degree and is delivered using both synchronous and asynchronous components; and a pilot study on an online course about tablets for language professionals designed for busy practitioners.

Drawing on these survey results, these exploratory studies analyse learners' experiences with different modes of online content delivery. Conclusions reflect on the links between tutor and peer feedback and scalability, arguing that individualised tutor or peer feedback may not be necessary for knowledge acquisition in all contexts, particularly among experienced language professionals.

Based on a discussion of two innovative technology-supported approaches to training interpreters online, this paper is expected to be of interest to trainers designing online courses or considering re-packaging pre-existing courses for online settings.

The origins of conference interpreter training

Although the first use of simultaneous interpreting technology dates back to the 1920s, with tests held at the International Labour Office and the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, formal interpreter education only began in the early 1940s, with university-level training programmes established in Geneva (1941), Vienna (1943), Heidelberg (1946), Germersheim (1946), Paris HEC (1948), Munich (1952), and Paris ESIT (1957) (Keiser 2004; Pöchhacker 2019). In the early years of conference interpreting, therefore, interpreters trained in university-level programmes were the minority. Other courses and professional development opportunities arose, including training organised by the London Interpreters' Working Party (1946), US State Department (1947), and European Productivity Agency (1953) as well as one-off courses organised for employers (European Coal and Steel Community, 1953) by interpreting schools (Keiser 2004).

Since then, BA-level translation and interpreting degrees and MA-level conference interpreter training programmes have arisen. Although interpreting curricula worldwide differ, in many MA-level courses, "students are expected to have a high level of proficiency in their working languages, usually ascertained by means of an entrance test; trainers are active professional interpreters; training activities try to reproduce real assignments as closely as possible; [and] students are trained in both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting." (Sandrelli 2015, 114). Deliberate practice helps consolidate professional-level interpreting skills in a short time (Moser-Mercer, Frauenfelder, Casado and Künzli 2000, 108-111), and final examinations tend to assess these skills using speeches which often resemble those professional interpreters regularly face (EMCI Core Curriculum 2017). As "self-learning activities (i.e., autonomous practice sessions) are an integral part of interpreter training, and the time spent on these activities normally exceeds the available contact hours" (Sandrelli 2015, 114), digital tools can help make authentic practice materials available to learners.

Digital tools in conference interpreter training

Interpreter trainers began using digital tools to help budding interpreters develop interpreting skills in the mid 1990s (Sandrelli and de Manuel Jerez 2007). For example, since the early years of Computer-Assisted Interpreter Training (CAIT), digital speech banks and repositories have offered students materials for self-study and classroom practice, fostering a shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach, which can help develop self-assessment skills and promote active learning (ibid). With the growth of the internet, trainers moved from hosting digital training materials offline (i.e., on audio cassettes, VHS and DVDs, successively) to making them available online, often hosting them on university and training websites, YouTube channels, course management systems or virtual learning environments (Sandrelli 2015). Online tools allow for peer assessment (Jiménez Ivars 2006), while course management systems let tutors provide individual feedback to trainees, which may not always be possible in classroom settings due to limited class time (Motta 2006). Mock conferences and virtual learning environments may also help to contextualise the learning content by situating live or recorded materials in realistic online or virtual settings (Braun and Slater 2014; Motta 2016; Sandrelli 2015).

The increasing availability of broadband connections and a desire to train a broader pool of interpreters who might otherwise not have access to interpreter training have given rise to a new phase of CAIT in which a course is partially or entirely conducted online. This has especially been the case for public service (Skaaden and Wattne 2009; Hildén, Mäkiranta and Tsavro 2013; Mikkelson, Slay, Szasz and Cole 2019) and humanitarian (Moser-Mercer, Delgado Luchner and Kherbiche 2013) interpreting. Such courses are scalable: nearly 1,700 learners enrolled in an introductory Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on simultaneous interpreting; about one of every eight learners (230; 13.5%) received a certificate of completion (Oster and Renau 2014).

These courses generally included asynchronous learning activities, which may be better suited to the needs of working professionals and those in various time zones. Such exercises can take the form of oral and written contributions on blogs, forums, and wikis. In addition to an onsite component – which often occurs at the beginning or end of the course – video conferencing tools (Hildén, Mäkiranta and Tsavro 2013), online chats (Skaaden and Wattne 2009), and virtual office hours (Mikkelson, Slay, Szasz and Cole 2019) may also provide opportunities for synchronous learning activities. In their research on these early forays into online interpreter training, practitioner-researchers pointed out the need to adapt curricula and reimagine participation (Mikkelson, Slay, Szasz and Cole 2019), offer clear structure, predictability and pace, minimise technological hurdles, and determine the learning activities best suited to each channel (Skaaden and Wattne 2009).

More recently, instructors have begun teaching conference interpreting online. For example, since 2016, one trainer at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies has offered consecutive, simultaneous and sight translation courses primarily online. Reflecting on his experience, Olsen (2017) noted that successful online teaching called for clear learning objectives and significantly more initial teacher preparation than residential teaching, including producing instructional videos in order to flip the classroom effectively and maximise every minute of synchronous teaching. Although the technological learning curve of the online learning environment proved more challenging than residential teaching for his students, remote teaching made it easier to draw on tools including screen sharing, digital whiteboards, video and audio sharing and recording, online journaling, real-time chat with students, and the ability to easily invite live speakers to class sessions. He concluded that "[i]ronically [...] I have interacted more with my students using videoconferencing, Whatsapp and online journaling this academic year than I have face to face in past years when on campus," and that "the advantages [of teaching interpreting online] clearly outweigh the disadvantages." (Olsen, 2017, n.p.).

Aims

To gain insights into learner interactions in different modes of online training offered at both the university level and as continuing professional development, this study considers an online course that is part of Glendon's blended interpreter training programme and a fully online interpreter training course offered by techforword[(c)].

The Master's program at Glendon (York University, Toronto) is based on the EMCI model for formal interpreting training at the post-graduate level (see EMCI Core Curriculum 2017) in line with AIIC recommendations. Glendon's programme follows a blended approach to training, with the first year of the programme taught completely online to students from across the globe and the second year held mostly onsite at the interpreting facilities on Glendon's campus in Toronto, with some online components. The first year of the course trains all students in community/healthcare, court and conference interpreting, while the second year focuses solely on conference interpreting. In both years, students enrol in language-specific courses, where they train with tutors and classmates who share their working languages, and language-neutral courses for all enrolled students.

techforword(c) offers a range of courses[1] that aim to teach technological skills to language professionals. Courses consist of a series of lessons, each of which includes instructional videos and accompanying activities hosted on a customised learning platform and a forum where learners can interact with instructors and peers.

This paper aims to understand tutor-student dynamics in both initial online interpreter training and online continuing education. In order to do so, it presents the results of surveys conducted at Glendon and techforword(c). Concretely, it considers four different online delivery modes. The first study, involving a survey administered on a Glendon course, examines online teaching with real-time interaction between tutors and learners and asynchronous tutor and peer interaction. The second study considers a pilot techforword(c) online course and examines on-demand training materials with asynchronous peer interaction and on-demand training materials with no support.

Through these four lenses, the paper aims to consider the importance of tutor-student and peer-to-peer interaction in online interpreter training for both initial training and continuing professional development.

Study 1

Methodology

From 2014 to 2019, a survey was conducted amongst the full cohort of Glendon's first year students between the sixth and seventh weeks of the Master's programme's mandatory, full-year (i.e., 24-week) introductory course in Conference Interpreting. Its aim was to gauge student engagement in the course and glean ideas about its format and structure.

The survey consisted of seven open-ended questions. Participation was optional and anonymous. The questions remained the same over the duration of the survey administration period, while the critiques provided through the survey were used to tweak the teaching approach and content delivery, in some cases during the same academic year in which the

[1] See https:/techforword.com/courses

feedback was provided. The survey on which the present study was based was administered to all students enrolled in the first year.

The survey focuses on student engagement, course format, and structure and was designed and implemented for purposes not related to the present paper (i.e., to optimise course delivery). However, the survey responses comprise a valuable corpus of student feedback that can be used, with appropriate analysis, for other purposes, such as those of the present paper. As none of the survey questions addresses tutor-student dynamics specifically, for the present paper, all comments spontaneously referring, directly or obliquely, to different forms of tutor-student dynamics were included in the analysis. These comments were categorised by the second author, who at the time of the survey was Course Director for the course on Fundamentals of Conference Interpreting at Glendon College, using a basic coding system ("positive" or "negative") according to the main point raised by the student respondent. For example, for synchronous tutor-student interaction, "I am most engaged during live classes" was coded as a positive comment and "[t]here are too many students in the live classes to get much work done" was coded as a negative comment; for asynchronous tutor-student interaction, "I appreciate receiving your personalised commentary on my homework" was coded as a positive comment and "I want to hear what the tutor has to say on the forums" was coded as a negative comment; for peer interaction, "I learn a lot from peer contributions on forums" was coded as a positive comment and "scheduling group work is a logistical challenge" was coded as a negative comment. Comments not referring to interactions (e.g., "I need to learn how to manage my time better") were not included in the present study.

Results

Table 1 indicates the survey response rate by year for each of the five cohorts of first-year students enrolled in the introductory course on Conference Interpreting.

Table 1: Glendon survey response rate by year

Academic year	Number of responses	Number of students enrolled	Response rate (%)
2014-15	14	23	61
2015-16	9	23	39
2016-17	6	21	29
2017-18	4	19	21
2018-19	7	15	47
TOTAL	40	101	40

Over the five-year period, an average of 40% of all students completed this optional survey. The drop in response rate following the first year (which had the highest response rate overall, at 61%) may be due to the fact that the course was adapted year-on-year to take on board student feedback. However, the reasons for this decline are not immediately clear; a follow-up study may be required.

The number and type of comments provided on each type of tutor-student dynamic is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Breakdown of comments regarding tutor-student and peer interaction

Topic addressed	Positive comments *(% of total comments on this topic)*	Negative comments *(% of total comments on this topic)*	Total comments *(% of overall comments)*
Synchronous tutor-student interaction (i.e., live classes)	14 *(39%)*	22 *(61%)*	36 *(34%)*
Asynchronous tutor-student interaction (i.e., teacher feedback)	7 *(27%)*	19 *(73%)*	26 *(24%)*
Peer interaction (i.e., group work and discussion forums)	21 *(47%)*	24 *(53%)*	45 *(42%)*

Approximately two fifths (39%) of all comments about synchronous tutor-student interaction were positive (e.g., live classes are engaging), while the majority (61%) were negative (e.g., too many students in class, would prefer to have more frequent live classes). Comments about asynchronous tutor-student interaction were also predominantly negative (73%; e.g., students would appreciate more personalised feedback on assignments), while less than one third (27%) were positive (e.g., the teacher actually listens to our concerns). Finally, comments regarding peer interaction were evenly distributed, with students appreciating the ability to practice with peers and learn from peer contributions to forums, but noting difficulties in scheduling practice time or reading all forum entries.

It should be noted that although all students were enrolled in the same course and experienced the same types of tutor-student and peer-to-peer interactions, they had extremely varied – and sometimes contradictory – perceptions of these interactions. While for some, more group work with peers was needed, others found they spent too much time working with their peers. Some wanted more asynchronous forum interactions while others wished there were fewer forums to follow. Similarly, some students stated that too much time was spent in live classes with the tutor while others wished there were more classes scheduled. These discrepancies, while falling outside the scope of the present paper, may be due to differences in learning styles and merit further study.

Discussion

The student survey elicited a wide variety of views regarding the different delivery modes (tutor-run live classes, asynchronous interaction with the tutor and peer interaction). That said, some clear trends could be identified.

For instance, most students indicated that they feel most engaged during live classes, but also believe class size limits authentic interaction and feedback. Students also want as much personalised tutor feedback as possible. Since live class time is limited and many students attend each live class, personalised feedback must be provided outside of class. But tutors' time is limited: just 20 minutes of real-time personalised feedback per week per student in a class of 25 would represent eight hours of extra tutoring time per week, which would have to be provided outside of class time and in addition to all other coursework-related tutor obligations. The authors believe that for many tutors, especially those who are also practicing interpreters and do not hold a full-time faculty position, such a high level of live personalised feedback is simply not feasible.

Asynchronous interaction with the tutor is one possible way to deal with what students perceive as a shortage of synchronous tutor-student interaction. This can take the form of asynchronous feedback on individual or group homework assignments or tutor comments on forums. Even so, some students desired more feedback on their work, whether synchronously (in class) or asynchronously (on homework).

Peer interaction can fill this feedback gap. Overall, students generally seem to be satisfied with the experience of working with their peers. Most students reported learning from peers in both synchronous group activities and asynchronous interaction in online forums. However, many also stated that the workload from peer interaction added up quickly – since peer interaction involves not just receiving feedback but also preparing and providing it to classmates – and can therefore become overwhelming.

Furthermore, many students noted that peers are not experts; students also need their tutors' expert input and guidance.

Study 2

Methodology

techforword(c) piloted "Tablets for Wordsmiths"[2] in summer 2019. The free pilot ran for 39 days (July 29 - September 6, 2019). Participants were invited to participate in the pilot via several messages on techforword's(c) social media channels and mailing list, which included attendees in prior onsite courses.

The on-demand course contained seven video lessons including an introduction, conclusion, and five substantive lessons focusing on different tips and tricks to boost productivity on a tablet. Each substantive lesson comprised a three-to-four-minute video including demonstrations, screencasts and explanations to walk learners through the features of a given piece of technology as well as one or more exercises designed to help participants master that approach.

The pilot included two different course variants: one with peer support – in which the exercises encouraged participants to post comments and respond to peers in the online classroom – and one with no support – where the comments function in the classroom was disabled. Both variants included activities which participants were encouraged to complete on their own in order to master course content.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two variants. After completing the course, they were invited to complete a post-course survey and informed their feedback would be used to improve future online courses. The post-course surveys for both cohorts are attached as annexes 1 and 2.

Results

In total, 63 participants enrolled in the pilot. Approximately four fifths worked as interpreters (81%). Average work experience was 17.7 years, and

[2] Now entitled "iPads for Wordsmiths: Five tried and tested tips to boost your productivity," the pilot course is available online at https://techforword.com/courses/ipads-for-wordsmiths/.

most participants already considered themselves tech-savvy (average: 3.7/5). Individuals from 23 countries on five continents participated, with nearly half of participants (49%) hailing from Europe and nearly a third (30%) from North America.[3]

A learner was deemed to have begun the course after completing the first lesson – the pre-course survey – and to have completed the course after finishing the last lesson – an optional post-course survey. Table 3 presents course initiation and completion rates.

Table 3: Course initiation and completion rates for the pilot techforword on-demand course

Variant	Enrolled participants	Participants beginning course[4]	Participants completing course
Peer support	39		6 (15%)
No support	24		11 (46%)
Total	63	47 (75%)	17 (27%)

In both modalities, the average number of views per video was nearly identical (peer support: 1.6; no support: 1.7). Similarly, participants in both cohorts tended to sign in twice (average = 1.87 for both variants).

Just under half (47%) of participants reported completing the exercises which asked them to practice on their own.

As mentioned above, the no support modality did not include opportunities for learners to post comments. In the peer support modality, eight participants (21%) posted introductions, and only one (3%) posted a question.

Despite these results – which might seem to indicate low engagement – participants in both modalities claimed that the course was highly interactive, with an average interactivity rate of 3.8/5.

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[3] Similar information for the first study was not collected.

[4] As all students completed the same initial survey, a breakdown of participants beginning the course in each variant is not available.

Participants reported an increase in knowledge of tablets after the course (from 3.0 to 4.2 out of 5 on a Likert scale) and felt very comfortable with the skills that were taught (4.3/5). They also found the course highly useful (4.5/5).

In the no support modality, 50% of respondents thought the course should include instructor feedback, while only 30% thought it should include peer feedback.

Discussion

Course initiation (75%) and completion (27%) rates were much higher than those that have been reported for other online courses. For example, a meta-analysis of massive open online courses (MOOCs) conducted by Aldahdouh and Osório (2016) reported completion rates of between 10% and 13%. For an interpreting MOOC, Oster and Renau (2014) reported a 13.5% completion rate and a 39% initiation rate. The comparatively high rates in the current study may be due to the small sample size, the fact that many participants had previously taken live courses with the instructors, the shorter course length, or differences in learner populations: experienced interpreters pursuing professional development may be more likely to complete online courses. Course certificates or paid courses may further increase initiation and completion rates (see Aldahdouh and Osório 2016); these variables will be included in subsequent studies.

The higher completion rate in the no support group (46%) may be due to various factors. Exercises encouraging participants to post comments may have deterred them from completing the course. The post-course survey for the peer support variant was also slightly longer, with four more questions (25%) and 89 more words (28% longer), which may have led to lower survey completion rates. Further research considering larger samples may help to shed light on whether these variables have a significant impact on course completion rates.

With the exception of course completion rates, there were few differences on self-reported metrics (i.e., exercises completed, videos watched, course interactivity) between the peer support and no support modalities.

For the peer support variant, interaction on forums was low. This may be due to various factors. Given the asynchronous nature of feedback, participants may have been unmotivated to post comments or responses. Some participants may not have owned a tablet or might have had a different brand of tablet than the one covered in the course, which may have limited their ability to complete the exercises.

Participants in the no support variant reported that they would appreciate instructor feedback, but participants in the peer support variant did not use the forum to ask questions or seek instructor support. This may be due to various factors. The materials may have been clear enough that participants did not have any questions. As no participants broke the ice by asking questions early on, they may not have realised that instructors would answer questions in the forum. Participants were not required to post to the forum; had that been the case, more questions might have arisen. Furthermore, this was a free mini-course that participants tended to work through quickly; many completed the course in a single sitting.

Although interaction on the forum was low, participants reported that the course was interactive and results showed that most participants watched videos multiple times. The authors initially assumed that interaction would entail posting comments on the forum, but participants appeared to have a different understanding of interactivity. Indeed, videos in which instructors conduct real-time demonstrations and directly address participants may be the kind of "interaction" professionals seek in on-demand online courses.

Although further research may shed light on the difference in completion rates between the two variants, on the whole, results seem to indicate that bite-sized videos with demonstrations may be a good match for busy professionals, leading to self-reported learner satisfaction and knowledge acquisition.

Conclusions

This paper considered the role that tutor-student and peer-to-peer interaction – or lack thereof – might play in online interpreting training. Unsurprisingly, results from the first study demonstrated that learners appreciate feedback, especially from tutors, and that time spent on peer interaction is also generally deemed satisfactory, albeit time-consuming. However, results of the second study indicated that individualised tutor or peer feedback may not be necessary for knowledge acquisition in all contexts, particularly among experienced language professionals. Although results from the second study indicate that professional interpreters may prefer to "just press play" rather than interact with peers, this paper has only considered one aspect of online interpreter training. Future studies should continue to examine whether and how well learners acquire skills with limited interaction.

Although exploratory in nature, these studies imply that online courses offer opportunities to reach large numbers of learners despite geographical barriers or timing constraints. Indeed, online courses facilitate access to training for both budding and experienced interpreters, including those in far-flung locations and those whose busy schedules might preclude traditional onsite courses. The insights on interaction obtained here could help online interpreting tutors consider additional tools and activities for promoting interaction and explore possibilities for scaling their training in a way that best fosters skill acquisition.

Future research could consider additional factors which might influence online learner motivation and course completion – including attention to different learning styles, the differential use of communication channels, asynchronous vs. synchronous approaches, and paid vs. free course formats. Further studies might also explore the role of course design and structure in facilitating online learning and consider how interactive materials and activity design and flipped approaches can be harnessed for the training of both budding and experienced interpreters.

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Annex 1 - Glendon survey

AT WHAT MOMENT ON THIS COURSE ARE YOU MOST ENGAGED AS A LEARNER?

1. At what moment on this course are you most distanced as a learner?
2. If you could improve one aspect of this course, which would it be and how would you change it?
3. If you could add one new thing to this course, what would it be and why?
4. If you could eliminate one thing from this course, what would it be and why?
5. What aspect of the course surprises you most?
6. Is there any other feedback you would like to give on how to make this course better?

Annex 2 - techforword post-course survey, peer support variant

1. Which field(s) do you work in? *(Pick all that apply)*
    - Writing/Blogging
    - Editing
    - Translation
    - Interpretation
    - Teaching/Training
    - Other:
2. How many years have you been working in these fields? *(Text field)*
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your knowledge of technology *(1 = very inexperienced, 5 = very experienced)*
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your knowledge of tablets BEFORE the course *(1 = very inexperienced, 5 = very experienced)*
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your knowledge of tablets AFTER the course *(1 = very inexperienced, 5 = very experienced)*
6. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate how useful this course was. *(1 = Extremely useless, 5 = Extremely useful)*
7. On a scale of 1 to 5, how interactive was the course? *(1 = Not interactive at all, 5 = Extremely interactive)*
8. How many times did you watch each video? *(Pick one)*
    a. 0
    b. 1
    c. 2
    d. 3
    e. 4 or more
9. Did you do the exercises which asked you to practice on your own? *(Pick one)*
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable do you feel with the skills you were asked to practice? *(1 = Extremely uncomfortable, 5 = Extremely comfortable)*
11. How do you feel about the exercises where you were asked to practice on your own? How were they helpful? How could they be improved? *(Text field)*

12. Did you do the exercises where you posted comments in the comments section?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
13. On a scale of 1 to 5, how useful were the exercises where you posted in the comments section? *(1 = Extremely useless, 5 = Extremely useful)*
14. How do you feel about the exercises where you posted in the comments section? How were they helpful? How could they be improved? *(Text field)*
15. Did you do the exercises which asked you to interact with peers?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
16. On a scale of 1 to 5, how useful were the exercises where you interacted with peers? *(1 = Extremely useless, 5 = Extremely useful)*
17. On a scale of 1 to 5, how useful was the feedback your peers provided? *(1 = Extremely useless, 5 = Extremely useful)*
18. How do you feel about the feedback from your peers? How was it helpful? How could it be improved? *(Text field)*
19. What are the three most useful things you learned in this course? *(Text field)*
20. How could we improve this course? *(Text field)*

Annex 3 - techforword post-course survey, no support variant

1. Which field(s) do you work in? *(Pick all that apply)*
    - Writing/Blogging
    - Editing
    - Translation
    - Interpretation
    - Teaching/Training
    - Other:
2. How many years have you been working in these fields? *(Text field)*
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your knowledge of technology *(1 = very inexperienced, 5 = very experienced)*
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your knowledge of tablets BEFORE the course *(1 = very inexperienced, 5 = very experienced)*
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your knowledge of tablets AFTER the course *(1 = very inexperienced, 5 = very experienced)*
6. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate how useful this course was. *(1 = Extremely useless, 5 = Extremely useful)*
7. On a scale of 1 to 5, how interactive was the course? *(1 = Not interactive at all, 5 = Extremely interactive)*
8. How many times did you watch each video? *(Pick one)*
    a. 0
    b. 1
    c. 2
    d. 3
    e. 4 or more
9. Did you do the exercises which asked you to practice on your own? *(Pick one)*
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable do you feel with the skills you were asked to practice? *(1 = Extremely uncomfortable, 5 = Extremely comfortable)*
11. How do you feel about the exercises where you were asked to practice on your own? How were they helpful? How could they be improved? *(Text field)*

12. Do you think the course should include feedback from peers? *(Pick one)*
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
13. Do you think the course should include feedback from the instructors? *(Pick one)*
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
14. If the course included peer or instructor feedback, what kind of feedback would you like to receive? *(Text field)*
15. What are the three most useful things you learned in this course? *(Text field)*
16. How could we improve this course? *(Text field)*

CHAPTER III:

THE FUTURE OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETING – A DISCUSSION AROUND SIX QUESTIONS

Introducing the Discussion

Christopher Thiéry

La principale justification pour ma présence à cette commémoration réside dans le fait que, pour paraphraser Beaumarchais, je me suis donné la peine de naître avant tous ceux qui sont dans cette salle. C'est vrai qu'en 1973, à l'occasion du vingtième anniversaire de l'AIIC, j'avais intitulé un article pour le bulletin « Looking back and looking forward », comme l'évènement qui nous réunit, mais cela ne me donne pas vraiment une quelconque légitimité pour parler de l'avenir de la profession, et des promesses et des dangers de la révolution numérique. C'est à vous que cela incombe, et quand je vois tant de collègues venus du monde entier apporter toutes leurs compétences, j'ai un sentiment d'humilité, et aussi de fierté.

Les organisateurs, dans leur sagesse, ont donc suggéré que je parle de la notion de changement. Le premier changement, évident, concerne la langue dans laquelle je devrais vous parler. Il y a cent ans la question ne se serait pas posée, bien sûr : notre profession est née de la connaissance insuffisante du français de certains dirigeants américains et anglais, et les premiers interprètes de conférence avaient par définition le français dans leur combinaison linguistique. Ce n'est plus le cas. Ainsi, si nos jeunes collègues en cabine me le permettent, je vais profiter du hasard de ma naissance qui m'a donné deux langues maternelles, pour continuer en anglais.

Jesús Baigorri-Jalón, the historian we are so lucky to have as a colleague, has described in his books and his keynote address the process of change from military interpreting towards the end of WWI to the consecutive interpreting between the wars and the experiments in "telephonic" interpreting, at the ILO in particular (Baigorri-Jalón 2014, 2015, 2016).

I would like to concentrate on specific changes of three kinds: those we brought about ourselves, those that were imposed on us, and those that we were subjected to, but which were our own fault.

The first big change was when Léon Dostert managed to convince the American authorities organising the Nuremberg Trials that simultaneous interpreting could work, although it had never been done on such a scale, and very few interpreters had any experience of it. At the time, this was sheer madness, and only the thought of consecutive in four languages made it happen (Baigorri-Jalón 2014). To paraphrase Saint Augustine, Thank God for those who are mad, and protect us from those who are too wise!

The next big change, in 1953, was when three chief interpreters (Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, OEEC, predecessor of today's OECD, the Council of Europe, COE, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO) managed to convince three dozen colleagues to set up a worldwide (!) association of staff and freelance interpreters to turn conference interpreting into a real profession, with its code of ethics, etc., and which would also act as a trade union. There were many at the time who considered the idea to be sheer madness…

A few years later, in 1956, the president of AIIC, Constantin Andronikof, and myself, as executive secretary, were instructed by its Council to approach the big international organisations in order to obtain an increase of the daily freelance rate from US$25, established by UN ten years earlier, to US$30. When we asked to meet someone, we were told, "we don't talk to a bunch of crooks".

So, in 1957, when the Geneva-based UN specialised agencies and the Council of Europe were recruiting for their autumn sessions, the word went around that interpreters should accept, subject to the rate being US$30, and enough colleagues did so for the organisations to give in. This was not only a success in itself, but the authorities who had given in had to explain to their superiors that our request was very reasonable. We had suddenly become people one could talk to.

In 1967 Zoran Seleskovitch came up with an outlandish idea: seeing that international organisations employed freelance interpreters year in year out, because it suited them, they had an obligation to help provide for their old age. When we approached the organisations, they agreed to see us, especially as we were acting jointly with the International Association of Conference Translators, AITC. They naturally started by throwing out the idea, but after lengthy negotiations the first five-year agreements with the three groups of organisations came into force in 1969.

Those were changes we brought about ourselves. And there were others, like the 1965 boycott of an initiative by Philips to put the interpreters in the basement of a new building in Paris, with TV monitors, instead of having booths in the conference room. This led to the direct vision article of the

Code, and several decades of relative peace on that front – until the present need to address remote interpreting, about which you know far more than I do.

Then, in the 1990s, a momentous change was forced on us. The founders of AIIC had considered that competition among interpreters, a natural phenomenon, should be based on quality, not on price. In other words, they suggested a scale of minimum fees members had to respect. But the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) decided that, as we were a group of private enterprises, and not, as we had thought, a group of people practising a profession, the rules devised before WWI to break up the Rockefeller Standard Oil monopoly should apply to us! Therefore, our scale of minimum fees and working conditions were viewed as unlawful. However absurd this unsolicited honour appeared to us, the established doctrine at the time was that "you don't fight the FTC". Fortunately, thanks to our north American colleagues (and one of them, Evelyn Moggio, is here today), we did fight the FTC, at great effort and expense. Although we had to abandon the minimum rates, hence the deregulation, we did save the working conditions, and the five-year agreements.

Another rule established at the outset was that in order to avoid the fate of freelance translators, who were in the hands of agencies, interpreters would insist on a direct contract with the people using their services. But some of our colleagues, among the most distinguished members of the profession, year after year urged us to relax the rule, because there were some very good intermediaries, definitely on our side. Although we always pointed out that when the chips are down the interests of the intermediary and those of the interpreter inevitably conflict, they eventually achieved their end, with the result that now, in many parts of the world, interpreters have no option but to work through, and for, agencies. In his poster presentation, Philip Minns calls for a sense of individual responsibility. It is my fondest hope, or dream, that one day the profession will have the guts (*la cabine française est autorisée à dire "aura les couilles")* to regain control over our relationship with those who use our services.

I know that the main purpose of this session is to enable questions from the floor, and I can sense that Kilian's beard is growing grey with stress, but I would like to leave you with two brief thoughts.

Firstly, a lot depends on our attitude towards time, which is not linear. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, I pointed out to my students at the Ecole Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) in Paris, who were all under forty, that they had lived all their lives in a world where it was easier to go to Stockholm than to Prague. And yet, Prague is closer to Strasbourg than Bordeaux. With the closing of the Cold War parenthesis, normal geography would reclaim its rights. There are other examples of such parentheses, like organic agriculture, which is not new, but a gradual closing of the post-war chemical, intensive agriculture parenthesis. People are planting hedges again…

Being aware of living, to some extent, in parentheses, gives us a different approach to time, and can help us tackle the future with good heart: all is not laid down for all eternity in the Laws of the Medes and the Persians.

Secondly, what is technologically feasible doesn't always happen. In the sixties we were told on the best authority that by the year 2000 we would all be feeding ourselves on pills. No more need for knives and forks. And yet, as was confirmed for some of us at the dinner reception, this has definitely not happened!

And while we are on the subject of time,

My time is up!

Thank you for listening.

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QUESTION 1:

WHO ARE THESE CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS AND WHO MANAGES THEM?

Perroquets Savants ou Professionnels Aguerris ? L'importance de la Préparation

Marie Muttilainen

L'interprète se contente-t-il de répéter ce qu'il entend dans une autre langue ou n'est-il pas plutôt un professionnel doté d'une solide formation linguistique et culturelle, armé d'une longue expérience en cabine, doué d'une capacité d'analyse et d'adaptation peu commune ? Est-il comme certains le prétendent un spécialiste du général ou bien plus un généraliste capable de se spécialiser rapidement avant chaque mission ?

L'opinion exprimée dans cet article est le fruit d'une expérience longue de 27 années à la Cour de Justice de l'Union européenne, tant en cabine qu'à la tête d'abord d'une unité et ensuite de la Direction de l'interprétation. Elle n'engage que ma personne.

S'il fallait décrire la mission de l'interprète comme celle d'un soldat aguerri, voici les stratégies que j'envisagerais.

Repérer le terrain

La connaissance du sujet est à l'interprète ce que la connaissance du terrain est au soldat. Et ce d'autant plus dans un contexte éminemment spécialisé, tel que celui d'un congrès médical, d'une réunion très technique ou encore dans une audience devant une juridiction internationale.

La préparation d'une affaire à la Cour de justice nécessite rigueur et discipline. La précision de l'interprétation dans le prétoire est capitale. Bien que les interprètes de conférence soient formés pour paraphraser, contourner les expressions idiomatiques non transposables dans une autre langue, transmettre des messages selon les codes linguistiques et culturels de l'auditeur, ils doivent rester fidèles à l'orateur, non seulement dans le contenu mais aussi dans la forme. En effet, lorsque des arguments juridiques sont en jeu, le choix des mots utilisés importe ; tous les propos prononcés devant la Cour, y compris ceux de l'interprète, sont susceptibles d'être repris et décortiqués par les parties ou les membres de la Cour. De plus, les audiences sont enregistrées, et une transcription peut en être demandé (tant à partir de l'original que d'une interprétation). Le travail de l'interprète dans ces conditions ne se limite pas à aider les personnes présentes dans la salle à se comprendre, il devient, à travers l'enregistrement de l'audience, partie intégrante du dossier de l'affaire plaidée.

Au fil du temps, les plaidoiries sont devenues plus complexes, plus denses ; leur lecture, contre la montre, s'est accélérée. Selon des études, les interprètes doivent interpréter aujourd'hui, en 30 minutes, 60% de mots en plus qu'il y a 20 ans, la plupart du temps en raison des limitations de temps de parole de plus en plus strictes. Les affaires plaidées devant la Cour sont également de plus en plus techniques ; la préparation d'une audience nécessite davantage de temps qu'auparavant. L'utilisation de différents supports de présentation par les orateurs dans la salle est source de nouveaux défis : comment se concentrer en même temps sur la voix de l'orateur, sur la plaidoirie écrite remise en cabine, sur le fil d'Ariane de l'argumentation et sur le PowerPoint projeté en salle d'audience, si en plus l'orateur parle italien alors que ses diapositives sont en anglais ? La recherche semble montrer que la multiplication des écrans et d'images superposées ainsi que l'utilisation simultanée de plusieurs supports engendrent une augmentation notable de la charge cognitive à laquelle l'interprète doit faire face. Le recours à l'interprétation à distance pendant la crise de la Covid-19 a remis ces préoccupations au-devant de la scène à l'heure où chaque organisation internationale réfléchissait à des solutions techniques pour assurer la poursuite des activités multilingues nécessitant l'interprétation.

Compte tenu de ces impératifs, comment garantir l'interprétation précise et de haute qualité à laquelle les participants à une audience ont le droit de s'attendre dans une procédure juridictionnelle garantissant les droits des citoyens européens ?

Comprendre les enjeux

À la Cour comme ailleurs, l'image de l'interprète capable de jongler avec autant de langues que de matières, entrant en cabine la fleur au fusil, prêt à faire des miracles sur les interventions les plus pointues cache une réalité bien plus complexe. Contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait penser, son travail ne commence pas au moment où il s'installe derrière son micro et chausse ses écouteurs ; il s'appuie sur une minutieuse préparation, commencée souvent plusieurs jours auparavant et qui représente une part considérable de son temps de travail. Pour batailler à armes égales, l'interprète doit disposer du même dossier que les participants à l'audience, un dossier souvent volumineux, accompagné d'annexes de plusieurs centaines de pages et truffé de notions, expressions et arguments juridiques qu'il faudra assimiler en bien moins de temps que tous les spécialistes du droit qui ont œuvré sur cette affaire pendant parfois des mois. Comment, dans ces conditions, s'approprier le dossier ? Comment en distiller l'essence, en repérer les subtilités ? Comment, en d'autres termes, débroussailler le terrain ?

Dans notre institution, le dossier complet de l'affaire est disponible sous forme numérique sur une plateforme d'accès taillée sur mesure en fonction des besoins des interprètes. Elle contient, outre les pièces de procédure, différents liens vers des ressources terminologiques, des documents de référence, des bases de données telles qu'Eurlex pour la législation européenne, le recueil de jurisprudence, des fiches thématiques. Des outils et méthodes de préparation ont été développés dans le cadre de projets promus au sein de la Direction. La lecture rapide, le « mindmapping », les fiches de synthèse sont aujourd'hui largement utilisées par de nombreux collègues. La Cour dispose en outre d'un grand nombre de ressources en ligne qui ont été analysées afin d'exploiter au mieux les informations qu'elles renferment. Certains documents, préparés par d'autres services de la Cour, sont ainsi plus facilement accessibles à partir de l'intranet de la Direction et une base commune d'informations permet désormais de connaître les nouvelles tendances dans les affaires traitées devant la Cour et de mieux s'y préparer. Enfin, comme le travail en cabine ne peut se concevoir qu'en esprit d'équipe, des efforts tout particuliers ont été investis dans la communication au sein du service ainsi que dans l'accueil et l'accompagnement des freelances, qui bénéficient d'une journée de préparation rémunérée avant chaque audience à laquelle ils sont affectés.

Ce travail de préparation prend du temps, beaucoup plus de temps souvent que celui passé en cabine. Comment intégrer ces activités discrètes mais essentielles dans le temps de travail ? Comment leur donner le rôle qu'elles méritent ?

C'est là qu'entre en jeu la responsabilité du management d'un service d'interprétation et des organisateurs de conférences.

Entraîner ses troupes

Le professionnel, aussi aguerri soit-il, doit se préparer pour être à la hauteur du travail que l'on attend de lui. Le rôle de la hiérarchie va consister à l'accompagner dans cette préparation en mettant en place un environnement de travail motivant et générateur de qualité.

Dans une organisation ayant son propre service d'interprétation, les conditions sur lesquelles la hiérarchie peut influer sont : les heures de travail (selon les besoins spécifiques des organisations), le temps nécessaire pour la préparation des réunions (selon la difficulté des sessions), le temps nécessaire pour la récupération et les possibilités de formation continue (tant des formations linguistiques que des formations spécialisées en droit ou en économie).

Mais un environnement de travail générateur de qualité implique aussi le soutien du management, la possibilité d'entretenir des contacts avec les orateurs, la compréhension de la mission et du rôle des interprètes dans le processus de travail de l'organisation, l'intégration des freelances dans l'équipe des permanents, la promotion d'un esprit d'équipe, et la reconnaissance du travail bien fait. Dans un service constitué en majorité d'interprètes permanents, il faut penser à assurer une répartition équitable des affectations en cabine. Les conditions de travail doivent être adaptées aux spécificités de la Cour, par exemple en laissant aux interprètes un temps de préparation raisonnable avant une audience et en tenant compte du fait qu'une grande partie de la préparation des plaidoiries se fait la veille de l'audience, souvent le soir. La nécessaire autonomie dans l'organisation du travail personnel s'exprime notamment par une grande flexibilité dans les horaires de travail au bureau. Elle a pour contrepartie un grand engagement personnel et un sens aigu des responsabilités en matière de préparation du dossier et des plaidoiries, accompagnement des freelances, entre-aide entre collègues en cabine, ponctualité et qualité de l'interprétation.

Créer des alliances

La qualité d'une audience ou d'une réunion dépend aussi de l'interaction de plusieurs acteurs amenés à travailler ensemble. L'interprète n'est pas isolé dans sa cabine, il est au cœur d'un échange entre un orateur et ses auditeurs. Aussi est-il souhaitable de mettre en place une démarche proactive d'information pour encourager des échanges plus fluides en amont des prestations en cabine.

Permettre et encourager les contacts entre les orateurs et leurs interprètes est générateur de qualité. L'organisation et son management ont tout intérêt à promouvoir ces contacts par une sensibilisation des utilisateurs de l'interprétation aux contraintes liées au travail des interprètes. Cette sensibilisation peut prendre la forme d'instructions et conseils envoyés aux orateurs ou publiés sur Internet. Des rencontres peuvent également être organisées avec des orateurs réguliers, pour permettre des échanges entre les interprètes et leurs utilisateurs et une meilleure compréhension des attentes des uns et des autres.

Traiter ensemble de questions comme de la nécessité d'envoyer les plaidoiries à l'avance, du bon rythme à adopter et du style adapté à l'interprétation simultanée, insister sur l'utilité d'informations sur les éléments-clés du dossier, permettent non seulement de préparer une audience donnée, mais surtout de créer une alliance entre l'orateur et son interprète, d'en faire des partenaires dans une situation de communication multilingue.

Jouer à armes égales

Beaucoup d'autres professionnels dans d'autres domaines n'accepteraient pas d'effectuer leurs prestations sans une préparation adéquate, une connaissance du terrain et de tous les aspects pouvant avoir un impact sur la qualité de leur réalisation. Pourquoi en serait-il autrement pour les interprètes ? Car même si la nature même du métier exige une capacité de réaction immédiate et la maîtrise de plusieurs registres différents pour une communication adaptée à la situation, l'interprétation médicale, technique ou juridique notamment nécessitent une préparation approfondie.

Cette préparation peut être réalisée par l'étude d'un dossier accompagnée de différentes méthodes présentées ci-dessus, ou par le biais d'un briefing, d'une présentation d'un sujet technique par les participants à la conférence ou encore par des contacts directs avec les orateurs. Quoi qu'il en soit, une préparation complète à la situation et au contexte dans lesquels l'interprète effectue sa tâche permettra à l'interprète de s'approprier, de comprendre et d'assimiler son rôle.

Les avocats et agents plaidant devant la Cour préparent leurs plaidoiries souvent en groupe de travail, entre experts, et avec une connaissance approfondie du dossier. Certains chronomètrent leurs plaidoiries et les répètent même devant un miroir pour pouvoir impressionner leur public.

Pour pouvoir jouer à armes égales, les interprètes doivent pouvoir se préparer avec les mêmes outils que leurs orateurs. Un interprète professionnel et préparé est capable de rendre le discours avec le même registre, la même précision juridique, et les mêmes citations.

Ils permettront ainsi à un orateur de briller non pas seulement dans une langue, mais dans vingt-quatre !

Perroquets savants ou professionnels aguerris ? Avant toute chose, les interprètes sont des hommes et des femmes passionnés par leur métier, engagés à le faire bien et intelligemment. A nous, leur hiérarchie, leurs formateurs ou leurs clients de leur en donner les moyens.

The Management of Interpretation Services: Linguist or Generalist?

Ian A. Newton

On the front-line

As front-line essential services, language services in multilateral institutions require effective management. Prieto Ramos (Geneva, 2017) examines related issues in respect of translation service management. He notes that "Translation management functions have been the subject of little research in Translation Studies". An analogous statement may be made in respect of conference interpretation management functions.

Much literature has been devoted to technology, software, processes and workflows, which is understandable, given the professional linguist's rapidly evolving work environment. Less attention has gone to the individuals, the human resources employed by the organisations, be it as permanent staff members, or as freelance recruits. Even less attention has gone to the effective management of these human resources, to securing their quality output for the organisations that they serve.

Almost all multilateral organisations employ conference interpreters, in various contractual forms. Depending upon the organisations' statutes and needs, interpreters service language regimes ranging from bilingual systems (e.g., English-French) to much broader spreads of some 20 languages, although, in the United Nations system, the number is generally six or seven. It is this latter context that I wish to address here, in agencies where managers are close to day-to-day interpreting operations.

Given the official texts that establish the language regimes, as well as the importance attached by organisations' members to the right to express themselves in the relevant official language, any service that is judged inadequate by meeting delegates can have serious consequences: for the immediate communication in the meeting room; for political sensitivities;

for the organising secretariat; as well as for the organisation's general reputation, including within the community of professional linguists. The statement that conference interpretation is a front-line service with a political dimension is no exaggeration.

Taking measure of the responsibility

Just like other quality language services whose objective is to secure effective communication at an international level, interpretation services are costly. The annual number of interpreter days supplied by a medium-sized UN agency can easily run into the tens of thousands, with the accompanying budget into the tens of millions of dollars. Above and beyond expenditure on interpreter remuneration and social benefits, an interpretation service also requires funding for interpretation equipment procurement and maintenance, and management/clerical software. Management and secretarial support is also an important budget-line. Accordingly, the operation implies the management of a substantial volume of human and financial resources.

Administrations of such organisations would, in all logic, wish to entrust such responsibilities to the best qualified individual or individuals, to ensure that a quality service is supplied to constituents on a sound economic basis and, at the same time, in a climate of social peace.

The best wo-man for the job

When appointing language service managers in organisations of this size, senior management (members of which are often not professional linguists) is generally unaware of the professional profile that it is seeking; who is most likely to be the most effective manager for the future? Frequently, as for any other potential vacancy in the organisation, the question is asked as to whether the post can be abolished. When the realisation is arrived at that the function is an essential one, the next stage will be to consider how the search can be as effective as possible.

The linguist

Various options may be examined. For example, a selection may be envisaged among the available senior linguists. Senior management may, however, doubt the management potential of linguists who, until then, may not have borne management responsibilities. Linguists are sometimes considered to constitute a volatile community, and managing them presupposes certain aptitudes and sound experience. The community is capable of being forceful with its professional demands, and a manager selected from their midst may not be perceived as an effective defender of the administration's interests and points of view. Senior management may, rightly or wrongly, harbour suspicions of divided loyalties. In any event, it is challenging to be lifted out of the rank and file, to step over the management line whilst appearing credible in the eyes of both parties. Such a transition generally presupposes well-established professional authority possessed by the new manager. The manager of interpretation services will be called upon to fulfil the role of go-between in relations between a whole range of stakeholders. Noteworthy soft-skills are required – in dealings with internal interlocutors, in understanding their needs and technical fields of specialisation for which those partners are organising their conferences; and in dealings with external interlocutors, in understanding the political dimensions that they represent.

The generalist

Conversely, senior management may consider that it would be a safer option to select a candidate who is not a professional linguist but who has a proven track record as a general manager. This would be a person who has accumulated experience in dealing, *inter alia*, with budgets and complex human resource issues and who may have an established political network. Such an option, however, gives rise to doubts of a different order. There is no guarantee that such a candidate will be in a position to defend the interests and points of view of the interpreter workforce. Ultimately, it is in the very interests of the organisation itself for these to be adequately exposed and understood. To brush them aside may prove to be a disservice to the organisation. Is the general manager best placed to understand that what is good for the linguists can also – more often than not – be good for the organisation?

Expectations of the incumbent

At this juncture, it is appropriate to review a range of the basic skill-requirements for such posts.

What we might expect the linguist to offer:

- ability to exercise effective quality assurance or to delegate the responsibility appropriately

- ability to rejuvenate the pool of linguists, to engage in succession planning
- intimate knowledge of all of the regulatory texts applicable to the professional activities of his/her staff, including to the planning of assignments and individual workloads
- resilience in the face of multiple and frequent operational emergencies
- natural authority based on widely-recognised and sound professional judgement (perceived both within and outside the organisation in professional circles)

What we might expect the generalist to offer:

- human resource management skills necessary to ensure social peace in a front-line service
- ability to manage and defend substantial budgets which may be coveted elsewhere in the House
- planning skills

What we might expect both to be able to offer or acquire:

- understanding of the pattern and sensitivity of meetings that the linguists are called upon to service
- ability to manage potentially large numbers of linguists[1]
- an acute sense of discretion, *inter alia*, with personal confidential information; equally, effective communication skills
- the vision and drive to determine strategy and shape the future of the service in accordance with the organisation's evolving needs
- the ability to manage change, to uphold, even enhance, professional motivation (possibly more readily comprehended by the linguist)[2]

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[1] The linguist will have an advantage by virtue of his/her knowledge of individual strengths, aptitudes, compatibilities; s/he will apply sensitivity in delegating such responsibilities to others within the service; the generalist may have more extensive human resource skills.

[2] Even if the human skill of interpreting will remain the same, technology will offer different forms of support and assistance in the interpreter's work environment. This prospect presupposes an ability, on the part of the person directly responsible for the service, to engage in change management, to steer the staff towards innovation and to uphold professional motivation.

More generally, the above can all be considered as part of the skill-set required by leaders of women and men.

A quality choice…

In the context of translation services, Prieto Ramos relates every one of the job requirements that he identifies – many of which overlap with those enumerated above for interpretation services – with the task of Quality Assurance (QA). In the translation context, this concern is comprehensible: translation operations are being increasingly impacted by the question of differing quality expectations, depending upon the method of translation production and the projected utilisation to be made of the translation by the final consumer. His supposition is that, faced with the need to make certain choices regarding the required quality of translation, and given the necessity to supply a reliable professional judgement in that regard, it is a professional linguist who should be invested with these management responsibilities.

Even if some see QA in conference interpretation as a subjective exercise, all of the skill requirements enumerated above for a chief interpreter are, in some way or another, related to the job of securing a quality service for the organisation and its constituents. Furthermore, just as Prieto Ramos asserts that a professional linguist's judgement is necessary to determine what level of quality expectation is appropriate for what kind of end-use, similarly, a chief interpreter who is an interpreter will know, for example, where safely to assign, and not to assign, the novice interpreter emerging from a Master's programme.

If the fundamental mission, in the exercise of all of the management functions, is that of quality assurance, it is legitimate to ask whether a non-linguist is suitable for hands-on interpretation service management.

… and a step forward

However, the very act of calling upon the linguist to assume such responsibilities presupposes that a pool of interpreters with management skills can be readily identified. Were that the case, senior management's task of making an appointment would presumably be easy to complete. It must be recognised that academia has yet to establish a language service management qualification, something that has, however, been achieved for other sectors of professional activity. Various formulae may be explored, including modules in existing Master's programmes in interpretation, certificates of advanced studies, and others.

Some will say that there is no critical mass of career openings to make such endeavours worthwhile. If, however, the community of professional linguists and its academic partners remain inactive, linguists – and the organisations that employ them – run the risk of exposure to poor language service management – either by those who have little understanding of linguists, or by linguists who have scant management skills.

100 years ago, conference interpreters were "born not made". Attitudes have changed on that score. Particularly in this troubled age, it is now time to change attitudes towards interpretation management.

Reference

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The Interpreter as Partner in a Multidimensional Act of Communication (A Reply to M. Muttilainen and I. A. Newton)

Marc Orlando

« Apparaissait ensuite la légion des Interprètes, coiffés comme des sphinx, et portant un perroquet tatoué sur la poitrine ».
(G. Flaubert, *Salammbô*, 1862, 78).

Working conditions and status

The pieces by Marie Muttilainen and Ian Newton deal with essential characteristics of our multifaceted profession: the need for appropriate working conditions and a good understanding of conference interpreters' status and role by all the actors involved in the communication situation. Even if their respective reflection mainly focusses on work at multilateral institutions, their concerns, claims and recommendations can be extended to other multilingual meetings and environments where conference interpreters provide their services. Whether considering access to as much time and information about the topic as possible for optimum preparation and performance, recognition of the necessity to work as part of a team and not as an isolated agent, or support from organisers and managers or coordinators to raise awareness about the specificities of multilingual and multicultural communication among participants, the role played by conference interpreters needs to be fully understood.

A quality service

Both authors remind us of the fact that conference interpreters provide a service, and they justifiably underline the need for effective management of human resources and working conditions to guarantee the quality output expected of such a service. As many publications on the topic underline, because of the multiple variables to consider, quality in interpreting is not easy to measure and assess. To make sure the transfer and the rendition of the source message is accurate, meaningful and of high quality, interpreters must show rigour, discipline, excellent mastery of their working languages, cultural awareness, meticulous preparation, cognitive adaptability and team spirit, among other things. But the quality of their work will also be dependent on the working environment they operate in, which should allow for proper working arrangements, teamwork, collaboration with speakers, empowerment, recognition, and motivation, and should facilitate the establishment of mutual respect and trust among the various participants. It is therefore crucial to understand that the onus for quality cannot be on the interpreters alone. For a quality service to be secured, all elements of the equation must be considered, all actors in the communication situation have a role to play.

The interpretation act as partnership

Translation Studies' recent works dealing with the role of translators have focussed on the 'translator as agent', positing that the translator is only one participant in the translational process, working towards a quality product and having to deal with considerations relating to the text, the author, the reader, but also the publisher/commissioner, the editor/reviser or the project manager. I believe the same would apply to the interpreter, who cannot be relegated to being a mere 'vocaliser' of discourse. In interpreted meetings, participants are all engaged in the ongoing process of constructing conversational meaning. They are all active agents involved in the interpretation process and the making of this meaning: speakers, interpreters, listeners, organisers, managers/coordinators. To ensure the output of interpreted discussions is of the highest standard, interpretation managers/coordinators have the responsibility to create a sense of partnership within this community and ecosystem.

I, too, believe that the best person to coordinate or manage conference interpretation services, be it within multilateral/multilingual institutions or private companies providing conference interpreting services, should know the ins and outs of interpretation very well, but should also be trained in leadership, management, and Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) procedures. Organisations and companies that provide interpreting services should at least organise internal training on such topics.

Training in interpretation management

But could such training also be part of interpreter education, as suggested by Ian Newton?

Given the demands interpreters have to respond to at many different levels today – linguistic, practical, technological, or ethical –, but also from end-users, professional associations, policy makers, or certification authorities, in different markets, their skills cannot merely be those relating to the interpreting task itself. Considering the variety of challenges, they have to take up and the mutability and transience of their working environments, adaptability and versatility are undoubtedly, and even more than before, part of the skills interpreters are expected to master in their daily practice. Therefore, most interpreting courses offer training beyond practical skills and competence and include, for example, market-oriented situated learning as well as transferable skills in their curricula and syllabi. Until very recently, when some translation service providers pointed out the need for it, not much was done in translator education to cater for project management. Now, more and more degrees in translation include some training in project management for translation workflows, in team management, in QA/QC processes etc. It would therefore not be totally unrealistic or unreasonable to expect language service management qualifications to become a component of interpreter education. This is food for thought for training institutions and/or for professional associations that provide professional development short courses.

Parrot, chameleon, acrobat…what else?

Whether seen as a skilful parrot, a creative and dexterous chameleon, or an artful and polyvalent acrobat, an interpreter is first and foremost an agent taking part in a multidimensional act of communication involving different actors. To facilitate fruitful interaction among these working partners and guarantee optimum interpreting performance at an event, organisers and managers/coordinators must ensure that all participants are well aware of the interpreters' working requirements, role, status, and place. *« Apparaissait ensuite la légion des Interprètes,… »*

The Management of Interpreting Services and the Need to Acknowledge the Costs of Preparation for Interpreters (A Reply to M. Muttilainen and I. A. Newton)

Raluca Droahna

Ian Newton makes a valid point when observing the need to reflect on interpreting services management for (international) organisations, especially when it comes to the effective management of human resources. Indeed, the insufficient quality of interpretation services can be a direct result of inadequate human resources and service management and can have a number of consequences, which can ultimately affect the reputation of an organisation.

The question of competence in management matters is further raised by the author, who points out that interpretation services involve both human and technological resources and represent an important part of organisations' budgets. Given the specificities of the task (i.e., interpreting) and the particular needs of the professionals (i.e., interpreters), identifying the adequate service manager profile can be a challenge and the choice between a linguist and a generalist can be harder than expected.

The issue is not unique to this field, though. In health care management, preference is sometimes given to generalists and not to health professionals, in light of the economic and financial dimension of the responsibility incumbent upon such managers. A medical doctor in a management position may be more likely to favour peers' and patients' needs, to the detriment of the economic principles of budget allocations. This kind of advocacy is likely to be practised by linguists, too, when they take on management positions in interpreting services. The generalist, on the other hand, may be insufficiently sensitive to the profession's requirements because of their costs even when they are perfectly legitimate. It would thus seem that to a large part it boils down to money and the spending policies favoured by each of the two profiles.

Two opposite tendencies may thus emerge, depending on the manager profile: maximising the well-being of the professionals at the risk of incurring higher costs; or increasing the efficiency of the service, with a potential impact on professionals' well-being and motivation at work.

Ian Newton is therefore right when emphasising the perception of "divided loyalties" when it comes to the linguist manager, and the inability to defend the profession's interests when it comes to a generalist manager.

But the idea of establishing a language service management qualification may not be viable, since, as the author points out, there are not so many career opportunities in this direction to make such training programs worthwhile.

The best solution is yet to be found, the question being whether it is easier to provide basic management training to a linguist or to explain to a generalist the technicalities of interpreting. Either way, there will be tensions and conflicting interests which service managers will not be able to resolve unless they can establish a sense of balance, credibility and professionalism among all the stakeholders.

One aspect where having a generalist or a linguist as service manager can make a difference is addressed by Marie Muttilainen in her opinion piece, where she deals with the issue of preparation within the context of interpreting for the European Court of Justice.

As she correctly points out, preparation is time-consuming and represents the hidden part of the whole interpreting process, to which the users do not have access and which they often ignore. The users of interpreting services are more often than not unaware of the preparation time required, but the service manager will have to take into account the interpreters' need to prepare for the assignment as a professional obligation and as part of the office routine.

As a service manager and an interpreter herself, Marie's understanding of the preparation phase as a compulsory component of high-quality interpretation services comes naturally. But what goes without saying for a professional may require thorough explanation when discussed with the higher management of an organisation.

As Marie argues, unlike the users, management has to acknowledge and to factor in preparation and to integrate it into the interpreters' job description, but its mission goes beyond that. To be effective, management must understand the interpreters' need to communicate with the users of interpreting services. Such contacts are mutually profitable for all intents and purposes, but above all allow expectations to be adjusted and a sense of teamwork among interpreters and stakeholders to be established. One aspect that should be emphasised when bringing stakeholders together with interpreters, especially within the context of judicial affairs, is the absolute confidentiality of such contacts and exchanges. Asking users for access to written materials for preparation purposes, for example, has to be carefully considered from the point of view of the security precautions which may have to be taken.

The security of internal communication is one thing, but accommodating such exchanges with external professionals while reassuring legal professionals that these materials will not be leaked or intercepted in the process may be an entirely different issue – one that may entail additional expenditure for the organisation.

Another aspect that may need careful consideration is the impact which close cooperation with stakeholders may have on the interpreters' neutrality. An assessment of this potential impact should be performed in order to have a clear picture of the influence of such cooperation.

But irrespective of the dimension that cooperation between interpreters and stakeholders may take, preparation remains an obligation inherent to the interpreters' mission, which should be advertised among the stakeholders, acknowledged by the management as part of the job, and compensated accordingly.

Question 2:

Who Listens to Conference Interpreters Anyway?

Los que Escuchan a los Intérpretes: Necesidades y Espectativas de los Usuarios

Javier Hernández Saseta

Me recuerdo perfectamente «reprochando» a los organizadores de la magnífica Conf1nt100 el haber organizado tres paneles de expertos sobre 100 años de la práctica, de la investigación y de la formación de la interpretación y no haber mencionado los 100 años del uso y el consumo de la interpretación. En realidad, me gusta poner el dedo en la llaga y ser un poco provocador. Los intérpretes somos especialmente dados a mirarnos al ombligo y regodearnos en los problemas y limitaciones que tenemos a la hora de hacer nuestro trabajo, supongo que será porque somos especialmente escrupulosos y tenemos un elevado concepto de lo que es una labor profesional. Y los intérpretes, si algo somos, somos muy profesionales.

¿Qué es lo que piensan nuestros clientes de nuestro trabajo? ¿Estamos a la altura de sus expectativas? Mi optimismo natural me lleva a decir que en principio sí porque si fuese de otra manera nadie podría explicar por qué en el mercado privado las empresas siguen gastando mucho dinero en interpretación y por qué las organizaciones internacionales siguen empleando a cientos de intérpretes cada día con todo el costoso aparato que eso supone. Y no es simplemente porque formamos parte de la decoración: cuando hay problemas de dinero lo primero que desaparece es lo accesorio y los intérpretes siguen ahí a pesar de las múltiples restricciones.

En la UE, donde ejerzo desde hace años esta profesión, en cabina, pero también con responsabilidades de gestión, siempre he pensado en nuestra labor, como en el servicio por excelencia. La propia idea de alguien escuchando a una persona en un idioma y tras descifrar, analizar y ordenar el mensaje, transmitirlo a otra en otro diferente no puede sino ser un servicio personalizado, y permítanme, casi íntimo: nuestros usuarios ponen en nuestras manos, en nuestros oídos y nuestras bocas, su pensamiento y su razonamiento, lo más personal que tienen. ¿Alguien puede pensar en una mejor manera de prestar un servicio, que dejando a otros usar “nuestros” oídos, “nuestro” cerebro y “nuestras” bocas para comunicar “su” mensaje?

Uno de los políticos que más he admirado y que mejores ratos me ha hecho pasar como intérprete en cabina, por su inteligencia, su carisma y por su sentido del humor, que además resultó ser durante cinco años el que estuvo al mando de la UE desde la Presidencia de la Comisión Europea, fue Jean Claude Juncker. En una de sus últimas entrevistas al frente de la nave comunitaria dejó un cariñoso, así lo considero yo, recuerdo para todos aquellos que, entre bastidores, le habían permitido capitanear esa máquina tan compleja, entre ellos, los intérpretes:

> **THANKS:** To the 32,000 European civil servants who dedicate their lives to making the European Union better every day. I have a particular soft spot for the unsung heroes — the interpreters and translators, the chauffeurs, security guards and cooks. They fill this institution with life and have brightened my *quotidien* for years now. (Juncker, J-C. 2019)

Tal vez a alguno de mis colegas esta analogía de los intérpretes con otros colectivos como los guardias de seguridad o los cocineros, les resulte, cuando menos, chocante. Para mí, que un político de la talla de Juncker, con su historia y su legado, de entre los 32.000 trabajadores de la UE se acuerde de nosotros en esas circunstancias como los “desconocidos” u “olvidados” héroes, como los que llenan la Institución de vida, quiere decir mucho, mucho con respecto al servicio que prestamos y a cómo es percibido por nuestros responsables políticos. Los héroes de la escena. Los que prestan el servicio que hace posible que todo funcione. Yo me quedo con eso, con el Presidente que me consideró un héroe digno de mención en su último mensaje porque le presté un servicio que le resultó útil. ¿Puede haber mayor satisfacción profesional?

Y en eso estábamos… pero llegó la Covid-19…

Y se tuvieron que anular decenas, cientos de reuniones, con interpretación, sin interpretación, transformadas en videoconferencias, que funcionaban, que no funcionaban, con problemas de sonido, interminables, provocadoras de enormes dolores de cabeza, pero también generadoras de nuevas maneras de trabajar, de nuevos modos y nuevas oportunidades.

La transformación digital ya había empezado hacía tiempo. El ver cómo esa transformación iba a afectar, a mejorar o a empeorar la forma en la que el servicio de la interpretación se iba a prestar, cómo la profesión debería adaptarse había llegado para quedarse. Conferencias como la organizada en

Ginebra en octubre 2019 para celebrar los 100 años de la profesión, pero también otras como SCIC Universidades en diferentes ediciones y muchos otros foros se habían, con más o menos ganas, lanzado en la reflexión de la digitalización de la profesión. Por otra parte, diferentes operadores en el mundo, en general vinculados a empresas privadas deseosas de encontrar nuevos nichos de mercado, ya habían presentado proyectos y plataformas capaces de ofrecer algo que se parecía a un servicio de interpretación a distancia como lo que los clientes esperaban. Pero marzo de 2020 puso todo patas arriba, o mejor, aceleró en cuestión de días un proceso que de otra manera nos habría llevado años, décadas.

Los interpretes *freelance* que prestaban sus servicios en el mercado privado primero y después los servicios de interpretación de las organizaciones internacionales se vieron obligados a incorporar a sus prácticas el trabajo via plataformas puesto que la manera en la que estábamos acostumbrados a interpretar ya no era posible.

Y aquí aparece claramente la línea argumental que defiendo desde siempre: los usuarios necesitan un servicio, si no se lo podemos prestar de acuerdo a sus expectativas, irán a buscar una solución alternativa a otra parte. De nuevo la necesidad de adaptarse a lo que el cliente espera de su intérprete inspira el cambio y la evolución. ¿Qué motivó el salto de la interpretación consecutiva a la simultánea allá por mediados del siglo XX? Lo primero las posibilidades tecnológicas que iban apareciendo, pero sobre todo la necesidad de los usuarios de la interpretación de contar con un servicio más ágil y capaz de permitir la compresión y la eficiencia en cuanto al tiempo y los recursos en un contexto en el que cada vez había más lenguas y más delegados presentes en las reuniones.

Ahora más que nunca está claro que las necesidades de nuestros usuarios han cambiado en tiempos en los que las reuniones internacionales con cientos de delegados procedentes de decenas de lugares de todo el mundo con muchos idiomas que hablar y con muchas ideas que comunicar no son sostenibles. Y no son sostenibles en tiempo de confinamiento causado por una pandemia, pero tampoco lo son a medio y largo plazo en términos de viabilidad económica y de sostenibilidad medioambiental, y además poco compatibles con un mundo digital al que todos aspiramos.

Después de unos meses de pandemia y confinamiento y sin que todavía se puedan extraer conclusiones definitivas, al menos desde la perspectiva de las organizaciones internacionales, sí que se puede pasar revista a los retos a los que la profesión se ha enfrentado y cuáles son las lecciones que más rápidamente podemos extraer para el futuro.

Ansiedad por la conservación de la salud, pero ansiedad también por la supervivencia de la profesión; preocupación por nuevos métodos y condiciones de trabajo desconocidos o inexplorados hasta el momento; nuevas tecnologías y nuevas herramientas que aprender a utilizar en un tiempo record; preservación del diálogo social entre la administración y los intérpretes; relaciones entre el personal permanente y los intérpretes autónomos. Estos son algunos de los problemas que la crisis de la Covid-19 ha traído para los servicios de interpretación de las organizaciones internacionales.

Además de esos retos, importantísimos para garantizar la continuidad del servicio, están las preocupaciones y necesidades de los consumidores de la interpretación en medio de la crisis: imposibilidad de desplazarse a las reuniones pero al mismo tiempo necesidad de hacer avanzar las negociaciones y sobre todo los acuerdos en tiempos difíciles; presión sobre los servicios de interpretación para que estuvieran a la altura de las circunstancias; multilingüismo vs monolingüismo; necesidad de plataformas y nuevas herramientas para hacer frente a la distancia y necesidad de formación en el uso y aplicación de esas nuevas tecnologías así como necesidad de conexiones capaces de asegurar un intercambio correcto, fluido y fiable. Y todo eso en un entorno que sea seguro y con las necesarias garantías de confidencialidad que todo organizador de reunión desea y espera. Ahí es nada.

¿Acaso, no constituyen esos retos argumentos suficientes como para pensar realmente que nos encontramos ante la verdadera segunda revolución de la historia de la interpretación (siendo la primera la generalización de la simultánea)?

Hemos aprendido mucho en muy poco tiempo. Hemos aprendido que los intérpretes tienen que adaptarse y que tenemos que ser creativos y ágiles, si no corremos el riesgo de que la ola gigante nos arrastre y no deje rastro de lo que esto era. Nuestros usuarios han debido también adaptarse al nuevo contexto y lo han hecho prácticamente de la noche a la mañana, de otra manera habrían perdido oportunidades de negocio, acuerdo y pacto. Hemos aprendido que el diálogo con los intérpretes es fundamental para acompañarlos y para poder hacer frente a esas ansiedades de diferente naturaleza que los acechaban, pero también hemos aprendido que el diálogo con los clientes es la única manera de conseguir esa adaptación con respecto a la nueva realidad que no coincide con la que teníamos antes. Hemos aprendido que las tecnologías funcionan, para poder reunirse a distancia y también, porque no puede ser de otra manera, para poder interpretar a distancia. Hemos aprendido que hay nuevas oportunidades de trabajo para los delegados y también, por qué no, para los intérpretes. Nuevas posibilidades de interpretación que se abren allí donde antes no las había.

Que siempre habrá que juntarse para negociar, limar asperezas y, gracias a la empatía presencial, llegar a consensos está claro, pero que siempre haya que juntarse para acordarlo absolutamente todo no está tan claro. En nuestras manos, intérpretes, está el que los usuarios cuenten con nosotros en sus intercambios. Si ellos han aprendido a negociar, intercambiar y acordar en las nuevas circunstancias, nosotros aprenderemos a interpretar en las nuevas circunstancias. Estoy convencido.

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Public Relations and the Way Forward

Jonathan Downie

Prestige and public relations

From its earliest days, conference interpreting has been associated with high-level international politics, treaties and summits. Its establishment as a profession is intimately tied to the development of modern intergovernmental organisations. For as long as the primary market for conference interpreting was to be found in such places, the prime targets for efforts to build and maintain its position and prestige were diplomats and those whose work enabled multilingual diplomacy.

Yet conference interpreting soon reached beyond the corridors of political power into the private market, as multinational corporations, international associations, and even large non-governmental organisations saw the power of applying conference interpreting to their meetings. From Annual General Meetings and European Works Councils to scientific conferences and even larger seminars, it became clear that understanding conference interpreting meant understanding how each of these meetings worked and the expectations that clients brought to them (Gile 1989, Downie 2015).

In all of these cases, building the reputation of conference interpreting meant being attuned to a very specific, and in many cases a rather small, group of people who led or managed organisations which could afford conference interpreters and their associated equipment. It is no wonder that conference interpreting would tend to be focussed on a small number of key conference cities.

In such a rarefied environment, the most common picture of conference interpreters would be of impartial, neutral, perhaps even slightly aloof professionals who were committed to the highest standards and insisted on these from others. In the early 2000s, Ebru Diriker illustrated how common this picture had become, with interpreters, associations and even the wider media all readily describing the work of conference interpreters in such terms, with an emphasis on interpreters' commitment to say what the speaker said without additions, omissions or alterations (Diriker 2004). It is a picture of interpreting that makes sense in a world where conference interpreting is associated with prestige, power and globalisation.

Facing new publics

Yet the very globalisation that increased the use of interpreting as companies expanded eventually shifted the spread of conference interpreting and the expectations clients brought with them. Just a few years after the release of Ebru Diriker's book, Şeyda Eraslan completed her PhD thesis, in which she found that expectations of interpreters were far more complex than previously thought (Eraslan 2011). When asked questions about their expectations of interpreters in general, the delegates at the conference on pedagogy she studied did indeed look for interpreters to be impartial, neutral and detached from proceedings (ibid, 19-21). However, when they were asked how interpreters should behave at their specific event, they instead preferred that interpreters ask for clarifications, explain cultural references and explain details in case of misunderstandings (ibid, 21-23).

This contradiction, itself a theoretical and methodological challenge for client expectations research, lies at the heart of the future of conference interpreting and the role played by Public Relations in this future. As conference interpreting spreads beyond its traditional heartlands and especially as it tries to adjust to the changes brought about by the Covid-19 crisis and its aftermath, building the reputation of conference interpreting among new publics and new interest groups, while understanding the nature and meaning of their *current* views of interpreting, will be a key challenge. Before even getting that far, it is important to understand what Public Relations (PR) actually is.

Understanding PR

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations defines PR as follows:

> Public Relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you.
>
> Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. (CIPR 2019).

As the same document expressly includes entire professions within the definition of an "organisation", this suggests that PR for conference interpreting would mean building the reputation of the profession to produce greater goodwill and better mutual understanding between the profession and the wider world, thus influencing opinion and behaviour.

The importance of influencing opinion and behaviour and producing greater goodwill becomes clear as soon as we reflect on issues of key importance for the future of the profession. Interpreter rates of pay and their working conditions are directly affected by the value that buyers and clients perceive that conference interpreting produces for them. The choice to choose a human interpreter over a machine is a behaviour that is closely tied to the opinions people have about the difference between human and machine interpreting. Growing the use of conference interpreting among new clients and in new markets depends almost entirely on goodwill and reputation.

With this in mind, delivering excellent results can only ever be the start of the process of nurturing and growing the reputation of conference interpreting. Indeed, the foundational skill of delivering excellent work consists of having the right techniques and understanding client expectations enough to be able to deploy those techniques in a way that clients notice and appreciate. It is impossible, therefore, to fully separate the reputation of conference interpreting from our knowledge of what clients want interpreting to do for them. This provides another reason for more fieldwork in research (Diriker, this volume), as quality will always be determined by context. It also explains why any attempts to shape the future as a global community (Fink-Hooijer, this volume) will depend on building a community that expressly includes and welcomes the points of view of a wide range of stakeholders. We simply cannot build the reputation of conference interpreting on our own.

Concrete actions and the way forward

Building the reputation of conference interpreting through strategically planned PR, including open-minded listening to the views and expectations of clients, therefore relies on three key decisions. The first decision is to move away from our current interpreter-centred views of our own work, towards an understanding of interpreting as embedded within and existing because of wider contexts, including the intentions, purposes and aims of our clients and other stakeholders in the profession. Good PR will begin with rebranding the profession as a service that exists to meet the needs of these clients and helps them fulfil *their* purposes.

Appreciating the views of clients, even when we disagree with them; working alongside key partners to create case studies of the results of excellent interpreting; and taking the time to learn the terminology used by clients and other stakeholders, such as politicians, campaigners and business leaders, together form the basis of any attempt to grow the reputation of interpreting. It may seem paradoxical, but we cannot dream of improving how people see interpreting until we learn to see interpreting through their eyes.

The second key decision, therefore, is to work closely with outside organisations who have already seen the power of interpreting at work, so that they, in turn, can convince the people they already know of this power. One happy client may be glad to work with the interpreters who served them on a case study of how we helped to grow their business or how much better their conference was with us there. By starting with the people who already understand what we do and producing materials with them, both parties can benefit and both can see their reputation grow.

Working to produce case studies of the power of interpreting necessarily involves revisiting what confidentiality really means. If interpreting PR is ever to improve and if we are to survive in an increasingly remote, increasingly technologised future, confidentiality can no longer mean "tell no-one anything, ever". Of course, sensitive information should always be kept secret. Clearly, it will never be right to use our privileged access to information for our own benefit. But it can be right to work with happy clients to spread the good news of the power of interpreting to new audiences by making the most of the successes they want to publicise anyway.

The last and most universally-applicable key is to remember that whether a conference interpreter is freelance or staff, consultant or fresh graduate, their actions, reactions, attitudes and words determine how the people around them view them as individual interpreters and how they view interpreting as a profession. Talking to the press and writing sparkling case studies may be reserved for the few, but every single conference interpreter is responsible for the reputation of the profession. We all always represent our profession and we must never forget that.

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The Role of the Interpreter and Public Relations: Educating the Users and Public About Conference Interpreting (A Reply to J. Hernández Saseta and J. Downie)

Evelyn Moggio-Ortiz

Downie deals with the relationship between conference interpreting (CI) and its users from a private market perspective. He stresses the power of CI in building interpreters' reputation and goodwill, and the importance of catering to clients' needs. He argues that the profession requires new PR strategies to cater to new audiences brought about by globalisation and to face the multiple challenges posed by Covid-19, suggesting three such strategies. Firstly, to understand interpreting "as embedded within and existing because of wider contexts", which in his understanding means "rebranding the profession as a service that exists to meet the needs of clients and to help them fulfil *their* purposes". Secondly, to work closely with key stakeholders in developing case studies to publicise how the use of CI has been key to the success of a conference or to the growth of a business. Thirdly, to make the profession aware that every single conference interpreter is responsible for the reputation of the profession, and that individually every interpreter always represents our profession.

Discussing CI and PR from an institutional angle, Hernández Saseta deals with users of conference interpreting services and with interpreters. He answers in the affirmative the question of whether or not we live up to clients' expectations. If this were not the case, he argues, companies would not continue spending a great deal of money on interpreting services (and international organisations would not continue employing interpreters given the significant budgetary implications of this service). For Hernández Saseta, interpreting is the service *par excellence* as interpreters put their ears, brains and mouths at the service of the speakers who in turn entrust the interpreters with their thoughts and messages. He believes that the new Covid-19 context entails new opportunities for all, and a chance for interpreters to explore novel interpreting modes and ways of working. Organisers, heads of services, freelancers, staff interpreters and universities had already been exploring the digital transformation underway, but Covid-19 confronted them with a pressing need to respond. Virtual platforms became the only workable environment amidst the global lockdown by enabling virtual meetings with remote interpretation. In spite of the challenges, they ensured service continuity, safeguarding multilingualism and finding new means of communication to ensure that meetings and debates run smoothly while striving to preserve the confidentiality of proceedings. Hernández Saseta believes this to be the second revolution in the history of CI, simultaneous interpretation being the first.

I join Hernández Saseta in praising the *100 Years of Conference Interpreting* conference and in regretting the absence of *The use of Conference Interpreting* as an item for one of the discussion panels. The authors of both opinion pieces develop their thoughts on PR and users, on customer satisfaction and expectations. Both describe how users have adapted to the new, globalised markets, and the limitations imposed by Covid-19. Yet in the end, both only talk about interpreters as individuals. They mention the high cost of CI without mentioning its added value: multilingualism allows for a rich and diverse debate while preserving languages and cultures, and enables countries to choose their best representatives on the basis of their professional, rather than linguistic, skills. Throughout my interpreting career, I have thought that the relationship between the conference interpreting profession and its public relations works both ways: interpreting is a powerful promotional PR tool of international relations, commercial exchanges, cultural and technical debates and businesses, while PR is a powerful promotional tool for conference interpreting. Let us remember how the development and use of simultaneous interpreting in four languages allowed the Nuremberg Trials to be publicised worldwide, on a daily basis, not to mention the impact it had on the proceedings. Goering himself allegedly complained that the use of simultaneous interpreting had shortened his life! Originally, the multilingual debates of the UN General Assembly were broadcast live by radio – today, streaming allows these debates to be broadcast live in the six official languages. In international organisations, CI has helped promote multilateralism and multilingualism, contributing to preserving cultural and linguistic diversity in a globalised world, where standardisation overshadows diversity.

PR, in turn, can be a powerful tool for promoting an in-depth knowledge of the profession. In promoting my career, I repeatedly run into the same obstacle: little is known about our profession, and this leads to a misperception or total lack of understanding of what CI is, what it can achieve, and what purposes it serves. My argument is that PR can be a powerful tool to educate users about our profession and make them aware of how we work – our code of ethics, our working conditions, the quality requirements of our working environment, and the need for continuous education and preparation to update our knowledge and terminology of the multiple fields we interpret – so they better understand, and come to accept our rates and requirements that enable us to do our job well.

You may consider what I am saying to be fundamentals we are far beyond, but after reading the opinions of Hernández Saseta and Downie, I have come to the same conclusion: no matter what context we work in, public or private, as freelance or staff interpreters, the development, prestige and future of our profession lie in the hands of each and every individual interpreter.

I regret to say that although I learned a great deal at *100 Years of Conference Interpreting*, it was too focused on training and research and not enough on the practice of the profession and on the interpreter. I consider it a missed PR opportunity to inform the outside world about our profession and to promote the use of CI. We must make the users of our services aware that like them, we have human limitations, that like them, we are neither machines nor applications, and like them, we shoulder an enormous responsibility when practicing our profession, that of faithfully conveying their message in another language.

One Hand Cannot Clap!
(A Reply to J. Hernández Saseta and J. Downie)

Maha El-Metwally

One hand cannot clap. This is the Egyptian equivalent of it takes two to tango. For a long time, discussions among interpreters focussed on their own perspective: working conditions, equipment, the lack of documents, the speed of the speakers, etc. These discussions are all too familiar to conference interpreters. One of the things that became clear when Covid-19 forced us all into lockdown is that we are in the same boat as our clients. They, too, suffered from cancellations, restrictions on their mobility, loss of income and having to work from home, to name but a few consequences of the global pandemic. In their articles, both Hernández Saseta and Downie emphasise that, moving forward, it is important to take the perspective of the clients of interpreting into consideration. After all, interpreting is still a service, albeit a highly specialised one.

Now more than ever, opening the communication channels with our clients is key to a successful transition to remotely interpreted meetings. One of the lessons learned from this pandemic is that dialogue with clients is the only way to achieve this adaptation with respect to the new reality, as Hernández Saseta puts it.

If I were to describe the most important qualities of an interpreter, I would say being agile, flexible and having stamina. These are the qualities interpreters need the most in the current climate. Interpreters need to tap into these qualities to help their clients. Having a proactive attitude helps. Since the start of the pandemic, many interpreters have plunged into remote interpreting with both feet. The hundreds of interpreters I trained in remote interpreting are proof of that. Now is the time for interpreters to use their newly acquired knowledge and experience to guide their clients.

There are meetings that have to be convened and decisions that have to be made despite the conditions dictated by the pandemic. Clients of interpreting may be at a loss as to how to get their work back on track. This is where interpreters can help. A good starting point would be to communicate with clients about *their* needs. Understanding these needs is key to being able to advise them on what is feasible in a remote setting. Interpreters can advise their clients on elements like which platform to use, which equipment is needed or the best format for their event in order to have a smooth meeting. Going the extra mile with our service would demonstrate the added value interpreters bring into a meeting.

Our message needs to be clear: we are here to help. If we are to get that message across to a wider range of clients of interpreting, building alliances with groups who have shared interests is a win-win situation. I am thinking of the bridges AIIC has been building with the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) industry. Downie calls for working "closely with outside organisations which have already seen the power of interpreting at work". The MICE industry is a good example of such an organisation. A partnership would allow interpreters to have a real impact in terms of improving working conditions in virtual settings while delivering a quality service.

For the one hand to clap it needs the other hand to work with it in sync, so let's reach out to our clients.

Question 3:

How Should we Train Conference Interpreters?

TRAINING DEPLOYABLE CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS FOR MULTILINGUAL DIPLOMACY

KILIAN G. SEEBER

Contextualising the issue

During the opening keynote of this conference, Jesús Baigorri-Jalón traced back the origins of the conference interpreting profession to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, when, owing to the establishment of English as a language of international diplomacy alongside French, multilingual proceedings had become a political necessity (Baigorri-Jalón 2014 and also in this volume). Formalised training, however, only became available in the early 1930s with the creation of the first training courses specifically designed for conference interpreters. Historical evidence shows that many of these were short-lived, but some evolved and/or were attached to universities, making them more sustainable. By the 1960s, aspiring conference interpreters could enrol in university-level courses in Austria, France, Italy, Germany, Russia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, etc., sometimes with two or more programmes to choose from. By the time the European Community was created in 1957, one could therefore have expected these training programmes to be able to meet the demand for professional conference interpreters for what was then but a modest quadrilingual language regime. But while training in French, German and Italian was widely available in several of the existing schools, formal training programmes for Dutch were only set up in the late sixties (in Antwerp and eventually in Maastricht in the early eighties). The same challenge would arise with different enlargement waves, such as for Danish in 1973, for Greek in 1981, etc. Formally trained conference interpreters, therefore, often simply did not have the required language profile to be hired by the institutions. Even at that, some of those invited to sit the accreditation test were not deemed proficient enough to meet the institutions' demands. This is what led Ms. Van Hoof, then Director-General of SCIC (the European Commission's Joint Interpreting and Conference Service) to set up a Training Division to administer its own in-house interpreter training scheme in the 1960s. The so-called *stage* was born (Mónica Varela-García provides more details about this training programme in this volume). In spite of its success, with results slightly above those of the best candidates trained at universities, the non-negligible cost associated with the *stage* led to its mothballing in 1997, several years ahead of the biggest enlargement yet (at least in linguistic terms), when Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Slovak, and Slovenian were slated to be added to the EU's official language regime. At the same time, most likely as a compensatory measure, the idea of a standardised European curriculum for the training of conference interpreters was floated and took shape with the creation of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) in 2001. At the time of writing, the EMCI has 16 members who implement a joint core curriculum and undergo a regular quality control procedure. What is more, the interpreting services of both the European Commission and the European Parliament have invested significant resources in so-called pedagogical assistance measures ranging from the creation of training materials to tailored coaching. And yet, the overall pass rate at what in 2005 became an inter-institutional accreditation test remains relatively low at about 30% (p.c., DGSCIC, August 15 2020). Given the recurring argument that graduates of conference interpreter training programmes can often not be considered deployable, I suggest the following four areas be considered among those with potential room for improvement and be made topics of discussion in the relevant fora, such as the yearly DGSCIC Universities Conference or IAMLADP's Universities' Contact Group (UCG): defining booth-readiness, identifying the gap, promoting transparency and avoiding turf wars.

Defining booth-readiness

I vividly recall a heated debate about the meaning of *deployability* at a DGSCIC Universities Conference only a few years ago. During the discussion following a presentation outlining the low pass rate at the inter-institutional test, the explanation provided by some representatives of the interpreting services was that graduates were often not booth-ready and that the expectation was for them to be able to "hit the ground running". Interestingly, a seasoned conference interpreter trainer suggested that perhaps it might be enough for them to be able to "hit the ground walking", with reference to all the workplace-specific knowledge any newcomer needs to acquire (see also Newton in this volume). This probably resonates with many trainers of conference interpreters, regardless of EMCI membership. Although training programmes are natural feeders for the

European institutions and many international organisations, unlike the former *stage*, they are not exclusive prep schools for any one of them. Graduates from training programs whose training mandate is inherently broader than any one institution or organisation should be held to the highest standards of technical conference interpreting skills, but can probably not be expected to have mastered what previously took others six months of full-time on-the-job training to acquire. The question, therefore, is whether one would or should expect recent graduates with little or no professional experience to perform like their experienced peers in the most demanding and high-level technical meeting an organisation has to offer. If booth-ready is indeed to be understood as an absolute notion then the alleged gap between training and real life can hardly be closed. If, on the other hand, booth-ready is understood as the possibility of being assigned to any of a range of representative meetings (hallmarked by comparable overall complexity and difficulty), then this gap might be less pronounced than it is sometimes made out to be. For the sake of finishing the anecdote, the discussion was closed by the institutions' senior management making it crystal clear that they do not expect graduates to hit the ground walking, nor jogging… but running.

Identifying the gap

I feel relatively confident that, at least in the case of the training programmes the EU institutions and UN organisations partner with (through the different MOUs) and especially the members of the EMCI consortium, any alleged training gap is located towards the end of the training programme, not its beginning. Put differently, I submit that the perceived shortcomings concern not so much the first steps and therefore the foundations of conference interpreter training, as they do the "last mile", which might differ across training programmes much like the different historical miles did throughout the centuries before the international mile was established in 1959. While programmes with easy access not only to a large pool of qualified trainers but also to conference interpreters' traditional work environment (read multilingual multilateral events) have been able to reduce this mile to mere inches, for others it is still a matter of feet or even yards. Crucially, the gap can only be filled if those expected to fill it know exactly where the shortcomings are, which in turn is only possible if these are systematically registered and fed back not only to individual candidates (who should ideally receive feedback outlining the reasons for their failure), but also, in an anonymised and aggregate format, to the interpreter training programmes. Progress is being made on both fronts, and organisations like the UN, for example, have started providing feedback to candidates going beyond merely communicating whether they passed or failed. At the EU's inter-institutional test, where a two-stage testing model is currently applied, written feedback is provided to the candidate following the so-called pre-selection test, and oral feedback after the full selection test. In both cases, however, for the time being this feedback is ad-hoc in nature and not methodically compiled or archived (at least not to our knowledge), meaning that general trends are currently not identified or at least not communicated to those in charge of training these candidates. Clearly and systematically logging recurring gaps across candidates would make it possible to identify the specifics required for training programmes to adapt their curriculum (to the extent possible) to better account for the institutions' and organisations' needs. The knowhow for such a fine-grained analysis is conveniently located with those training institutions many organisations and institutions already partner with.

Promoting transparency

I welcome the spirit of collaboration the institutions' and organisations' interpreting services have been fostering since the training mandate for interpreters was returned to universities. Events such as the SCIC Universities meeting, the (former) DG INTE's Rector's conference, as well as the IAMLADP's Universities Contact Group clearly show that there is keen interest in collaborating with universities. Similarly, the EC's and EP's grants to support interpreter training are a testimony that this commitment is also financial. The Pedagogical Assistance (PA) scheme, with its broad offer, allows universities – all with their own specific needs – to benefit from resources to which they would otherwise not have access. Part of this PA is the participation in final examination panels at partner universities. This has a number of advantages. On one hand, it allows universities that are not located near a large concentration of professionals (like Brussels, Geneva or Paris) to source jury members with hard-to-find language combinations. On the other hand, it enables general benchmarking allowing universities to constantly crosscheck with the institutions what *overall* proficiency level is expected. During final exams, institutional representatives therefore get more than a look behind the scenes: they get a full-disclosure account of the entire exam procedure, including the participation in jury deliberations with access to arguably sensitive personal student data, with the understanding that all such data are to be handled confidentially. This is one area where reciprocity is not yet fully achieved, as similar access to institutional accreditation tests is not granted to universities. While the nature of an academic exam and a professional exam is indubitably different, being able to participate, even only as a silent observer, in such an exam, or receiving an anonymised recording of such proceedings, would allow universities to better understand where the setting screws need to be tightened. For the time being, the actual implementation of grading criteria and their relative weightings as well as the deliberation process remain clouded in a shroud of mystery – one we should strive to lift.

Avoiding turf wars

The apprenticeship model, according to which interpreters are best taught by practising professionals, remains a cornerstone of modern conference interpreter training. More than that, it is an unequivocal requirement for all EMCI schools, where interpreting classes are supposed to be conducted by practising and/or experienced conference interpreters with teaching skills. Given the ensuing close relationship between universities training conference interpreters and the institutions employing them, it is not surprising that, at least at times, toes get stepped on. The PA activities mentioned above are a case in point. For universities it makes a lot of sense to take advantage of the invaluable insights into specific institutional realities, requirements and norms which are sometimes difficult to grasp from the outside, but readily available within the institutions. Attempts by universities to provide comprehensive training in these areas based on the arguably narrow view of a few select trainers who might occasionally work for the institutions appears tenuous at best. Conversely, institutions are generally ill-equipped to deliver the pedagogical approach (understood as the method and practice of teaching) necessary for the incremental acquisition of skills. Thus, while activities aimed at allowing students to hone skills they would otherwise not be training (e.g., working with a multitude of relays or learning about an institution's decision-making processes) should be foregrounded, those duplicating what generally falls within the remit of any conference interpreter training programme (e.g., the foundations of consecutive interpreting or the introduction to note-taking) should probably be reconsidered, allowing each partner to focus on what they do best.

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Is In-House Training the Answer?

Monica Varela Garcia

During the Conference on *100 years of Conference Interpreting,* held in Geneva in October 2019 as a joint initiative between the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting (FTI) of the University of Geneva and the International Labour Organization (ILO), I had the privilege of moderating the panel devoted to conference interpreter training. One of the most interesting subjects tackled was the training of future generations. I would argue that international organisations (IOs) and universities alike feel that the need to ensure the "*relève*", the future generations of conference interpreters, is as important as ever. The recurring question is how to do so in the most effective way. Is IOs' own in-house training the answer, should it be left exclusively to universities or is there another way?

In-house training at the European institutions

During the discussions, we heard the contribution of one of the institutions that has been most active in conducting in-house training for conference interpreters, i.e., DG SCIC (the European Commission's Directorate General for Interpretation). Javier Saseta Hernández, Head of Unit for Multilingualism and Training, provided a comprehensive account of the European Commission's activities in this field. The six-month *stage*, its in-house training program, was created in the 1960s and led to the training of hundreds of conference interpreters who joined the ranks of staff interpreters of the European institutions. It consisted of three highly intensive two-month modules (basic consecutive, advanced consecutive and basic simultaneous; advanced level in all modes and preparation for the booth), as explained by Ian Newton, former Chief Interpreter at ILO, who completed the *stage* himself in 1977-78. There was an eliminatory test at the end of each module. The *stage* was run exclusively by European Commission staff interpreters who were otherwise regularly assigned to the booth.

With time and the emergence of numerous universities in Europe offering academic programs in conference interpreting, the European approach changed in favour of closer cooperation with these universities culminating in the creation of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) in 2001 (see also Kilian Seeber in this volume). The Consortium receives financial support from the European institutions but, much more importantly for this discussion, it benefits from the expertise of staff interpreters of the European institutions who share their experience and skills.

In-house training at the United Nations

As for the United Nations, different training programmes existed at different points in time. As Jesús Baigorri-Jalón, keynote speaker at the Conference, documents in his book *Interpreters at the United Nations: A History* (2004) the first UN training programme for interpreters saw the light in 1952 with the increased need for simultaneous interpreters after WWII. The programme consisted of "on the spot training" for those candidates who had the linguistic abilities but who had never trained as conference interpreters. They came to the profession purely by chance. These were still the days when many thought that interpreters were "born" not "made". In the 1970s, the UN training programme became more structured. Whereas in the fifties it had consisted of trainees' autonomous practice, learning by shadowing UN staff interpreters on the job, listening to tapes for self-training etc., by the seventies the programme had evolved into a form of supervised training, with staff interpreters training junior colleagues in sight translation, terminology, organising mock conferences, giving individual feedback, etc.

Under the auspices of different Under-Secretaries-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, in particular USG M. Shaaban and later USG C. Pollard, the importance of training and outreach grew. From 2007 onwards, the United Nations signed 23 Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with universities from different regions of the world. The aim was to intensify cooperation with universities to address the shortage of highly-qualified interpreters in general, to counter the low pass rates at the Language Competitive Examination (the competition to become a UN staff interpreter), as well as to address the gaps in certain language combinations.

However, in spite of all efforts, the gap persists for certain language combinations at the UN. As a result, over the last few years and with particular emphasis on language combinations such as English with Russian, or Arabic with English as a retour language, a special in-house ad-hoc training programme has been conducted at UN HQ in New York. It allowed junior colleagues with the required profile to be recruited for in-house training whilst working in the booth.

A new type of in-house training

As the above shows, in-house training within international organisations has existed at different points in time for mainly one reason: the shortage of highly qualified conference interpreters. The main advantage of in-house training is undoubtedly the tailor-made training whereby the institution trains for what it needs. It allows for focused training putting emphasis on the specificities of the institution concerned, with full immersion of the trainees in the environment in which they will be working if successful at the end of the training.

However, for an in-house training programme at the UN to be effective and successful, numerous aspects have to be taken into account. The following reflects my personal views as a senior conference interpreter, former Chief of the Spanish Interpreting Section at the United Nations Office at Geneva and currently Chief Interpreter at the ILO.

Firstly, I refer to aspects related to the profile of trainees and universities. Today, the general requirement should be that the trainee of an in-house training programme has pursued prior conference interpreting studies. However, at what level should trainee recruitment be conducted, i.e., at graduate or post-graduate level? This is no minor decision, as it will have an impact on the duration, structure, content and learning outcomes of the in-house training programme. If we want the in-house training to be targeted to the specificities of the institution, the advantage of having an intake at postgraduate level is clear: candidates will already have solid training in simultaneous interpretation, making it possible for the in-house training programme to be shorter and more focused. The other option would be to select candidates who have trained at a graduate level but have acquired professional experience as conference interpreters.

Secondly, should such UN trainees mainly be selected from among the graduates of MoU universities? The logical answer would be affirmative. In general, however, we observe that freshly graduated conference interpreters lack the required skills and coping mechanisms to confront the challenges typical of the work of a conference interpreter in an international organisation such as the United Nations, i.e., working with written speeches, coping with high speed, density, accents, etc. In addition, statistics show that only half of successful candidates in the UN Interpretation Competitive Exams are graduates of MoU Universities.

How could these universities contribute to "producing" students meeting the UN's expectations of a junior conference interpreter? How could the required level be ensured if the general feeling is that improvements might be required?

The proposal that I would submit is to adopt a hybrid approach which would enable the UN to draw greater benefit from the current MoU network. This hybrid approach would foresee, at all MoU universities, a training module exclusively devoted to the United Nations. This module would be embedded in the advanced stage of the curriculum in MoU post-graduate conference interpreting universities, or it could be an additional course at the end of the postgraduate programme.

In both cases, the universities would offer the infrastructure, whereas staff interpreters at the United Nations would offer their expertise and acquired skills by offering virtual masterclasses, as well as virtual practical simultaneous interpretation training classes in different language combinations. The current situation with Covid-19 shows us how virtual training might be organised. At the end of such hybrid training, trainees whose profile shows potential could be invited to follow shorter in-house training as "associate interpreters".

This hybrid training approach in cooperation with universities would represent a win-win solution: the selection of trainees, testing criteria, learning stages and the expected outcomes could be handled jointly with lecturers in conference interpreting at MoU universities, as they have extensive experience in the field. In addition, academic staff of these universities have the required pedagogical training that most staff conference interpreters logically might lack, with the exception of those few who have enrolled in specialised teacher training programmes, such as the one offered by the University of Geneva[1]. UN staff interpreters would offer their expertise and feedback using virtual means as indicated above. Where appropriate, training classes could be asynchronous to take into account the possible capacity bottlenecks in weeks of high conference activity when UN staff interpreters are required to be in the booth. Staff interpreters interested in becoming trainers should receive prior pedagogical training from peers, those who have trained as trainers, or they should receive this training in advance from the MoU University concerned, as we know that a good interpreter does not necessarily make a good trainer. The advantage for

[1] Masters of Advanced Studies in Interpreter Training, www.unige.ch

trainees would be enhanced preparation for a possible career at the United Nations.

This hybrid and blended model would prove effective, inasmuch as it would require limited investment with a potentially large return on investment. However, it would require a reinforced mechanism for interaction with universities and a solid structure to sustain it. The creation of a Unit for Multilingualism and Training, similar to that at SCIC, could be considered.

In conclusion, the training approach suggested offers many advantages. It would require a joint effort from both parties, MoU universities and the United Nations, and would represent a renewed effort to equip our future generations of conference interpreters with the required profile and skills. Any effort in this direction is worth pursuing.

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In-House Training and IO-University Cooperation (A Reply to K.G. Seeber. and M. Varela Garcia)

Helen J L Campbell

Bridging the gap

During the Conference in Geneva in October 2019, I had a brief opportunity to outline my training experience with the European Commission. I was a s*tagiaire* on the first organised six-month *stage* for graduates, begun by Renée Van Hoof (as she was then known). Her trail-blazing initiative changed the course of interpreter training. I subsequently became one of the *stage's* first trainers, experiencing, so to speak, both sides of the table.

In 1973, with the first EU Enlargement, qualified interpreters were in short supply and for the new languages, English and Danish, virtually impossible to find. The few UK schools trained with UN languages, Russian, Spanish, French, not those of the European Community as it then was. Hence the launch of the *stage.*

I well recall my own aptitude test, a short affair, comprising 2-minute speeches in French and German, to be interpreted from memory only and some general knowledge questions. This model has since proved the simplest and most successful. Aptitude is an essential quality and should be the central qualification for any candidate applying for a Master's in conference interpreting.

As I said in Geneva, Renée Van Hoof and the *stage* were key to the future training of conference interpreters. Given the shortages, she introduced a 'milk round' to recruit graduates from the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews and Trinity College Dublin. Some were graduates of economics and PPE, had not studied languages but knew them sufficiently well to pass the test. That background, though rare, proved highly successful; such graduates had a wealth of knowledge of 'other' subjects.

The in-house training offered was ideal: short, intensive, taught by professionals – though many had no pedagogical training then – with time for us trainees to practice, learn how to make speeches, with 3 formal 'exercise' sessions a week and frequent dummy booth practice. Admittedly, it was tough, with 2 monthly eliminatory tests, a fairly heavy fall-out rate but once through the gate we were as ready to 'hit the ground running' as is possible.

With further Enlargements it became too expensive, as Kilian Seeber points out in his chapter of this volume. So began in-house training of trainers to provide pedagogical assistance to university programmes, and the creation of the EMCI which became a blueprint for interpreter training.

If universities' main goal is for graduates to pass tests at international organisations, then close cooperation should be pursued, pedagogical assistance, virtual classes with the EP, SCIC and the UN, SCIC participation in final exams, use of the Speech Repository, plus some form of 'top up' if needed.

All this costs resources. But both IOs and universities realise that exchange and cooperation are essential. The Universities Contact Group of IAMLADP which I set up in 2006 is a good example. Steve Slade of Bath University and I devised a simple format; half of the 34 volunteer members were from universities running T&I training programmes, half from IOs, members of IAMLADP. From the start, this group of active people came up with novel ideas, e.g., the 'Salamanca Seminar', proposed by founder UCG member Jesús Baigorri-Jalón, keynote speaker at the Conference. Jesús and I created a model for staff translators in IAMLADP IOs to spend a week following morning lectures on legal subjects, an area they had all expressed interest in. In the afternoons, the same professional translators offered guidance and training to the Salamanca students. After the first 2 successful seminars, student interpreters from Bath, Leeds and Salamanca interpreted the talks, a baptism of fire but a unique experience. Other universities have since replicated the model, i.e., Leeds. That kind of quid pro quo should be fostered and encouraged.

The MoU of the UN, mentioned by Monica Varela Garcia from the ILO in her chapter of this volume, was a welcome initiative and continues to provide valuable in-house experience for student interpreters. However, I would submit that the MoU should take a leaf out of the EMCI book, with, as Kilian Seeber mentions, 16 members and "regular quality control procedures".

The MoU, should establish such procedures if it has not done so already, since standards can sometimes drop, for many reasons. It is essential for any course to be reassessed from time to time to ensure continued quality. In my capacity as trainer and examiner at Glendon College MCI we invite staff (and freelance) interpreters to join the exit exam jury. Without bias, I hope, I cannot but note that the experienced SCIC colleagues are ahead of the field in assessing and giving feedback. UN interpreters, excellent professionals, often lack this experience and judge as though for a recruitment test. Training for them would be an asset.

This brings me to some pertinent issues raised by Kilian Seeber and Monica Varela Garcia on identifying the gap and finding a solution. As members of the UCG have pointed out too often, IOs need to recruit staff who are booth – and text – ready. For translation the problem is equally relevant. To (loosely) quote two former UCG staff translators, “They [recent graduates] are great at syntax but they get the numbers wrong…” and, “Proust does not prepare you for the Beef Committee”.

Universities are not crammers for a given exam, like A levels. Future employers will have to ‘top up’ new recruits, offering some professional induction. Any graduate programme aiming for IO recruitment should run a module or two on the EU and UN. I recall with horror many interpreting students coming to SCIC on our study visit programme, who had scant knowledge of which Institution they were in or what any of the others did! Teachers must encourage students to study and give presentations on the UN and EU.

Finally, universities teach students for the future, many interpreter graduates will go into professions unrelated to interpreting, but that is no bad thing, they have acquired transferable skills, a real asset for life.

In-House Training of Deployable Conference Interpreters: A Canadian Experience (A Reply To K.G. Seeber and M. Varela Garcia)

Gillian Misener

Across the pond, far from any EMCI consortia, DGSCIC, IAMLADP UCG, or other similarly awe-inspiring acronyms, Canada is also grappling with how to train deployable, or booth-ready, conference interpreters. The federal government's Translation Bureau feels that it has found a way, and I intend in this article to draw parallels between the Canadian context and Varela Garcia's experience with in-house training at the UN, and to address Seeber's concerns regarding the definition of booth-readiness, identifying the training gap, promoting transparency and avoiding turf wars.

Let us assume, as per Seeber, that we rely on university MCI programmes to apply their pedagogical know-how to ensure students' incremental acquisition of conference interpreting tasks and skills. Agreed; ideally, however, interpreter trainers should be appropriately qualified – as both interpreters and trainers. If it is true, as Varela Garcia posits, that good interpreters do not necessarily make good trainers (and the same could be said of any profession), then the partnership between the Translation Bureau (TB) and the University of Ottawa (UO) is a step in the right direction. The TB lends a number of staff interpreters to UO as trainers, and since the UO MCI is a feeder programme for the TB's Parliamentary Interpretation Service, both partners benefit – not to mention the students who, if they pass their MCI exit exams, will eventually become their trainers' colleagues. Staffers who undertake to train the students enrolled in the UO MCI have generally manifested a prior interest in interpreter training, but also receive coaching from their colleagues who have prior training experience, including two TB staffers who have completed the Masters of Advanced Studies in Interpreter Training offered by the University of Geneva. Furthermore, the TB and the Glendon College MCI partner in joint endeavours, including interpreter training and exam preparation and juries.

All of these initiatives ensure that no staffer is ever "parachuted" into an interpreter training context, but rather arrives there with some degree of interest as well as prior preparation.

An important component of the UO MCI is the *stage*, which spans between five and 10 days and takes place during the last two months of the programme. Students are sent to carefully selected real-life parliamentary assignments, where they are mentored and given feedback by staff interpreters – either their UO trainers, or other colleagues with pedagogical know-how. This feedback is shared with the trainers, who can then focus on any shortcomings in the last weeks of the programme before the final exams. Perhaps a promising approach to closing the training gap?

To return to Seeber's "hit the ground running" analogy, past and current experience has shown that UO MCI grads can be counted on to be fast joggers at the very least, and the TB is confident that this is because it does not hesitate to invest its own human resources in preparing students for the parliamentary context.

So much for the role of universities in training booth-ready interpreters. If we agree that the role of subsequent in-house training is to help MCI grads acquire institution-specific practices, culture and terminology, then let us look at the TB equivalent of UN in-house training: the "booth" camp. This two-week intensive training session, also given by staffers, takes fast-jogging graduates and brings them even further up to speed by focusing specifically on speeches and debates in the parliamentary context. However, it depends on participants having been previously trained as part of an MCI; it is in no way a standalone module. UO grads have an advantage, but we have seen many young recruits from other MCI programs (Glendon, for example) benefit from this training as well, and ultimately become full-fledged accredited conference interpreters – more proof that the MCI is the foundation, and that subsequent in-house training builds thereupon.

Another parallel can be drawn between TB staff interpreters being lent to the UO/in-house training and the pedagogical assistance (PA) programme in Europe: both would appear to ultimately target interpreter recruitment in institutions that are seriously understaffed. A recurring theme, as we can see here, is the importance of partnerships across the board.

Question 4:

What Role will Research Play in Conference Interpreting?

WHAT CAN RESEARCH DELIVER AND HOW?

BART DEFRANCQ

Eppur si muove - 'And yet it moves'. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) is credited with those three (or, depending on how the first word is written, four) words spoken in the face of religious persecution. They are meant to depict him as a stubborn defender of scientific fact, although there is little evidence that Galilei actually spoke those words. Yet, they immediately sprang to mind when the research panel at *Conf1nt100* was told by someone in the audience that there is a potential risk to one's reputation in the community of practitioners if, as an interpreter-researcher, "one's scientific findings contradict professional accepted truth". It was as if we were not celebrating the 100th anniversary of conference interpreting, but rather the 400th anniversary of the 1616 ban on Copernican heliocentrism.

It is difficult to tell whether the claim itself was based on anecdotal evidence, but the fact is that the interpreting community has long had a complex relationship with scientific inquiry, especially when that research is carried out by researchers who do not have formal training in interpreting. Researchers, whatever their background, are occasionally suspected of fostering misconceptions about the nature and difficulties of the activity, about its contextual constraints, its situatedness, etc. This concern was one of the initial drivers for interpreter trainers to step up and become researchers.

Basically, research delivers answers to questions, based on facts. It increases knowledge. It does little to antagonise in the way described above, unless it uncovers inconvenient truths. But more on that later. In a general sense, research does deliver. We have a much better picture of how the brain mobilises for the task of simultaneous interpreting; we know that there are robust interpreting patterns across languages, such as face-saving; there is ample evidence of strikingly high error rates in interpreting with regard to specific items, such as numbers; we have explored the evolution of the profession and the professional biographies of particular groups of conference interpreters; remote interpreting technology and its effect on interpreters have been tested. The list is by no means exhaustive.

Various research centres have collected data of various sorts in the course of decades of research: experimental data, corpus and observational data, survey and anthropological data. However, the coverage of such efforts is almost always frustratingly limited, unfocused and incoherent. Some examples of broad surveys set apart, studies usually cover one to three dozen interpreters or interpreting students. In the absence of agreed research protocols, recruitment and data collection are done in an ad hoc fashion, compromising data exchange as well as the replication and meta-analysis of studies. As a result, the knowledge presumed to be acquired and shared by researchers is actually built on quicksand. It took Anthony Pym (2008), a translation scholar, 16 pages in 2008 to discard one of the most widely quoted hypotheses in interpreting studies by simply going through the same data that its author, Daniel Gile (1998), had produced and used to advance it. A joint effort by researchers is needed to standardise data collection and to build large enough data sets that can be exploited from different perspectives.

More cooperation is also needed to comprehensively study interpreted events from different methodological angles. As different methodologies are now applied to different sets of interpreters working in different contexts, it is impossible to piece together an image of how interpreters' performances are influenced by all the various relevant factors or how these factors interact: demographics, educational background, expertise, preparation, cognitive load associated with the task and fatigue, booth interaction, conference type and multilingual practices, speaker-related features, technological features, etc.

The interpreting research community urgently needs to address these issues. The dramatic events of 2020 have propelled conference interpreting into uncharted areas. Remote interpreting has become the rule rather than the exception, booth interactions are cut off as remote interpreting platforms allow very limited inter-interpreter communication. Even in hub and on-site settings, interpreters for the same language are distanced in separate booths. This was all decided exclusively on the basis of public health guidelines. Scientific advice from interpreting researchers has barely been sought. AIIC, as a professional organisation, is adamant about the importance of booth partnering for quality, but the research to substantiate it is slim at very best. Paradoxically, most if not all of the research on remote interpreting has been carried out with interpreters performing alone as experimental subjects. So not only are researchers not consulted, they do not always deliver the research that proves critical in times of crisis. Important gaps subsist in our knowledge about interpreters as dynamic actors in a multilingual environment, in and outside traditional booths. It is important for the research community to pull together, define a research agenda, work out widely accepted methods and provide scientific guidance to interpreter recruiters and employers on best practices to reconcile the interests of public health with those of the profession. This does not necessarily run counter to academic freedom, nor does it curtail opportunities to carry out fundamental research in favour of applied research. On the contrary, as much of the fundamental research still has to be carried out on a scale that meets scientific standards in other disciplines, this creates opportunities for it. Professional organisations should relish the perspective of more fundamental research as it will lead to better advice and to stronger credibility.

This brings me to my next point. Independently from crisis situations: does interpreting research deliver for the individual interpreter? Does it help an interpreter to know that the part of the brain called *putamen* is involved in the suppression of the incoming language during the production of the target language? Is one's performance better with or without face-saving? Is it worth reading research papers to prepare for the first remote interpreting assignment? Before we answer these questions, let us first address another one: would we put more trust in a physician who is aware of the scientific literature in the field than in one who is not? Or in a lawyer who is acquainted with the current state of the law as opposed to one who stopped updating on graduation day? One could argue that the task of interpreting itself has not changed, and that our main task as interpreters is to stay updated about the subject matters we interpret. However, that would miss the point. It is true that patients trust physicians more if the latter know the details of their particular case file, but they would rapidly lose faith if the treatment they are offered was obsolete or proven to be less effective and more costly or if the physician was unable to explain what exactly the treatment will change for the better or the worse. Similarly, interpreters are likely to inspire trust in their clients if, besides their awareness of the clients' terminological needs, they are also able to refer to knowledge acquired through research efforts while responding to questions such as: how do you manage to speak and listen at the same time? Or, is it possible to organise meetings online with interpretation? Or, why would I need you if I have Skype Translator?

Obviously, research holds the potential to contradict a number of beliefs that are widespread in the interpreting community. There has been a tendency in the past to expect research to support conference interpreters' exceptionalism. A significant proportion of research papers start by stating the exceptional complexity of simultaneous interpreting, which is often used as an explanation (not to say an excuse) for the high numbers of errors and omissions made by interpreters or to dismiss the potential of interpreting technology. Research will inevitably lay bare inconvenient truths about conference interpreting. It might come to the conclusion that their cognitive saturation point is actually higher than assumed, that computer-assisted interpreting technologies actually improve interpreters' accuracy, that a fit-for-purpose approach to quality does not inevitably lead to a race to the bottom, or that teaching consecutive interpreting does not benefit skills required for simultaneous interpreting after all. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. Ultimately, such inconvenient truths have the greatest potential to benefit training and the profession as a whole. If no inconvenient truths had been uncovered in medicine, we would probably still use bloodletting to treat Covid-19 infections. Interpreter education is a crucial area in this respect. Many training programmes around the world still adhere to very traditional training models and methods, ignoring findings from (developmental) psychology and pedagogy. Practitioners who are also trainers can then function as catalysts for the dissemination of knowledge to the community of interpreters.

Admittedly, the research community could probably do more to popularise its specialist knowledge. The names of both scientific journals dedicated exclusively to interpreting seem to suggest that popularisation was one of their incipient goals. By presenting itself as a 'newsletter', the *Interpreters' Newsletter* places itself in a corporate business market, rather than a scientific one, while *Interpreting* still identifies as a *Journal of Research and <u>Practice</u> in Interpreting* (my emphasis). If we look at the published content though, there is no denying that a shift has taken place to mainly scientific discourse over the last years. Again, popularisation is a mission that the professional organisations and researchers could take up jointly.

Last but not least, can interpreters help researchers deliver? In fact, they are the only ones who can. Time and again, researchers are forced to admit that their conclusions are based on a limited number of observations. This is partly due to a well-known reluctance by professional interpreters to be observed while interpreting, to be recorded or to participate in experimental research. Paradoxically, research on one of the most crucial subjects for conferences interpreter training, i.e., the successful or unsuccessful use of interpreting strategies by professional interpreters, is relatively scarce, because datasets are small and interpreters do not always allow researchers to disclose performance data. The few publicly available datasets, such as the video repository of the plenary meetings of the European Parliament, are therefore over-represented in the literature, even though they lack basic metadata such as the identities and backgrounds of the interpreters involved. Interpreters do have legitimate concerns related to the use of data, especially data that could constitute evidence of inadequate interpreting quality and cause reputational damage. In many experimental settings, they are requested to perform in conditions that differ dramatically from their ordinary working conditions. However, research protocols have evolved: data management plans have become widespread and participants are given detailed information on how data will be stored, accessed and used before they give their written consent. Anonymisation of data is common practice nowadays. The same can be said about the collection of corpus and observational data. A constructive dialogue between researchers and professional interpreters needs to be fostered on this point.

The general conclusion of this pamphlet is a worn-down cliché, I am afraid: more cooperation is needed. Cooperation among researchers, cooperation between professional interpreters and researchers, between researchers and employers, between tech developers and interpreters, between trainers and researchers. We are a small community with a disproportionally large overlap among these categories, yielding ideal circumstances for cooperation. *Eppur non si muove abbastanza!*

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Interpreting and Ethnography: Contexts Revisited

Ebru Diriker

100 Years of Conference Interpreting offered a valuable forum for interpreting scholars to take stock of interpreting research. It seems that research interest in interpreting studies has tended to gravitate towards subjects held to be particularly salient to the sub-field in question. In conference interpreting (CI) research, for instance, considerable attention has been paid to the cognitive aspects of the task, with many studies relying heavily on experimental designs. In community and signed language interpreting research, on the other hand, the marked salience of the interactional context has generated significant interest in the interplay between interpreters, their interpretation, and the socio-cultural contexts around them. Case studies have been quite prevalent, with researchers immersing themselves in interpreted situations and sharing the embodied experience of interactions as they unfold. Based on naturalistic methods such as participant observation, interviews, and the analysis of interpreted discourse (or combinations thereof), this type of research has generated multiple situated knowledges related to role conflicts, ethical dilemmas, the impact of turn-taking sequences, power relations, ideology, and so on.

Given the findings of the few studies that have explored CI as situated action, the lack of rich ethnographic data from this branch of interpreting appears all the more striking. Aiming for an in-depth understanding of a single case, or relatively small corpus, such studies have shown that social, institutional, political, ideological, and economic contexts inform the micro- and macro-level decisions of conference interpreters too. They have revealed that conference interpreters can, just like community interpreters, engage in face-saving strategies (Monacelli 2009), exert an influence on how meetings unfold (Diriker 2004), shape the institutional discourse (Beaton 2007, Duflou 2016), shift the speaking-subject in their interpretation (Diriker 2004), have strong and impactful feelings towards the contexts in which they work (Ayan 2019, Kent 2009, Dam and Zethsen 2013), etc. In that sense, they have shown that contexts matter in CI and that the presence and performance of conference interpreters both shape and are shaped by socio-cultural contexts.

Although contextual data has remained scant, in recent years there has been a remarkable surge in the accessibility and quantity of 'output' data, i.e., interpreted discourse and its source material, with international organisations such as the UN, EU, and the Council of Europe webstreaming their multilingual meetings. The availability of hours of original speeches and their interpretations into many languages has come to be a real game-changer in a field where previously the main way to assemble a corpus had been the arduous task of obtaining permission from the conference organisers to record conferences. Corpus-based interpreting research has made good use of this newly emerging data and investigated various patterns in the interpreted discourse. The output data, however, comes with little contextual information, creating a lacuna in what Geertz (1973) terms the 'thick description' of available data, which could otherwise help explain 'why' interpreters interpret the way they do, enabling researchers to turn 'big data' into 'deep data' (Fine and Abramson 2020).

At the time this opinion piece is being written, CI is being severely pummelled by a pandemic that has caught the world unprepared. Fear of the disease, lockdowns and travel bans have rendered typical 'conference contexts' more or less impossible, impelling the profession(al) towards remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) more rapidly than anyone could have imagined. On-site meetings have been cancelled and many meetings have gone online. According to ABI research, there has been an 80 % increase in upload traffic during Covid-19 (www.prnewsire.com). This development is also evidenced by the large number of meetings that are webstreamed or uploaded, thereby creating another surge in 'output' data while tearing apart interpreters, interlocutors and contexts, not to mention the researchers who try to make sense of it all.

Without a doubt, this situation constitutes a massive change, if not a crisis, for interpreting (as a practice and object of study) and ethnography as we know them. Both have typically relied on physical proximity. And both now need to revisit their fundamental concerns and methodologies.

Interpreting professionals and interpreting scholars alike will have to think about the implications of this rapid change in their field of activity. They will need to deal with the loss of typical assignments, visibility and even parts of their 'expertise'. Perhaps they will find alternative ways of engaging or novel ways of working in and exerting influence on interpreting contexts, but then again certain aspects of their shaping/constitutive power might be lost forever.

Many questions spring to mind. How is RSI changing the daily practices of interpreters, such as how they prepare, interpret and interact with colleagues/employers/the audience? Are people's expectations of CI changing? Is a shift from the expectation of 'accuracy' to that of 'satisfaction' becoming more pronounced (Buts 2020)? Are the skills needed of interpreters as 'experts' changing? Who is adapting, who is not, and why?

A survey by the Turkish Conference Interpreters' Association on the use of RSI during Covid-19 points to some interesting changes in the field. Conducted among 163 professional conference interpreters in early June 2020, the survey's results reveal the disruption caused by the pandemic with a quarter of the professional interpreters saying they had not worked a single day in three months. An overwhelming 96% acknowledged they saw many challenges in the move to RSI. And while some had done distance interpreting in a location provided by employers, 70% conceded they had never done RSI from their homes before. Interestingly, 80% of the latter group also displayed an impressive adaptability to extraordinary circumstances, stating that they had already prepared their infrastructure to do RSI from home or were thinking of doing so. Close to a half mentioned already taking an active 'expert' role in advising conference organisers on alternative RSI platforms, while 12.9% reported exerting strong enough influence on employers to change their minds on which RSI platforms to use. Interpreters also mentioned frustration with RSI, especially concerning the lack of communication with and support from a boothmate, technical problems stemming from organisers, the need to monitor multiple devices, and feeling more exhausted than when carrying out on-site interpreting (TKTD 2020).

The results clearly point out at how important it will be to understand the 'insider's position' in finer detail. Ironically, then, the current global context calls for the very contextualised understanding of changing practices, values, and politics that ethnography can provide, even as it precludes ethnography as a logistical possibility (Dehart 2020).

As a discipline that is dedicated to documenting societal change, ethnography will have to formulate ways to work through this unprecedented event (Kumar 2020). At a juncture when 'immersion' in physical settings is nearly impossible, and sometimes even fatal, what kinds of ethnographies will be possible going forward, and what can be gained by thinking beyond the dominant methodologies of the discipline? How can we contribute to a more robust understanding of the challenges that lie ahead when the current moment is forcing us to reimagine the ‘field’ in which we do our research (ibid.)? Discussions around such questions are starting to take place, and even more thorny issues are being debated, such as the ethical implications of how some researchers with big funding from western universities have long been subcontracting ‘facilitating researchers’ in the ‘Global South’ to do fieldwork in dangerous places but then claiming sole authorship of publications (Dunia et al. 2020).

In conference interpreting research, we have lost precious time in exploring the presence and performance of interpreters in on-site meetings. Perhaps now we can truly appreciate the importance of what we have neglected and develop novelBai and critical perspectives for approaching interpreting as situated action.

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Research *into* Interpreting: Prospects and Limitations (A Reply to B. Defrancq and E. Diriker)

Daniel Gile

Scientists extend human knowledge on the basis of information they gather by observing and measuring, and through reflection – Einstein's contribution to physics was conceptual. Research *strives* to describe phenomena and/or deliver answers to questions, and produces new data as well as ideas and generalisations (theories).

When collected rigorously, data are solid, but their interpretation is often uncertain. The history of science is rife with examples of the same data being interpreted differently by researchers. In conference interpreting research (CIR), Defrancq mentions Gile's data produced as supporting evidence for his Tightrope Hypothesis and Pym advancing his own risk-based interpretation of the data – which Gile considers unconvincing (e.g., Gile 2020, which also lists references with further evidence in support of the Tightrope Hypothesis). Moser-Mercer et al. (1998) produced experimental data on prolonged turns in the booth which they interpreted as showing a deterioration of quality, but do they really? When information shifts between source speeches and target speeches are documented, are they errors, tactics, or manifestations of the interpreter's ideology or facework? Research does not always offer clear-cut answers.

One of the reasons why interpretations of data can vary is that available methods, tools and additional empirical data are not sufficient to determine which if any is 'correct'. For a long time, samples in empirical CIR research tended to be small. With electronic corpora, this has partly changed, though, as stressed by Diriker, much contextual information is missing, and samples accessible through corpora are still biased, e.g., the over-representation of European Parliament meetings in corpus research. Another limitation arises from the small population of CIR researchers and the small volume of data they produce: most of them are also interpreting professionals and divide their time between teaching, interpreting and research. As can be seen in bibliometric sources, including BITRA and CIRIN, only a small proportion of them have a sustained research activity. In comparison with previous decades, CIR has indeed made progress. But the yearly volume of incremental research is limited, probably not more than a few hundred published items worldwide and far less than 100 from most single countries. The number of replications, an essential component in assessing the reliability of scientific findings and the value of specific research methods and designs, is a fraction of that. There is probably a substantial volume of unpublished data produced by MA students (see the entries in *CIRIN Bulletin* issues at www.cirinandgile.com over the years), but most of them are difficult to access either because their existence is not known to the wider CIR community or for linguistic reasons – e.g., when they are written in Chinese, Czech, Finnish, Korean etc.

The most influential CIR authors are still cited mainly for their ideas, less so for data they produce, and this creates a dynamic of its own, in which empirical findings are not given enough attention.

From the 1960s on, CIR has been delivering theories, including general ideas that interpreter trainers have largely adopted, Interpretive Theory and the Effort Models being two well-known examples from the 'West'.

As pointed out by Defrancq, it has also delivered some knowledge, but to a large extent, such knowledge is still fragmentary or uncertain: we know something about pupillometric variation in interpreting tasks, something about the effect of cognitive load on disfluencies. But we do not know much about the interpreters' maximum cognitive processing capacity, or how to predict the students' success or failure in conference interpreter training at admission to training programmes, or whether interpreting into one's A language or from one's A language is better. Some data are available, but not enough to provide clear-cut answers.

Being aware of the complexity of interactions between relevant variables in interpreting and of the small amount of empirical research that is produced by our small CIR population, researchers know that we cannot advance on these and other fundamental questions rapidly. Neither is knowledge derived from research so far enough to make researchers authoritative among practitioners, who have their own individual and collective knowledge based on many years of experience and introspection. Nor can CIR offer to practitioners knowledge that would change their status in the eyes of other stakeholders: interpreting is about skills and thematic and linguistic knowledge in the relevant topics of the meetings for which they work, not about profession-specific knowledge of the same nature as in medicine (e.g., findings on medical conditions and treatments) or the practice of law (legislation and case law).

Environmental CIR conditions as listed by Defrancq weigh heavily on experimental research with inferential statistics, less so on questionnaires, interviews and field observation, which generate data on feelings, attitude and behaviour. This line of research has been particularly productive in signed language interpreting research, where it has made organisations reconsider professional codes of conduct and even prompted legislative change with respect to the competence of Deaf jurors in court proceedings (Jemina Napier, personal communication). In conference interpreting too, it has generated interesting information on quality perception (e.g., studies by the ECIS group in Granada, Spain) and might well reveal disagreements among practitioners about received wisdom and make us reconsider some norms and practices.

But are practitioners willing to accept inconvenient truths and their implications? Defrancq and Diriker stress the importance of Remote Simultaneous Interpreting in the wake of the present Covid-19 pandemic. If research were to show that after a certain learning period, interpreting quality does not suffer from RSI from home provided certain technical adjustments are made, how will interpreters react to the practical consequences, to the loss of attractiveness of the profession and poorer working conditions, including remuneration?

Research is useful, but can only go so far at any time and must be handled with wisdom and care.

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Understanding RSI through Research (A Reply to B. Defrancq and E. Diriker)

Karin Sibul

Both Ebru Diriker and Bart Defrancq raise the question of how to better research conference interpreting (CI) and be more relevant under the changed circumstances, given the pandemic that has hit the world. Changes happening in the practice of CI also affect research into CI. As a conference interpreter myself, I am a "practisearcher" (Gile, 1994, 150) who is personally engaged in the field of interpreting, or perhaps rather a "histerpreter" (Takeda and Baigorri-Jalón, 2016, xi): a conference interpreter interested in the history of my profession.

In the hundred-year history of CI several significant shifts have taken place, such as the introduction of conference interpreting in 1919 and simultaneous interpreting in Nuremberg in 1945-1946. In 2020, we may have witnessed another such shift: the rapid spread of remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI). Óscar Jiménez Serrano (2019, 23) aptly summarises the introduction of RSI as a "truly explosive paradigm shift". The pandemic has made a quick and lasting impression on CI both on the institutional and private markets. Transitioning to remote interpreting is no longer simply a topic for discussion at conferences; it is a reality. The UN suggests on its Covid-19 page that RSI is becoming an established practice in multilingual meetings.

First, we have to agree on terminology. For AIIC, "'remote interpreting', 'video remote interpreting', 'remote simultaneous interpreting' (RSI) and even 'distance interpreting' are often used to mean the same thing" (2020, 4), whereas in actual fact these interpreting setups might be home-to-venue or hub-to-venue. At the Directorate-General for Interpretation in the European Commission (SCIC), the meaning of remote interpreting is limited to the use of cabled audio and video connections with the interpretation booths; the booths have split screens providing a global view of the room, the speaker and the chair.

A simple Google search comes up with numerous hits for RSI: companies that organise conferences and hire interpreters offer RSI as a cost-saving solution that does not need special equipment and saves on interpreter travel, accommodation and other expenses.

When the introduction of simultaneous interpretation was discussed at the UN (1945–1947), several consecutive interpreters were against it. They were "part of the machinery of international conferences and it was not going to be easy to put an end to their monopoly", concludes Jesús Baigorri-Jalón (2004, 50). Today researchers have pointed out similar resistance to RSI, and interpreters' enthusiasm "remains muted" (Seeber, Keller, Amos, and Hengl, 2019, 297). Transitioning from on-site to RSI could mean that if interpreters are fully removed, interpretation may become just another device, and the interpreters may lose their prestige. It is worth studying whether interpreters' dissatisfaction with this mode of delivery is partially due to similar psychological reasons as at the UN years ago.

Bart Defrancq points out that professional interpreters do not want to be observed. New methods should be devised to research the interpreter community working primarily for the private market, which is under pressure from agencies; those interpreters may well work alone from home or from an improvised hub with a colleague.

Research conducted in a specific setting in 2014 led to the conclusion that remote interpreting "is no longer perceived as more stressful than in-situ interpreting or as being detrimental to the quality interpreters are able to provide" (Seeber, Keller, Amos, and Hengl, 2019, 300). Such research should be revisited under the new circumstances, where interpreters have to work off-venue. But how to carry out such research? Studies like the one conducted by the Turkish Conference Interpreters' Association and described by Ebru Diriker offer a gratifying insight into novel ways of working. Interpreter-researchers could engage more in fieldwork research. Combining ethnographical methods with autobiographical writing could lead us to an autoethnographic study and an analysis of our own experience.

As a conference interpreter, I am looking forward to research that provides insight into changed working conditions and the implications thereof, interpreters' coping strategies when separated from their booth partner, their computer skills and responsibility to cope with unexpected technical glitches, their frustration, and their fear of failure due to audio-visual malfunction of the platform used. The question is to what extent video platform engineers understand the needs of interpreters. Promotional websites outline advantages for conference organisers and the audience, but what about the interpreters who, interpreting aside, also have to cope with technical aspects without immediate technical assistance? Even if the output data is recorded and available for the researcher, the latter will remain unaware of the circumstances the interpreter has to put up with: loss of audio-visual input, poor audio sound as the speaker delivers the speech via a phone standing on a street corner, lack of preparatory documents, no video input to see the visual material the speaker displays, etc. Research should break new ground to figure out how to protect interpreters' health and safety from "an early onset of fatigue" (Moser-Mercer, 2005, 727) and "psychological effects, including an increase in feelings of isolation and alienation" (Roziner and Shlesinger, 2010, 214). However, there is always the possibility that a future generation of technology-savvy interpreters will embrace new job opportunities arising from RSI.

Urgent research from four perspectives (industry, service providers, customers, interpreters) should be conducted. All agents – not only platforms, intermediary translation agencies and the audience, but also interpreters – are to be treated equally as research subjects.

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Question 5:

What is and will be the Impact of Remote Conference Interpreting?

DISTANCE INTERPRETING AND THE RISK OF ALIENATION

MATTHEW BALL

Just as technology has shaped conference interpreting since its birth at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, it will continue to shape the profession in the future. Without a doubt this future will hold an increasing use of distance interpreting (DI), which raises the concern of alienation among conference interpreters. I will explore how the profession evolves with technology, the factors that contribute to the feeling of alienation in DI and how to deal with the issue of interpreter alienation.

The good, the bad and the invisible

Simultaneous interpreting (SI) was the ground-breaking cousin to consecutive interpreting in the 1920s, when IBM patented the telephonic interpreting equipment invented by Filene and Finlay. Interpreters used to working alongside their clients in consecutive mode may have felt they were becoming invisible being relegated to a booth, but SI became widely accepted and used following the Nuremberg Trials.

A few decades later, the dawn of the information age fuelled rapid change as the workplace embraced telework and videoconferences thanks to ground-breaking developments in information and communications technologies (ICT). The transformation of the global communication landscape brought by the Internet in the 1990s led to the development of DI.

Despite all these technological advances, many interpreters seemed unaware of how ICT would change their work. This may be explained by the fact that the working environment had not undergone any fundamental changes in 50 years, as Panayotis Mouzourakis observed in an interview with Vincent Buck in 2000. Technical standards had improved sound quality and comfort, but the equipment used by interpreters – microphones, consoles and headphones – had not changed (Buck 2000).

The arguments in favour of DI were compelling: reducing the financial cost and environmental footprint associated with air travel, not to mention the personal cost for travellers who spend time in airports, airplanes and hotels. These undeniable benefits of DI for clients led to a surge in its use in business and community interpreting settings, while conference interpreting services in public and institutional settings were more cautious in adopting DI.

Naturally, many institutions were interested and carried out tests. Interpreters involved in the tests consistently rejected DI, judging it unacceptable and highlighting sound quality, loss of information and feelings of alienation (Korak 2012, Moser-Mercer 2003, Mouzourakis 2006).

While the institutional conference interpreting world was not yet ready to jump on the DI bandwagon, Mouzourakis foretold the sea of change that awaited the profession at the time (Buck 2000). Twenty years later, with the benefit of hindsight, Barry Slaughter Oleson described the profession as poised for change:

> The interpreting profession was on the edge of a cliff waiting for the right breeze to come along so we could safely test our new technological wings and then quickly fly back to safety. Then the winds of the COVID-19 pandemic began to howl, and everything changed. (Olsen 2020, para.4)

2020: Covid-19

The scale of this pandemic had not been experienced in generations: in a matter of weeks, public health officials across the world issued stay at home orders for all except essential workers. Workplaces were closed.

> Suddenly, almost overnight, the world moved online. As a result, videoconferencing became the principal way to interact. As international organizations, corporations and governments realized they would need to continue to operate virtually for the foreseeable future, remote interpreting quickly became a must-have. (Olsen 2020 paras. 5 & 6)

In April 2020, global downloads of web conferencing apps like Zoom, Teams, and Skype increased by more than 100 percent (Murphy 2020).

Some were prepared for this new virtual world, but others were not at all ready. For two legitimate reasons, most large organisations had not adopted DI. First, while tests had been carried out, the issues surrounding sound quality, quality of service, cognitive load, and workplace injuries were not resolved. Second, over the 50 years that traditional SI had been in place, these organisations had established professional practice standards and negotiated complex agreements with AIIC (the International Association of Conference Interpreters) and unions, which all were required to respect. These agreements contained no provisions for DI.

But in the context of the Covid-19 lockdown, governments and organisations had no choice but to implement DI. They scrambled to provide interpretation services remotely for hastily organised virtual meetings. The challenge of adjusting to virtual meetings was felt across organisations, from officials to meeting delegates. Everyone experienced the new phenomenon of fatigue and stress resulting from digital compression used in web conferencing – dubbed "Zoom fatigue" by news outlets (Murphy 2020).

Sound quality: interpreters versus clients

While clients were aware of the poor sound quality from web conferencing, most meeting participants attend meetings only occasionally. The impact was felt the most by interpreters, who work with compressed sound every day. If participants do not understand properly, they can ask questions or it can go unnoticed. If interpreters do not understand properly, they cannot interrupt to ask questions, as they are not delegates in the meeting. Interpreters must understand properly in order to follow the speaker's thoughts and reproduce them accurately, and they must do this over the sound of their own voice, which makes understanding even more difficult.

For interpreters, working with sound quality that is compromised may be worse than tiring and painful, it may prove dangerous to their health. Andrea Caniato posits that interpreters' reports of tinnitus, hyperacusis and even hearing loss are the result of a problem more complex than acoustic shocks, but rather the result of poor sound quality.

> The Covid19 crisis and lockdown…sparked a lively debate about [remote simultaneous interpreting, RSI] as a valid alternative to simultaneous interpreting from the booth. Dozens of platform reviews have been published and interpreter organisations have issued guidelines and recommendations. Little or no attention is paid here to the quality of sound feeds, which is more or less being taken for granted. (Caniato, 2020, para.3)

Many believe interpreters' symptoms were the result of sudden sound spikes, dubbed Acoustic Shock Disorder (ASD), but acoustic shock injuries had occurred in traditional settings and Caniato references studies that show similar symptoms reported by call centre workers who also work on a regular basis with poor quality sound (Caniato 2020). He warns that constant and repeated exposure to this type of sound

> keeps [the] middle ear muscles constantly contracted and working inefficiently for very long stints, [possibly leading] to chronic hypercontraction…and increase[d]… sensitivity to events that would normally not pose any threat to…ears (Caniato 2020, para.8).

In an article posted in May 2020, Cristian Guiducci points to the complex audio transmission chain as the culprit for the poor sound quality referenced by many interpreters in RSI and describes how the processing degrades sound. The resulting poor-quality sound is characterised in lay terms as muffled, tinny, and hollow. Experts refer to poor quality sound as having low signal-to-noise-ratio and refer to concepts such as excessive microphone gain, distortion, hum and artefacts.

A recipe for alienation

While interpreters have signalled the problems with sound quality in RSI settings, and have cited feelings of alienation when working remotely, cognitive and neurolinguistics researchers have studied listening effort, acoustic challenge and speech comprehension outside the context of interpreting. These results may link the challenges interpreters have described with general challenges in understanding speech and the feelings it can provoke.

Jonathan Peelle, a cognitive psychologist and neuroscientist, describes how extracting meaning from acoustically degraded speech requires additional cognitive support and that this can interfere with other operations such as language processing and memory, clearly relevant facts when it comes to interpreting. In a telling study, he demonstrates that even when speech is not degraded, memory is affected when later parts of speech are degraded (Peelle 2018). This research shows a clear link between acoustic challenge, listening effort and the ability of interpreters to work with degraded audio and provide quality results without substantially greater cognitive effort and load.

Beyond "mere" cognitive load, listening effort may also impact interpreters' affect and motivation. Alexander Francis uses behavioural and psychophysiological measures to evaluate speech comprehension. His research goes beyond cognition – that is, how our brain's neural systems function in information processing – and delves into the affective and motivational response to increased listening effort (Francis and Love 2019).

Francis and Love explain that methods used to objectively quantify listening effort may ultimately reflect a complex interaction between information processing systems. In their aptly titled article *Listening effort: Are we measuring cognition or affect, or both?* they explore this very question and point to findings in related research that when listening is too effortful, it may lead to tuning out or giving up, which in interpreting implies a negative impact on quality. Added to this, "expending effort in listening may increase stress and fatigue and […] have long-term consequences for mental and physical health." (Francis and Love 2019, 27).

Clearly the affective side of effortful listening, which accompanies speech that is difficult to understand, is an important piece of the puzzle explaining why interpreters experience alienation and this relationship would benefit from research using interpreters as subjects.

Scientific studies also suggest that understanding acoustically degraded speech decreases the motivation to work, resulting in negative impacts on mental and physical health. Working under physically and mentally challenging conditions could be clear causes of the sense of alienation described by many interpreters.

Interpreter alienation may also result from a loss of control in general and a lack of feedback from clients, something conference interpreters working in a traditional setting obtain through visual cues from the booth or when they step out of the booth to get a document or interact with clients or delegates for other reasons.

One final thought on the risk of interpreter alienation: if everyone were in the same boat, interpreters could take solace that they were suffering just like their clients. But if interpreters feel they are bearing the brunt of change, or that the change is imposed for the sake of convenience or expedience and that clients do not appreciate or understand how DI affects them, this alienation will be felt even more strongly and will also impact the quality of their work, according to research.

A recipe for success

The recipe for success with DI is a combination of technology and expertise that must be harnessed to create an experience that clients will appreciate.

DI technology must be improved. Interpreters must not pay the price in hearing or mental health for expediency's sake. For DI to succeed in delivering quality service, the entire audio chain – from the microphone capturing the speaker, through the entire transmission chain that delivers it to the interpreters' ears, and then back out to clients – must be professional grade. The sound quality and the service quality will only be as good as the weakest link in this chain. Hardware, network connections, entire systems need upgrading for DI to provide clients with high quality service and to attract and retain the best interpreters. The challenge for the interpreting sector will be to convince clients and organisations of the added value of a quality DI environment.

While improved technology will cost more than some wish to spend, the good news is that DI generates considerable savings. Take, for example, the travel costs associated with one two-day event with 300 participants. 300 return airfares. 600 hotel nights. 600 meals and per diems. Assuming everyone travels one half day to and from this event, the salaries or professional fees add up to more than a further 300 days. You get the idea. The cost of technology upgrades to provide high quality sound and image transmission can be justified and offset by these considerable savings.

In addition to upgrading technology, it is critical to rely on the knowledge and experience of audio-visual (AV) and information technology (IT) experts. For DI to flourish, the best-qualified and most experienced experts must be involved and their recommendations must be heeded. In traditional SI, interpreters have always relied on AV experts. In DI, as the AV and IT fields blend, videoconferencing experts will continue to serve interpreters and clients alike. Their contribution to this endeavour must not be underestimated.

Finally, in order to reduce or eliminate interpreter alienation, it would be smart to allow interpreters to regain a measure of control in their work. To do so, organisations responsible for interpreting services should consult unions and professional associations in developing new DI working conditions and agreements. Interpreters want to provide high-quality service to clients – it is bred in the bone. While there is no consensus among interpreters on all matters related to DI, the good news is that there is a rich history of cooperation between interpreting organisations and professional associations and unions.

Time may prove that DI is as ground-breaking to the profession as SI was at the Nuremberg Trials. If this turns out to be true, the DI technology being used today will likely evolve as much as SI technology did between 1945 and 2000. Finally, for interpreters to feel connected, rather than alienated, it is important to remember the fundamentals of interpreting.

The role of technology in interpreting

While technology most certainly transforms *how* we work, it does not necessarily change *what* we do or *why* we do it. For example, today we use our smartphones to order groceries from the supermarket and have them delivered to our home. However, fifty years ago, our parents used land-line telephones to call the corner grocer to place an order and have them delivered. Going further back, one hundred years ago horse-drawn carriages delivered milk to our grandparents' homes. Same task, different technologies. Our fundamental human endeavours are timeless, but technology affects how we go about them.

So it is with interpreting. Clearly, DI is relatively new and only time will tell if DI will replace traditional interpreting. More than likely it will complement it to some degree as we determine under what circumstances we prefer to meet in person and when to meet virtually.

The act of interpreting will remain and interpreters will evolve with technology.

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The Impact of Remote Conference Interpreting: Revolution vs Evolution

Uros Peterc

The *New Normal*

"Perhaps the sharpest tool in any country's arsenal is a qualified, professional and sharp interpreter." That was my concluding remark at the opening ceremony of the *100 Years of Conference Interpreting* event in Geneva in October 2019, oblivious to what 2020 had in the making for us.

A year later many claim we are indeed a world at war. A war not between nations, but a war of all nations against a new virus. Lockdown, quarantine, face-mask, hand-hygiene, social distancing, travel restrictions, and self-declaration are just some of the new buzzwords for 2020 – and the topic of almost every headline out there.

In the world of conference interpreting *cancelled* and *postponed* have become our new reality. The coveted *contract day* is but a memory of the good old times for many, indeed too many of us. Even its once less desirable sibling, the *option* is but a pipe dream for the freelancer living in this "new normal". Unemployment and loss of income have become our newest and most serious occupational hazards. The aforementioned qualified, professional and sharp interpreter is conspicuously absent from the arsenals our governments, companies and international organisations revert to in fighting the pandemic.

All gloom and doom? Not so fast!

Interpreting is a funny business. To be a good or, better yet, an outstanding interpreter, one has to possess a few basic qualities: a great deal of sheer talent, a generous helping of general knowledge (the famous *culture générale*), not to mention the sine qua non – mastery of languages. If one is running a bit shy of one or the other, then experience and technique can come to the rescue. But if there is a single thing that interpreters really *are* utterly good at then it's the ability to rapidly adapt, to improvise, to find solutions to impossible or sometimes even incomprehensible problems, to decipher the essence of an ever so blurred message and to find their way out of the darkest intellectual alley and emerge triumphant, ideally without anyone even noticing the sheer hell we've just singlehandedly survived.

So what seems to be stopping us collectively, as a profession, from rapidly adapting to this new reality, from improvising our way through, from finding a solution to this unprecedented predicament? Why are we failing at finding our way out of this impasse and why are we not – at least not yet – emerging as the inventive phoenix from what some fear are the ashes of a bygone era?

I can already hear voices saying, "because we haven't embraced remote interpreting soon enough". It's not that simple. Distance interpreting, or simply *remote*, to use its now household appellation in professional circles, is not necessarily the silver bullet that will solve all our problems. Let's have a closer look.

There are, to my mind, three main families of factors impeding the immediate and generalised deployment of remote as the new preferred or generalised vehicle of providing interpretation services.

Firstly, connectivity: the overall quality of systems and platforms, connections, input and output devices, and their integration with existing conferencing systems;

Secondly, security: a large portion of our work is conducted in more or less secure settings which cloud-based technology with dispersed teams struggles to guarantee;

Thirdly, acceptance: among organisers, clients, participants, and interpreters – across the staff-freelance divide.

Connectivity and security are technical aspects which, sooner or later, will be solved. The main stumbling block and primordial policy issue, however, is and will remain what I refer to above as *acceptance*. And this fits in perfectly with the notion of revolution vs evolution. Forced acceptance vs organic acceptance. This applies not only to interpreters. Participants are increasingly suffering from videoconference fatigue. They just don't like it, simple as that. Even though so much of our 21st century lives take place on-screen, there is no substitute to real interaction.

The business of interpreting has been through all this before, the most obvious parallel being that of simultaneous taking over the international conference circuit from consecutive. The fears at the time were much the same. Economic, philosophical, and logistical considerations were put forward. Doctrine and dogma were summoned to the battlefield. Pride and prejudice played their part, but so did sense and sensibility. War and peace, at least, were kept at bay. Though there are accounts of friendships broken and enemies made over the whole thing.

Our profession has successfully evolved through the centuries. Exponentially so over the last 100 years, as it took on the guise of multilingual conference interpreting as we know it today. Many a revolution in its time is today seen as mere natural progression. Once a niche for a select few, interpreting today is a mainstream profession with a huge diversity of interests. Yet, we are notoriously individualistic professionals and that does not help our collective cause.

Choices will have to be made, though. Are we interpreters going to shape the world around us? Is the world going to change for our sake? Unlikely. Every day we hear, see and read that the world as we knew it is changing profoundly. Indeed, it has changed considerably already. "New normal" is a notion we are confronted with on a daily basis.

We need to start asking ourselves some very uncomfortable questions: How long can we, as individuals, still afford to "sit this one out"? How much longer until our savings dry up if they haven't already? How much longer before institutional interpretation departments undergo restructuring and/or repositioning? How much longer before we might have to swallow our pride and ask for assistance from solidarity funds? Can we prevent an outright confrontation between salaried and freelance interpreters around the issues of remote, booth sharing, etc.? Does going remote spell the end of the single professional address or domicile as we know it? Are we deep enough in this mess to be able to have a meaningful, realistic debate about the way forward without the tarnish of false pride, outdated truths and long debunked myths? These are the questions each and every one of us in the interpreting profession has a duty to ask themselves – very seriously and very honestly, all taboos set aside. And then, what might first have seemed as a revolution, will become our natural evolution.

No, remote will not replace on-site interpretation, just as simultaneous did not wipe the world clean of consecutive. It is counter to the human condition. But embracing it as a new tool that, in all professional honestly does indeed fit certain scenarios well, is not tantamount to sacrilege. It can be an opportunity to expand our reach. Much less is it sacrilege to use it as a tool to help keep interpreters at work, allow conferences to take place and to keep multilingualism alive in these extraordinary times of crisis and emergency.

And, once this is over, we will be back in the booth armed with a new tool broadening our array of cutting-edge skills and, no doubt, sharing many an anecdote about how we got there.

Courage!

ÉVOLUTION DANS L'ALIÉNATION : CRAINTES FONDÉES OU RÉTICENCES D'UNE PROFESSION RÉFRACTAIRE? (UNE RÉPONSE À M. BALL ET U. PETERC)

RAWDHA CAMMOUN-CLAVERIA

Un isolement virtuel bien réel

Dans le monde du tout virtuel, l'impact néfaste d'une qualité de son médiocre ou pour le moins extrêmement aléatoire est indéniable. Les systèmes de visioconférence, quels qu'ils soient, s'avèrent, pour l'heure, incapables de garantir une qualité de son égale à celle dont bénéficient les interprètes et les participants en mode présentiel : que l'interprète travaille à distance, en simultanée la plupart du temps, ou en consécutive, la piètre qualité du son brouille les pistes et l'oblige à extirper un message souvent noyé dans un magmas de mots inintelligibles.

Mais la qualité du son est loin d'être le seul facteur qui alimente le sentiment d'aliénation ressenti, à juste titre, par l'interprète qui travaille en mode virtuel. Une précision s'impose : la téléinterprétation est pratiquée sous deux formes qui se sont « démocratisées », quasiment du jour au lendemain, depuis que la crise sanitaire a frappé le monde en 2020: le télétravail en mode hub ou depuis le domicile.

Le télétravail en mode hub consiste, en substance, à rassembler l'équipe d'interprètes dans un local pleinement équipé (cabines, consoles physiques, techniciens, etc.). Les participants, eux, sont à distance.

Le télétravail depuis le domicile de l'interprète implique, en revanche, l'utilisation de son propre équipement (ordinateur, tablette, smartphone, casque et micro intégré), de sa propre connexion internet et la console se réduit à une interface virtuelle que l'interprète doit apprendre à manipuler parallèlement à une multitude d'autres fonctions. Cette configuration touche davantage le marché privé que le marché institutionnel. Les quelques lignes qui suivent visent cette configuration en particulier.

La différence majeure entre ces deux modes est la « co-localisation »: le mode hub, en dépit de ses limites, a le mérite de permettre aux interprètes de travailler ensemble, de se voir à travers la vitre, de s'entraider, comme dans une configuration conventionnelle, tandis que téléinterpréter depuis le domicile fait voler en éclat ce rempart à la fois réconfortant et utile, les interprètes n'ayant accès à leurs collègues que par des moyens virtuels. Exit l'entraide entre concabin.e.s si nécessaire à l'esprit d'équipe.

Ingrédients de la fragilisation d'une profession

Le sentiment d'aliénation ne provient pas de la nécessité de s'ajuster aux nouvelles technologiques et d'acquérir de nouvelles compétences. C'est au contraire une aptitude qui reflète une capacité d'adaptation dont les interprètes professionnels peuvent s'enorgueillir. Le sentiment de dépossession qui s'empare d'un interprète qui télétravaille depuis son domicile s'explique par d'autres facteurs :

En premier lieu, l'invisibilité. Celle-ci fait partie de son ADN : un interprète qui se respecte est un interprète dont on ne remarque pas la présence, qui se fond dans le décor et dont on confond la prestation avec celle de l'orateur. Mais l'invisibilité qui découle du tout virtuel pose problème. Non seulement l'interprète est invisible « physiquement » pour son client, mais il l'est aussi pour son/sa concabin.e avec qui il ne peut plus partager ses doutes d'un regard et dont il ne sait pas s'il rencontre les mêmes difficultés. Or, un simple regard, un document tendu, un chiffre glissé en toute discrétion ou un sourire bienveillant influe indubitablement sur la qualité du travail et sur le moral de l'interprète. Seul derrière ses écrans, la médiocrité du son aidant, l'interprète est plus démuni que jamais. Il se sent « hors-sol ».

Ensuite, téléinterpréter depuis le domicile fait peser sur les épaules de l'interprète de nouvelles responsabilités. Stabilité de la connexion internet, câblage correct, environnement propice au travail sont du ressort d'un interprète désormais livré à lui-même et tenu pour responsable en cas de défaillance technique ou de nuisance sonore.

La voie sinueuse d'une acceptation éclairée

Est-ce à dire que la profession doive se replier sur elle-même dans un refus catégorique d'embrasser ce changement au motif qu'il serait source d'aliénation ? Certainement pas.

La téléinterprétation est un phénomène qui s'impose à notre profession dans un monde désormais « zoomifié ». C'est ainsi et les interprètes en ont pris acte. Mais la voie de l'acceptation d'un changement si brutal, ne peut se résumer à une adhésion sans réserve. L'acceptation éclairée découle au contraire d'un processus complexe qui oscille entre contrainte et assimilation, doutes et réflexion. Il ne s'agit donc pas tant d'accepter tout bonnement un phénomène face auquel on serait impuissant ou d'y opposer une fin de non-recevoir mais de se (re)positionner. Il appartient aux individus mais surtout à leurs Associations professionnelles de mener une discussion vitale pour l'avenir de la profession: Quid de l'adresse professionnelle dans un univers virtuel qui redessine les contours de marchés jadis plus ou moins protégés ? Comment se prémunir du rouleau compresseur que constituent les plateformes commerciales de visioconférence dont le modèle économique agressif menace notre existence en tant qu'interprètes professionnels ainsi que nos moyens de subsistance ? Quels compromis la profession doit-elle consentir sans pour autant céder aux sirènes de compromissions périlleuses ?

Le rôle des Associations professionnelles

Ne nous y méprenons pas : la téléinterprétation est là pour durer. Elle trouvera sa niche, c'est certain. D'ailleurs, contrairement à un mythe réconfortant auquel on se plaît à penser, nombreux sont les participants qui voient dans les réunions virtuelles une occasion de faire entendre leurs voix en participant à des fora auxquels ils n'auraient jamais eu accès autrement, malgré la frustration et la lassitude qu'engendre ce mode d'interaction purement virtuel. Par contre l'interprète, lui, ne doit pas être sommé d'accepter cette nouvelle donne sans qu'il ait voix au chapitre. Mais le débat à lui seul ne suffit pas et doit se doubler d'une volonté politique assumée par les organes directeurs de ces Associations professionnelles qui nous représentent, telle l'AIIC, pour que cette discussion ne reste pas purement théorique. Une piste de réflexion pourrait s'articuler, par exemple, autour de la nécessité de se réapproprier son outil de travail pour réduire la dépendance de l'interprète vis-à-vis des fournisseurs de plateformes qui entendent mener la danse. Tout le problème est là.

Ce débat est plus pressant que jamais à l'heure où cette nouvelle normalité n'aura pas réussi à éliminer une constante tenace : s'affranchir de ce sentiment d'aliénation est possible à condition que l'interprète dépossédé de ses moyens de production ait une prise sur l'évolution de la profession, qu'il reconquiert son outil de travail. C'est pourquoi, l'interprète aussi individualiste soit-il, a besoin de l'éclairage d'une Association professionnelle audacieuse, qui pose le problème sans détour et propose une voie à suivre. Cette voie ne peut qu'être collective, faute de quoi l'interprète ne sera plus qu'une icône sur une interface virtuelle.

Dans une profession en passe d'être atomisée, le collectif sera notre seule planche de salut.

Déconnectés dans la Connexion (Une Reponse à M. Ball et U. Peterc)

Sophie Hengl

Appelée à réagir aux articles de Uros Peterc et de Matthew Ball, je me livre dans ce texte à une réflexion qui se fonde essentiellement sur la brève expérience que j'ai gagnée en télé-interprétation pendant les 9 derniers mois à mon domicile professionnel, Bruxelles. Il n'est pas évident d'exprimer un avis clair sur l'impact de l'interprétation à distance (RSI) sur l'interprétation à l'heure actuelle. Dans l'univers de l'interprétation de conférence, qui est celui que je connais, nous n'en sommes qu'au début de l'expérience RSI à si grande échelle. Nous manquons de recul devant une technique qui se développe vite, voire dans la précipitation. De surcroît, le grand facteur perturbateur de l'année qu'est la pandémie déteint sur notre réflexion et notre ressenti de la RSI telle que nous la pratiquons aujourd'hui. Pour certains collègues, la RSI n'est qu'un outil provisoire activé dans l'urgence sanitaire - on finira bien par tous revenir en salle de réunion. Pour d'autres, la RSI est l'avenir, pour d'autres encore le début de la fin. Qui plus est, aujourd'hui, et depuis des mois déjà, les interprètes connaissent des réalités professionnelles plus divergentes encore qu'auparavant. Entre ceux qui travaillent tous les jours et ceux qui ne travaillent pas du tout, ceux qui interprètent depuis chez eux et ceux qui se rendent sur place. Ceux qui travaillent en RSI à faible dose et ceux qui essaient d'éviter que leur charge hebdomadaire en RSI n'augmente. Ceux qui veulent enfin se remettre au travail, et ceux qui cherchent à tout prix à le quitter. Ceux qui y voient une chance et ceux qui y voient notre perte. Nous n'avons pas les mêmes priorités, les mêmes conceptions de ce qui est urgent.

En ce moment, la RSI permet à certains d'entre nous de survivre, elle nous permet de maintenir la visibilité de la profession, de rester utiles à nos clients, de préserver (sauver, nous dit-on) le plurilinguisme. Parmi les interprètes qui ont la chance de travailler, nombreux sont ceux qui sont prêts à s'accommoder des effets moins agréables de la RSI, pour autant que l'interprétation à distance reste pour l'essentiel passagère, et que l'on puisse espérer des temps meilleurs, le retour à la normale – *the old normal* de l'interprétation de conférence. En attendant, ils font le dos rond - nous faisons le dos rond. Je nous observe en réunion, devant nos écrans et les salles vides, et je nous regarde adopter notre position de sécurité pendant les derniers tests de son auprès des participants. Je nous vois secouer la tête, lever les yeux au ciel de la cabine, je nous vois rire-pleurer-nous énerver-chercher le regard compatissant d'un collègue lorsque, tôt ou tard, le discours finit par devenir métallique, les mots nous parviennent en accéléré, hachés, étouffés, distordus. Et, parfois amusés, souvent désespérés de cette matière première sonore grotesque, de ce palais des glaces auditif, je nous vois déployer notre réflexe premier quand ça devient difficile : nous nous accrochons, nous forçons un peu plus encore l'écoute - nous activons nos mécanismes de compensation. Mais au lieu de demander à notre cerveau de déchiffrer un accent opaque, ou de deviner le sens d'une phrase à syntaxe approximative, de trouver la sortie d'obscurs méandres discursifs tels que le décrit Uros Peterc, nous lui demandons d'entendre et de traiter l'inaudible et l'intraitable :

> Technicien - *Apologies for the sound quality. It's beyond our control*
> Participant - *the only solution is to listen to one of the translators*
> *(trouvé sur le "chat" des participants qui défilait sur mon écran de cabine)*

Pour l'instant, nous sauvons la mise, à nos dépens, à une technologie encore largement défaillante pour les interprètes et parfois aussi pour leurs clients, une technologie qui n'est pas conçue pour répondre à nos besoins. Matthew Ball décrit les conséquences d'une qualité audio insuffisante pour les interprètes. Outre toutes sortes de troubles physiques et nerveux, il relève l'une des réactions psychologiques les plus redoutables pour quiconque aime son métier : le sentiment d'aliénation. On décroche, on abandonne intérieurement, on arrête l'effort - et on perd en qualité. Cette perte de qualité, elle, exacerbe une aliénation qui transcende les difficultés techniques. Matthew Ball l'effleure, mais ne s'attarde pas dessus. Pourtant c'est elle qui s'avère particulièrement problématique, puisqu'elle ne trouvera pas de réponse dans la technique : étant donné les exigences rigoureuses que nous nous imposons à nous-mêmes, que nous avons été formatés à scrupuleusement respecter, il n'est pas concevable, à terme, de nous satisfaire de la qualité médiocre que nous devons nous résoudre à fournir tant que le son est mauvais (et je ne parle même pas de l'image). Et j'entends bien Uros Peterc nous assurer que les problèmes d'ordre technique que nous rencontrons actuellement en RSI finiront par être résolus. Mais lorsque le son et l'image seront parfaits, et ils le sont parfois, pourrons-nous vraiment revenir à la qualité à laquelle nous avons appris à aspirer ? Même opérée dans un cadre technique impeccable, la RSI exacerbe toutes sortes de maux dont nous étions déjà nombreux à souffrir et qui ont été suffisamment développés et débattus dans la littérature spécialisée : perte d'empathie, perte de l'illusion de participer au débat, dégradation du sentiment d'utilité, perte de motivation lorsque nous constatons que personne ne nous écoute, etc. Tout comme, au long de cette pandémie, la visioconférence a souvent été critiquée pour la fatigue, ainsi que la perte de communication et de motivation qu'elle entraîne, la RSI réduit les échanges interprétés à leur strict minimum communicatif. Elle précipite la dissolution du contact. Pire, la RSI distribuée prive l'interprète de son plus grand complice, le concabin, la concabine, l'isole un peu plus encore des échanges, le laissant seul avec ses chiffres lus à toute vitesse, ses doutes, sa responsabilité technologique et souvent encore, juridique.

Saurons-nous, alors, nous adapter à la RSI en maintenant nos exigences de qualité ? Pourrons-nous *évoluer*, pour reprendre le terme d'Uros Peterc, dans le sens des technologies de plateforme ? Les plateformes constituent-elles un environnement suffisamment favorable, même en admettant avec beaucoup d'optimisme que la RSI ne devienne pas plus qu'un outil complémentaire à l'interprétation *in situ* ? Et quand est-ce que l'environnement devient trop hostile pour pouvoir s'adapter ? L'argument selon lequel nous serions capables d'adaptation puisque les interprètes se sont bien adaptés à la simultanée il y a cent ans me semble discutable. Depuis cent ans, la technologie s'est adaptée à l'interprète tout autant que l'interprète s'est adapté à la technologie. La technologie, l'interprétation de conférence, et les interprètes se sont professionnalisés ensemble - et ce, à la mesure de la valeur que l'on prêtait au travail des interprètes. Il est loin d'être acquis que dans le courant des quarante prochaines années (je n'ose pas dire cent), la technologie s'adaptera aux besoins des interprètes comme elle l'a fait au cours des cent dernières années. Dans ce cas, si la RSI constitue l'avenir vers lequel nous sommes appelés à évoluer, partiellement ou totalement, nous devrons probablement adopter un autre type de métier, une autre définition de notre rôle et de notre effort. Peut-être faudra-t-il finir d'assumer définitivement le passage du rôle de communiquant à celui de restituant ? Sortir d'un exercice dynamique pour s'insérer dans un travail plus machinal. En tout état de cause, l'évolution allant de pair avec la sélection naturelle, dans cette jungle d'interprètes sans équipe, sans domicile professionnel, sans technicien, sans contact réel avec le client (la notion de réel sera probablement aussi à revoir), la loi du plus fort ne sera pas la loi du meilleur. Ce bouleversement de l'ordre du monde de l'interprétation de conférence, dont le point cardinal est pour l'instant encore l'excellence, aura un impact profond sur notre fonctionnement professionnel individuel et collectif, sur les compétences auxquelles nous formerons nos étudiants, sur notre degré d'acharnement cognitif et intellectuel, notre gestion de la difficulté "en cabine". Une évolution à la baisse dans un certain sens, sans être une régression pour autant. Une mutation - de préférence accompagnée de près par les professionnels de l'interprétation - vers un exercice, des aptitudes et vers une définition de l'interprète qu'il nous reste à repenser - rapidement.

Question 6:

What is the Future of Multilingualism?

Shaping the Future as a Global Community

Florika Fink-Hooijer

Should anyone doubt the importance of multilingualism to the EU, they have only to look up the very first legal act ever adopted by its institutions, way back in 1958. Regulation 1/58 establishes the principle of equality among the working languages of the European Union. Since then, successive generations of interpreters at DG SCIC have made multilingualism a reality in the interest of the European project as a whole and given meaning to the EU's motto – "united in diversity". Today's conference interpreting market is vast, dynamic and multi-faceted. It is the result of a 100-year journey that was made possible by the vision of a small number of pioneers who turned a practice into a profession. The reason we can celebrate such a centennial is that we stand on the shoulders of giants, to whom we owe our gratitude. What started off as a handful of women and men has turned into a global community of practising interpreters, trainers and researchers, who contribute daily to the reputation of the profession. Interpreters were present at every turn of every major political event. They did not just find out about the news, they made it. They did not just read about history, they helped write it.

Of course, a lot has changed since the time of those early pioneers. Indeed, the last 30 years alone have seen profound changes in the interpreting world. Anyone who started working for DG SCIC in the early 1990s will remember an EU made up of 12 Member States with 9 working languages. Consecutive interpretation was still common practice in certain types of meeting. The Internet was in its infancy, and communication took place by telephone, fax or paper. Interpreters' assignments were posted on a sheet of paper pinned to a wall. Glossaries were kept in personal booklets, many colleagues carried around paper dictionaries and the Commission's official travel agency organised all missions abroad. The daily reality for new recruits in today's DG SCIC is one of 24 working languages and online programmes, glossaries and speaking points. As of next year, our interpreters will be "augmented" by using a tailor-made digital toolbox for automatic terminology extraction for each assignment, live chatting among interpreters during sessions and digital and intelligent documentation support.

But while change has been a constant feature of the past 100 years, the core concerns of the profession remain the same. Take the demand for quality, for example. What is quality? How do we measure it? How can it be maintained or even improved in an ever-changing environment? Or do we need to become more pragmatic and less self-centred? Part of the answer probably lies in the training that is offered to budding interpreters. New digital skills are required and must be integrated into today's curriculum.

All the changes described above were incremental, yet real, and it would be foolish to assume that we can simply sit back and expect the status quo to endure. The only constant element over the last 100 years has been change. So far, most have feared the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) replacing live interpreters. Yet, the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates that a crisis can hit without any warning, but also that change can be an opportunity and act as an accelerator to modernise and make the profession fit for the unexpected future.

Preparing for change

One of the ways in which DG SCIC has attempted to handle future change is precisely to connect even more to the global community by offering and hosting a digital platform for exchange – the Knowledge Centre on Interpretation (KCI)[1]. DG SCIC has the leverage and the know-how to help build capacities in interpreting throughout the globe, and is not shying away from assuming its responsibility as a global standard-setter.

The KCI is a platform that offers access to knowledge sharing, training and interdisciplinary interaction, and aspires to be an advocate for all. Its ambitions are to become "the place to be" for the global conference interpreting community but also for many other disciplines too – students, trainers, academic researchers, and industry representatives to name but a few.

The KCI is a space to share, connect and exchange in a collaborative way precisely about the changes the profession is going through, the challenges it faces and how we can work together to safeguard multilingualism and

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/education/knowledge-centre-interpretation/knowledge-centre-interpretation_en

demonstrate its added value in this globalised world. The KCI exists in the 24 EU official languages and is expanding to cover other world languages. Furthermore, members can set up communities to discuss different points of interest in any of those languages.

One other field in which DG SCIC uses its leverage and know-how to help build capacities in interpreting around the globe is teaching and ensuring the succession planning of future generations of interpreters. We have a solid network of universities in Europe with which we cooperate, and which were instrumental in setting up the EMCI (European Masters in Conference Interpreting). Pedagogical assistance is given not only to European countries, but there have also been projects with Africa, Cuba, Mongolia, Vietnam, Macao and China. Precisely because communication is global, so too the standards of the interpreting profession should be global.

This is why our efforts need to be global. We can learn from each other and get inspiration and solutions to common challenges (from training to defining quality or succession planning).

Facing challenges

One such common challenge is the Covid-19 crisis, which hit the world in 2020 and showed beyond any doubt that we are all in it together. Conference interpreting activity almost came to a standstill. For a few weeks, it looked as if the profession had even become obsolete. Institutions, private companies, NGOs and the like drastically reduced their interaction, as did – for a while – the interpreters they were used to working with. However, alternative solutions such as videoconferencing soon came to replace – at least temporarily – face-to-face meetings. Such tools were known to interpreters but were still used to a lesser degree. All of a sudden, they became the standard for meeting organisers. The key word was business continuity. In the midst of all the confusion and the financial loss for many interpreters around the world, there was a silver lining: their customers were willing to keep hiring them as long as they were ready to embrace new tools.

As I write these lines, it is hard to say exactly which of these new technological solutions will stay and which will once more disappear, but it is clear to all that the world will not be the same after the coronavirus crisis. For that reason, the community will have to keep an open mind and be ready to test new tools in order to avoid blind spots and not let others – such as industries, for example – carry the debate.

In 2019, DG SCIC tested several (online) interpreting platforms for a very simple reason: it was a part of a new market reality and it made no sense to ignore them, especially given the advantages for multilingual broadcasting and remote participation. As things turned out, platform technology was crucial in ensuring remote participation during the peak of the 2020 crisis; an innovative technical lifeline solution to keep multilingualism and the interpretation profession alive at a moment when monolingual videoconferencing was the norm. At the same time, our priority during the Covid-19 pandemic had always been to look after the health and safety of interpreters through radically new measures such as social distancing, Plexiglas partitions in booths, increased virtualisation of training and accreditation tests, etc.

As worldwide, international organisations like the European Commission but also the private market are scaling the technical availability of multilingual interpretation via platforms, the time has come to identify a new legal framework under which these new delivery methods can be used. Deciding on adequate working conditions for interpretation in virtual or hybrid multilingual meetings with new technology while trying to optimise the technical conditions will be the next key challenge for the profession.

Leading the way

As political leaders keep stressing, the future will have to be greener, with delegations trying to reduce their carbon footprint by flying less. This is increasingly likely to go hand-in-hand with some of the new technologies described above. Interpreters will need to stay open to such societal trends and to shape new tools if they want to avoid being overtaken by new solutions.

Looking back at the last 100 years of conference interpreting, it is clear that interpreters have much to celebrate and much to be proud of. Perhaps they will pause to reflect on all the collective progress achieved and realise that a lot of it was the result of constant change. Change in their working methods, in their relationship with customers, in technology, in training and in many more aspects of their daily lives. Hopefully, they will also realise that the future is not a threat, but rather an opportunity to embrace further change and keep their profession indispensable to their clients, an opportunity to offer more and better services while safeguarding a working environment conducive to quality. One thing is certain: DG SCIC will play an active part in shaping the future of the profession and in guaranteeing that its political leaders see the added value that EU interpreters and multilingualism bring to the whole European project.

The Conference of the Future

Agnieszka Walter-Drop

Shaping the present and investing in the future of conferencing at the European Parliament

As we come together to reflect on the 100th anniversary of the International Labour Organization and the legacy we are left with at this landmark moment, it also feels important to recall the context of our times. Looking across the globe, to the political institutions and organisations for which many of us work, it is clear that multilateral diplomacy is something to be cherished and defended, today more than ever. In this context, conference interpreting is the bearing that allows the wheels of a multilingual debate to turn smoothly. It is right that it should be celebrated for its achievements and its role safeguarded for the future. Conference interpreting has indeed come a very long way in a hundred years. During the conference *100 Years of Conference Interpreting*, presentations and discussions on interpreting practice and interpreter training pointed to some key milestones in the profession: 1) the growth of simultaneous interpreting and the technology underpinning it; 2) the establishment of an organisation to support the interests of practitioners of the profession (AIIC); 3) the birth of organised interpreter training and growing recognition for the status and qualifications of conference interpreters around the world.

In the European Parliament, the interpreting service has also undergone some profound changes. Most notably the "big bang" enlargement in 2004, which uniquely stress-tested the multilingual system, and dramatically increased the complexity of organising and providing services for Members of the European Parliament from 10 new countries with 9 new languages. The old matrix gave way to a mixed interpreting system, in which *retour* booths complement the standard matrix. Furthermore, since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Parliament's increased competences have, on the one hand, made its institutional role more pivotal to the Union, but on the other hand, its political dossiers have become much more technical. Interpreters have had to keep pace with this change (moving from being generalists to multi-field specialists) and continuously adapt. Meetings themselves have become more dynamic: longer meetings scheduled firmly in advance have been increasingly giving way to shorter and more dynamic meeting patterns; language regimes and subject matter have been changing rapidly in response to shifting political realities. In the booth, interpreters have absorbed important changes to their working environment. The European Parliament moved to a paper smart environment, and reams of paper documents in the booths are now a thing of the past. Instead, interpreters are equipped with and trained to use cutting-edge IT tools for their booth work, and a documentation service supplies them with the electronic support material for their assignments. Mobile interpreting equipment is now in use for travel on missions all over the world, as consecutive becomes an increasingly rare phenomenon.

So, as we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, we can certainly look back with pride on the way our interpreters and the profession as a whole have adapted to keep pace with the changing world. The human interpreter, engaged in a long-term quest for perfecting skills and ongoing knowledge acquisition, provides a stable element of continuity amidst the rapid changes we have witnessed and will continue to see developing around us. But an anniversary is not just about the past. It reminds us that we must also look ahead to the future of the profession, in order to be prepared. When we consider the future, we must think about the interpreter in the booth, of course. But we must also consider the bigger picture. At what kind of meetings will our interpreters be deployed? What equipment will they use, and what skills must they master? An understanding of the changing environment will help in answering many of these questions. While the future may always be uncertain, it was clear that an agile service, flexible enough to meet the evolving demands of its clients, would be well-placed to deliver public value within its mandate. It was also clear that investing in a well-trained workforce of technology-literate and motivated professionals would be a key to delivering that service into the future. An important first step in preparing for these changes in service provision was the overhaul of the European Parliament's own interpreting service. The Directorate General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences (DG LINC) was created to implement a new Conference of the Future flagship programme, to upgrade existing services and allow MEPs and meeting organisers to benefit from professional and intuitive conference organisation. This involved projects such as: remote participation, as an improvement to videoconference interactivity; interpreter meeting preparation digests, to increase the efficiency of meeting preparation in an environment with a high churn of programme reassignments; event memory services and webinars for moderators, to name but a few. At the European Parliament, preparations have been made over the years to build a conference and interpreting service that, whilst serving the key principle of multilingualism, would be resilient and adaptive, in order not just to withstand the pressures and demands placed on it, but also to help drive and shape the immediate future. These preparations were pushed into a completely new gear at the beginning of 2020, as a result of the European Parliament's Covid-19 crisis response measures. DG LINC suddenly found itself at the heart of the discussion on how to allow the Parliament to continue operating as a multilingual legislative body at a time of quasi-paralysis in global conferencing. In a very short space of time, the remote participation tools which had been considered in a limited context for the enhancement of videoconferencing capabilities had to be re-engineered to facilitate large-scale use in multilingual meetings with interpreting. Overnight, Simultaneous Interpretation Delivery Platform (SIDP) technology became a vital component in securing safe, multilingual and equal meeting access for MEPs unable to attend the Parliament in person due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and social distancing. I am proud to say that the European Parliament was the first European institution to offer multilingual remote participation as part of the Covid-19 response. The interpreting service and the professionals who run it demonstrated resilience and offered a clear example of how technologies can add value to the human component of conference interpreting. From the introduction of the remote participation tool at the beginning of March 2020, DG LINC services worked tirelessly to overcome the challenges faced, going from an initial 75% reduction in interpretation provision, to servicing 6 Plenary sessions with a full profile of 24 languages, and offering up to 12 languages in ordinary meetings outside the Plenary as of September 2020. The number of meetings held with remote participation varies between 75 and 120 per week. Without the use of the remote participation platform and our teams of committed interpreters, it would have been impossible for the wheels of European parliamentary democracy to keep turning at a time when the institution needed to play its role more urgently than ever. This was an example of how an adaptive and resilient system can cope with whatever the future brings. Technology played an important role in this story, particularly with the iterative upgrades brought in to fix issues and improve performance of the SIDPs. It was equally important, however, to be able to rely on the professionalism and the dedication of the DG LINC service providers during such a challenging time. In parallel to the technical and IT work, DG LINC services organised and established processes and channels of feedback – in dialogue with representatives of staff and freelance interpreters – to ensure a safe working environment and to customise and improve the tool based on both the needs of users and professional practitioners. Our interpreters showed flexibility and adaptability in absorbing these new processes and in working with the tool, thanks in large part to their familiarity with ongoing technological change.

The introduction of the platforms as a remote participation tool is no doubt just the beginning of this chapter of technological change. While there is no expectation that remote participation will render physical meetings a thing of the past, this episode has shown more than the benefits of adaptability. It is also important to have a range of tools at our disposal with which to face future challenges, such as hybrid meeting capabilities and the possibility of providing interpretation even when we cannot bring interpreters to the premises. Indeed, interpreting at meetings with remote participation, and performing remote interpretation itself, should form part of the skillset of new entrants to the profession, as they seek to make themselves a career in a *métier* which was born in its present form following just such a technological jump. Furthermore, the European Parliament can play a valuable role when it comes to the setting of new standards and the shaping of responsible working practices for remote technologies as they emerge. Working in remote mode may never be the whole truth of conference interpreting, but it could be an important feature of professional adaptability which takes the profession to new and interesting places.

There is an obvious advantage in focusing the learning paths of our interpreters on new skills and learning to equip the next generations of conference interpreters for the chapters to come. Attention will soon turn back to developing even more innovative virtual tools for online language learning, training and meeting preparation, to name but a few of the challenges we face. It is not enough to train interpreters who work within the physical or virtual walls of our institution, but also to set a standard for the profession, to engage in succession planning for future needs, and to keep a focus on technological change and innovation for the benefit of the service. The virtual conferencing environment has been thrust to the forefront of world attention as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, and while the pandemic will not last forever, there are some changes which will no doubt affect thinking in this field well into the future.

Not everything will change, of course. Many of the pre-Covid-19 considerations that occupied the thinking of conference organisers will remain valid in its aftermath, and interpreters will have to be well placed to deal with that reality. Meeting organisers require flexibility and range – politics is exciting and dynamic by nature, and where decisions need to be taken in a multilingual environment, an interpreting service needs to be agile enough to step in and deliver quality, where monolingual expediency is its chief enemy.

Technology is still progressing in other areas as well. Augmented reality screens with overlays can show speakers biographies, or background information to help meeting participants orient themselves during a speech. Whether this could be an aid to interpreters or a distraction remains to be tested thoroughly. If the latter, is it a question of cognitive load or being trained to work with these tools? Speech recognition and transcription technology is increasingly in use around the world at multilingual events. Interpreters will have to make peace with the sometimes uncomfortable positioning of speech-to-text tools and captioning in use by the general public as they work.

During the “big bang” enlargement, questions were posed about the viability of a multilingual conferencing system at the European institutions in which all languages were respected equally. 16 years later, with 24 languages in regular use at the European Parliament, both the system and the people who make it work have shown these question marks to have been unfounded. We now find ourselves at a new big bang moment, however, as the disruption from Covid-19 has caused us to reinvent our working methods from the ground up. It remains uncertain how many of these changes will stay with us, and to what extent. We should approach the future not with disbelief and denial, for many of these changes are within our power to shape. Let us instead be open to the possibilities that lie ahead, ever mindful of our mandate, and willing to make the most of the benefits that human beings can draw from the extraordinary technologies developing around them.

Interpreters will not be Replaced by Technology, but by Interpreters Using technology (A Reply to F. Fink-Hooijer and A. Walter-Drop)

Kim Ludvigsen

In October 2019, the University of Geneva and the ILO co-organised a conference celebrating one hundred years of conference interpreting, revisiting the past and looking into the future. In this volume, two high-profile civil servants within the European Union's interpreting community each wrote an opinion piece, sharing valuable insight into how they see the profession develop. Dr. Florika Fink-Hooijer stressed that, "interpreters will need to stay open to societal trends and to shape new tools if they want to avoid being overtaken by new solutions" and Agnieska Walter-Drop argued that, "we should approach the future not with disbelief and denial, for many of these changes are within our power to shape".

The economic, strategic and cultural achievements of the European Union are impressive and undisputed. For the first time in history, Europe has had a 70-year period without war between major powers. Politicians have learnt that dialogue and negotiations are the best way to resolve disputes. Interpreting is a central tool for enabling direct and constructive discussions across language barriers; not only for EU member states, but for any kind of organisation and group, where people speaking different languages get together.

Surprisingly enough, neither of the authors mentioned Remote Simultaneous Interpretation (RSI), a technology which over the last years has changed conference interpreting more than any other technology since its inception one hundred years ago.

The conference itself had an interesting programme with the last afternoon dedicated to the future of the profession, but also here, RSI was not on the agenda. The closest we got was a sales presentation with a historic review of various consoles and interpreter training installations by an interpreter equipment supplier.

In the last session questions were asked by the audience about RSI which seemed to create some discomfort. “Does anyone know of any studies on this topic? Wasn’t there an event in 2005 where this technology was used?” was asked back to the audience. Bewilderment seemed to fill the room and one participant even said – probably half seriously and half sarcastically – “I don’t know it, so it must be bad”.

Back in 2019, RSI was already a well-established business practice with ILO and other UN organisations using it regularly, and Interprefy as well as other RSI-platform providers delivering simultaneous interpreting to dozens of events daily. A year earlier my company had set the world record with the highest number of interpreters working in parallel at one single conference: 102, all scheduled and trained in less than a month. And when I looked around the room, I recognised several interpreters, who I know were working regularly on our platform. I was puzzled.

Only months later, Covid-19 turned the market upside down. When the first wave of the pandemic swept conferences and business meetings away, interpreters were out of work overnight. This was the bitter reality for a profession I admire and deeply respect.

However, soon after, we and other RSI providers registered a huge uptake in requests from event organisers who wanted us to take crucial meetings and conferences completely online, and gradually interpreters were put back to work. One of the first organisations to quickly adopt RSI was the United Nations, securing that vital meetings could go on as scheduled – with interpreters, speakers and delegates alike attending remotely, interpreters often from booths in otherwise empty conference halls.

Interviews and conversations with interpreters, language service providers (LSPs) and professional associations over the last six months indicate that interpreters’ current workload is up to 20-50% of the pre-Covid-19 level, compared to 0-20% this summer. The volume of interpreting seems to be going back towards normal, but with a fundamental difference: the service is not delivered from booths any longer – with exceptions of course – but remotely.

And while young interpreters embrace RSI and see modern technology as a tool to enter the profession, it is my impression that many established professionals seem to struggle with the change that reduces the need for travelling and on-site presence but also require a certain level of technical expertise from their side. But as both authors rightfully mentioned, the reality of new technology and social trends cannot be ignored but should be shaped by interpreters.

RSI has revolutionised the interpreting profession. Instead of spending time in airports and hotel lobbies, interpreters can now focus on what they have been trained to do and master: delivering a highly-qualified service. Needless to say, good online briefing and support are indispensable for successful preparation and delivery.

An experienced interpreter recently explained how she normally would have to pack her suitcase Sunday evening and rarely be back home before Friday night. She said she hardly had a social life, but now – with the possibility to work anywhere without travelling – she has time during the week to go to the gym, take her kids to music classes and enjoy dinners with friends.

RSI generates a better global reach and more business for interpreters: Due to the reduction in the additional cost of delivering the service (booth rental, travel and accommodation, interpreter fees remaining the same), a whole new market segment of smaller, short-term events has appeared, generating more work for interpreters willing and able to adapt to this technology.

RSI also leads to more flexibility and shorter booking lead time. Former UNEP Head of Chemicals, Jacob Duer, explained:

> When organizing intergovernmental meetings in six UN languages, we had to sign contracts for interpretation services up to nine months in advance of the event at high costs. With RSI it is possible to book much closer to the event at lower costs and with more flexibility.

Platform providers must listen to and learn from interpreters about how to create the best possible working conditions for them. And we all need to understand that the main driver for the future of interpreting is neither the desires of interpreters, nor the efforts of their professional associations, but the market and clients who pay for the service. As with any other profession, we need to embrace change and adapt to new realities. As interpreting technology pioneer Bill Wood perfectly puts it: “Interpreters will not be replaced by technology, they will be replaced by interpreters who use technology.”

Interpreting, Technology and Humanity (A Reply to F. Fink-Hooijer and A. Walter-Drop)

Robin Setton

The title of the first of these pieces, in particular, held out hopes for an essay by a knowledgeable interpreter on the future of our profession worldwide. Instead, we have two reports from large institutional employers on their responses to the Covid crisis. The first, from the European Commission, bears the somewhat bitter traces of the labour dispute: the author manages to salute the pioneers who made the profession without mentioning AIIC; observes that interpreters also 'withdrew their interaction' at one point in the conflict; and suggests that we are lucky our customers will still hire us, as long as we adapt. The second piece is more motivational, reflecting not just the European Parliament's glamorous status as a showcase of multilingual interpreting, but more importantly, an atmosphere of purpose and teamwork under pressure.

The DG-SCIC piece is a classic management pep-talk – pride in past achievements, facing the present challenge, the need to adapt, leading the way to the future. The "challenge" is framed rather narrowly as the physical distancing imposed by Covid (and tomorrow, the climate), and how to meet it: by adapting to new technology to guarantee "business continuity". The tone is top-down and paternalistic: any discussion of wider implications for diversity, multilateralism, democracy, or the future of interpreting worldwide, seems to be above the reader's pay grade (or below the author's horizon), while comments on our role within this institution smack more of the stick than the carrot.

I am sure I don't speak only for those with an interpreter's IQ and training, in Europe and beyond, when I bristle a little at this approach. Many of us were attracted to this profession in the belief we would be a necessary link in communication between people of different cultures and languages. And we were trained to anticipate, to think ahead. So: what if they don't hire us? Will they be happy to speak Globish? Will the much-vaunted multilingualism drift towards tokenism? Or is AI so close to success that it will soon provide stellar SI? If so, tell us frankly, so we can choose between adapting regardless, and exploring other settings where a human interpreter's skillset might still be useful and meaningful, perhaps beyond the aircon, suits and fitted carpets of Brussels or Luxemburg.

As for leading the way, while "augmenting" its own interpreters, DG SCIC claims to be shaping interpreting globally in two ways: standard-setting and capacity building.

Standards are not just technical, however. If the EU can promote better, updated working conditions worldwide, so much the better. But a consensus on *ethical* standards (neutrality, interpreters' role…) in a culturally diverse world is another matter, as AIIC veterans and practitioners in other settings (diplomacy, business, judicial, conflict) know all too well. This could only fall to a more active AIIC, not an intergovernmental regional body where this status is institutionally protected. An acknowledgement of this key dimension of "standards" and these limitations on SCIC's world knowledge and agency would have shown awareness and humility.

In terms of capacity-building, DG SCIC's world outreach initiatives seem modest in light of the tone of this piece. "Pedagogical assistance" , currently provided to training programmes in four countries outside Europe (and one continent, Africa), seems to consist mainly of staff interpreters joining exam juries with an eye to recruitment, and seminars in Brussels for trainers (ToT) or young officials (from China), but little or no financial support outside Europe. Inside Europe, leading schools have suggested that DG SCIC should just focus on helping them with EU-specific "last mile" training (Seeber, this volume). The heavy lifting of full training up to that level – listening, speaking, critical thinking, consecutive, simultaneous, preparation, etc. – is more effectively and thoroughly done by our schools, traditionally designed, on AIIC recommendations, to train interpreters for *all* our markets. The only other 'worldwide' capacity-building initiative, proclaimed here with some fanfare, seems to be the 'Knowledge Centre on Interpretation' (KCI[1]), apparently an EC-oriented (i.e., self-referential) addition to the many websites already offering information on interpreting.

Yet there seem to be plenty more opportunities for meaningful outreach by a European institution that was sincerely committed to demonstrating the added-value of multilingual human interpreting on the ground, by

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/education/knowledge-centre-interpretation/

supporting the linguistically disenfranchised, from refugees and migrants to entrepreneurs, who make up much of the ‘rest’ of the planet and need help to defend their identities and cultures. Where, for example, are the programmes and grants to build capacity for legal and community interpreters, to cater for the linguistic needs of the thousands of immigrants that Europe still agrees to take? Or to promote further research and develop quality cross-cultural communication with other poles of influence – the Arabic-, Russian-, Chinese-speaking worlds?

The report from the European Parliament is warmer and more upbeat (albeit as one might be cheered at a good showing by the royal family), and makes interesting reading. The technical achievement is impressive, and the “adaptability” message (though a little over-egged, with 21 occurrences of “flexible”, “adapt(able)”, “agile”, “resilient” or “dynamic”) goes down much better with the author’s praise for the interpreters’ efforts.

Again, the story is more or less exclusively about this leap towards a ‘Conference of the Future’ in the high-profile, well-funded EP; but it is contextualised in a way that makes it relevant to the profession as a whole and to wider changes in our world.

For the profession, this ‘remote turn’ is looking increasingly like a new normal, not necessarily in expectation of a permanent pandemic, but as a global consequence of a new public health awareness in the context of climate change. This is plausibly compared to two historical milestones: the move from consecutive to simultaneous (a first removal from face-to-face interpreting), and more recently, for the EU, the sudden leap in multilingual complexity, urgency and technicality that followed the Big Bang enlargement and the Lisbon treaty.

This ramping-up of the difficulty of SI, and the alienation and fatigue inherent in the new arrangements, are a fearsome challenge that has been felt for some years well beyond the confines of the EP, and it is clear that, while optimising its ergonomics, the new mode must be swiftly integrated into training. But here, two things make the prospect more bearable, perhaps even motivating, in spite of everything: the attention paid to the human and wider political implications.

First, while the EP can be expected to provide the best possible technical conditions, making full use of interpreter feedback, measures are also foreseen to offset the relative alienation of this new distancing with support in meeting preparation, terminology and real-time background. The account conveys a convincing impression of seamless and even enthusiastic teamwork to adapt to the new systems within short deadlines. Second, if this account is to be believed, the feat of rapidly restoring and maintaining a full multilingual service seems to have been instrumental, at least for now, in defending and maintaining the principle of equality among languages, and thus, indirectly, the conditions for multilateral democracy.

The piece is obviously a polished piece of PR work, and we may wonder how smooth the process really has been, how comfortable interpreters are with the changes, and how many jobs and assignments are threatened in the medium and longer term (Two coy but ominous references to “human beings” and “human interpreters” foreshadow a more severe future contest with the machines.). But inside the tent, at least, one does sense a warmth and team spirit, with leaders and rank and file sharing a sincere pride in the face of limited options. The maintenance of language equality, and the speed with which a full service has been restored via the new platform – now over 100 meetings a week – are especially good for morale (as was the DG’s defiant tweeted response to a sceptical Economist article in April).

Of course, the EP is a rich and high-profile institution, a flagship of multilingual diversity and multilateralism whose members will have approved every technical, ergonomic and social measure necessary to ensure a rapid return to normal service. A much wider range of stories, reports and feedback from different regions and settings around the world, and from interpreters and users as well as administrators, would be needed to assess the current impact of this crisis (and similar future crises) on our profession, let alone imagine what the “Conference of the Future” will look like elsewhere. But we also need to look much further afield to understand how multilingual diversity, and its correlates of cross-cultural respect and a lively multilateral democracy, can be preserved – critical, as the author says, “now more than ever” – despite limitations on movement and funding, the temptations of “monolingual expediency”, and perhaps in the near future, of over-hasty and radically impoverishing all-AI “solutions”.

There is no doubt that technology and interpreters must mutually adapt in the optimal service of our mandate, and that a crisis can be a spur. But the wider goal of keeping interpreting meaningful will take the efforts both of ‘laboratories’ to develop and demonstrate this symbiosis, like the EU, and an independent worldwide professional association. For this, AIIC needs to recover a louder voice in promoting and shaping ethics and quality in interpreting – perhaps more broadly defined – to generate trust and make the human option more attractive to clients of all markets and cultures, rather than Globish (with or without a stealthily tokenised multilingualism) or the still-shaky promise of automatic interpreting. For these efforts to converge, it helps when the managers who bring interpreters and users together respect the profession, both in spirit and in labour relations.

But if (mainly) human interpreting really is key to supporting cultural diversity and equality, and these are recognised as values worth defending in themselves (as these EU authors imply); and if, as it seems, discourse in the institutions should continue to converge on conventional boilerplate (perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, to ‘facilitate’ AI or monolingual options), then perhaps the cause of defending diversity through multilingualism will shift elsewhere, conference interpreters will play a smaller part in it, and it will be time for AIIC to consider broadening its constituency, beginning with the recognition of professionally qualified interpreters in all settings worldwide. In this new and wider representative role, it might itself be thereby strengthened.

EPILOGUE

GREG VINES

Thank you all very much. I can assure you it has been both a great pleasure and indeed a great honour for the ILO to provide the facilities to host this conference over the last few days. I was quite surprised when I did just walk in half an hour ago to find that the discussion was around wages, which is, of course, what this building, what this room, hears almost every time there is a meeting in it – so it felt a very natural environment to be walking in to. But then the second comment that was made after I had walked in was around public relations, and I really do think, for an organisation like the ILO – and from my experience in the ILO, both now as an official of the ILO, but before that indeed I used to sit in the middle of that table behind us as President of the Governing Body of the ILO – I can assure you that the best public relations for your profession is echoed by that genuine and heartfelt applause that the interpreters get at the end of every meeting that we hold in this room. And I think people recognise that after we've met in this room and our Governing Body, for example, for two weeks, when we've dealt with such complex issues between the governments and the employers and the workers from all over the world, many of whom don't speak a second language. Yet we resolve such difficult, difficult problems, simply because of the assistance we get from the colleagues who are sitting up in those booths behind us. And I think that's the best form of public relations that your profession can have: that heartfelt appreciation and admiration for the work that is done.

I think it's also important that the hosting of this conference by the ILO reflects what I think is very much a parallel history between your profession and our organisation. We've both turned 100 this year, and the success of our organisation, the success and the impact of the ILO, has largely been a result, as was just indicated, of our approach to dialogue. Of course, dialogue means that those who are engaged in it need to be able to understand what the others are saying and that's where your profession has been integral to the success and impact of the ILO over the last 100 years.

Given that it is 5:30 on a Friday night, I don't intend to try and summarise what you've been discussing over the last few days, but I am aware of the diversity of the discussions that you've had, their intensity and the huge interest they generated as well. When we look back at the last 100 years we see, particularly in the profession of interpreting, the work that's been done and continues to be done around the training, the research and the practice. I know that these are the three areas that you have focussed on and that specialists from each of those areas have participated in the conference. Indeed, they're very similar priorities for the ILO as well, for us in the world of labour: training, research and practice are very much part and parcel of what we do the whole time. I think you've also heard about what the ILO has been doing this year: looking not only at our proud histories and our proud development, but also, of course, even more importantly, at the challenges that are ahead of us. And I'm sure that, as Guy Ryder, the Director General of the ILO, said to you yesterday, this profession will of course continue to evolve, it will continue to be impacted by change, but from the ILO's perspective, we always see the people at the centre of this profession. Our centenary declaration, which was approved in June of this year by the International Labour Conference as I'm sure you'll have heard, is built around the theme of a human-centred approach to the future of work. That human-centred approach, I think, is as relevant to this profession as it is to any, or at least as it is to any other areas of work. And, certainly from the ILO's point of view, the relationship that we have with our interpreters and with your association will continue, will continue to grow, and will continue to get even stronger than what it has in the past. I think that it is important, as we always do in this room, to thank the interpreters who have provided the services and the support to your meeting. These are students and freshly graduated colleagues who have been working over the last two days from the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Geneva, and I certainly thank them and ask you to do the same.

I think many of you would be aware that the ILO enjoys a very strong relationship with the University of Geneva, and of course specifically with the Faculty of Translation and Interpretating and with Kilian and his colleagues. I'd like to thank him and his colleagues for the fantastic collaborative way that my colleagues here in the ILO and his team have been able to work together to bring this conference together so successfully over the last few days, and so my gratitude goes to Kilian and also to Monica, the head of our interpretation service, as I think they've done an amazing job.

So I'll just close by saying: let's really hope for another 100 years of your profession of conference interpreting and another 100 years of the ILO, and I'm quite sure that with the very rapid pace of change in technology, the change in health, the change in work, we can all look forward to meeting here again, in person, in 100 years' time: you're more than welcome to return to the ILO at any time in the future, thank you all very much.

100 Years of Conference Interpreting: Concluding Thoughts

Kilian G. Seeber

The centenary celebration of our profession has shown how different stakeholders of this vibrant community can come together to critically assess its state of the art and ambitiously project themselves into its future. One hundred years on we have gathered an impressive amount of knowledge about the profession: how and by whom it is performed, how it is perceived, how it is trained, how it is studied and how it *can* and perhaps *should* evolve. Unsurprisingly, one hundred years on we have also compiled a long list of questions that have not yet been answered, we have identified many blind-spots that have not yet been explored, and we have put our finger on many shortcomings that have yet to be fixed. As far as I am concerned, that is not so much disappointing as it is encouraging, as it shows that there is still a lot to be done: by us and by the future generations of all those who hold a stake in the world of multilingual multilateral diplomacy including conference interpreting.

When I approached the ILO's chief interpreter, Monica Varela Garcia, with the idea of adding a tribute to the conference interpreting profession to the Organization's centenary celebrations, neither of us could have anticipated its timeliness. Only a few months after the event, at a time when we were finalizing the list of contributors to this volume, the world around us started changing drastically with the spreading of the Covid-19 pandemic. The world of multilingual multilateral diplomacy, until then predicated on international gatherings entailing physical travel, very abruptly came to a grinding halt. The effects on the profession were immediate: no conferences – no conference interpretation.

Some were quick to liken the profound changes affecting the world of conference interpreting in its 101st year of existence to those brought about by the introduction of simultaneous interpreting at the ILO in the mid 1920s, knowledgeably portrayed by Jesús Baigorri-Jalón in his lead article. Others underlined similarities with the Nuremberg trials and how this first stress-test of a new technology accelerated its spread across conference rooms (both institutional and other) throughout the world. The similarities are obvious and cannot be denied. Developments that had begun rather tentatively several years prior, such as virtual conferencing, became the lifeline for many international organisations. Technologies that were considered emergent, such as platform-mediated remote interpreting, acquired default status in the course of just a few weeks. Concerns that had driven the debate among different stakeholders in the world of conference interpreting, such as working conditions and occupational health and safety, were pushed to the margins as many conference service managers and interpreters struggled for sheer survival. Technologies that were long thought of as relative niche applications all of a sudden were common currency for anyone having to meet professionally or privately.

This was the backdrop against which most of the contributions to this volume were written. And while the nature and timeline of scholarly articles makes them less prone to be affected by current events, the opinion pieces and replies collected in this volume very clearly reflect the impact of this cataclysmic event on the profession.

It is difficult to anticipate the long-term effects of the pandemic on the world of multilingual multilateral diplomacy and, consequently, on language service providers along with all direct and indirect stakeholders. If the comparison with the introduction of simultaneous interpreting holds, then the world of multilingual multilateral conferences is about to undergo rapid and profound changes – too rapid for some, too profound for others. What is certain is that the bell cannot be unrung, and that many of the phenomena touched upon by the contributors to this volume will remain on the agenda of those working *as* and *with* conference interpreters for the foreseeable future.

It will be up to others to chronicle the next century of the profession. To them we entrust this legacy of the first 100 years of conference interpreting.

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