

Editorial

In June 2010 the international conference on *Emerging Topics in Translation and Interpreting/Nuovi percorsi in traduzione e interpretazione* was held at the University of Trieste at the Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori (SSLMIT), hosted by the Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio dell'Interpretazione e della Traduzione (DSLIT) to celebrate both the launch of the department's new PhD programme in *Scienze dell'Interpretazione e della Traduzione* (Interpreting and Translation Studies) and the first thirty years of the SSLMIT as an independent faculty. A call for papers in both translation and interpreting studies to cover five different sessions received an overwhelming response from all over the world. The sessions were designed to offer insights on emerging and innovative research, each introduced by an expert in the field:

Session 1 - *Translation and interpreting as a human right*: Erik Hertog

Session 2 - *From interpreting theory to the interpreting profession*: Robin Setton

Session 3 - *Translation teaching: bridging theory and the profession*: Hannelore Lee-Jahnke

Session 4 - *Interpreting corpora*: Miriam Shlesinger

Session 5 - *The right to see through words: audiodescription*: Pilar Orero

In this issue of *The Interpreters' Newsletter* we offer a selection of papers from the session *From interpreting theory to the interpreting profession* that we convened together.

The idea lying behind the title of this session was to call for and receive contributions that would highlight recent developments and possibly new approaches to research on conference interpreting, with special attention devoted to research methodologies and the way research findings can be applied to training.

Wider access to real data from the professional world over the last ten years is probably the major change we have witnessed in research. Advances in technology have given us previously unimagined possibilities of gathering, storing, retrieving and analysing authentic conference material, to the point of collecting whole corpora of data. These new possibilities may lead to a more direct feedback between research, training and the profession.

In the early days, back in the 1950s and 1960s, studies on conference interpreting offered much personal theorising from professional interpreters about the profession and the role of the interpreter to underpin training methods, more so than empirical research. The following wave of experimental studies conducted by cognitive psychologists helped to gain access to the processes lying behind simultaneous interpreting and showed the interest in simultaneous interpreting as a research paradigm in cognitive sciences. Later on, research expanded across a wide range of topics in conference interpreting giving rise to Interpreting Studies. Descriptive, experimental and theoretical studies by practisearchers and also by a growing number of young researchers multiplied, leading to the emergence of a discipline in its own right, but despite this, not always has research been accompanied by investigation into and discussion of methodologies and techniques adopted to empirically research simultaneous and consecutive interpreting.

Research can stem from theory or vice versa, but in either direction real-life data have to be tested. Initially, in the past, it was very difficult to prove theories because there were insufficient authentic interpretation data to work on. The best way to examine simultaneous and consecutive interpreting was with the help of empirical/experimental studies, which focused on 'single pieces of the puzzle' drawing conclusions which are only a part of the whole picture. Therefore, our initial intention was to attract contributions on conference interpreting to bridge this gap. We were expecting to receive papers that examined the profession not only from a theoretical point of view but also highlighted new methodologies and approaches both on traditional and innovative emerging aspects of interpreting pertaining to the professional workplace and their possible application to conference interpreter training.

A fundamental link between professional practice and theory/research is interpreter training. However, we avoided focusing on it explicitly, but rather, called for the way research findings from the professional world can be applied to it. The results of interpreting research must be adapted to training to make it more effective and to keep pace with the ongoing

changes within the profession. Input from training, or from research on training, shows us what happens before becoming professionals and also what kind of research is needed, or is useful, to move training forward. Indeed, we were sent several contributions on training related topics.

Overall we received fewer ‘innovative’ contributions than we had hoped, with a focus on recurrent themes and problems such as technology and its use and impact on the interpreting profession and training, investigations on quality factors, how to enhance training and professional expertise. As Robin Setton states in his article, the theme chosen for our session “turned out not to be about the impact of theory (or research) on professional practice, but an invitation to take professional reality as a starting point for investigation, rather than mere theory”.

In the following we offer what we consider a varied and interesting selection of ‘emerging topics’ with some clearly pertaining to the current macro research areas of training, quality and working languages.

Robin Setton discusses why he believes that theory and research can more productively influence professional practice through interpreter training and that sound research findings, which can be applied directly to professional settings, will elude us in the immediate future. He gives useful suggestions on how theory and research based on authentic interpreting data and situations can contribute to developing an updated training model to meet the new challenges facing interpreters in a changing world.

The question of European Union multilingualism and the interpreting services of the European Institutions is discussed by Brian Fox who points out the challenges of maintaining linguistic diversity at the European Commission which has increased exponentially with EU enlargement over the years. He reports the findings of the latest Customer Satisfaction Survey touching on the issue of English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF).

Marianna Sunnari and Adelina Hild explore the literature on how we can identify experts in the field of interpreting discussing various perspectives of professional expertise and providing a meta-analysis of individual differences studies and SI expertise research. They examine the interaction between cognitive and sociocultural expertise to shed more light on what professional interpreting means and to gain a better understanding of the complex nature of interpreting expertise today. Finally, they also touch on implications for training and assessment.

Claudia Monacelli and Michael Boyd’s paper is centred on the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to Interpreting Studies in the political speech genre and on the Discourse-Historical Approach. They propose a new multi-layered, analytical, interdisciplinary, context model to analyse source texts, providing an analysis of the theoretical implications. They argue that when such a model is applied to interpreter training it enables students to better understand the source text and the discursive practices underlying it, giving examples from speeches on climate change.

An innovative approach to consecutive interpreter training is offered by Marc Orlando who describes digital pen technology that simultaneously captures the video of real-time consecutive note-taking together with the audio of the speech itself. He describes different pedagogical sequences to illustrate its application in the classroom and how it could be used in assessment. Although his recent adoption of this technology is at too early a stage to draw any serious conclusions, interesting patterns in the student note-taking process have begun to emerge from a five-week experiment which will lead to future research.

Sarah Tripepi Winteringham offers an overview of a topic increasingly emerging in our digital era, i.e. the use of Information and Communication Technologies in the interpreting profession, in simultaneous interpreting and liaison interpreting. She examines and discusses the usefulness of Computer-Assisted Interpreting and of the currently available technology, illustrating a wide range of electronic tools from handheld devices and voice recognition software programmes to more complex remote interpreting systems. Furthermore, she points out the advantages and drawbacks and which forms of interpreting may benefit from them most.

Four papers deal with different aspects and parameters of quality in conference interpreting carried out within the framework of a research project on Quality in Simultaneous Interpreting (QuaSi) at the University of Vienna. The prosodic feature of fluency is the subject of Sylvi Rennert's paper. She provides an overview of aspects of fluency and describes a study where she developed a new design tailored to the research questions with the aim to investigate whether fluency has an impact on the way users evaluate interpretation as to comprehensibility and the interpreter's performance. Using audio manipulation it was possible to change only the parameter fluency leaving all others intact, ensuring comparable versions of speech with regard to intonation, voice or choice of words.

Intonation is the prosodic feature covered by Elisabeth Holub in her study on the impact of monotony on listener comprehension. She used the audio-editing programme Praat to produce two versions of the same simultaneous interpretation, allowing her to modify only the parameter intonation, yet leave other speech parameters unchanged. She describes the results of her experiment, the subjects of which were advanced marketing students who completed questions on comprehension and on the performance of the interpretations they heard.

Cornelia Zwischenberger reports the findings of two web-based surveys on conference interpreters' rating of the relative importance of output-related quality criteria for a simultaneous interpretation. She compares the views of respondents from the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) with those from the German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD). The new element in her research is that respondents were asked to rate the importance of quality criteria

considering real interpreting situations such as media events and technical congresses.

The spread of ELF is the topic dealt with by Karin Reithofer. It is a growing reality in the interpreters' world where speeches are increasingly delivered in non-native English. She covers the main advantages and disadvantages of its use in different domains and describes her research on the comparison of listeners' comprehension of non-native English speakers with that of simultaneously interpreted speeches from non-native English. The underlying hypothesis is that interpretation can increase the comprehensibility of a non-native speaker's speech when it comes to monologic, unidirectional communication as in conference settings.

Tomohiko Ooigawa and Kinuko Takahashi's paper examines whether there are differences in the phonetic perception of English words embedded in sentences among Japanese professional interpreters with different childhood language experiences. The two test groups were interpreters educated in English in childhood in a foreign country (returnee interpreters) and those educated in Japanese in childhood in Japan (non-returnee interpreters). Although the sample chosen is small, this is the first empirical study of its kind conducted on phonetic perceptual differences with professional interpreters.

Cynthia Jane Kellett Bidoli introduces the last topic of this issue, dealing with sign language interpreting. Apart from the mode of delivery, sign-language interpreting is in many ways similar to simultaneous spoken-language interpreting and much theory from research conducted on the latter can be, and is being, adapted to the former. This paper illustrates the result of corpus-based research conducted in Trieste on sign-language interpreting in media settings, in order to investigate the provision and quality of sign language interpreting on Italian television channels.

We hope our selection of papers, covering a variety of topics incorporating theory, methodology and new approaches related to both professional and training environments, may contribute towards furthering interest and research in Interpreting Studies.

Cynthia Kellett and Alessandra Riccardi

From practice to theory and back in interpreting: the pivotal role of training

ROBIN SETTON

SISU-GIIT Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation
(Shanghai International Studies University)

Abstract

Interpreting research (IR) has so far yielded 'no major discoveries or applications' for professional practice (Gile 2001). Today, with access to new and larger corpora and advances in analytic techniques, research on authentic data, and in 'ecovallid' conditions, is developing fast, but conclusions will necessarily remain tentative for the foreseeable future, and uptake by professionals indirect at best. However, IR has helped to conceptualise and model interpreting to pedagogical effect. Currently, therefore, the most direct route for interpreting research and theory to benefit professional practice is still through training, initial or remedial.

Changing markets are posing several new challenges to interpreter training: multilingualism, shifts in language demand and distribution (with more demand for work into B), increased pressure to accept fast, 'multimedia', recited and remote input, and the need to rejuvenate an aging profession. An effective pedagogy adapted to contemporary and future conditions must (i) reset objectives by 'working back' from a realistic picture of the balance between client expectations, inherent constraints, and the potential of expertise, as derived from research on authentic data and situations; (ii) tap rich seams of relevant theory in cognition and communicative interaction that have been relatively neglected in the past; and (iii) take the pedagogical challenge seriously, with more attention to such aspects as progression, simulation, usable feedback, consistent and credible evaluation and testing, and putting ourselves in the student's (and later, the client's) place.

1. Introduction

The theme chosen for the 2010 Trieste conference 'From Theory to the Interpreting Profession' turned out not to be about the impact of theory (or research) on professional practice, but an invitation to take professional reality as a starting point for investigation, rather than mere theory.

At the landmark Trieste conference of 1989 (Gran and Dodds 1989), the call went out for more empirical, but also more rigorous research on interpreting to replace 'personal theorising'. One result of this call has been to favour controlled experiments as a source of findings, with a relative decline in corpus-based studies. In fact, the 'personal theorising' in Paris went with a strong commitment to corpus-based research. The 'empirical turners' criticism was more justifiably aimed at the apriorism with which this school seemed to project personal theory and intuition onto the data, and at a lack of scientific method, rather than at the use of authentic data as such (still less at this school's undeniably effective teaching).

Against this historical context the 2010 Trieste conference can be seen as an invitation to a re-alignment. Lately there have been growing questions about the power of natural-science experimental methods alone to produce relevant, ecologically valid findings about this human, situated activity, and a clear new trend towards combining or triangulating multiple approaches, qualitative and quantitative. At the same time we are seeing a spectacular revival of research based on authentic data, as reflected in the rich and exciting session at Trieste devoted to corpus-based interpreting studies. Importantly, however, there is no sign of any backtracking in the demand for better and more solid scientific method.

Taking an optimistic view, we may be seeing a new turn in a spiral of progress as interpreting research matures, in which the empirical turn is confirmed, but can now embrace a broader range of approaches without abandoning its attention to rigour and careful inference. The 'spiral' metaphor seems more appropriate than the 'paradigm shift' in a discipline that sits astride the humanities, with their ineradicable element of human variation, and the new sciences of cognition and language that aspire to more tangible forward development. In the 'hard' sciences, entire paradigms – like phlogiston or the ether – may be proved to be simply wrong and superseded completely and without residue, becoming mere historical curiosities. In the humanities, a truly mature and confident discipline does not erase formative phases as if they had never contributed, but recognises them as perfectible contributions to a maturing whole. To coin a phrase, we will always have Paris, as we will always have Trieste 1989, and now Trieste 2010.

A growing discipline needs both the push of individual initiative and the support of its institutions, on which it is dependent for its research

centres, and the pull of interest and expectations from the profession. Today, Interpreting Studies owes its existence to the commitment of a few enthusiastic researchers and the thesis requirements of a few schools rather than to any direct appeal from the profession or recognised application of its findings to the practice of interpreting. It can thus only survive as part of a self-nourishing cycle in which the pivotal link is interpreter training.

In the first part of this paper, we explain why research findings robust enough to be applied directly to a diverse and complex professional reality will remain beyond our reach for the immediate future, and suggest that the most productive way for theory and research to feed back into practice is still through the laboratory of interpreter training. The second part of the paper suggests how theory drawn from wider sources, plus certain kinds of research based on authentic interpreting data and situations, can contribute to developing an updated training model to meet the new challenges of a changing professional environment.

2. From research to practice: direct and indirect impacts

Research, especially when done with scientific care and rigour, yields results only piecemeal and very slowly. In an attempt to foster realistic expectations of research among professionals, Gile (2001) avows that '[interpreting research (IR)] 'cannot claim to have made any *major* discovery so far, or to have developed *major* applications in professional interpreting or training'. Gile explains that even the modest findings of barely three or four decades are based on small samples and remain tentative and in need of verification, and recalls the many objective constraints on this research. We might add as complicating factors: severe methodological difficulties (eco-validity, valid extrapolation), and consequently, competing paradigms and intense debate over method that certainly reflect vigour and belief in the discipline, but also dissipate energy in false dichotomies, and perpetuate a tension, potentially paralyzing, between a misplaced scientism that puts exclusive trust in quantified approaches and the inherent individual variability that inevitably emerges in every new study, as it must in any observation of human behaviour.

The difficulties of applying research results to practice thus stem partly from disagreements over methodology and standards of proof, and partly from a mismatch between the nature of research findings and the realities of practice. These problems are illustrated by two studies that seem directly relevant to working conditions. Moser-Mercer *et al.* (1998) claimed to show a deterioration of quality after 30 minutes of continuous simultaneous working in the booth; but Gile (2001) disclaims it. Anderson (1994) found no influence on performance of either a view of the speaker,

or of prior access to documentation, a finding that seemed at odds with interpreters' direct experience or preferences. The reluctance to draw the conclusions for professional practice is ascribed to the clash between 'objective' research and the subjective preferences of interpreters and their associations. Another way of putting it might be to say that such experiments, meticulously conducted but on a small sample of interpreters working in the laboratory, cannot claim a level of ecological validity sufficient for application to real life: among other things, since experimental participants often treat a more difficult task as a challenge and put in extra effort to compensate (compare linguistic acceptability tests in which subjects are biased by ingrained academic standards of what is 'good grammar'). They may not, however, wish or be able to keep up this effort or discomfort day in, day out in their normal professional life. Meanwhile, numerous studies have shown that 'vision is an integral part of the normal listening process' (Kellerman 1990); so interpreters' 'subjectivity' in seeking this normal condition would seem legitimate. The findings of studies like Anderson's do not yet have the force of the evidence that the world is not flat, and cannot be expected to override our preferences for more comfortable working conditions.

Although IR, like any discipline, is taking some time to produce findings robust, ecologically valid and representative enough for direct practical application, this is not to say that research on interpreting can never yield

BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS	Through advocacy and negotiation	TRAINING: AIIC business seminars for freelancers
BETTER STATUS	Indirectly through status of schools, published research	TRAINING in research methods
BETTER SERVICE/PERFORMANCE		
- Basic skills	Better initial training	APPLIED THEORY: cognitive modelling; pedagogy
- Better COMPREHENSION	Expand range: dialects, domains, genres	TRAINING: refreshers & updates
- Better knowledge, terminology	Domain-specific refreshers, updates	Technology (ITC) and training in use of resources
- Readiness	Knowledge/language activation	Cognitive THEORY
- Better PRODUCT	User feedback, to determine needs Peer feedback (colleagues, mentors...)	RESEARCH on reception: user surveys, interaction with users Informal exchanges

Table 1 Practitioners' aspirations: contributions of theory, research and training

useful findings. Multiple studies on small samples and in local situations can build up a suggestive picture until it becomes as difficult to show that converging results are unrepresentative than to accept them as generally valid. But to reach this critical mass (including the requisite checking, critical review and replication) from which more confident judgments can be made about what is universal or variable will take time, and a sustained momentum. This will require continuing researcher motivation and qualification, and perhaps most critically, institutional stability. For the foreseeable future, that in turn may well depend primarily – when weighed in the scale of educational funding priorities – on the schools' performance in training market-ready interpreters.

Table 1 gives a rough overview of the ways in which interpreters, both staff and freelance, aspire to improve their lot, as reflected in informal and formal surveys (e.g. Setton and Guo 2009), and the role of theory, research and training in meeting these aspirations. There is clearly a place for research and theory, but they find their way to application essentially through the training of people.

In short, while direct feedback from research to practice is still tenuous, training is still the most productive conduit between theory and practice: these nourish each other in a constant cycle, but find their way to application essentially through training (Figure 1).



Figure 1

For the foreseeable future, therefore, no bigger impact can be made on interpreting practice than the successful training of excellent interpreters. Each successive group of trainee interpreters presents a clear challenge to course designers and instructors: to take the measure of what is universal vs. what is individually variable, applying the findings of cognitive science and pedagogical theory respectively, so that theory is converted into practice through the learning process – theory implemented through people in their diversity.

3. Theory and training

Effective specialised training for interpreters has never been more necessary than today, with:

- (i) Expanding and changing market conditions, discourse patterns and styles of presentation: mixed media, fast and informationally-dense speeches often recited from text;
- (ii) New language combinations and shifts in abilities required in interpreters, including increasing demand for simultaneous into B;
- (iii) An aging profession (Durand 2005);
- (iv) The need to uphold standards and demonstrate the added-value of quality interpreting in the service of both efficiency and ethics, at a time of rising pressure on communicators in all domains to make do with English (e.g. in conference and business interpreting), or accept makeshift interpreting (e.g. in legal and community settings).

These developments place new requirements on training at different levels:

- pre-training modules for interested candidates in the final undergraduate year;
- basic interpreter training;
- further training (refreshers and updates to add languages or activate a B language, or in specific knowledge domains);
- teacher training;
- training in scientific methods for researchers.

Last but not least, *interpreter testing and certification* is coming under increased scrutiny. A credible, reliable and consistent certification regime is necessary for accountability, credibility and transparency vis-à-vis both clients and institutions hosting training programmes, who may reasonably be concerned about perceptions of equity, student morale, and integration with the wider grading system in the university. Here again, in seeking the difficult balance between consistency and human variability, there is no reason not to consult, and adapt, lessons from the broader literature on testing.

3.1. The potential for theoretical progress

Historically, practice came first: a sudden demand for professionals spurred training, which in turn generated theory and research. In completing the cycle so that research and theory benefit practice, there will only be something new to feed back if some added value has been picked up since the days when practice suggested the first theories. Indeed the decades since the birth of conference interpreting have seen a golden age of discovery in the cognitive sciences, but both the theory and pedagogy of interpreting studies have been disappointingly slow in integrating this knowledge.

Some relatively untapped sources of theory and models that are directly relevant and adaptable to the needs of interpreter training include findings on the complexities of memory and attention, the organisation and activation of knowledge and language in the brain, and the acquisition of expertise; and in linguistics, modern theories of verbal communication that notably shed light on the vast dimension of pragmatic choice, and the role of context and inference, fleshing out the rules-and-conventions description of language that though increasingly sophisticated, was utterly inadequate to model the mechanisms of real verbal communication.

Unfortunately, all this is quite new and not easy to formulate non-technically, especially since it involves inter-disciplinarity and thus probably needs invention of new terms and concepts. In drawing on this new understanding to inform interpreter training, we will have to distinguish between two levels of theory: theory for course designers and instructors, and theory for students, as a tentative adjunct to classroom pedagogy.

3.2. Complementing the ‘apprenticeship model’

Training is the main justifiable motivation for development of any ‘theory’ about interpreting – though some are sceptical of need for theory even here, or even opposed to it as a distraction or source of confusion. This was the old-school view at a time when interpreters were all supposed to be encyclopaedic, highly-cultured pure bilinguals, and training was pure apprenticeship, through observation, imitation and practice. Jean Herbert, one of the first trainers of conference interpreters, is said to have introduced his training course as follows: “This course will be in two parts: theory and practice. Part 1: The interpreter must say exactly what the speaker said. Now for Part 2...”

Today, however, any conscientious young trainer will soon feel the need to be able to *explain*, if not how interpreting works, at least the parts students stumble on. It soon becomes obvious to any would-be teacher, in any field, that understanding, doing and teaching are three different things. The first ‘new’ requirement we must add to the traditional apprenticeship model is that both course designers and individual instructors will increasingly need more than just personal professional experience. There is no good reason to change the basic spirit of the apprenticeship tradition, but we need to add two dimensions:

1. Theoretical: models of the criterion tasks and of progression towards them, and an understanding of the trainee’s learning curve.
2. Practical: a pedagogical framework and practice for getting trainees there:
 - (i) course design and progression;
 - (ii) classroom practice, exercises and especially, feedback.

Training can benefit from ‘theory’ in at least two dimensions: in understanding the *problem* – the target tasks, intermediate objectives and their attendant cognitive challenges – and to develop effective *solutions* – in other words, pedagogical strategies for reaching them. Implementation in the classroom will always retain some experimental, flexible element, since each student is a new person, but what we know from cognitive science and educational theory, about memory, attention, processing capacity or language availability or interference in multilinguals, or implicit vs. explicit learning, all adapted to the specific tasks of interpreting, make it possible to conceive general guidelines for course design, and for teacher training.

3.3. Theoretical: modelling the training challenge from both ends

Effective training needs to be designed and dispensed against a model, or set of nested models, of interpreting. The starting point should be an accurate, updated picture of the real market requirements (adapted to whatever market(s) the course is targeting), consisting of detailed realistic descriptions of the criterion tasks that will be required of the graduate. This model should be multi-faceted, showing the tasks from the perspective of the interpreter (cognitive, linguistic and social challenges, components of expertise, and the incremental steps for getting there) but also of the users and perhaps also the clients – hence the value of research data on user reception and expectations in the target markets.

A training course should be designed by working *backwards* from this task description, and *forwards* from (virtual) profiles of typical beginners admitted to the course. Both these models must allow for some variation – real-life demands vary, and people even more so – but we must decide what can vary, and what aptitudes all beginners (or graduates) must have, and design selection tests (or final certification tests) accordingly.

Next, we need a structured progression of activities, exercises, explanations (and remedial or support modules) to get from A to B. This will be much more solid, and more convincing for instructors who will be expected to subscribe to and internalise it, if it is based on a cognitive analysis of the successive challenges that trainees will face, and thus a rough understanding of their general learning curve. Theories about cognition and communication (and psycholinguistics, mental processes etc.) can help here, if intelligently and critically adapted to interpreting.

Once this theoretical apparatus is in place as a basis for training, instructors must familiarise themselves with it to be able to teach confidently and effectively. Teachers navigate a space between two constraining ‘guidrails’: on one side, the fixed rail of the course structure and progression, with its defined steps, exercises and intermediate objectives (and parallel language and knowledge development), and on the

other, the variable paces and styles of the different individual students, allowing for plateaux, leaps and dips, which may also call for occasional ‘morale management’.

4. Pedagogical solutions

4.1. Progression in a complex skill: theory and evidence

When trying to apply the results of research, we sometimes have to choose between a persuasive theory that has never been implemented and an established practical procedure that seems to work. When the stakes are high it is understandable to submit to ‘path dependency’ and prefer the latter (rather as computer keyboards follow the layout originally designed to slow typists down to prevent the metal arms getting stuck, rather than make the whole transitional generation’s typing skills obsolete). Expertise research has analysed complex tasks as composites of simpler skills, leading to proposals for a componential approach to interpreter training, in which component sub-tasks can be mastered separately in targeted exercises, then finally combined as ‘multitasking’ into full competence.

The established alternative to the componential strategy is the incremental approach that grew out of the spontaneous solution to the first urgent training demand, whereby those with some experience tried to pass it on, combined with inspiration from the constructivist pedagogy advocated by Piaget. In a well-orchestrated apprenticeship, the trainee is initiated in a simple version of the integral task, in a protected environment (ideal working conditions) which already elicits the same reflexes, excitement, risks and rewards as the full task, but without most of the more notorious difficulties and hazards of real life. These hazards can then be added incrementally: the speeches become gradually more difficult, more formal or structured (or indeed, more problematically incoherent), are delivered faster, and in the later stages, are mixed up with other input like unfamiliar proper names, complex numbers, written text and slides.

Our preference for continuing and developing this tradition is in part theoretical: it is not clear how SI would be analysed into sub-tasks, and we know of no ‘dual-tasking’ research on how to juggle or combine the two tasks needed in interpreting, i.e. analysis of an unfolding argument and lexical translation. More importantly, this choice is evidence-based: to our knowledge, no successful attempt to train interpreters through the componential method has yet been documented. To test this approach on a generation of trainees would seem to put unjustified faith in the transposition of a theory to this specific activity; developing and enhancing the incremental apprenticeship with new theory and pedagogical technique seems a better bet.

4.2. Course structure and progression

The incremental apprenticeship model provides for a progression from initiatory exercises through simpler tasks and/or demands to more challenging or complex tasks and more rigorous criteria of assessment. A complete course should culminate in practice on authentic discourse, posing the combined, complex cognitive and linguistic challenges of real-life, in which the trainee's performance is measured against the projected expectations of real (informed) conference participants, in terms of fidelity and comfort – the two sides of the quality coin – allowance being made for the artificiality of the setting.

Partly because of this artificiality, most courses stop short of this final simulation of reality, though in a well-organised and funded course and/or in favorable conditions (e.g. an in-house course in an organisation like the EU), this shortcoming may sometimes be compensated for with mock conferences, internships and mentoring. There is certainly room for more research on training at these higher levels, given the probable rising demand to train viable 'professional beginners' for a fast-changing environment.

The classic conference interpreting course on the apprenticeship model usually comprises three successive and incremental phases:

- (i) General initiation: discovering how an interpreter must listen, how (s)he is expected to speak (register, presence, coherence, and what is expected in a B language), what (s)he should know, or be expected to learn about temporarily;
- (ii) Consecutive interpretation;
- (iii) Simultaneous interpretation.

To allow explicitly for individual variability, the process of acquiring the specific technical skills of interpreting – basically, consecutive and simultaneous – can also be divided into three phases, in which the longest allows each trainee freedom to experiment, albeit under supervision:

- Initiation, in which the student discovers the basic challenge of the skill (balancing note-taking and attention to the message, for consecutive; listening with speaking, for simultaneous) and is given a simple basic objective (render content, worry less about form);
- Experimentation, in which (s)he finds her/his own way of handling the task, on a widening variety of speeches;
- Consolidation, moving towards increasingly realistic materials, conditions, settings and demands on the product.

Though instructors will offer diagnosis, feedback and recommendations throughout, the focus in the experimentation phase will be on process, and in the first (relatively short) and last phases on the product.

4.3. Classroom practice: feedback

To understand and address problems in the classroom as they arise, while guiding students in a way that is coherent with the rest of the programme, each instructor can now draw on three resources:

- an inherent pedagogical sense and sensitivity (which must be checked at recruitment);
- a clear course design and progression, common to the whole training programme and based on both cognitive and market realities,
- an overall grasp of interpreting as an encounter between cognition and communication, a balance between the cerebral and the social; and crucially, of the interdependence between external conditions, interpreter competence, and expectations, or quality and service objectives.

Classroom feedback is the ‘coalface’ of effective teaching. Only an instructor thus qualified can provide all-round, or ‘3D’ instruction.

4.4. ‘3D’ Training: observation, diagnosis and treatment

For various reasons – budget, motivation, instructor availability or motivation – trainee interpreters have often had to be content with one-dimensional instruction, mere observation and correction: – ‘you should have said this’ or ‘you should be more fluent, elegant, convincing’ and in worse cases, observation and rejection (‘how can you hope to be an interpreter’, etc.).

1. Observation (↯ correction): from ‘you should have said...’ and a list of mistakes, to demonstration by self and peer evaluation (e.g. by recording and playback, public and private), and sensitive interaction;
2. Diagnosis: identifying the causes of errors and failures, where theory can complement intuition;
3. Treatment: recommendations and exercises, drawing on theory, research and pedagogical expertise.

To provide ‘3D’ instruction – or at least 2D, offering diagnosis – we must be able to unravel the source of problems, if necessary with the help of some heuristic template, such as this analysis of interpreting competence into four components:

- *Language*: passive (comprehension range and depth) and active performance (availability, range, flexibility, register control).
- *Knowledge*: general (world) and local or specialised (preparation, activation); range, depth and mobilisation.
- *Skills*: active listening, public speaking, consecutive with notes, simultaneous, managing mixtures of speech and text, and in general, interpreting-specific cognitive agility.

- *Professionalism*: awareness of relationship between conditions, quality expectations and potential performance; social, diplomatic and interpersonal skills.

Problems attributable to weakness in one or more of these four areas can usually be distinguished in the classroom from each other and from issues common to all translation, such as cultural transfer strategies, choices to explicate or omit, and so forth.

Table 2 shows some frequent problems encountered in consecutive with notes.

OBSERVATION	DIAGNOSIS	TREATMENT
SIGNIFICANT OMISSION	Item not heard, too busy writing (Skills: attention/coordination)	Explanation, practice
	Heard but disregarded (Knowledge, sense of relevance)	Deepen knowledge (reading, preparation)
	Heard but didn't note (Awareness of own memory)	Practice
	Heard and noted illegibly (Skills)	Practice
	Heard and noted but misunderstood (Language, listening/analysis and/or knowledge/preparation)	Warning and 'notes-vs-no notes' demo on abstract, argumentative passages
SIGNIFICANT ERROR	Heard and noted, but distorted (Analysis, or target language weakness)	
VAGUE OR UNCLEAR OUTPUT FROM A INTO B	Misjudged cultural gap (explication, paraphrase needed), and/or TL weakness	Use 'naive' TL listeners; language enhancement

Table 2 Common problems in consecutive with notes

As we can see, there are usually several possible causes for failure, of which the student may only be partly aware. Examining the notes can help, but in many cases the problem(s) can only be reliably diagnosed by elimination through a variety of exercises on different kinds of speech, auxiliary exercises like sight translation, returning to a demonstration of how one may do better without taking notes on certain passages. As trainees progress, problems and recommendations should shift from process (coordination) to product (strategic choice, professional judgment, eye contact, momentum, posture, etc.).

4.5. Theories, models and metaphors in the process phases

Theories and models of the interpreting process, if explained clearly with examples, can usually help most students to understand the task in the initiation and experimentation phases. The Effort Models (Gile

1995/2009), for example, help to visualise the challenge of coordination, but do not address issues of meaning and language, which in turn are analysed helpfully in ITT. Chernov (1994, 2004) helps to understand how interpreters can exploit the information structure of discourse, as it alternates between density peaks of new and old information, as well as their own knowledge, to distribute attention and production, while Setton (1999) draws attention to the use of context, and of pragmatic cues in discourse, to anticipate or compress. To raise awareness of the interpreter's role and relations with her/his clients and environment in different settings – conference, court or community – authors like Pöschhacker (1994), Hale (2004) or Wadensjö (1998) can be tapped for general overviews.

However, this literature should only be drawn upon if a clear, lively and pedagogical picture can be extracted that trainees can immediately connect with their own experience. Failing this, evocative metaphors like Seleskovitch's 'currant bun', have proven their effectiveness.

These theoretical aids to teaching are to be distinguished from the more abstract and technical material from cognitive science, briefly mentioned below, that can make a significant conceptual contribution to interpreter pedagogy at the course design level, and should be recommended reading for instructors.

4.6. Theory in defining the criterion standard of competence

In the later stages of training, from 'consolidation' in a wider variety of speech types through to exposure to real life conditions (SI with text, speed, accents, etc.), students will gradually be judged against a new yardstick – no longer against the intermediate and partial objectives of successive steps in the progression, as described, but against the expectations of users, and beyond them where possible.

Here, theory and research can contribute usefully to the quality criteria and expectations to be internalised and applied by instructors in the final stages, up to and including the certifying diploma (and hence also by jury members). This stage is critical, not just for its traditional gatekeeper function, but because training programmes are under pressure from all sides to meet standards that are simultaneously credible, accountable and consistent. Credibility means showing students (by instructor demonstrations and visits to real conferences) that the standard demanded is feasible and realistic, and employers that it meets their needs. Consistency and accountability mean showing all stakeholders that standards do not vary from jury to jury, class to class or year to year (subject only, perhaps – realistically – to 'running-in' periods for brand-new language combinations).

These goals are not trivial to achieve, and we can use any available help from research on testing generally, and on reception and users' quality perceptions and expectations, and from theories of communication that can help conceptualise and operationalise a standard of communicative quality, and importantly, understand and factor in degrees of difficulty:

- (i) *User surveys*, a fairly recent branch of interpreting research, tell us about the relative importance that users of the service attach to different features of the product. These must be used with caution (they show variation among different meeting types, for example), and cannot be adopted blindly without balancing with our own profession-internal standards, and of course, against what we know (but users may not) about feasibility in different working conditions – SI from recited text, for example. But these surveys have already adjusted our understanding of quality as perceived by our users.
- (ii) *Controlled, specific research on reception*: Collados Aís (1998), for example, found that a pleasant, charming voice often blinded judges of interpreting quality to inaccuracies, while Setton and Motta (2007) found that accuracy was a good indicator of quality as judged by experts. Exam administrators must satisfy themselves that jury members, especially the less experienced, are alert to this danger.
- (iii) *Theories of communication*, from the field of linguistic pragmatics, offer a useful framework for measuring quality and discourse difficulty. For example, in Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1995), the *relevance* of an utterance to an individual is technically defined as a trade-off between the cognitive effects it provides (roughly, its meaningfulness or informativeness) and the effort needed to derive them. This is a useful guide to evaluating communicative quality: in assessing interpreting into a B-language, for example, the amount of meaning communicated must be weighed against the possible discomfort or effort that linguistic flaws may cost the listener, which may even cause him to switch off above a certain threshold. More positively, quality is enhanced by user-friendly presentation, with meaningful prosody and cohesive ties. Of course, this guideline must be complemented with an interpreting-specific criterion – *fidelity* to the speaker's meaning – but the effect-effort equation shows how fidelity and 'presentation', which juries are sometimes asked to judge separately, are inseparable sides of the same quality coin.

4.7. Theory and training to market readiness

Even the best training programmes find it hard to prepare trainees for the shock of real market conditions. There is usually no time left at the end of the course to practice on difficult accents, ultra-fast or recited speeches, or

PowerPoint presentations via relay, nor the facilities to simulate the combination of these conditions we meet in reality, leaving an 'expertise gap' (Donovan 2008).

Nor do we have any specific pedagogy for these tasks. To make a start in filling this gap, trainers must first try to analyse and understand these complex tasks in cognitive terms, check their feasibility against user needs and interpreters' own norms, derive realistic expectations on student performance, and recommend coping tactics and strategies.

Some of the more advanced tasks required in real-life interpreting pose new and significantly different cognitive challenges when compared to 'basic, everyday' consecutive and simultaneous. SI with text, for example, entails juggling three 'texts' instead of two (two in, one out). Giving or taking relay on a slide presentation calls for different time management. The intelligent gisting needed to meet user needs (i.e. provide key information) from a speech that is read too fast for full interpretation is different from the basic gymnastics of producing complete renditions of successive sentences. Instructors will be able to diagnose and recommend more confidently and effectively if they have some internalised model of these tasks.

Analytical work that could contribute to developing a cognitively informed pedagogy might start with a finer typology of speech types, from genres down to the level of discourse texture, which might then be related to a cognitive model of processes to inform diagnosis. With their own experience enhanced by this theoretical understanding, and sharing reflections on pedagogy, instructors should be able to teach trainees to recognise a speech that needs complete reformulation from one that can be followed more closely, or one that is too fast and dense for 'full' interpretation, and recommend appropriate strategies to meet user needs in each situation: instead of trying to render everything and inevitably fail, producing nothing usable, focus on doing justice to the dominant note of the speech, be it persuasive, informative or ceremonial; learn what information to omit, how to highlight topic changes, to 'bullet-point' the speech with vocal pointers, and so on.

5. Feasibility: the price of realistic, sustainable interpreter training

For theory to irrigate pedagogical practice, it must be internalised by course leaders and designers, then expressed in the course structure and evaluation/testing procedures, and finally, passed on to each instructor, who must complement their personal professional experience and intuition with a basic understanding of key parameters: the cognitive challenges of the course for students, factors in speech difficulty and their appropriateness at different stages (for choosing materials), the likely

variation in students' temperaments and development (with some typical profiles and problems), and when to focus on process and when on product. These qualifications can be conveyed through teacher training, staff discussions and some background reading, as well as experience.

It will now be clear that this reinforced training programme presupposes more investment in personnel, time, study and probably funding than before. This depends on the politics and economics of interpreting, institutional policies and arguments that can be made in defence of proper high-quality interpreter training. For course leaders and administrators, critical parameters to watch in finding the right balance between quality, feasibility and sustainability include curriculum load (the risk of overload and stress if too many components, like knowledge or language enhancement modules, are added), and the availability, motivation and recruitment of instructors.

These aspects are beyond the scope of this paper; but clearly, the closer the results of training can be seen to fit actual market needs, the stronger the case for supporting quality training. Hence the need for more research on reception, for schools to keep abreast of short and medium-term language needs and heed signals from employers. Realism, simulation, market-relevant teaching and credible certification will all help to make interpreter training, and interpreting studies, useful and sustainable.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we have compared the potential of research and theory to influence the practice of interpreting directly and indirectly, through training. We suggest that for various reasons, to do with basic methodological difficulties as well as transposition to a complex reality, valid direct applications of conventional research to practice are not yet within reach and that the most effective conduit through which theory and research can impact on practice is through their contribution to training, by upgrading and enriching the incremental apprenticeship model to make interpreter training more realistic, accountable, and sensitive to individual variability. Training excellent interpreters is the best 'proof of the pudding' that our theory and understanding of interpreting, from its different and complementary cognitive and social-interactional perspectives, is relevant. To enrich the training effort, we need to draw on both cognitive and educational theory, without underestimating the need to adapt them to this highly specific application. This should be feasible with the commitment of course leaders and instructors, and the support of administrators and funding authorities.

References

- Anderson L. (1994) "Simultaneous interpretation: Contextual and translation aspects", in S. Lambert and B. Moser-Mercer (eds.), *Bridging the Gap: Empirical Research in Simultaneous Interpretation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 101-120.
- Chernov G.V. (1994) "Message redundancy and message anticipation in simultaneous interpreting", in S. Lambert and B. Moser-Mercer (eds.), *Bridging the Gap. Empirical Research in Simultaneous Interpretation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 139-153.
- Chernov G.V. (2004) *Inference and Anticipation in Simultaneous Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Collados Aís Á. (1998) *La evaluación de la calidad en interpretación simultánea: La importancia de la comunicación no verbal*, Granada: Editorial Comares.
- Donovan C. (2008) "Closing the expertise gap: a concrete example of guided reflection on a conference experience", *Forum* 6(1), 35-58.
- Durand C. (2005) *La Relève : étude prospective*.
www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article1509.htm (accessed 31.10.2010).
- Gile D. (2001) "Interpreting research. What you never wanted to ask but may like to know". AIIC website.
www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm?page_id=341 (accessed 30.10.2010).
- Gile D. (1995/2009) *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Gran L. and Dodds J.(eds) (1989) *The Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Teaching Conference Interpretation*, Udine, Compagnotto Editore.
- Hale S. (2004) *The Discourse of Court Interpreting: Discourse Practices of the Law, the Witness and the Interpreter*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Kellerman S. (1990) "Lip service: the contribution of the visual modality to speech perception and its relevance to the teaching and testing of foreign language listening comprehension", *Applied Linguistics*, 11(3) 2, 72-280.
- Moser-Mercer B, Künzli A. and Koraç M. (1998) "Prolonged turns in interpreting: effects on quality, physiological and psychological stress" (Pilot study), *Interpreting*, 3(1), 47-64.
- Pöschhacker F. (1994) *Simultandolmetschen als komplexes Handeln*. Tübingen, Gunter Narr.
- Setton R. (1999) *Simultaneous Interpretation: A Cognitive-pragmatic Analysis*, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Setton R. and Motta M. (2007) "Syntacrobatics: quality and reformulation in simultaneous-with-text", *Interpreting* 9(2), 199-230.
- Setton R. and Guo Liangliang A. (2009) "Attitudes to role, status and professional identity in interpreters and translators with

- Chinese in Shanghai and Taipei”, *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 4(2), 210-238.
- Sperber D. and Wilson D. (1986/1995) *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Wadensjö C. (1998) *Interpreting as Interaction*, New York, Addison Wesley Longman.

EU multilingualism: the looming challenges

BRIAN FOX

DG for Interpretation, European Commission

Abstract

The European Union's motto "Unity in Diversity" is the demonstration of the enduring vision of Europe's different languages and different cultures as a priceless asset. Ensuring that this diversity is not a barrier to understanding is the task of 10% of the European Commission staff, comprising roughly three quarters translators, one quarter interpreters. I shall of course be concentrating on the latter.

Danica Seleskovitch very pertinently pointed out that the chain of communication does not stop in the booth. We in the European Commission's Directorate-general for Interpretation have long taken this to heart, both literally and figuratively. Literally, in the sense that the ultimate destination of the message is of course the customer: I will present some key findings of our latest Customer Satisfaction Survey which has just been finalised. Figuratively, because the looming shortage of good young conference interpreters coming into the profession threatens that the message may only reach an empty booth for some languages.

Within those two over-arching themes, there are of course other important interwoven issues which I would like to tease out for your consideration.

1. Some preliminary considerations

Allow me first to provide some context for a better understanding of the complexities involved. The four ‘founding’ languages and their 12 possible permutations gradually increased over the first four decades to 11 languages and 110 combinations. Then came rapid expansion to 23 languages and a massive 506 combinations. The number of languages may have doubled but the operational complexity has increased by far more than that (cf. Figure 1).

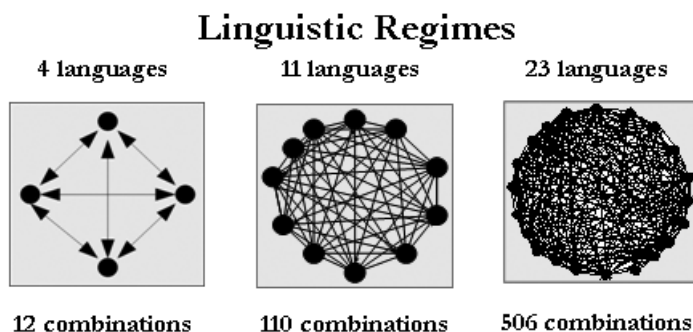


Figure 1

In addition, special arrangements were also agreed for the occasional inclusion of Basque, Catalan, Galician, Scots Gaelic and Welsh. Nor was that all; visiting Heads of State or government, different international groupings, all require tailor-made language arrangements which we are required to provide. Our record currently stands at full coverage of a 28 language meeting. “*L’intendance suivra*” indeed!

Nonetheless, this exponential increase in complexity has also profoundly changed the professional landscape. Previously, we had stressed a marked preference for direct interpretation into the mother tongue wherever possible. Nowadays, to paraphrase Eco, the language of EU interpreting is relay (cf. Appendix).

It should not be thought that this unparalleled linguistic wealth might offer any immunity from the spread of English. Indeed, there are grounds to argue that this very diversity may have favoured and accelerated the use of the prevailing lingua franca.

Naturally, since we have said that interpreting may be assessed according to its usefulness to the customer, this is a further factor that we must take into account in assessing the quality of interpretation we provide. But I shall return to this later.

Having now pronounced the ‘Q’ word, I should at this stage immediately declare that I am using the very simplest definition of quality that obtains in an organisation, or perhaps more broadly, in the paid exercise of the profession: “ ‘Quality’ in a product is not what the supplier puts in. It is what the

customer gets out and is willing to pay for...” (Drucker 1985: 206). Drucker’s formula is particularly apt since it is unambiguous, universally applicable and also because it is a useful reminder that interpreting is customer-focused rather than art for art’s sake. This definition will be a touchstone to which I shall return in the course of this presentation. Moreover, as Umberto Eco says “*Every sensible and rigorous theory of language shows that a perfect translation is an impossible dream*” (2001). Any assessment of quality of service must accordingly be based on how ‘useful’ the user considers the interpretation to be.

2. Are the customers satisfied?

After lengthy preparation – in which our staff interpreters were also closely involved – DG SCIC’s first Customer Satisfaction Survey was launched at the end of 2006 and the report published in 2007. This was the very first survey undertaken by an organisation on this scale (over 3,000 respondents) and to such depth, so a degree of apprehension was inevitable. Given the rather creditable results that emerged, the 2010 Survey was greeted with far greater equanimity. The results, published very recently, may be found at the following address:

http://www.scic.cec/scicnet/upload/docs/application/pdf/2010-03/2nd_customer_satisfaction_survey_2010.pdf

Questionnaires were distributed to delegates in a range of meetings across SCIC client Institutions and bodies in Brussels. Respondents represented a very similar constituency to that of 2007: 78% were ‘regulars’, i.e. attended more than 5 meetings with interpretation per year and 75% were national civil servants. In other words there was an overwhelming majority of experienced and knowledgeable customers even if the number of respondents was down (around 2,500 delegates). Overall satisfaction, the ‘headline’ figure, edged up slightly from 2007 with only 2% expressing dissatisfaction. But, reassuring as that was, we were far more interested in less obvious aspects, particularly where and how we could improve.

Perhaps I could highlight a few more noteworthy findings as I see them:

1. As in 2007, respondents with interpretation into their own language were significantly more satisfied (+7.8%) than those who listened to interpretation in another language.
2. The ‘terminology’ satisfaction rating was slightly up (1%) on average but the situation for individual languages oscillated considerably. But, digging a little deeper, a most striking correlation is to be found between satisfaction for “terminology” and overall satisfaction. Those who were ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘fairly dissatisfied’ with terminology gave an overall satisfaction rating of 57.4% while those who were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with terminology gave an extremely high 95.4% overall rating.

The difference in satisfaction of 38% is enormous and certainly gives much food for thought. The 2007 survey had already indicated that more attention was needed in this area and we had accordingly reweighted our training mix to strengthen the thematic training (meeting subjects) component. It would appear that either this has had limited impact or that the technical sophistication of meeting discussions has become even greater. It is quite clear that we (management and interpreters) must reflect carefully on this.

But what exactly is the problem? On the correlation itself, there is in my opinion room for some exploration. Firstly, how is “terminology” understood? One could easily conceive that ‘terminology’ might go beyond its meaning *stricto sensu* and spill over into the far wider concept of “knowledge of the subject being discussed”. It is true that our interpreters change meetings, subject areas, organisations even, everyday so this is inevitably our Achilles heel. In addition, the relevant documentation is often available only in a restricted number of languages so the technical terms are not always available. At the more practical level, an interpreter who knows the exact term need not dither, hunt around or resort to lengthy circumlocutions and will project effortlessly knowledgeable reassuring professionalism. (I have always considered interpreting to be akin to medicine and banking in that all depend on gaining and maintaining the trust of the client for the viable exercise of their profession). This combination of the substantive and the subliminal could warrant the sizeable premium given to “terminology” by the respondents.

3. Another interesting issue cropped up when looking at which language customers used when interpretation was available. “I always speak in my mother tongue” was chosen by 65% of respondents, 10% sometimes spoke in another language, while 5% always spoke in another language. The principal reasons given for choosing to take the floor in another language were:
 - Concern that the interpreters would not convey their message accurately: 10% (down from 19% in 2007);
 - Communication would be improved by using a more widely-spoken language: 30%;
 - Greater familiarity with the meeting subject in another language: 30%.
4. The progressive spread of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has already been alluded to previously. It is worth underlining explicitly that this phenomenon has two quite separate manifestations. While more and more people speak (non-native) English, native English speakers are less and less able to speak (or understand) anything else. Thus English-native speakers are by far the most faithful to and dependent on interpretation (93%).

As in 2007, there is again a very substantial gap in satisfaction with interpretation between native speakers and non-native speakers who

listened to English interpretation. Overall satisfaction of native English speakers was very high (93%) but less so for non-natives (79%). This 14% gap shows slight progress since 2007 (16%) but the order of magnitude clearly constitutes a red light on the dashboard¹. Actually, the red light is signalling a very crucial issue going well beyond the EU: what is English?; which English?; and whose language is it anyway?

Deeply held feelings of ownership begin to be questioned. Indeed, if there is one predictable consequence of a language becoming a global language, it is that nobody owns it anymore. Or rather, everyone who has learned it now owns it 'has a share in it' might be more accurate – and has the right to use it in the way they want. This fact alone makes many people uncomfortable, even vaguely resentful. (Crystal 2003: 2-3)

This has led to a somewhat paradoxical situation: on the one hand, for the majority of its users, English is a foreign language, and the vast majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve any native speakers of the language at all. On the other hand, there is still a tendency for native speakers to be regarded as custodians over what is acceptable usage. (Seidlhofer 2005: 339)

Thus, the English of native speakers (or very proficient non-natives) cohabits uneasily with the English of those non-native speakers who know it only as a *lingua franca*, an extra-territorial common space rather than as a language with an indissociable underlying culture, history and geography.

It is manifestly a source of continuing professional frustration for interpreters to hear more and more ELF spoken in meetings – often by their own customers, especially when they see very valid arguments failing to get across because of awkward, ambiguous or plain bad expression. (The lot of the translators is probably even worse, as they often have systematically to revise or even rewrite texts in English. Documents being legally binding, imprecise drafting can cause the direst consequences.)

However, we are there to help not to oblige people to speak any particular language. Consequently, the only way to go about it is to show that interpretation does offer the best way of achieving the customer's objectives.

[...] l'interprétation est de plus en plus vue comme un luxe offert aux auditeurs pour leur confort afin de leur épargner la fatigue occasionnée par l'écoute prolongée d'une langue étrangère, comprise certes, mais au prix d'un certain effort. Or ce confort n'est apporté que par une interprétation qui présente la qualité d'un produit de luxe. (Déjean le Féal 2005: 41)

1 Perhaps the binary distinction between native and non-native speakers may be oversimplistic since the Nordics and the Dutch are often highly proficient.

If customers are unconvinced by the quality of the interpretation to which they listen, it follows that they will be far less inclined to trust to interpretation when they themselves speak. Hence the importance we attach to performance appraisal at every level. The weakest link determines the strength of the whole team and so quality must necessarily be consistently high throughout the whole team.

But the rise of English is a global phenomenon going well beyond the meeting rooms of the EU Institutions. Other rather more powerful instruments are committed to ensuring that multilingualism remains vibrant. In 2002, the EU Council of Ministers in Barcelona set the target of “mother tongue plus 2” (foreign languages) for citizens. It was generally understood that the “2” would comprise one ‘major’ language and one other. In 2008 the Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue (a.k.a Malouf group) aired the interesting proposal that the other language should be a PAL (personal adoptive language).

The idea is that every European should be encouraged to freely choose a distinctive language different from his or her language of identity, and also different from his or her language of international communication (Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue 2008: 10).

Given ELF’s inexorable progression, this has been completed more recently by the very explicit ‘English is not enough’. Indeed it is not.

3. The next generation

The ranks of our interpreters are not enough either. Although good conference interpreters have always been in short supply, that shortage – which also affects all the international organisations – is becoming increasingly acute. Nowhere more so than for English. The paradox of being awash in a sea of English and yet experiencing a drought of English interpreters recalls Coleridge’s thirst-stricken Ancient Mariner in a becalmed ship: “*Water, water everywhere, Nor any drop to drink*”.

But shortages were already present and/or foreseeable for other languages too, e.g. French and German. These shortages are also making themselves felt more and more. For German, there is also the aggravating circumstance that the number of learners of German is continuing a clear downward trend, so much so that interpreters working from German are keenly sought.

In addition, the EU and other interpreting services found themselves fishing in the same talent pool as many other recruiters, the latter often having superior pulling-power with more appealing remuneration/career packages. In the last decade the demand for bright young graduates with keen analytical skills and a flair for communication has rocketed. As far back as 1997, the iconic McKinsey consultancy had coined the phrase “War

for Talent” and prophesied that the demand for highly-skilled people would increasingly outstrip supply for the next 20 years.

For a few more years companies can fill their executive ranks with the increasing number of older baby boomers, but when those boomers retire, companies will find their management ranks very thin (McKinsey & Co. 2001: 10).

The greying of Europe is certainly evident behind the tinted glass of the interpreting booths. The average age of SCIC German interpreters is 48.4, the freelance colleagues at 53.4 are even older. For the French the ages are 44.8 and 53 respectively and for the English 48.3 and 51.2. The wave of baby-boomer retirements has started and will continue for the next ten years or so.

The ever-fiercer competition for the best, generated by the transformation of Europe into a knowledge society and coinciding with the move towards retirement of a whole generation of baby-boomers was and is a major source of concern. Nor is this confined solely to the EU, it is a major issue for advanced economies world-wide. The European Commission had already been pro-active on the succession planning front, as had the European Parliament. A diversified cooperation programme of professional and financial support for student interpreters and university training courses had been progressively set in place.

But it was clear that more was needed.

1. *Innovative Schemes.* Most appropriately for the Year of Innovation and Creativity, 2009 was a year that produced an unprecedented number of significant and innovative actions on our part. Over the last years, we had intensified our contacts in the Member States. From numerous visits and conversations with key players in the Universities, Ministries and other national authorities, by my management team and myself, we were able to identify potential areas where productive improvements could be introduced. We designed, developed and, in 2010, launched the ‘KIN’ actions, a set of three new schemes tailored to complete our “Next Generation” platform (cf. Figure 2) with the following aims:

- *Key Trainers Scheme:* Support key university trainers by offering specially tailored access to long-term recruitment, so as to allow them to reconcile both their University training commitments and their interpreting activities for SCIC, (thereby also ensuring transmission of our professional and quality requirements to student-interpreters);
- *Integration programme:* Provide a one-month internship with grant for young graduates who had not quite made the grade in our tests but had demonstrated the potential to do so to EU test panels. This highly flexible facility allowed us both to cater to a wide linguistic range of candidates and to do so in a highly more cost-effective manner. In the

framework of inter-Institutional co-operation, our EU sister services also contributed valuable support;

- **Newcomers Scheme:** Guarantee a good professional start for newly-accredited young colleagues. Given the “live” nature of the profession, inexperienced young graduates inevitably face a vicious circle: no experience means no work; no work means no experience. Offering a guaranteed annual workload with accompanying mentoring, this scheme tangibly improves the entry of promising young interpreters to ensure the continuing vigour of the profession.

The figure also shows the existing actions which many of you will be very familiar with already to show how these new schemes dovetail into existing programmes. We hope they will also prove mutually-reinforcing.

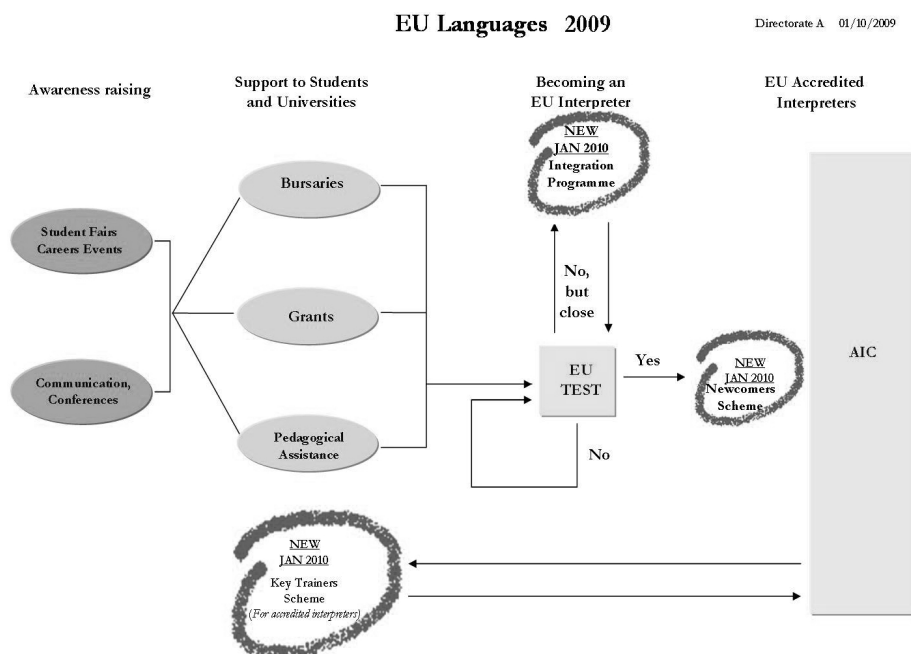


Figure 2

2. **New Channels.** We also realised that in order to get through to our intended target audience, traditional media was ineffective and we had to harness the power of attraction of the Internet. Thus, we published a Facebook page for information and dialogue appropriate for the target age-groups. After a visit to Riga, Marco Benedetti commissioned a tailor-made clip for Latvian which proved very successful. On that basis, we launched a series of video-clips targeted at the different languages and age-groups we sought. The site, named “Interpreting for Europe”², is

² <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Interpreting-for-Europe/173122606407>.

tangible proof of the high degree of cooperation attained by the three EU Interpreting Services (European Court of Justice, European Parliament and ourselves, European Commission). Your feedback and contributions are always most welcome.

3. *Strengthening Cooperation*. Our inter-organisational cooperation also extends well beyond Europe encompassing virtually all the world's International Organisations through IAMLAPD³. This is the one and only forum for the Language and Conference Services of the world's international (and supra-national) organisations and is chaired by the UN.

In this wider global context and in close cooperation with the UN, we are founding project partners in the 2 new conference interpreter university training courses on the African continent (Nairobi, Kenya and Maputo, Mozambique) also contributing pedagogical support and examiners. In the same framework, we remain in close touch with the existing course(s) in North America and also continue to talk to potential new entrants. As Chairman of the IAMLADP Working Group on Training, I can assure you that IAMLAPD is firmly committed to working with the training Universities and will constantly strive to strengthen and multiply the bridges between the employers and the trainers.

4. Conclusion

In concluding, I am grateful for this opportunity to offer an insight into our main concerns as well as some new initiatives and developments which I believe might be of interest to you as University trainers, researchers and professionals. Apart from providing the intellectual underpinning of the language professions, your research will inevitably feed back into the teaching and training of the next generations. They will be all the better for it. There is no room for complacency in today's world and customers' expectations of quality rise continually.

From almost everything I have said, it emerges beyond the shadow of any doubt that we are firmly committed to quality and that the Universities and trainers with whom we cooperate are and will remain the key elements of our strategy. As you are aware, we invest heavily in our joint partnership and we intend to continue to do so.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to record my deep appreciation of the very valuable work you are doing, particularly in the

3 International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publishing.

strained circumstances in which many of your institutions currently find themselves.

References

- Crystal D. (2003) *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press [first edition 1997].
- Dejean le Féal K. (2005) “L’interprétation simultanée vers une langue apprise: peut-on et doit-on l’enseigner?”, in F. Israel and M. Lederer (eds.) *La Théorie Interprétative de la traduction III: de la formation...à la pratique professionnelle*, Paris, Lettres modernes Minard, pp. 21-43.
- Drucker P.F. (1985) *Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practice and Principles*, Amsterdam, Elsevier.
- Eco U. (2001) *Experiences in Translation*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue (2008) *A Rewarding Challenge*, http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/archive/doc/maalouf/report_en.pdf
- McKinsey and Company (2001) *The War for Talent*, http://autoassembly.mckinsey.com/html/downloads/articles/War__For__Talent.pdf
- Seidlhofer B. (2005) “English as a Lingua Franca”, *ELT Journal* 59(4), 339-341.

Le monday 26 july 2010 1000 1250.

Titre: **CONSEIL AFFAIRES GENERALES**

Regime: SIM de FR-DE-EN-IT-ES-NL-PT-EL-DA-FI-SV-CS-ET-LV-LT-HU-MT-PL-SK-SL-GA-BG-RO-
vers

Institution: CONSEIL DE MINISTRES

Programme des réunions
et de l'interprétation

23/22

SIM

DA

DA 1->FR
FR DE EN NL
DA 2
FR DE EN IT
NL
DA 3
FR DE EN IT
SV

EL 1
FR EN IT
PT
EL 2
FR EN IT
EL 3
FR DE EN IT
ES NL

PT 1
FR DE EN IT ES NL
PT 2
FR EN IT
PT 3
FR DE EN IT ES NL

NL 1
FR EN IT ES PT SV
NL 2
FR EN IT ES PT DA
SV NO
NL 3
FR DE EN IT PT
NL 4
fr DE EN ES DA FI

ES 1
FR DE EN IT PT
ES 2
FR DE EN NL PT
ES 3
FR DE EN IT NL PT
SV OL

IT 1
FR EN ES PT RO
IT 2
FR DE EN PT
IT 3
FR DE EN ES NL
BG RO

EN 1
FR ES GA
EN 2
FR DE IT GA
EN 3
FR DE IT NL PT
DA
EN 4
FR DE ES NL CS
EN 5
FR IT ES FI

DE 1
FR EN IT ES NL PT SV
DE 2
FR EN IT ES NL CS SK
SK BS HR
DE 3
FR EN IT ES NL EL

FI 1
FR EN ES
FI 2
FR DE EN
SV
FI 3->FR
FR EN IT NL

CS 1
EN SK
CS 2
FR EN IT PT
SK
CS 3
DE EN NL SK

LV 1
DE EN RU
LV 2->EN
EN RU
LV 3->EN
FR EN

ET 1->EN
EN
ET 2
DE EN
ET 3->EN
EN RU

LT 1->EI
EN DA RU
LT 2->EN
EN
LT 3
DE EN RU

HU 1
EN ES
HU 2->EN
EN RO
HU 3->EN
FR DE EN

MT 1->EN
FR EN
MT 2->EN
EN IT ES
MT 3->EN
EN IT

PL 1->EN
DE EN
PL 2
DE EN
PL 3->EN
FR DE EN

RO 1->EN
FR EN
RO 2
DE EN IT
RO 3->EN
FR EN

BG 1->EN
FR EN
BG 2
DE EN
BG 3->EN
EN

GA
SL 1
EN ES CS
SK 2->FR
FR EN ES
SK 3->FR
FR DE NL CS

INDISPONIBILITES:

M. xxxx

IND

17h30

Retour into :

FRENCH
ENGLISH

From :

DA FI SK
BG ET HU LT LV MT PL RO SL

Where to find your relay for:

FRENCH DE EN IT ES NL PT EL DA FI SV CS LV HU MT PL SK SL BG RO
 GERMAN FREN IT ES NL PT EL DA FI SV CS ET LV LTHU PL SK SL BG RO
 ENGLISH FR DE IT ES NL PT EL DA FI SV CS ET LV LTHU MT PL SK SL BG RO
 ITALIAN FR DE EN ES NL PT EL DA FI SV CS MT
 SPANISH FR DE EN IT NL PT EL DA FI HU MT SK SL
 DUTCH FR DE EN IT ES PT EL DA FI SV CS SK
 PORTUGUESE FR DE EN IT ES NLEL CS
 GREEK FR DE
 DANISH FREN NL LT
 FINNISH FREN NL
 SWEDISH FR DE ES NL DA FI
 CZECH DE EN SK
 ESTONIAN EN
 LATVIAN EN
 LITHUANIAN EN
 HUNGARIAN EN
 MALTESE EN
 POLISH FREN SV
 SLOVAK FR DE CS
 SLOVENE EN
 IRISH EN
 BULGARIAN EN IT
 ROMANIAN EN IT HU

Les codes SCIC employant un seul caractère sont en cours d'adaptation à la norme ISO 2

Codes langues ISO 2 :

FR DE EN IT ES NL PT EL
FRA DEU ENG ITA SPA NLD POR ELL

Affichage salles Conseil :

 DA FI SV CS ET LV LT HU MT PL SK SL BG RO
 DAN FIN SVE CES EST LAV LIT HUN MLT POL SK SLV GLE BUL RON

Lieu: JUL

CO 501

26/07/10

CONSEIL AFFAIRES GENERALES

Interprète Responsable / Head of Team

Ms xxx

Cabine / Booth

DG INTERPRETATION - SCIC

SIM

23/22

Interprètes Responsables / Head of Team	Ms xxx	TIPS FOR SPEAKERS : Whenever possible,
<p>EU lang</p> <p>FRA FRANCAIS (French)</p> <p>DEU DEUTSCH (German/Allemand)</p> <p>ENG ENGLISH (Anglais)</p> <p>ITA ITALIANO (Italian/Italien)</p> <p>SPA ESPANOL (Spanish/Espagnol)</p> <p>NLD NEDERLANDS (Dutch/Néerlandais)</p> <p>POR PORTUGUES (Portuguese/Portugais)</p> <p>ELL ELLINIKA (Greek/Grec)</p> <p>DAN DANSK (Danish/Danois)</p> <p>FIN SUOMI (Finnish/Finnois)</p> <p>SVE SVENSKA (Swedish/Suédois)</p> <p>CES CESTINA (Czech/Tchèque)</p> <p>EST EESTI (Estonian/Estonien)</p> <p>LAV LATVIESU (Latvian/Letton)</p> <p>LIT LIETUVIU (Lithuanian/Lithuanien)</p> <p>HUN MAGYAR (Hungarian/Hongrois)</p> <p>MLT MALTI (Maltese/Maltais)</p> <p>POL POLSKI (Polish/Polonais)</p> <p>SLK SLOVENČINA (Slovak/Slovaque)</p> <p>SIV SLOVENSČINA (Slovene/Slovène)</p> <p>GLE GAELIGE (Irish/Irlandais)</p> <p>BUL BULGARSKI (Bulgarian/Bulgare)</p> <p>RON ROMÂNIA (Romanian/Roumain)</p>	<p>et parler mais pas écouter AND SPEAK BUT NOT LISTEN TO</p>	<p>use your mother tongue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- speak freely and avoid reading- speak at an appropriate pace to get your message across to everyone in your audience <p><i>If you have to read out a text, kindly give the interpreters a copy beforehand</i></p> <p>PLEASE SWITCH OFF YOUR MOBILE PHONE : IT MAY CAUSE INTERFERENCE WITH THE MICROPHONES.</p> <p>More Info: http://europa.eu.int/comm/scic/help/workwithinter_en.htm</p> <p>VOUS PRENEZ LA PAROLE :</p> <p>Dans toute la mesure du possible,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- parlez votre langue maternelle- ne lisez pas, parlez- votre auditoire est multilingue, adaptez la vitesse de votre intervention <p><i>Si vous devez lire une intervention, assurez-vous que les interprètes disposent de votre texte</i></p> <p>VEUILLEZ ÉTEINDRE VOTRE TELEPHONE PORTABLE : IL PEUT PRODUIRE DES INTERFÉRENCES AVEC LES MICROS</p> <p>Infos: http://europa.eu.int/comm/scic/help/workwithinter_fr.htm</p>

A multi-factorial approach to the development and analysis of professional expertise in SI

MARIANNA SUNNARI - ADELINA HILD

University of Turku - SUNNY, USA

Abstract

In the last decade, attention in interpreting studies has focused on both the issues of expertise and of professionalisation. In view of the substantive changes taking place in the profession today, this article advocates the need for a new type of relationship between the two approaches in which both interact and enrich each other. It examines the interaction between the two dimensions of expertise – cognitive and sociocultural – to shed more light on what professional interpreting means and to gain a better understanding of the complex nature of interpreting expertise today.

1. Introduction

Who becomes an expert? How does one become an expert? What is the nature of the knowledge and skills embodied by experts? These questions concerning the nature, locus and development of expertise have been posed and approached from two different, independently developing academic approaches in modern times.

The first approach is propounded by cognitive psychologists and knowledge systems researchers working in the burgeoning field of psychology of expertise (Ericsson *et al.* 2006). The locus of expertise and the subject of research under the expert performance approach (Ericsson and Smith 1991) is the individual. Its methodological commitments have been rooted in the positivist tradition and despite its initial interest in

personal accounts of experts, it generally eschews phenomenological descriptions in favour of a decontextualized, asocial account from a third person perspective. The expertise performance approach emphasizes the need to identify and account for (cf. Ericsson and Smith 1991) generalizable characteristics of experts' cognition (memory involvement, knowledge organization and access, metacognition) that are extrapolated from large-scale studies of experts or expert-novice comparisons.

The second approach construes expertise as an emergent property of communities of practice and concerns itself with the "contextual conditions for the development of expertise and its functions in modern societies" (Evetts *et al.* 2006). The sociological approach emphasizes the role of the professions as a form of institutionalization of expertise (Abbott 1988, Mieg 2006: 751).

In the last decade, attention in interpreting studies has focused on both the issues of expertise and of professionalisation. The research on these two topics, however, has been developing in a situation of a methodological parallelism. As we shall see in the section below, the cognitive approach has generated claims about the cognitive basis of expert performance extolling interpreters' skills in coping with multitasking, time constraints, and language switching. The attribution of expertise, however, remains largely under-researched. On the other hand, more recently, the professionalization of interpreting has emerged as a topic in research discourse, with trainers and practisearchers actively involved in generating a "discourse of professionalization".

At the present time, with substantive changes taking place in the profession, we advocate the need for a new type of relationship between the two approaches in which both interact and enrich each other. The sociological approach can indicate the direction of changing perceptions of expert interpreters, highlight problems with the social attribution of expert status and consider the importance of enculturation for fostering career development along an expertise path. Cognitive research on interpreting expertise, on the other hand, has the potential to articulate a description and a developmental model of interpreting-specific skills and knowledge. In doing so, it can be instrumental in formulating professional standards and in supporting accreditation. A developmental model of skill acquisition can help identify the specific needs of professionals at different phases of the process and promulgate training across the entire career span to ensure continual advancement of competence.

2. Cognitive studies of expertise

Ever since modern experimental psychology established itself as a scientific discipline, expertise has been an item on its research agenda.

While early interest focused on specific (even unique) abilities of experts, the late 1980s saw the rise of the idea that research on superior performance can proceed at an even higher level of abstraction – that of expertise. With it the focus of research shifted from single individuals and the abilities, skills and knowledge that underline their subjective outstanding performance, to generalizable features of performance. This was suggested by findings that expert performance in different domains reflect the acquisition of similar mediating mechanisms (Ericsson 1996). The expert performance approach, advocated by Ericsson and his colleagues, emphasizes the role of objectively measurable superior performance to identify experts and argues that its causes should be sought in training and practice, rather than personality traits. In other words, “expert performance reflects the mastery of the available knowledge or current performance standards and relates to skills that master teachers and coaches know how to train” (Ericsson *et al.* 1993: 392). Ericsson (1996) further argues that the quantity and quality of deliberate practice (an individualized training with corrective feedback) accumulated by a person in a specific domain is directly related to the attained level of performance.

The topic of expertise first entered interpreting research a decade ago when theoretical (e.g. Moser-Mercer 2000) and experimental interest (Kalina 1998, Ivanova 1999, Liu 2001) addressed the need to provide a description of interpreting expertise. However, it should be pointed out that IR has traditionally focused on differentiating individuals from a specified group (bilinguals, novices or student interpreters) from professionals (for a review, see Liu 2009). In the section that follows we offer a meta-analysis of individual differences studies and SI expertise research in an attempt to provide a picture of the processes underlying superior performance.

2.1. Quantitative differences in performance

A robust, albeit not surprising, finding is that professional experience leads to substantial improvement in performance, as measured either by accuracy (Dillinger 1989, Ivanova 1999) or holistic rating (Liu 2001), or measures of intelligibility and informativeness (Tiselius 2009). The presence or absence of professional experience appears to be a significant factor in determining performance quality. Liu (*ibid.*) reports no significant differences between two student groups at the end of first and second year of training, but a significant one between the student subjects and the professionals (minimum two years of experience). Tiselius (*ibid.*) also finds changes that are not statistically significant in the intelligibility and informativeness rating between professionals of limited (two years) and extensive (over 20 years) experience. However, both groups scored

significantly higher than her student subjects. In general, these quantitative findings support a view of interpreting as an acquired skill rather than an extension of L1 or L2 skills, although clearly the effects of practice in the two more recent studies call for a careful distinction between practice as it takes place in the training process or as part of a membership of the interpreting occupation.

2.2. Component processes of SI

Taking a component processes approach to interpreting, we can find studies providing evidence for the existence of qualitative difference in comprehension, translation and production as a function of experience. Regarding *comprehension*, Ivanova (1999) and Liu (2001) find evidence for the selective processing of task-important information: both studies emphasize the effect of semantic factors in guiding professionals' allocation of attention to idea-units (Liu) or informational nuclei (Ivanova). Conversely, the processing of professionals appears to be less dependent on syntactic cues (Hild, forthcoming) and consequently relatively unaffected by measures of syntactic complexity. In comparison, *translation* as an element of the interpreting process, has received very limited empirical attention. Evidence for translation comes from retrospective studies which demonstrate that experts engage in criterion-guided search for contextually appropriate equivalents, rather than rely exclusively on automatic retrieval of pairs of translation equivalents (Ivanova 1999; Sunnari forthcoming). Concerning the processes underlying *TT production*, convergent findings from studies using retrospective and quantitative methods indicate that with extended practice interpreters become more attentive to their TT production and engage actively in monitoring (Ivanova 2000, Liu 2001).

At first sight, this appears to contradict the results obtained from a series of suppressed articulation/delayed auditory feedback (SA/DAF) studies (e.g. Fabbro and Darò 1995, Moser-Mercer *et al.* 2000) which concluded that professionals with longer experience are less susceptible to SA/DAF effects than interpreting subjects with shorter experience. The findings were interpreted as evidence of the fact that professional interpreters do not need to monitor their output. However, these two findings are not mutually exclusive. If one considers Gervers' model of SI (Gerver 1976), monitoring is said to occur at two cycles: pre-articulatory (comparison of TT and ST at the level of "deep" or semantic structure) and post-articulatory (which will be susceptible to DAF effects). It is therefore plausible that the two sets of findings address different aspects of the same process – one looks at monitoring for semantic cohesion and translation equivalence of inner speech, while DAF studies address post-articulatory processes. Another critically important aspect of production is prosody, which plays

a pivotal role in structuring the TT and renders extralinguistic information, e.g. emphasis, expressiveness (Brown 1977). Studies of TT prosody (Shlesinger 1994; Ahrens 2005) have focused on analysis of professionals' output and concluded that even interpreters with experience of five and more years still display atypical prosodic patterns (in terms of length, frequency and distribution of pauses; mismatch between intonation contour and underlying syntactic structures, preponderance of stress patterns that are not semantically or syntactically motivated). It would appear, then, that in terms of cognitive changes, the improved control over the delivery of the TT could emerge relatively late in one's professional development and as such could serve to distinguish interpreters at various levels of skill development.

2.3. Working memory involvement in SI

To account for the range of changes attributed to training and practice, interpreting research has turned to theories of memory and attention. This has resulted in a relatively prolific line of experimental research focusing on expert-novice differences in working memory involvement. An up-to date and comprehensive discussion of the methodological assumptions, tools and findings emerging from these studies is offered by Köpke and Nespoulous (2006). The authors draw attention to the inconclusive nature of the findings emerging from both previous studies and their own research and suggest that expertise-related changes may not have an effect on general cognitive mechanisms (e.g. increased memory capacity in the sense proposed by Just and Carpenter 1992), which could be experimentally accessed by simple tasks such as those traditionally used in memory research (comprehension of decontextualised isolated sentences; recall of word lists). Similar to the previous findings discussed above, they suggest that an experiential advantage could be captured by using more complex tasks involving semantic processing. This is in line with the idea introduced by Ericsson and Kintsch (1995) of the domain-specificity of acquired memory skills, which, they argue, effectively extends their WM capacity. The skills, however, rely on the experts' ability to predict and anticipate and consequently can be demonstrated only when experts are confronted with familiar stimuli and tasks.

2.4. Interpreting strategies

Consistent differences between experts and novices have been demonstrated in terms of their analysis of problems and the strategies they used in response to them. This line of research has used a variety of

methods: retrospective protocols focusing on differentiating between trainees and professional/expert interpreters (Ivanova 2000; Tiselius 2006); performance of professional and trainee interpreters (Kalina 1998; Riccardi 2005; Sunnari 1995a, 1995b, forthcoming); interpreting students at various stages of their training (Bartłomiejczyk 2006) as well as longitudinal studies of student interpreters (Moser-Mercer 2000).

2.4.1. Adaptive vs. routine expertise

Ivanova (1999) correlated strategies and problems and concluded that professionals apply a variety of strategies to the solution of problem-types; by varying the redundancy of the input text, she also demonstrated that strategy use and selectivity adapt to changes in the task content. She concluded, based on these findings, that interpreting expertise is best characterized and described as “adaptive expertise” (Hatano and Inagaki 1986).

Similarly, in a study analyzing the simultaneous interpreting performances of eight trainee and eight professional interpreters, Sunnari (forthcoming) found that the distinction between routine and adaptive experts could also be applied to the participants of the study. The work of professional interpreters did not always comply with the definition of expertise as “consistently superior performance” (e.g. Ericsson and Smith 1991)¹. Some of the professionals could be characterized as routine experts or experienced non-experts, because their work was clearly based on practiced routines and fixed solutions, which often resulted in less than ideal rendering. In quantitative terms, the information content was accurately conveyed, but there were other problems of quality, such as rather clumsy sentence structures, redundant corrections as well as abundant repetitions and corrections. This suggests that these experienced professionals had stagnated to a level once reached and abandoned their continuing effort to reach a higher standard, which is considered a hallmark of genuine expertise.

Although it is not possible to measure the effort invested in interpreting performance in absolute terms, it is safe to assume that an analysis of the interpreting input does reveal something about the nature of the interpreting process and about the processing load. While it is true that expert-level simultaneous interpreting sounds fluent and effortless, it could be concluded from the performance analysis that underlying the smooth rendering of adaptive expert interpreters there is a sophisticated array of comprehension and production skills and strategies. An expert performance that complies with the established quality requirements of

1 Similar findings have been made in studies on written translation. See a recent discussion in Jääskeläinen (2010).

professional interpreting (e.g. accuracy of content, fluency and economy of delivery) enables the listener to follow the presentation with minimum effort but is highly effortful from the perspective of the interpreter. In other words, it takes a great deal of effort to create the impression of effortlessness. By contrast, trainees (and professionals acting as routine experts) tended to resort to strategies and solutions that are easy and effortless from their own perspective but resulted in a fragmented output that the listeners may find hard to follow. Finally, it is worth noting that the routine-adaptive distinction was also present when the trainees and professionals had met the limits of their cognitive constraints. In the words of Feltovich *et al.* (2006: 56) “Experts fail graciously but novices crash”.

Moreover, it is worth noting in this context that expert-novice differences found in, e.g. reading and writing, have challenged the notion that an increase in knowledge, skill, or experience allows effortless performance. In their discussion on studies on literate expertise, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1991) list a number of findings that show that “[e]xpert writers are generally found to work harder at the same assigned tasks than nonexperts, engaging in more planning and problem solving, and in general more agonizing about the task” (*ibid.*: 172). Their results also show that the more accomplished readers do more work, which “takes the form of more backtracking in the text to pick up missed information, reading more slowly at points of difficulty, and putting more effort to summarize the text” (*ibid.*: 173).

In assessing this research, we would like to refer back to the opening questions, viz how can we identify experts in the field of interpreting. The majority of the studies discussed above equate expertise with professionalism. For example, in the study by Köpcke and Nespoulous (2006), the group of experts consisted of interpreters whose professional experience ranged from 4 to 35 years. In her meta-analysis of expert SI processing, Liu (2001) eschews distinctions between professional, experienced and expert interpreters or between novices (individuals, unfamiliar with the task) and interpreting students (at various stages of training). Such approaches do not take into account empirical models of skill progression established for a variety of domains (Ericsson 1996) and proffered in interpreting research most prominently by Moser-Mercer (2008, 2010). This evidence suggests that the skill progression is best understood in terms of discrete phases characterized by clusters of specific cognitive mechanisms (skills and knowledge), context sensitivity and emotive factors. At present, it is not quite clear how a developmental progression can be applied to interpreting, and the lack of terminological sensitivity does hamper the consolidation of results across empirical studies and the development of models which could specify concrete thresholds for all maturation phases. Furthermore, there is a general lack of objective performance-related indexes of expertise which could be

applied to designate expert interpreters. Instead, studies tend to rely on length of experience as a primary criterion in identifying experts. Some studies have used composite indexes – a combination of length of experience, professional accreditation, membership of professional organization and peer designation. Even so, they do not reliably predict performance in our experience. In Ivanova (1999), one of the experts selected by composite criteria had to be excluded from the study because the performance measures of accuracy and recall were markedly worse than those of the other eight interpreters.

Furthermore, as the above meta-analysis shows, the preferred method employed in the majority of the studies is expert-novice comparison. It is both easy to underrate and overrate what they tell us about the nature of expertise. The central problem of the comparative method lies in the fact that by sampling two groups, maximally different in terms of their skills, the comparison can only provide a static picture at the moment when the study is conducted. It does not allow researchers to attribute causality, although the clear presumption is that the changes emerge through a combination of training and practice.

3. The socio-cultural approach to SI expertise

In their discussion on the changes taking place during the transformation of expertise from novice status to higher levels, Boshuizen *et al.* (2004: 3-8) point out that expertise and professional learning involve two processes: a change within an individual (acquisition of knowledge, skills, practices and attitudes) and a process of becoming a member of the professional culture and community in question. They maintain that in order to understand how professional expertise develops, it is necessary to consider both of these aspects in more detail. In this section, therefore, we shall introduce further elements of expertise and discuss their relationship to cognitive research as well as their relevance for training and professional development.

This is considered necessary, because a number of authors, especially those looking at the development of professional expertise have emphasized the need to extend the current approach beyond that offered by the traditional theories of expertise. For example, Mieg (2006: 756) argues that as the acquisition of expertise is based on deliberate practice and long-term training, socialization (i.e. social influence through which a person acquires the culture or sub-culture of his/her group) can be expected to have a strong influence on expertise development. Within this frame of reference, expertise has been studied from the perspective of a community pursuing a certain activity, or as a process of enculturation (e.g. Boshuizen *et al.* 2004: 6-7; Hakkarainen *et al.* 2004: 11).

The issue of acquiring membership of a professional culture is also linked with the question of attribution, i.e. how and why do professional interpreters obtain expert status? (cf. Mieg 2006). One answer to this question is given by Sternberg and Frensch (1992: 194-195) who discuss what they term “the attributed aspect” of expertise. They maintain that in the real world, a person is an expert because s/he is regarded as such by others. In other words, expertise is, to a great extent, an attribution. Within this framework, expertise can be examined as a social role in a community. In addition, there is a further approach which focuses on the social aspects of expertise, such as the norms governing the definition of expert behaviour and the identification of experts by their peers within a community or domain. Accordingly, expertise is regarded as something that is socially constructed, i.e. development of expertise is perceived as being dependent on participation in expert culture and becoming acquainted with the domain, its best practices and socially negotiated norms (Hakkarainen *et al.* 2004: 11). Therefore, an account of expertise must look at both its social-attributional and its cognitive side.

In sum, the social perspective extends the analysis from individuals to professional fields and groups. This means adopting a more relativistic view of expertise. In other words, rather than presenting an absolute definition for what counts as expertise (see also Chi 2006), those advocating the socially oriented approach maintain that expertise is often socially negotiated, for example, within a professional group formed to defend the status of the members, and their right to determine the requirements for acceptable competence and performance in the domain (Hakkarainen *et al.* 2004: 18-20). Additionally, this means that gaining expertise is not only a cognitive process but it also involves a social process in which beginners become fully qualified members of the community of professional practitioners. Thus, while expertise depends on individual knowledge, skills and performance, individuals can draw on and benefit from knowledge and practices of other members of their professional community.

3.1. Perceptions of professionalism and expertise in conference interpreting

The social perspective appears to be particularly relevant to interpreting studies, since the notions of professional performance and quality feature prominently in the descriptions of the common core of knowledge, skills and competences that are considered necessary in the practice of conference interpreting. Furthermore, interpreting developed and became a profession through insights gained in practice, or, as Setton (2007: 54) puts it: “In interpreting, practice always came first, informing training and theory.” The first publication to contain a guide for beginners, Jean

Herbert's *Manuel de l'interprète*, was based on his own experience as an interpreter and interpreter trainer. According to Stelling-Michaud (1952: xi), the manual presents in substance and completes in a number of details the course Herbert gave to the UN interpreters at Lake Success in 1946. As the original French version was soon translated into English, German, Dutch, Italian and Chinese, and was also used in the Soviet Union in the early 1950s (Chernov 1999: 43), it can be assumed that his training model and the professional practices introduced in the manual were adopted by other conference interpreters and interpreter trainers. It can also be assumed that his approach had a major impact on the formulation of the set of rules concerning the conference interpreter's task and responsibilities adopted and advocated by AIIC from the very beginning of its existence. Mackintosh (1995: 119-20) points out that the creation of AIIC in 1953 in itself seems to suggest that there was a basic agreement on the parameters defining the professional practice of conference interpreting. In other words, the tacit knowledge accumulated among conference interpreters during the first three decades of the profession had been developed, by the 1950s, into a concrete set of rules and recommendations. Another point worth making in this context is that Herbert's guide explicitly states that interpreting is teamwork and that co-operation between team members may result in substantial improvement in the quality of their performance, or as he himself puts it: "An interpreter who is not good in team work is not a good interpreter" (Herbert 1952: 81).

When discussing professionalism and expertise in conference interpreting it is therefore useful to consider how interpreting has become a profession and which are its defining features. A review compiled for a biography of conference interpreting by Sunnari (forthcoming) shows that three trends can be distinguished in how the professional skill of conference interpreting and its practitioners have been perceived over the last 90 years. Firstly, the early conference interpreters were language experts who entered the profession by chance, mainly thanks to their language skills, whereas the recruitment of today's professional interpreters is based on a more broadly-based aptitude and training. Secondly, the first pioneers were regarded as a miracle with an innate gift that only a few possessed, while today's professionals are required to have a university level training and competences built on practice and research. The third major change in the perception of the profession involves a shift of focus from individual performance to teamwork carried out within the professional community with its established norms and best practices. Thus, the conceptualization of the interpreting profession has gradually evolved from mystification and marvel into a view in which interpreting is understood as an acquired expert skill, developed through systematically organized training. In other

words, what used to be regarded as a spin-off of language skills is now considered a specialized profession (Sunnari, forthcoming).

To illustrate this gradual shift of emphasis from a skilled individual to a professional community, we can look at how the United Nations refers to their interpreters in the legends of pictures displayed in the UN photo archives². For example, a picture with the date 29 March, 1948 shows a single interpreter referred to as “Susanna Wieniawa of the Interpretation Division, Department of Conference and General Services, who interprets from French and Spanish into English.” The legend of a later photograph dated 9 March 1965 reads: “Some fifty highly skilled interpreters perform a vital service at United Nations meetings. Miss Maria Luisa Araujo, a United Nations Interpreter at work.” Yet another picture taken some thirty years later carries the following description: “The United Nations Interpretation Service provides simultaneous interpretation for UN meetings. Two UN interpreters at work 9 August 1991.” These descriptions indicate that not only has the interpreter become an anonymous figure, but s/he is also considered a member of a larger unit that provides interpreting as a service to the delegates.

3.2. Does professionalism equal expertise?

As was mentioned above, the topics of professional performance and professionalization have also received an increasing amount of attention both among practising interpreters and those involved in the study of interpreting. In both contexts, however, the concepts of ‘profession’, ‘professional’, and ‘professionalize’ have been examined from different angles and defined in different ways; Mackintosh (2007: 51) points out that they remain rather imprecise in the discussions on the topic. As a representative of AIIC conference interpreters, Luccarelli (2004: 1) proposes that the profession of interpreting be viewed as comprising two aspects, i.e. “a field of work that requires specialized knowledge and training” and “the body of qualified practitioners”. Interestingly, Luccarelli’s view of professionalism also contains a further dimension:

[M]any people understand the word [professionalism] in its narrowest sense, restricting it to the performance of a discrete task. But it is actually much broader and embraces complete knowledge of and adherence to ethics and standards of practice. And since professionalism is related to how we participate in a career field over a long period of time, it also implies keeping up to date with the latest developments and technologies, and the state of the world in general. It demands preparation and ongoing learning. Needless to say, it also requires collegiality, the will and willingness to get along with

2 <http://www.unmultimedia.org/photo/gallery.jsp?query=Interpreting>

colleagues. In other words, it goes far beyond the necessary skill to transmit a message from one language to another. (Luccarelli 2004: 2)

The above perception of professionalism with a long-term dimension is related to the concept of expertise as a process that requires a continuing effort to reach a higher standard. This view is in line with that proposed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) who emphasize the importance of progressive problem solving and the need to surpass oneself by continuously expanding one's competencies when aiming at expertise. It also tallies with the notion of dynamic development of expertise, which results from working at the edge of one's competence as discussed in Hakkarainen *et al.* (2004: 37-41). They conclude that people with long work experience tend to differ from each other in that some remain dynamic and flexible, whereas others fall into routines (also termed adaptive and routine experts, respectively, by Hatano and Inagaki (1986)). While routines are useful in many situations, excessive reliance on routine solutions may have a negative impact on performance, because they enable a person to stagnate at a certain acceptable level of work. Thus, routines may impede further development of expertise and fail to provide sufficient means for coping with new or unexpected situations. In the same vein, Ericsson and colleagues (e.g. Ericsson and Charness 1994; Ericsson 2006) emphasize the role of deliberate practice, or activities focussing specifically on improving one's skills. Improvement in individual performance requires work on clear practice goals, repetitions, and informative feedback from a teacher or coach. This results in performance changes, which are linked to refinements in processes with problem solving (Ericsson 2009: 8-9).

4. Implications for training

There seems to be a consensus in interpreting studies literature that the general goal of interpreter training is to produce interpreters who are able to work reliably on the market. Thus, the programme graduate is expected to possess the skills and competences needed in professional work. Likewise, there seems to be widespread agreement in the professional community of conference interpreters that graduates must be able to work independently in the profession (Sawyer 2004: 56-58). This is considered particularly important, because the new entrants to the profession are immediately and solely responsible for the quality of their output (Déjean Le Féal 1998: 363).

However, as Kintsch points out (2009: 230) schools, generally, do not produce real experts, but strive to move students closer to expertise and provide them with the tools to develop further on their own. Often discussed in terms of conceptual metaphors such as 'journey', 'way' or 'road', professional expertise involves a development process and is

constructed in two environments: while the prerequisites for it are created in educational contexts, it mainly develops and grows in authentic working life and is often socially negotiated. This means that there is an intrinsic relationship between individual strength and group acknowledgement: skilful people do not acquire expertise on their own but are guided by other members of the social system.

Throughout its existence, one of the leading principles of conference interpreter training has been that it should be given by professional interpreters. The main justification for the strong professional basis was the conviction that outsiders could not understand what the task and the training for professional competence involve. An obvious benefit of working with professionals is that it offers the learner an opportunity to become acquainted with the practices of the interpreting community, to participate in its culture, adopt its values, norms and identities, and become one of its members. The participation perspective focuses on interactive processes of enculturation and socialization that mediate development of individual expertise (Hakkarainen *et al.* 2004: 14). However, expertise is domain-specific, which means that expertise of one domain does not transfer to another domain. Therefore, it should be noted that professional interpreters are not automatically qualified trainers nor automatically qualified assessors. Training is needed for both tasks.

The perspectives on expertise discussed above are not mutually exclusive; instead, they complement each other and contribute to our understanding of expertise in general and interpreting expertise in particular. We need all these different approaches and perspectives for professional work and training. What we are aiming at is dynamic and adaptive expertise – perhaps related to the notion of ‘mental agility’ (Gaiba 1998: 46-49), which was already listed as one of the criteria of aptitude when the very first simultaneous interpreter trainees were tested and recruited for the Nuremberg Trials.

References

- Abbott A. (1988) *The System of Professions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Ahrens B. (2005) “Prosodic phenomena in simultaneous interpreting: A conceptual approach and its practical application”, *Interpreting* 7(1), 51-76.
- Bartłomiejczyk M. (2006) “Strategies of simultaneous interpreting and directionality”, *Interpreting* 8(2), 149-174.
- Bereiter C. and Scardamalia M. (1993) *Surpassing Ourselves. An Inquiry into the Nature and Implications of Expertise*, Chicago and La Salle, Illinois, Open Court.

- Boshuizen H.P.A., Bromme R. and Gruber H. (2004) "On the long way from novice to expert and how travelling changes the traveller", in H.P.A. Boshuizen, R. Bromme and H. Gruber (eds.) *Professional Learning: Gaps and Transitions on the Way from Novice to Expert*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 3-8.
- Brown G. (1977) *Listening to Spoken English*, London, Longman.
- Chernov G.V. (1999) "Simultaneous interpretation in Russia: development of research and training", *Interpreting* 4(1), 41-54.
- Chi M.T.H. (2006) "Two approaches to the study of expert's characteristics", in K.A. Ericsson et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, 2-38.
- Déjean le Féal K. (1998) "Didaktik des Dolmetschens", in M. Snell-Hornby, H.G. Hönl, P. Kußmaul and P.A. Schmitt (eds.) *Handbuch Translation*, Tübingen, Stauffenburg, 361-367.
- Dillinger M. (1989) *Componential Processes of Simultaneous Interpreting*, unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, Montreal, McGill University. Also available at http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=392156&local_base=GEN01-MCG02.
- Ericsson K.A. (1996) "The acquisition of expert performance: an introduction to some of the issues", in K.A. Ericsson (ed.) *The Road to Excellence: The Acquisition of Expert Performance in the Arts and Sciences, Sports, and Games*, Mahwah, NJ, Erlbaum, 1-50.
- Ericsson K.A. (2006) "The influence of experience and deliberate practice on the development of superior expert performance", in K.A. Ericsson et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, 683-704.
- Ericsson K.A. (ed.) (2009) *Development of Professional Expertise. Toward Measurement of Expert Performance and Design of Optimal Learning Environments*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Ericsson K.A. and Charness N. (1994) "Expert performance. Its structure and acquisition", *American Psychologist*, 49(8), 725-747.
- Ericsson K.A., Charness N., Feltovich P.J. and Hoffman R.R. (eds.) (2006) *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Ericsson K.A. and Kintsch W. (1995) "Long-term working memory", *Psychological Review* 102(2), 211-245.
- Ericsson K.A., Krampe R.Th. and Tesch-Römer C. (1993) "The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance", *Psychological Review* 100(3), 363-406.
- Ericsson K.A. and Smith J. (1991) "Prospects and limits in the empirical study of expertise: an introduction", in K.A. Ericsson and J. Smith, (eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Expertise. Prospects and Limits*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1-38.
- Evetts J., Mieg H.A. and Felt U. (2006) "Professionalization, scientific expertise, and elitism: a sociological perspective", in K.A. Ericsson et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, 105-126.

- Fabbro F. and Darò V. (1995) "Delayed auditory feedback in polyglot simultaneous interpreters", *Brain and Language* 48, 309-319.
- Feltovich P.J., Prietula, M.J. and Ericsson A.K. (2006) "Studies of expertise from psychological perspectives", in K.A. Ericsson et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, 41-67.
- Gaiba F. (1998) *The Origins of Simultaneous Interpretation: The Nuremberg Trial*, Ottawa, Ottawa University Press.
- Gerver D. (1976) "Empirical studies of simultaneous interpretation: a review and a model" In R.V. Brislin (ed.), *Translation: Applications and Research*, New York, Gardner Press, 165-207.
- Hakkarainen K., Palonen T. and Lehtinen E. (2004) *Communities of Networked Expertise: Professional and Educational Perspectives*, Amsterdam, Elsevier.
- Hatano G. and Inagaki K. (1986) "Two courses of expertise", in H. Stevenson, H. Azmuma and K. Hakuta (eds.), *Child Development and Education in Japan*, New York, NY, W.Y. Freeman and Company, 262-272.
- Herbert J. (1952) *The Interpreter's Handbook – How to Become a Conference Interpreter*, Genève, Librairie de l'université Georg.
- Hild A. (forthcoming) "Effects of linguistic complexity on expert processing during simultaneous interpreting", in C. Alvstad, A. Hild and E. Tiselius (eds.), *Methods and Strategies of Process Research: Integrative Approaches in Translation Studies*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Ivanova A. (1999) *Discourse Processing during Simultaneous Interpreting: An Expertise Approach*, unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Cambridge.
- Ivanova A. (2000) "The use of retrospection in research on simultaneous interpreting", in S. Tirkkonen-Condit and R. Jääskeläinen, *Tapping and Mapping the Processes of Translation and Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 27-49.
- Just M.A. and Carpenter P.A. (1992) "A capacity theory of comprehension: individual differences in working memory", *Psychological Review* 99, 122-149.
- Jääskeläinen R. (2010) "Are all professionals experts?" in G.M. Shreve and E. Angeloni (eds.), *Translation and Cognition*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 212-227.
- Kalina S. (1998) *Strategische Prozesse beim Dolmetschen. Theoretische Grundlagen, empirische Fallstudien, didaktische Konsequenzen*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr.
- Kintsch W. (2009) "Learning and constructivism", in S. Tobias and T.M. Duffy (eds.), *Constructivist Instruction: Success or Failure?* New York: Routledge, 223-241. Retrieved on 29 November, 2009 from <http://psych.colorado.edu/~wkintsch>.

- Köpke B. and Nespoulos J-L. (2006) "Working memory performance in expert and novice interpreters", *Interpreting* 8(1), 1-23.
- Liu, M. (2001) *Expertise in Simultaneous Interpreting: A Working Memory Analysis*, unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.
- Liu M. (2009) "How do experts interpret? Implications from research in Interpreting Studies and cognitive science", in G. Hansen, A. Chesterman, and H. Gerzymisch-Arborgast (eds.) *Efforts and Models in Translation and Interpreting Research. A Tribute to Daniel Gile*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 159-177.
- Luccarelli L. (2004) "Letter from the editor – a profession", *Communicate!* 25 Oct. 2004 [Online]. Retrieved on 20 March, 2007 from <http://extranet.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page1552htm>.
- Mackintosh J. (1995) "A review of conference interpretation: practice and training", *Target* 7(1), 117-133.
- Mackintosh J. (2007) "Conference interpreting as a profession and how it got that way", in F. Pöchhacker, A.L. Jacobsen and I. M. Mees (eds.), *Interpreting Studies and Beyond*, Copenhagen, Samfundslitteratur, 41-52.
- Mieg H.A. (2006) "Social and sociological factors in the development of expertise", in K.A. Ericsson et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, 743-760.
- Moser-Mercer B. (2000) "The rocky road to expertise in interpreting. Eliciting knowledge from learners", in M. Kadric, K. Kaendl and F. Pöchhacker (eds.) *Translationswissenschaft. Festschrift für Mary Snell-Hornby zum 60. Geburtstag*, Tübingen, Stauffenburg, 339-352.
- Moser-Mercer, B. (2008) "Skill acquisition in interpreting. A human performance perspective", *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 2:1, 1-28.
- Moser-Mercer B. (2010) "The search for neurophysiological correlates of expertise in interpreting", in G. M. Shreve and E. Angelone (eds.), *Translation and Cognition*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 263-287.
- Moser-Mercer B., Frauenfelder U.H., Casado B. and Künzli A. (2000) "Searching to define expertise in interpreting", in B. Englund Dimitrova and K. Hyltenstam (eds.) *Language Processing and Simultaneous Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 107-131.
- Riccardi A. (2005) "On the evolution of interpreting strategies in simultaneous interpreting", *Meta* 50(2), 753-767.
- Sawyer D. (2004) *Fundamental Aspects of Interpreter Education: Curriculum and Assessment*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Scardamalia M. and Bereiter C. (1991) "Literate expertise", in K.A. Ericsson, and J. Smith (eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Expertise. Prospects and Limits*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 172-194.

- Setton R. (2007) "Staying relevant: interpreting in the information age" in F. Pöchhacker, A.L. Jacobsen and I. M. Mees (eds.), *Interpreting Studies and Beyond*, Copenhagen, Samfundslitteratur, 51-72.
- Shlesinger M. (1994) "Intonation in simultaneous interpretation", in S. Lambert and B. Moser-Mercer (eds.) *Bridging the Gap: Empirical Research in Simultaneous Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 225-236.
- Stelling-Michaud M. (1952) "Preface to the Interpreter's Handbook", in J. Herbert, *op. cit.*, vii-xii.
- Sternberg R.J. and Frensch P.J. (1992) "On being an expert. A cost-benefit analysis", in R.R. Hoffman (ed.), *The Psychology of Expertise. Cognitive Research and Empirical AI*, Mahwah, N.J, Erlbaum, 191-203.
- Sunnari M. (1995a) "Processing strategies in simultaneous interpreting: experts vs. novices", in W. Kravutschke (ed.), *Connections. Proceedings of the 38th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association*, Medford, NJ, Information Today, 157-164.
- Sunnari M. (1995b) "Processing strategies in simultaneous interpreting: saying it all vs. synthesis", in J. Tömmola (ed.), *Topics in Interpreting Research*, Turku, University of Turku, Centre for Translation and Interpreting, 109-120.
- Sunnari M. (forthcoming) *Professionalism, Expertise and Expert Performance in Conference Interpreting*, Turku, University of Turku.
- Tiselius E. (2006) *The work shows the workman - an investigation of two methods for measuring interpreting performance and studying expertise in interpreting*, unpublished MA thesis, Stockholm University.
- Tiselius E. (2009) "Revisiting Carroll's scales", in C. Angelelli and H.E. Jacobson (eds.), *Testing and Assessment in Translation and Interpreting Studies*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 95-121.

Politics, (con)text and genre: applying CDA and DHA to interpreter training

MICHAEL S. BOYD - CLAUDIA MONACELLI

Università Roma Tre - Libera Università LUSPIO, Roma

Abstract

This study proposes the application of a number of important tenets from Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach, to interpreter studies and training. It recognizes the crucial distinctions of text, discourse and genre in the sphere of politics and proposes a multi-layered interdisciplinary model of context to analyze source texts. The application of the model is illustrated on three political speeches that share the pro-active discourse of climate change.

1. Introduction

No one would deny the significance of 'politics' in all fields of action for interpreters, from corporate marketing to European parliamentary talk. All institutional text and talk are imbued with ideological, historical and contextual references, features Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) addresses directly. However, with few exceptions (Beaton 2007, Olk 2002, Schäffner 2004), CDA has not been fully exploited in the field of Translating and, to an even lesser extent, Interpreting Studies (IS). Those studies that do exist tend to favor ideological issues over extra-discoursal contextual, historical and social ones that are seen as paramount for understanding discourse practices. Moreover, to our knowledge, studies

on the application of context in CDA to interpreter training have never been carried out.

IS has indeed explored issues concerning power relations in institutional contexts (Drennan and Swartz 1999; Laster and Taylor 1994), often through the analysis of pragmatic and situational features (Mason and Stewart 2001), falling short of offering “practisearchers” (Gile 1994) a complete package of background tools to fully grasp texts and talk. Even though many scholars in IS recognize the importance of analyzing context (Setton 1998, Hatim and Mason 1997), the theoretical principles have not yet been fully applied.

This study proposes a synergy of recent theories in both fields directed to the learning process in IS. We apply current methodologies of CDA and IS to the analysis of political speeches. A model of context has recently been introduced in IS (Monacelli 2009a) to detect translational shifts and interpreting moves. Specifically, we argue that the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, Wodak 2001), one of the main theoretical approaches within CDA, provides a highly useful framework to analyze context, which can be successfully applied to interpreter training. Crucially, DHA recognizes four inter-related levels of context: context, intertextual, the extralinguistic, as well as the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts. Furthermore, DHA is underpinned by the important distinction between text, genre and discourse, as well as recontextualization¹.

We propose a new analytical model, to be used in IS, that also recognizes the importance of different levels of context, an understanding of text, genre and discourse and, additionally, a wider view of recontextualization, i.e. a three-dimensional view of context with recontextualization that spans different layers of context. Our underlying hypothesis holds that when such a model is applied to interpreter training in the analysis of a source text it better places students to perceive discursive practices underlying political speeches and thus potentially fine-tunes comprehension and expectations with regard to a speaker’s message.

The multi-level model we propose embraces the notions of text, genre and discourse as paramount to understanding both discoursal and social practice (Boyd 2009, Fairclough 2003, Wodak and Meyer 2009). It examines the historical, cultural, social and ideological expressions through the analysis of specific linguistic, paralinguistic and pragmatic features. To illustrate the application of the model, we analyze three different speeches on climate change by José Manuel Durão Barroso, Barack Obama, and Gordon Brown.

Section 2 discusses CDA and how genres are dynamically and strategically created, exploited and modified. Section 3 focuses on DHA and what it has to offer interpreter training. Section 4 distinguishes the

1 Fully explained in Section 4.

discursive practice of recontextualization and considers its significance in terms of grasping ideological moves in political speeches. Section 5 discusses the synergies of CDA and IS research and Section 6 briefly examines a recent IS model of context. We propose an interdisciplinary context model in Section 7. This model is then applied in Section 8 to speeches on climate change and its relevance to interpreter training is then discussed.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse, text, and genre

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is premised on the assumption that language is not only a product of society but also an important force in (re)shaping social practices, both positively and negatively (see, for example, Wodak and Chilton 2005, Fairclough 2010, 2005, 2003, 1995, van Dijk 2001, Wodak and Meyer 2009, Wodak 2008a).² Analysts working in this framework aim to examine linguistic structures in relation to their social, political and historical contexts (Schäffner 2007). Wodak (2008b: 297) proposes four overarching concepts characterizing the many approaches found within CDA: *critique, power, history and ideology*. With such foci, CDA naturally lends itself to the investigation of the ways domination and discrimination are embedded in and mediated through language use (Ietcu 2006: 75).

CDA can be differentiated from other linguistic approaches by its central focus on the “mediation between language and social structures” (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 21). In addition, it calls attention to the conditions in which texts and genres are produced, received and accessed and how these processes are reflected in social practices (Fetzer and Johansson 2008). The ‘critical’ side of CDA originates from analysts originally being interested in unmasking and ultimately rectifying (unfair) distribution practices and ‘social wrongs’ (Fairclough 2009). More importantly, however, especially for the application of CDA in an IS context, is analysts’ unequivocal role in society.

Continuing a tradition that rejects the possibility of a ‘value-free’ science, they argue that science, and especially scholarly discourse, are inherently part of and influenced by social structure and social interaction (van Dijk 2001: 352).

While all currents of CDA distinguish between text, discourse and genre, there are some important differences. While a full discussion of the issues at stake are beyond the scope of this work, we discuss the most pertinent issues for IS.³ In line with Fairclough and Wodak, we see text as an actual occurrence of language use, either written or spoken, while discourse is a

2 It should be noted that these premises are not universally accepted. For an opposing view see, e.g. Mason 2006, 2009, Stubbs 1997, Toolan 2002 and Widdowson 2004.

more general way of representing the world (Fairclough 2003: 215). Fairclough (2010: 6) further specifies discourse as being “a complex of three elements: social practice, discursal practice (text production, distribution and consumption), and text”. Texts are “encoded in and determined by discourse and genre” (Wodak 2008b: 17) and discourse practices, in general, are seen to be conditioned by the type of social activity, or genre, being pursued (Fairclough 1995). Genres can be defined as various ways of (inter)acting linguistically, which are distinguished by genre-specific linguistic forms and/or structures and are closely linked to specific social and institutional contexts (Fairclough 2006). In her view, Wodak highlights the importance of “social practices, conventions, rules and norms governing certain sets or groups of speakers” (*loc. cit.*) in relation to genre. Consequently, since political actors use different genres in different social and institutional contexts, discourse practices can be analyzed on the basis of how these actors exploit different genres to express their ideas, opinions and messages, legitimize their own policies, and delegitimize their opponents in different situations and contexts (Chilton and Schäffner 2002). Finally, such an approach recognizes the crucial role of communicative and social purpose in defining genre, privileging the notions of recontextualization in text, discourse and genre production and reception (Fairclough 1995, 2006, Wodak and Meyer 2009).

One of the tenets of CDA we feel is particularly salient to IS is the notion that the communicative context is not a separate nonverbal level. Furthermore, unlike other approaches to discourse analysis prevalent in IS, CDA is highly focused on mediating between language and social structures (see, e.g., Wodak and Meyer 2009: 21).

A recent IS context model (see section 6 below) maintains that the context provided by the behavioral environment where communication comes about is reflexively linked to it within larger patterns of social activity (Monacelli 2009a: 25) or genres. This would indeed imply that when social actors exploit genres strategically, as mentioned above, the ensuing activity creates a dynamic environment in which an interpreter’s behavior necessarily reflects the communicative context. Such dynamic phenomena have emerged in an empirical study (Monacelli 2009a: 26) in terms of proactive and reactive control (Bandura 1991: 260), where constant action is taken at decisive moments in order to manage contextual and structural (discursal) shifts, since interpreters always operate in the immediacy of a given situation where they are in a position of coping with contextual constraints (see Varela 1999). To date, however, a broad application of context has yet to be adopted in interpreter training.

3 For a complete discussion of various approaches to text, discourse and genre, see Wodak and Meyer 2009.

3. DHA and context

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is one of the main sub-branches within CDA representing the social-political orientation of critical theory (Wodak and Meyer 2009) with its primary focus on political texts and discourse practices. The approach explicitly links the concepts of fields of action, discourse, genre and text (Reisigl and Wodak 2009) and examines the contents of text and talk, discursive strategies and the linguistic means by which speakers enact these strategies. Furthermore, DHA applies a triangulatory approach, i.e. one that “implies taking a whole range of empirical observations, theories and methods as well as background information into account” (*op. cit.*: 89). Moreover, a multi-dimensional view of context is seen to operate on four linguistic and non-linguistic levels: the immediate co-text; the intertextual; the extralinguistic elements in terms of social variables and institutional frames; the broader sociolinguistic and historical domains. As will be demonstrated in Section 6, we argue for a simplified, three-tiered approach to context.

In line with CDA, DHA also recognizes the importance of power and power relations in language, and language is seen as gaining and maintaining power through the “powerful use people make of it” (*op. cit.*: 88). This would explain why DHA studies tend to focus on the language use of those in power or of those who belong to different social groups. In addition, DHA’s focus on the notions of discourse, text and genre provides, we would argue, a useful distinction for IS and the application of a context model for the study of source texts. Discourse is defined according to a number of closely related criteria as

[...] a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action [that is] socially constituted and socially constitutive [,] related to a macro-topic [,] linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view [,] (*op. cit.*: 89)

Discourse, then, is seen as a fluid construct, and moreover one that is “open to reinterpretation and continuation” (*ibid.*). Such a conception of discourse, we would argue, ties in nicely with our notion of recontextualization (section 4 below). Text is seen as a part of discourse, one that links the two different speech situations of production and reception. Finally, texts reflect the various genres within which they are produced, according to the conventions and expectations of a given genre. Reisigl and Wodak (*op. cit.*: 90) further note that discourses, such as those dealing with climate change, can be realized through various genres serving various purposes: a news analysis, editorial, political debate, advertisement and, the genre we propose to cite in order to demonstrate the application of our model, the political speech. Another important part of DHA, which we do not specifically address in our model, are fields of

action (Bourdieu 1985), which are regulated by a number of different discursive functions. Finally, another important part of DHA are discursive strategies, which are seen as “intentional plan[s] of practices [...] adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal” (*op. cit.*: 94).

For its potential use as a model for teaching IS, we do not include certain elements of analysis characteristic of DHA that, we feel, might unnecessarily complicate analyses. This also takes into account the limited amount of time interpreters in the field have. Thus, the fine-grained, multi-level and often time-consuming ethnographic (historical) analyses espoused by DHA proponents would be difficult to recreate in a training situation. Instead, the areas of DHA most suited for use in interpreter training concern a good understanding of the power structures in society, the differences between the concepts discourse, genre, text, and a grounding in various levels of context (Section 6).

4. Recontextualization

In the CDA literature, recontextualization is generally treated as one of the most common means of text production and text-to-text interaction (see, for example, Wodak and De Cillia 2007: 323) and as a sub-type of intertextuality or text-external referencing, whereby an element or argument is extracted from one, often dominant, context or text for some strategic purpose (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 17) and repropounded in a new one. A useful summary can be found in Fairclough (2010):

Relations of recontextualisation involve principles of selectivity and filtering devices which selectively control which meanings (which can now be specified and differentiated as which discourses, genres and styles) are moved from one field to another. But there are also internal relations within the recontextualising field which control how recontextualised meanings are articulated with, recontextualised in relation to, existing meanings [...] (*op. cit.*: 76)

Furthermore, since recontextualization processes are underpinned by specific “goals, values and interests” (Schäffner and Bassnett 2010: 8), they can be a powerful tool in transforming social or discursive (linguistic) practices and creating new ones (Busch 2006: 613). In politics it is particularly fruitful to study how discursive practices are relocated or recontextualized through various genres and political fields and ultimately adapted to new interlocutors, arguments, and situations (Wodak and Wright 2006: 254). As noted above, such relocation involves both ‘suppression’ and ‘filtering’ of meanings “[...] in the process of classifying discourses, establishing particular insulations between them” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 126).

Boyd (2009) proposes a broad interpretation of recontextualization, which occurs both text-externally *and* text-internally through lexical substitution and resemanticization, as well as through metaphor and metonymy. The process is closely tied to the way that social actors are represented and constructed. In particular, recontextualization plays an important role in discourse-world creation through pronominal use, which is particularly salient in political discourse analysis. Pronouns, it is well known, can be used to indicate or obscure collectivity and individuality (Fairclough 2003: 162), for ‘self’ or ‘other’ referencing or to polarize ingroup and outgroup representation (van Dijk 2001: 103). Pronominal use is mediated by a number of different social and personal factors “producing a range of possible uses and interpretations” (Wilson 1990: 45). With so many external factors, which include formality, informality, status, solidarity, power, class, sex and other factors, it is clear that meaning is constructed through various internal and external levels of context. In the field of politics, the most common distinctions are *I* vs. *we*, inclusive vs. exclusive-*we*, and *us* vs. *them*. In general, it should be noted, pronoun meaning is inferred on its distance from the ‘deictic center’ of which *I* and other first-person singular pronominal forms can be considered the core (Chilton 2004: 57-59; see also Boyd 2009: 81-82). The parameters [+/-distance] can be used to express distance from or proximity to this deictic center. In Section 6 we provide specific examples of how recontextualization can operate across various levels of context.

5. CDA and Translation and Interpreting Studies

As mentioned above, CDA has been applied to the field of translation (cf. Saldanha 2010⁴), but much less so to IS (cf. Beaton 2007 and Mason 2006). This is surprising since politics and political institutions play such an important role in the work of interpreters. Even in Translation Studies, however, as Schäffner notes, “political discourse analysis has not yet paid sufficient attention to aspects of translation” (2007: 135). In their recent volume, Schäffner and Bassnett note (2010: 12) an “increased concentration on social causation and human agency and a focus on effects rather than on internal structures”. The authors stress, moreover, that there is much to be gained from a critical analytical approach to translation, in terms of understanding “institutional practices, the respective roles of actual agents involved in the complex translation processes as well as into the power relations” (*ibid.*).

4 The author notes that within a critical discourse approach “translation is seen as a process of mediation between source and target world views, a process that is inevitably influenced by power differentials among participants” (*op. cit.*: 150).

An example of how CDA can be successfully applied to political discourse comes from Calzada Pérez (2007), who analyzes how transitivity patterns used in the translation of EU parliamentary speeches reflect individual translation choices. Newmark (1991) also devotes an entire chapter to the translation of political language, with a focus on lexical aspects. He characterizes political concepts as “partly culture-bound, mainly value-laden, historically conditioned and [...] abstractions in spite of continuous efforts to concretise them” (*op. cit.*: 149). He mentions pronouns, political jargon, euphemisms, metaphors, neologisms, acronyms and euphony, and collocations as characteristic features of political language, thus stressing that “the translator’s neutrality is a myth” (Newman 1991: 161, cited in Schäffner 2007: 142).

In IS, more specifically, there has been a number of scholars who have pointed to the need to critically examine performance output and take heed of discursive practices. Marzocchi (2005: 94), for example, has also warned that “contextualized studies of conference interpreting also show a discrepancy between (assumed) norms and practice”, between discourse and practice.

Diriker’s work (2004), which deals with the position of conference interpreters as individuals and professionals working and surviving in sociocultural contexts, may be considered the beginning of a cultural turn in IS. Her work in many respects is groundbreaking, since she not only examines the meta-discourse as social context and the (re)presentation of conference interpreting in the meta-discourse of various actors inside and outside the profession, but also analyzes a corpus of situated performances. Her study moves from the assumption that

[...] conference interpreters are constrained by but also constitutive of a multitude of intertwined and mutually reflexive context(s) such as the *most immediate discursive context(s)* during interpreting that are invoked by previous utterances and implied by potential utterances; the conditions and demands of the *particular conference context* where they work in a given instance, and the conditions and demands of the *larger socio-cultural context(s)* in which they operate and survive as professionals. (*op. cit.*: 14, original emphasis)

Diriker, therefore, views conference interpreting as both context-constrained and context-constituting, adopting a dynamic view. She follows Bakhtin (1981), Cicourel (1992) and Lindstrom (1992) in approaching conference interpreting in relation to both the broader (macro) and narrower (micro) contexts and makes use of CDA in her examination of the meta-discourse on conference interpreting.

As far as applying background knowledge to IS teaching is concerned, Gran *et al.* note (2002: 287) “[t]he more background knowledge the addressee can call upon while listening to a speech, the less dependent s/he will be on the actual text, the more rapidly and thoroughly will s/he understand it and the more complete and accurate this understanding will

be". Moreover, Boyd (2010) has argued for a multidimensional discourse-text-genre approach combined with the use of new technologies to encourage the development of the multitasking skills so important for future interpreters.

6. IS context model

Even though the notion of context is crucial to understanding, surprisingly there is very little agreement in the literature about what exactly a 'context' is (van Dijk 1998: 211). When speaking of the ideological control of context in his multidisciplinary approach to ideology, van Dijk (*ibid.*) defines context as, "the structured set of all properties of a social situation that are possibly relevant for the production, structures, interpretation and functions of text and talk". There have been several scholars that have modeled context in IS to varying degrees (see Pöhhacker 2004, Alexieva, 1997/2002) but to date, as also Furmanek has pointed out (2010), there is little or no attention being brought to bear on ST discursive practices in interpreter training.

In Section 2 we argued that discursive practices and the communicative context are mutually defined. Bourdieu indeed stresses (1985: 196) that social space is "constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation", but this presupposes some sort of relationship between what is distinguished and its background or environment. A relationship between two orders of phenomena that mutually inform each other to comprise a larger whole is central to the notion of context (Monacelli 2009a: 48), making for an extremely dynamic environment. When made aware of generic practices, future interpreters may more easily prepare for moments when expectations are flouted, e.g. when politicians strategically recontextualize a topic to push forward their own argument.

A recent model of context used for textual analysis has recently been presented in IS (Monacelli 2009a, 2009b). The model was instrumental in assessing pragmatic shifts from ST to TT and detecting interpreters' distance-altering alignments, depersonalization and the mitigation of illocutionary force, with respect to the ST. Figure 1 represents an adapted version of this model.

The extra-situational context (Ochs 1979) concerns background knowledge, local phenomena that are systematic features of larger processes (Phillips 1992), as well as discursive rules and conditions that give people unequal power and control (Lindstrom 1992), i.e. what often may be considered the political, economic and historical frame.

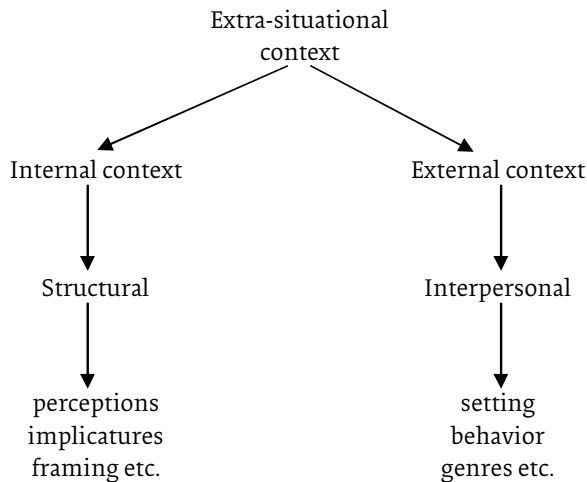


Figure 1. Model of context (adapted from Monacelli 2009a)

The internal and external contexts (Schegloff 1992) are yet two other levels that constrain both the development of a speech and interaction: the external context embraces aspects of interaction understood as constraints on social life (language conventions or genres) or the embodiment of power concerns (setting and behavior); the internal context is created by participants (speakers) through their actions and as the speech unfolds, through a series of structural elements (grammar and discourse), guided by perceptions, implicatures and so on.

This model was successfully applied to interpreting students in an elective course on public speaking used for the creation of speeches framed in events or situations (Monacelli 2009b). Whereas interpreter training necessarily begins with ST analysis, students aiming to create and enact speeches found this model useful. Although comprehensive, this model falls short of allowing for an extended analysis of discourse practices, a crucial element when dealing with the genre of political speeches and an invaluable springboard to interpreter training.

7. A proposal for an interdisciplinary context model

In our model, as demonstrated in Figure 2, there are only three layers of context: internal, external and extra-situational. These combine to a large extent the various levels proposed in DHA while grafting on the terminology from Figure 1 (Monacelli 2009a). By combining DHA with the IS Context Model (Fig. 1), our first aim was to create a simplified version compared to both parent models for use in training without, however, foregoing their comprehensive and multi-disciplinary nature.

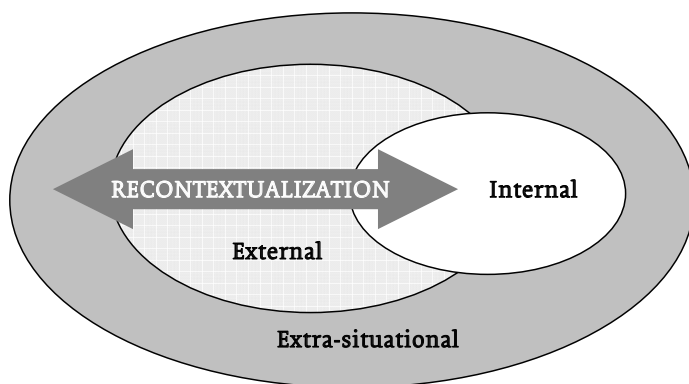


Figure 2. Model of context for interpreter training

As can be seen in Figure 2, DHA's four-tiered analytical structure has been reduced to three layers of context. Furthermore, in our model recontextualization plays an overarching role, as we envision it as spanning across and operating within the various context layers. Thus, recontextualization can occur text internally, externally and extra-situationally and, more importantly, elements can be recontextualized from one layer of context to another (or others). It should be noted that the model does not currently address Bourdieu's 'field of action' (Bourdieu 1977, 1990), which the DHA model also incorporates (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, Wodak 2001) since the model is to be used for interpreter training.

We have incorporated the four DHA levels: immediate co-text, intertextual, extra-linguistic, broader sociopolitical and historical context, conflating the last two levels into the extra-situational layer of context.

Levels	Internal	External	Extra-situational
<i>Descriptors</i>	immediate co-text text as it unfolds	intertextuality: relation with other texts, genres, and discourses	background cognitive frames broader sociopolitical and historical constraints

Table 1. Context model dimensions

In Table 1 we provide an overview of the various levels of context in our model which will then be applied to the analysis of texts for interpreter training in the following section.

8. Applying the model to interpreter training

The three speeches we have selected to demonstrate the application of our model were given during the lead-up to the UN Conference on Climate

Change, which was held in Copenhagen, December 2009. The following factors determined our choice: first, the three texts are intertextually (and interdiscursively) related to the broader debate (and existing discourses) about climate change and the institutional frames that define them; second, like all important texts, they too have been and will continue being subject to recontextualization on various levels; finally, the debate about climate change is controversial and therefore lends itself more easily to a critical analysis.

Before discussing the speeches individually we classify them in terms of discourse, genre and text, as provided in Table 2 below.

Discourse	proactive approach to climate change
Genre	political speech to international organization
Text	3 speeches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • José Manuel Durão Barroso, Council on Foreign Relations, New York (21 September 2009). • Barack Obama, United Nations General Assembly, New York (22 September 2009). • Gordon Brown, Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF), London (19 October 2009).

Table 2. Discourse-Genre-Text Classification

All three speeches are representative of what we call proactive discourse about climate change and are made to international organizations: Barroso (the Council on Foreign Relations in New York)⁵, Obama (the UN General Assembly in New York)⁶ and Brown (the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate [MEF] in London)⁷. Extracts from each speech are presented and discussed in the examples that follow.⁸

In the first set of examples below José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission, is speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher.

1. We want to position *Europe* as one of the first movers in developing the technology. (L49-50) [...] So we need to signal *our* readiness to talk seriously about finance this week. (L90)

As to the internal context, “We” gains meaning cataphorically from “Europe” in the immediate co-text. The external context is represented interdiscursively by its relation to “Europe”, here qualifying “we” as the

5 <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/09/401&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

6 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/09/22/obama-un-climate-change-s_n_294628.html

7 <http://www.g-can.net/documents/2009%20M10%20191009%20Gordon%20Brown%20on%20Climate%20Change.pdf>

8 Text samples are referenced by indicating line numbers of extracts, e.g. (L49-50).

Commission, signaling a form of depersonalization (cf. sample 3 below), where the speaker distances himself from the text (+distance). The second use of “we” in sample 1 is exclusive in relation to the audience (Council on Foreign Relations) and again refers to the Commission. Here the speaker realigns himself with the Commission (-distance) but distances himself from the audience (+distance). The frame ‘political representation of the Commission in another setting’ (CFR) establishes the extra-situational context.

In sample 2, Barroso introduces Nick Stern, whom he qualifies contextually as a climate change expert. Such a characterization, in fact, comes from the external, intertextual layer, so meaning is again reinforced through recontextualization. This example, according to our analysis, also includes an inclusive-we “us” (Commission + CFR), where the speaker again aligns with the audience (-distance). The proactive discourse about climate change activates an extra-situational frame as represented by the reference to economic consequences (“world’s GDP”).

2. However, *climate change expert*, Nick Stern, tells us that failing to act will cost much more: at least 5% of the world’s GDP every year. (L39-41)

Samples 3 and 4 are taken from a speech by Barak Obama to the UN General Assembly. In it he highlights the new line of US climate change policy after 8 years of G.W. Bush, and the failure of Kyoto. It should be noted that although the expectations for the speech were very high, it offered very few concrete proposals. Nonetheless, the speech demonstrates some interesting strategic uses of political discourse, which emerge in the application of our model. Obama moves across context levels by inclusively and exclusively referring to the audience in sample 3.

3. Taken together, these steps represent an historic recognition on behalf of *the American people* and *their government*. We understand the gravity of the climate threat. (L45-46)

On the one hand, he situates both “the American people” and “their government” externally, almost exclusively (in terms of co-text, or internal context). On the other, “We” becomes, at the same time, both inclusive (the speaker and his audience) and exclusive (as compared to the rest of the world). In the first case his discourse develops internally, representing a form of depersonalization (+distance), whereas in the second case his discourse spans across the external and extra-situational context layers through recontextualization.

In sample 4 the important historical figure of JFK is introduced from an external (intertextual) reference, activating an important historical frame.

4. *John F. Kennedy* once observed that “Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man.” (L13-14)

In terms of context, there is a direct quotation of JFK’s words at an internal level. However, these words take on new meaning as they are

recontextualized in Obama's speech: an original exclusive-we becomes inclusive since it is Obama who is repeating these famous words, thereby activating both the external and extra-situational layers. Pronominal meaning is enhanced through recontextualization among the various layers of context.

Samples 5 and 6 are extracted from Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's speech to the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF). It was held later than the other two speeches and therefore closer to the Copenhagen summit on climate change held in December 2009. His message was forceful, speaking of catastrophic consequences and urging developing nations to save the world. The MEF was originally launched on 28 March 2009. It was intended to facilitate a candid dialogue among major developed and developing economies, helping to generate the political leadership necessary to achieve a successful outcome at the December UN climate change conference in Copenhagen, and advance the exploration of concrete initiatives and joint ventures that increase the supply of clean energy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

In sample 5, Brown activates the important historical frame of Lancaster House, which is steeped in British colonial history.

5. I'm particularly pleased that you're discussing such a big issue *here* at *Lancaster house*. Lancaster House *has a history* of resolving some of the great issues of *our* time. It's where all the great colonial and independence movements were resolved, from Ghana to Zimbabwe. It's where *we* agreed debt relief for the poorest countries. (L4-7)

Brown makes reference to his immediate surroundings through the use of the deictic "here" and the co-referent "Lancaster House". The reference is both internal and external, as the participants are co-present and the venue's historic importance represents this intertextual link. This is further reinforced in the actual co-text, "has a history", and the use of a historically-extended "our" in reference to "time" in the text, similar to Obama's pronominal use in Sample 4. The following "we" signals an extra-situational reference and recontextualizes the G7 meeting in 2005 held at Lancaster House. Therefore, this pronominal reference is partly inclusive, since some of the MEF members were represented at that meeting; it is also partly exclusive since indeed most of the MEF members were not present. Nonetheless, Gordon Brown uses this discursual strategy to align with his audience (-distance).

Finally, in sample 6 there is an internal contextual referent "I" since Brown as Prime Minister hosted the MEF at Lancaster House. A deictic shift to "you" follows at an external level (+distance), activating an extra-situational frame in reference to the MEF. Brown then uses an inclusive "we" in relation to the event to be held at "Copenhagen".

6. And I hope *here* that *you* will be able to agree progress on climate change discussions that *we* need to have at Copenhagen. (L7-8)

Sample 6, moreover, is an example of a recontextualization chain, in which elements of the proactive discourse(s) on climate change, MEF and Copenhagen are selectively filtered (and suppressed) in new texts, creating what might be seen as a sort of recontextualization script. To fully understand text meaning the receivers, and indeed interpreting trainees, need to have access to this script. In the case of these three speeches, which represent only a small part of the complete (and ongoing) script, MEF is recontextualized on various layers of context: e.g., Barroso cites the MEF launch at L'Aquila in July 2009; Obama mentions the six MEF meetings in his speech; Brown addresses the MEF directly. A good knowledge of such scripts will allow trainees to better interpret intended meaning, especially in the case of simultaneous interpreting where the time element greatly constrains performance quality, trainees would be better placed to anticipate discursual strategies (cf. Chernov 2004).

Fine-tuned discourse analysis, as suggested here, provides interpreter training with a fundamental dimension of investigation. Text samples 1-6 are only just a few of the many existing in the speeches which cannot be represented here in full, all illustrating constant shifts in alignment linked to specific instances of recontextualization across all levels of context. An in-depth examination of these trends (+distance/-distance) enhances knowledge of discursual strategies at work in political speeches and better places future interpreters to deal with them interlinguistically. While we have mainly focused on how these phenomena operate in relation to pronominal choice due to the space limitations of this article, the delicacy of fine-tuned analysis suggested here fosters the detection and better understanding of emerging ideological trends in political discourse.

9. Some conclusions

One of the underlying assumptions of CDA (and, of course, DHA, see, e.g., Reisigl and Wodak 2009) is that different (political) actors pursue different and often conflicting interests. The examples provided above clearly demonstrate that the speakers shift alignments in relation both to the various layers of context and to their strategic discursive practices, creating more or less distance in relation to their audience and text.

We have argued that a clear distinction among the categories of discourse, genre and text is crucial for text analysis and understanding. We have also recognized the importance of considering different layers of context and how they are linked through various types of recontextualization. By adapting a number of important constructs from CDA in general, DHA and IS, we have proposed an interdisciplinary and multi-layered model of context, thus providing appropriate tools for an analysis of context with a view to interpreter training.

In future research, it would be interesting to carry out empirical research concerning the outcome of interpreter training based on this model, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Along with the assessment of students' perceptions of the comprehension process, the analysis of performances may offer a key as to whether this model also serves to improve production. We believe the model may also lend itself for use in studies of discursive phenomena and strategies in other genres.

References

- Alexieva B. (1997/2002) "A typology of interpreter-mediated events", in F. Pöchhacker and M. Shlesinger (eds.) *The Interpreting Studies Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 219-33.
- Bakhtin M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Bandura A. (1991) "Self-regulation of motivation through anticipatory and self-regulatory mechanisms", in R.A. Dienstbier (ed.) *Perspectives on Motivation: Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* (vol. 38), Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 69-164.
- Beaton M. (2007) "Interpreted ideologies in institutional discourse", *The Translator*, 13(2), 271-296.
- Bourdieu P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, CUP.
- Bourdieu P. (1985) *Distinction*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu P. (1990) *In Other Words: Essays toward a Reflexive Sociology*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Boyd M.S. (2009) "Deconstructing race and identity in US presidential discourse: Barack Obama's speech on race", *Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 31 (2), 75-94.
- Boyd M.S. (2010) "ESP for interpreting and translation studies: new media for multimodal learning Environments", in M. Cennamo, A. Lamarra, A.R. Tamponi and L. Cavaliere (eds.), *Plurilinguismo e integrazione. Abilità e competenze linguistiche in una società multietnica*, Rome, ESI, 368-388.
- Busch B. (2006) "Media, politics, and discourse: interactions", in K. Brown (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, Oxford, Elsevier, 609-616.
- Calzada Pérez M. (2007) "Translators and translation studies scholars as inoculators of resistance", *The Translator*; 13(2), 243-269.
- Chernov G.V. (2004) *Inference and Anticipation in Simultaneous Interpreting*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, .
- Chilton P. (2004) *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*, London/New York, Routledge.
- Chilton P. and Schäffner C. (2002) "Introduction: Themes and principles in the analysis of political discourse", in P. Chilton and C.

- Schäffner (eds.), *Politics as Text and Talk: Analytic Approaches to Political Discourse*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1-41.
- Chouliaraki L. and Fairclough N. (1999) *Discourse in Late Modernity. Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Cicourel A.V. (1992) "The interpretation of communicative contexts: examples from medical encounters", in A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds.), *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 291-311.
- Diriker E. (2004) *De-/Re-contextualising Simultaneous Interpreting: Interpreters in the Ivory Tower?*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Drennan G. and Swartz I. (1999) "A concept over-burdened: Institutional roles for psychiatric interpreters in post-apartheid South Africa", *Interpreting* 4(2), 169-98.
- Fairclough N. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis*, Harlow, Longman.
- Fairclough N. (2003) *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London, Routledge.
- Fairclough N. (2005) "Critical discourse analysis in transdisciplinary research", in R. Wodak and P. Chilton, (eds.), *op. cit.*, 53-70.
- Fairclough N. (2006) "Genres in political discourse", in K. Brown (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, second revised ed., Oxford, Elsevier, 32-38.
- Fairclough N. (2009) "A dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse analysis in social research", in R. Wodak and M. Meyer, (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, London, Sage, 162-186.
- Fairclough N. (2010) *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Second ed.), Harlow, Pearson Education.
- Fetzer A. and Johansson M. (2008) "Hybridities in political media discourse", *Politics and Culture*, 4. Available at: <http://aspen.conncoll.edu/politicsandculture/page.cfm?key=677>, Accessed 15 April 2010.
- Furmanek O. (2010) "Applied Interpreting Studies at the core of teaching the instructors: a proposal of solutions", *The Journal of Specialized Translation*, 14, July 2010.
- Gile D. (1994) "Opening up in interpreting studies 2", in M. Snell-Hornby, F. Pöchhacker and K. Kaindl (eds.), *Translation Studies - An Interdiscipline*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 149-58.
- Gran L., Carabelli A. and Merlini R. (2002) "Computer-assisted Interpreter Training", in G. Garzone and M. Viezzi (eds.), *Interpreting in the 21st century*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 277-294.
- Hatim B. and Mason I. (1997) *The Translator as Communicator*, London/New York, Routledge.

- Ietcu I. (2006) *Discourse Analysis and Argumentation Theory*, Bucharest, Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti.
- Laster K. and Taylor V. (1994) *Interpreters and the Legal System*, Sydney, The Federation Press.
- Lindstrom L. (1992) "Context contests: debatable truth statements on Tanna (Vanuatu)", in A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds.), *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 102-124.
- Marzocchi C. (2005) "On norms and ethics in the discourse on interpreting", *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 13, 87-107.
- Mason I. (2006) "Ostension, inference and response: analyzing participant moves in community interpreting dialogues", in E. Hertog and B. van der Veer (eds.) *Taking Stock: Research and Methodology in Community Interpreting*, *Linguistica Antverpiensia* 5, 103-120.
- Mason I. (2009) "Translator moves and reader response: the impact of discursual shifts in translation", in B. Ahrens, L. Černý, M. Krein-Kühle and M. Schreiber (eds.) *Translationswissenschaftliches Kolloquium I*, Frankfurt a.M., Peter Lang.
- Mason I. and Stewart M. (2001) "Interactional pragmatics, face and the dialogue interpreter", in I. Mason (ed.) *Triadic Exchanges. Studies in Dialogue Interpreting*, Manchester, St. Jerome, 51-70.
- Monacelli C. (2009a) *Self-Preservation in Simultaneous Interpreting: Surviving the Role*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Monacelli C. (2009b) "Business interpreter training through the study of international business ethics", paper presented at the XIV AICLU SEMINAR *Mediation at Work. Learning to Liaise in Business*, 4 December 2009, Università di Trieste.
- Newmark P. (1991) *About Translation*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.
- Ochs E. (1979) "Introduction: what child language can contribute to pragmatics", in E. Ochs and B.B. Schieffelin (eds.), *Developmental Pragmatics*, New York, Academic Press, 1-17.
- Olk H. (2002) "Critical awareness in translation", *The Translator*, 8(1), 101-115.
- Phillips S.U. (1992) "The routinization of repair in courtroom discourse", in A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds.), *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 312-322.
- Pöchhacker F. (2004) *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, London and New York, Routledge.
- Reisigl M. and Wodak R. (2009) "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)", in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, second ed., London, Sage, 87-121.
- Saldanha G. (2010) "Linguistic approaches", in M. Baker and G. Saldanha (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, second ed., New York, Routledge, 148-152.

- Schäffner C. (2004) "Political discourse analysis from the point of view of translation studies", *Journal of Language and Politics* 3:1, 117-150.
- Schäffner C. (2007) "Politics and translation", in P. Kuhiwczak and K. Littau (eds.), *A Companion to Translation Studies*, Clevedon, UK, Multilingual Matters, 134-147.
- Schäffner C. and Bassnett S. (2010) "Politics, media and translation: exploring synergies", in C. Schäffner and S. Bassnett (eds.), *Political Discourse, Media and Translation*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars, 1-31.
- Schegloff E.A. (1992) "In another context", in A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds.) *Rethinking Context: Language as Interactive Phenomena*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 193-227.
- Setton R. (1998) "Meaning assembly in simultaneous interpreting", *Interpreting*, 3 (2), 163-199.
- Stubbs M. (1997) "Whorf's children: critical comments on Critical Discourse Analysis", in A. Ryan and A. Wray (eds.), *Evolving Models of Language. Papers from the Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics*, Swansea 1996, Clevedon, BAAL/Multilingual Matters, 100-116 (reprinted in Toolan 2002).
- Toolan M. (ed.) (2002) *Critical Discourse Analysis: Critical Concepts in Linguistics*, New York, Routledge.
- van Dijk T.A. (1998) *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, London, Sage.
- van Dijk T.A. (2001) "Critical Discourse Analysis", in D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen and H. Hamilton (eds.), *Handbook to Discourse Analysis*, Malden, MA, Blackwell, 352-371.
- Varela F.J. (1999) *Ethical Know-How*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Widdowson H. (2004) *Text, Context, Pretext: Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Wilson J. (1990) *Politically Speaking: The Pragmatic Analysis of Political Language*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Wodak R. (2001) "The Discourse-Historical Approach", in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, first ed., London, Sage, 63-94.
- Wodak R. (2008a) "The contribution of critical linguistics to the analysis of discriminatory prejudices and stereotypes in the language of politics", in R. Wodak and V. Koller (eds.), *Handbook of Communication in the Public Sphere*, Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 291-316.
- Wodak R. (2008b) "Introduction: Discourse studies – important concepts and terms", in R. Wodak and M. Krzyżanowski (eds.), *Qualitative Discourse Analysis for the Social Sciences*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1-29.
- Wodak R. and Chilton P. (eds.), (2005) *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis: Theory, Methodology, and Interdisciplinarity*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.

- Wodak R. and De Cillia R. (2007) "Commemorating the past: the discursive construction of official narratives about the 'Rebirth of the Second Austrian Republic'", *Discourse and Communication* 1(3), 315-41.
- Wodak R. and Meyer M. (2009) "Critical Discourse Analysis: History, agenda, theory and methodology", in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, second ed., London, Sage, 1-33.
- Wodak R. and Wright S. (2006) "The European Union in cyberspace", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 5(2), 251-275.

Digital pen technology and consecutive interpreting: another dimension in note-taking training and assessment

MARC ORLANDO

Monash University, Melbourne

Abstract

Rules of note-taking have been defined and modelled in order to be taught during training of consecutive interpreting. However, not much has been done to find relevant ways of evaluating the progressive acquisition of such systems and of note-taking skills. When instructors want to assess an interpretation, it is generally the quality of the consecutive interpretation and the final notes which allow them to give feedback and evaluate the performance. Such a product evaluation of the interpretation is generally made without being able to clearly distinguish the process of note-taking. Thanks to digital pen technology, trainers have now the possibility to capture simultaneously the video of the notes being taken and the audio of the speech, and therefore can provide better advice and remedial strategies to their students. Such technology is presented in the following article along with pedagogical suggestions for its use and for training in consecutive interpreting.

1. Introduction

The debate about the development of note-taking skills in the training of interpreters has always occupied an important place in the T&I industry as well as in the academic and education field. Ilg (Ilg and Lambert 1996:

78) pointed out that as the technique remains highly personal and individual, some instructors and practitioners are sceptical or neutral about the necessity to teach note-taking while others tend to promote its systematic instruction as a kind of code superimposed on language. Whether it is taught systematically or not, practitioners know that an effective note-taking technique is a necessary tool for any consecutive interpreter to perform well, and that it must be seen as a crutch whose function goes beyond that of a simple summarized reproduction of an utterance on paper, and which really works as a memory reinforcer.

Despite the consensus that to provide a good consecutive interpretation it is recommended to have developed a good system of notes, nothing has been said about how to evaluate these systems during the training of future interpreters. In this article, I would like to discuss a new approach to the teaching of note-taking – and more precisely the assessment of note-taking – which relies largely on the use of new available digital technology. As Peter Lindquist showed in his 2005 study on simultaneous interpreting, advances in technology have begun to help us to examine empirical data in different digital forms and offer trainers the possibility to make assumptions easy to apply practically in the classroom.

2. Is note-taking too personal a technique to be taught?

One major problem in the debate on teaching note-taking systematically or not lies in the difficulty to find a clear answer to the question about the system being a too personal one or not. As Ilg pinpoints, “The consensus among those who have taught note-taking in a systematic manner is that any system should be highly individual but based on common-sense rules of *efficiency and economy*” (Ilg and Lambert 1996: 78). The system of notes developed by each interpreter is surely very personal, even if symbols and ways of noting ideas and links can be borrowed from existing modelled systems. The problem for trainers in encouraging their students to develop their own personal systems freely is often the impossibility to observe these systems *in the process of being developed* throughout the training, and therefore, the incapacity to provide effective advice or remediation. What future interpreters should be taught through any curriculum is that training in *consecutive interpreting for speeches* (considering *speech interpreting* different to *dialogue interpreting* inasmuch as notes are not required in dialogue interpreting, but both being consecutive interpreting exercises) requires the development of a personal note-taking system, but that this skill is only one of those proper to this mode. Indeed, there are too many variables in a speech interpretation to limit its quality to merely good notes. As all trainers know, interpreting training is not language teaching. Similarly, interpreting students must understand that consecutive interpreting is not limited to

note-taking. Students must be regularly reminded that notes are an essential ally for them to provide a good speech consecutive interpretation, but that they can also become their worst enemy, especially when students try to write the speech in its entirety. Such a task is simply impossible and useless as it generally entails the Nose-in-the-Notes-Syndrome during the interpretation, and an incoherent production, both contrary to and incompatible with the act of communication an interpreter is supposed to perform.

It is possible to teach – and therefore to learn – how to take good notes. But as for any skill to be taught, whatever the field, a clear pedagogical project with a clear progression, a clear evaluation strategy, and clear objectives must be designed. As Gentile alluded to as early as 1991, a good interpretation encapsulates many parameters that need to be broken down to be properly analysed and taught: “The difficulty [of teaching note-taking] lies in separating the teaching of a system from the task of interpretation” (1991: 346).

3. Different components to be broken down in the curriculum

The following example of curriculum is implemented at Monash University, Melbourne, in the Master of Translation and Interpreting Studies, with the objective to make trainees aware of the importance of each of the different components. In the interpreting stream, students are trained to develop their personal, efficient and economical system of notes progressively, over three semesters. However, following the same belief as many trainers of the field (Ilg and Lambert 1996, Ficchi 1999), note-taking activities for speech interpreting are introduced after a few weeks of studies, after other exercises have been practised: listening comprehension, analysis and oral production of speeches; memory drills (visual and audio); written and oral paraphrasing and summarizing exercises; but also situations where students develop an aptitude to act and to perform (notably through dialogue interpreting situations).

3.1. Memory capacity

Regarding the challenges of writing notes, researchers have shown that, given the information processing challenges facing many students, the act of writing previously mentioned ideas might cause critical information to be missed and/or be misinterpreted, and that certain note-taking practices can produce notes that are incomplete and ineffectively organized and can contribute to students’ failure to record many important points in a speech or a lecture (DiVesta and Gray 1973, Kiewra and Benton 1988). These problems are underscored in research studies that have identified

the cognitive requirements of successful note-taking. For instance, Kiewra and Benton found that good note-takers have sufficient *working memory capacity* to “attend, store, and manipulate information selected simultaneously, while also transcribing ideas just presented and processed” (1988: 35). Those with limited working memory capacity may experience cognitive overload attempting to execute these multiple tasks integrally. Although note-taking facilitates learning/comprehension for note-takers with greater working memory capacity, it may be detrimental for learners with more limited capacity (DiVesta and Gray 1973, Kiewra 1989).

Alexieva, in her three-stage training of note-taking (1994: 199), quotes Gile’s 1991 study which pointed out too that consecutive interpreting is impossible without notes but that, at the same time, note-taking diminishes focus and processing capacity available for different tasks, and, therefore, impairs memorization. She recommends introducing note-taking instruction in the last stage only. Interestingly, she points out that during this Note-Taking Instruction Stage, students adhere very quickly to the principles stated in existing models or systems of notes (especially the importance of the layout to get a structure in their notes), but also that their performance remains low for a rather long period because their energy is spent on different decision-making steps and, therefore, their memory operational capacity weakens (1994: 200). This suggests that if memory exercises and note-taking are introduced at the same time and too early in the training, students’ performances will suffer from too many information processing challenges.

Consequently, as far as progression and curriculum are concerned, it does not seem relevant to expose interpreters to note-taking exercises too early in their training. Because of the above mentioned reasons, students should be first exposed to memorization exercises and be convinced that their memory capacity will be one major asset in the profession.

3.2. Performing and acting

As a good interpreting performance is assessed on the content accuracy, the quality of the expression, and the presentation, it is invaluable for interpreters to be trained to *public speaking*, to *acting*, and to the *production of impromptu structured and coherent speeches*. Exercises such as role plays during domain specific dialogue interpreting situations (e.g. in healthcare, legal or education contexts), mock business meetings, mock trials or conferences, are all opportunities for students to develop their aptitude to act, to perform in public, and are also good memorization exercises as students must learn their lines – their role – before coming to class. Support in phonetics, phonology, voice placement, as well as lectures on kinesics and nonverbal communication, are also arranged and scheduled in the curriculum to ensure better communication skills.

3.3. Coherence and *skopos*

The importance of coherence of the interpretation as one main pedagogical objective in consecutive interpreting has been underlined by many (Gile 1983, Gonzalez *et al.* 1991, Bastin 2003) on the grounds that a good interpreter is expected to give a convincing statement. As far as the interpretive act is concerned, Bastin (2003: 175) suggests that the structure of the conceptual relations is important for the purpose of communication. An essential characteristic of a successful interpretation is its *coherence*: a guarantee of the communication effectiveness and of the production quality. Reporting on the evaluation of different consecutive speech interpretations by students, he underlines the essential importance of the macro-structural comprehension of the message, more than its micro-linguistic one. This idea that the interpreter must be able to clearly distinguish a macro-text vs. a micro-text seems to be a key element to elaborate an effective note-taking system. To manage to work at the macro-structural level instead of the micro-linguistic one, and therefore, to train students to deliver coherent interpretations, Bastin (2003: 182) recommends a teaching methodology insisting first on monolingual exercises without notes, then monolingual exercises with notes, then bilingual exercises without notes and finally bilingual exercises with notes. He also insists on the necessity to work from argumentative texts, which are generally logically structured and coherent.

Another important notion students should be made aware of in the early stages of their training is that of the function – the *skopos* – of the source speech to be interpreted. Like the translator of the written word, the translator of the verbal word should always analyse the source text in terms of function and intended effect – and not only in linguistic ones – and should anticipate what this function and effect should be in the target text. As previously discussed by the present author (Orlando 2010) interpreting eloquence is different to interpreting arguments or scientific facts, and requires sometimes a different approach and application of the same techniques. Therefore, following Seleskovitch's speech types distinction – descriptive, argumentative or affective – a large variety of source texts/speeches must be considered to show students that note-taking is not an automatic act and that their system of notes cannot be definite and will change from one type of speech to another. These exercises in text/speech analysis should be introduced in the early stages of the curriculum to enhance the learning of note-taking skills applied to different texts, contexts and functions.

4. Teaching and assessing note-taking

Rules of note-taking have been defined and modelled (Rozan 1956, Seleskovitch 1975, Ilg 1980, Matyssek 1989) so that instructors can design

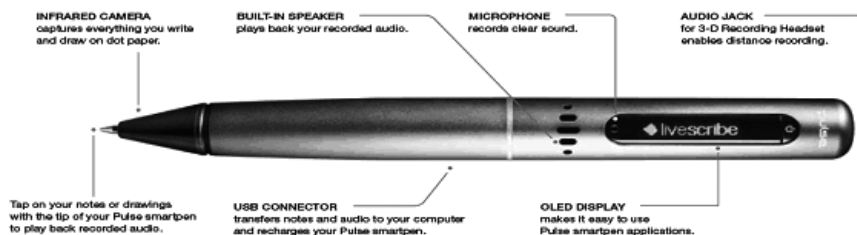
training tools to develop their students' skills, or so that interpreters develop a system by themselves. But not much has been done to find relevant ways of evaluating the progressive acquisition of such systems and of note-taking skills.

4.1. Product or process-oriented assessment of note-taking?

It is relevant to use the concepts of *product-oriented* and *process-oriented* assessment – often used in the written translation assessment field – to deal with the subject of note-taking and interpretation assessment. When instructors want to assess an interpretation, it is generally the quality of the consecutive interpretation (based on criteria to evaluate the linguistic accuracy, as well as their expression and presentation) and the final notes (the product) which allow them to give feedback and evaluate the performance. Such a *product* evaluation of the interpretation is generally made without being able to clearly distinguish the memorization qualities/deficiencies and the note-taking qualities/deficiencies of the interpreter.

One possibility to evaluate the note-taking *process* (the significance of notes being taken 'live') is to find a way to capture simultaneously the notes and the speech. To do so, some instructors have used OHPs and transparent paper to observe and assess 'live' the notes being taken. The capture of the process has also been done by video-recording the interpreter at work and by comparing the recording with the speech from which notes were taken. It is worth mentioning as an example the large and invaluable empirical study on note-taking conducted by Doerte Andres (2002), where one could really follow the note-taking process of 14 students and 14 professional interpreters. Each of them was video recorded taking notes from a speech and rendering the speech, and Andres painstakingly noted the exact second when each element was spoken in the original, appeared in the note-pad, and was spoken by the interpreter. The script of the original speech and that of the interpretation were put together on the same sheet of paper, with the notes in between to allow the visualisation of the links and the evaluation of qualities and defects. It seems that no similar study has been repeated since. However, weekly and all over the world, instructors lead workshops on consecutive interpretation and note-taking techniques, where students' performances and notes are assessed. Unfortunately, the time and resources required prevent most trainers from repeating the colossal work done by Andres, and from analysing the quality of the interpretations in relation to the note-taking process. In most training programs, this results in the incapacity and impossibility to provide well-considered and personalised remedial strategies to improve the students' skills, based on their personal learning.

5. New technology



The Livescribe Smartpen

Recent advances in technology help us now to examine empirical data in different digital forms. A new generation of digital pens, belonging to the category of mobile computing platforms, offer advanced processing power, audio and visual feedback, as well as memory for handwriting capture, audio recording, and additional applications. These pens consist of a microphone, a built-in speaker, 3D recording headsets, and an infrared camera. They are used to take notes – they have a normal ink cartridge and are held as ‘normal’ pens – and to capture data on a microchipped paper. Thanks to the built-in microphone and speaker, and the infrared camera, an application synchronizes what is being filmed/recorded as handwriting with the audio recorded at the same moment.

5.1. Two distinct applications for consecutive interpreting

At any time, thanks to the *dot-paper* technology which enables interactive “live” capture using plain paper printed with microdots and a function called Paper Replay, the user of the pen can play back the speech from the notes taken on paper. One simply needs to tap on a word on the page of the notebook to hear the part of the speech related to that same word or a phrase played directly from the pen.

The pen can also be put on a cradle and be connected to any computer through a normal USB port, and both audio and video data can be uploaded and played on the computer. This allows users to backup, search,



and replay notes from their computer. Users can also upload and convert notes to interactive Flash movies or PDF files.

Because such digital pens provide the means to easily capture handwriting and speech – video and audio – and also speech/notes can be replayed simultaneously from the notebook or visualized on a computer, they provide a universal platform for improving note-taking learning among students, the ideal tool for classroom visual activities and immediate collective feedback where students can easily learn from others.

5.2. Examples of notes taken using the digital pen

Two examples of notes taken with digital pens can be accessed on the following website:

<https://confluence-vre.its.monash.edu.au/display/DPCI/Digital+Pen+Technology+and+Consecutive+Interpreting+Training>

6. A new dimension in training

A variety of approaches and technologies have been developed to help trainees take and review notes during the learning process. However, they all have shortcomings. For example, other technologies exist that permit the recording and rehearing of speeches/lectures in relation to notes, but the audio segments and notes are not synchronized. This synchronicity can exist with Tablet PCs with audio recording capability, but Tablet PCs are more expensive and less portable than a pen and a notepad.

6.1. Metacognition and review time in the learning process

It is the present author's belief that teaching is an interactive formative activity where the student is a subject, not an object. The symbolic death, the gradual disappearance of the instructor, and the gradual autonomy of the trainee should, therefore, always be aimed at through a range of problem solving strategies and metacognitive activities.

In any program training future interpreters – and ours at Monash is not an exception – no one would contest the benefit of evaluating students against various professional standards. However, as pointed out by Choi (2006), such evaluation also runs the risk of defeating the purpose of evaluation and assessment from a pedagogical standpoint, hence the importance for assessment to be studied also from the student's perspective. Self-assessment and metacognition play an important part when one wants to give students the possibility to reflect on their progress

and become ‘actors’ in their own learning process; therefore, collective and individual assessment activities should be planned in any curriculum. As defined by Choi (2006: 277), “metacognition in learning can be described as the awareness of the learning process and the ability to adapt to challenges that occur during this process through effective strategies, thereby helping learners improve their learning capacity”.

As far as the learning process of note-taking is concerned, research suggests that the use of text-to-speech technology and efficient and effective note-taking activities, coupled with review, can aid learning and understanding and enhance the comprehension, fluency, accuracy, speed, endurance, and concentration of individuals (Tran and Lawson 2001, Lindstrom 2007). Therefore, one can consider that if the taking of notes is too demanding on a student’s working memory to permit the student to carry out generative processing in real time – and, in the case of interpreting students, leads to a poor performance – the needed generative processing of the content is still capable of occurring during the follow-up review of notes. Given the difficulties many students face when reading their own notes, the synchronous juxtaposition of text and audio provided by this digital pen technology should induce greater learning from the students reading, reviewing and self-evaluating their own notes during assessment activities. Moreover, during these self, peer or class assessment activities, such technology offers the possibility for students and instructors to work together closely and clearly observe and/or show what can be noted down or not, what notes are useful or not, what is detrimental to the rendition, etc. It allows all the participants to make an objective evaluation of what constitute economic and effective notes.

6.2. Example of pedagogical sequences

Different pedagogical sequences using such technology to train future interpreters to take notes and assess them effectively (during self-assessment or peer-assessment activities) were introduced in Monash’s interpreting course and could be modelled as follows.

A. Class activity: this sequence is set up on a pair-work basis: student 1 (the interpreter) + student 2 (the assessor) or instructor. Each participant has a pen.

Step 1: The speech to be interpreted is played or read to student 1 (recorded by pen 1) / student 1 takes notes on dot notebook 1 (handwriting is filmed by pen 1).

Step 2: Student 1 stands up and interprets from notes (recorded by pen 2) / Student 2 takes notes about the interpretation-performance on dot notebook 2 (handwriting is filmed by pen 2).

Step 3: The recorded and filmed information is uploaded from pen 1 and pen 2 onto a computer, a laptop or an iPad, and is played one after the

other on the screen for comment and evaluation by both participants (or by the whole class group for collective assessment). First, the notes of the interpreter are observed being taken while the speech is played simultaneously for an evaluation of the note-taking process; then the notes of the assessor are played simultaneously with the performance of the interpreter for a 'live' evaluation of the performance.

B. Class activity: this sequence is set up for a group (up to 5 students). Each student in the group has a pen. The instructor uses a video camera to film the students' performance.

Step 1: The speech to be interpreted is played or read to students who take notes with their digital pen (the speech is audio recorded and the handwriting is filmed).

Step 2: The instructor asks the students one after the other to provide their interpretation of one part of the speech and video records them.

Step 3: One student's filmed interpretation is played and assessed by the group in terms of communication quality (body language, voice, style etc.) and accuracy (the written version of the speech is provided to the students and missing or misinterpreted elements are noted and listed down).

Step 4: The information recorded by this student's pen (speech and handwriting) is played on a computer, a laptop or an iPad (it can be projected to the class). The instructor and students focus on the filmed notes and on the list of misinterpreted or missing elements and try to identify potential reasons in the process of note-taking to explain the deficiencies. This step is repeated for each student and each part of the speech.

C. An activity can also be set up for self-assessment. Each student has a pen and access to a computer, a laptop or an iPad.

Step 1: The speech to be interpreted is played or read to the student (recorded by the pen) / the student takes notes on the dot notebook (handwriting is filmed by the pen).

Step 2: Student interprets from notes (recorded by the pen).

Step 3: The recorded and filmed information is uploaded from the pen onto the student's own computer, laptop, iPad and played for comment and evaluation by the student who can observe his/her notes being taken while the speech is played simultaneously and can observe what is relevant or not, and can then listen to his/her performance from the pen, for further assessment related to the notes. Such an activity can be done in class or as homework, and the student will be asked to write a personal diary of analysis of his/her notes to be handed in regularly to the instructor.

6.3. Combined technologies for optimal assessment of a performance

For a performance assessment based on accuracy of meaning but also on appropriate nonverbal expression and presentation, all the activities of our weekly workshops are filmed. The trainee's performance on video can thus be assessed on screen with software like ELAN (Eudico Linguistic Annotator) for example. ELAN is a professional tool used for the creation of complex annotations on video and audio resources. With ELAN a user can add an unlimited number of annotations to audio and/or video streams. An annotation can be a sentence, word or gloss, a comment, a translation or a description of any feature observed in the media. Annotations can be created on multiple layers which can be hierarchically interconnected. An annotation can either be time-aligned to the media or it can refer to other existing annotations. Such software and applications provide any assessor the possibility to annotate comments for the filmed performance of a student on the screen while the video is being played, and allow students to review their performance and visualise their mistakes by simply clicking on the assessor's comment.

The combined use of both technologies – the digital pen and the video annotator – in the classroom allows the ideal performance assessment of speech interpreting because:

- the 'live' notes of the interpreters are simultaneously recorded with the source speech;
- the 'live' notes of the assessor are simultaneously recorded with the interpretation;
- the interpretation is video-recorded 'live';
- the 'live' notes and comments of the assessor are annotated and time-aligned on the video.

The treatment and review of all data on a weekly basis added to the assessment of the interpreter's performance either by the instructor, by a peer, or on a self-assessment basis, undoubtedly helps identify patterns useful to define personal remedial strategies in the learning process.

7. Research and pedagogical outcomes

There is no doubt that the digital pen technology will open new doors for research in Interpreting Studies, and more specifically in note-taking for consecutive interpreting. Monash University's interpreting stream is currently looking for funding to enable the data collection of notes taken by students during their training but also by professional experienced interpreters, both in Australia and in Europe. Such a collection would surely lead to the establishment of a best practices repository which would be useful for training purposes, but would also surely allow to identify

patterns in note-taking. The current collection and analysis of data in our program is at a too early stage to allow us to draw any serious conclusions yet, but patterns in the note-taking process have already emerged and students exposed to such a technology have provided interesting feedback.

As I was presented this new technology only a few months ago, digital pens were introduced to students of the interpreting stream at Monash University in the course of their second semester in 2010. The main objective was to trial digital pens in a pedagogical sequence informally, to see how a group of students and their instructor would react, and if any obvious specific pattern would emerge in the students' note-taking. The study was conducted using the pedagogical sequence B, as described above. As the experiment was conducted over five weeks in August and September 2010 and with five students, 25 different sets of notes were collected. This is certainly not enough to draw definite conclusions and more time is needed to analyse this data properly. However, from early observations of the notes and in the classroom, and from the students' answers to a questionnaire given to them after these five weeks (provided below), the use of such a technology in consecutive interpreting training seems really promising. For example, one specific pattern has emerged and deserves to be mentioned and studied more in depth in the future: thanks to the simultaneous capture of the handwriting and of the speech, it is interesting to observe that when the speaker pauses for a few seconds, trainees often go back to earlier notes to add or change elements with information from the previous part of the speech stored in their memory (in 21 notes sets out of 25). Such a pattern cannot be observed when the process of note-taking is not captured and notes are only assessed as a final product. It is also worth mentioning that students had already been training in note-taking in a conventional way for one semester and a half when the digital technology was introduced during their weekly workshop. Interestingly, 3 out of 5 students mentioned the importance of not starting too early to work with the digital pen, but only after having worked with their system for a while.

The following questionnaire was given to the five students after the five week experiment. The answers compiled below show interesting first impressions from users and should encourage pedagogical use of the digital pens.

1. Had you heard of or used digital pens before?
1 student out of 5 had heard about such a technology before but had not used the digital pen.
2. Was using the pen similar or different to conventional note-taking with pen and paper?
It was similar (5/5) as it is a pen, ink and paper. [1 student mentioned the pen "is a bit bigger than a usual pen but this is not a problem"].

3. The digital pen technology allows the playing back of recorded notes and accompanying source text. What were you able to observe/learn about your note-taking conventions through the recording and play-back function?
The fact handwriting is not clear and notes not well organised (4/5); the fact notes are too long and not abbreviated enough and that students waste time (3/5); the possibility to measure the time lag between the speech and the notes (3/5); the possibility to see exactly when elements are discarded or not memorized (2/5). [1 student did not answer this question]
4. Are there features of your note-taking conventions that you believe you need to address or change, after viewing playbacks of your performance? If yes, what are they?
*Yes (5/5).
 Students answered they need to write less (5/5); to write in a more legible way (4/5); to use more symbols to represent ideas or words (3/5); to use the page layout in a more efficient way (3/5); to use more linking words (2/5).*
5. You were able to view playbacks of recorded notes from other students. Did the ability to see how others take notes influence your understanding and performance of note-taking?
*Yes (4/5). Not sure (1/5).
 It gives a clear idea of what the others do better or not (3/4); it gives new ideas for notes (3/4); it shows what makes sense and what does not (2/4); "it shows clearly how people transcribe what they understand" (1/4).*
6. In semester one, note-taking strategies were taught in a conventional way and you all started developing your system of notes. Do you think digital pen technology has advantages or disadvantages in comparison to conventional note-taking training?
*[advantages] It enables to record speech and notes simultaneously and to review notes later for improvement (5/5); it shows clearly and for the first time qualities or defects in the system that were not identified so far (4/5); it enables students "to have some distance" with their performance and notes (3/5); it enables students to be more objective in assessing the effectiveness of the notes (2/5); "it is really useful if one already knows some theoretical background on note-taking and the mental processes involved" (1/5).
 [disadvantages] "It has never happened but what happens if the pen runs out of battery?" (1/5).*
7. Do you have any other comments or impressions about using digital pens that you wish to relate?
It is preferable to use the pen after having already developed a system (3/5); it would not be as useful without the videorecording of the individual performance (2/5).

From these first observations, and despite the lack of data analysis, one can anticipate that, at each stage of the students' training, thanks to the visualization of their own – and other students' – notes, patterns would emerge in the efficiency of note-taking. The audio-visual evaluation, either by an instructor, a peer or as a self exercise, should impact on the student's performance and note-taking skill development.

Last but not least, such data will be highly useful to convince students that notes are not the ally they think they are and not the only point of focus in the learning process. It should help them to accept more easily, especially in the early stage of their training, that a good consecutive interpretation of a speech relies on memory capacity, the ability to provide a coherent, convincing and well-presented interpretation, more than the capacity to elaborate a relevant note system.

8. Beyond classical interpreting modes? Towards a new hybrid mode of interpreting?

Hamidi and Pöchhacker (2007) have already reported an experimental study on a potential new mode of interpreting, *simultaneous consecutive interpreting*, where a digital voice recorder is used to record the original speech which the interpreter then plays back into earphones and renders in the simultaneous mode. Through this experimental study, they tested “the viability or even superiority of technology-assisted consecutive interpreting as a new working method for conference interpreters” (2007: 276). Even if the authors put forward the need “for more research to test the scope of application of this new interpreting mode” (2007: 288), their conclusions showed that “digital voice recorded-assisted consecutive permits enhanced interpreting performance” (2007: 288). Although the digital pen technology offers different applications, it could certainly offer the possibility to investigate this area further. Indeed, thanks to the digital pen application which offers the possibility to record and instantly replay the speech from what is written on the dot paper – with *the option of speeding up or slowing down the audio playback* – using the 3D recording earphones provided with such pens, would it be totally unrealistic to imagine future interpreters being trained to deliver interpretations in a new hybrid mode of interpreting? A *consecutive-simultaneous-interpretation-from-notes* where the professional would interpret the source speech both listening to the replayed speech *and* reading his/her notes? Time will tell, but there is certainly room for new research in this area too.

References

For more information on the digital pen, visit www.livescribe.com

For more information on the ELAN software, visit
www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan

- Alexieva B. (1994) "On teaching note-taking in consecutive interpreting", in C. Dollerup and A. Lindegaard (eds), *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 2*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 199-206.
- Andres D. (2002) *Konsekutivdolmetschen und notation*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang.
- Bastin G.L. (2003) "Les marqueurs de cohérence en interprétation consécutive", *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 12, 175-188.
- Choi J.Y. (2006) "Metacognitive evaluation method in consecutive interpretation for novice learners", *Meta* 51(2), 273-283.
- DiVesta F.J. and Gray G.S. (1973) "Listening and note-taking II" *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 64, 278-287.
- Ficchi V. (1999) "Learning consecutive interpretation. An empirical study and an autonomous approach", *Interpreting* 4, 199-218.
- Gentile A. (1991) "The application of theoretical constructs from a number of disciplines for the development of a methodology of teaching in interpreting and translating", *Meta* 36(2-3), 344-351.
- Gile D. (1983) "L'enseignement de l'interprétation: utilisation des exercices unilingues en début d'apprentissage", *Traduire* 133 (4), 7-12.
- Gile D. (1991) "Prise de notes et attention en début d'apprentissage de l'interprétation consécutive – une expérience – démonstration de sensibilisation", *Meta* 36(2-3), 431-439.
- Gonzalez R., Vasquez V. and Mikkelsen H. (1991) *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy, and Practice*, Durham, Carolina Academic Press.
- Hamidi A. and Pöchhacker F. (2007) "Simultaneous consecutive interpreting: a new technique put to the test", *Meta* 52 (2), 276-289.
- Ilg G. (1980) "L'interprétation consécutive. Les fondements", *Parallèles*, 3, 109-136.
- Ilg G. and Lambert S. (1996) "Teaching consecutive interpreting", *Interpreting* 1(1), 69-99.
- Kiewra K.A. (1989) "A review of note-taking: the encoding storage paradigm and beyond", *Educational Psychology Review* 1, 147-172.
- Kiewra K.A. and Benton S.L. (1988) "The relationship between information-processing ability and note-taking", *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 13, 33-44.
- Lindquist P.P. (2005) "Technologies, discourse analysis, and the spoken word: the MRC approach, an empirical approach to interpreter

- performance evaluation and pedagogy”, *Meta* 50(4).
<http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/019848ar>
- Lindstrom J.H. (2007) “Determining appropriate accommodations for postsecondary students with reading and written expression disorders”, *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 22 (4), 229-236.
- Matyssek H. (1989) *Hanbuch der Notizentechnik für Dolmetscher. ein Weg zur sprachunabhängigen Notation*, Heidelberg, Julius Groos.
- Orlando M. (2010) “Interpreting Eloquence: when words matter as much as ideas”, *The AALITRA Review* 1, 52-60.
- Rozan J.F. (1956) *La prise de notes dans l’interprétation consécutive*, Geneva, Librairie de l’Université.
- Seleskovitch D. (1975) *Langage, langues et mémoire. Etude de la prise de notes en interprétation consécutive*, Paris, Minard.
- Tran T.A.T. and Lawson M. (2001) “Students’ procedures for reviewing lecture notes”, *International Education Journal: Educational Research Conference 2001 Special Issue - 2* (4), 278-293.

The usefulness of ICTs in interpreting practice

SARAH TRIPEPI WINTERINGHAM

SSLMIT, University of Trieste

Abstract

Drawing from recent developments and studies on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in interpreting practice, this paper is aimed at analysing and discussing the usefulness of Computer-Assisted Interpreting (CAI). The currently available technology will be explored in order to analyse the application of ICTs to interpreting practice, with the objective of assessing which technologies may assist interpreters in their real-life work, which forms of interpreting may benefit from these technological advancements, and to which extent interpreting rendition would benefit from the use of these new technologies.

The author will also consider the possible future application of ICTs in interpreting and on the way in which this sector may change in the future, in light of the need for this professional field to look to the future of communication and adapt accordingly to the trends of the Third Millennium.

1. Introduction

Technology in the 21st century permeates everyday life. In the past two decades, the widespread incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) – that is computers, digital tools and the Internet – into society, has reshaped our way of living and working. The introduction of new technologies has led to a revolution in communica-

tion and in the way information is disseminated and accessed. Communicative exchanges are faster, the distance between interlocutors has been shortened, and information is always readily available. These technological advances have had a profound impact on the way business is performed in many fields and many professions have had to adapt to the new technological demands. Consequently, also the fields of translation and interpreting have followed in these global footsteps by incorporating the use of ICTs in their practice.

The aim of this paper is to analyse and discuss the impact technologies may have had on interpreting practice and what the future may hold in light of the need for this professional field to look to the future of communication and adapt accordingly to the trends of the Third Millennium. Both simultaneous (SI) and liaison interpreting (LI) will be considered and for the purpose of this paper, the term liaison interpreting will be used to refer to any form of interpreting outside the conference setting.

2. Interpreting and Technology

Interpreting is one of the most intense cognitive activities in which the human brain can engage (Mouzourakis 2000: 5) and interpreters perform an extremely strenuous task, where much effort is at stake in terms of decoding, memorizing and encoding a message. Interpreting is not a mere linguistic activity where words are transferred from one language to another. Performance is influenced by linguistic proficiency as well as knowledge of non-linguistic factors, namely, non-verbal expressions and gestures that come into play during an interpreting session that only the human mind and experience can grasp.

Interpreter performance is, undoubtedly, also facilitated by an adequate working environment and the availability of reliable equipment. In this respect, interpreting practice has undergone some changes over the years, but these developments have not yet been significant enough. One reason behind this may be the fact that interpreting is the second oldest profession in the world (Baigorri-Jalón 2004: 165) and may thus be slower in adjusting to technological transformation.

The first technological advance that changed interpreting occurred in the first half of the 20th century, when equipment for SI was introduced (Bowen 1994). Since then, interpreting booths have improved significantly in terms of soundproofing, console design and sound quality. Consoles have become increasingly digitalized, favouring quicker channel selection, more efficient microphone functions and clearer voice inputs and outputs. LI, on the other hand, can be performed without equipment and has only recently benefited from some of the new technological advances of the Third Millennium.

Overall, however, technological developments in interpreting have been extremely gradual, particularly if compared with the pace of technological adaptation that has characterized written translation. As Berber states (2008: 3), translation has received all the benefits of new inventions since the beginning of the information era in the 1980s. First the use of computers and word processing, then online access and transmission of documents and finally the introduction of Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) have transformed the way in which translation is performed, facilitating the translation process, helping translators speed up their work and meet the constantly growing demand for translation because of globalization.

Computer-Assisted Interpreting (CAI) – the parallel of CAT – is indeed an acronym that has been a part of interpreters' vocabulary for the past two decades, but seems to have had little practical application in the profession. To date a limited number of studies has been dedicated to the practical use of ICT in interpreting (Berber 2008, Braun 2006, Andres and Falk 2009, Moser-Mercer 2005 a and b, Kalina 2010). More research has, instead, been focused on telephone interpreting (Andres and Falk 2009, Kelly 2008, Ko 2006, Lee 2007, Rosenberg 2007, Wadensjö 1999), on Computer-Assisted Interpreter Training (CAIT) and the development of efficient software programmes designed specifically to support trainees in developing their interpreting skills either in the classroom or for self-study (Gran *et al.* 2002, de Manuel Jerez 2003, Blasco Mayor 2005, Sandrelli and de Manuel Jerez 2007). So far, CAIT has proven to have had a positive effect on students' performance (Sandrelli and de Manuel Jerez 2007). It may be thus assumed that, in the practice of the profession, interpreting rendition may benefit from the use of technological aids. CAI may indeed be a major breakthrough in the interpreting field as it may provide a powerful solution enabling interpreters to improve both the quality and productivity of their interpretation services (Kelly 2009, Dynamic Language Newsletter 2008 at www.dynamiclanguage.com).

However, questions have been raised, by both practitioners and researchers, on whether technological tools can actually improve interpreters' performance and professionalism and many interpreters have shown some degree of reluctance to the use of ICTs in their profession, as shown by Berber in her survey on the use of ICTs in professional interpreting settings (2008: 9).

Nonetheless, technology-driven changes are a reality of the Third Millennium and, whilst some of these advances have already led to some transformations in interpreting practice as will be discussed in section 2.1, other changes are likely to permeate the sector at a number of levels in the future.

2.1. Technological changes in interpreting

One of the main technological revolutions that has affected interpreting practice is the boom of the World Wide Web. The wealth of information available on the Internet in the 21st century is unprecedented, thus providing interpreters with specific thematic information and terminology during the preliminary preparation phase, helping them to deal more effectively with the complexity and variability of the subject matters they are asked to interpret. As Mouzourakis (2000: 4) states, the complex task of interpretation includes several factors, among which preparation plays an important part. Having the necessary information at their disposal before the interpreting task is crucial to interpreters to guarantee a good performance and today, access to information is no longer a difficulty.

Ready access to Internet has changed preparation and background knowledge acquisition: whereas in the past interpreters would spend hours tracking down information and found it particularly difficult to obtain up-to-date facts, they are now confronted with a surfeit of data. (Donovan 2006: 4)

The new goal pursued by CAI in the digital era for all forms of interpreting is the same objective Quicheron called for in 1995, when describing the future interpreter booth for the year 2000, that is, to have access to the maximum amount of information in the booth by electronic means.

In her article *Moving toward machine interpretation*, Kelly (2009) explains that computers and new technologies offer potential for easing some of the transfer burdens related to interpreting tasks, in that they can help interpreters in their real-time work providing them with quick access to a broader range of information in electronic dictionaries, databases and glossaries. These *powerful* technological CAI tools include terminology aids, such as laptops, notebooks, small handheld PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) or similar instruments with Internet accessibility that may facilitate interpreters' work.

Theoretically, these tools should represent the most effective information interface when interpreting, but is their practical use feasible and does rendition benefit? The main drawback of the use of these tools is that it is still considered, at least in the booth, to some extent as unnatural (Donovan 2006: 5), presumably because it may be time-consuming and distracting in an activity that requires concentration and fast-paced decoding and delivery. The interpreter at work may not have the time or the cognitive ability to look up a word online or in his/her electronic dictionary, or detect and choose the correct translation of a specific term among the myriad of possible solutions that are generally offered by dictionaries. As Donovan specifies (2006: 5) the difficulty lies in sorting through the sheer mass of information. Online dictionaries or databases provide a wealth of information, which includes not only multiple variants but also fields of meaning and dates of acceptance (cfr. The

Interactive Terminology for Europe *termbase* at iate.europa.eu), and thus, interpreters may find it difficult to look through such vast material. In addition, as Veisbergs (2007: 80) states, should the right word be found it may not be possible to incorporate it smoothly in speech. Even the help of the fellow colleague in the booth may sometimes prove useless in real-time oral translation, and may even slow down the interpreting process. The interpreter, when hearing something unknown, is often alone and has nothing to resort to but his/her own memory and mind (*ibid*: 77). A simultaneous interpreter at work cannot wait for more than half a second for a missing word otherwise his/her narrative would sound broken and the short memory be overburdened; a liaison interpreter, sitting in close proximity to his/her interlocutors, may find it impracticable to access glossaries or *termbases* through his/her handheld device either while listening to the source message or while delivering the target translation. For both types of interpreters, typing an unknown word on a laptop or PDA requires an additional time-consuming effort which would affect the already existing efforts that interpreters support during their work. The activity of searching for the right term may result in distraction and loss of concentration for the interpreter. In liaison settings, in particular, this distraction may even irritate the interlocutors and may cause the interpreter to miss out on essential non-verbal language and lose the *human closeness* that is the much praised characteristic and facilitator of LI (Wadensjö 1998: 145-150).

However, real-time terminology accessibility may sometimes be effective for the interpreter at work especially in the event of the repeated occurrence of terminology in both LI and SI settings. Moreover, CAI advocates state that the use of PDAs in liaison-interpreted encounters may, for example, be beneficial to the overall outcome of the interpretation because it reduces the time interpreters may need to ask for clarification (Kelly 2009: 5) in case of unclear concepts or utterances.

With regards to SI, a study conducted by Berber (2009: 71-84) on the use of ICTs by conference interpreters showed that some members of the profession are:

[...] more skeptical about the effectiveness of ICT on their work, some even referring to its interfering to listening and concentration or being altogether against considering ICT an integral or important part of interpreting. (*ibid*: 82)

but others, who stated to work largely with pen and paper, explained that:

[...] just as they make an extraordinary use of pen and paper for support, so should ICT be used, as support, not expecting to do the job for you. (*ibid*: 82)

This state of the art shows that, despite some wariness, part of the profession is aware of the importance of understanding new technologies and their impact on the profession with a view to increasingly be able to match today's working requirements of technology-driven, fast-paced services.

2.2. Machine Interpreting

Like the developments in the field of Machine Translation (MT), the movement toward Machine Interpreting (MI) will be incremental. Yet, while it is unfamiliar territory for most who concentrate on written language, some promising efforts to automate conversion have already taken place in the oral communication realm. (Kelly 2009: 16)

Despite the concern this statement may raise, practitioners ought to look to the potential support these instruments may provide in interpreting practice.

Companies such as BBN, IBM and SRI have developed what are known as speech-to-speech translation systems, which, as Dillinger and Gerber (2009) explain in their article on the use of machine translation in the US Government, are enabled by impressive leaps in speech recognition and machine translation technology and allow free flowing conversation between any two speakers of the source and target languages. These systems are the second generation technology that has come to life as a further development of the first CAI devices that were created to enable one-way oral translation through previously created authoritative translations.

One of the most widely used of these handheld devices is the *Voxtec Phraselator*, which is an interactive tool whereby users “utter a phrase or combination of phrases that they know to be among the material in the interpreting system” and the device “retrieves the translation and plays it out loud” (Dillinger and Gerber 2009: 10). These devices are currently primarily used by the US military deployed in conflict areas and have been designed to enable communication with the local forces and populations; they are especially important in situations where reading and writing are not practical, such as at military checkpoints, at medical intakes, when communicating in the dark or dealing with illiterate people.

The development of these tools for use in the field in difficult situations is understandable and, admittedly, very useful. However, their creators may need to focus their attention on possible drawbacks, such as inaccurate pronunciation and incorrect or incomprehensible translation, as illustrated in the example in Figure 1. It displays a BBN broadcast monitoring system, which is mainly used for television and web-based news sources in Arabic, and works with speech recognition software that transcribes the text and then automatically translates it into English in near real time (Dillinger and Gerber 2009: 9).

Dillinger and Gerber go on to say that this host of tools and technologies can facilitate interpreting in many more environments and invite to explore their commercial use.

Speech recognition software programmes may find a useful application in the interpreting sector. Undoubtedly, the potential of the human mind



Figure 1. Automatic translation from Arabic into English with BBN software (Dillinger and Gerber 2009)

and its ability to go beyond words and grasp meaning and nuances and clarify misunderstanding can never be replaced by machines, but these may provide fast-paced support to practitioners.

Voice recognition software programmes may be particularly helpful in SI: their installation in booth consoles or on laptops may be useful to create *termbases* through the detection of new or specialised terminology during real-time interpretation, which could be recorded and stored in their source and target versions.

A *termbase* that may be shared and constantly updated by practitioners may become a very useful tool for all interested interpreters. This advance would be particularly important since terminology access for interpreters is a necessity and terminology management is a fundamental part of an interpreter's job and professional development. The terminology needed by interpreters is often highly technical and specialised and, in some cases, even novel (Benhamida 1990, cited in Veisbergs 2007: 81), which means interpreters can be faced with words that cannot be easily found in standard dictionaries. For all these reasons, pooling interpreters' terminology resources can be of help for future reference to practicing professionals.

Moreover, having extendable *termbases* at hand which enable interpreters to retrieve a term quickly by the push of a button and see it

displayed on a screen in the booth could be highly useful and lighten the workload. Clearly, it may be argued that even this solution may hinder the interpreter's work in terms of timing, concentration and detection of the correct term that would fit the context. The main advantage would be the speed of application.

2.3. Remote Interpreting

Communication has changed dramatically since the 1980s and further transformations will affect the way in which we interact with the world around us and with others.

Technological changes affecting interpreting have taken place with the increasing use of distance communication technology and the advent of call conferencing, video conferencing and Skype. Indeed, distance or remote interpreting is increasingly becoming widespread as a consequence of the evolution of teleconferencing technologies, which link communicative partners at two or more locations, creating new opportunities for real-time interaction without the need for physical co-presence (Braun 2006: 1).

The most basic and oldest form of distance interpreting is telephone interpreting (TI), which was first introduced in 1973 in Australia to help immigrants arriving to the country (Kelly 2008: 5). Initially, TI could only be used to connect interlocutors from two locations, facilitating bi-lateral communication. Today, with the advent of mobile communication and round-the-clock access to broadband/Wi-Fi connections, these technologies have evolved to the extent that distance multilateral audio and video communication is possible, enabling more than two participants – including the interpreter – located in different parts of the world to interact verbally and visually.

The need for remote interpreting (RI) is developing for various reasons, the main one being cost-efficiency. International organisations, primarily the United Nations and the European Union, have already shown some interest in this form of interpreting at an experimental level and may eventually resort to RI to cut the costs of their interpreting services and, for the EU, to tackle the problem of a shortfall in booths following the rise in the number of working language combinations. As Donovan states (2006: 5),

[...] this seems a very likely development for reasons of cost (saving on travelling expenses) and spaces (particularly given the number of booths required at the European Institutions). There are also environmental considerations, with growing concern about air travel, as evidenced in a recent advertisement (France Telecom, April 2006) which read “remplacer une réunion par un visioconférence, c’est aussi protéger un iceberg”.

To date, however, RI has only had a few practical applications, even though it is cost-efficient and timesaving. It provides quicker access to interpreters in areas and for languages where or for which no on-site local qualified interpreters are available (Andres and Falk 2009: 20). From the clients' perspective, RI has its advantages in that it can help reduce costs by saving on the interpreters' travel and accommodation expenses. From the interpreters' point of view, working remotely means being able to work from the office or from home without the need to travel long distances, and also possibly being able to take on more assignments.

All this, however, does not come without its disadvantages. RI is, in fact, regarded as one of the most difficult forms of interpreting due to the relevant drawbacks it presents. A number of experiments with remote conference interpreting have been conducted since the 1970s by the United Nations and more recently by the European Union. The first major remote interpreting experiments were the Paris-Nairobi ("Symphonie Satellite") experiment by UNESCO in 1976 and the New York-Buenos Aires experiment by the United Nations in 1978 (Moser-Mercer 2005 b: 5). A series of experiments was conducted by the European Institutions in the second half of the 1990s and then in 2000 and 2001 (ibid: 5). The United Nations explored the issue again in 1999 (United Nations 1999) and the European Parliament carried out the latest, most comprehensive study in 2005 (European Parliament 2005).

The results of these studies have shown that interpreters describe the experience of RI as negative, both physically and physiologically. As Mouzourakis (2000: 6) explains, the major disadvantage that is frequently mentioned is the unavoidable loss of visual information. By working from a screen, the interpreter is forced to perform an unfamiliar task, that of obtaining non-verbal clues from the speaker or the audience through a screen which often displays a fixed angle. These studies revealed that interpreters experience unusual fatigue, eyestrain and nausea, as well as loss of concentration, motivation and a feeling of alienation (Mouzourakis 2006: 52). These problems, as Mouzourakis goes on to explain, are unlikely to derive from inadequate sound and video quality, but rather from the condition of remoteness: the physical and psychological distance from the conference venue makes interpreters feel a loss of control.

And what about remote liaison interpreting? The general claim and belief is that RI may be more suited and feasible in liaison-mediated encounters. Nonetheless, remoteness may also have its drawbacks in these settings. As it has been shown mainly with studies on telephone interpreting (Mintz 1998, Swaney 1997, Vidal 1998, Wadensjö 1999), the lack of human contact with the interlocutors entails a loss of *closeness among participants* that is so important in these forms of interpreting. Remote liaison interpreters, even if they benefit from a video link, do not have the same type of contact or may not receive the same non-verbal clues that are so necessary to understand the meaning or intention of an

utterance. It would also be difficult for them to grasp the interlocutors' reaction, which is often fundamental to see if the information has been understood. This lack of closeness could place more strain on the interpreters, who may experience increased difficulty in interacting, managing speaking turns, and requesting further clarifications and may develop a sense of alienation and loss of control. These open issues need to be further researched to enable interpreters to cope with the new challenges of RI. As Andres and Falk (2009: 24) state, it is indisputable that the use of this form of interpreting is on the increase and for certain settings, RI may in the long run become a genuine alternative to traditional face-to-face interpreting.

3. Tentative conclusions: the possible future application of technology in interpreting

In an age where fast delivery of services, time saving and cost-cutting are a priority, it is highly probable that the interpreting sector will change in order to accommodate to the new trends. The ongoing spread of technologies is likely to reshape the future of interpreting, possibly leading to a wider use of the new forms of interpreting (LI and RI) in preference to the more traditional ones. "Does this mean that the simultaneous interpreter will be banned from the conference room and have to work from a video conference studio, just as the consecutive interpreter sitting in the conference room with the delegates was replaced by the simultaneous interpreter in the booth?" (Kurz 2000 in Andres and Falk 2009: 10). This may be the future working scenario for interpreters, given the search for cost-efficiency and the increased use of English as the *lingua franca* of communication and RI may become the preferred form of mediation in a foreseeable future.

As Donovan (2006: 5) explains, part of the profession expresses reservations about RI mainly for fear that interpreters will be ejected from meetings and relegated to remote backrooms and as she continues to say:

This mirrors early attitudes to simultaneous interpreting which was met with hostility and suspicion on the part of many interpreters. [...] They feared understandably that the new method would place them entirely in the background [...]. A similar pattern of rejection, fear and distrust can be seen over a possible shift from simultaneous to remote interpretation. (ibid: 5)

On the other hand, other conference interpreters state that the use of ICT ensures competitiveness in this age of fast information and the conference interpreter who cannot use ICT is at a disadvantage (Berber 2009: 83).

Technological development today is inevitable and the interpreting sector certainly needs to adapt if it wishes to keep up and meet new

market demands. Indeed, the full incorporation of technology in interpreting is still in its early days and more studies are needed to assess whether it can lighten and facilitate interpreters' work. The challenge for those concerned with interpreting studies is to constantly research the use of ICTs and CAI tools in interpreting, assess their feasibility, study the new strategies interpreters may need to learn to adopt and, eventually, transfer this new knowledge to the practice of training interpreters.

Clearly, what must be borne in mind at all times is the undisputed uniqueness of the human presence in interpreting practice. Interpreting – the oldest form of intercultural communication – can never become an alienating profession that will be performed through CAI tools, but rather a profession that will be increasingly supported by new technologies.

References

- Andres D. and Falk S. (2009) "Remote and telephone interpreting", in D. Andres and S. Pöllabauer (eds.). *Spürst Du wie der Bauch rauf runter?/Is everything all topsy turvy in your tummy? - Fachdolmetschen im Gesundheitsbereich/Health Care Interpreting*, München, Martin Meidenbauer, 9-27.
- Baigorry-Jalón J. (2004) *Interpreters at the United Nations: A History*, Salamanca, Ediciones, Universidad de Salamanca.
- Benhamida L. (1990) "Translators and interpreters as adopters and agents of diffusion of planned lexical innovations. The Francophone Case", *Dissertation Abstracts International* 50 (11), 3568-A.
- Berber D. (2008) "ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in conference interpreting: a survey of their usage in professional and educational settings", http://isg.urv.es/cetra/article__CETRA_2007_berber.pdf (retrieved on 22/04/2010).
- Berber D. (2009) "Reinforcing intercultural skills: ICT in conference interpreting", *Journal of Multicultural Research* 1 (1), 71-84.
- Blasco Mayor M.J. (2005) "El reto de formar intérpretes en el siglo XXI", *Translation Journal*, 9 (1), <http://accurapid.com/journal/31interprete2.htm> (retrieved on 10/04/2010).
- Bowen M. (1994) "Interpreting studies and the history of the profession", in C. Dollerup and A. Lindegaard (eds.) *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 2*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 246-252.
- Braun S. (2006) "Multimedia communication technologies and their impact on interpreting", in M. Carroll, H. Gerzymisch-Arbogast and S. Nauert (eds.), *Audiovisual Translation Scenarios. Proceedings of the Marie Curie Euroconferences MuTra: Audiovisual Translation Scenarios Copenhagen*, http://www.euroconferences.info/proceedings/2006_Proceedings/2006_proceedings.html.

- de Manuel Jerez J. (2003) *Nuevas tecnologías y formación de intérpretes*, Editorial Atrio, Granada.
- Dillinger M. and Gerber L. (2009) "Uses of machine translation in the U.S. government", in *ClientSide News Magazine* 9 (2), 8-10.
- Donovan C. (2006) "Trends – Where is Interpreting heading and how can training courses keep up?". Contribution at the EMCI conference: *The Future of Conference Interpreting: Training, Technology and Research*, 30 June – 1 July 2006, http://www.emcinterpreting.org/repository/pdf/UoW_conf_06_C.Donovan.pdf (retrieved on 13/07/2010).
- European Parliament (2005) *Report on the 3rd Remote Interpretation Test*, Brussels, 22.11-10.12.2005. *Study Concerning the Constraints Arising From Remote Interpreting. Full Report*, Interpretation Directorate.
- Gran L., Carabelli A. and Merlini R. (2002) "Computer-assisted interpreter training", in G. Garzone and M. Viezzi (eds.) *Interpreting in the 21st Century. Challenges and Opportunities. Selected Papers from the 1st Forlì Conference on Interpreting Studies*, 9-11 November 2000, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 277-294.
- Kalina S. (2010) "New Technologies in Conference Interpreting", in H. Lee-Jahnke and E. Prunč (eds.) *Am Schnittpunkt von Philologie und Translationswissenschaft. Festschrift zu Ehren von Martin Forstner*, Bern, Peter Lang, 79-96.
- Kelly N. (2008) *Telephone Interpreting: A Comprehensive Guide to the Profession*, Trafford Publishing, Canada.
- Kelly N. (2009) "Moving toward machine interpretation", in *TCWorld*, January/February 2009 Issue, 15-17.
- Ko L. (2006) "The need for long-term empirical studies in remote interpreting research. A case study of telephone interpreting", *Linguistica Antverpiensia: New Series*, 5, 325-338.
- Kurz I. (2000) "Tagungsort Genf/Nairobi/Wien: Zu einigen Aspekten des Teledolmetschens", in M. Kadric, K. Kaindl, and F. Pöchhacker (eds.) *Festschrift für Mary Snell-Hornby zum 60. Geburtstag*, Tübingen, Stauffenburg, 292-302.
- Lee J. (2007) "Telephone interpreting – seen from the interpreters' perspective", *Interpreting* 9 (2), 231-251.
- Mintz D. (1998) "Hold the phone: telephone interpreting scrutinized", *Proteus* 7 (1), 1-5.
- Moser-Mercer B. (2005 a) "Remote interpreting: the crucial role of presence", *Bulletin suisse de linguistique appliquée* 81, 73-97.
- Moser-Mercer B. (2005 b) "Remote interpreting: issues of multi-sensory integration in a multilingual task", *Meta*, 50 (2), 727-738.
- Mouzourakis P. (2000) "Interpretation booths for the third millennium", *Communicate!* March-April 2000, <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page131.htm>.

- Mouzourakis P. (2006) "Remote interpreting: a technical perspective on recent experiments", *Interpreting* 8, 45-66.
- Quicheron J.B. (1995) "La cabine de l'an 2000, quelques réflexions", <http://clubdebruxellesrichelieu.org/documentinterprete/cabinean2000waregem.pdf>
- Rosenberg B.A. (2007) "A data driven analysis of telephone interpreting", in C. Wadensjö, B. Englund Dimitrova and A. Nilsson (eds.), *The Critical Link 4. Professionalisation of Interpreting in the Community. Selected Papers From the 4th International Conference on Interpreting in Legal, Health and Social Service Settings, Stockholm, Sweden, 20-23 May 2004, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins*, 65-78.
- Sandrelli A. and de Manuel Jerez J. (2007) "The impact of information and communication technology on interpreter training: state-of-the-art and future prospects", *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer (ITT)*, 1 (2), 269-303.
- Swaney I. (1997) "Thoughts on live vs. telephone and video interpretation", *Proteus* 6 (2), 5-6.
- United Nations (1999) *A Joint Experiment in Remote Interpretation*. UNHQ-UNOG-UNOV, Geneva, United Nations, Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.
- Veisbergs P. (2007) "Terminology issues in interpreter training", *Proceedings of the Baltic Sea Region University Network "Quality and Qualifications in Translation and Interpreting II"*, <http://www.tlu.ee/files/arts/645/Quali698bb7e395e0b88d73d603e33f5b153f.pdf>
- Vidal M. (1998) "Telephone interpreting: technological advance or due process impediment?", *Proteus* 7 (3), 1-6.
- Wadensjö C. (1998) *Interpreting as Interaction*, London/New York, Longman.
- Wadensjö C. (1999) "Telephone interpreting and the synchronisation of talk in social interaction", *The Translator*, 5 (2), 247-264.

Webliography

- <http://www.dynamiclanguage.com/dynamic-language-services-process/dynamic-language-services-automating-interpretation.htm> .
 "Automating interpretation. What the electronic world brings to the spoken word", in *Dynamic Language Newsletter*, June 2008 (retrieved on 02/04/2010).
- <http://iate.europa.eu>

The impact of fluency on the subjective assessment of interpreting quality

SYLVI RENNERT

University of Vienna

Abstract

Prosodic features such as fluency are key components of natural speech and, thus, also of simultaneous interpreting. Disfluencies, such as hesitations, vowel lengthening and repairs, are particularly significant in the output of simultaneous interpreters, which presents a pattern of pausing and disfluencies that differs from other forms of spontaneous speech. This paper provides an overview of aspects of fluency and a brief introduction to previous research in the area of fluency and user perceptions, and describes a study conducted by the author at the University of Vienna. The results of this experiment indicate that there may be a link between perceived fluency of an interpretation and users' assessment of the interpreter's accuracy. There also appears to be a link between self-assessed comprehension and assessment of the interpreter's performance.

1. Introduction

Fluency has been studied as one among many aspects of quality in interpreting since the 1980s. However, only recently has research in the field of interpreting studies begun to focus on fluency as an individual factor in order to investigate what constitutes fluency and whether or not it has an impact on intelligibility and user perception.

This paper focuses on fluency in the subjective assessment of interpretations. While it can be argued that listeners hearing an interpreted speech usually cannot really evaluate the quality of the interpretation (cf. Bühler 1986: 233), practising interpreters nevertheless come across listeners every so often who do judge the quality of the interpretation and appear to see no reason why they should not be capable of doing so. This, coupled with the frequent experience that listeners often lay the blame for unclear formulations or errors squarely at the feet of the interpreter and rarely consider that the problem might, in fact, originate in the source speech (cf. Kurz 1989: 144, Ng 1992: 37), demonstrates the need for interpreters to come to terms with the fact that the audience will judge their interpretation, and that factors that users perceive as errors or problems can cast a bad light on their performance. Therefore, this paper takes a closer look at the impact of the quality factor *fluency* on audience evaluation.

The first sections focus on the definition of fluency and on previous research. The second part describes a study conducted by the author, which, among other things, aimed to investigate whether fluency has an impact on the way users evaluate an interpretation with regard to comprehensibility and the interpreter's performance.

2. Fluency

Fluency as a concept is somewhat elusive, as there is no generally recognised definition (cf. Aguado Padilla 2002: 13, Guillot 1999: 3). I will therefore describe some of the many different perspectives on fluency and the individual factors that may contribute to fluency or a lack thereof in subsection 2.1. Subsection 2.2. contains my working definition of fluency and its constituent parameters as used in my doctoral thesis and this paper.

2.1. Fluency in research

While some researchers consider fluency a part of language “proficiency that indicates the degree to which speech is articulated smoothly and continuously without any ‘unnatural’ breakdowns in flow” (Ejzenberg 2000: 287), others see it as the interaction of temporal variables of speech (such as pause length and length of uninterrupted speech runs) with other, less objective factors such as “clarity of voice”, “enunciation” and “ease/confidence in speech” (cf. Freed 2000: 261).

Even among those researchers who focus on objective, measurable parameters there is no general consensus on the exact definition of fluency. However, a large number of researchers in linguistics,

interpreting studies and second language learning mention factors such as pauses, speech rate and hesitations. While these definitions differ in the number of parameters they use and their exact classification, some core features occur in numerous definitions (cf. Aguado Padilla 2002). These include speech rate, pauses, hesitations, lengthened syllables, repetitions, self-corrections and false starts (cf. Ahrens 2004, Chambers 1997: 538, Hedge 1993: 275, Kurz and Pöchhacker 1995: 354, Laver 1994: 537, Lennon 2000: 25, Mead 2005: 45, Tissi 2000: 112).

The factors listed above are key components of natural speech and, thus, also of simultaneous interpreting (cf. Ahrens 2004: 76f), which is a special form of spontaneous speech that is characterised by online planning but dependent on input from an external source. This dependence may lead to a pattern of pauses, breathing and other disfluency factors that distinguishes interpreting from other forms of spontaneous speech (cf. Shlesinger 1994). The following paragraphs describe the individual variables as they relate to interpreting in general. Where there are several definitions, I have described the ones used in my study in 2.2.

Many different ways of defining and measuring *pauses* have been used in research. Some researchers (cf. Stuckenberg and O'Connell 1988) argue for measuring pauses as interruptions of the speech signal, which has the advantage that it can be easily detected and automatically measured with the aid of computers. However, this way of measuring does not necessarily correspond to our subjective experience: measured pauses are often not perceived as pauses, and pauses are perceived where there is no true interruption of the speech signal (cf. Ahrens 2004: 102, Laver 1994: 536, Pompino-Marschall 1995: 174, Stuckenberg and O'Connell 1988). Therefore, some researchers differentiate between pauses at the psychoacoustic level, where a certain percentage of listeners perceive an interruption of the speech signal, and instrumentally detectable breaks (cf. Butcher 1981: 61). Pauses can be distinguished by position, as either *syntactic* – e.g. between sentences or phrases – or *non-syntactic* – in positions that do not usually call for a pause (cf. Ahrens 2004, Chambers 1997, Goldman-Eisler 1968). Researchers have defined the length of pauses in different ways, and it is important to note that the position has a strong impact on the minimum length necessary for a pause to be noticed.

Audible breathing includes any intake or exhalation of breath that is perceived as out of the ordinary. While breathing in natural speech mostly occurs in syntactic pauses and is usually barely audible (cf. Ahrens 2004: 186f., Butcher 1981: 112, Chambers 1997: 539), interpreters cannot always adjust the position of syntactic pauses to their breathing requirements owing to their dependence on the source speaker (cf. Ahrens 2004: 187).

Hesitations are sounds such as “umm” and “ahh”. Vowels and consonants can be *lengthened* at the beginning, end or in the middle of a word. These phenomena are signs of spontaneous speech planning processes and are,

therefore, quite common in the various forms of spontaneous speech (cf. Arnold and Tanenhaus, forthcoming, Henderson *et al.* 1966, Hieke 1981).

False starts are created by interrupting a sentence and beginning a new one without completing or correcting the previous sentence, while *repairs* include corrections of errors in pronunciation, grammar, structure, content or style (cf. Pöschhacker 1994: 135f., Tissi 2000: 114). *Repetitions* of words can be used as a method of stalling and speech planning; however, they can also bridge two speech segments that have been separated by pauses or hesitations (cf. Hieke 1981: 152ff).

The *tempo of speech* can be measured in various ways: the speech rate is measured in syllables per minute of total speech time, including pauses, whereas the articulation rate corresponds to the number of syllables per minute of all vocalised speech, i.e. words and hesitations, but without pauses (cf. Ahrens 2004: 101, Goldman-Eisler 1958: 61, Laver 1994: 539, Möhle 1984: 27). The rates can also be measured in words, but this makes it hard to compare the speed of utterances in languages with differing word lengths (cf. Pöschhacker 1994: 131). As the perceived local speech rate can apparently differ radically from the calculated average, measuring the speed in audible syllables is considered more accurate for perception studies than a transcription-based syllable count (cf. Pfitzinger 2001).

2.2. Fluency: a working definition

Based on the numerous definitions of fluency and its individual constituents as described in 2.1, I have defined fluency as a prosodic feature of speech that can be viewed as a function of a number of temporal variables. It is the complex interaction of pauses, audible breathing, hesitations, vowel and consonant lengthening, false starts, repairs, repetitions and speech rate that creates the impression of fluency or a lack thereof.

With regard to *pauses*, as my research centres around the subjective impression of the target audience, only perceived interruptions of the acoustic signal were counted as pauses for the purposes of the study. As the minimum length where pauses were perceived as such varied from 0.05 to approx. 2 seconds in my study, no cut-off point for pauses is given in this paper.

Audible breathing is defined as in 2.1, and Ahrens' (2004: 187) remark on the interpreter's dependence on the source speaker may be an explanation for the frequent sharp and clearly audible intakes of breath found in my material.

As discussed above, there are many ways of measuring the tempo of speech. For my research material, a manual syllable count was used to calculate the *global articulation rate* (syllables or sounds per minute without pauses calculated over the entire interpretation) and the *net articulation rate* (average speed between two pauses).

Hesitations, vowel and consonant lengthening, false starts, repairs and repetitions were all found in the experimental material as well. For definitions see 2.1.

3. User perceptions: previous research

User expectations of various criteria have been studied since Bühler's seminal 1986 survey among conference interpreters, and researchers such as Kurz (1989, 1993), Vuorikoski (1993, 1998), Kopczyński (1994) and Moser (1995) have shown that users tend to consider fluency important, though usually not a top priority. However, it was not until 1998 that user expectations were contrasted with user evaluations of interpretations. With an experimental study on intonation, Collados Aís (1998) initiated a line of research at the University of Granada that compares users' expectations with their ratings of actual interpretations and explores the impact of various factors on user evaluation.

Collados Aís (1998) provided her test subjects, consisting of a user group (legal experts) and a practitioner group (interpreters), with a questionnaire in which they were asked to rate the importance of ten criteria for interpretations. They were then asked to listen to and evaluate one of three interpretations. The videos were recordings of the same original speech with the interpretation recorded as a voice-over; one interpretation was accurate but presented in a monotonous way, the second version contained content errors but was presented with a lively intonation, and the third one contained no errors and had a lively intonation. The correct but monotonous version received the lowest rating for overall quality from both groups; the interpreters rated the two lively versions equally, while the user group gave the lively and correct version the highest rating and the lively but incorrect version received slightly lower marks but was nevertheless considered better than the correct but monotonous one.

The monotonous version was also evaluated worst on a number of aspects that had not been changed: quality of voice, logical cohesion, sense consistency, terminology, style and professionalism. While the number of subjects in this study was too small to justify generalisations, this was the first piece of experimental research that indicated that user perceptions of interpreter performance might be influenced by prosodic factors rather than accuracy.

In 2003, this line of research was extended to fluency with Pradas Macías' doctoral dissertation on silent pauses as a parameter of fluency. Similar to the methodology employed by Collados Aís (1998), Pradas Macías first elicited user expectations, asking subjects to rate the influence of ten quality-related features. Fluency was rated fifth, a ranking similar to that given in previous user expectation studies. Subjects were divided into three groups and asked to watch and listen to one of three videos with

a voice-over interpretation of the same speech used by Collados Aís (1998). The videos were recorded by a professional interpreter using a prepared translation to ensure that the content and choice of words did not vary between recordings. However, she introduced pauses of different lengths at previously determined positions. 13 pauses were added to video 1, whereas video 2 contained these same 13 and seven additional pauses. The third video was the control version without any additional pauses. The subjects were then asked to judge the interpretation based on 14 parameters: overall quality, impression of professionalism, impression of reliability, quality of original speech, accent, voice, logical cohesion, correct rendition of sense, completeness, terminology, style, diction, intonation, and fluency (cf. Pradas Macías 2003).

While the differences in the ratings were not very pronounced and not statistically significant, a number of interesting trends could be observed. The control video was rated better than the two versions with additional pauses not only with regard to fluency but also for factors such as professionalism, logical cohesion, completeness and diction. However, in some cases the control version was rated slightly lower, e.g. for style. The differences between videos 1 and 2 are less pronounced. In some cases video 1, the version with fewer additional pauses, was evaluated more favourably, such as in the case of accent, voice and logical cohesion, while video 2 with the largest number of pauses scored higher for other parameters, including overall quality, impression of reliability and, interestingly, fluency.

The number of subjects and the very small differences in ratings – which may also be attributable to the fact that all three versions are based on an “ideal” interpretation – again make it hard to extrapolate from this research, but the general trend of the results suggests that the manipulation of a prosodic factor may have influenced user perception of other aspects as well.

Following these studies, a more detailed investigation into all the individual parameters was conducted at the University of Granada (cf. Collados Aís *et al.* 2007), which was an important contribution to the systematic investigation of quality criteria of simultaneous interpretations. The study consisted of three phases. First, a user expectation survey on 11 quality-related features was carried out. Next, twelve versions of an interpretation were recorded as voice-over, 11 of which were manipulated for one of the quality-related features. The last video was not manipulated and served as control video. The subjects were divided into 12 groups, with each group watching and rating one of the versions. As a last step, the subjects were given a questionnaire in which they had to spontaneously define the parameter that had been manipulated for their group and indicate how much that parameter had bothered them in the interpretation they had just heard.

As in other studies, fluency ranked in the midfield as the fifth of 11 criteria (cf. Pradas Macías 2007: 60). The version that had been manipulated for fluency contained not only pauses but also repairs and false starts. It received low ratings compared to the control video not only for fluency but also for most other parameters, including those for correct rendition of sense and completeness (cf. Pradas Macías 2007: 64). No other manipulated factor elicited such consistently lower scores for all parameters compared to the control version, and fluency was one of the factors with the strongest negative impact on the evaluation of professionalism, reliability and overall quality (cf. Collados *et al.* 2007: 218).

In a study by García Becerra (2007) at the University of Granada, fluency was named as one of the top three out of 14 factors by users when asked which factors were most important in forming first impressions of an interpreter. The study also found that first impressions appeared to influence the evaluation of subsequent performances by the same interpreters. In the same study, subjects were asked to choose the best of four interpretations and state their reasons for this choice. The main reasons given by the subjects were fluency, voice and intonation (cf. García Becerra 2007: 314).

These studies all indicate that users are influenced by a number of factors in their subjective quality judgements and that fluency may be among the top factors. The following chapter describes an experiment I conducted in order to measure whether such an influence does, in fact, exist for fluency and what it means for user perceptions of the quality of the interpretation.

4. Fluency and user perceptions: experiment

Within the framework of the research project entitled *Quality in Simultaneous Interpreting* (QuaSI) at the University of Vienna. I conducted an experiment in March 2010 to investigate the impact of fluency on quality. The main focus of the project, which is part of my doctoral thesis, is on objective, measurable quality criteria, such as equivalence of effect (assessed in terms of comprehension). Nevertheless, subjective user evaluation was also included in the research design, which builds on the work done by colleagues in Granada. Some results from this second part of the study will be presented here. As mentioned in the introduction, subjective assessments by the audience are part of the everyday reality of interpreters, and, therefore, have to be taken into account even though they are not necessarily a reliable measure of interpreting quality from the point of view of interpreting researchers and practitioners.

To accommodate both the comprehension and subjective evaluation aspects, a new design was developed that is based in part on previous

studies in interpreting research, but was tailored to the research questions.

4.1. Subjects and material

With comprehension as one of the key dependent variables, all participants had to have similar background knowledge in order to control for confounding factors. This was achieved by using a speech on a specialised topic and a group of subject-matter experts where similar background knowledge could be assumed. The source text used was a speech on an innovative marketing topic held in English by an expert in the field, and the subjects were business students specialising in marketing (N=47). The subjects were parallelised for language background in order to ensure an equal distribution of native and non-native speakers of German, and randomly assigned to one of two groups.

The experimental material was produced in advance using the audio software PRAAT. A professional conference interpreter was asked to interpret the source text several times from English to German, yielding interpretations with differing degrees of fluency. The most fluent of these was selected as a basis for manipulation, and all versions were mined for disfluencies – hesitations, lengthened vowels and consonants, audible breathing – and analysed to detect typical pausing patterns of this interpreter. One copy of the selected base version was then manipulated for increased fluency by removing hesitations, false starts and audible breathing that had a negative impact on fluency, and shortening or removing pauses in non-syntactic positions, while at the same time adding pauses and calm audible breathing to syntactic positions. A second copy was turned into the non-fluent version by adding pauses, hesitations and audible breathing to non-syntactic positions, lengthening existing pauses in non-syntactic positions and adding false starts, lengthened sounds and repairs.

The material was pretested to verify that it sounded natural and did not appear exaggerated in either version, making sure that the fluent version was not so smooth as to be unrealistic and that the non-fluent version still sounded like a professional interpretation one might hear at a conference.

The advantage of using audio manipulation to produce the material is that it allows changing only one parameter, in this case fluency, while leaving all other parameters intact, thus ensuring that the versions are completely comparable in all other respects, such as intonation, voice or choice of words.

4.2. Experimental design

A conference setting was simulated for the experiment in order to approach realistic conditions. Two interpreting booths were set up in the auditorium along with the necessary technical equipment, operated by a professional audio technician. Infrared receivers were distributed to the audience.

The experiment was held during regular university classes without informing the students in advance. At the start of the class, the subjects were told they would hear a guest lecture on marketing and post-modernism, presented as a video with an interpretation which they would hear via the headphones, and that they would be asked to answer questions about it afterwards. It was stressed that the anonymous questionnaires would only be used to evaluate the quality of the interpretation, not their own skills or knowledge.

Each group was assigned a separate channel on the infrared receiver. While the impression conveyed was that these channels corresponded to the two interpreting booths, they were in fact connected directly to audio equipment playing back the previously manipulated versions of the interpretation. Although they could not be heard, the interpreters in the booths shadowed one of the versions each in order to give the impression of a live interpretation to any subjects turning to watch them.

4.3. The questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first contained a set of 11 comprehension questions to investigate the first research issue, audience comprehension in relation to different degrees of fluency. The second part was dedicated to the subjective assessment of the interpretation and the gathering of background variables such as age, gender, familiarity with the topic, etc.

One of the evaluation questions was designed to assess the subjective impression of fluency in order to determine whether the two versions manipulated to be either very fluent or less fluent were, in fact, experienced as such by the listeners. This question – “Please rate the fluency of the interpretation (pauses, hesitations)” – also provided context for two further items, worded as “How well did you understand the content of the interpretation?” and “How accurately did the interpreter render the content?”. The rating was given on a 7-point scale with 1 being the best and 7 the worst result. The scale was chosen to permit nuanced answers and to have a mid-point (4) that allowed subjects to choose a neutral answer.

Presenting the results of the full study would go beyond the scope of this paper, and as the findings of the first part, comprehension, will be

reported in detail elsewhere, I will focus here on the aspect of audience assessment.

While the objective of these questions was similar to that of the studies conducted in Granada (cf. Collados Aís 1998, Pradas Macías 2003, Collados Aís *et al.* 2007), they were posed in a different way, as the studies by Pradas Macías (2003) and Collados Aís *et al.* (2007), in particular, had shown that the definitions of the individual items varied widely from subject to subject (cf. Collados Aís *et al.* 2007: 219). To avoid misunderstandings and different interpretations of a generalised question on interpreting quality, which might have led to unreliable results, a narrower question was chosen. The question “How accurately did the interpreter render the content?” can be seen as covering one aspect of quality, the impression of fidelity, without the risk of a confounding influence of other possible readings of a question referring directly to “quality of the interpretation”, such as voice, accent, or style.

As has been pointed out, the question about accurate rendition of content is one that listeners cannot answer unless they have heard both versions and understood them equally well, which was not the case in the study described here, as the original sound was not audible to the subjects. Nevertheless, only 5 out of 47 subjects added a comment to the effect that they were not able to judge this as they had not heard the original speech, and two of these still answered the question. All other subjects responded to this question without any further comments.

The purpose of the question on understanding was twofold: it allowed the comparison of the actual comprehension scores from the first part of the questionnaire with the impression the subjects themselves had of their comprehension, and at the same time it provided information on possible links between fluency (perceived or actual), perceived interpreting quality and perceived comprehension.

4.4. Results

The results of the subjective fluency assessment confirmed that the non-fluent version was indeed perceived as less fluent than the fluent one by listeners who did not have the possibility of comparing both versions, thus validating the manipulation method. Figure 1 compares the median fluency ratings of the two groups, given on a seven-point scale, where 1 was “very fluent” and 7 “not fluent at all”. As the fluency rating is not on an interval scale, median values are used instead of means.

A U test showed the difference between the two groups to be significant (Mann-Whitney $U=172.500$, $p=.021 < 0.05$ two-tailed).

Correlating perceived fluency with the results of the question “How accurately did the interpreter render the content?”, showed a low correlation between the two ($r=.343$): there was a slight tendency for lower

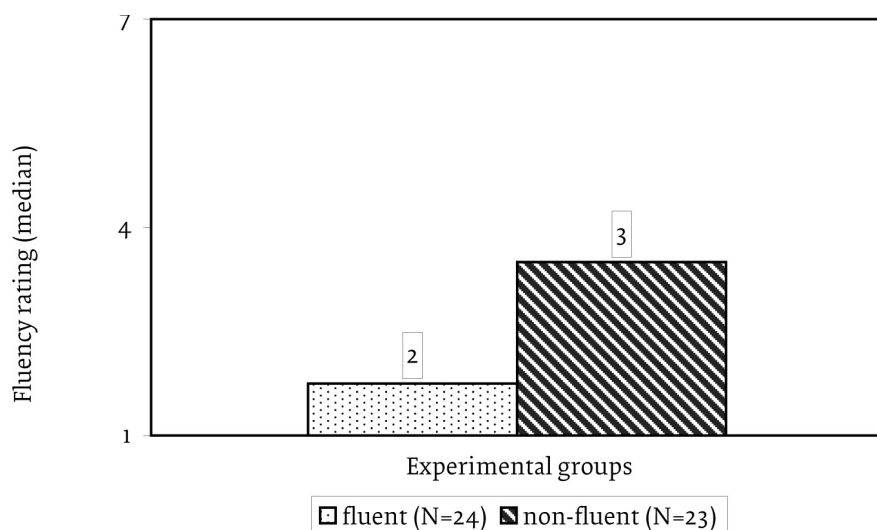


Figure 1: Fluency ratings

fluency ratings to correspond to a worse evaluation of the interpreting performance. The difference in scores for interpreter performance by fluency rating (see below) is significant at the 90 percent level in a two-tailed U test (Mann-Whitney $U=166$, $p=.073 < 0.1$ two-tailed).

Evaluation of the interpreting performance and subjective comprehension, however, showed a moderate correlation ($r=.533$), meaning that lower subjective comprehension correlated with a worse impression of the interpreter's performance.

While there is only a very weak correlation between perceived fluency and subjective comprehension ($r=.164$), a comparison of the median ratings for subjective comprehension shows a difference both between the experimental groups (see Figure 2) and by fluency rating (see Figure 3).

As perceptions of fluency can vary among individuals – and as judgements seem to be influenced by subjectively experienced fluency rather than by any external definition or measurement – the respondents were grouped by perceived fluency for a further part of the analysis. Subjects were assigned to one of two groups depending on their fluency rating, regardless of the experimental group they were in. Fluency was given a rating of 1 or 2 by 26 subjects (17 from the “fluent” and 9 from the “non-fluent” experimental group), and ratings between 3 and 5 by 21 subjects (7 from the “fluent” and 14 from the “non-fluent” experimental group).

It was interesting to see that the result of the comparison of the experimental groups (Figure 2) was borne out by the subjective ratings (Figure 3).

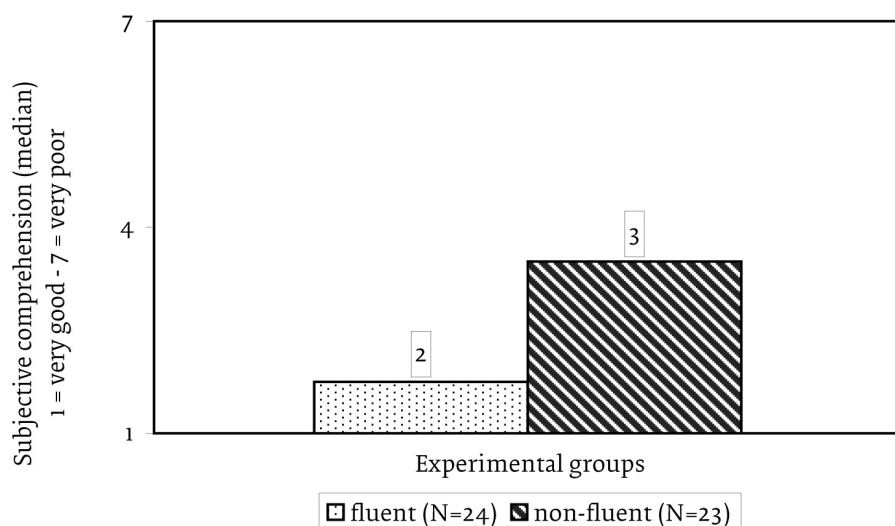


Figure 2: Subjective comprehension by experimental groups

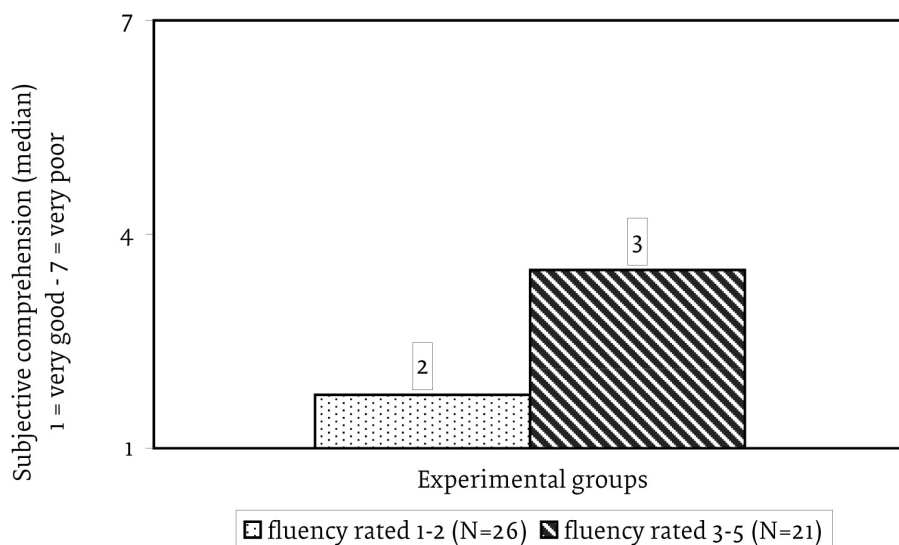


Figure 3: Subjective comprehension by fluency rating

5. Discussion

The results presented above suggest that there is a link between perceived fluency and perception of the interpreter's accuracy, confirming previous studies that suggested that lower fluency may impact negatively on the perceived quality of an interpretation. As the material used in this study differed only in terms of fluency and the two versions were identical with regard to voice, intonation, wording and information content, it appears

that fluency cannot be ignored as a factor that influences audience perception. This is also corroborated by the difference in perceived comprehension that was visible for both subjective fluency and the two versions of the experimental material.

As there is also a correlation between subjective comprehension and perception of the interpreter's performance, it appears that users may indeed show a tendency to blame the interpreter for problems with the interpretation.

6. Concluding remarks

It appears from the results of this study that fluency is more than just a matter of style and may, in fact, impact users' and clients' opinion of the quality of an interpretation in terms of performance and intelligibility.

It must be borne in mind that these results are valid only for the business students who participated in this study and cannot be generalised to other groups of students or subject-matter experts. However, as these results are in line with previous small-scale studies, more large-scale studies in this area would be welcome to test and corroborate these findings.

References

- Aguado Padilla K. (2002) *Imitation als Erwerbsstrategie. Interaktive und kognitive Dimensionen des Fremdsprachenerwerbs*, Habilitationsschrift, Universität Bielefeld, <http://karin.aguado.de/publ/downloads/ImitationAlsErwerbsstrategie.pdf> (last accessed 12 November 2010).
- Ahrens B. (2004) *Prosodie beim Simultandolmetschen*, Frankfurt/Main, Peter Lang.
- Arnold J.E. and Tanenhaus M.K. (forthcoming) "Disfluency effects in comprehension: how new information can become accessible", in E. Gibson and N. Perlmutter (eds.) *The Processing and Acquisition of Reference*, MIT Press, <http://www.unc.edu/~jarnold/papers/arnoldtan2007.pdf> (last accessed 27 July 2010).
- Bühler H. (1986) "Linguistic (semantic) and extra-linguistic (pragmatic) criteria for the evaluation of conference interpretation and interpreters", *Multilingua* 5 (4), 231-235.
- Butcher A. (1981) *Aspects of the Speech Pause. Phonetic Correlates and Communicative Functions* (Institut für Phonetik, Universität Kiel, Arbeitsberichte 15), Kiel, Institut für Phonetik.
- Chambers F. (1997) "What do we mean by fluency?", *System* 25 (4), 535-544, http://docs.ksu.edu.sa/KSU_AFCs/yousif/What%20do%20we%20mean%20by%20fluency.pdf (last accessed 07.01.2009)

- Collados Aís A. (1998) *La evaluación de la calidad en interpretación simultánea: La importancia de la comunicación no verbal*, Granada, Comares.
- Collados Aís A., Pradas Macías M., Stévaux E. and García Becerra O. (eds.) (2007) *La evaluación de la calidad en interpretación simultánea: Parámetros de incidencia*, Granada, Comares.
- Ejzenberg R. (2000) "The juggling act of oral fluency: a psycho-socio-linguistic metaphor", in H. Riggenbach (ed.) *Perspectives on Fluency*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 287-313.
- Freed B.F. (2000) "Is fluency, like beauty, in the eyes (and ears) of the beholder", in H. Riggenbach (ed.) *Perspectives on Fluency*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 243-265.
- García Becerra O. (2007) "La incidencia de las primeras impresiones en la evaluación de la calidad de la interpretación. Estudio piloto", in M.M. Fernández Sánchez and R. Muñoz Martín (eds.) *Aproximaciones cognitivas al estudio de la traducción y la interpretación*, Granada, Comares, 302-326.
- Goldman-Eisler F. (1958) "Speech analysis and mental processes", *Language and Speech* 1 (1), 59-75.
- Goldman-Eisler F. (1968) *Psycholinguistics. Experiments in Spontaneous Speech*, London/New York, Academic Press.
- Guillot M.-N. (1999) *Fluency and its Teaching*, Clevedon/Philadelphia/Toronto/Sydney, Multilingual Matters.
- Hedge T. (1993) "Key concepts in ELT (Fluency)", *ELT Journal* 47 (3), 275-276.
- Henderson A., Goldman-Eisler F. and Skarbek A. (1966) "Sequential temporal patterns in spontaneous speech", *Language and Speech* 9 (4), 207-216.
- Hieke A.E. (1981) "A content-processing view of hesitation phenomena", *Language and Speech* 24 (2), 147-160.
- Kopczyński A. (1994) "Quality in conference interpreting: some pragmatic problems", in M. Snell Hornby, F. Pöchhacker and K. Kaindl (eds.) *Translation Studies: An Interdiscipline*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 189-198.
- Kurz I. (1989) "Conference interpreting – user expectations", in D. Hammond (ed.) *Coming of Age. Proceedings of the 30th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association*, Medford, NJ, Learned Information, 143-148.
- Kurz I. (1993) "Conference interpretation: expectations of different user groups", *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 5, 13-21.
- Kurz I. and Pöchhacker F. (1995) "Quality in TV interpreting", *Translatio – Nouvelles de la FIT – FIT Newsletter* 15 (3/4), 350-358.
- Laver J. (1994) *Principles of Phonetics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lennon P. (2000) "The lexical element in spoken second language fluency", in H. Riggenbach (ed.) *Perspectives on Fluency*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 25-42.

- Mead P. (2005) "Methodological issues in the study of interpreters' fluency", *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 13, 39-63.
- Möhle D. (1984) "A comparison of the second language speech production in different native speakers", in H.W. Dechert, D. Möhle and M. Raupach (eds.) *Second Language Productions*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr, 26-49.
- Moser P. (1995) *Survey on Expectations of Users of Conference Interpretation. Final report*, <http://aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article525> (last accessed 27 July 2010).
- Ng B.C. (1992) "End-users' subjective reaction to the performance of student interpreters", *The Interpreters' Newsletter*, Special Issue 1, 35-41.
- Pfützinger H.R. (2001) "Phonetische Analyse der Sprechgeschwindigkeit", in *Forschungsberichte des Instituts für Phonetik und Sprachliche Kommunikation der Universität München (FIPKM)* 38 (2001), Munich, Universität München, 117-264, http://www.ipds.uni-kiel.de/hpt/pub/f38_hp_1.pdf (last accessed 27 July 2010).
- Pöschhacker F. (1994) *Simultandolmetschen als komplexes Handeln* Tübingen, Gunter Narr.
- Pompino-Marschall B. (1995) *Einführung in die Phonetik*, Berlin/New York, de Gruyter.
- Pradas Macías E.M. (2003) *Repercusión del intraparámetro pausas silenciosas en la fluidez: Influencia en las expectativas y en la evaluación de la calidad en interpretación simultánea*, Dissertation, Universidad de Granada.
- Pradas Macías E.M. (2007) "La incidencia del parámetro fluidez", in Collados Aís et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*, 53-70.
- Shlesinger M. (1994) "Intonation in the production and perception of simultaneous interpretation", in S. Lambert and B. Moser-Mercer (eds.), *Bridging the Gap. Empirical Research in Simultaneous Interpretation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 225-236.
- Stuckenberg A. and O'Connell D.C. (1988) "The long and short of it: reports of pause occurrence and duration in speech", *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 17 (1), 19-28.
- Tissi B. (2000) "Silent pauses and disfluencies in simultaneous interpretation: a descriptive analysis", *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 10, 103-127.
- Vuorikoski A.-R. (1993) "Simultaneous interpretation – user experience and expectations", in C. Picken (ed.) *Translation – The Vital Link. XIII FIT World Congress, Proceedings*, Brighton, Institute of Translation and Interpreting, 317-327.
- Vuorikoski A.-R. (1998) "User responses to simultaneous interpreting", in L. Bowker, M. Cronin, D. Kenny and J. Pearson (eds.) *Unity in Diversity? Current Trends in Translation Studies*, Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing, 185-194.

Does Intonation Matter?

The impact of monotony on listener comprehension

ELISABETH HOLUB

University of Vienna

Abstract

The study described in this paper aims to investigate whether monotony has a negative impact on audience comprehension. Whereas in previous research intonational deviations were produced mainly through voice acting, the present study employs digital audio editing to produce two versions of one and the same simultaneous interpretation. This method allows the researcher to modify intonation leaving other speech parameters unchanged. The material thus produced was validated by a pool of experts and submitted to several randomised groups of listeners in a simulated conference setting. Analysis showed that monotony can have a negative impact on both comprehension and the assessment of the interpreter's performance. These findings have major implications for both interpreting theory and practice.

1. Introduction

Intonation is an important feature of spoken language comprehension, as listeners use intonational cues to predict utterances as they unfold (cf. Féry et al. 2009). Intonation seems to be even more important in conference interpreting, where users strongly rely on the interpreter's voice. Surprisingly, intonation has received relatively little attention in both interpreting research and training. One reason for the limited interest in

the subject may be that there is no agreement on how to define intonation. Ahrens (2005: 53), for example, defines intonation as “the pitch contour of an utterance”, while Shlesinger (1994) considers intonation to be characterised by parameters like accent, pitch, duration and speed. This inconsistency in the definition of intonation is not unique to interpreting studies, but is evident across a number of relevant disciplines. By the same token, the functions of intonation and their relative importance are rather elusive, as explained by Chun (2002: 75):

[...] the functions of intonation cannot be divided into neat, clear-cut categories since they typically involve the grammatical, attitudinal, information-structural, illocutionary, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic domains of conversations and discourses with much potential overlap.

Furthermore, the functions and use of intonational cues vary across languages and cultures. Pitch modulation, for example, is used less often in German than in English (cf. Gibbon 1998: 89).

Another problem faced by intonation researchers is how to manipulate intonation to test the effect of different intonational patterns on the listener. On the one hand, speakers are not able to alter their fundamental frequency, which is considered the main correlate of intonation (cf. Vaissière 2005), without simultaneously changing other voice parameters. On the other hand, software-induced changes tend to render the speech stimuli less natural or less intelligible. And most importantly, intonation is considered rather irrelevant as a feature of output quality by both interpreters and users (cf. Collados Aís 1998, Kopczyński 1994, Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker 2010).

This paper will briefly summarise existing research on intonation in interpreting studies and will also present an experiment conducted by the author to analyse the impact of intonational deviations on listener comprehension. The results imply that, despite its seeming unimportance, intonation has a considerable impact on listener perception and comprehension.

2. Previous research

2.1. Expectation surveys among users and interpreters

Although empirical interpreting research has neglected prosodic parameters like intonation, they have often been listed among the quality criteria assessed in user and interpreter expectation studies (cf. Collados Aís 1998, Kopczyński 1994, Kurz 1989, 1993, Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker 2010). As these studies show, intonation is regarded as rather irrelevant, while sense consistency with the original is considered the most important quality parameter (cf. Bühler 1986, Kopczyński 1994, Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker 2010). On the whole, content-related

criteria are considered more important than delivery-related characteristics.

2.2. Quality assessment studies

Though the expectation surveys mentioned above have yielded a relatively stable pattern of findings, users' expectations seem to differ from their actual quality judgments. In an experiment by Collados Aís (1998), three different versions of an interpretation were presented to university lecturers and interpreters to assess whether monotony (i.e. flat intonation) had an impact on their perception of the overall quality of an interpretation. The first of the three interpretations was both consistent with the original message and spoken with lively intonation, while the other versions were either monotonous or inconsistent with the original message. The inaccurate but lively version obtained higher ratings than the correct but monotonous version, which implies that monotony has a negative influence on users' and interpreters' perception of the quality of an interpretation, regardless of whether or not the content is delivered correctly. These findings may be attributable, at least in part, to the fact that most listeners do not understand the source text and are thus unable to assess whether its content is adequately reflected in the interpretation.

2.3. Output analyses

The most comprehensive analysis of prosodic characteristics of simultaneous interpretations was carried out by Ahrens (2004), who conducted a detailed examination of the output of six professional interpreters working from English into German, their A language. She found the interpretations to differ from their source texts in terms of segmentation and final pitch movements. "That interpretation has an intonation all its own" was also observed by Shlesinger (1994: 234) in her ground-breaking study on the impact of interpreters' prosody on listener comprehension (see 2.5.).

An analysis by Nafá Waasaf (2007) yielded contrary results, as the prosodic units in the interpretations examined roughly corresponded to the segmentation of the source texts. Yet it seems likely that interpreters adopt special segmentation strategies to meet the requirements of the specific processing conditions of simultaneous interpreting. According to Ahrens (2004), interpreters try to organise the words they hear into meaningful units as fast as possible to decrease working memory requirements, thus producing relatively short intonational phrases. Furthermore, interpreters tend to use non-final intonation (i.e. medium to high-pitched voice at the end of a prosodic unit) more often than

original speakers to account for the possibility that there is more information to come.

2.4. Interpreters' perception of source text intonation

Other studies involving intonation in simultaneous interpreting have focused on the effect of source text intonation on the interpreter's performance. Pelz (1999), for instance, found that interpreters adjust to the fundamental frequency of the speaker and tend to be more monotonous than the speaker.

The data collected by Seeber (2001), who examined the impact of flat fundamental frequency on interpreters' ability to correctly anticipate the verb, suggest that monotony does not compromise anticipation. In fact, interpreters anticipated the verb more often when interpreting from the monotonous speech. Seeber argues that interpreters successfully compensate for lack of intonational cues by adopting specific processing strategies. However, this result cannot be generalised to interpreting performance as a whole. Further research is needed to establish the effect of monotony on other output parameters.

2.5. Impact of interpreters' intonation on audience comprehension

The seminal study by Shlesinger (1994) remains the only investigation to date of the impact of intonational deviations on audience comprehension.

Shlesinger's experiment aimed to test whether "interpretational intonation" has a negative effect on listener comprehension. The results indicate that abnormal intonation and stress patterns may compromise comprehension. Similar findings have been reported from psychological studies on the perception of flattened fundamental frequency (cf. Hillenbrand 2003, Laures and Bunton 2003, Watson and Schlauch 2008).

Inspired by Shlesinger's work, an experiment was designed to test the role of intonation in audience comprehension in a sizeable group of experimental subjects using a novel approach to the production of the stimulus material.

3. Methodology

3.1. Experimental material

So far, studies on the perception of interpreters' intonation have relied on shadowing, reading and voice acting to produce different intonational patterns. However, intonation is a highly complex phenomenon that strongly interacts with other speech parameters like pauses, syllable

length and intensity (cf. Gut 2000, Ingram 2007). For this reason, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for a speaker to deliberately alter fundamental frequency, i.e. intonation, without (unintentionally) changing other speech parameters as well. The study described in this paper adopted a new software-based approach to tackle this problem.

In line with previous work describing German intonation (e.g. Ahrens 2004, Möbius 1993, Seeber 2001, Wunderlich 1988), intonation was defined for the purposes of this study as the range and variation of fundamental frequency. Consequently, monotony was defined as the lack of variation of fundamental frequency.

Two versions of one and the same interpretation were produced to test the hypothesis that monotony has a negative impact on audience comprehension. The lively interpretation was produced by a professional conference interpreter (A language: German) under laboratory conditions from a videotaped English source speech given by a professor at Bocconi University, Italy, on the topic of post-modern marketing. The interpretation was then manipulated with the audio-editing programme PRAAT to render it more monotonous. PRAAT estimates the fundamental frequency and visualises the frequency values as a series of dots, which can be manually raised or lowered. This method enables the researcher to modify fundamental frequency leaving all other speech parameters unchanged.

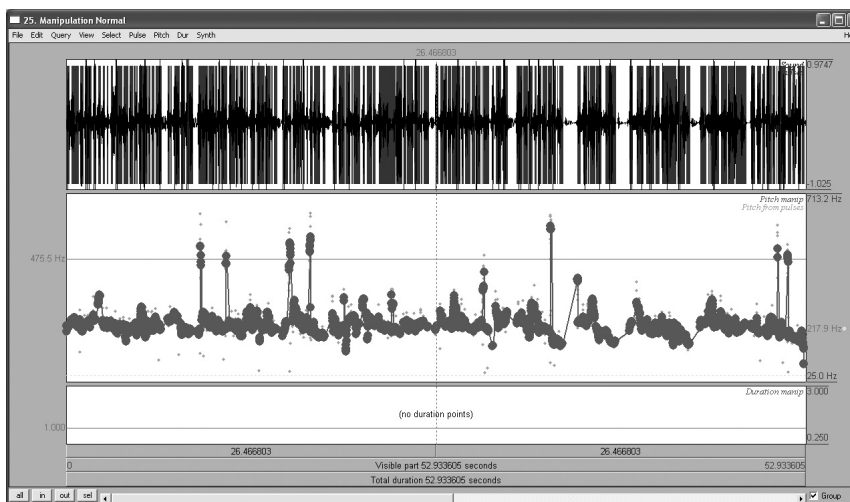


Figure 1: Pitch manipulation in PRAAT

The versions thus produced were validated in a pre-test to make sure that the experimental version still represented a professional performance but was nevertheless recognised as more monotonous. The subjects were 22 students at the Center for Translation Studies in Vienna, who were randomised into two groups. After listening to one of the two versions,

the subjects were asked to rate the liveliness of the presented speech on a seven-point scale. The monotonous sample was rated slightly lower than the lively version. None of the subjects reported to have heard any artefacts. The samples were also assessed by a pool of experts, who confirmed that the monotonous version sounded both natural and professional. In addition to the subjective analysis by the students and experts, an objective (acoustic) analysis was carried out in PRAAT to compare the fundamental frequencies of the two versions. Table 1 shows the fundamental frequency values of the control and the experimental versions. The standard deviation, which represents the variation of fundamental frequency, is considerably lower in the experimental (= monotonous) sample, indicating that this version is indeed more monotonous.

	Lively	Monotonous
Minimum	67.3 Hz	70.3 Hz
Maximum	598.9 Hz	604.7 Hz
Mean	210.6 Hz	194.2 Hz
Standard dev.	45.8 Hz	34 Hz

Table 1: Fundamental frequency values of the lively vs. monotonous versions.

3.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to both test comprehension and gather information on subjects' perception of the intonation and quality of the interpretations. The comprehension questions were phrased in such a way as to only test specific facts mentioned in the text. Two types of questions were used to test comprehension: multiple choice questions and half-open questions. In the second part of the questionnaire, the subjects had to rate certain quality criteria including intonation and the overall quality of the interpreter's performance on a seven-point scale.

Cognitive interviews were conducted to exclude or refine overly complex or incomprehensible questions. In the pre-test (see 3.1.), none of the subjects reported any difficulties in answering the questions, and all questions were answered correctly by several subjects, indicating that the questions were indeed comprehensible.

3.3. Experiment

The main comprehension experiment was conducted in a simulated conference setting on three days in mid-April 2010. A total of 63 subject-matter experts participated in the experiment, which took place in a

lecture room at the Center for Business Administration of the University of Vienna. All subjects were advanced marketing students and had a similar educational background, age and knowledge of the subject. They were parallelised according to the marks they had achieved in the previous semester and randomised into two groups to avoid bias. An interpreting booth was installed in the lecture room to convey the impression that the subjects were about to hear a live interpretation. The audio equipment was installed and handled by a professional audio technician. It was not connected to the booth but transmitted the pre-recorded versions of the interpretation to the listeners' headphones. Prior to the experiment, the subjects were instructed not to take notes and listen to the interpretation as though it were presented at a conference.

During the experiment, the original speech was displayed on a video wall, while a professional interpreter was sitting in the booth pretending to interpret. The students were listening to the pre-recorded interpretations, which differed only in fundamental frequency but were still the same in terms of wording, pausing patterns, speed, intensity, duration etc.

After listening to the interpretation, the subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire with the comprehension questions and the questions on the performance of the interpreter.

4. Results

Fourteen subjects were excluded from the analysis as their knowledge of German was limited, leaving data for 49 native-German subjects. Figure 2 shows the mean comprehension scores in the experimental (white bar)

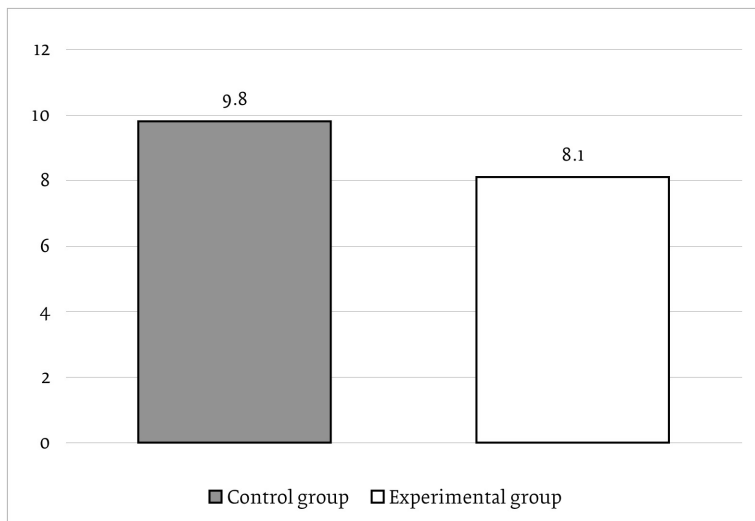


Figure 2: Mean score in the control and experimental groups.

and control groups (grey bar). The control group, i.e. the group that had heard the lively interpretation, achieved an average of 9.8 out of 19 points, while the group that had listened to the monotonous version obtained a mean score of 8.1. The difference between the groups did not turn out to be statistically significant in a t-test ($p = 0.098$, $t = 1.69$, $df = 47$), but the p-level indicates a strong tendency that flattened fundamental frequency impedes comprehension.

The difference in the scores of the two groups of participants tested on day 1 of the experimental run seemed particularly striking. Again, the control group obtained a mean score of 9.8. However, the experimental group achieved no more than 6.5 points on average. Although the number of subjects per group was very small (only 7), this difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.05$, $t = 2.15$, $df = 12$) and provides additional support for the hypothesis that monotony has a negative impact on comprehension.

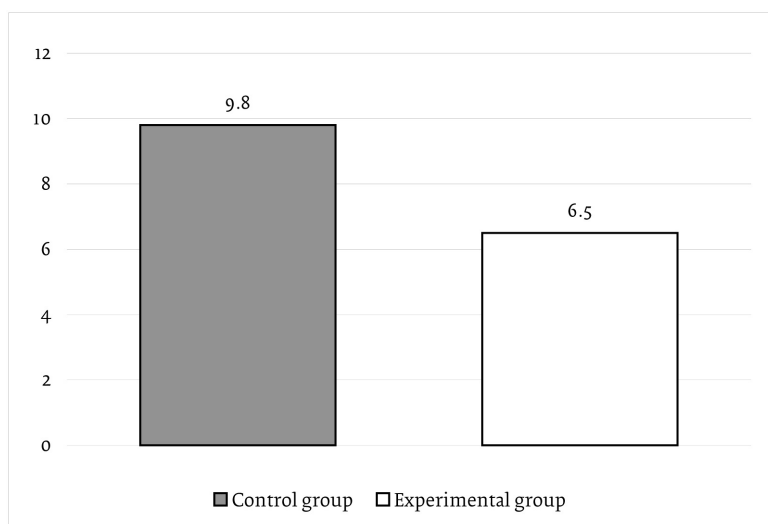


Figure 3: Mean score in the control and experimental groups on day 1.

The monotonous presentation also had an effect on the overall assessment of the interpreter's performance. Analysis showed a moderate correlation ($r = 0.4$) between the assessment of the liveliness of the interpretation and the overall performance rating, i.e. the livelier the rating of the interpretation, the better the rating of the interpreter's performance.

5. Conclusions

The data presented above suggest that monotony has a negative impact on the overall performance assessment of an interpretation, which confirms

the findings by Collados Aís (1998). This means that interpreters may be perceived as being less professional when speaking in a monotonous voice, regardless of whether they correctly convey the content of the original speech.

Furthermore, monotony can have a negative impact on listener comprehension. This result is in line with the initial findings by Shlesinger (1994) and confirms recent findings from cognitive and psychological studies (Hillenbrand 2003, Laures and Bunton 2003, Watson and Schlauch 2008). Intonation should thus receive greater attention in interpreting theory and practice, where the importance of prosodic features appears to have been underestimated.

References

- Ahrens B. (2004) *Prosodie beim Simultandolmetschen*, Frankfurt/Main, Peter Lang.
- Ahrens B. (2005) "Prosodic phenomena in simultaneous interpreting", *Interpreting* 7(1), 51-76.
- Bühler H. (1986) "Linguistic (semantic) and extra-linguistic (pragmatic) criteria for the evaluation of conference interpretation and interpreters", *Multilingua* 5(4), 231-35.
- Chun D.M. (2002) *Discourse Intonation in L2: From Theory and Research to Practice*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Collados Aís Á. (1998) *La evaluación de la calidad en interpretación simultánea: La importancia de la comunicación no verbal*, Granada, Comares.
- Féry C., Kaiser E., Hörnig R., Weskott T. and Kliegl R. (2009) "Perception of intonation contours on given and new referents: a completion study and an eye-movement experiment", <http://www.sfb632.uni-potsdam.de/~fery/NeuePapiere/DGfS-paper-rev.pdf> (04/01/2010).
- Gibbon D. (1998) "Intonation in German", in D. Hirst and A. Di Cristo (eds.) *Intonation Systems: A Survey of Twenty Languages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 78-95.
- Gut U. (2000) *Bilingual Acquisition of Intonation*, Tübingen, Niemeyer.
- Hillenbrand J.M. (2003) "Some effects of intonation contour on speech intelligibility", *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 114(4), 2338.
- Ingram J.C.L. (2007) *Neurolinguistics. An Introduction to Spoken Language Processing and Its Disorders*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Kopczyński A. (1994) "Quality in conference interpreting: some pragmatic problems", in M. Snell-Hornby, F. Pöchhacker and K. Kaindl (eds.) *Translation Studies: An Interdiscipline*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 189-98.

- Kurz I. (1989) "Conference interpreting: user expectations", in D.L. Hammond (ed.) *Coming of Age. Proceedings of the 30th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association*, Melford (NJ), Learned Information Inc., 143-48.
- Kurz I. (1993/2002) "Conference interpretation: expectations of different user groups", in F. Pöchhacker and M. Shlesinger (eds.) *The Interpreting Studies Reader*, London/New York, Routledge, 312-25.
- Lambert S. and Moser-Mercer B. (eds.) (1994) *Bridging the Gap. Empirical Research in Simultaneous Interpretation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Laures J.S. and Bunton K. (2003) "Perceptual effects of a flattened fundamental frequency at the sentence level under different listening conditions", *Journal of Communication Disorders* 36(6), 449-64.
- Möbius B. (1993) *Ein quantitatives Modell der deutschen Intonation - Analyse und Synthese von Grundfrequenzverläufen*, Tübingen, Niemeyer.
- Nafá Waasaf M.L. (2007) "Intonation and the structural organisation of texts in simultaneous interpreting", *Interpreting* 9(2), 177-98.
- Pelz M. (1999) *Betonung in gelesenen Konferenzansprachen und ihre Bedeutung für das Simultandolmetschen*, Master's thesis, University of Vienna.
- Pisoni D.B. and Remez R.E. (eds.) (2005) *The Handbook of Speech Perception*, Malden (MA)/Oxford, Blackwell.
- Seeber K.G. (2001) "Intonation and anticipation in simultaneous interpreting", *Cahiers de Linguistique Française* 23, 61-97.
- Shlesinger M. (1994) "Intonation in the production and perception of simultaneous interpretation", in S. Lambert and B. Moser-Mercer (eds.), *op. cit.*, 225-36.
- Vaissière J. (2005) "Perception of Intonation", in D.B. Pisoni and R.E. Remez (eds.) *The Handbook of Speech Perception*, Malden (MA)/Oxford, Blackwell, 236-63.
- Watson P.J. and Schlauch R.S. (2008) "The effect of fundamental frequency on the intelligibility of speech with flattened intonation contours", *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* 17, 348-55.
- Wunderlich D. (1988) "Der Ton macht die Melodie – Zur Phonologie der Intonation des Deutschen", in H. Altmann (ed.) *Intonationsforschungen*, Tübingen Niemeyer, 1-40.
- Zwischenberger C. and Pöchhacker F. (2010) "Survey on quality and role: conference interpreters' expectations and self-perceptions", www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article2510.htm (07-13-2010).

Quality criteria in simultaneous interpreting: an international vs. a national view

CORNELIA ZWISCHENBERGER

University of Vienna

Abstract

Ever since the profession became internationally organized in the early 1950s, quality has been a central topic in conference interpreting. In the mid-1980s, members of AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters) were first asked what importance they attributed to various quality criteria when sponsoring candidates for membership (Bühler 1986). Follow-up studies, however, were mostly conducted among users of interpretation services. With the exception of Chiaro and Nocella (2004), who conducted a web-based survey among conference interpreters, service providers have had no chance to express their views on the issue of quality. The two studies reported in this paper take the web-based approach pioneered by Chiaro and Nocella (2004) as a starting point for a survey among two well-defined populations, that is, members of AIIC and of the German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD). This paper presents the findings for conference interpreters' rating of the relative importance of output-related quality criteria for a simultaneous interpretation. Furthermore, the two associations' members were also asked to link the importance of the various criteria to concrete assignment types. The main aim of this paper consists in comparing the two groups and finding out whether members of a national and international professional organization attach similar importance to quality criteria or whether they differ in their perceptions of quality.

1. Introduction

Ever since the use of simultaneous interpreting became internationally widespread after the Nuremberg Trials, interpreting practitioners, trainers and researchers alike have taken a keen interest in the topic of quality which has generated one of the most prolific research lines in interpreting studies. Even so, no consensus on how to define quality in the field of interpreting has been reached. Thus, quality is still seen as “that elusive something which everyone recognizes but no one can successfully define.” (AIIC 1982:1).

The concept of quality involves many different variables and perspectives so that it may be very difficult and maybe even impossible to ever find one uniform working definition of interpreting quality applicable to all kinds of interpreting situations and all the viewpoints involved. It always needs to be specified for whom, how and under which circumstances quality is investigated. Furthermore, one always needs to bear in mind that any single contribution can only illuminate a small part of the overall construct of quality. An approach that views quality not as an intrinsic feature but as a time-, context- and culture-bound social construct which varies from viewpoint to viewpoint and is continuously (re-)negotiated, therefore, seems highly appropriate (cf. Grbić 2008).

Of the various relevant perspectives, this paper focuses on the service provider’s viewpoint which has been neglected for years. The reason for this neglect was that the focus had shifted to the user as recipient and thus also judge of the quality of an interpreter’s output. And yet, the interpreters’ perception of the various quality standards obviously plays a vital role, both in professional service delivery and in access to the professional community in the first place. Thus, when a conference interpreter applies for membership with AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters) s/he also depends on the judgement of colleagues. And when applying to work for the EU institutions, a conference interpreter’s performance will be judged in an accreditation test by more senior interpreters. Therefore, finding out about the profession’s understanding and perception of quality standards is not only of interest to interpreting research but also has particularly important implications for the fields of practice and training.

Conference interpreters have only very seldomly had the opportunity to express their views on the issue of quality. Bühler (1986) asked members of AIIC to rate the importance of various linguistic and extra-linguistic (pragmatic) criteria for an interpretation. Her list of criteria became something like the backbone of empirical research into quality. The large number of quality survey studies which followed took inspiration from Bühler (1986) and adopted her criteria, but all of them – with the exception of Chiaro and Nocella (2004) – were targeted solely at users (cf. Kurz 2001). Even though there is no consensus on the definition of quality as such,

there seems to be broad agreement on the criteria which make up good quality. Various studies among users and conference interpreters have shown a clear preference for content-related quality criteria such as sense consistency with the original or logical cohesion over form- and delivery-related parameters like grammatical correctness or voice quality.

This paper also takes Bühler (1986) as a starting point but links it up to the web-based approach pioneered by Chiaro and Nocella (2004). The paper presents a comparison between the international¹ view on the relative importance of various quality criteria as expressed by members of AIIC and the national view represented by members of the German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD). It seeks to find out whether members of a large and influential international professional association like AIIC and members of a smaller national association like the German VKD exhibit differences in their perceptions of quality standards, which may in part be due to differing admission requirements. For the first time survey respondents were not only asked to rate the importance of various criteria at a purely theoretical level but also to link it to concrete interpreting situations.

Before presenting results of the two web-surveys, I will offer a theoretical discussion on the concept of quality as such, followed by a succinct overview of empirical survey research dedicated to the issue of quality undertaken among conference interpreters.

2. Dimensions of quality

One of the most recent and holistic theoretical discussions on the concept of quality in interpreting has been put forward by Grbić (2008). Her contribution is an overview of the many different notions of and research approaches to “quality” which have been developed within the last decades in the field of interpreting. She postulates that the concept of quality is socially constructed and thereby underlines the subjective nature inherent in all descriptions and evaluations of quality, which are always time-, culture- and context-bound. The quality of an interpretation is never inherent in the interpretation itself but attributed to it by somebody. Grbić (2008) identified three dimensions or social metaconstructs of quality prevalent in the field of interpreting.

The first dimension she presents is the idea of *quality as exception* which encompasses the traditional notion of quality as advocated by the circle of conference interpreter pioneers around Jean Herbert who regarded quality as something exclusive which can only be attained by the most gifted. This metaconstruct also includes the notion of quality as advocated

1 The two qualifiers “international” and “national” only serve to label the two associations and do not say anything about the degree to which individual members of the two associations work in international assignments, however defined.

by AIIC which defines quality as compliance with very high professional standards. In this sense quality is no longer something exclusive and can be reached by everyone who fulfills the standards set by the association. However, these standards may be set so high as to bar some applicants from joining the association.

The second popular model which can be found in the field of interpreting is the notion of *quality as perfection*. This notion prevails in the fields of training and practice alike which very often demand a perfect or zero-defects performance of their members. Examples of this model are the evaluation schemes developed by Riccardi (2001) or Kutz (2005) for the field of training or the definition of the concept of *optimum quality* by Moser-Mercer (1996) for the field of practice which posits that a perfect performance is indeed possible given the right external conditions.

The third and last set of approaches described by Grbić (2008) is *quality as fitness for purpose*, under which she subsumes the application of translation and interpreting standards such as DIN 2345 for Germany or the Austrian interpreting standards D 1202 and D 1203, but also the notion of defining quality based on satisfying user needs as represented by the large number of user expectation surveys.

3. Survey research on quality among conference interpreters

The beginning of survey research into quality in conference interpreting was marked by the already legendary survey conducted by Bühler (1986) among 47 members of AIIC including seven members of the Committee on Admissions and Language Classifications (CACL) during two seminars in Brussels convened by AIIC. Survey participants were asked which degree of importance they attributed to 16 linguistic (semantic) and extralinguistic (pragmatic) criteria on a four-point ordinal scale ranging from *very important* to *irrelevant* when sponsoring new applicants for AIIC membership. The two content-related quality criteria *sense consistency with the original* and *logical cohesion of utterance* were the two top-rated criteria in the survey. Despite the limited and non-representative sample, the results obtained by Bühler (1986) are still cited to represent AIIC's standpoint on quality. No other survey explicitly dedicated to the topic of quality has since been carried out among the worldwide membership of AIIC.

The issue of quality, however, cropped up in three subsequent surveys undertaken among conference interpreters. Altman (1990) asked members of the United Kingdom and Ireland region of AIIC and interpreters working for the European Commission about factors contributing to effective communication. Survey participants were asked to rate the importance of various items, such as knowledge of the technical field in question, possibility of getting briefed etc., for the quality of an interpretation.

In his qualitative interview-based survey, Feldweg (1996) asked 39 members of the German region of AIIC about their self-image and professional status as conference interpreters in general. Most of the questionnaire items dealt with the interpreter's role, but there was also one question which requested respondents to name the personal and professional qualities of a conference interpreter and rate their importance.

It was only in 2000 that a replication of Bühler's (1986) study was undertaken. Chiaro and Nocella (2004) carried out the very first web-based survey in interpreting studies and adopted nine of Bühler's criteria, integrating them into their electronic questionnaire. The two researchers, however, requested survey participants not to rate but to rank the nine criteria listed, from the most important to the least important. An invitation e-mail containing the link to the questionnaire was sent out to approximately 1,000 interpreters belonging to several professional associations. The latter, however, were not specified by the authors, so that the general population of their study was not clearly defined. The web-based questionnaire yielded a total of 286 responses. Neither a specific fielding time nor a response rate were indicated by the two researchers. Again the two content-related criteria *consistency with original* and *logical cohesion* were ranked highest, whereas the two delivery-related criteria *pleasant voice* and *native accent* were considered the least important.

Taking inspiration from the pioneering work of Chiaro and Nocella (2004), a state-of-the art web survey project was designed, endeavouring both to reach a global target population and to explore possible variations with reference to a national-level association of conference interpreters. Results from these surveys will be described in this paper from a contrastive perspective.

4. Methods

As part of a larger research project on *Quality in Simultaneous Interpreting*,² two web-based surveys on the two interrelated concepts of quality and role were carried out at the Center for Translation Studies of the University of Vienna. They were designed as full-population surveys among members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and the German Association of Conference Interpreters (VKD) and implemented in autumn 2008 and 2009. For the survey among VKD members the original questionnaire in English was translated into German. Conference interpreters with double membership who had already participated in the AIIC survey did not receive the invitation to participate in the VKD survey. A total of 54 VKD members were identified as having double membership

2 The project (P202264-G03), led by Franz Pöchhacker, is financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

in 2009. These were then checked for actual participation in the survey among AIIC members one year earlier. In the end, 19 conference interpreters were excluded from the survey among VKD members since they had already participated in the AIIC survey in 2008.

In the case of the AIIC survey, which was conducted in autumn 2008, a total of 2,523 e-mail invitations containing the survey link were sent out of which 49 e-mails could not be successfully delivered due to some mail delivery faults. The list of e-mail addresses was compiled from the printed version of the official AIIC Directory 2008. For the survey among VKD members in autumn 2009 a total of 322 e-mail invitations was sent out. All the e-mail addresses were taken from the official membership list available online. The fielding time for the survey among AIIC members was seven weeks, including two reminders, whereas the fielding time for the VKD survey was four weeks, with one reminder. A total of 704 responses from AIIC members were received, which amounts to a response rate of 28.5%. The survey among VKD members yielded a response rate of 33%, with 107 questionnaires filled in.

Both surveys were carried out with the help of LimeSurvey, a web-based questionnaire generator tool installed on one of the servers of the University of Vienna Center for Translation Studies. For every entry in the e-mail database the system creates a personalized link to the questionnaire which rules out the possibility of multiple completions. The software automatically creates two separate databases – one containing all the e-mail addresses and the other one containing all the responses. What is crucial is that the two databases are not linked to each other. While the system allows the survey administrator to see who has submitted a response, the response as such cannot be traced back to the respondent. Participants were informed about this safeguard of their anonymity on the last page before they submitted the filled in questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of a total of 41 items³, including some follow-up questions, and was divided into three main parts. Part A elicited information on sociodemographic background variables such as age, gender, working experience, etc. Part B, some findings of which will be presented here, was mainly a replication of Bühler (1986) but also included a web-based experiment for which respondents were asked to listen to a one minute audio sample and give their impression. Part C, the questionnaire's longest part, was devoted entirely to the topic of the conference interpreter's role and will be reported elsewhere⁴. All the questions referred exclusively to simultaneous conference interpreting.

3 The questionnaire for VKD members contained a total of 39 items because not all of the items in Part A on the CIs' social background were equally relevant for both groups.

4 A presentation of the findings on the definitions and metaphors conference interpreters use to describe their role can be found in Zwischenberger 2009. A summary of the main results of the survey undertaken among AIIC members can be read in Zwischenberger and Pöchlacker 2010.

5. Results

5.1. Sample

Of the 704 AIIC members who filled in and submitted the web-questionnaire, 76% were female, and 24% were male. By comparison of the 107 VKD respondents 86 % were female and 14% male. 89% of the AIIC members in the sample work as freelance interpreters, which closely matches the membership structure of the organization (cf. Neff 2008). In the case of VKD respondents, 96% work as freelancers, and only 4% indicated that they were staff interpreters.

The average AIIC member in the sample is 52 years old, with a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 87 years of age, while VKD respondents are younger, with an average age of 40 years, a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 72 years. The largest number of AIIC survey participants is in the age category from 50 to 59 years, whereas the largest group of VKD respondents can be found in the category from 30 to 39 years.

In terms of formal education received, 79% of AIIC informants indicated having a university-level degree in interpreting/translation compared to 92.5% of respondents in the VKD sample. Furthermore, 60% of AIIC respondents and 23% of VKD informants hold a university-level degree from another field.

In the case of AIIC, participants' average working experience as conference interpreters is 24 years, with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 57 years. Most of the responses fell in the category of 20 to 29 years of working experience. VKD participants, on the other hand, have an average working experience of 12 years, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 45 years of experience as conference interpreters. Here most of the responses fell into the category of up to 9 years of working experience. The rather striking differences between the two groups in terms of age and working experience may be attributable to the differing admission requirements of the two associations. For AIIC membership an applicant must provide evidence of a minimum of 150 working days. Moreover, there have to be at least three sponsors who are active AIIC members, have worked with the applicant and can guarantee the candidate's competence in the language combination applied for as well as his/her professional ethics. The requirements for VKD membership are less strict. In order to become a member of the German association, candidates need to present a diploma from an interpreter and translator school which is recognized by the VKD. The VKD, however, makes a distinction as far as the professional status of its members is concerned. There are members called "Konferenzdolmetscher (conference interpreters)" who can provide evidence of having already worked at least 200 days and members called "Konferenzdolmetschanwärter (conference interpreter candidates)" who have worked less than 200 days. This explains why VKD members are much younger on average and have less working experience than their

AIIC colleagues. Furthermore, the VKD's admission requirements may also account for the extraordinarily high percentage of VKD members who are in possession of a university-level degree in interpreting/translation (cf. AIIC 2010; VKD 2010).

As far as the working languages were concerned, the most frequently reported A language of AIIC interpreters was French (24%), closely followed by English (22%) and German (18%). Quite unsurprisingly, English (55%) is in the clear lead among B languages, followed by French (27%) and German (9%). The pattern is rather similar for C languages, with English (47%) in the lead again, followed by French (43%) and then Spanish (29%). In the case of VKD participants, the most frequently indicated A language was of course German (84%), followed by French (6%) and Italian (5%). English (51%) is by far the most widespread B language, followed by French (19%) and German (16%). With 42%, English is also the leading C language, followed by French (35%) and Spanish (21%).

Participants were also asked to indicate the sector in which they primarily worked. The majority of AIIC respondents (42%) are mainly engaged in the non-agreement sector (private market). 33% work for the agreement sector⁵ (UN family, EU institutions, etc.), and the rest (25%) are evenly distributed between the two. In the case of VKD survey participants, 89% indicated that they work primarily for the private market and only 4% work for the institutional market, while 7.5% indicated working for both markets to roughly the same extent.

In terms of working mode, the vast majority of informants in both samples work primarily in the simultaneous mode: 79% of AIIC and 76% of VKD respondents indicated that they *rarely* or *never* work in the consecutive mode.

5.2. Quality criteria and their relative importance

In the second part of the web-questionnaire, respondents were requested to rate the relative importance of eleven output-related quality criteria for a simultaneous interpretation on a four-point ordinal scale ranging from "very important" to "unimportant".

Quite unsurprisingly, the content-related criterion of *sense consistency with the original* was attributed the highest degree of importance by both groups of survey participants, followed by the criterion of *logical cohesion*. However, some of the respondents commented that they themselves did

5 AIIC negotiates collective agreements on remuneration and working conditions with the European Union, United Nations and other major employers worldwide (termed agreement sector in AIIC jargon). The non-agreement sector refers to the private market. With this question VKD members were simply asked whether they primarily worked for the institutional market, the private market or both of them to about the same extent.

not feel solely responsible for the logical cohesion of their interpretation: “Logical cohesion can only be a criterion when the original speech is coherent.” (AIIC R 23), “Logical cohesion depends on the speaker, although we must do our best to improve its logic.” (AIIC R 129).

	Source	very important	important	less important	unimportant	N=
Content-related criteria						
<i>Sense consistency with original</i>	AIIC VKD	88.3 90.6	11.1 9.4	0.6 -	- -	702 106
<i>Logical cohesion</i>	AIIC VKD	74.8 76.4	24.8 22.6	0.4 0.9	- -	698 106
<i>Completeness</i>	AIIC VKD	47.7 46.2	45.7 50.0	6.3 2.8	0.3 0.9	698 106
Form-related criteria						
<i>Correct terminology</i>	AIIC VKD	61.0 56.6	38.0 43.4	0.9 -	0.1 -	703 106
<i>Correct grammar</i>	AIIC VKD	54.4 32.7	40.4 56.1	5.1 11.2	0.1 -	701 107
<i>Appropriate style</i>	AIIC VKD	36.2 32.1	55.6 61.3	7.4 6.6	0.9 -	702 106
Delivery-related criteria						
<i>Fluency of delivery</i>	AIIC VKD	70.7 57.0	28.6 43.0	0.7 -	- -	704 107
<i>Lively intonation</i>	AIIC VKD	28.2 19.8	59.3 67.9	11.7 12.3	0.9 -	703 106
<i>Pleasant voice</i>	AIIC VKD	27.5 24.5	58.5 62.3	12.7 12.3	1.3 0.9	702 106
<i>Synchronicity</i>	AIIC VKD	15.3 7.9	52.0 49.5	30.1 39.6	2.7 3.0	675 101
<i>Native accent</i>	AIIC VKD	14.1 8.4	42.1 41.1	39.7 44.9	4.1 5.6	701 107

Table 1. Relative importance of output-related quality criteria (in percent).⁶

6 The criteria were not presented in the order used in the table, nor was there a categorization into content-, form- and delivery-related criteria in the questionnaire.

As indicated in Table 1, the ratings by the AIIC and the VKD group for content-related criteria were relatively similar. Among the form-related criteria, *correct terminology* was rated most highly, followed by *correct grammar* and *appropriate style*. The AIIC group attributed a higher degree of importance to form-related criteria than their VKD colleagues. The same applies to the five delivery-related criteria, which consistently received a higher rating by AIIC respondents. Thus, AIIC members seem to be more demanding with form- and delivery-related criteria than their colleagues affiliated with the VKD. The criterion of *fluency of delivery* was rated the most important delivery-related criterion by both groups of survey participants.

Synchronicity and *native accent* were considered to be the least important delivery-related criteria and also received the lowest degree of importance in the overall rating by both groups. Almost one third (32.8%) of AIIC respondents rated the criterion as either “less important” or even “unimportant”. In the case of the VKD this percentage is even higher (42.6%). Quite a few respondents pointed out that the importance of the criterion of *synchronicity* varied with the type of discourse: “Synchronicity is important in certain types of speeches – with punch lines or lots of numerical data. In other speeches I would rate it as less important.” (AIIC R 643); “The more interaction there is, the more important is synchronicity (vote, applause).” (VKD R 15; my translation). In the case of *native accent* as many as 43.8% of AIIC and 50.5% of VKD respondents considered the criterion either less important or unimportant. Some survey participants stressed in their comments that the importance of a *native accent* depended on the target language: “The native accent is more important when going into French than when going into English, where more flavors of English are customary.” (AIIC R 550); “Native accent is primarily demanded by French (more demanding) clients.” (VKD R 70; my translation). In a very perceptive comment, accent was related to prosodic quality: “Native accent threw me, because if it was only accent it would be less important, but it is invariably associated with native intonation, which is essential to meaning.” (AIIC R 137).

In order to test whether the two groups actually differ significantly in their perception of the eleven output-related criteria listed, a chi-squared test was performed. It showed only the difference in the ratings of the form-related criterion of *correct grammar* to be statistically significant (χ^2 (n=808, df=1) = 5.744; $p = 0.017 < 0.05$). 94.7% of AIIC respondents perceived this parameter to be very important or important for a simultaneous interpretation compared to the 88.8% of VKD survey participants. The difference between the two groups was more marked for the delivery-related criterion *synchronicity*. 67.3% of AIIC informants rated that criterion as either very important or important compared to the 57.4% of VKD respondents, but this difference in perception did not reach statistical significance.

5.3. Variance of importance with meeting or assignment type

In order to go beyond a decontextualized rating of the various quality criteria, and mindful of the diversity of meetings at which conference interpreters work (e.g. Gile 1989), survey participants were also asked whether the importance of the criteria varied depending on the type of meeting (e.g. large assembly, training seminar, negotiation, press conference, etc.). The response options for this question were “Yes”, “Not sure, maybe” and “No”. 43% of the AIIC members responding to this question (n=681) answered “Yes”, compared to exactly half of the VKD informants (n=104). 17.6% of the AIIC participants and 9.6% of VKD respondents ticked the category “Not sure, maybe”, and an almost identical percentage of AIIC (39.1%) and VKD members (40.4%) opted for answering this question with “No”. Those answering “Yes” or “Not sure, maybe” were presented with a follow-up question requesting them to indicate spontaneously what might vary, when, and how.

According to these comments it is mainly the form- and delivery-related criteria that vary. Interestingly, it was the criteria which received a medium or lower overall rating, such as *correct terminology*, *appropriate style* or *synchronicity*, that were spontaneously mentioned as top priorities or as of (very) high importance when associated with concrete interpreting situations.

Among AIIC members, most of the spontaneous comments referred to technical congresses, media events and training seminars/workshops. In the case of the VKD, the three most frequently mentioned meeting types were technical congresses, press conferences/presentations and seminars/workshops.

(1) <i>Technical congress</i>	Of (very) high importance/top priority	Of less importance/(totally) unimportant
AIIC (N=90)	Correct terminology (56.7%) Completeness (12.2%)	Appropriate style (26.7%) Lively intonation (14.4%)
VKD (N=14)	Correct terminology (50.0%) Completeness (7.1%)	Appropriate style Lively intonation (35.7%) Fluency of delivery (28.6%)

Table 2. Relative importance of quality criteria in technical congresses

- 7 The sometimes rather low percentages are due to the fact that all responses were given spontaneously. “Technical congress”, for example, was mentioned by 90 AIIC respondents. 12.2% of these 90 respondents spontaneously mentioned the criterion of “completeness” to be of (very) high importance or even a top priority for this particular meeting type. Furthermore, some respondents spontaneously mentioned a certain criterion to be of (very) high importance while others associated the same criterion with less importance or (total) lack of importance for one and the same meeting type (cf. Table 3, completeness).

Both groups most often mentioned technical congresses. The criteria *correct terminology* and *completeness*⁷ were most frequently reported spontaneously to be of (very) high importance or even a top priority for this type of meeting by both groups: “Terminology can be decisive in very technical meetings.” (AIIC R 98); “Terminology would be of paramount importance in a technical meeting.” (AIIC R 527).

Appropriate style, *lively intonation* and *fluency of delivery* were the criteria most frequently mentioned spontaneously to be of less or no importance for a technical congress: “Appropriate style could be less important in very technical meetings.” (AIIC R 696); “Lively intonation is less important for a technical congress.” (VKD R 105; my translation).

(2) <i>Media events & press conferences/presentations</i>	Of (very) high importance/ top priority	Of less importance/(totally) unimportant
AIIC: Media events (N=63)	Synchronicity (46.0%) Pleasant voice (42.9%)	Completeness (11.1%) Correct terminology (6.3%)
VKD: Press conferences/presentations (N=14)	Fluency of delivery, Lively intonation, Appropriate style (28.6%) Completeness (14.3%)	Completeness Pleasant voice (7.1%)

Table 3. Relative importance of quality criteria in media events and press conferences/presentations

The second most frequently indicated meeting type was media events in the AIIC survey (N=63) and press conferences/presentations among VKD members (N=14). For media events the criteria of *synchronicity* and *pleasant voice* were most frequently associated spontaneously with (very) high importance: “Synchronicity is vital when interpreting for television programmes.” (AIIC R 23); “Synchronicity, pleasant voice is essential for TV.” (AIIC R 301). Whereas, *completeness* and *correct terminology* were deemed to be of less importance or even of (total) unimportance: “For TV completeness is less important.” (AIIC R 560).

For press conferences/presentations, VKD members responding to this question considered *fluency of delivery*, *lively intonation*, *appropriate style* and *completeness* the leading criteria: “At a press conference completeness and fluency are of high importance.” (VKD R 4; my translation); “At a press conference a lively intonation is of very high importance.” (VKD R 44; my translation).

Interestingly though, the criterion of *completeness* was also found to be reported spontaneously as a less important or even unimportant criterion for this type of assignment. *Pleasant voice*, in contrast with the AIIC survey result, was likewise reported.

The third most frequently reported meeting type in both surveys was training seminars/workshops. Here *correct terminology* and *lively intonation*

were the two most frequently mentioned criteria by AIIC respondents, who considered them to be of high importance or even a top priority: “In a training seminar it is very important to use the correct terminology.” (AIIC R 29).

(3) Training seminars/workshops	<i>Of (very) high importance/ top priority</i>	<i>Of less importance/(totally) unimportant</i>
AIIC (N=45)	Correct terminology (37.8%) Lively intonation (11.1%)	Appropriate style (20.0%) Correct grammar, Synchronicity (6.7%)
VKD (N=9)	Fluency of delivery, Lively intonation (22.2%) Correct terminology, Appropriate style (11.1%)	Correct grammar (22.2%) Native accent (11.1%)

Table 4. Training seminars/workshops and criteria importance

VKD respondents added *fluency of delivery* and *appropriate style*: “The appropriate style is important for seminars/workshops.” (VKD R 105; my translation).

Among AIIC members, *appropriate style*, *synchronicity* and *correct grammar* were the most frequently reported criteria of less or no importance for seminars/workshops: “At workshops and training seminars synchronicity and style are less important.” (AIIC R 234). VKD members also cited *correct grammar* and *native accent*: “At a seminar where the aspect of learning is at the focal point, correct grammar and native accent are less important.” (VKD R 76; my translation).

Interestingly, the two top-rated content-related criteria of *sense consistency with the original* and *logical cohesion* were never among the top criteria of varying importance. There seems to be a high degree of variance for form-related criteria, while the two content-related criteria remain largely stable, as summarized by a respondent in the AIIC survey: “all of them [vary], except sense consistency and logical cohesion.” (AIIC R 430).

6. Discussion and Conclusions

After years of neglect of the service provider viewpoint on quality, the study reported here sought to elicit the opinion of members of two professional associations of conference interpreters, one operating at a global and one at a national level. Respondents were requested to rate the importance of various quality standards at a hypothetical, decontextualized level, as well as to think of assignment types in which the importance of the criteria might vary.

The general rating of the importance of the various criteria confirms a preference for content-related criteria over form- and delivery-related parameters by both groups. It is particularly the two content-related criteria of *sense consistency with the original* and *logical cohesion* which received the highest overall ratings from both groups. This finding is in line with the results of previous studies. *Sense consistency with the original* was the most highly rated criterion in Bühler (1986) and Chiaro and Nocella (2004). In Bühler (1986), the second most highly rated criterion was *logical cohesion*, while in Chiaro and Nocella (2004) *completeness of information* ranked second, closely followed by *logical cohesion* in third place. While Bühler's survey was targeted exclusively at AIIC conference interpreters, we do not have any specific information about the composition of the sample in the case of Chiaro and Nocella (2004).

AIIC members attributed a higher degree of importance to form- and delivery-related quality criteria than did their colleagues from the German VKD. Nevertheless, the difference between the two groups was statistically significant in a chi-squared test only for the criterion of *correct grammar*. In contrast to national associations, AIIC has always been very active in propagating the idea that interpreters should only work into their A language(s). Working in this direction might be associated with higher demands on formal aspects such as the grammatical correctness of an interpretation. The figures obtained for the markets for which the interpreters primarily work may lead to the conclusion that members of AIIC indeed work more often into their A language than their colleagues from the VKD. 33% of AIIC members vs. only 4% of VKD members indicated to work primarily for the institutional market (UN family, EU institutions, etc.). Another 25% of AIIC respondents vs. only 7.5% of VKD respondents reported working for the institutional and private markets to almost the same extent (cf. Sample). In these institutions it is common practice to work mainly into one's A language⁸.

Despite the sociodemographic differences between the two groups in terms of age, working experience, the markets for which they primarily work, etc., the statistical data analysis has shown that the two groups attach a rather similar degree of importance to the various quality criteria, the only exception being *correct grammar*.

The majority of AIIC and VKD members hold the view that the quality criteria vary depending on the type of meeting. But this variation applies only to the form- and delivery-related criteria, whereas the two content-related criteria *sense consistency with the original* and *logical cohesion*, which received the highest overall ratings, were never among the top criteria said to vary with assignment type. While *logical cohesion* is a prerequisite for

8 This, however, does not hold true for languages such as Slovak, Bulgarian, etc., for which a shortage of interpreters with the required language combination necessitates *retour* (into-B) interpreting.

the success of inter- and intralingual communication alike, *sense consistency with the original* may be considered a professional norm – “the norm of the honest spokesperson” (Harris 1990: 118) – for interlingual communication. This norm exists beyond doubt and is strongly rooted within the professional interpreting community: “It is dunned into student interpreters. It is so unquestioned, however, that mostly it “goes without saying”” (Harris *ibid.*).

Both survey populations also show a high degree of agreement with regard to the criteria subject to varying importance. For technical congresses both groups spontaneously mentioned the same criteria as being of very high and of less importance, respectively. This indicates that there seems to be a rather homogeneous understanding among conference interpreters about which kind of prioritisation of form- and delivery-related criteria is needed for a particular assignment type.

The findings from these two surveys go some way towards establishing the quality-related standards for conference interpreting as a global profession while at the same time exploring possible differences in emphasis between members of an international and a national association. In either case, it has been shown that quality standards for simultaneous conference interpreting do not exist in a vacuum but need to be evaluated in relation to a given type of professional assignment.

References

- AIIC (1982) *Practical Guide for Professional Interpreters*, Geneva, AIIC.
- AIIC (2010) “CACL Guide for Applicants”, <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page199.htm> (last accessed 09/11/2010).
- Altman J. (1990) “What helps effective communication? Some interpreters’ views”, *The Interpreters’ Newsletter* 3, 23-32.
- Bühler H. (1986) “Linguistic (semantic) and extra-linguistic (pragmatic) criteria for the evaluation of conference interpretation and interpreters”, *Multilingua* 5-4, 231-235.
- Chiaro D. and Nocella G. (2004) “Interpreters’ perception of linguistic and non-linguistic factors affecting quality: a survey through the World Wide Web”, *Meta* 49 (2), 278-293.
- Feldweg E. (1996) *Der Konferenzdolmetscher im internationalen Kommunikationsprozess*, Heidelberg, Julius Groos Verlag.
- Gile D. (1989) “Le flux d’information dans les réunions interlinguistiques et l’interprétation de conférence: premières observations”, *Meta* 34 (4), 649-660.
- Grbić N. (2008) “Constructing interpreting quality”, *Interpreting* 10 (2), 232-257.
- Harris B. (1990) “Norms in interpretation”, *Target* 2 (1), 115-119.

- Kurz I. (2001) "Conference interpreting: Quality in the ears of the user", *Meta* 46 (2), 394-409.
- Kutz W. (2005) "Zur Bewertung der Dolmetschqualität in der Ausbildung von Konferenzdolmetschern", *Lebende Sprachen* 50 (1), 14-34.
- Moser-Mercer B. (1996) "Quality in interpreting: some methodological issues", *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 7, 43-55.
- Neff J. (2008) "A statistical portrait of AIIC: 2005-06", <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article2127.htm> (last accessed 19/07/2010).
- Riccardi A. (2001) "Die Bewertung von Dolmetschleistungen während der Ausbildung und in der Berufspraxis", A.F. Kelletat (Hg.) *Dolmetschen: Beiträge aus Forschung, Lehre und Praxis*, Frankfurt a.M., Peter Lang, 267-278.
- VKD (2010) "Mitglied werden" <http://konferenzdolmetscher-bdue.de/de/ueber-uns/mitglied-werden> (last accessed 09/11/2010).
- Zwischenberger C. (2009) "Conference interpreters and their self-representation. A worldwide web-based survey", *Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS)* 4 (2), 239-253.
- Zwischenberger C. and Pöchhacker F. (2010) "Survey on quality and role: conference interpreters' expectations and self-perceptions", <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page3405.htm> (last accessed 19/07/2010).

English as a lingua franca vs. interpreting: battleground or peaceful co- existence?

KARIN REITHOFER

University of Vienna

Abstract

The article addresses the contentious issue of the spread of English as a lingua franca in a number of domains – a trend that is not viewed very favourably by many interpreting professionals. After reviewing the development of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and its unique position in different domains, the advantages and disadvantages of ELF are discussed on a general level before approaching the topic from the interpreters' perspective. The negative stance taken by many interpreters towards ELF is viewed as a result of work-related as well as economic and psychosocial reasons. Against this backdrop the paper reports the first results of a study on the communicative effectiveness of English as a lingua franca vs. simultaneous interpreting. The findings indicate that under appropriate working conditions, in a given setting of technical communication, professional simultaneous interpreting can ensure a higher level of audience comprehension than the use of non-native English.

1. Introduction

English has undoubtedly come to be the world's most important lingua franca and a sine qua non in most domains of public life – from politics to business, from education to science. The increasing use of English as a means of communication amongst speakers from different linguistic

backgrounds has led to a situation where non-native speakers make up as much as three quarters of all English users. From this unprecedented development one might conclude that communication using this vehicular language serves its purpose in most interactions.

On the other hand, non-native speakers (NNS) of English are currently the target of criticism by practising interpreters. Speakers using so-called BSE – bad simple English – have made it to the top of the list of interpreters' grievances. Most professionals complain that they have to struggle unendingly with non-native speech, are unable to deliver a high-quality interpretation, and consequently perform much lower than their standard. This additional stress factor for conference interpreting professionals has been investigated in several studies which will be discussed. Furthermore, the paper seeks to explore other potential motivations for this rejection of NNS. In addition, this article reports the first results of a recent study by the author in which the focus was shifted from the interpreters' to the listeners' comprehension of NNS and where the communicative effectiveness of a simultaneous interpretation was compared to that of an original speech in non-native English.

2. Definitions and status quo

The term *lingua franca* is employed to describe an auxiliary language used between speakers of different first languages, or as Crystal (1992: 35) puts it “[a] language which has been adopted by a speech community for such purposes as international communication, trade, or education, though only a minority of the community may use it as a mother tongue”.

In the context of English, ELF – *English as a lingua franca* – has become the most widely used term in the research community, but denominations such as *English as an international language* (EIL), *English as a global language*, *English as a world language* or *International English* are also commonly employed to describe the concept (cf. Seidlhofer 2004: 210).

Even though it is virtually impossible to determine the exact number of speakers of English, it is widely accepted that English is today's most important *lingua franca*. An often quoted reference is Crystal (1992: 121) with his conservative estimate of 800 million speakers of English and a more generous estimate of 1.5 billion users, only 350 million of whom speak English as their first language (L1). This distribution implies that English is more often used as a non-native language than as a native language. Only one out of four speakers is a native speaker (cf. Seidlhofer 2005). Thus, most interactions in English occur among NNS. Jenner (1997: 13) believes that up to 70% of all communicative situations in English take place in such a constellation.

This unprecedented spread of English has been explained with reference to both top-down and bottom-up processes. The former have to do with

the past importance of Britain as a colonial power and the leading role of the US in business, research and politics (cf. Dollerup 1996: 26, Mauranen 2003: 513), and the latter with the mass appeal of English-language media, entertainment and advertising (cf. Dollerup 1996: 26f). In this regard, Phillipson (2003: 72) speaks of the “prestige attached to English in the modern world, its association with innovation and a specific type of professionalism”. Indeed, in our increasingly globalised world, one could define English as a basic prerequisite for people wishing to act as conference delegates, economic players, politicians or researchers. Carmichael (2000: 285f.) even suggests that nowadays people without a basic command of English could be compared to the illiterates of Europe in the age of industrialisation.

3. ELF in business, science and politics

Following the increasing globalisation of the business world, English has become an indispensable tool for overcoming linguistic barriers between global business partners. Every business person has to have at least some command of English to be able to participate in international dealings (Gnutzmann and Intemann 2005: 21). Furthermore, a significant number of multinational companies have adopted English as their internal working language to facilitate corporate communication, even if their headquarters are not based in an English-speaking country. As a consequence it has become normal for business men and women to use English every day in meetings, negotiations or e-mail correspondence – be it in-house or cross-company communication. Although this does give rise to communication difficulties in some cases, at times also leading to considerable costs (cf. Vollstedt 2002), these seem to be outweighed by the advantages of using this auxiliary language. Several ELF studies showed that in business interactions *lingua franca* communication is often successful (cf. Pitzl 2005, Bohrn 2008). These studies, however, mainly focus on dialogic communication such as negotiations, and not so much on conference presentations or speeches in a business context.

The domain of science presents a similar scenario. While some 100 years ago German was still the dominant language of the sciences and medicine, English has gained prominence in the research community and in academia since the end of the World War II. This is of great relevance as universities enjoy high social prestige and act as multipliers of linguistic norms (cf. Mauranen 2006: 146ff). At Europe's universities a trend towards English as the language of instruction can be observed (cf. Phillipson 2003: 77). However, English has become increasingly relevant not only for university-level teaching but also for academic publishing, where it has turned into a precondition for international reception and impact. Research papers or monographs published in other languages go

practically unnoticed. This was confirmed in a study carried out as early as 1992 which showed that 84% of the participating German researchers had already used English as a publication language. They had mainly chosen English to ensure the international flow of information. The second most often mentioned motive was that “important results might not be noticed, if they are not published in an international language” (Skudlik 1992: 402), while the third reason given was that English was *de facto* the working language in their field. As a consequence, English has also gained importance at the level of scientific conferences, where it is increasingly used as the only working language, often making interpreting redundant.

The impact of the advance of English in political settings can be aptly shown with reference to developments in the European Union, an institution that is also the biggest employer of conference interpreters in the world. While the principle of multilingualism – that is the use of all member states’ official languages – is laid down in the EU’s Treaty of Rome, its full implementation is not granted at all times (cf. Tosi 2005). In some institutions such as the Commission or the European Central Bank only a few of the official languages are used in everyday working routine. English, however, is one of the working languages in 96% of all institutions, and in eight of them it is the only one. Interpretation into and out of all official languages is guaranteed exclusively for meetings with a high symbolic value, such as the meetings of the European Council or the plenary sessions of the European Parliament (cf. He 2006: 26f). Many Council working groups use *interpreting upon request* – a scheme in which only delegations that explicitly request interpreting will be provided with the service (cf. Gazzola 2006: 394). A survey carried out by the Commission’s Directorate General for Interpretation (DG SCIC), which provides interpretation for all EU institutions except for the Parliament and the Court of Justice, showed that in their meetings only 57% of delegates had the possibility to listen to interpretation into their mother tongue. 75% of those who could not listen to their mother tongue listened to the interpretation into English, which may be seen as an indicator of the unique position of English (cf. SCIC 2010).

Furthermore, English has become the *de facto drafting language* for most texts elaborated in the EU institutions (cf. Phillipson 2003:120). This means that even in situations where interpretation is provided, negotiations are predominantly based on an English draft text.

Moreover, one cannot fail to notice that the role of English in the EU is constantly increasing also at an unofficial level. It has become indispensable for communication outside meeting rooms and for networking purposes: the famous corridor talks predominantly take place in this lingua franca. In general, however, politics and international organisations still seem to constitute a domain where interpreting is preferred to relying solely on the use of ELF (cf. Hasibeder 2010).

4. Pros and cons

This unprecedented linguistic development has not failed to provoke reactions ranging from great enthusiasm to extreme rejection. Many native speakers fear that their language will fall apart and Shakespeare's English will be divided up into mutually unintelligible varieties (cf. Widdowson 1994: 383). However, non-native speakers also often condemn global English, complaining that it invades their own language to the point that young people are no longer able to express themselves properly in their mother tongue. Another argument raised against the dominance of English is that it gives native speakers an undeserved advantage in negotiations, presentations or on the labour market (cf. Knapp 2002, Van Parijs 2004). Furthermore, several critics argue that ELF can at times be completely unintelligible and that meetings and conferences often collapse because of misunderstandings caused by ELF (cf. Harmer 2009: 193).

It should be pointed out, however, that this unique spread of English would most likely not have happened if ELF communication constantly failed to serve its communicative purpose. Researchers specialised in the field of ELF argue that communication in this lingua franca works more often than it does not (cf. Seidlhofer 2001: 137). ELF research as such established itself only in the 1990s and is, therefore, a young domain, still somewhat lacking in homogeneous theoretical and methodological approaches (cf. Lesznyák 2004: 43). Nevertheless, some concepts have become largely accepted in the community, such as the *let it pass* principle, according to which NNS' anomalies in grammar or phonetics are often accepted on the basis of the assumption that the meaning will become clear at a later point in time (cf. Firth 1996). Another widely recognised feature of ELF observed in many interactions is a cooperative attitude that often facilitates mutual understanding (cf. Meierkord 2000). Jenkins (2006: 36) argues that deviations from the native speaker (NS) norm are legitimate as long as they are intelligible to the interlocutors, suggesting that constantly comparing ELF to NS norms is not appropriate.

5. The interpreters' view

It has been mentioned time and again that conferences increasingly use English as the only working language or the only working language besides the language of the host country (cf. Kurz 2005: 61, Skudlik 1992: 400).¹ On the assumption that also at conferences only a fourth of all

1 Strikingly enough, there are virtually no relevant statistics. An MA thesis by Hasibeder (2010) seeks to shed light on this development in the case for Vienna, one of the world's most popular conference venues, and finds that there is a general lack of concrete data on language use and interpreting at international conferences.

speakers are native speakers, interpreters are faced with NNS from a wide range of different linguistic backgrounds when interpreting from English. Both Pöschhacker (1994) and Kurz and Basel (2009) confirm this trend in their case studies of conferences, showing that most speakers who spoke English at these events were NNS.² As previously mentioned, their phonological, lexical and syntactical deviations from Standard English seem to be a major stress factor for interpreters (cf. Cooper *et al.* 1982: 104, Mackintosh 2002: 25, Neff 2008).

Most empirical studies using accented source speeches have revealed that this has an impact on the quality of interpreting. In her MA thesis, Kodrnja (2001, cf. also Kurz 2005, 2008) showed that information loss was markedly higher when interpreting a speech read by an NNS rather than an NS. For her experiment she divided the subjects into two groups, each interpreting half the speech as read by the NS and the other half read by the NNS, which allowed for intra- as well as inter-group comparisons. A questionnaire and follow-up interview additionally showed that the interpreters had the subjective impression that delivery speed was higher in the NNS part than in the NS part, even though this was not always the case. The group of interpreters used was, however, very small (n=10) and was made up exclusively of students.

In Sabatini's (2000) study, subjects had to complete three tasks: listening comprehension, shadowing and interpreting, all from two source texts by speakers with atypical accents (Indian, colloquial American). Here, passages of English with atypical features also caused omissions and comprehension problems during interpreting. The findings showed that the highest performance was achieved in the listening comprehension task and that the scores for shadowing and interpreting were quite comparable. Again, the group of subjects was very limited (n=10) and consisted only of student interpreters.

Basel (2002, cf. also Kurz and Basel 2009) demonstrated in her experimental study that the loss of information was higher when interpreting an NNS with significant deviations from the NS norm than when working from another NNS with fewer deviations. Furthermore, the results quite unsurprisingly indicated that professional interpreters are more efficient at coping with non-standard English than novices. Interestingly, interpreters with a knowledge of the NNS' mother tongue were more successful at overcoming linguistic difficulties caused by the NNS' grammatical and lexical divergences. The facilitating effect of knowledge of an NNS' L1 for comprehension has been mentioned in a number of studies in second language acquisition (cf. e.g. Bent and Bradlow 2003), though it has not been confirmed for all L1s and situations (cf. e.g. Major *et al.* 2002). As with most empirical studies using

2 This question is, however, not the focal point of either of the studies.

interpreters, the number of subjects in Basel's (2002) study was too low (12 novices, 6 professionals) to generalise from the results.

Two other studies exploring interpreters' renderings of an NNS speech have contradicted the above findings. In Taylor's (1989) experiment Italian student interpreters had *fewer* problems working from an English speech read by an Italian NNS than from the same speech read by an NS. The author himself, however, qualifies his results by acknowledging that the NNS read more slowly than the NS and that the interpreters and the NNS shared the same L1 which – as mentioned before – might facilitate comprehension. Regrettably, the subjects are only referred to as a *homogeneous sample*, and neither their exact number nor the experimental design are described in detail. Proffitt (1997) likewise reported some unexpected findings. Her six subjects – all professional, experienced UN interpreters – achieved better results when interpreting strongly accented statements than when working from NS source texts. In addition, the NNS texts – all original statements from UN meetings – were rated as *particularly difficult to interpret* by ten other interpreters in terms of sentence structure, accent and intonation. Nevertheless, the interpreters achieved higher ratings on Carroll scales for intelligibility and informativeness when working from the NNS input that they themselves criticised as particularly difficult. The author herself explains this by hypothesising that the interpreters increased their concentration effort when exposed to the difficult NNS speeches, relied more heavily on top-down processing and were thus able to produce a better result.

Irrespective of these results, interpreters invariably report that they struggle with NNS (cf. e.g. Wooding 2002) and often harshly criticise the spread of ELF. This raises the question why interpreters find it so hard to understand NNS of English when *normal* listeners – according to many ELF researchers – do not. To answer this question one only needs to compare the situations mainly examined by ELF researchers with interpreters' working reality. Most ELF studies have analysed communicative events such as group discussions, negotiations or business meetings, all of which are face-to-face interactions. Interpreters, however, usually work in conference settings with monologic speech events that offer little or no room for interaction. In these settings a *negotiation of meaning* – often reported as a facilitator in ELF communication – is simply not possible. Quite evidently, interpreters cannot make use of the previously described *let it pass* principle as they cannot allow themselves to leave long gaps in their delivery.

Another factor that increases the difficulty of NNS speeches is the lack of NS-typical cues that interpreters use and need for anticipation, undeniably one of the key strategies in simultaneous interpreting (cf. Pöchhacker 2004: 133ff). In many instances NNS use idioms and metaphors *creatively* (cf. Pitzl 2009), which can set interpreters on the wrong track and throw the interpreting efforts described by Gile (1995) off

balance. All this may explain why an overwhelming number of professionals find NNS so hard to interpret.

Another factor underlying interpreters' negative attitude towards NNS and ELF is linked to economic and psychosocial issues. If communication is increasingly possible in a common auxiliary language, the need for interpretation decreases (cf. Pöchhacker 2004: 200). Some researchers even mention this cost cutting factor as one of the greatest advantages of the spread of ELF (cf. Van Parijs 2004: 118).

A survey on attitudes towards ELF carried out among experienced conference interpreters (cf. Albl-Mikasa 2010) impressively showed that interpreters seem to be torn between the increasing difficulty to maintain high quality and the increasing need to display the high quality of their services. On the one hand, interpreters are nowadays predominantly hired solely for highly technical and complex events where they are often faced with NNS and the problems arising from ELF talk previously described. On the other hand, they have to cope with tougher competition for fewer jobs and with the growing need to argue why customers should invest in interpreting services rather than managing their events in *bad simple English*.

Another aspect that most likely influences interpreters' stance on the use of ELF is the assumption that clients are increasingly losing confidence in interpreting. This hypothesis is fuelled by delegates who do not make use of interpreting even if it is available and "prefer to deliver a speech in sub-standard English rather than resort to the services of an interpreter" (Kurz and Basel 2009: 189). The SCIC survey mentioned earlier, however, did not confirm this alleged distrust on the part of users. On the contrary, 85.5% of the EU delegates who had the possibility of listening to an interpretation into their L1 expressed a high level of satisfaction. Only 10% of those *speaking* another language than their mother tongue – even if they were not forced to – reported doing so because they were worried the interpreters would not convey their message accurately (cf. SCIC 2010). Based on these findings, the concern that users may be losing confidence in interpreters appears to be unfounded.

In summary, interpreters' primarily negative attitude towards ELF and NNS is determined by a large number of factors. These relate not only to the increased difficulty of work but also to existential fears of a profession that sees itself as an endangered species. Against this background, conference interpreters would surely welcome empirical evidence that can strengthen their case for interpreter use vis-à-vis ELF.

6. Experimental study

In considering the added value of interpreting in an ELF environment, one might first examine the arguments used by advocates of an English-only

conference world. Conference organisers often do without interpretation claiming that NNS experts understand presentations by NNS as well as an interpretation into their L1. Keeping in mind that these presentations mostly display monologic features, making it difficult or impossible to employ common ELF comprehension strategies, one might argue that this mutual understanding is often a myth. There may well be a lack of comprehension, but it would be covert and remain unexpressed by the delegates.

Some interpreters (cf. also Altman 1990: 26) argue that they may improve on a deficient NNS source text: "Anticipation and conscientious guesswork may even remedy some of the shortcomings of the [NNS] original and make the interpreted version better understandable than the source text." (Kurz and Basel 2009: 193). However, this has yet to be thoroughly investigated. The present study therefore tried to put this claim to the test by examining the impact of English as a lingua franca not from the interpreters' but from the listeners' perspective. Some results of this research, which is part of my doctoral work,³ will be presented here.

The aim of the study was to compare the communicative effectiveness of an NNS to that of a simultaneous interpreter rendering that speech into the audience's L1 (German). The approach used to evaluate effectiveness was to test and compare the listeners' comprehension of the NNS speech and its interpretation.

6.1. Subjects and material

The experimental audience consisted of 58 native-German subject-matter experts who can be assumed to understand a speech in English just as well as in their L1 – a claim frequently heard from conference organisers. In a simulated conference setting, the study participants were asked to listen to a presentation in their area of expertise and then to answer written comprehension questions. Half of the subjects listened to the original speaker, an Italian NNS (Group EN), while the other half heard the speech in a professional interpretation into German (Group DE). The subjects were business students who were parallelised according to their grade-point average and English skills and then randomised to ensure balanced groups.

The speaker was an Italian professor of business studies who regularly uses English when teaching at his university, at conferences and in research publications. He gave an unscripted speech on an innovative marketing topic. The representativeness and appropriateness of the speaker was additionally confirmed in a rating exercise by 46 experts in interpreting and ELF.

3 See also the homepage of the QuaSI project at the University of Vienna at: <http://quasi.univie.ac.at/subprojects/subproject-4/>

The interpreter was briefed on the topic of the speech, but delivered an authentic interpretation with typical interpretational features rather than reading from a translated script. The speaker's L1 Italian was one of her working languages.

The simulated conference took place in a lecture room with interpreting booths at the Center for Translation Studies at the University of Vienna. Both groups saw the original speaker on a video wall. The sound was transmitted to the subjects' headphones: while Group EN heard the original speech, Group DE heard the pre-recorded interpretation. In order to give the impression of a live interpretation an interpreter sat in one of the booths pretending to interpret.

The questionnaire the subjects were asked to fill in consisted of eleven comprehension questions on the content of the speech: eight multiple-choice questions and three open-ended, or half-open questions with clearly defined correct answers. All questions and response options – including the distractors – were worded using elements from the original speech and the interpretation, respectively, with the intention that the test would in fact test the subjects' comprehension and recognition, not their memory or reasoning skills. The instrument had been thoroughly pretested in cognitive interviews⁴ with experts and used in a pilot study. The maximum score achievable was 19 points.

6.2. Results

The comparison of the average scores of the two groups shows an exceptionally clear result: while Group EN listening to the NNS reached a mean score of 8.07 points, Group DE listening to the interpretation scored an average of 11.98 points (cf. Figure 1). A t-test showed this result to be statistically significant at the 5% level ($t=-4,006$, $df=56$, $p=0,000$).

This result can be read as follows: the group listening to the interpretation into their L1 understood the content significantly better than the group listening to the non-native original speaker, even though the subjects were highly proficient users of English with relevant subject-matter expertise. This confirms the hypothesis stated above that interpretation can potentially increase the comprehensibility of an NNS speech.

It must be kept in mind that these results are limited in that they hold true only for one particular NNS with a certain L1, one group of listeners with a certain L1 and one particular interpreter who was able to render a high quality interpretation. They cannot be extrapolated to other contexts

4 In cognitive interviewing, cognitive processes that respondents use to answer questions and that are usually covert can be studied so as to detect cognitive as well as structural and logical problems in questionnaires (cf. Willis 1999).

and settings. The trend shown is, however, exceptionally clear and had been observed also in the pilot study (n=50) as well as in another small-scale study with a different group of experts (n=31).

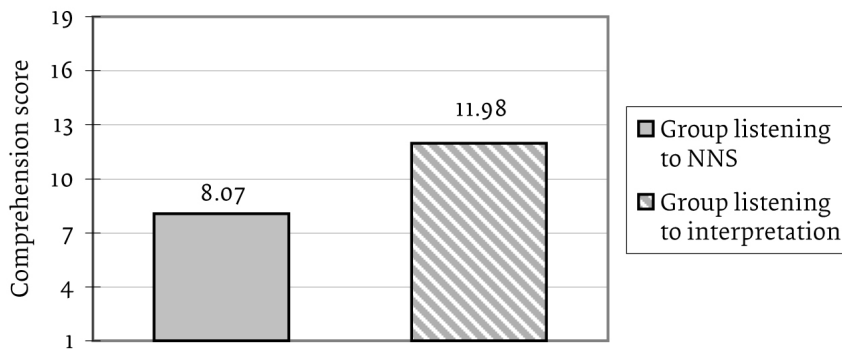


Figure 1 Comprehension test scores

7. Conclusions

English increasingly serves as the primary means of communication between speakers of different first languages and has become indispensable in a large number of domains. It is most likely that this development will continue. This spread of English has far-reaching consequences for the interpreting profession, ranging from more strenuous working conditions to a declining number of interpreted events and the fear of losing one's main source of income. Nevertheless, ELF and interpreting as alternative ways of overcoming language barriers are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The degree of effectiveness of ELF and interpreting greatly depends on the setting in which intercultural speech acts occur. If communication is characterised by dialogic features, ELF seems to serve its communicative purpose in most cases. In instances of monologic, unidirectional communication, however, the experimental study reported here indicates that interpreting still appears to be more effective. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that only high quality interpreting is likely to be more successful than the use of ELF. To guarantee such a high level of quality under the adverse condition of working from non-standard speech, interpreters must be trained to cope with deviations characteristic of NNS (Kurz and Basel 2009: 209, Proffitt 1997: 24). While it is fairly simple to put this into practice in interpreter training, it also seems necessary to convince practising interpreters of the need to constructively adapt to the new circumstances that they are not very likely to change. Clearly, there will be those who merely complain about this new development and wish back the old days. But interpreters with less negative bias towards ELF in general may be more effective in

convincing their clients of the superiority of their services over ELF communication in certain settings. This type of customer education seems vital to make clients aware of the circumstances under which the use of ELF might threaten their communicative goals and professional simultaneous interpreters can ensure cross-language understanding.

References

- Abbl-Mikasa M. (2010) "Global English and English as a lingua franca (ELF): implications for the interpreting profession", *trans-kom* 3(2), 126-148.
- Altman J. (1990) "What helps effective communication? Some interpreters' views", *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 3, 23-32.
- Basel E. (2002) *English as Lingua Franca. Non-Native Elocution in International Communication. A Case Study of Information Transfer in Simultaneous Interpretation*, doctoral thesis, University of Vienna.
- Bent T. and Bradlow A. (2003) "The interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit", *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 114 (3), 1600-1610.
- Bohrn P. (2008) *English as a Lingua Franca: Negotiation Common Ground in Business Interaction*, Master thesis, University of Vienna, http://othes.univie.ac.at/3590/1/2009-01-27__0201393.pdf (10.03.2010)
- Carmichael C. (2000) "Conclusions: language and national identity in Europe", in S. Barbour and C. Carmichael (eds) *Language and Nationalism in Europe* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 280-289.
- Cooper C., Davies R. and Tung R. (1982) "Interpreting stress: sources of job stress among conference interpreters", *Multilingua* 1 (2), 97-107.
- Crystal D. (1992) *An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Dollerup C. (1996) "English in the European Union", in R. Hartmann (ed.) *The English Language in Europe. European Studies Series*, Wiltshire, Cromwell Press, 24-36.
- Firth A. (1996) "The discourse accomplishment of normality: on 'lingua franca' English and conversation analysis", *Journal of Pragmatics* 26, 237-259.
- Gazzola M. (2006) "Managing multilingualism in the European Union: language policy evaluation for the European Parliament", *Language Policy* 5, 393-417.
- Gile D. (1995) *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Gnutzmann C. and Intemann F. (2005) "Introduction: the globalisation of English. Language, politics, and the English language classroom", in C. Gnutzmann and F. Intemann (eds) *The Globalisation of*

English and the English Language Classroom, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 9-24.

- Harmer J. (2009) "Interpreting tomorrow. What is in the pipeline?", in J. Matsunawa (ed.) *East Meets West. Current Interpreting Trends. Selected Papers from the International Symposium at Kobe College, Japan*, Tokyo, Entitle, 127-205.
- Hasibeder M. (2010) *Die Entwicklung der englischen Sprache zur internationalen Lingua Franca und die Auswirkungen auf das Konferenzdolmetschen. Am Beispiel Wiens als international führender Kongressstadt*, Master thesis, University of Vienna, http://othes.univie.ac.at/10009/1/2010-05-31__0503601.pdf (10.07.2010).
- He X. (2006) "Dynamics between language choice and politics in the EU", *Forum* 4 (1), 23-36.
- Jenkins J. (2006) "Global intelligibility and local diversity: possibility or paradox?", in R. Rubdy and M. Saraceni (eds) *English in the World - Global Rules, Global Roles*, New York, Continuum, 32-39.
- Jenner B. (1997) "International English: an alternative view", *Speak Out!* 21, 10-14.
- Knapp K. (2002) "The fading out of the non-native speaker. Native speaker dominance in lingua-franca-situations", in: K. Knapp and C. Meierkord (eds) *Lingua Franca Communication*, Frankfurt am Main a.o., Lang, 217- 245.
- Kodrnja D. (2001) *Akzent und Dolmetschen. Informationsverlust beim Dolmetschen eines "non-native speaker's"*, Master thesis, University of Vienna.
- Kurz I. (2005) "Akzent und Dolmetschen – Informationsverlust bei einem nichtmuttersprachlichen Redner", *Bulletin Suisse de Linguistique Appliquée* 81, 55-70.
- Kurz I. (2008) "The impact of non-native English on students' interpreting performance", in: G. Hansen, A. Chesterman and H. Gerzymisch-Arbogast (eds) *Efforts and Models in Interpreting and Translation Research*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 179-192.
- Kurz I. and Basel E. (2009) "The impact of non-native English on information transfer in simultaneous interpretation", *Forum* 7 (2), 187-213.
- Lesznyák Á. (2004) *Communication in English as an International Lingua Franca. An Exploratory Case Study*, Norderstedt, Books on Demand.
- Mackintosh J. (2002) "Workload Study: what it tells us about our job", *Communicate!*, February/March 2002, <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article659> (01.12.2008).
- Major R., Fitzmaurice S., Bunta F. and Balasubramanian C. (2002) "The effects of nonnative accents on listening comprehension: implications for ESL assessment", *TESOL Quarterly* 36 (2), 173-190.

- Mauranen A. (2003) "The corpus of English as lingua franca in academic settings", *TESOL Quarterly* 37 (3), 513-527.
- Mauranen A. (2006) "A rich domain of ELF: the ELFA corpus of academic discourse", *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 5 (2), 145-159.
- Meierkord C. (2000) "Interpreting successful lingua franca interaction. An analysis of non-native/non-native small talk conversations in English", *Linguistik online* 5, http://www.linguistik-online.de/1_00/MEIERKOR.HTM (01.12.2008).
- Neff J. (2008) "A statistical portrait of AIIC: 2005-06", *Communicate!*, Spring 2008, <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article2127.htm> (26.01.2009).
- Phillipson R. (2003) *English-Only Europe? – Challenging Language Policy*, London/New York, Routledge.
- Pitzl M.-L. (2005) "Non-understanding in English as a lingua franca: examples from a business context", *Views - Vienna English Working Papers* 14 (2), 50-71, <http://www.univie.ac.at/Anglistik/Views0502mlp.pdf> (13.06.2007)
- Pitzl M.-L. (2009) "'We should not wake up any dogs': idiom and metaphor in ELF", in A. Mauranen and E. Ranta (eds) *English as a Lingua Franca: Studies and Findings*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 298-322.
- Pöhhacker F. (1994) *Simultandolmetschen als komplexes Handeln*, Tübingen, Narr.
- Pöhhacker F. (2004) *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, London, Routledge.
- Proffitt L. (1997) *Simultaneous Interpretation of the Non-Native Speaker of English – Perceptions and Performance*, Master thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London.
- Sabatini E. (2000) "Listening comprehension, shadowing and simultaneous interpreting of two "non-standard" English speeches", *Interpreting* 5 (1), 25-48.
- SCIC (2010) *Customer Satisfaction Survey. The 2010 edition*, http://scic.ec.europa.eu/europa/upload/docs/application/pdf/2010-06/wfi5125-20100330172220-9185__rapport__suggestions__css__2010__3.pdf
- Seidlhofer B. (2001) "Closing a conceptual gap: the case for a description of English as a Lingua Franca", *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11 (2), 133-158.
- Seidlhofer B. (2004) "Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca", *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 24, 209-239.
- Seidlhofer B. (2005) "English as a lingua franca", in A. Hornby (ed.) *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, R 92.
- Skudlik S. (1992) "The status of German as a language of science and the importance of the English language for German-speaking

- scientists", in U. Ammon and M. Hellinger (eds) *Status Change of Languages*, Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 391-438.
- Taylor C. (1989) "Towards a typology of speakers", in D. L. Hammond (ed.) *Coming of Age. Proceedings of the 30th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association*, Medford, NJ, Learned Information, Inc., 183-188.
- Tosi A. (2005) "EU translation problems and the danger of linguistic devaluation", *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 15 (3), 384-388.
- Van Parijs P. (2004) "Europe's linguistic challenge", *European Journal of Sociology* 45, 113-154.
- Vollstedt M. (2002) "English for internal company communications", in K. Knapp and C. Meierkord (eds) *Lingua Franca Communication*, Frankfurt am Main a.o., 87-107.
- Widdowson H. (1994) "The ownership of English", *TESOL Quarterly* 28 (2), 377-389.
- Willis G. (1999) "Cognitive interviewing. A 'how to' guide", <http://appliedresearch.cancer.gov/areas/cognitive/interview.pdf> (17.08.09).
- Wooding M. (2002) "The notion of an international language and the case of English", *Communicate!*, April/May 2002, <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article519.htm> (01.12.2008).

Identification of English words embedded in sentences by Japanese professional interpreters with different language experiences

TOMOHIKO OOIGAWA - KINUKO TAKAHASHI

Phonetics Laboratory, Sophia University, Tokyo

Abstract

The present study aims to examine perceptual differences in the identification of English words between Japanese professional interpreters educated in English in childhood in a foreign country (returnee interpreters) and Japanese professional interpreters educated in Japanese in childhood in Japan (non-returnee interpreters). We conducted an identification test of English words in sentences with returnee interpreters and non-returnee interpreters. In the test, the participants were asked to listen to recordings including English words and to identify the words. The results showed that the returnee interpreters identified the English words significantly better than the non-returnee interpreters. Also, we found some commonalities in phonetic perception (listening skills) between the returnee and non-returnee interpreters.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the present research is to examine perceptual differences in the identification of English consonants and vowels between Japanese returnee professional interpreters and Japanese non-returnee professional interpreters. According to one of the most prestigious Japanese dictionaries, *Koojien* (Shinmura 1998), the definition of a returnee (*kikoku-shijo*, in Japanese) is “a child who spent a few years

outside Japan due to his or her parents' job and returned to Japan". One with such experiences is widely believed to be bilingual in Japan. In this paper, we focus on interpreters who are returnees (hereafter, referred to as returnee interpreters) and interpreters who are not returnees (hereafter referred to as non-returnee interpreters). The definition of a returnee interpreter in the present paper is a Japanese professional interpreter who was educated in English in a foreign country when s/he was a child. A number of students and even teachers in Japan believe that only a returnee can become an interpreter or that a returnee is more qualified to become an interpreter, though there are almost no statistics to indicate the exact number of returnee interpreters. Their belief is attributed to the anecdotal assumption that returnees have "good ears" (good listening skills). In order to examine perceptual differences in the identification of English consonants and vowels between returnee and non-returnee interpreters, we conducted an identification experiment (listening test). In this experiment, the participants (the interpreters) were asked to listen to recordings including English words and to identify the words that they had heard. The words used for the experiment included minimal pairs of the following contrasts: /l/-/r/ (e.g. lane/rain), /s/-/θ/ (sink/think), /b/-/v/ (boat/vote), /dz/-/z/ (cards/cars), /ar/-/r/ (farm/firm), /o/-/ou/ (ball/bowl) and /i/-/I/ (sheep/ship).¹

The present research was motivated by some claims made by the participants in the study undertaken by Takahashi (2010), on student interpreters' performances and by the results of a study on the phonetic perception of English words by students and professional interpreters (see Takahashi and Ooigawa 2009). The aims of the present research are to examine the identification of English words in sentences by Japanese returnee and non-returnee professional interpreters and to identify differences in phonetic perception (i.e. listening skills) between the two groups. The ultimate goal of our studies is to establish the relationship between phonetic perception and interpreting performance. This study can hopefully contribute not only to interpreters' education and training but also to research into bilingualism.

2. Previous studies and research questions for the present research

In Takahashi (2010), nine student interpreters were asked to interpret English materials into Japanese, and their interpretations were analyzed to identify the common problems in their interpretations. This study found that problematic omissions were one of these. In this case, omissions do not mean simple summarization. Due to partial omissions,

1 In order to avoid some technical problems (i.e. garbling, or symbol coding troubles), we use these phonemic transcriptions instead of IPA fonts.

the meaning of the original material (source text) was distorted. In Takahashi (2010), after the participants had completed an interpreting task, they were asked the reason why the problematic omissions had occurred. Eight out of nine students answered that they had difficulties in identifying English words phonetically. Some said that it was easy for them to understand the meaning of the words when they saw the words, but they could not identify the words or sentences easily by listening. We wondered whether their claims were true. However, no empirical studies answered our question on the relationship between listening skills and interpreting performance (or comprehension). Therefore, we conducted our own research (Takahashi and Ooigawa 2009). Seven student interpreters and five professional interpreters were asked to identify English consonants (/l/-/r/ & /s/-/θ/) included in isolated single words by listening. However, the results showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups. Rather, the results suggested that there was a distinctive difference in phonetic perception (listening skills) between returnees and non-returnees. This suggestion led us to focus on the possible difference in phonetic perception between returnees and non-returnees. Our research then turned to professional interpreters: that is, professional returnee interpreters and professional non-returnee interpreters.

The research questions of the present paper are as follows: 1) Are there any significant differences in the phonetic perception (listening skills) of English consonants and vowels between Japanese returnee and non-returnee professional interpreters? 2) If any, what differences are there in their phonetic perception?

3. Experiment

3.1. The purpose of the experiment

The purposes of the experiment was to compare the results of the identification of English words embedded in sentences by returnee interpreters with those of non-returnee interpreters and to identify the differences between the two groups. The stimuli and procedures of the present experiment are the same as in Takahashi and Ooigawa (2010).

3.2 Stimuli

The stimuli were produced by native speakers of American English. In the research only American English was targeted because it is the most widely learned form of English in Japan.

3.2.1. Speakers

Two male and one female native speakers of American English participated in the recording. One of the male speakers was 20 years old and from the state of California (Speaker 1). The other was 21 years old and from the state of Washington (Speaker 2). The female speaker was 20 years old and from the state of Kentucky (Speaker 3). They asserted that they had no difficulties in speaking and hearing.

3.2.2. Words and sentences

We used paired words, each of which included a pair of the following contrasts: /l/-/r/ (e.g. lane/rain), /s/-/θ/ (e.g. sink/think), /b/-/v/ (e.g. boat/vote), /dz/-/z/ (e.g. cards/cars), /ar/-/r/ (e.g. farm/firm), /o/-/ou/ (e.g. ball/bowl), and /i/-/I/ (e.g. sheep/ship). Each of the paired words was embedded in the same passage or sentence. We used passages and single sentences that make sense with either word's selection. For example, in the case of 'ball/bowl', the sentence was "Would you pass me the ball/bowl?". As the aim of the research was to examine phonetic perception, it was decided to eliminate contextual information that might possibly help the listeners identify the target words through inferring. The paired words, the passages, and the sentences are shown below. All the materials were proofread by a native speaker (a university lecturer of English language in Japan) and a Japanese university professor of English teaching. The list of the materials (stimuli) is as follows:

Contrasts of the consonants

I. /l/-/r/

lane & rain

I like driving very much, but while I was driving, the *lane* got on my nerves that night.

I like driving very much, but while I was driving, the *rain* got on my nerves that night.

long & wrong

He was anxious to know the answer very much. But as the answer was *long*, he got mad.

He was anxious to know the answer very much. But as the answer was *wrong*, he got mad.

flight & fright

The last time I had a *flight*, I watched a movie on the plane.

The last time I had a *fright*, I watched a movie on the plane.

play & pray

Don't study too much on Sunday. You should *play* a little bit.

Don't study too much on Sunday. You should *pray* a little bit.

pleasant & present

My family came to visit. So they were *pleasant*.

My family came to visit. So they were *present*.

II. /s/-/θ/

sink & think

He seemed to be very depressed. He was *sinking* in the pool while swimming.

He seemed to be very depressed. He was *thinking* in the pool while swimming.

pass & path

The *pass* over the mountain was open again after the snow.

The *path* over the mountain was open again after the snow.

III. /b/-/v/

boat & vote

All you need is one more *boat*; otherwise you wouldn't be able to win the race.

All you need is one more *vote*; otherwise you wouldn't be able to win the race.

IV. /dz/-/z/

cards & cars

When he passed by the store, he saw a lot of *cards* inside the store.

When he passed by the store, he saw a lot of *cars* inside the store.

Contrasts of the vowels

V. /ar/-/r/

farm & firm

I would like you to come and see what I am doing, so please visit our *farm*.

I would like you to come and see what I am doing, so please visit our *firm*.

VI. /o/-/ou/

ball & bowl

Would you pass me the *ball*?

Would you pass me the *bowl*?

hall & hole

When I entered the garden, I was very surprised, because I saw a huge *hall* in the garden.

When I entered the garden, I was very surprised, because I saw a huge *hole* in the garden.

VII. /i/-/I/

sheep & ship

The *sheep* I saw while traveling along the coast in Northern France was white.

The *ship* I saw while traveling along the coast in Northern France was white.

3.2.3. Recording

The native speakers of American English mentioned in 3.2.1 produced these stimuli in the soundproof room belonging to the Phonetics Laboratory of Sophia University. The speakers were asked to read out the materials in a random order at least five times. The utterances were recorded onto a digital recorder (Sony Linear PCM Recorder PCM-D50) through a microphone (Sony ECM-MS957) and digitized at 48 kHz with 16 bits. Two tokens per type (the passages or sentences) were selected from the recorded materials.

3.3. Listeners (participants)

The listeners were five Japanese returnee professional interpreters (39-46 years old) and six Japanese non-returnee professional interpreters (42-49 years old). They were English-Japanese interpreters and their length of interpreting service was 5-11 years. All the listeners asserted that they had no difficulties in speaking and hearing. Each returnee interpreter had spent 1.5-6 years outside Japan before they reached 12 years old, mostly due to his/her father's overseas job assignment and was educated in English either at local schools or international schools.

3.4. Procedures

The perception experiment was conducted in the same soundproof room where the stimuli had been recorded. We used a computer software program Praat Ver.5.1.17 (Boersma and Weenink 2009) as an interface. The listeners individually participated in the experiment. First, they sat at the lap top personal computer wearing headphones. They saw two buttons on the screen that indicated the paired words (e.g. lane/rain) included in the forthcoming recording. 0.5 seconds later they listened to the short spoken passage or the single sentence on the headphones which were connected to the computer. The listeners were asked to click the button indicating the word that they thought had been included in either a single sentence or passage. Also they were asked to click either a "Difficult" button or an

“Easy” button below the words on the display. When the listeners were unable to make an instant decision, they had to click the “Difficult” button.² Conversely, when they were able to make a choice without a moment of hesitation, they had to click the “Easy” button. The listeners repeated the same procedure in each trial. They were allowed to make a correction to their responses before clicking the “OK” button to proceed to the next trial. Once they clicked “OK”, they were not allowed to return to the previous trial. When one play was not convincing enough to make a choice, they were permitted to play the recording one more time by clicking the “Repeat” button for each trial. The experiment included 176 trials (26 words x 2 tokens x 3 speakers + 20 distracters).³ The listeners were asked to take a short break after finishing 44 trials. The stimuli were presented in a random order.

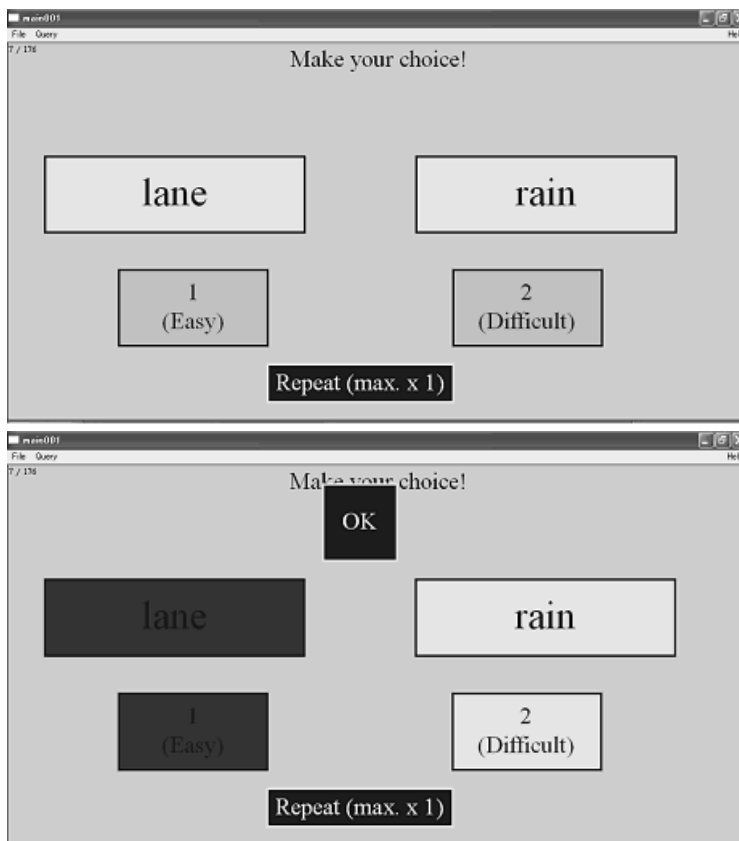


Figure 1. The displays used for the experiment in the case of lane/rain. After clicking “lane” and “Easy”, the “OK” button appears.

- 2 We do not report the results of the Easy/Difficult buttons as analysis of them is still underway.
- 3 These distracters were used for other preliminary studies.

Prior to the experiment, the listeners were provided with a warm-up session consisting of 12 trials with a break after six trials. The contrasts used for the warm-up session were not included in the materials used in the experiment. During the warm-up session, the volume was adjusted to a comfortable listening level for each listener.

Examples of the displays used for the experiment are shown in Figure 1. In order to ensure the validity of the test, we asked three native speakers of American English (20-21 years old) who had not participated in the recordings to try the same experiment individually before the study. They answered all the questions correctly.

4. Results

4.1. Overall results

Figure 2 shows the overall results of the non-returnee interpreters and returnee interpreters. The mean rate of accurate identification of the former is 72.4% and that of the latter is 89.0%. The Mann-Whitney U test showed that the difference is significant between the scores of the two groups ($U = 3.0, p < .05$).

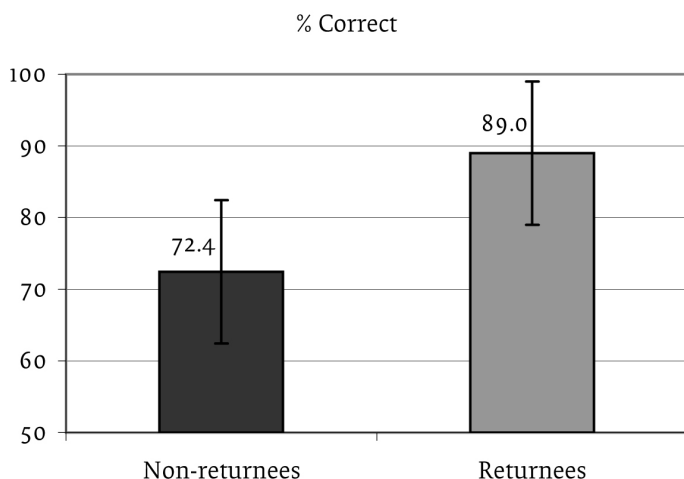


Figure 2. The overall mean rates of accurate identifications of the non-returnee interpreters and returnee interpreters. The error bars indicate the standard deviations.

4.2. Contrasts

Figure 3 displays the results of each contrast. All the correct rates of returnee interpreters (/l/-/r/: 94%, /s/-/θ/: 87%, /b/-/v/: 98%, /dz/-/z/: 77%, /ar/-/r/: 98%, /o/-/ou/: 75%, /i/-/I/: 92%) are higher than those of

non-returnee interpreters (/l/-/r/: 69%, /s/-/θ/: 78%, /b/-/v/: 81%, /dz/-/z/: 58%, /ar/-/r/: 86%, /o/-/ou/: 64%, /i/-/I/: 89%). However, there are contrasts that do not show significant difference. The Mann-Whitney *U* tests indicated that the difference is significant only in /l/-/r/ ($U = 2.0, p < .05$), /b/-/v/ ($U = 4.5, p < .05$) and /ar/-/r/ ($U = 4.5, p < .05$), but not in the other contrasts. Note that the number of stimuli, the segmental/supra-segmental context and the position of the target word in the sentence are different for each contrast. However, it is interesting that not all the contrasts show significant differences. The results may have revealed the weak contrasts of the returnee interpreters.

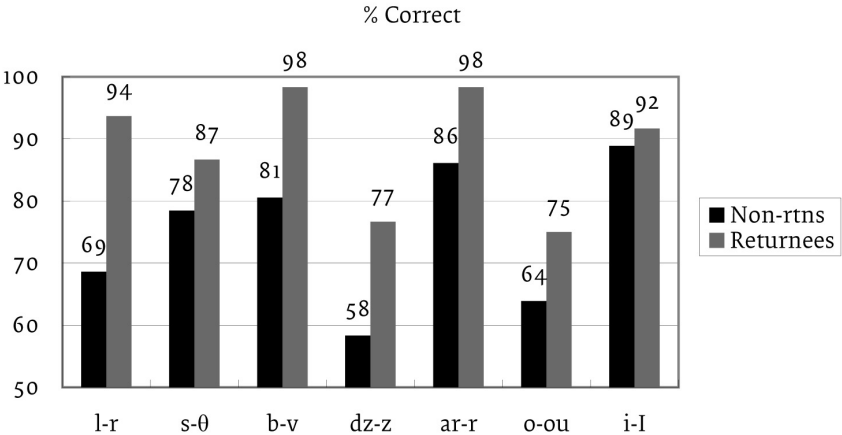


Figure 3. Comparisons among the contrasts. The black bars and grey bars indicate the mean rates of accurate identifications of the non-returnee interpreters and returnee interpreters respectively.

4.3. Speakers

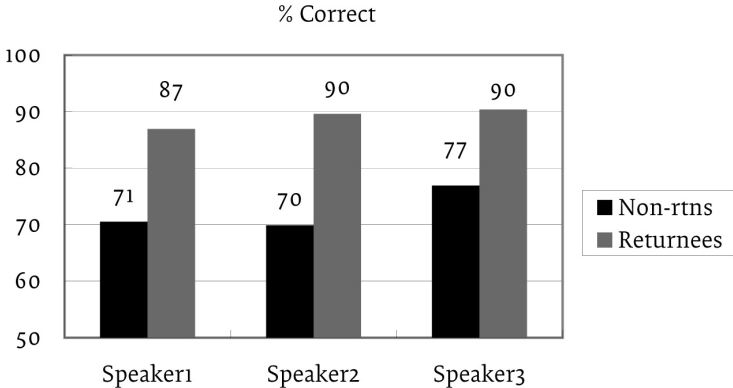


Figure 4. Comparisons among the respective correct identification rate of the stimuli produced by three native speakers.

As was noted in 3.2.1, the stimuli had been produced by three native speakers. Figure 4 shows the respective correct identification rates of the stimuli produced by three speakers of American English. All the correct rates of the returnee interpreters (Speaker 1: 87%, Speaker 2: 90%, Speaker 3: 90%) are higher than those of non-returnee interpreters (Speaker 1: 71%, Speaker 2: 70%, Speaker 3: 77%).

For the non-returnee interpreters, the graph shows that there are differences in the scores depending on the speakers. The differences are significant according to the results of the Friedman test ($\chi^2 = 6.5$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). On the other hand, the scores of the returnee interpreters did not show such a phenomenon, and the Friedman test indicates that the difference is not significant ($\chi^2 = .0$, $df = 2$, $p = 1.0$). In other words, the difficulties in identification did not vary depending on the speakers.

5. Discussion

The results show that the returnee interpreters identified the English consonants and vowels better than the non-returnee interpreters, and that there were differences and commonalities in the identifications between the two groups.

As for the differences, the returnee interpreters identified the contrasts of /l/-/r/, /b/-/v/ and /ar/-/r/ better than the non-returnee interpreters. Among all these contrasts, the largest difference is found in /l/-/r/. According to Ladefoged (2005: 91), these sounds are frequently used consonants in American English. Therefore, these results might indicate that if returnee interpreters are usually able to identify frequent consonants almost correctly, they are able to converge more energy on other tasks in their performance than non-returnee interpreters. Another difference is found in the speakers' phonetic effect that was exerted on the listeners' perception. The non-returnee interpreters had a large gap in identifications depending on the speakers while the returnee interpreters did not have such a gap. The returnee interpreters seem to be advantaged to work as interpreters because interpreters in general have enormous opportunities of being exposed to diverse speakers due to the very nature of their profession.

As for the commonalities, the returnee interpreters did not identify the contrasts of /s/-/θ/, /dz/-/z/, /o/-/ou/ and /i/-/I/ significantly better than the non-returnee interpreters. The result suggests that there are some contrasts that even returnees are not good at identifying. The scores of /dz/-/z/ (77%) and /o/-/ou/ (75%) by the returnees, in particular, are low. These results might indicate some weak points of the returnees. As was noted in 3.4, three native speakers answered everything correctly in the same identification test.

The answer to the first research question "Are there any significant differences in phonetic perception (i.e. listening skills) of English

consonants and vowels between Japanese returnee and non-returnee professional interpreters?" is "Yes". The answers to the second research question "If any, what differences are there in their phonetic perception?" are "Returnee interpreters identify some English consonants and vowels better than non-returnee interpreters" and "Non-returnee interpreters have a large gap in identifications depending on the speakers while returnee interpreters do not".

6. Future Research

There are limitations to the present research. The number of the participants was small, and they came from diverse backgrounds. The country where they resided, the age when they stayed abroad, and the length of foreign residence, were different from participant to participant. Therefore, we need to increase the number of the participants and find ones with the same background. The prospective participants include returnee/non-returnee student interpreters, returnee/non-returnee university students without interpreter training, and novice interpreters.

The ultimate goal of our research is to establish the relationship between phonetic perception and interpreting performance by interpreters and student interpreters from different backgrounds. We would like to apply the results of our research to interpreters' education and training. Also it is our hope that our research will eventually contribute to English education for advanced level students.

7. Conclusion

We conducted an identification test in order to examine perceptual differences in the identification of English consonants and vowels between Japanese returnee professional interpreters and Japanese non-returnee professional interpreters. The results showed that the former identified some English consonants and vowels significantly better than the latter. To our knowledge, this was the first experiment of its kind.

The fact that returnee interpreters are good at identifying /l/ and /r/, which are frequent consonants in American English respectively (Ladefoged 2005: 91), is very interesting. Also, we found that the non-returnee interpreters had a large gap in identifications depending on the speakers while the returnee interpreters did not have such a gap. By looking at these results alone, it seems likely that returnee interpreters are more qualified to work as interpreters than non-returnee interpreters. However, we do not believe that the present study has reached this conclusion. The experiment has not established the relationship between identification and comprehension. Empirically, it is not known whether

those who are able to identify segments correctly are able to establish the meaning more accurately. Another point is the direction of the interpretation. In Japan, the English-Japanese interpreters have to interpret both from English (B language) to Japanese (A language), and from Japanese (A language) to English (B language). Therefore, listening to English is not always dominant in the interpreting assignments of English-Japanese interpreters. They have to listen to Japanese utterances as well. Empirically, it is not known whether returnee interpreters' perception of Japanese segments is better than non-returnee interpreters. Moreover, the experiment did not take contextual and situational information into account. Background information might be very important for the interpreting performance (Seleskovitch 2001: 23). It might be possible that non-returnee interpreters are able to use background information in more efficient ways than returnee interpreters, which enables non-returnee interpreters to compensate for their poorer perception.

Given the fact that this type of experiment has not been conducted before, the present research is significant. In particular it is expected to offer some insights for interpreters who are suffering from listening problems. Therefore, we would like to continue to conduct the experiments with different conditions from those in the present research.

Acknowledgments

First of all, our thanks go to the speakers and the professional interpreters who were willing to participate in the research. We also thank them for their interest in our research. We would like to express our gratitude to Prof. Shigeko Shinohara of Sophia University for her insights. Our thanks also go to Dr. Yoshinori Watanabe of Sophia University, Mr. Neale Cunningham of Josai International University and Prof. Frank Scott Howell of Sophia University for reviewing our drafts. We must not forget to extend our gratitude to Dr. Nobuko Koyama who helped us find native speakers of English. Without their kindness, we could not have done the research. Thank you all very much.

References

- Boersma P. and Weenink D. (2009) *Praat: Doing Phonetics by Computer* (Version 5.1.17) [Computer program] (Retrieved from <http://www.praat.org/>).
- Ladefoged P. (2005) *Vowels and Consonants: An Introduction to the Sounds of Languages* (2nd edition), Malden, MA, Blackwell.

- Seleskovitch D. (2001) *Interpreting for International Conferences*, Arlington, VA, Pen and Booth.
- Shinmura I. (ed) (1998) *Koojien* (5th edition), Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten (Japanese dictionary).
- Takahashi K. (2010) *The Problems in English-Japanese Consecutive Interpretations by Student Interpreters: The common problems identified in consecutive interpretation: A case of Japanese interpreting studies*, Saarbrücken, Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Takahashi K. and Ooigawa T. (2009) "Identification of English consonants by interpreting students and professional interpreters", *Interpreting and Translation Studies* 9, 55-69.
- Takahashi K. and Ooigawa T. (2010) "Identification of English consonants and vowels in sentence-embedded words by professional interpreters and student interpreters", *Interpreting and Translation Studies* 10, 207-217.

Interpreting from speech to sign: Italian television news reports

CYNTHIA J. KELLETT BIDOLI

SSLMIT, University of Trieste

Abstract

The profoundly deaf and hard-of-hearing live and work like their fellow citizens, but constantly have to adjust to sound deprivation in order to communicate in mainstream society. How do they cope with international communication? This paper focuses on one aspect of international communication: global news coverage through simultaneous Italian Sign Language (LIS) interpreting on television. A comparative linguistic analysis of a small multimodal corpus obtained from the transcriptions of video recorded television news bulletins in spoken Italian and a simultaneously interpreted version in LIS, has revealed insights into how and to what extent news related specifically to global conflicts crosses the international 'sound barrier' and has highlighted some of the problems encountered by professional sign language interpreters. This analysis of professional interpreting in a real life working environment (the television studio) has led to findings that can be turned to good use in sign language interpreter training classes.

1. Introduction

Sign language interpreting has developed into a profession at differing rates around the world. It is well established in several countries such as

in the U.S.A. and the Netherlands but is still at a fledgling stage in others (cf. Napier 2009). With an uneven international provision of training, research on sign-language interpreting, unlike spoken-language interpreting studies, can still be considered an emerging topic with much to be discovered. Investigation has been slowly gaining momentum (e.g. Frishberg 1990; Cokely 1992; Solow 2000; Marschark *et al.* 2005; Janzen 2005; Napier *et al.* 2006), but little attention has hitherto been paid to sign-language interpreting in media settings. Studies, mainly in the British Isles, have focused principally on its provision and the description of deaf people's reactions to it with less attention given to the purely linguistic and theoretical aspects of media interpreting (Woll and Allsop 1990; Steiner 1998; Kyle and Dury 2003; Stone 2005). A broad survey of television sign language in 17 European countries has been conducted by Kyle and Allsop (1997) and one on Austrian as well as other German-language broadcasters' services for the deaf and hearing impaired has been undertaken by Kurz and Mikulasek (2004). A description of sign language news interpreting from the point of view of the deaf interpreter is offered by Allsop and Kyle (2008).

The first attempts to transfer information on television to deaf and hard-of-hearing Italians began tentatively in 1986 when the RAI provided subtitling for some films and television series. Today the Italian *Televideo* service, page 777, offers access to a wide range of subtitled pre-recorded programmes (Tucci 2000)¹. However, for technical reasons, live subtitled programmes – such as those featuring real-time political debate or sport – are not yet available. Voice recognition technology is being perfected and occasionally experimented on Italian television to permit real-time subtitling (Eugeni 2006, 2008a, b). At present, the provision of subtitles or Italian Sign Language (LIS – *Lingua dei Segni Italiana*) on television is deemed insufficient by many deaf people who pay a full TV license like other Italian citizens. But it is probably not fully understood and appreciated how complex and costly it is to provide such specialized media translation for a minority audience. There are also differences in opinion on this subject between signers and oralists. Among the former many consider sign language their first 'natural' language and, according to age or education, may not find reading subtitles an easy task. Yet the latter, brought up and educated without sign language, need subtitles.

An encouraging indication for future developments is a contract stipulated in 2007 between the RAI and the Italian Ministry for Communications, endorsing the proposals of the Italian Deaf Association (ENS – *Ente Nazionale Sordi - Onlus*) for more integration and accessibility².

1 Percentages of total, broadcast, subtitled, Italian programme genres: films – 40%; television series – 20%; culture/information – 25%; children's programmes – 15%. (Tucci 2000: 94).

2 See: http://www.storiadeisordi.it/articolo.asp?ENTRY_ID=998 (in Italian, last accessed October 2010).

It includes access by Italian deaf people through subtitling or LIS to at least 60% of all programmes broadcast, with particular attention focused on educational and political information². There is also provision of one daily edition of signed or subtitled TV news on the RAI TG1³, TG2 and TG3 channels.

This paper describes research done in Trieste at the *Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori* (Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators) regarding the simultaneous sign language interpretation of Italian television news flashes. LIS news bulletins can be considered a genrelet within the television news report subgenre belonging to the broad media genre. It is an informative genre, reporting events, facts and figures within a restricted time limit. This research is one of several areas of study being undertaken in an Italian national research project on socio-discursive practices⁴ and a continuation of previous work on sign language media interpreting and subtitling for the Italian deaf community (see Kellett Bidoli 2008a, b, 2009a, b; Kellett and Sala forthcoming). In order to investigate the provision and quality of sign language interpreting on Italian television channels a small corpus of video recordings of daily news bulletins was collected (see Table 1).

TV programme	Items	Bulletins and period of recording
RAI, TG 1 LIS	104	18 bulletins between 20 th Dec. 2006 and 25 th Jan. 2007
RAI, TG 2 LIS	44	9 bulletins between 19 th and 30 th Jan. 2009
RAI, TG 3 LIS	123	23 bulletins between 21 st Nov. 2008 and 30 th Jan. 2009
RETE 4, TG 4 LIS	41	5 bulletins 19 th - 23 rd Jan. 2009
	Total news items = 312	Total news bulletins = 55

Table 1. The 2006-2009 LIS television news corpus

3 From the online ENS bulletin, 19th April 2007 <<http://www.ens.it>>.

4 TG stands for *Telegiornale*, i.e. TV news on the Italian national RAI television network, channels 1, 2 and 3.

5 Research is underway within the PRIN project prot. 2007JCY9Y9, *Tension and Change in English Domain-specific Genres*, coordinated by Professor M. Gotti (University of Bergamo). The author is member of the Turin research unit, coordinated by Professor G. Cortese, dealing specifically with *Genre Migration: Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity across Media*. Research on this news genre began in a previous project, PRIN prot. 2005109911 *Identity and Culture in English Domain-specific Discourse*. See: <<http://www.unibg.it/cerlis/progetti.htm>>.

Although the news was reported in spoken Italian and simultaneously interpreted by professional interpreters into LIS, for the purpose of the research project I was initially interested in looking at manifestations of Anglo-American institutional and political identity in Italian television news reports to see if and how they are transferred through sign language interpreting. Intercultural discourse, identity, genre, domain-specific terminology and anglicisms are all major aspects that have been taken into consideration in this and previous research projects.

I have no knowledge as to the original source of the RAI news reports, though it is highly probable that those related to foreign affairs were obtained from international English-speaking news agencies or directly from English-speaking 24-hour news networks, like CNN, and subsequently translated into Italian. How much of the original news was domesticated or foreignised (Venuti 1995: 81) in the transfer from English to Italian at a macro level, or how much the news was ideologically manipulated, if at all, is impossible to discern.

2. The LIS news corpus

In terms of size, the corpus is small compared with the written corpora collected in language and translation studies, but, because of its complexity (a corpus composed of signs and speech), it is sufficient to start with. The total number of Italian tokens in the LIS TV corpus stands at 19,350 containing 4,516 types. As illustrated in Table 1, 55 news bulletins were recorded from four television channels containing 312 separate items of news and reporting events over two similar winter time spans.

As a channel of communication for deaf people this news genrelet is of multimodal nature. Not only are speech and sign language both present in the corpus but also additional visual semiotics that vary greatly from channel to channel:

- TG1: behind the interpreter viewers can see a wall screen displaying a single static picture related to the news content that does not distract from the signing. A short headline (2 to 4 words long) related to the news item is placed along the bottom section of the screen behind the interpreter, leading occasionally to the first 2 or 3 letters being obscured (which happened on 18 occasions);
- TG2: no images are provided but there are headlines in capital letters;
- TG3: neither images nor headlines are broadcast;
- TG4: dynamic film footage is shown in the larger of two inserts, separated from the headline below. Headlines are slow to appear after the reader has introduced the first words of each item and the film footage is aired.

The main problem for interpreters is the brevity of the bulletins, as illustrated in Table 2. From a rough calculation based on the TV Guide, at

the time of recording there were on average three minutes of news aired once a day with the exception of eight minutes for channel 4, compared to approximately 25 minutes dedicated to regular news bulletins for the hearing (with several editions per day).

	Regular news bulletins per day	Minutes aired	LIS news Flashes per day	Minutes aired
RAI TG 1	11	195	1	3
RAI TG 2	6	115	1	3
RAI TG 3	7 (plus regional news editions)	255	1	3-4
Rete 4 TG 4	4	120	1	8

Table 2. Amount of news aired per day

Clearly, deaf and hard-of-hearing people are provided with a greatly reduced amount of information in LIS, which for many deaf people is their first language. Unfortunately, in March 2010 the Rete 4 TG4, the longest of the four programmes, was replaced by a subtitled edition. This in no way contravenes the 2007 contract, which states that news must be provided in LIS or subtitles, but has led to discontent among the signing community.

The brevity of the news flashes leads to necessary adaptations by the interpreters. There is little space for a long lag-time (*décalage* or voice-hand span). The interpreters have to start and close almost simultaneously with the newsreader so that they are not cut off or keep the newsreader waiting for them to finish. Added to the stress caused by this temporal constraint are the many linguistic features involved in the translation process. Furthermore, whereas the spoken language interpreter normally prepares for a conference assignment by working on a specific topic or subject area (be it political, economic, legal or scientific, etc.), anticipating the content and preparing to use specific terminology and phraseology determined to a large extent by genre, the sign language news interpreter is confronted with a wide selection of topics (from 3 to 10 depending on the channel), presented in rapid succession.

The 2006-2007 Italian recordings were manually transcribed, whereas the scripts of the 2008-2009 recordings were obtained from the interpreters. Regarding LIS, manual conversion was undertaken of signs or units of semantic meaning into glosses/labels of their nearest 'spoken language' equivalents, with the assistance of professional sign language interpreters. Signs are three-dimensional and constantly accompanied by simultaneous gestures, facial expression and mouthings; therefore, the transcription of sign language is extremely arduous. However, it is

possible to vertically align chunks of the original spoken discourse with corresponding ‘glossed’ transcriptions of the sign language (see Kellett Bidoli 2007a). All examples below have been translated for an international readership from the original Italian into English.

I initially analysed the domain-specific source text (ST) terminology contained in the 2006-2007 recordings and manually extracted 861 domain-specific terms (13.89% of total types), sorting them into six broad categories as illustrated in Figure 1, for a closer investigation of features related to identity and genre.

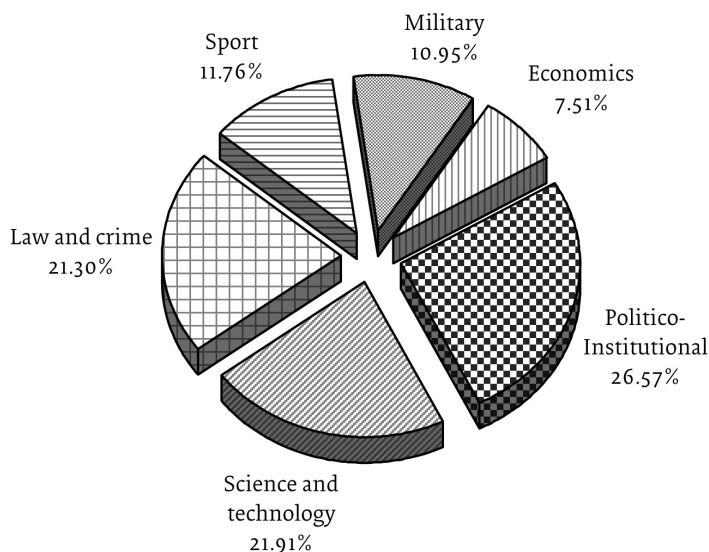


Figure 1 Domain-specific ST terminology in the 2006-2007 recordings
(Source: Kellett Bidoli 2009a: 321)

Below follows an overview of findings related to research on three of these terminological categories (in Figure 1): politico-institutional news, news on law and crime and conflict-related news.

3. Politico-institutional news

News reporting Anglo-American realities, selected from the 2006-2007 recordings, comprises 12.5% of total international news items with a dominance of American news, mainly related to the Iraq War (see Table 3. – ‘General international events’ comprise news mainly on international organizations, e.g. UNO or EU). Terms considered culturally-bound identity markers were extracted from the subcorpus. These were terms that mentally evoke images of a politico-institutional nature different from Italian ones or lack equivalents altogether, such as:

- 'White House' and 'Congress' (reference to the principal symbols of American government);
- 'Magistrate', a 'false friend' image of a British juridical figure neither culturally nor institutionally equivalent to the Italian *magistrato* (Kellett Bidoli 2009a: 323).

TOPIC AREA	% of total coverage
<i>Italian news</i>	68.3
<i>International news</i>	31.7
USA	10.6
UK	1.9
Middle East	5.8
Africa	5.8
Cuba	0.9
General international events	6.7

Table 3. Percentage of coverage of topic areas in the 2006-2007 recordings

The names of well-known British or American individuals were also taken into consideration, because in LIS they must be conveyed through fingerspelling as there rarely exists a ready-made sign name for them. Spelling from one mode into another can lead to error, misunderstanding and a slowing down of the interpreting process. Similarly, geographical place names act as culture-bound identity markers not only of their actual geopolitical location, but may evoke 'foreignness' through their pronunciation, spelling or fingerspelling if no official signed translation exists. Sometimes fingerspelling is used to spell out new Italian terms lacking a sign or for terms whose sign the interpreter is not fluent or acquainted with. In the corpus most interpreters use the full fingerspelling of politicians' names or surnames or resort to initializing one of them or both, i.e. they use the letter of the manual alphabet which corresponds to the first letter of the name and/or surname and continue by mouthing the rest of the name in full. This strategy is the least time-consuming solution.

During any translation (written, oral or signed) an intercultural/ linguistic migration takes place across two semiotic systems bringing about an inevitable adaptation or hybridisation of the original ST genre in the target text (TT). Hybridisation is not meant here as a text "shifted to another type and made to serve another purpose without completely losing at least some of the properties of the original type" (Hatim and

Mason 1990: 147). It is intended as a cross-linguistic migration resulting in a semantic transfer that is essentially unchanged at a macro level, but at a micro level, lexical, morphological, or rhetorical properties may be altered (or even omitted) to produce a hybridised text to fit the linguistic patterns of the target language and culture. In other words, a 'domestication' takes place (Venuti 1995). However, although Venuti states that, at least in Anglo-American culture, translation "has long been dominated by domesticating theories" (1995: 21), in the news corpus a dominance of foreignisation was detected thus an interpretation was produced that did not always comply with the norms of standardization or normalization of the ST into the TT (*ibid.*: 81). At the lexical level in the corpus, the American and British culturally-bound, identity-related terms were found to pass from the oral to the gestural mode resulting in a migration of the ST genre, but, because these terms were often transferred unaltered into LIS, little hybridization was detected in the TT. Both Italian hearing and deaf target audiences are expected to be acquainted with the British or American culture-bound referents. How receptive deaf people are to Anglo-American realities through the foreignisation of such lexical items in LIS (by maintaining the original in fingerspelling and/or mouthing) is an area for possible future investigation. Many older deaf Italians do not know English at all, although the younger generation now learn it at school and have daily contact with it on the Internet (see Kellett Bidoli 2007b).

Interestingly, it was also found that the morphological and linguistic adaptations made by the interpreters to convey meaning from an oral to gestural mode of communication do not always conform to the grammatical norms of LIS. Several occurrences were noted of the encroachment of Signed Italian, i.e. sign language shadowing the word order and grammar of spoken Italian.

At the macro level, a transfer of predominantly negative undertones embedded in the bulletins was detected. The United States of America was portrayed as a bellicose nation with a powerful President and Britain represented by crime and Royal Family intrigue. Owing to the brevity of the bulletins it is logical to assume that news scriptwriters tend to select only catchy, interesting news items from the original news agency reports during the reporting/translation process from English to Italian before the news reaches the LIS interpreters and subsequently the deaf viewers. (For a more complete report of findings, see Kellett Bidoli 2009a)

4. News on law and crime

Most terminology related to law and crime extracted from the 2006-2007 recordings was found in the national news reports, see Table 4.

TOPIC AREA	% of total coverage
<i>Italian news</i>	68.3
Politics	33.7
Crime	7.7
Culture	1.9
Science	0.9
Sport	11.6
General events	12.5

Table 4. Percentage of coverage of topic areas in Italian news (2006-2007 recordings)

Only one item reported a British crime, the arrest of a serial killer in Ipswich, containing several domain-specific terms (TG1 21/12/06). The toponym was fingerspelled correctly but accompanied by a mouthed mispronunciation: I-P-S-W-I-C-H + “*Iswich*”. The headline ‘Serial killer’, a common anglicism in Italy, was written in English on the studio screen. Another item reported was on Lady Diana’s inquest (TG1 08/01/07). ‘Inquest’ became the more generic sign INVESTIGATION and ‘accident’ was specified by using a clear classifier for CAR to sign CAR-ACCIDENT, although this was not explicitly mentioned in the original. Here the interpreter’s ‘world knowledge’ led her to add information to clarify her signing. All items subsequently analysed in the 2008-09 recordings related to law and crime were on Italian events apart from one on China: the trial of three Chinese citizens involved in a milk contamination scandal (TG2 22/01/09).

The 143 Italian ST tokens in the ‘law and crime’ category (see Figure 1) contain 121 types of which 81 occur only once (56.64 % of total ‘legal’ words). The most frequently occurring Italian lexemes are principally composed of widely understood crime and law-related terms used in standard everyday language (e.g. *carcere* – prison/jail, *omicidio/i* – murder/homicide/s, *pena capitale* – capital punishment, *polizia* – police, *strage* – slaughter). Only a few terms in the Italian ST can be considered specialized lexemes (e.g. *avviso di garanzia* – ‘writ of summons’, *impugnare* – ‘to counterclaim’).

By looking closely at the types it was found that signs referring to ‘arrest and legal procedure’ are the most numerous (50.41 %), followed by ‘crimes committed’ (25.62 %), ‘punishment’ (11.57 %), and lastly ‘generic and statute law’ (10.74 %). The 2008-09 items in the extended corpus still need to be tested to see whether these results reflect a general tendency and, if so, the data could provide a useful indication of the ‘legal’ terminological

fields most likely to be encountered on the job (see Kellett Bidoli 2009b for more detail and examples).

5. Conflict-related news

A closer look at the ‘military’ terminological category was aided by the addition of the 2008-2009 recordings. A subcorpus of items reporting conflict was extracted from the international news. It comprised 17.31% of total news items, containing 1,207 types within the 3,709 tokens. The percentage of news coverage for each channel is illustrated in Table 5.

	TG1	TG2	TG3	TG4	Corpus
International news	31.73	34.09	27.64	41.46	31.73
Conflict related news	19.23	18.18	14.63	19.51	17.31

Table 5. Percentage of coverage of international and conflict-related news

The areas of world conflict reported in the subcorpus are shown in Table 6. They were dominated by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and great tensions between the Israeli government and Hamas.

	TG1	TG2	TG3	TG4	Corpus	%
Africa	5		2	1	8	14.8
India			2		2	3.7
Iraq	8				8	14.8
Middle East	3	8	14	6	31	57.4
USA	1			1	2	3.7
Transnational	3				3	5.6

Table 6. Geographical source of conflict-related news in the subcorpus

This is followed by conflict between Iraq and the USA (reported exclusively in the 2006 TG1 recordings). Thirdly, African conflicts include reports on fighting between various ethnic groups in the Congo, Horn of Africa and clashes between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. Next follows conflict related to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai (November 2008) and hence, military intervention and tension between India and Pakistan. Terminology was included from two reports on ‘American territory’. Firstly, a terrorist attack at the American Embassy in Athens and, secondly,

the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base detainment camp where President Barack Obama pledged to end torture by American troops there or anywhere in war. General transnational events related to conflict concern international organizations (e.g. the UNO, EU and NATO).

The Italian domain-specific terminology in this ‘military category’ falls into five terminological subcategories or concept fields as illustrated in Figure 2.

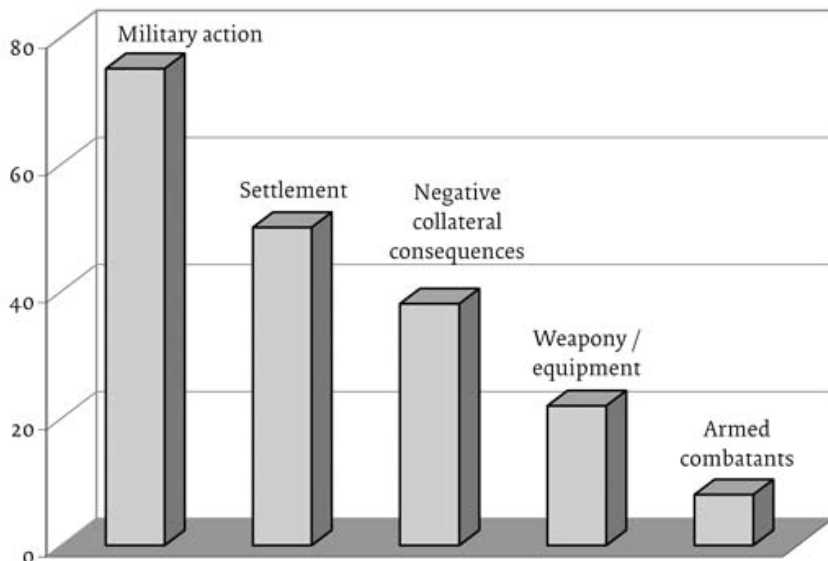


Figure 2 Onomasiological division of conflict-related tokens in Italian ‘military’ terminology

The largest field, related to military action, contains 75 tokens, such as: ‘ambush’, ‘command’, ‘contingent’, ‘clashes’, ‘explosions’, ‘hostility’, ‘incursion’, ‘offensive’, ‘shots’, ‘violence’ and ‘war’. Interestingly, regarding the key words ‘war’ and ‘conflict’ that one would expect to find in a subcorpus of this kind, the former ranked only 9th (with 5 occurrences) and the latter was totally absent.

Terms associated with the settlement of conflict comprised the second largest terminological concept field and, hence, positive developments in conflictual situations, of which three terms rank first in the word count: ‘truce’ (13 occurrences), ‘peace’ (11), ‘withdrawal’ (9), as well as ‘cease fire’ (8) ranking 5th.

The third field is related to the mortal consequences of conflict: ‘death/s’, ‘killed’, ‘massacre’ and ‘victims’, and other negative collateral circumstances, ‘evacuees’, ‘hostages’, ‘refugees’ and ‘wounded’.

Two smaller concept fields contained lexemes for military weaponry and equipment (‘arms’, ‘helicopter’, ‘missiles’, ‘mortar’, ‘tanks’), and referents related to armed non-military or paramilitary combatants (‘guerrillas’, ‘militias’, ‘rebels’ and ‘terrorist/s’).

Having identified the domain-specific ST terminology, attention was turned towards how it was signed. Sign language manages to convey a great deal of detailed information (e.g. movement or the shape of objects) through its particular 'phonological' and grammatical characteristics. For example, the Italian verb *dare* (to give) has a sign but it changes according to whom you are giving something to or which object is being given (even its shape, weight, or direction can be conveyed). The general 'container' term in LIS for 'to give', does not always fit nicely into the interpreted context as a single sign; therefore, the interpreter has to adapt it accordingly to create a verb-object fusion which modifies the 'basic' sign. An example of this adaptation in the conflict subcorpus is the verb 'to strike/hit' (*colpire* which in Italian is homonymic and also means 'to shoot'). The 'strike/hit/shoot' handshape changes according to whether 'a man strikes/hits foe or friend', 'a missile strikes from the air, land or sea', or whether 'shots are from a gun or mortar'. In all these cases the specific shape the hand must assume is different and interpreters have to adjust accordingly very rapidly. It is in these circumstances that the interpreter's 'world knowledge' on current news is fundamental. It might be what s/he remembers from previous news or what s/he has read as pre-broadcast preparation. An example can be found in the following item:

Ventiduesimo giorno di attacco israeliano su Gaza. Colpito di nuovo un edificio dell'ONU. (TG3 on 17/01/2009)

[Twenty-second day of the Israeli attack on Gaza. A UNO building has been hit yet again].

The interpreter uses a closed 5 figure classifier (5-CL) for the sign HIT (COLPITO) as an indication of bombs falling from the sky. Although this was not explicitly stated in the item, she knew that the building was not hit by a gas explosion, a concealed bomb or sea-to-land strike, but by an air strike.

Examples of nouns in the subcorpus that have different synonymous signs in LIS are 'truce' (*tregua*) and 'cease-fire' (*cessate il fuoco*). In the bulletins they are interpreted by various signs glossed as: PAUSE, WAR-SUSPENDED, SUSPENSION, or FIRING-ENOUGH/SUFFICIENT. Often the signs used to interpret 'truce' are identical to those used for 'cease-fire'. However, when both terms are present in the same item of news, the interpreter is forced to make a split second decision whether to use a synonymous sign or omit one of them. News interpreters need to be acquainted with an extremely wide range of signs to cover the numerous concept fields encountered. Sometimes fingerspelling has to be adopted as in the case of 'white phosphorous'. There is no sign in LIS for 'phosphorus' so it is fingerspelled and followed by the sign WHITE (F-O-S-F-O-R-O + BIANCO).

Proper and institutional names, place names and nationalities are particularly common in the conflict subcorpus owing to the international

nature of conflict and the parties involved. For proper names the initial letter or full or partial fingerspelling with mouthings comes into play again (as described in section 3), e.g. Williamson – “Williams” O-N; Mubarak – M-U “Barak”; Olmert – O-L “mert”.

Fingerspelling is adopted 71 times for institutional references composed of 21 types referring to international organizations, seats of government and diplomacy, political parties, factions, militias, religious groups or institutions, tribunals, a television network and particular locations such as a hospital or the hotels and Jewish centre involved in the Mumbai terrorist attacks. The most frequent term is ‘ Hamas’ (14 occurrences) followed by ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (9), related to various countries.

Toponymic reference causes problems in LIS as signed television news reporting in Italy is recent and signs have not yet developed for the less common names. Sign names exist for European countries or major states and continents like ‘China’ or ‘Africa’ but even these may evolve over time to accommodate political correctness (see Kellett and Sala, forthcoming). The range of toponymic types is very extensive, 58 in all with 169 occurrences (tokens). Interpretation of toponyms follows similar choices to those described for proper names, i.e. recourse to fingerspelling (the whole word or initial letter) or the use of existing (biblical) place sign names (e.g. ‘Israel’, ‘Egypt’ as well as the city of ‘Jerusalem’). For the names of Arab states most interpreters resort to full or partial fingerspelling because no sign names exist for them in LIS (e.g. G-A-Z-A fingerspelled in full or preceded by the LIS sign for ‘strip’: STRIP + G-A-Z-A). Likewise, the manual alphabet is adopted for 99 occurrences of nouns and adjectives denoting nationality (composed of 20 types).

In sign language facial expression conveys important grammatical and semantic information. A sentence can be rendered interrogative through a brow raise. The widening or narrowing of the lips can indicate the size of an object. In most cases, prosody, speed and emphasis are indicated through particular facial expressions, but to date little research has been done in this area on LIS. Correct management of facial expression is problematic for sign language interpreters as it is not natural and spontaneous in hearing people (unless they were brought up by deaf parents). It is particularly important when conveying news on conflict where emotions, reactions and the intensity of conflict have to be transmitted in some way. For more detail on the conflict subcorpus see Kellett and Sala (forthcoming).

6. Foreign loans

Anglicisms are common in regular spoken Italian news reports, have become part of the Italian language and are found in all genres. Several

appeared in the main corpus. Some have entered LIS acquiring recognizable signs (glossed below in English) like:

Film – FILM

Goal – GOAL

Leader – HEAD

A LIS sign does exist for LEADERSHIP borrowed from American Sign Language, but it is not used in the corpus. Some anglicisms have no corresponding sign but a solution is sought to convey the meaning:

Fan – WHO LOVE

Raid – AEROPLANES BOMBING

Others, if not so common, have to be conveyed by finding logical, clear, solutions on the spur of the moment made from the combination of an existing sign in LIS and the mouthing of the term in English:

Cargo – TRANSPORT + “*cargo*”

Container – BOX + “*container*”

Manager – BAG-CARRIER + “*manager*”

Pacemaker – HEART + “*pacemaker*”

*Test Anti-doping*⁶ – BLOOD-EXTRACTION PILLS + “*test doping*”

Unabomber – 1 BOMB + “*bomber*”

Yet others are fingerspelled:

OK – O-K

Pop – P-O-P

Another solution is partial fingerspelling of the English word plus mouthing of the English:

Provider – P-R-O + “*provider*”

One anglicism was mixed including a LIS sign, initialization of the place name, as well as its English mouthing, which turned out to be an Italian phonetic pronunciation of the spelling.

Scandalo Watergate – SCANDAL -W- + “*Watergate*”

‘OK’ and ‘pop’ are widely used English loans in both Italian and LIS. ‘Stop’ is another commonly used anglicism in Italian but has distinct signs in LIS according to whether it means ‘enough’, ‘come to a halt’, ‘bring to an end’ etc. ‘Big’ was also found but it is a loan only in Italian and hence probably not transparent in LIS as is also the case for ‘*provider*’ and ‘*manager*’.

Other foreign loans used in the Italian corpus are:

- ‘*blitz*’ of German origin, uttered once in the ST but omitted in LIS as rendered redundant by the term ‘*raid*’ preceding it in the same news item;

6 English words but in an Italian word order.

- a word of French origin in the sub corpus is '*bipartisan*', interpreted according to the context by indication of the spatial location of the two parties involved followed by EQUAL;
- a second French loan is the common term '*premier*' interpreted by HEAD like '*leader*', or, if already mentioned in the item, by indication of 'his' previously signed location and interpreted once by FIRST + -M- "*minister*" (i.e. Prime Minister);
- a third gallicism is '*dossier*' rendered FILE + "*dossier*";
- the Arabic word '*rais*' is mouthed three times when referring to Saddam Hussein. It is interpreted once by indication of Saddam's location in the previously signed discourse and twice by the sign 'EX/FORMER' + -R- accompanied by mouthing: EX + -R- "*rais*";
- the biblical Hebrew term '*Shoah*' meaning desolation, catastrophe or disaster, referring to the Jewish Holocaust in items on Middle Eastern events is always fingerspelled in full: S-H-O-A-H.

7. Concluding remarks

The comparative linguistic analysis of a small multimodal corpus of Italian news reports signed in LIS has revealed several insights into how and to what extent international and Italian news, related specifically to politico-institutional events, law, crime and global conflicts, crosses the international 'sound barrier': it has also highlighted some of the problems encountered by professional sign language interpreters. This paper has included only a few examples of the linguistic challenges confronting them in the television news studio (more fully explained in Kellett Bidoli 2009a, b; Kellett and Sala forthcoming). It was found that on all four channels the news was conveyed adequately despite the temporal constraints imposed by the medium. In the three domain-specific areas examined so far, eight principle factors challenge the sign language interpreters' cognitive coping strategies. They are mainly linguistic and textual features forcing them to adjust and find suitable solutions ranging from anticipation to reformulation or even omission of terms or chunks of information:

- the time factor (bulletin schedule as well as the speed of enunciation);
- domain-specific terminology;
- the use of 'container' terms and synonyms;
- culture-bound terms;
- home and foreign proper names;
- toponymic reference and nationalities;
- foreign loans;
- emphasis through facial expression.

Apart from the mode of delivery, sign-language interpreting in many ways is not so diverse from simultaneous spoken-language interpreting

(Kellett Bidoli 2002). Similarities in research interests can easily be found but are as yet little explored. One such area is interpreting quality. Some of the output-related quality criteria commonly cited in the literature could be applied also to sign-language interpreting quality such as:

- correct terminology: a criterion highly relevant to the wide variety of ST terms described above and for which the sign language news interpreter must find rapid solutions when ready-made established signs do not exist;
- correct grammar: extremely important in sign language where signed varieties of national spoken languages should be avoided (e.g. Signed Italian);
- fluency of delivery: sign fluency is achieved through the correct use of the four universally recognized parameters: handshape, palm orientation, movement and location;
- lively intonation: the equivalent of this prosodic feature in sign language is emphatic facial expression and gesture. (An interesting experiment could be to sign the news with reduced or no facial expression. Could this be considered the equivalent of monotonous and inexpressive speech?);
- pleasant voice: signing has to be clear but also pleasant and harmonious to watch;
- synchronicity: here synchronicity with the newsreader is of the essence;
- native accent: there is not one universal sign language as many hearing people believe, but as many signed languages and regional 'dialects' as there are deaf communities. This may cause problems of comprehension not only among interpreters but also among signers unacquainted with particular 'signed accents' or signed lexical variants.

As mentioned in the introduction, little attention has hitherto been paid to research on sign-language interpreting in media settings. At the Trieste conference *Emerging Topics in Translation and Interpreting* (16-18 June, 2010) Robin Setton stated that interpreting theory has to be based on observing the interpreting profession followed by categorization, explicit theory, testing, verification and application. This paper falls within the first phase of this chain: observation. Research interest in Trieste has modestly begun to emerge in this area but has a long way to go before analysis of professional interpreting in the television studio passes through the subsequent stages leading to practical applications that can be turned to good use in sign language interpreter training courses. During the training of novice sign language interpreters, time should be set aside to dwell on different settings. On the one hand, like in spoken-language interpreting, there is the conference setting, as deaf people are becoming more aware of their rights and attend conferences on deaf issues. On the other hand, more importantly for the deaf, socially-related settings are those in which interpreters will work more frequently (in hospitals, courtrooms, educational institutions etc.), but a few will be employed to

work in the television studio to provide deaf and hard-of-hearing people with access to national and international communication. Students should be made aware of differences in these working environments and taught the appropriate coping strategies. In the case of news interpreting they must work on many fronts: on signing skills, on how to handle a wide range of domain specific-terminology, on the perfection and rapidity of fingerspelling, on learning to cope with the barrage of proper names, toponyms and numerous institutional and geographical references, on becoming aware of quality criteria and expected standards, on working in front of a camera.

What is learnt through research about how professionals cope in real-life situations can be taught in classroom learning environments where this knowledge is absorbed by trainees. Over time, they will become 'fledgling' interpreters themselves and probably apply the theoretical teaching to a practical amelioration of their own interpreting skills. This in turn will be observed by new generations of researchers to hopefully generate a cyclical improvement of sign language interpreter performance, thus, starting from the interpreting profession, passing to theory, back to the interpreting profession, to theory, to the interpreting profession.

References

- Allsop L. and Kyle J. (2008) "Translating the news: a Deaf translator's experience", in C. J. Kellett Bidoli and E. Ochse (eds.) *op. cit.* 383-401.
- Cokely D. (ed.) (1992) *Sign Language Interpreters and Interpreting*, Burtonsville, MD, Linstok Press.
- Eugeni C. (2006) "Introduzione al rispeaking televisivo", *Intralinea Online translation Journal*: special issue, http://www.intralinea.it/specials/eng_more.php?id=444_o_32_o_M52%25
- Eugeni C. (2008a) "A sociolinguistic approach to real-time subtitling: re-voicing, respeaking, shadowing and simultaneous interpreting", in C. J. Kellett Bidoli and E. Ochse (eds.) *op. cit.* 357-382.
- Eugeni C. (2008b) "Respeaking the TV for the Deaf: for a real special needs-oriented subtitling", *Studies in English Language and Literature*, 21, 37-47.
- Frishberg N. (1990) *Introduction to Interpreting*, 2nd ed., Silver Spring, MD, RID Publications.
- Hatim B. and Mason I. (1990) *Discourse and the Translator*, London, Longman.
- Janzen T. (ed) (2005) *Topics in Signed Language Interpreting: Theory and Practice*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.

- Kellett Bidoli C.J. (2002) "Spoken-language and signed-language interpretation: are they really so different?", in G. Garzone and M. Viezzi (eds.) *Interpreting in the 21st Century. Challenges and Opportunities*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 171-179.
- Kellett Bidoli C.J. (2007a) "The linguistics conference setting: a comparative analysis of intercultural disparities during English to Italian sign language interpretation", in G. Garzone and C. Ilie (eds.) *The Use of English in Institutional and Business Settings: An Intercultural Perspective*, Bern, Peter Lang, 331-349.
- Kellett Bidoli C.J. (2007b) "English in the invisible city", in G. Del Lungo, J. Douthwaite and L. Jottini (eds.) *Cityscapes Islands of the Self*, Vol. 2, *Language Studies*, Cagliari, CUEC, 185-201.
- Kellett Bidoli C.J. (2008a) "Transfer and construction of identity and culture in audiovisual feature film translation for the Italian Deaf Community", in C. J. Kellett Bidoli and E. Ochse (eds.) *op. cit.*, 403-432.
- Kellett Bidoli C.J. (2008b) "Constructing identity through multimodal narrative for the Italian Deaf Community: cinema and TV", in G. Di Martino, V. Polese and M. Solly (eds.) *Identity and Culture in English Domain-specific Discourse*, Naples, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 261-280.
- Kellett Bidoli C.J. (2009a) "Transfer of institutional and political identity through TV news reporting for the Italian Deaf", in G. Garzone and P. Catenaccio (eds.) *Identities across Media and Modes: Discursive Perspectives*, Bern, Peter Lang, 311-336.
- Kellett Bidoli C.J. (2009b) "Cross-cultural/linguistic transfer of legal terminology on film and television to the Italian deaf community", in S. Cavagnoli, E. Di Giovanni and R. Merlini (eds.) *La ricerca nella comunicazione interlinguistica: Modelli teorici e metodologici*, Franco Angeli, Milano 489-508.
- Kellett Bidoli, C.J. and Ochse E. (eds.) (2008) *English in International Deaf Communication*, Bern, Peter Lang.
- Kellett Bidoli C.J. and Sala R. (forthcoming) "Interpreting conflict from speech to sign on Italian television", paper presented at the 3rd Conference of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies, *Mediation and Conflict: Translation and Culture in a Global Context*, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia 8-10 July 2009.
- Kurz I. and Mikulasek B. (2004) "Television as a source of information for the deaf and hearing impaired. Captions and sign language on Austrian TV", *Meta*, XLIX, 1, 81-88.
- Kyle J.G. and Allsop L. (1997) *Sign on Europe: A Study of Deaf People and Sign Language in the European Union*, Bristol, Centre for Deaf Studies.
- Kyle J.G. and Dury A. (2003) *See Hear Now, Final Report to BBC*, Bristol, Deaf Studies Trust.

- Marschark M., Peterson R. and Winston E.A. (eds.) (2005) *Sign Language Interpreting and Interpreter Education: Directions for Research and Practice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Napier J. (ed.) (2009) *International Perspectives on Sign Language Interpreter Education*, Washington, DC, Gallaudet University Press.
- Napier J., McKee R. and Goswell D. (2006) *Sign Language Interpreting: Theory and Practice in Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney, The Federation Press.
- Solow S.N. (2000) *Sign Language Interpreting: A Basic Resource Book* (Revised ed.), Burtonsville, MD, Linstok Press.
- Steiner B. (1998) "Signs from the void: the comprehension and production of sign language on television", *Interpreting* 3 (2), 99-146.
- Stone C. (2005) *Towards a Deaf Translation Norm*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Bristol.
- Tucci L. (2000) "... a pagina 777 di Televideo", in C. Taylor (ed.) *Tradurre il cinema*, Trieste, DSLIT, 91-100.
- Venuti L. (1995) *The Translator's Invisibility*, London/New York, Routledge.
- Woll B. and Allsop L. (1990) "Recent variation in BSL in the light of new approaches to the study of language", in J.G. Kyle (ed.) *Deafness and Sign Language into the 1990s*, Bristol, Deaf Studies Trust.