

INTERPRETING COMPETENCES AS A BASIS AND A GOAL FOR TEACHING

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1. Interpreting competence and what it means to whom
- 1.1. Linguistic and other competences

Interpreters working at conferences, in negotiations, dialogues or in the media are expected to render a professional service, based on the skills and competences they have acquired during their training. If they fail to perform properly, misunderstandings may arise, the atmosphere between communication partners may be affected or communication between the different linguistic groups may break down altogether. Thus the skills that interpreters have must enable them to provide their services in such a way that participants in a multilingual event who do not speak or understand each other's language may nevertheless communicate successfully and that no disturbances of proceedings arise from the fact that interpreters are at work.

In a conference situation, the interpreting process is rarely taken much note of and it is rather at points where interpreting does not function properly, either for technical reasons or owing to the performance of the interpreters concerned, that participants who rely on interpreters wonder what it is that makes a good interpreter. In a non-conference situation, where (regrettably, too often, non-professional) interpreters are used, e.g. to mediate in situations where people, unable to speak or understand the language spoken in a country in which they happen to be, have to deal with local authorities, the police, medical staff etc., the interpreter's participation in the communication process is felt more immediately. The role of the interpreter may also vary depending on the interpreting situation in which s/he is expected to perform, and in some situations the interpreter's attitude and competence in interaction may be just as crucial as his/her linguistic skills (cf. Wadensjø 1998).

Among the prerequisites people generally think of as necessary for good interpreting are the linguistic skills, i.e. the knowledge of as many languages as possible, and being able to speak and listen at the same time. It is less widely appreciated that it is not only the purely linguistic skills (and even less the sheer number of languages) that are vital but the thorough knowledge of the cultures of the countries or regions concerned, including political, economic, social and ethnic differences, administrative structures, community life but also literature and the arts. Knowledge of all these aspects is generally acquired by living and studying in the relevant countries for a certain period, which is a prerequisite for

everyone working in the context of more than one culture or in intercultural mediation. Equally important for the interpreting profession are the mental skills, i.e. the excellent functioning of mnemonic capacity and the ability to work at a high level of concentration, as well as self motivation and extraordinary tolerance to stress. But all these skills, necessary as they are, will not by themselves enable an interpreter to do his/her job satisfactorily.

What, then, are the more specific skills that a professional interpreter is expected to apply to his/her job? Which specialized skills do interpreters need in different communication situations in order to be able to render a professional service to the satisfaction of all those involved? Is there such a thing as interpreting competence, can it be defined in the same way for all types of interpreting, and what is its relation to other types of linguistic mediation?

Of course, the linguistic skills of interpreters have to be excellent, which means more than being 'fluent' in one's working languages. They include not only command of the general or conversational but also specialised languages such as banking, medical or data processing language, differences in usage, style, register, cultural norms and peculiarities etc. (declarative and semantic knowledge). A skilled interpreter is not only aware of those differences but also knows how to cope with them (procedural knowledge). S/he will know, for instance, whether a technical term (of IT or stock exchange jargon) is to be translated or rendered in the source language, a decision which depends, among other things, on corporate usage. That is why the popular idea of an interpreter having numerous working languages from which and into which s/he is able to work does not very much reflect real life, where interpreters have to be acquainted with the history, social developments, literature and political constitutions of all the countries of their working languages, a condition which tends to place a limit on the number of languages offered by most interpreters.

If one attempts to define the competence of professional (conference) interpreters more theoretically, one might say that it refers to the ability to perform cognitive tasks of mediation within a bi-/multilingual communication situation at an extremely high level of expectations and quality, often in a team of several interpreters. It includes the ability to interpret in the consecutive as well as simultaneous and any other mode such as whispering or dialogue interpreting. Interpreting takes place either between two languages (bilingual interpreting) or from one or several languages into one language which is generally the interpreter's mother tongue. The different contexts and situations in which interpreters work require comprehensive and specific cultural and communication knowledge, extensive subject knowledge and the ability to quickly extend the relevant knowledge acquired. Moreover, interpreters will have to make use of their procedural knowledge about ways of solving linguistic, cultural, situational or other problems in the interpreting process, and

they will have to act appropriately and professionally when confronted with any new difficulties arising during a given conference. Competence is not only required during the interpreting process itself, it has to go into preparation prior to the actual act of interpreting and is necessary after the event (when newly acquired linguistic and subject knowledge has to be recombined with previous knowledge) as well as with regard to an interpreter's overall attitude, flexibility, and ability to adapt to technical challenges and ethical principles. This professionalism results from the ability to use the skills acquired; the more professional experience an interpreter has gained, the more distinct this professional approach should become.

The competence of a professional interpreter can thus be defined as the competence to process texts within the scope of a bi- or multilingual communication situation with the aim of interlingual mediation. It is also the capability of acting and performing in a situation characterised by externally determined constraints, such as the pressure of time, lack of semantic autonomy and the potential interference between closely connected processes of production and comprehension.

1.2. The competence for strategic text processing

Apart from the purely linguistic aspect, interpreting competence is the ability to perform in a communication situation where people (speakers, text producers) produce texts on the basis of their own knowledge, their intentions and assumptions about those to whom the text is addressed, and other people (recipients, addressees) to whom texts are addressed and whose goal is to comprehend a given text on the basis of their knowledge, interests and assumptions about the producer of the text (cf. Kohn & Kalina 1996). In this communication situation, the cognitive tasks of the interpreter differ from those of text producers and addressees in a number of aspects. In particular, interpreters have to undertake special comprehension efforts, as – unlike the addressees – they are usually deficient in their knowledge of the relevant subject matter, and they are not normally expected or allowed to filter out any information which they consider to be irrelevant or of no interest.

The above general approach to interpreting also makes use of the findings of psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology. It is psycholinguistic in that it takes into account the relationship between the participants in a communication act. It assumes strategic processing, i.e. the ability to determine the goal of interpreting as the production of a target text that enables the addressee to comprehend what the text producer has addressed to him/her, to inference implicit information, producer's intentions etc., and to take further action of whatever type – reply, contradict, or just memorise elements considered as relevant. The conditions in

which the goal of target text production is attained are likely to change through the process so that the way in which the goal is reached has to be adapted dynamically as a function of the processing constraints with which the interpreter is confronted. These constraints include, in addition to the factors mentioned above, the fact that interpreters are not in control of their own processing speed – which is a function of text presentation by the speaker - nor of the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the input they receive, and that they are engaged in competing activities (as described by Gile 1988 and 1991 in his model of capacity management), a circumstance which results in higher susceptibility to disturbances affecting the comprehension process (loss of information) and the production process (e.g. interference (cf. Kalina 1992) and presentational deficiencies, cf. Shlesinger 1994)). To cope with these constraints and yet achieve the goal of target text production, interpreters must be able to choose the appropriate strategies¹ for text comprehension and text production from among and in addition to the strategies used in monolingual text processing. The strategies interpreters use most frequently must become, to a certain degree, automatic so as to leave cognitive capacity for complex operations that occur less frequently².

The approach is cognitive in that it considers the processing operations to be performed at different cognitive levels and in different stages of the process of mediation. Mental modelling (building a representation of a text and of the world to which the text refers, cf. Johnson-Laird 1981) is not only carried out by those to whom texts are addressed but also by those who interpret texts for addressees. This applies to professional conference interpreting as well as non-conference interpreting (and to translation processes). Thus, interpreting competence requires assessing one's own comprehension and that of others, and it involves the ability to use one's memory as efficiently as possible, having to store details (micro-information) but also the macrostructure of a given text, along with contextual, situational, world knowledge and a multitude of other information. Interpreting also requires rhetorical and speaking skills, which have to be fully mastered so as to withstand the disturbing influences that are likely to affect the interpreting process. Moreover, interpreting competence requires the efficient management of one's own processing resources in such a way that the best result possible in the given circumstances can be obtained, and it presupposes that an ethical standard is maintained, i.e. it requires appropriate and conscientious behaviour.

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- 1 The term strategy is used as defined by Færch & Kasper (1984:47) in their psycholinguistic approach to monolingual communication and refers to "potentially conscious plans for solving [...] a problem in reaching a [...] communicative goal".
 - 2 For a detailed discussion of the strategic processing approach see Kohn & Kalina (1996); for a brief overview of strategies in interpreting Kalina 1992.

The strategic nature of text processing by interpreters is more evident - and crucial for the processing result - than strategic text processing as described for monolingual text production and comprehension (cf. the literature discussed in Kalina 1998). It also differs from strategic text processing as observed in the translation process in certain aspects, whereas in others, translation and interpreting strategies can be regarded as similar when contrasted with those of monolingual text processing.

Describing the specificity of interpreting against the background of the disciplines from which its descriptive tools are derived (such as applied linguistics, translation, cognitive and psycholinguistics) may help come somewhat closer toward the establishment of a (sub-)discipline and should enable interpreter teachers to choose priorities and a methodological orientation for their classroom work.

To sum up, interpreting competence involves the competence to use text processing strategies in ways that can be distinguished from strategic processing in monolingual settings. Strategies used by interpreters in text processing may be defined by goal-oriented categories. Comprehension strategies include segmentation of input, anticipation, inferencing, accessing previously stored knowledge, building relations between stored and new information, in short, mental modelling. Text production strategies comprise restructuring, paraphrasing, condensing or expanding information, and the use of prosodic or non-verbal features. Global strategies are of a more general and comprehensive nature; they involve memorizing the input, adapting one's mental model, monitoring one's own output for deficiencies but also that of the text producer for coherence, and repairing errors. All these different operations, with their specific goals or sub-goals, interact in a complex way in the interpreting process. The interpreting-specific use and interaction of strategies is more typical of and especially more crucial for the result in simultaneous than in consecutive interpreting or in translation.

2. How the training of interpreters developed

In linguistic research, some scientists suggest that the basic competence to perform tasks of interlingual mediation is a natural gift that comes with the ability to use more than one language (cf. Harris & Sherwood 1978). This theory would provide an explanation for the fact that interpreting services have for centuries been performed by non-professionals. The view has not been entirely shared by other linguists (such as Krings 1992), and it can certainly not be applied to the more complex linguistic mediation tasks required today. But, in line with that approach, the skills of interpreters were explained as a matter of talent alone even just a few decades ago. The phrase coined by Renée van Hoof,

then head of the European Communities' Conference and Interpreting Service, which was quoted in *The Times* of September 26, 1973 (cf. Weischedel 1977:101), "interpreters are born", is evidence of the belief, which prevailed at that time, that no methodological structure of training was necessary. All that students needed was excellent knowledge of their working languages and communicative skills. This approach may in part though not fully be explained by the fact that, at the time the phrase was coined, the majority of interpreters had indeed gained access to the profession through their bi- or multilingual family background, owing to personal or political circumstances, so that they felt more or less at home in the cultures of all their languages. After all, the earliest simultaneous interpreters had either been trained as translators or were bilinguals with an interest in this type of activity³. The early interpreting teachers came to the conclusion that the way they themselves had learned to do simultaneous, i.e. simply by trying and practising until it worked, was the only method by which this skill could be learnt at all. Actual conference practice was regarded as far more vital than classroom practice (Paneth 1957:88). As no method of training existed, this approach was understandable.

Meanwhile, however, the demand for interpreters has grown exponentially, and so have requirements with regard to their performance. The grand old interpreter who was a central actor on the conference scene and would often be publicly applauded and admired for his/her performance is a thing of the past. *Culture générale* and a broad general knowledge, which were regarded as essentials by the early generation of conference interpreters, and education as a *généraliste*, as Seleskovitch (1968) put it (a view critically commented by Ilg 1980), are no longer sufficient as prerequisites, nor are stringency of thought, linguistic skill and intuition; which are rather vague concepts that were and are difficult to define anyway. (And *culture générale* in itself is becoming something quite different today from what it was in the past.) It is true that quotations from works of literature are still making interpreters' lives difficult from time to time, but much more so are the frequent references to rapidly expanding technological fields of knowledge, to the vast shared knowledge of the global community of tv-watchers (soaps are a case in point) and to the common language of IT. The early generation of simultaneous interpreters could afford to refuse their services e.g. if texts were read – and all the more if they were not provided with a manuscript, as they regarded interpreting on the basis of a read out manuscript (which, one must admit, was, and continues to be mostly poor reading) as an impossibility. This was not, in fact, part of their natural skill. Teaching interpreting therefore consisted of teaching to cope with

3 cf. Koch (1992), Gaiba (1998) for details on the recruitment of interpreters for the Nuremberg Trials.

impromptu speech on subjects that well-educated people were supposed to be more or less acquainted with.

Today, the speaker who does not rely on a manuscript but develops his/her speech spontaneously and therefore with a certain degree of redundancy, which makes interpreters' jobs much easier (cf. Chernov 1994), is the exception rather than the rule. Aspects of presentation have gained priority over content in public speaking in many instances (a point which is most apparent in multimedia events or when interpreting for TV), and although this affects not only interpreting, it has specific consequences for interpreters, who can no longer rely on meaning alone. (And often, conference participants do not even like to be seen to depend on interpreters, whom they prefer to work unnoticed, offering them at most an occasional word of thanks.) The teaching community will have to take note of this change in priorities, and adapt training methods accordingly.

The types of interlingual mediation performed by interpreters today are manifold. They range from bilateral dialogue and community interpreting, public service, court and police interpreting, and conference interpreting to TV or videoconference and remote interpreting and even to telephone interpreting which can be switched on by dialling a telephone number⁴. Even though one cannot always consider such services to be quality interpreting services, it is nevertheless inevitable, in view of the complexity of the tasks that professional interpreters have to perform in our technological age (which may include handling a computer while interpreting but also working late at night for a videoconference) and of the broad range of different and highly technical subjects with which they are confronted, to prepare students for tasks the older generation of interpreters would never have accepted to. It is therefore not sufficient to look out for the naturally skilled who can do the job even without any formal training. The sheer number of interpreters needed at multilingual events each and every day of a year and the different character of conferences today (where speeches are often made not in order to impress the audience but to have one's paper printed in the proceedings) as compared with the past (where speeches were made to impress those listening or obtain a reaction from them) shows that the number of interpreters 'born' is far too small. And the question of how to spot these 'born' interpreters has not been solved either (cf. 3.2). Moreover, promoting natural talents alone would not justify the fact that interpreting training is offered at university level in most countries. For this to be justified, there has to be a systematic, structured training methodology based on solid theoretical research findings.

4 The very day the author was writing this passage she received a letter from an innovative communication company offering a 24-hour simultaneous telephone interpreting service, requesting interested interpreters to be available on the phone for a specified length of time per day.

The first scholars to deal with questions of interpreting training were practising conference interpreters who had taken over training courses at university institutions for the training of interpreters. These people, professional as they were in their practical work, had not, however, enjoyed any formal scientific or educational training and were, understandably, tempted to base their teaching methodology on their own personal experience. As some of them, like Danica Seleskovitch of ESIT, were highly talented interpreters as well as teachers, they proved to be quite successful in their training approach. However, the experience these early pioneers of interpreter training made in their own teaching led them to design their teaching methods as a model of interpreting as such – rather than qualifying their insights as teaching experience (see e.g. Seleskovitch 1968; 1974). Personal experience was thus lifted up to the level of a theoretical framework, without the assumptions made being reviewed by any scientific standards (cf. the critical remarks by Gile 1990). The result of such an individual approach was a highly prescriptive teaching theory and a rather dogmatic approach by those that had developed it.

In the literature, one finds a number of articles on the merits or dangers of specific types of exercises, such as on sight translation (cf. Coughlin 1989), anticipation in simultaneous interpreting (cf. Moser 1978 and Chernov 1994), disputes on shadowing (Schweda Nicholson 1990, Kurz 1992, Kalina 1994, all discussed in Kalina 1998), The two books by Seleskovitch & Lederer (1989) and Gile (1995) offer a full range of valuable suggestions for organising and structuring interpreting classes. They are all based on years of experience, but, again, they constitute individual experience and in some cases are in stark contrast with each other.

For instance, the prescriptive approach of the Paris School which is convinced that consecutive has to be fully mastered by students before they try to work in the simultaneous mode, has been challenged by scholars who base their thinking on the Paris School model (Aarup 1993) as well as those who have criticized the Paris School approach as insufficient anyway (Kalina 1994). And yet, empirical findings proving either one or the other method do not exist.

The same must be said with regard to note-taking for consecutive, where there are a whole range of different approaches on questions such as the language of notes (cf. Rozan 1956, Ilg 1988). Matyssek (1989) and others recommend source-language notes or symbols. The Paris School (Déjean Le Féal 1981, and on this, Aarup 1993 agrees entirely) recommends target-language notes, if at all. Aarup even goes so far as to suggest that notes made by students could serve as an indicator of analytical capability. But as long as there

is such a lack of hard facts about how memory works and interacts with notes taken, such conclusions are extremely problematic⁵.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to have more facts on the effect of interpreting training, based on a set of empirical studies on the use and success of different teaching methods. A number of scholars have meanwhile developed a considerable interest in such matters (cf. e.g. Kurz 1989, Mackintosh 1990, Schjoldager 1993 and recently Pöchhacker 1999). But the teaching of interpretation needs a broad basis of scientific findings from which it will be possible to develop a scientifically-based teaching methodology. Pöchhacker's 1999 study is descriptive; it presupposes that there is agreement on the skills that are to be taught. The criteria he chooses for the teaching context are those specified by Bühler for an evaluation context and are not being discussed any further. However, one might assume that evaluation of students during different training stages does not necessarily have to be based on the same criteria as evaluation of authentic professional interpreting. So many more studies are needed on the ways in which student performance in various stages of training differs from that of professional interpreters.

3. Basic skills and basic training

3.1. The research situation

The early interpreting experts regarded interpreting as an activity the main characteristics of which are not related to language⁶; the fact that, for them, interpreting was based not on language but on meaning, meant that it was something quite different from translation, and it could therefore not be explained with the tools of translation theory nor with linguistic theory in general. It took a number of years before attempts at interdisciplinary cooperation were made, and these did not emanate from the interpreting community but from linguists (e.g. Bühler 1989).

At a time when consecutive interpreting was more and more replaced by simultaneous, psychologists, on their part, became interested in some of the phenomena to be observed in the simultaneous mode (the ear-voice span, the simultaneity of speaking and hearing etc.). However, their interest was not directed at explaining interpreting but at finding answers to questions that had

5 Several diploma theses submitted to the University of Heidelberg Institute of Translation and Interpreting in recent years have contributed to establishing a corpus of data on these questions, of what notes are taken by students and professionals, cf. Skerra 1989 and Hegels 1993.

6 The so-called deverbalisation model (e.g. Seleskovitch & Lederer 1989) has been broadly discussed in the literature, cf. Kalina 1998.

come up within their own disciplines, and they regarded interpreting as a case in point to be studied to find these answers (e.g. Treisman 1965 on selective attention and on ear-voice span). It was only in the late 80s and early 90s that a broader range of approaches for a theoretical description of interpreting developed, and the number of publications has risen accordingly in the past few years. As to the ambition and quality of these recent contributions, opinions differ (see Gile 1990, Pöschhacker 1995).

Moser-Mercer (1997) discusses the difference between novices and experts in interpreting and points to the fact that differences in strategic processing have never been investigated with a view to making teaching more efficient. She hypothesises that expert interpreters (professionals) rely more on contextual strategies than novices, going from the known to the unknown, whereas novices turn first to the unknown, trying to solve the problem it raises. Knowledge organisation is also more efficient in professional interpreters, regarding semantic, procedural but also schematic knowledge (cf. Moser-Mercer 1997:257). These assumptions are corroborated by the preliminary findings referred to in Kalina (1998, Chapter 4.3), which suggest that professionals use strategies contrary to those of students: while students split sentences to reduce workload, professionals do not seem to need such relief; while students tend to make frequent micro-corrections but not to correct serious errors, professionals, who seem to monitor their output more efficiently, are likely to correct rather the serious errors and leave micro-slips unrepaired.

Interpreting research is still struggling with the task of identifying what exactly it is that interpreters do when they interpret, or rather how they succeed or fail. A model of interpreting that could explain this would have to describe skill components with a number of subskills to be identified, as Moser-Mercer et al. (1997) suggest. Once all skill components are defined, it should be possible to develop a method of training that can help achieve the results desired, namely train those skills that are needed for interpreting as efficiently as possible. Kutz (1990) has attempted to define global targets and break them down in sub-targets that can be achieved in a cognitive learning process. Based on the views referred to above, it should be possible to break down the vague definition of skill to be acquired into subskills that are to be mastered one after the other, in distinct, well-defined learning stages, so that a fully developed teaching method for training future interpreters can be established.

3.2. Aptitude and testing

Skills are partly acquired during the training stage, but some of them must be present even before training is started. As the training of interpreters is a time- and effort-consuming enterprise, many universities and schools have introduced

aptitude tests, where, apart from language skills, a number of other prerequisites are tested. Aptitude testing is one of the perspectives of interpreting research (for an overview see Dejean Le Féal 1998) but also a practical need, so that tests had to be administered before any scientific findings existed as to which skills should be tested and whether the tests did in fact test these skills. The objective of most tests is to measure linguistic and cultural competences and such attributes as quick, extrovert, intuitive personality etc. Criticism of these tests, which are used to decide on whether a candidate may proceed to interpreting studies proper, focuses on the problems of the reliability and validity of test procedures (cf. Pearl 1995). There is as yet no clear evidence that the skills deemed necessary as prerequisites for successful training efforts are really the ones tested, and that it is those skills students must have before they go into interpreter training. Moreover, the tests do not as yet seem to be sufficiently objective and transparent to be used for decisions that affect the future (chances) of many students.

In this context, it poses a serious dilemma that, despite considerable research efforts, there is still no model for assessing the quality of interpreting, either in class, at the end of the training period (examinations) or in the authentic conference situation (cf. Gile 1995, Kalina 1995). As long as there is no agreement on what quality is and how it can be measured, it is difficult to imagine how tests can ascertain whether an individual will at some future point be able to provide such quality.

3.3. Training competence

As long as there is no clear evidence as to which skill components are absolutely required (and cannot be compensated for by others) for a successful career as a professional interpreter, the question of what exactly the training of future interpreters should consist of remains open. Should they be trained – as in the past – by exposing them to a trial-and-error method, with abundant practicing but no systematic methodological guidance? Interpreting schools in search of interpreter trainers usually require candidates to work as professional interpreters, preferably with some years of experience, and they expect them, above all, to confront students with real life conditions. The literature on interpreting training agrees that authentic, real-life texts should be used in class. This unanimity was one of the results also of Pöchhacker's (1999) study. However, what are real-life texts? In authentic interpreting situations, anything can happen. Therefore, professionals who teach should be expected to offer more than just the texts they may have had to interpret themselves. They should have some approach to training which identifies global and more specific training goals, methods to reach these goals and which takes into account the

complexity of the cognitive tasks they expect students to perform, and the problems with which the latter are likely to be confronted.

Training of trainers is not yet the rule for those who teach, and training institutions rarely look for interpreter trainers with such qualifications. Even in the literature, we find broad agreement in the interpreting community that the most important teaching qualification is that a teacher is a professional interpreter. This may have been sufficient in the past, but today those who train interpreters should be at least acquainted with the concerns and problems of interpreting research and have basic educational qualifications. These are needed if they want to find answers to the questions to be asked, which are: In which way, with what kind of training is it possible to learn or teach which skills and capabilities? How are the objectives of interpreter training in different training stages to be defined and reached? And what is the need for and the position of academic interpreter training programmes for interpreters (as, for that matter, for translators)?

Interpreting teachers who consider themselves to be not trainers of one single activity but also teachers of ways and means, using methods and strategies with which their teaching objectives can be obtained, feel uncomfortable having to wait until research presents them with findings that enable them to do their work properly. They have to train interpreters now. Some have therefore devised a number of specific exercises such as e.g. cloze, text completion or compression, shadowing and others to bridge the gap. As there is no theory of interpreting or teaching and learning as yet which would allow us to justify or falsify such methods, the argument about some of these practical exercises has tended to become quite ideological (for a discussion see Kalina 1998). Continuing the fierce argument about the pros and cons of individual teaching practices is therefore futile and will not result in any further insight into how interpreting competence is achieved. What we need, rather, is the understanding by those who recruit interpreter training staff that they have to look for people who, in addition to being professional interpreters, have a theoretical background and are prepared to undergo some kind of training (e.g. learning theory, cf. Kiraly 1997 on translation teaching) themselves. Giving interpreting students an insight into interpretation theory and research is therefore a necessity, as this may provide the basis on which some of them will qualify for teaching later in their careers.

4. The potential of a T&I approach

4.1. Interdisciplinarity

In recent years, interpreting research has made more and more efforts at interdisciplinary cooperation. These have so far concentrated mainly on

information and communication sciences, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics and neurophysiology (cf. many of the articles in previous numbers of *The Interpreters' Newsletter*). They have resulted in a range of valuable conclusions as to processes at work during interpreting. Nevertheless, there is scope for cooperation also with other disciplines, such as language acquisition and bilingualism research; as for teaching, educational studies may provide useful insights into learning processes, learning progress and teaching strategies that can be of use in the teaching of interpreting competences. Teachers of interpreting would then be able to qualify as such. This would provide a framework in which interpreting competence can not only be defined but also taught more systematically.

4.2. Translation and interpreting (T&I)

In view of the fact that interpreting training takes place in institutions which also train translators and that, in some of these, there is a common basic training, a closer look at translator training would suggest itself. But, as explained in the previous sections, early interpreting studies did not regard translation as very helpful. Translation studies, on its part, has not undertaken too many efforts to integrate interpreting into the models that it developed. Interestingly, the authors that have, even to a limited extent, considered interpreting in their studies are those with a didactic interest.

In the framework of T(translation) and I(nte)preting), and especially in a general theory of translation (see below), interpreting and translation are regarded as two components or subdisciplines of one single discipline. If that approach is valid, there should be elements common to both subdisciplines. The identification of these common features and of the distinctions between the two should be of great interest to the field of translation studies and to interpreting research. That is why I am convinced that such cooperation within the overall discipline can be fruitful for both, although this article focuses on what translation studies can contribute to interpreting research, didactics and professional practice and not vice versa. The key question to be asked is: What can translation contribute to acquiring interpreting competence?

There are several perspectives from which translation may be conclusive with a view to interpreting research. One is the perspective of strategic processing, (see 1.2). In translation research, strategies and the acquisition of translation competence have been described, among others, by Kußmaul (1993), House (1986), Krings (1986b) and Lörcher (1991). These approaches could be examined closely with a view to identifying strategies that are used more extensively both by interpreters and translators than in monolingual communication. Moreover, in research on strategic processing in interpreting,

methods of empirical research that have been applied to translation may be tested for potential application to interpreting.⁷

A second focus of modern translation studies is that of skills, where Wilss (1984) has described types of skills and their development in a training context, even though his model is strongly language-oriented. Nord (1996) suggests a comprehensive approach and describes categories of knowledge skills and competences, which together build a network of competences and are coordinated to reach the goal in question.

However, the literature on translator training has hardly been reflected in that on interpreter training, and there is no indication in the latter about whether and how translation skills may be of any help in interpreting. This is an area where a thorough examination and more cooperation between translation and interpreting didactics should be very promising.

In the past, translation scholars described interpreting as just an oral form of translating, with translation being the generic term that covered both activities (Kade 1968 and the Leipzig school, and later Reiß & Vermeer 1984 in their *General Theory of Translation*). No need was felt to describe the peculiarities of interpreting or defining those aspects in which interpreting differs from translating. The early interpreting scholars and teachers, on the other hand, tended to draw a rigid line between the two, arguing that in translating, one was compelled to work much more on the basis of and along the wording of a text, whereas interpreters were much more guided by the meaning and the intention of the author and therefore performed a more ambitious cognitive task (cf. Seleskovitch 1976; Seleskovitch & Lederer 1989). Neither view lends itself, I think, to describing interpreting on its own or even providing a theory of interpretation, but it could be worth while to search for fruitful insights for both disciplines by also considering results of the study of the other. This is another reason why I think that closer cooperation between the two subdisciplines and a more open mind on the part of one towards the other would be desirable.

Translation studies have a longer history than interpreting studies, which only developed after the technique of simultaneous interpreting had become popular. Both disciplines are taught in similar or identical institutions, and some university curricula stipulate exams in both of them for obtaining diplomas. In other institutions, one has to pass a translation degree before one is allowed to do interpreting, whereas some offer exclusively interpreting courses, often at

7 The author has attempted to adapt the think-aloud method, used to reveal translation processes by Krings (1986a), where it yielded interesting results, to interpreting (for details cf. Kalina 1998); for this, the method had to be adapted to account for the constraints of the interpreting process. Despite the obvious difficulties, the method of retrospective think-aloud may help gain additional information about interpreting processes and should be tested by different research groups.

postgraduate level. But how close is the relation between the two? Can interpreting be defined as oral translation and therefore be taught like translation with account taken of the oral character of interpreting and consequently the addition of public speaking skills? Which are the differences between what is expected of the professional translator and the professional interpreter, and in which ways are the problems different in translating and interpreting? Are there some types of interpreting and translating that share the same problems more than others? Why do interpreters encounter difficulties where translators do not even have to translate but only to copy, e.g. when numbers, names are at stake?

4.3. The integrative approach

The first interpreting researcher who endeavoured to examine translation and interpreting from an integrative perspective was Franz Pöchhacker (1994); his objective was to test the general theory of translation as developed by Reiss and Vermeer (1984) by applying it to simultaneous conference interpreting. In doing so, he found a number of aspects in the theory which would need further elaboration or amendment if it were expected to be valid for simultaneous interpreting in a conference situation, a goal which Pöchhacker would not dismiss. Had Pöchhacker not chosen simultaneous conference interpreting - though this is, admittedly, a very typical and frequent type -, but other types of interpreting and perhaps such forms that are to be defined neither as pure translation nor as pure interpreting but rather as some intermediate type of processing⁸, he might have come closer towards his objective.

From a perspective of mediated (translated or interpreted) strategic text processing in a given communication situation (see 1.2), one finds a number of general conditions that apply to translating and interpreting alike. The language/culture mediator has to comprehend, i.e. analyse the text more thoroughly or fully than the normal reader/listener and will focus as much on what the text producer has wanted to say as on the effect his/her rendition has on the recipient. Text processing strategies will be extensively applied, though in translation these are not as different from monolingual text processing strategies as in interpreting (see above). Basic competences, such as linguistic and cultural competence as well as world and relevant special knowledge, must have been acquired by the translator just as by the interpreter. Equally important are the

8 Translators may be requested to do an oral translation of a written text, or to translate from an audio-/video tape, and likewise, interpreters are frequently confronted with the task of interpreting on the basis of written manuscripts or overhead transparencies, or will have to interpret/translate draft documents for adoption or rejection by conference participants.

ability to process texts cognitively and analytically (comprehension) and to produce texts comprehensibly and communicatively with the appropriate means; the latter will, of course, differ in translating vs. interpreting. Stylistic competence, the ability to make swift decisions and to access one's knowledge and relate textual information to previous knowledge are as important, and so is the competence to tackle interlingual problems. Neubert (1994:412ff) and other translation scholars define this skill as a transfer competence which is achieved if all part and sub-competences interact successfully.

However, though this general transfer competence is a factor T and I should have in common, the various subcompetences will necessarily differ, as will the degree or need of strategic text processing. Such differences can be traced back to the difference in the processes at work in T and I respectively.

4.4. Skills and strategies in T and I

If we assume that there is such a basic transfer competence, it should include a number of basic skills common for translation and interpreting, which must be complemented by translation-specific and interpreting-specific competences. A condition common to T and I is that specific subcompetences must interact, and possibly some translation-specific skills can help in acquiring interpreting-specific competences and that, in particular, interaction may involve translation-specific and interpreting-specific competences in those types of translating or interpreting which are of a more intermediate character in the continuum that links T and I than e.g. simultaneous conference interpreting is (cf. Kalina 2000b). This would imply that there are certain components of training that translators and interpreters can acquire together and others, which must be trained specifically.

A basic commonality of T and I is the strategic approach, i.e. identifying problems and searching for appropriate solutions. Even though there may be a number of similar problems identified for the two types of interlingual text processing, problem solution is bound to differ, with the translator isolating individual problems for separate solution and continuing only after having solved them, the interpreter having to solve problems on-line while the process continues (i.e. more source text is coming in) and even while new problems may be cropping up, and at worst finding only second-best solutions or none at all.

Deficiencies in the texts produced (but also in the original) are another factor to which translators as well as interpreters have to be sensitized. Handling such deficiencies may require the translator to get in touch with the author, other experts or find some other way of solving the problem if the deficiency confronts him/her with a translation problem. An interpreter has only very limited – if any – chances to turn to the text producer for extensive clarification or improvement of source text.

As for target text deficiencies, the translator can review the text s/he has produced as often as deemed necessary within the given time limits. Going over a translation, its style and register, correcting here, amending there, rephrasing, replacing one solution by another is indeed one essential component of the translation process, as has been proven in empirical studies (cf. e.g. Krings 1986a).

If the interpreter finds any target text deficiencies – and more often than not those deficiencies will go unnoticed –, there is not much s/he can do; the decision whether to correct (and thus lose time, incoming information and cognitive capacity) or to do with the flaw as it is (based on a quick assessment of the effect either decision may have on the recipients, versus overt correction, or, if possible, to correct covertly) has to be taken within fractions of a second and cannot be revised easily. Interpreting competence therefore also implies being able to take such decisions swiftly and to live with them, even if they are second best.

Functionally induced changes of source text in translation are operations on which some translation scholars have focussed heavily (Reiß & Vermeer 1984). Drawing attention to potentially different functions of texts as to differing expectations of recipient groups, provides valuable insights both for translators and interpreters; the fact that text function tends to be less of a variable in conference interpreting should not be seen as a reason for ignoring this subject altogether. Meyer (in press), e.g., describes situations in hospital interpreting where information given by doctors may (or may not?) have to be adapted by the interpreter to make it comprehensible for patients – the question of whether this corresponds to the principle of fidelity is wide open for discussion.

One major difference between T and I relates to the effort/result ratio. In translating, one takes every justifiable effort to achieve the best result possible. Interpreters cannot always take efforts to the extent they would like or deem necessary, a point which is best demonstrated with the example of the time factor. Within the limits and constraints given, interpreters have to find the best acceptable solution to hand, i.e. the constraint on the time and effort that can be invested determines the quality of the result. This means that operations that recur frequently have to be performed as routines that have become automated to a considerable degree. The teaching of interpreting has to develop ways for students' acquiring the necessary automatisms or routines (cf. Kalina 1998).

My conclusion from the above is that although ways and means of problem-solving (and many of the problems themselves) may differ in T and I, there are a number of similar or related factors at work in the two subdisciplines that can be pursued within the scope of an integrated approach. Moreover, an integrated T&I approach which takes account also of the results of interdisciplinary research of the two subdisciplines with other disciplines may help shed more

light on some of the intermediate forms of linguistic mediation, such as oral translation or interpreting from/with written material, which are not covered extensively in the literature and deserve far more attention than has so far been devoted to them.

5. Teaching skills and subskills

5.1. Teaching methodology

If we accept that a general theory of translation and interpreting can be established within a T&I framework, this should have consequences also for the teaching of both translation and interpreting. For both, it is necessary to train capabilities (to learn, think, be creative, solve problems). and skills (automatic processes). In translating as well as in interpreting, there are various authors who cope with training as the teaching of subskills and propose some of these. Subskills for translation that should be taught separately are mentioned by Reiß (1974), Wilss (1984), for interpreting by Moser (1978), Kutz (1990) and Gile (1995). House (1986) and Nord (1996) have suggested that interpreting practice may serve to prepare students for acquiring translation competence⁹; Nord also emphasizes the importance of networking for the different skills and capabilities when translation competence is acquired.

Gerzymisch-Arbogast & Mudersbach (1998:45ff) have described a sequential translation method which, if followed when translating, should result in a translated text in which the solutions found can be scientifically justified by the translator. Such approaches are likely to have consequences also for the teaching of the art, as they offer methodologically well defined sequences of steps which, when followed, will lead to a translation where strategic processes and decisions become transparent and reconstructable. This method, attractive as it is, cannot be followed in interpreting, as processing does not take place as a sequence of steps but rather in interaction of different processing decisions that must be taken without full awareness of how they will affect other processing decisions. Nevertheless, sequential approaches may be of help in the teaching of interpreting, if this complex activity is to be decomposed in individual processing steps or stages to be taught separately. Only then does it seem reasonable to expect students to cope with the real task in its entire complexity.

If there is general agreement among interpreter researchers and teachers that [simultaneous] interpreting is a “high-skill information processing activity composed of interdependent subskills” which “should be taught by progressing from easy to more difficult” (Kurz 1992:245), the question is: which subskills of

9 Some of my translation colleagues told me that their students benefit from the inclusion of relevant practical interpreting exercises in translation classes.

the overall goal of interpreting competence should be taught separately, and by which means and in which order are they to be trained? The literature on interpreting training offers no methodological guidance, and teachers may be at a loss to decide what is to be learned first, what is required next, and what degree of interaction can be managed by students at which stages. To complicate matters, there are many more extraneous factors to be considered in interpreting than in translation, as the different processes interact far more also with extratextual elements than in translating processes.

5.2. Learning to interpret

As explained above, there are numerous publications on individual training experience, but too few on training methodology proper. Taking up the issue of training competence (cf. 3.3), interpreter trainers' methodology often consists of the view that texts used in interpreting classes should be real-life texts, with all the difficulties of real-life interpreting. This view is maintained and corroborated in the empirical study by Pöchhacker (1999) based on data from one of the reputed schools, but neither here nor anywhere else is there any indication of the steps that must be completed before students feel in a position to process real-life speeches reliably. The all too categorical demand for real-life conference proceedings in class ignores the need for the filtering out of difficulties for beginners and thus for a systematic introductory phase. In early training stages, I maintain, texts should not reflect all the pitfalls of real life interpreting but be carefully adapted to students' abilities and needs. For example, simplification of input texts regarding various parameters (reducing complexity and density, replacing difficult lexical items and grammatical choices by less problematic ones, making optimum use of prosodic means such as intonation and stress and of nonverbal signals, adapting speed of presentation, providing ample information on the communicative context so that mental modelling can take place in advance of interpreting processes etc.) appears to be a valid method for use in initial training stages. Step by step, more and more of these parameters may then be approximated to real-life situations.

As referred to above, there are very different approaches to certain types of preparatory exercises such as shadowing or dual task performance, but there is no methodologically structured approach saying from which easier subtasks systematic progression to more difficult ones can be expected. No doubt some kind of progression is made in class, but this is not seen to be based on any well-defined, constructive way of proceeding or methodological principle of teaching, starting from a point of departure to achieve a clearly defined learning goal.

How, then, can a more systematic teaching approach be developed? Even with what little we know about the competences a professional interpreter has to command and the basic competences that are required of both interpreters and translators, it should be possible to identify, with some degree of objectivity, at least some specific competences and skills that characterise good interpreting. It is to those that teaching has to be geared.

If we turn to learning theory and psychology to know which types of cognitive tasks are learnt first or more readily, which skills are prerequisites for the acquisition of others, and at which stage students are best able to cope with the interactive character of the interpreting process, this could provide a basis of learning and teaching expertise which teachers of interpreting are so much in need of. It would then be possible to build up sequences of specific exercises, with the relevant learning steps and teaching goals clearly defined, transparent teaching methods and teaching results (i.e. goal achievement) being controlled. If, based on the identification of subskills, a method of teaching certain basic interpreting-specific tasks within the framework of a scientifically tested methodology of interpreter training is developed, then one would be able to speak not of interpreter training alone, as necessary as that is, but also of the teaching of the sub-discipline of interpreting within the scope of T&I.

5.3. The teaching of subskills for different goals: sight translation as an example

Teaching subskills is necessary for translation and interpreting training. Even if the type of subskills to be taught is different for the two activities, there are practical classroom exercises which can serve different purposes for the two. They may therefore be recommended both for translation and for interpreting classes. There are numerous ways in which preparatory teaching units can be organised. To my knowledge, many teachers use some of them; however, when asked, they would be unable to specify what exactly the goal of the exercise is and how it is related to others.

The example discussed here is given for demonstration and refers to sight translation, an intermediate type of interlingual transfer, as seen from the comprehensive perspective of T&I. The example is intended to demonstrate how different subskills can be trained if the unit is embedded in a methodological teaching framework. On the basis of the strategic text processing approach, it is assumed that one of the subgoals of teaching (i.e. the achievement of a subskill) is a receptive competence (comprehending, analysing a source text, structuring input and attributing ranks of importance to different information segments, anticipating and inferencing, short-term memorizing, processing for storage in working memory and building new mental models).

For this, the tasks do not necessarily have to involve code switching. Another subgoal is a performative competence to be made use of in a situation of semantic dependence, of prolonged existence of signals of the source language - a factor which has to be overcome when simultaneous listening and speaking involves switching between languages. Goals may be defined at even lower levels, such as the ability to paraphrase, generalise, condense or explain/expand information, changing register, using different linguistic and extralinguistic means. A subgoal which, however, is of a strongly interactive nature is the competence to monitor all the processes described above. It can be split up in individual monitoring tasks (monitoring only for grammar, or for prosody etc.).

5.3.1. Receptive competence

Let us define the semantic analysis of the source text as one initial subgoal. For this, students are given a written text with the teacher indicating the setting in which the text is supposed to be presented. After a short glance at the whole text, students mark the essential information segments. After putting the text aside, they have to summarize the text on the basis of mnemonic storage of text and marked passages. The summaries given serve only to check on reception and are not further discussed linguistically.

Another subgoal may be the ability to make specific strategic use of the capacity to anticipate and/or inference. Of a text, single phrases (in a later stage, even only segments) are displayed on overhead, with students having to start taking up and continuing the text before they are shown the following phrase/segment. Processed segments may even disappear from the overhead.

As the two tasks mentioned above were monolingual tasks, the next goal could be reaching a certain degree of transfer competence. For this, sight translation of the same text and in the same modes can be used as a method; to further refine the competences needed, this may be combined with tasks of text compression or with a time limit for processing. A further step would then be sight translation of unknown segments of the text, with the same conditions applying.

If memorizing capacity is the subgoal, students are to note one word or one relation as a cue for each of the segments (cf. above), with rendition of texts either in the source or target language after a sequence of segments has been displayed.

These units may be run with progressively more demanding texts or with rising pressure on processing time. In Kalina (1992; 1998) I have suggested similar sequences for cloze and shadowing exercises.

5.3.2. Production competence

The units described are targeted at interpreter and translation students alike, as the assumption is that basic receptive skills are as necessary for the translator as they are for the interpreter. The following exercises have been devised for use in interpreting classes, but on closer examination it would seem that they can be used as validly in translation classes, as the goals to be obtained are relevant also for translators. They are aimed at production and presentation competence.

If the subgoal is the production of a grammatically correct text, students are presented with a source text in the oral mode which contains grammatical and other deficiencies. During shadowing of the text, they are expected to produce a flawless target text (in the language of the source text) without making any changes to the semantic content of the text.

If the subgoal is the ability to apply syntactic transformation strategies to a source text, material with extremely complex syntactic structures is to be split up in such a way that short segments are built. Another task of this type may be to process a text which contains syntactical structures that violate the norms of the source (and target) language and are borrowed from a language in which students have to interpret in subsequent stages of their training. In the shadowing mode, students are expected to produce a linguistically correct text where syntactical structures have undergone transformation operations so as to bring them into line with the norms of the source/target language.

For paraphrasing as a subgoal, a text with a high content of proverbs, metaphors or idiomatic expressions is to be paraphrased without using the wording of the source text. Time pressure may be a task-burdening component of this as of other exercises.

5.3.3. Interaction of competences

If the subgoal is one which requires interaction of different processes, such as monitoring, there are several ways of practicing the strategic use of this general processing approach. Students may be asked to shadow – and later interpret – sections of text that show either one or several different deficiencies – lexical and grammatical errors, frequent corrections, false starts, weaknesses in presentation – and produce their target text in such a way that no trace of the deficiency in question is left.

These training units may be combined and made more difficult to pursue other or more complex teaching goals. For the time being, the list given above is nothing but a teaching suggestion. For developing a teaching methodology, it would, of course, be necessary to analyse the effect of all these units and their combinations.

5.4. Other skills

There are, of course, other subskills which may be taught in different ways. Competences that indirectly affect translation or interpreting products are those related to the behaviour of the mediator. Reliability and confidentiality are but two of the ethical requirements that both interpreters and translators have to fulfil. Being confronted with ethical questions but also with problems of behaviour and interaction in the learning stage will enable the future translator or interpreter to find solutions to questions e.g. of neutrality or active participation in situations as different as that of a conference setting where absolute neutrality is expected versus a dialogue situation involving refugees expecting to be helped, which sometimes means for the interpreter having to give up his/her neutrality.

5.5. Integration of subskills

There may be different ways of integrating the separate subskills mastered in this way. These ways will depend on the specific training goal to be achieved. However, one should not ignore the fact that even with all the different processing conditions and requirements of the numerous forms of T and I, there are quite a few lessons one sub-discipline can learn from the other.

Translators, when confronted with tasks of text compression or of translating under time constraints, or of oral presentation in the presence of listeners who want to react to a text offered to them, will learn to look beyond the mere words of a text and view it from a bird's eye perspective, identifying more easily what is absolutely essential and neglecting what may be redundant information. This will help them re-examine their own procedures and will enable them to see the relative strengths and weaknesses of one or the other theory of translation.

Interpreters, when confronted with translating tasks, may find it easier to progress, as they move from processing text which is presented without burdening their memory capacity to text that is presented in the oral mode and has to be memorized. They will better understand the function of memory and the capacity they have for memorising text if they have had a chance to thoroughly analyse it beforehand. They will also understand that problems that could not be solved before the process of text production as such will affect their processing capacity, and they will be confronted with the peculiarities of a communication situation where people who listen to their production rely fully on what they get. On the other hand, they will understand that just forgetting the words of a given source text and concentrating on the meaning alone will not solve all their problems, nor will it be even possible in every stage of the

process. They will become acquainted with basic strategies which can be refined in subsequent teaching steps.

5.6. Conclusion

Research into the teaching of interpretation, however, does not end here. Just as it is necessary to observe authentic interpreting performance to obtain data on interpreting, it would appear advisable to observe authentic teaching to collect data on “real life” training. This can be done either by interviewing as many interpreter trainers as possible as to their – formal or other – teaching qualifications, their teaching experience and their methods. On the other hand, it would also be informative to observe the teaching of groups of students with different degrees of proficiency – from the real beginners to exam classes. Here, different procedures applied by teachers for different degrees of proficiency might be identified, and the responses of learners in their different learning stages might become visible.

A collection of data of the latter type is presently being analysed by the author, with the preliminary results indicating that problem solution is tackled differently by different groups of progression (for preliminary results see Kalina 2000a; hopefully, an in-depth analysis will follow). This finding, if it is confirmed after more thorough analysis and on the basis of more data, reinforces my belief that skills are to be taught separately in the early stages of training and that interpreting competence is a highly complex successful interaction of the various skills which can only be obtained in a carefully structured sequence of learning steps.

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