‘MICROPHONE OFF’ – APPLICATION OF THE PROCESS MODEL OF INTERPRETING TO THE CLASSROOM

Sylvia Kalina

Cologne University of Applied Sciences
Mainzer Str. 5, D-50678 Köln
Germany
Tel.: 49 (0)221-8275 3303, Fax : 49 (0)221-8275 3991
Sylvia.Kalina@fh-koeln.de

1. Conference interpreting – practice and theory

In the initial period when simultaneous conference interpreting developed into a profession, an excellent conference interpreter (CI) was a gifted person who had an excellent command of his/her working languages (in general, not more than three) and a broad knowledge of the world, talent, persistence and aptitude –the latter were not specified in any great detail. With these gifts, a person should find it easy to become an accomplished CI. What such a person needed was abundant field practice.

Meanwhile we have learned from experience and research that it is not quite that easy to perform as a good interpreter. Research into interpreting, together with the contributions made by other disciplines, has enlightened us about the complexities of the task and the demands on the quality of the interpreting product. Talent and field practice, for all their importance, have to be preceded by proper training, and training must be based on a clear perception of what exactly needs to be trained. It is not sufficient for an interpreter to be able to translate orally whatever is being said unless that interpreter has also learned what rules are to be heeded when out of booth. These include, beyond preparation and information search, a number of so-called ‘soft skills’ that extend from negotiating technical conditions with potential clients and processing of contract details to handling of documents received and include in- and out-of conference behaviour, confidentiality, and contacts with clients and colleagues. The importance of these skills has, in my view, not been sufficiently acknowledged in the past. It may not even have been necessary to teach them back then, but it certainly is necessary today.

Interpreting research (IR), as far as it is devoted to conference interpreting, can be roughly grouped into product oriented, user oriented, capacity oriented and process oriented research, with especially the latter two being approached in an interdisciplinary manner, drawing also on disciplines such as cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics.

Early linguistic product oriented research compared two texts which, even though they were presented orally, were analysed on the basis of parameters taken from the study of written discourse.

Typical characteristics of oral communication, such as the delivery parameters of the original, were hardly considered in this early phase. Early product-related process research, mainly conducted by psychologists, then focused on presentation factors such as pauses, hesitations, the phenomenon of ear-voice span (décalage) and on delivery rates; analyses were based on samples of recordings made in meetings or on experimental data (for an overview of early IR, cf. Gerver 1976, Kalina 1998).

User oriented research was pursued in the wake of the paradigm shift in translation studies, when the function of a text to be translated and its usability became central concerns of translators (for the reflection of 'skopos' theory in interpreting studies, see Pöchhacker 1994, Viezzi 1999).

Cognitive research is aimed at shedding light on the type of effort needed to perform during an interpreting assignment, explaining how certain routines are established to leave room for the more demanding cognitive tasks to be performed during the interpreting activity (Gile 1995).

Against this backdrop, my interest has always been in processes. My assumption continues to be that interpreters process strategically, and the strategic approach which is mainly concerned with comprehension and production processes resulted in a model of interpreter-mediated communication (Kohn & Kalina 1996, Kalina 1998).

The model defines discourse strategies as they are generally used in monolingual oral communication; conference interpreters, however, have to rely much more on them. Anticipation is a discourse strategy which, in simultaneous interpreting (SI), can sometimes be detected by listeners, as certain elements of speech are verbalized in the interpreter's output even before they have been uttered by the original speaker. Other strategies also used in monolingual communication are segmentation of input, a strategy which interpreters make use of in a specific way so that they have segments that they can start to translate separately. Inferencing is a process which uses given parts of the original speech in order to draw conclusions as to implicit or simply inaudible speech parts which are then translated as if they had been uttered or heard. These strategies are further supported by the principles of cooperativeness in direct oral communication (i.e. listeners use all available cues to understand speaker's intention, and speaker considers listeners' attitudes, expectations and previous knowledge in the planning of his/her discourse). In addition to these general strategies, interpreters have strategies they apply as a function of situative and contextual conditions (Kalina 1998). A number of authors have conducted empirical research and established authentic data for the use of this type of strategic processing by interpreters (Lederer 1981, Pöchhacker 1994, Sunnari 1995, Lamberger-Felber 1999, Vuorikoski 2004).

2. A broader process perspective

A more recent line of research is motivated by the concern for quality and by the effort to define what quality is and how it can be measured. In recent years, the perspective has broadened and the significant role played by external factors in the attainment of interpreting quality has been emphasized (Kopczynski 1994, Moser-Mercer 1996). Most authors, recognizing the effect of external factors on interpreting quality, applied this insight to circumstances existing while interpreters work at the conference. However, there are a number of external factors in connection with the phases before and after conference activity, and these have to be included in these considerations.

The concern for achieving a reliable quality definition has resulted in an even broader view of what an interpreter's work consists of, where we look not only at processes to be observed (or hypothesized) in the booth but, in a more comprehensive framework, at all internal and external factors involved when an interpreter performs. The aim of such an approach is to find out which factors may have what type of repercussions on interpreting quality. For this purpose, I have defined four dimensions to describe the components and conditions of interpreters' work. The **pre-process** phase includes trained interpreting skills and expertise, preparatory activities and coordination in advance of the meeting; the **peri-process** dimension describes working conditions (participants, languages, team, relay work, documents available etc.); the **in-process** phase covers actual production by speakers and interpreters and any conceivable data related to these, and **post-process** work which is concerned, among other things, with quality assurance. Within each dimension, individual factors can be isolated and measured or assessed separately. The result is a data sheet from which the conditions found at a given interpreting assignment can be read in detail (for a more extensive description see Kalina 2005).

The findings obtained by collecting data on all these phases led to a check list for use by professional interpreters. In connection with this project, a number of studies were carried out, among others interviews with some 60 conference interpreters. These interviews revealed that many interpreters who were interviewed do not keep track of anything that precedes a meeting or occurs in connection with it. Most interviewees had no idea about the number of days that elapsed on average from reception of an assignment contract to date of the event, nor were they able to say how many hours of preparation time they had spent and what type of preparation they had done for which purposes. In order to obtain data on these questions, we therefore observed a number of interpreters during their preparation for a specific assignment.

From the data collected by interviews and observation, one conclusion to be drawn is that interpreting assignments are of a far more varied nature than was the case in the past. This necessarily has to be reflected in the training of interpreters, which needs to be adapted to prepare students for the huge variety of situations, conditions and expectations found on the CI market today.

3. Implementation of the process model in the classroom

In this article, I will discuss recent findings with a view to the training perspective and try to describe how the broader theoretical approach outlined above can be applied in the classroom. In this, I will argue that the extended process model also helps to improve teaching quality and broaden the scope of interpreter training. The skills taught in the past continue to be the basis for young professionals, but they have to be complemented by other skills interpreters need to offer a service of excellent quality, such as adequate preparation under time constraint, team management and efficient terminology work.

In an initial pilot study on the prerequisites that interpreter trainers have had before they took up teaching interpreting, I found that over 85% of those questioned had in fact taken a university degree in conference interpreting and had some or a lot of professional practice but had not had any educational or pedagogical training prior to their teaching assignment. Moreover, roughly 65% had not undergone any intensive training in interpreting theory. They were largely unaware of

theoretical interpreting models and even of publications on interpreter training such as those by Seleskovitch & Lederer (1989), Gile (1995), Szabo (2003), Gillies (2002).

On the other hand, a look at today's training environment (and, for that matter, at the market for professional interpreters) reveals that there are numerous challenges for interpreter training. The development of IT and media resources offers opportunities for the classroom which could not even be dreamed of a few decades ago. The facilities offered by the new technologies are at the same time challenging for the novice on the market, and in this fast changing environment, appropriate methods of teaching are needed. Times are past when conference interpreting was learned by being placed in a booth, made to interpret and hopefully do a good job, based on linguistic skills and talent alone. Today, on-the-job training must be preceded by the acquisition of the basic skills of the profession, as there is no initiation phase and novices must have full command of these, including knowledge of interpreting situations, contexts, characteristics of different settings, user expectations, conference and knowledge management as well as the handling of the different technologies. On-the-job training then consists in refining these skills further, extending one's knowledge base, and improving one's linguistic resources.

A number of IR experts and interpreting trainers have put forward suggestions aimed at optimizing the teaching of CI. Theoretical and case studies were provided e.g. by Gile (1995), Kalina (2000), Sawyer (2004), and practical teaching approaches are contained in Gillies (2002), Szabo (2003), to mention just a few. All these efforts reflect the attempt to narrow the gap between interpreting theory and the practical reality of conference interpreting. The authors mentioned have considered components of the different phases of the process in their approaches for training.

Hönig proposes a modularized curriculum model of multilingual communication which also comprises the establishment and use of databases, CAT tools and media knowledge and logistics (1995,160). Kalina (2000) subdivides the skills to be acquired into subskills which can be trained separately, with processing strategies but also information management strategies that may be trained in isolation in an initial phase and will then be integrated in an overall strategic approach to CI. Gile (1995) suggests a similar way of proceeding in the classroom, with the emphasis on the different efforts (listening, memorizing, speaking).

Sawyer sketches out a comprehensive educational framework for interpreter training; his curricular model includes a course on "Interpretation as a Profession" which is intended to cover conference organization, identity as professional interpreter etc. (2004:141). Gillies (2002), too, adopts a pedagogical approach which contains a number of elements of all the dimensions mentioned above.

Sawyer has also described an interesting way of proceeding for quality assurance to reach the classroom. He measured student performance in exams, as related to curriculum content. This helps detect where the quality of training can be improved and makes teachers aware of potential resources as well as of instruments to be used. Exam results as analysed by Sawyer are aimed at testing production (and, indirectly, comprehension) of trainees, but this is not all that students have to learn in their courses. If the pedagogical approaches mentioned above and the interpreting process model are combined, the content of interpreter training will also include items such as preparation of subjects, conference organization, finding solutions for certain linguistic requirements etc. Exams should therefore include the testing of extended skills that pertain to the overall process

and all its phases. All too often, external factors that affect interpreting quality are not sufficiently reflected in exam procedures (e.g. students are not allowed any preparation, insufficient information is given about situation and expectations of potential audience). Regularly, examiners listen to examinee's interpretation with two eyes on a written text they have in front of them, not from the perspective of a potential conference participant. Cooperative comprehension processes of participants are thus largely ignored. Moreover, what an examinee does or should do in pre- and post-process phases escapes the eyes and ears of examiners and is therefore not considered in the assessment.

The problems connected with the rating of student performance, especially on the occasion of exam sessions, is also discussed in Sawyer (2004) and Mack (2002). The models proposed by these two authors could be extended to include the skills relevant in those phases during which no interpreting per se takes place, so that students would also have to prove that they have achieved the standard required in these skills.

Another instrument for rating student progress is assessment and self-assessment by means of portfolios, i.e. protocols of learning steps as observed either by the teacher or the student (cf. Gross-Dinter in press, Sawyer 2004, 125). Portfolios can serve to make students realise what progress they have made. They can be based on the process model and could be used also in connection with theoretical modules so as to make students aware of which skills and subskills they have acquired.

The process model could even be applied to entry-level assessment, where constraints such as high applicant numbers and limited time for assessment require a short intensive test in which several test items are combined. Tests could include items such as e.g. search skills and organization of knowledge.

4. The media, new technologies and the training of interpreters

4.1 Preparation as a skill to be trained

Preparation is one of the most important pre-process components (cf. Kutz 2000). If trainees are left to prepare a given subject on their own, they tend to devote too much time on less significant information. Therefore, the way in which preparation phases are organized has to be taught. Thus, future interpreters will not only get prepared in an efficient way but also will be aware of how important it is to keep track of the time spent for preparation and for the different preparation activities. Rütten specifies the levels of preparation (goal-oriented information search, speedy document analysis, processing and structuring of information obtained, recording of results, marking and linking. These processes have to be attributed priorities depending on their relevance for the subject to be prepared (2007, 119).

If we assume that new ways of information retrieval will affect strategies of meeting preparation, CI training has to cover the main tools that are available. Drechsel lists search machines, web catalogues, theme portals, scientific websites, company or customer websites, library catalogues, online libraries, specialized services for e-publications, online magazines, news groups etc. (2005:16f.). This is definitely in stark contrast to file cards and handwritten glossaries on notepad

paper, as in the early CI times, even to microfiche storage, as in the more recent past. There are numerous technology-supported tools, such as present-day terminology extraction functions; however, as our observational study on preparation has revealed, they are not extensively used by interpreters (cf. Kalina & Ippensen, in press). But, as the use of such tools is one of the skills required of a modern professional interpreter, training has to include courses for learning to apply them to the tasks to be solved in the different phases of CI.

Preparation procedures have meanwhile been refined. This affects ways of proceeding even in cases where no documents are available; recordings of speeches can be downloaded as audio or video winamp files; search can be organized by speakers, topics, companies and their Annual Meetings for preparation; all these resources can be used for training purposes, and students have to be advised on how to process them in the most rational way.

As time from contract to event is getting ever shorter, the preparation phase has to be organized most efficiently. Preparation for media interpreting assignments is a special case. Technical conferences can often be prepared with sophisticated tools and a variety of material, but media interpreting assignments are usually offered at extremely short notice. Often, a request for a televised interpretation comes only a few hours in advance of the event, so that the interpreter has no information about speakers, nor any manuscripts or contact with organizers. Interpretation, though, is mostly followed by a large TV audience that is quite unaware of these adverse conditions, and viewers expect an excellent interpretation, which can only be achieved when the interpreter is acquainted with all tools needed to find out at least which search machines provide what type of information on a given person or subject. Also, preparation strategies are adapted to new settings. For preparing for a TV show, e.g., interpreters are expected to focus more on the voice and speaking habits of those they have to interpret. The Internet offers video or audio TV or radio interviews, so that interpreters who are getting prepared acquaint themselves as much as possible with participants' speech rate, personal characteristics of speech, articulation, intonation etc.

These preparation techniques are increasingly used even for conventional assignments. Today an interpreter, knowing that at a conference a number of speakers from different cultures (Asia, Africa) will make presentations, gets used to typical accents in advance even in cases where no information material about the speakers in question is available. For this purpose, one can listen to any native speaker of the region in question from an audio file in the internet (to be found on the servers of international organizations and others).

The effect of these innovations on training is that as the strategies of information management are changing, information sharing and team cooperation are becoming crucial even in the preparation phase. Clients expect interpreters to be autonomous in retrieving the information they need. Specific software, such as terminological databases for conference interpreters, is still rare but exists. However, as our observation study has revealed, very few interpreters are making use of it, as they have not been acquainted with such tools during their training. CI curricula ought to have specific modules on preparation and the use of IT in that phase.

4.2 New technologies for consecutive

The development of new IT tools has also affected the in-process and peri-process dimension. Consecutive of PPT-based presentations (which is the rule today) takes place in conditions totally different from the traditional consecutive assignments of the past centuries. For the slide show or multimedia event, interpreters have to know what they need to make that event as successful for their listeners as for those participants who follow the original. Speakers should be consulted and advised beforehand that it would be preferable to give the interpreters their turn after each slide so that slides can stay on screen until all listeners have heard the relevant comments. Ways of doing so without interfering with conference management and ways of processing information which is provided as a combination of oral and visual discourse should be practised during training. This should also include the use of PDA equipment for consecutive (software enabling interpreters to take notes on a PDA, with certain given information icons installed in advance, such as predefined text blocks and connectors), and the use of mini e-dictionaries and glossaries on PDAs, which can be used during consecutives, e.g. at press conferences, where one cannot use one's notebook.

Another technology is the so-called 'simultaneous consecutive' (or simul-cons) device, obviously first developed by Michele Ferrari and tested by the Vienna Centre for Translation Studies (cf. SCICNEWS issue N0. 124, February 2007), which makes a digital PDA or minidisc player recording of the speaker which the interpreter listens to again after having heard the original for the first time, and which serves as a basis for him/her to do a quasi-simultaneous. The hope is that the device will improve the quality of consecutive. This may be somewhat surprising, as the traditional consecutive has always been regarded as the mode which yielded optimum quality. Today, however, many conference interpreters have too little opportunity to practise consecutive, as conference organizers prefer not to provide for extra time for translation and therefore opt for simultaneous interpreting. The device still needs ample testing, and it might prove to be a poor replacement of the traditional consecutive mode, as it does not allow to heed the stylistic and communicative norms expected of a consecutive rendering. In my interviews with professionals I found that so far, none of them had ever heard of the technique.

4.3 Changes in simultaneous

The simultaneous interpreting mode, though a comparatively young technique, has also undergone changes which fall within the range of in-process factors. Interpreting used to be an activity for which the audio channel was the most important source. Interpreters had to struggle to get conference organisers to understand that they need to have a view of speakers, conference setting etc. With modern multimedia presentations, however, the visual channel has gained much more weight, and interpreters need not only have a view of the speaker and the audience but also good sight of the potential media displayed during a presentation.

In the past, interpreters insisted that when texts were read out from manuscripts, they could only translate if they had the texts in the booths. If this was denied, they sometimes declined to continue. Today, it would be much easier to provide interpreters with exactly the view that the speaker has of his/her manuscript but this novel technology is rarely used. On the other hand,

delivery of presentations, like everything else, has become speedier, and an interpreter switching off the mike is in most cases unthinkable. So interpreters continue to translate but risk having to leave out pieces of information or sum up what is being said or neglect style and grammar, or get lost altogether, repeating only words they don't understand. Output quality is then often attributed to poor interpreting without any consideration of the poor conditions in which interpreters had to work.

Laptops in booths mean that more dictionaries and glossaries are available and search for unknown terms is much faster. Some interpreters use interpreter-specific databases (LookUp, Interplex) in the booth, but, as stated before, this hopefully is only the beginning of software development geared to interpreter needs. There are still quite a number of colleagues who feel irritated by laptops and prefer to use their handwritten collection of paper cards. One significant advantage of having a laptop in the booth is that manuscripts, presentations, video material that come in only after the event has already taken off can be displayed and processed further (e.g. by adding target language terms, acronyms etc.). The future standard will be internet connection availability, so that part of the preparation work will not be long-term in advance but rather in-process, i.e. in the booth. File management and updating can be done – and is increasingly done – in the booth and not after the end of the assignment

As to the question of whether the availability of appropriate software in the booth affects interpreting output, that depends obviously on whether access to terms needed is simple and speedy enough to yield results in time to be used immediately. Audiences will expect interpreters to use correct terminology to a much higher extent than in the past. If that is the case, interpreting strategies may have to be adapted as interpreters will no longer make extensive use of emergency strategies such as generalisation, paraphrase etc. and will rely on their software instead. This may mean that coping strategies (survival strategies) may become less significant and would result in a qualitative change in interpreting output.

Videoconference and remote interpreting are specific types of conference interpreting with conditions that put severe constraints on interpreters. This affects the quality of the interpreting output, as found in a number of studies (cf. Moser-Mercer 2003) and, as there will be a growing trend to make use of this technology, it should be the subject of specific training or further training courses. If trainees were taught to keep a long ear-voice span, they may find that in practice, when they are working for television, they have to reduce ear-voice span as much as possible, as otherwise, TV audiences feel too much disturbed and the live character of the discussion or show is affected. TV interpreters are even advised to imitate speech attitudes of speakers. These are conditions which they can analyse if they have the model in mind and if they are able to see what conditions they may face in various interpreting situations.

5. Conclusion

The model proposed is intended to provide a comprehensive training framework for conference interpreting, i.e. all the skills needed for a professional career are to be addressed. This does not imply, however, that the actual interpreting activity should be neglected. Rather, it should find its proper place in consideration of situational and contextual factors, of requirements of potential

speakers and listeners and of the setting in question. In this, great care has to be devoted to the apparent contradictions between the artificial situation of the training environment and the requirements of authentic professional CI. If, e.g., trainees have been advised to translate the intended meaning and not words, they may find that in an authentic interpreted event, they are unable to detect the intended meaning and will have to go by words for the sheer purpose of surviving, or, in our English-speaking world, they are expected to use English words where they have learned to use words of the target language, especially in the media and IT language (e.g. 'downloading' instead of German 'herunterladen').

In conference interpreting curricula at universities, elements of the pre- and post-process phases are partly covered by courses under the heading of "professional ethics" and "specialization". As specialization means a life-long learning process, curricula need to include in-depth courses on how to become specialized in a given subject. These courses should comprise knowledge acquisition and structuring, terminology management and ways to develop skills in identifying the level of expertise or type of knowledge of a field one needs to interpret (an interpreter needs knowledge of how procedures or techniques or component parts of an equipment are described, but not necessarily knowledge about their practical implementation as such). Expertise must be acquired in all relevant components of the model. The different dimensions can be theoretically explained, but in practice, their components should be demonstrated and practised on the basis of authentic or simulated conference assignments of different types, including such settings as TV events and even court proceedings. Within the scope of such comprehensive units, those elements of the model that are relevant should be explained where they apply, tasks can be given to trainees to make them aware of the amount of work that an interpreter has to do outside the booth.

As further training is one of the requirements an interpreter has to fulfil if he/she practises quality assurance (cf. Kalina & Ippensen, in press), universities will be expected to offer such courses and provide information on recent technological and procedural developments relevant for interpreters. This and all the foregoing shows that it is particularly important to have practising interpreters among the members of the teaching staff of universities that offer courses in conference interpreting.

The all-encompassing objective is to train interpreters who can assert themselves on the market, who know how much the quality of their product depends on their own excellence but also on other factors related to the different dimensions, and who will do their utmost to fulfil as many requirements of quality assurance as possible. The interpreting process model should help interpreters when they have to explain to potential clients that CI is not an instantaneous service but that it requires certain conditions and thorough preparation by all those concerned with the organization of an event. In a world where costs for interpreters tend to be cut before any other conference costs, this will help the profession maintain quality standards and prove what requirements need to be fulfilled to do so.

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„MIKROFONAS IŠJUNGTAS“. PROCESŲ MODELIO TAIKYMAS RENGIANT VERTĖJUS ŽODŽIU

Sylvia Kalina

Santrauka

Straipsnio pradžioje pateikiama trumpa apžvalga darbų, susijusių su žodiniu (konferencijų) vertimu. Pastebima, jog moksliniai tyrimai pasiskirsto tarp procesų analizės ir į galutinį produktą orientuotos veiklos. Pateikiamas straipsnis sutelktas ties procesais, supančiais vertimą žodžiu, o jo išdava – praktinis vertimo apdorojimo modelis prieš verčiant ir netrukus po to. Šis modelis, akcentuojantis išorinių sąlygų svarbą, o taip pat vertėjo pasirengiamąjį darbą prieš įžengiant į kabiną, pateikiamas vertėjų rengimo kontekste. Jis apima procesų modelio komponentus ir kontekstinius bei situacinius faktorius – tokiu būdu pradedantieji versti parengiami visai veiklai, susijusiai su vertimo žodžiu profesija.