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Conference and community interpreting

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Introduction

All types of interpreting (and translation) share a certain number of processes that were already described in 1964 by Nida (Nida 1964). These are to identify, decode, transfer, encode and produce a series of linguistic units. Interpreting involves spoken or signed languages, and the difference between translation and interpreting is normally defined by the immediacy of the process (Kade 1968), although there are also hybrid forms (ISO 18841 2018). Pöchhacker (2018: 46) proposes that interpreting in a wide conceptual sense is “an activity in which a bilingual individual enables communication between users of two different languages by immediately providing a faithful rendering of what has been said” (see also Pöchhacker 2011b). Despite the common core, the task is described by many different denominations. Different professions in interpreting rely heavily on these different denominations.

Looking closely at these denominations, it is clear that although they are often well established, they may actually be misleading (this was pointed out by Mikkelson as early as 1999 (Mikkelson 1999). A conference interpreter masters the techniques used in simultaneous and consecutive modes (see Bartłomiejczyk and Stachowiak-Szymczak, Chapter 2, in this volume) and so does the court interpreter. The conference interpreter interprets at conferences, lectures, and seminars, and so does the sign language interpreter (see Turner, Grbić, Stone, Tester and de Wit, Chapter 38, in this volume). The conference interpreter can interpret in bi-lateral two-party meetings (see Slaughter Olsen, Liu and Viaggio, Chapter 5, in this volume), and so can the community interpreter. A conference interpreter is sometimes called a simultaneous interpreter, but a sign language interpreter would never be called a simultaneous interpreter, despite the fact that sign language interpreters work almost exclusively in simultaneous mode. Several authors have proposed different delineations of the different types of interpreting (e.g. Alexieva 1997; Hale 2007; Pöchhacker 2016; Pruné 2011; Tipton & Furmanek 2016). One such attempt made by Gentile (1997: 117) suggests that the difference between conference and community interpreting in terms of modes is (1) simultaneous as unique to conference interpreting, and (2) different use of modes during the same assignment depending on language direction (e.g. a court interpreter who does whispered simultaneous
interpreting for the defendant, and consecutive interpreting for the court) as unique to community interpreting. Yet, community interpreters may work in simultaneous mode in a parent-teacher association meeting, and conference interpreters may work in short consecutive mode (dialogue) in a smaller bi-lateral meeting. The challenges of definitions are poignantly framed by Prunč (2011: 22) as he notes that definitions of conference and community interpreting have their roots in the historical development of the interpreting professions and interpreting studies. In fact, Prunč argues that they are outdated in a multicultural and polycentric world.

In this text, the term ‘community interpreter’ was chosen to contrast with ‘conference interpreter’. Community interpreter as a label is in itself the subject of debate. Other terms used are ‘public service interpreter’ or ‘dialogue interpreter’ (see Hale 2011; Herring 2018; Merlini 2015; Tipton & Furmanek 2016). Community interpreter is used to indicate all types of interpreting in areas where members of a minority language community are provided with language services in different types of contexts, and not only in the public services.

The two denominations conference interpreting and community interpreting continue to be used widely, and in common parlance designate two different professions. However, the starting point in this chapter is that conference and community interpreting are two different fields of activity that are not necessarily two different professions. The two fields of activity will be explored from the perspective of their different profiles, skills, training, use of directionality, the users and working conditions. After this overview, I will explore the professionalization of the two fields of activity as the level of professionalization seems to be the only area where a plausible reason for the fact that they are considered different professions can be found (see Prunč 2011). I use the sociology of professions as described by Svensson and Evetts (2010) as a framework. Finally, the body of research of the two different fields of activity will be briefly touched upon.

Due to limited space, this chapter will not include sign language interpreting, but it should be noted that in countries where sign language is considered a profession, sign language interpreters perform both conference and community interpreting. Conference sign language interpreting is discussed by Turner, Grbić, Stone, Tester and de Wit in Chapter 38, in this volume. Sign language interpreting is mentioned in the discussion of the core concepts below, however.

**Core concepts**

First, certain core concepts are described, viz. the ‘monologic’ and ‘dialogic’ approaches, ‘settings’, ‘modes’, and ‘modalities’. These core concepts of interpreting are universally relevant for all types of interpreting, and may also be productively employed to describe all types of interpreting. The fact that these concepts are universal for interpreting will serve as a case in point to argue why it is not fruitful, from a task-based or componential perspective, to regard the two fields of activity as different professions. The aim in this section is to describe these concepts, in order to establish a common frame of reference for the rest of the discussions of the chapter.

**Dialogic vs. dialogue/monologic vs. monologue**

From a discourse analysis approach, the understanding of an utterance can be analysed from a static, text perspective or from a dynamic, discourse perspective (see Bakhtin 1986; Brown & Yule 1983; Wadensjö 1992; Widdowson 2008; and Okoniewska & Wang, Chapter 31, in this volume). An interpreted utterance can be analysed either from a dialogic or a monologic perspective. From
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a monologic perceptive, the interpreted utterance is studied as a static text with inherent meaning (talk-as-text), taking only the single speaker and source text, and interpreter and target text, into account. A monologic analysis can also be understood to focus mainly on the interpreting product. From a dialogic perspective, the interpreted utterance is studied with the approach that the co-constructed meaning is unfolding as the conversation goes on, and that all participants, including the interpreter, contribute to it (talk-as-activity). From a dialogic perspective, the analysis takes the intertextual dimension into account, which involves the addressees as well as the participants, irrespective of whether or not this is an interactive setting. Although the interpreting process can be studied in many ways, a dialogic perspective can also be understood to include the interpreting process. Depending on the reason for the analysis, they can both be an adequate instrument. To assess an interpreter, in an exam, for instance, a monologic approach can be judged necessary, as an assessment might prove hard to perform if an utterance cannot be deemed to have one specific meaning or message in its own. On the other hand, when analysing how the interpreter monitors themselves as well as the other speakers, or what effect or impact an utterance has on the other parties, a dialogic approach is meaningful as the consequences of the interpreters’ choices will shed light on what happens in the event of meaning being co-constructed. Having made this distinction, I hope to show that conference interpreting cannot, solely, be coupled with a monologic perspective, although many assignments consist of interpreting monologues. On the same note, community interpreting cannot be defined as dialogic per se, although many assignments consist of interpreting dialogues. Thus, monologic and dialogic are not a possible distinction between the two fields of activity.

Setting

Setting refers to the context where interpreting takes place. Classical labels for setting include medical, legal, or conference. Grbić (2015a: 371) labels it “the socio-spatial contexts of interaction in which interpreting events take place”. Pöchhacker (2016: 197) describes settings in a continuum from inter-social to intra-social, where the inter-social is understood as the interpreting needed for different communities to meet, whereas the intra-social meeting takes place within the community. The boundaries between settings can be fuzzy. For the purpose of discussing commonalities in conference and community interpreting, I will conceptualize ‘setting’ somewhat differently from how it is classically described (Grbić 2015a: 371). Setting can be understood as a heterogeneous compound, and can denote a ‘physical place’, a ‘field’, a ‘speech format’, or a ‘channel’, and most certainly many other things. This approach to setting serves as an example as to why conference and community interpreting cannot be divided on the basis of setting.

When the setting denotes a physical place, it can, for instance, be a conference, a court, or a hospital. Although the physical setting of an interpreted event is often used as a general designator for different types of interpreters, such as conference interpreter or court interpreter, there is no limitation in terms of what the physical place can be. Although interpreting is rarely described as swimming pool interpreting or soccer field interpreting, interpreting does take place in such settings too.

Field may seem similar to the physical place, but in this text field and physical place are considered as two distinct concepts. Media interpreting as a field can, for instance, take place in different physical places, such as on a television platform, or from a booth. Medical interpreting as a field can take place in different physical places: in a hospital, in a medical clinic, or even in a medical conference. Interpreting which takes place in different public institutions, such as with an immigrant, a minority, or allophone language speaker as one party, is often labelled public service interpreting, following the overarching field of the public services, and not the...
physical setting of the police station or the employment office. Public service interpreting is often used as a competing term for community interpreting.

The speech format is limited to monologue and dialogue interpreting. Tasks may consist of the interpreting of monologues, typically requiring simultaneous or long consecutive mode (see Bartłomiejczyk and Stachowiak-Szymczak, Chapter 2, in this volume), or the interpreting of dialogues, requiring short consecutive mode, with or without notes, and also sometimes simultaneous (such as multi-party meetings for mental health consultations).

Finally, the channel in which the interpreting takes place can be on-site, over the telephone, or via video link (the two latter are often labelled distance or remote). The three channels also overlap on many occasions as the interpreter can be on-site together with all participants, on-site with some of the participants, remotely with some participants, remotely with colleagues, or remotely on their own (see Seeber and Fox, Chapter 35, in this volume). Conference interpreters have been reluctant to work remotely, while for community interpreting, in countries like Australia, remote interpreting has been both common, and a necessity. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the landscape of remote interpreting changed rapidly, and remote work is now a part of both conference as well as community interpreters’ everyday life.

Mode

Pöchhacker (2015a) points out that mode is generally linked to temporal aspects of interpreting, that is, whether it is produced with very short time lag, concurrent with a speaker’s utterance (as in simultaneous), or after a longer or shorter utterance is finished (as in long or short consecutive). In some cases, mode is used to label the interpreter, such as a simultaneous interpreter. However, and as has been pointed out above, both conference and community interpreters use the two modes. It should also be stressed that what is sometimes labelled whispered interpreting (chuchotage) is also simultaneous interpreting, and dialogue interpreting is also a type of consecutive. For modes in conference interpreting, see Bartłomiejczyk and Stachowiak-Szymczak, Chapter 2, in this volume.

Modality

In interpreting, the term modality serves as a way of distinguishing working between spoken (oral and auditory) languages, and a signed (gestural and visual) language (Padden 2000/2001; Prunč 2011; Turner, Grbić, Stone, Tester and de Wit, Chapter 38, in this volume). Modality has many other definitions in other types of research (grammar or interaction), but these definitions will not be discussed further here. In addition to the two modalities ‘spoken’ and ‘signed’, interpreters also work to or from a written modality (Pöchhacker 2018: 48), in the case of sight interpreting. This modality is used by conference and community interpreters alike. The conference interpreter will receive a written speech to interpret directly, either at the same time as the speaker (simultaneous with text) or independently of the speaker. The community interpreter can, for example, be asked to interpret instructions from a form, or the statement from a witness.

The core concepts of interpreting described here show that conference and community interpreting share the same basic foundations of interpreting.

Conference and community interpreting

This section pinpoints some areas of interpreting for the purpose of comparing and contrasting conference and community interpreting. Earlier descriptions of the profile, role,

Profile, skills, and training

Community interpreters are a more heterogeneous group of people than conference interpreters. They can be heritage speakers (with immigrant parents or belonging to a minority language group, see Mellinger & Gasca-Jiménez 2019), adult immigrants to a country (Tiselius & Englund-Dimitrova 2019), or have a similar profile to conference interpreters, that is, middle/high school or university L2 learners. In terms of skills, one notes that the literature focuses on the skills of the community interpreter, and not of the community interpreter student, which perhaps reflects the fact that there are fewer education programmes focused on community interpreting. Already in 1994, Roberts identified community interpreters as: (1) likely to work in institutional settings; (2) more likely to interpret in dialogue-like interactions; (3) interpreting actively to and from their working languages as default; (4) more visibly present in the encounter (than a conference interpreter); (5) representing a plethora of languages, not represented at an institutional level in the country where they work; and (6) often seen as advocates or brokers. These characteristics are found both in current and older descriptions (Bancroft 2015; Corsellis 2008; Englund Dimitrova & Tiselius 2016; Hale 2007, 2015; Mikkels 1999; Tipton & Furmanek 2016; Tomassini & Rudvin 2011; Wadensjö 2011). The characteristics are also reflected in ISO 13611 (2014: 7), which states that the community interpreter should be able to interpret both consecutively, and simultaneously, as well as sight-translate. They should also be able to take notes, monitor their own performance, listen actively, deliver effectively, have strong memory skills, use appropriate language register, handle turn-taking, use effective problem-solving, intervene effectively, act professionally, develop professionally, and not advocate. Looking at skills, the identified requirements for community interpreters’ skills are similar to that of the conference interpreter: bilingual; able to concentrate well; able to process information fast; able to deal with stressful situations adequately; in possession of analytical skills and memory capacity; having general knowledge and general language knowledge, verbal skills and language transfer skills, as well as general background knowledge, communicative skills, sociability and empathy (Rosi et al. 2020: 26; Setton & Dawrant 2016a: 106; see also Russo, Chapter 23, in this volume).

Conference interpreters today are, typically, graduates from a university interpreting programme. Most conference interpreting students today do not grow up bilingually, but learn their other languages as a second or third language (Bartłomiejczyk 2015). Conference interpreting training in many countries consists of at least a one-year course at advanced level (MA) in higher education (Sawyer 2004; see also Kalina and Barranco-Droege, Chapter 24, in this volume). Entrance tests vary between educational institutions and reflect both the approach to selecting a suitable candidate and the country’s higher education philosophy (see also Russo, Chapter 23, in this volume).

Unlike the case is with conference interpreters, community interpreters, in many cases, have not gone through training for interpreting. Some countries have training programmes ranging from a few weeks to several months, but few are at the higher education level. They are often aimed solely, or mainly, at community interpreting, and comprise minority, immigrant languages. Examples of such countries include Australia, Canada, Finland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the UK, and the US (Hlavac 2013; Prunč 2011; Wallace 2017). The United States also has many training programmes offered by private companies rather than educational institutions. There is little literature on entrance tests for community interpreting courses
(Pöchhacker 2016), although it can be deduced from course pages that they exist in several cases. Entrance tests have been described by Norwegian (Skaaden 2016a) and Swedish authors (Tiselius & Wadensjö 2016) and in more general terms also by Corsellis (2008). In these accounts, entrance tests are designed to be performance tests, to test language in use by rendering utterances in one language into another language, and also using cloze tests (see Pöchhacker 2011a). These tests are thus similar to that of entrance tests for conference interpreting training programmes. A closer look at the tests reveals that the sequences to be rendered are short. The cloze test is also short and of a general nature.

In conclusion, as can be seen in the literature, the profile of the conference and the community interpreter differs while no huge differences can be identified in the skills requirements for conference or community interpreters. The entrance tests do, however, seem to indicate differences in requirements for the training programme. Furthermore, as a general rule, conference interpreters seem to be university educated, whereas community interpreters seem to have a less homogeneous educational background.

**Directionality**

The approach to directionality, that is the language into which an interpreter works (Godijns & Hinderdael 2005) differs a lot between community and conference interpreting, especially when it comes to the norms and terminology surrounding it. Institutional conference interpreting for the EU (see Graves, Pascual Olaguibel, and Pearson, Chapter 8, in this volume) and the UN (see Ruiz Rosendo and Diur, Chapter 9, in this volume), as cases in point, are dominated by a strong mother tongue norm (the interpreter only works into their strongest language, L1, or mother tongue, Garzone 2002). Despite this norm, and as pointed out in the related chapters in this volume, there are examples within these institutions where interpreters work into their L2/B languages, such as the Arabic and Chinese booths in the UN, which are always providing retour, or booths such as Finnish or Polish in the EU, which provide retours on a regular basis. The reasons behind this include the combination of teaching traditions in the respective countries, market demands, and scarcity of interpreters with the necessary language combination. In the case of NATO, the booths are often bi-active French/English, interpreters work into both French and English\(^1\) (see Slaughter Olsen, Liu, and Viaggio, Chapter 5, in this volume). For non-institutional interpreting, the situation differs from country to country or market to market. In general terms, non-institutional interpreting has booths where interpreters work both to and from their mother tongue (see country-specific Chapters 10–18, in this volume). In conference interpreting, these phenomena have specific terms, A-language (L1 or mother tongue), B-language (L2 or foreign language), C-language (a language interpreted from but not into, also called ‘passive’ language) as defined by AIIC,\(^2\) and retour interpreting (working from the A language into B) are cases in point (see Bartłomiejczyk and Stachowiak-Szymczak, Chapter 2, in this volume).

In contrast to conference interpreting, the working languages of the community interpreters are in most cases not labelled for the purpose of determining which language is used under what circumstances. In community interpreting, using the two languages of an encounter is implied in the task. Passive languages are thus not a relevant concept in this context, and community interpreting tests or certifications also typically involve testing both working languages equally. In terms of training, it means that interpreting exercises as well as any language-enhancing exercises are carried out in all the languages of the community interpreter (Niska 2005). This can of course be difficult to provide if the languages are rare. One of the languages is dominant in its role of being the institutional as well as the societal language, thereby determining
the importance of different terms or concepts. For many community interpreters, as described above, the institutional language is their second language, which also often implies extra cognitive load (Tiselius & Englund Dimitrova 2019; Tiselius & Sneed 2020).

To conclude, conference interpreting is dominated (at least in the larger institutions of Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic (WEIRD) societies, Heinrich et al. 2010) by the A-, B- and C-language definition norm and a certain preference for interpreting into one’s mother tongue. For community interpreting, working in at least two languages is the dominant practice and norm.

**Users**

Users of conference interpreting services are usually highly educated individuals of different professions (politicians, physicians, academics). Admittedly people with a shorter, or more professional, education also use conference interpreting, but then often in contexts where they are experienced both in the topic in question and in using interpreters (trade unionists, see Setton 1999). The users of conference interpreting are labelled clients or delegates and have also been the focus of several studies in interpreting. Studies have investigated users’ expectations of conference interpreters and also how different parameters affect their perception and understanding (see Pradas Macías and Zwischenberger, Chapter 19, in this volume). As Mason and Wen (2012) and later Mason (2015) point out, the concept of power in interpreting studies can be related to language, institution, and interaction (see also Bahadır 2004 and Rudvin 2006). From a participant perspective in conference interpreting, many situations are characterized by a relative balance of power between languages and between institutions represented. This can, of course, depend on meeting arrangements or language policies. For instance, in some meetings only some participants may be allowed to speak their mother tongue, or weaker or smaller organizations or countries may be in underdog positions. Despite these exceptions, in general, there is arguably a relative power balance between participants in these meetings. However, as has been shown by researchers in discourse analysis (see Okoniewska and Wang, Chapter 31, in this volume), this relative power balance does not necessarily apply to the conference interpreter.

Community interpreting users (labelled users or clients) are, on the one hand, often highly educated professionals of different professions (physicians, lawyers, employment officers, teachers) who are fluent in the societal language, and, on the other hand, individuals, who may be either highly educated, illiterate or anything in between, but are not fluent in the majority language of the country where they reside. Furthermore, the institutional party in the encounter is also experienced both in the institutional matter at hand, and sometimes also in using interpreters, whereas the other party represents themselves as individuals with knowledge of their situation, but not of the particular society’s legislation, and health care tradition. The possible power imbalance, as described above, is thus significant, both in terms of the relative societally ascribed status of the languages (one being the official language of the institution and the other a minority language and (often) an immigrant language in that society), the institutional power (an institution vs. an individual), and the interactional power, with one party mastering both the use of interpreters, and the institutional discourse, while the other party does not (see Mikkelson 1999). As has also been shown by several authors, the community interpreter’s power is deeply entangled in these different power relations (see Bahadır 2004; Mason 2015; Rudvin 2006). A phenomenon which may also add to this complexity is the fact that (depending on country and context), many community interpreters share not only language, but also ethnic background with the allophone language speaker, which adds an extra layer to the participants’ perception of the interpreters’ alignment. Finally, users of community
interpreting who are not fluent in the societal language have not been the focus of studies to investigate their expectations of, or satisfaction with, the delivered services, to any greater extent, although examples can be found (Hadziabdic et al. 2009).

In summary, users of conference interpreting often have equal professional footing with each other, but not necessarily with the interpreter. Power imbalance both between the users and the interpreter in community interpreting is more tangible, and also more likely to have an impact on the interpreted event.

**Working conditions**

The working conditions of conference interpreters are for the most part negotiated and upheld in solidarity, and through AIIC (see Dam and Gentile, Chapter 21, this volume). Working conditions encompass working time, breaks, team strength, audio quality and sight lines (whether the interpreter can see the speaker or not) (Grbić & Pöchhacker 2015: 442). Work hazards for conference interpreters include burnout and acoustic shock (AIIC 2020; Mackintosh 2003). The impact of conference interpreters having one strong professional organization is perhaps clearer in current times of technological disruption, and massive transfer to online meetings due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As many interpreters found themselves without a job or facing demands to interpret in new challenging online settings, AIIC and negotiation delegations at the EU and UN institutions quickly went into action. They negotiated with institutions and provided guidelines for this new type of work.  

Working conditions for community interpreters are highly context-dependent. Professional organizations for community interpreters exist in many countries and do important work (ITIUK in the UK, NCIHC in the US or AUSIT in Australia are cases in point), but their positions differ from that of the AIIC. The context for community interpreters is a local rather than global issue and depends on whether community interpreters are freelancers or employees. The level of general professionalization of interpreting in the country, region, or even sector in question also plays a role. There are no global, or nation-wide, or region-wide, or even sector-wide general rules regulating working times, pauses, or team strength for community interpreters, and, as pointed out by Grbić and Pöchhacker (2015: 442), working conditions may be negotiated by other bodies, such as interpreting agencies, that are driven by other goals. Furthermore, as has been shown by Tiselius et al. (2020) and Norström et al. (2012) for community interpreters in Sweden, and most likely for other countries as well, challenging working conditions result in major distress and risk of burnout for community interpreters. One significant occupational hazard for community interpreters is vicarious trauma (Lai & Costello 2020). Community interpreters have also been affected during the Covid-19 pandemic. Reasons are both due to cancelled activities (doctor’s appointments, school meetings) where interpreting is needed, creating a scarcity of jobs, but also due to interpreters not being able to afford to decline interpreting assignments which still take place on site, exposing them to health hazards. Just as for conference interpreting, activities have been carried out remotely.

This section shows that conference interpreters are generally more strongly organized than community interpreters, which in turn impacts their ability to improve working conditions. Community interpreters are a larger group, but are strongly linked to a local market. They often have strong linguistic, cultural and/or ethnic affinities with the minority language speaker for whom they interpret, all of which seem to decrease the power to organize the profession, and as a consequence lead to poorer working conditions and lower pay.
Professionalization

The term ‘profession’ as used in everyday language, requires specific education and skills, and also gives the practician a certain status in society (see Dam and Gentile, Chapter 21, this volume), this popular use of ‘profession’ is generally considered outdated by authors within the sociology of professions (Grbić 2015b: 322). The boundaries between a profession and a mere occupation are more pragmatic and perhaps also fuzzier (Evetts 2014). Parsons (1978: 40) describes a profession as a group of individuals which provide laypeople with services requiring high-level and specialized competence. Parson’s definition of professions points to elite professions, such as lawyers or doctors, as opposed to mere occupations. A profession would comply with a checklist of different attributes (training, part of a community of professionals, adhering to certain ethics). Another feature of a profession is that laypeople trust this particular group of individuals. Svensson and Evetts (2010: 20) point to a differentiation between performative and organizational traits of professions. The performative aspect reflects the delivery of a specialized service, and the organizational aspect, as said above, points to the fact that the professional has received training, belongs to professional organizations, and has a unique right to deliver that particular service. This framework will be used to further describe and contrast conference and community interpreting.

Conference interpreting is, arguably, the most professionalized, that is closest to having the status of a ‘profession’ as described above (Parsons 1978; Svensson & Evetts 2010) of the different interpreting professions (Diriker 2015; Pöchhacker 2011b, 2016). The professionalization process of interpreting has been illustrated by Tseng (1992), Pöchhacker (1999), Ozolins (2010) and Skaaden (2016b). As pointed out by Grbić (2015b: 325), the issue of interpreting as a profession is an important part of interpreting studies, and even if not explicitly mentioning professionalization, the research carried out in interpreting directly contributes to it.

As a general rule, conference interpreters worldwide are trained at higher education institutions in a systematized and generally accepted way (Diriker 2015; Gile 2009; Setton & Dawrant 2016a, 2016b). They are trusted by other professions (politicians, businesspeople, academia) and laypeople, all of whom rely on their competence to solve a problem (communicate) through a high-quality, special competence (interpreting). Furthermore, conference interpreters belong to one or several professional organizations, and finally, research focusing on conference interpreting has been part of translation studies since the 1970s. There is also a systematized and fairly elevated system of remuneration in place for conference interpreting. Although ‘conference interpreter’ is not a licensed occupation, one can argue that the strict rules and regulations around accreditation for international institutions (see Graves, Pascual Olaguibel and Pearson, Chapter 8, and Ruiz Rosendo and Diur, Chapter 9, in this volume) and membership of the AIIC function as a type of licence, at least for institutional conference interpreting. Ozolins (2010) also shows that in half of the 15 countries he compared, the term, ‘interpreter’ was reserved for ‘conference interpreter’. The right to interpreters in conferences or for communication on an international level, per se, is not covered by legislation, and although there is a working group in the international organization for standards on conference interpreting, there is to date no ISO standard on conference interpreting. There are standards for conference interpreting equipment, however ISO 2603 and ISO 4043 (ISO 2016a, 2016b), and work is ongoing to establish a standard for conference interpreting. Confrence interpreting also has a narrative of the birth of the profession, referring to the beginning of the twentieth century as the defined starting period of the profession. Community
interpreting as a practice has been around for longer, and yet has seen a longer progressive integration into societies with no or little common narrative (for an overview, see Albl-Mikasa 2020; Baigorri-Jalón 2015; Bancroft 2015; Hale 2015). Despite this, and despite the ISO 13611 (ISO 2014) standard for community interpreting and the ISO 18841 (ISO 2018) for interpreting in general, community interpreting is, arguably, the least professionalized of the two professions. This is also interesting in light of the fact that there is more legislation directly impacting or mentioning community interpreting, in stark contrast to conference interpreting. In many countries, and also in the EU Directive 2010/64/EU (EU Directive 2010) on the right to interpreting in court, there is legislation in place to guarantee individuals access to health care and public services despite language barriers. Some of these laws mention interpreters directly, such as “the regional council provides interpreting support to individuals who need it in doctor’s appointments or hospital visits” while in others the right can be inferred by the wording of access, such as the title VI of the US Civil Rights Act (United States of America 1964):

> no person in the United States shall, on ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any programme or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Despite what appears to be a general lack of training programmes globally for community interpreting, there are certification or registering bodies for community interpreters in many countries, although the numbers of certified community interpreters are usually fairly low. Reasons for this include both that certain languages are not offered in certification exams, and that the population in question lacks enough training to sit certification tests. However, and as pointed out by Hlavac (2013), the number of countries that are now introducing certification systems are increasing.

Furthermore, Ozolins’ (2010) study of 15 countries approaching interpreting in terms of provision, training, and accreditation of interpreters points out that a society has to be willing to fund public service interpreting in order for it to exist. Other than the bare necessity that a society has to cater for and fund interpreters in the public sector, Ozolins also points to the level of professionalization of interpreters, training for users of interpreting, government policies, and not least the nomenclature for interpreting as predictors of access to interpreters in the public sector. Training, certification, research, and systematized remuneration are present in a few countries, as shown by Ozolins, but following what was laid out above (see Parsons 1978 and Svensson & Evetts 2010), it is clear that community interpreting on a global level is comparatively poorly professionalized. Community interpreters are: (1) not systematically trained at higher education institutions in a generally accepted way; (2) not necessarily enjoying trust from other professions (Granhagen Jungner et al. 2021; Phelan et al. 2019); (3) less professionally organized than conference interpreters; and (4) being paid very little.

The state of professionalization contributes to the fact that the conference interpreting and community interpreting are seen as different professions.

**Research**

Research is an important part of the professionalization of any profession, and both conference and community interpreting have attracted research interest for quite some time. As is pointed out in several chapters of this volume, the very first research focusing on conference
interpreting can be traced back to the late 1950s and early 1960s, and conference interpreting has developed as a viable research topic since the 1970s. Community interpreting, on the other hand, did not gain research focus until the late 1970s and early 1980s, but has since developed quickly.

Research in interpreting covers a wide array of topics, though, as Albl-Mikasa (2020: 91) points out, much of the focus in community interpreting has been on ‘role’, while conference interpreting has put a lot of energy into ‘quality’. Albl-Mikasa also enumerates competence, memory, aptitude, didactics, and professionalism as hot topics in conference interpreting, in contrast to ethics, certification, and professionalization in community interpreting. Herring (2020) adds that social and interactional aspects are important in community interpreting. The different foci for the research on the two professions can probably be sought both in the different areas elaborated above, as well as in the placement of the interpreter in the event. Thanks to technical solutions placed in the back of the room, for conference interpreters it is often in a soundproof booth, interpreting for many. The community interpreter works in the middle of an intimate encounter, interpreting for a few. Turn-taking is a case in point, being a well-researched area in community interpreting, with findings pointing to the importance of the interpreter in the turn-taking pattern in an interpreted event (Roy 1996; Wadensjö 1992, 1998), but hardly pursued in conference interpreting, where turn-taking is a much less common phenomenon. Downie (2020) argues that it is futile to divide research on interpreting into different settings or professions, as the task and the core are the same. Englund Dimitrova and Tiselius (2016) and Albl-Mikasa (2020) argue from a cognitive-constructivist perspective that conference and community interpreting have a common processing foundation. An overview of the state of the art of the research in the two areas was not the goal here, and the reader is referred to other works in this volume, and to, for instance, the Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies (Pöchhacker 2015b).

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to identify commonalities and differences between conference and community interpreting with the aim to show why they may be seen as two professions by many, although they may in fact be two fields of activity within one profession. In essence, if seen as two professions, they differ in terms of setting and placement (at least on site), and more profanely in terms of remuneration, status of users, and level of education. Not least of all, they differ in the level of professionalization. Yet, the aim was to show that the core of the two fields of activity is the same, and that the area where they overlap (as shown in Pöchhacker’s (2016: 17) conceptual spectrum of interpreting) is also the space where one discovers that they are two sides of one coin. The two fields of activity share both the general conditions for interpreting, advanced functional language knowledge of at least two languages and cultures, and the competence to switch between them. But also, more subtle features such as handling different skills and techniques are revealed. There is thus no ground for assuming that either conference or community interpreting should be less demanding in terms of the required skills, competences, and knowledge.

In terms of organization and availability for users, there may be benefits in considering the two as different professions. However, as the requirements for skills, competence, and knowledge are similar between the two fields of activity, and as some interpreters work as both conference and community interpreters, it is incomprehensible that training, working conditions, and remuneration still differ so greatly.
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Notes
2. aiic.org/site/world/about/profession/abc.
4. Since 2013, the European-wide network, ENPSIT, has lobbied at the EU-level for working conditions for public service interpreters (accessed 10 May 2021).
6. From the Danish Healthcare Act (Sundhedsloven): “Regionsrådet yder tolkebistand til personer, der har behov for tolkebistand i forbindelse med behandle hos alment privatpraktiserende læge og privatpraktiserende speciallæge og behandling på sygehus” (my translation).

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References
Conference and community interpreting


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