

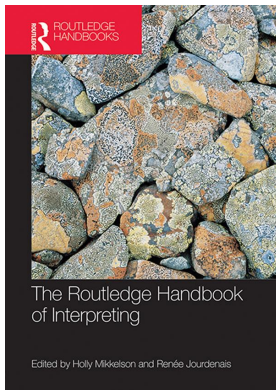
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PART III

INTERPRETING SETTINGS

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11

CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

*Ebru Diriker***Introduction**

Conference interpreting is generally understood to be the communication of messages which have been delivered in one language into another at formal and informal conferences and conference-like settings in either the simultaneous or consecutive mode (cf. AIIC, 1984; Pöchhacker, 2013). Conference interpreting thus refers to the setting where different modes of interpreting are carried out to enable communication between interlocutors who do not speak the same language. These settings are typically international conferences, multilateral meetings, and workshops, but can also include official dinners, press conferences, parliamentary sessions and a wide range of other gatherings.

The most prevalent mode used in conference interpreting is simultaneous interpreting (see ‘Facts and figures’, p.179 below, as well as Chapter 5 in this volume). In the simultaneous mode, the interpreter gives an interpretation of the incoming speech quasi-simultaneously with the speaker. There is generally a minimal time lag of only a few seconds between the presentation of the original speech and its rendition in another language. Simultaneous conference interpreters working between spoken languages use soundproof booths which are equipped with a simultaneous interpreting system, which allows interpreters to hear what the speakers say while simultaneously transmitting the interpreted version of the speeches to the listeners who are wearing headsets. In this mode, interpreters tend to be in the same room as the conference participants, but typically are not directly visible to the interlocutors.

Occasionally, simultaneous interpreting can also be done without a booth. One means of doing this is whispered interpretation (*chuchotage*) and the second is interpreting via a mobile interpreting system (*bidule*). In whispered interpretation, the interpreter sits next to or behind one or two participants and provides simultaneous interpretation in a quiet voice. When working with a *bidule*, on the other hand, the interpreter sits in the same room together with the participants and quietly speaks his/her interpretation of the speech into a hand-held microphone which transmits the interpretation to listeners who are wearing headsets. In that sense, working with the *bidule* is more or less like whispering except that the interpreter does not need to sit right next to the participants who requested interpretation. Working in the absence of a proper simultaneous interpreting system with soundproof booths, however, can be very taxing for interpreters. Interpreting in a proper booth gives interpreters control over the amplitude of the

incoming sound and this enables them to strike an optimum balance between listening, speaking and monitoring their output. When whispering, however, the interpreter has no control over the incoming sound and can face serious difficulties hearing the interlocutors, especially because the interpreter's own voice tends to interfere with what she or he can hear. Furthermore, when whispering or using the *bidule*, the interpreter must control his/her voice and keep it low at all times to avoid distracting the other participants in the room. For these reasons, these modes of interpreting incur additional strains and are generally regarded as exceptions to the common practice of interpreting in soundproof booths.

In addition to working between two spoken languages, interpreters can also work simultaneously between a spoken and a signed language or between two signed languages. Signed languages used by the deaf deploy the visual-gestural medium (see Chapters 7 and 8 in this volume). Therefore, booths and interpreting equipment that are critical in preventing an 'acoustic' overlap when interpreting between spoken languages are unnecessary in the simultaneous interpreting of signed languages. For signed language interpreters, being seen by all deaf participants in the room is critical, which is why they tend to choose a highly visible location when they work.

Consecutive interpreting is the other mode used at conferences and conference-like settings (see Chapter 6 in this volume). In consecutive interpretation, the interpreter waits until the speaker finishes his/her speech, or a part of it, and then renders it in another language. The interpreter is generally in the room and sits or stands quite close to the interlocutors. Consecutive interpretation can take the form of short or long consecutive. Short consecutive tends to be the preferred mode for bi- or multilateral discussions where speakers take quick turns exchanging views. Long consecutive is used where one speaker takes the floor for a longer period of time, and this allows for a train of thought to continue in an uninterrupted manner. In long consecutive, the interpreter can wait up to 20 minutes and even longer before starting to interpret, and this requires strong note-taking skills. In this process, interpreters generally make use of their notes to reconstruct the speech in another language.

Although consecutive interpreting requires more time, its use extends to all conference settings, from the most formal to the most informal, depending on the preferences of the conference organizers, the number of languages used, logistical issues, cost concerns and so on. Consecutive interpreting is often used during lunch or dinner speeches, and during bilateral talks and missions in which delegations travel from one site to another. In large conferences, both modes can be used for different reasons. For example, while simultaneous may be the preferred mode during the main sessions of a conference, consecutive may be used at an opening dinner where the host delivers a short welcome speech.

Professionalization

Interpreting has existed for centuries, possibly ever since humans started communicating with each other in different languages (see Chapter 1 for a history of interpreting). Ancient Egyptian is known to have an expression for 'interpreter' (Bell, 1976), and interpreters have been influential in the spread of religions (Kaufmann, 2005; Karlik, 2010), in the setting up of critical commercial and political ties (Roland, 1999; Rothman, 2009) and in building, sustaining and eroding the power of empires (Delisle and Woodsworth, 1995; Philiou, 2001).

Conference interpreting is largely a continuation of this legacy and has flourished as a technology-assisted solution in meeting the demand for efficient cross-cultural communication. With the impetus provided by the proliferation of international organizations in the post-WWII period, conference interpreting underwent a rapid process of institutionalization. While consecutive

interpreting set the initial stage and continued to play an important role in conference interpreting, the simultaneous mode ultimately became more closely associated with conference interpreting (Baigori, 1999 and Chapter 1 in this volume).

Two important developments that went hand in hand with the growing need for interpreters and played important roles in the process of institutionalizing conference interpreting were the founding of interpreting schools, first in Geneva and then in Vienna, and the creation of a worldwide professional organization, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC).

Role of the AIIC

With currently over 2,900 members in 90 countries, the AIIC has played a significant role in the development of the profession for a number of reasons, the first of which was its early establishment. The AIIC was founded by the pioneers of the profession in 1953, only eight years after simultaneous interpreting gained visibility in Nuremberg (see Chapters 1 and 5). This early start allowed it to shape some of the professional practices and standards right from the beginning, and also explains why the professional standards advocated by the AIIC have found significant resonance in the world of conference interpreting, from working conditions to booth standards (now an ISO standard) and training guidelines.

The second factor that made the AIIC a pivotal player was its establishment both as a professional association and a trade union. As a trade union, AIIC concluded the first collective agreements with the United Nations, Coordinated Organizations and the European Community in 1969 (Thierry, 2009). Those agreements indexed the pay of freelance interpreters working for major international organizations to the remuneration of staff interpreters while also harmonizing the working conditions for the conference interpretation field. AIIC's efforts to set a minimum daily fee for freelance interpreters working in the private market, however, were curtailed by a decision of the US Federal Trade Commission, which considered such action to be in violation of anti-trust laws. While this decision prevented AIIC from setting minimum daily rates for the private market, the association continued to negotiate agreements concerning recruitment, remuneration and working conditions for all freelance interpreters (whether members of the AIIC or not) working for the 'Agreement Sector'. This sector currently includes the United Nations and its agencies, the institutions of the European Union, the Coordinated Organizations (the European Space Agency, the Council of Europe, NATO and the WEU), the World Customs Organization and the Global Union of Federations.

Lastly, from its first years onwards, AIIC has functioned as a quasi-accreditation body in which membership is not 'automatic', but relies on the endorsement of one's performance by fellow interpreters. At a time when more objective accreditation tests and systems were missing, AIIC's insistence on some form of (peer) accreditation contributed to raising the general awareness of 'quality' among professionals and users of conference interpreting services (see Chapter 2 in this volume).

Key terms of the profession

As conference interpreting became established, a number of well-established professional practices were developed. The terms that are commonly used to denote professional practices include:

Working languages (also referred to as a 'language combination'): This term is used to refer to the languages with which an interpreter works. The working languages of interpreters are classified into two groups, namely 'active languages' and 'passive languages'. In most cases, conference interpreters work from their 'passive' languages (also referred to as the 'C language') into their

native language (also referred to as the ‘A language’). Some interpreters have an excellent command of a language other than their native language and are able to work into that language as well, and hence they are said to have a second ‘active’ language (also referred to as the ‘B language’) (SCIC, 2014).

In other words, active languages (A and B) are those that interpreters work into while passive languages (C) are those that they only work from. AIIC’s definition of these language categories is as follows:

Active languages:

A: The interpreter’s native language (or another language strictly equivalent to a native language) into which the interpreter works from all of her or his other languages in both modes of interpretation, simultaneous and consecutive. All interpreters must have at least one ‘A’ language but may have more than one.

B: A language other than the interpreter’s native language of which she or he has a perfect command and into which she or he works from one or more of her or his other languages. Some interpreters work into a ‘B’ language in only one of the two modes of interpretation.

Passive languages:

C: Languages of which the interpreter has a complete understanding and from which she or he works (www.aiic.net – accessed 30 Sept 2014).

Relay Interpreting: This term refers to the type of interpretation in which an intermediary third language is used when interpreting from one language to another. While the general rule is that interpreters listen to the original speaker directly, in some instances (mostly at meetings carried out in multiple languages when interpreters in certain booths do not know one of the languages spoken by the speakers), interpreters can listen to and base their interpretation on the delivery of another interpreter in another booth. For instance, during meetings of the European Union at which all 24 official languages can be spoken, the interpreters in the Maltese booth might not know Estonian well enough to interpret from it. In this case, when a speaker speaks in Estonian, the interpreters in the Maltese booth can ‘connect’ to another booth and listen to the interpretation provided by their colleagues who are able to work from Estonian into a language they know (SCIC, 2014). ‘Relay’ can be used both in simultaneous and in consecutive interpreting.

In signed language interpreting, relay interpreting is also used to ensure more effective communication with a deaf person, especially if they have idiosyncratic language use. Pre-lingually deaf people who grew up using a signed language as their first language are often best placed to communicate with other deaf people and be trained to interpret for them (www.asli.org.uk – accessed 30 Sept 2014). Deaf interpreters usually take a ‘relay’ from a colleague who interprets from a spoken language into a signed language which the deaf interpreter knows. They then interpret that input into the signed language that their deaf audience knows. Naturally, deaf interpreters can also provide relays from one signed language to another which can then be used by a hearing interpreter who can convey that into a spoken language. In international settings, deaf interpreters also work into International Sign, a kind of *lingua franca* which is not as conventionalized or complex as a natural sign language (Nadja Grbić, 2014, personal communication).

Retour interpreting: Normally interpreters work into their mother tongue, although some interpreters know a second language well enough to be able to work into that language from

their mother tongue. Working into a foreign language is called 'retour' interpreting (after the French word for 'return').

A small number of interpreters know their second active languages so well that they are able to interpret into that language from all the languages in their language combinations. These interpreters are said to be able to work in two booths. Retour interpreting is especially useful in providing relays out of less well-known languages into more widespread languages (SCIC, 2014).

Pivot: If only one or two interpreters have a less common language as a passive language, they are said to be the 'pivots' for the interpreters working in other booths who take relays from them. The French term (and pronunciation) is universally employed.

At large meetings with many languages, it is best to avoid having a single pivot for any language. When a large team capable of working in 24 languages interprets, as is the case at many EU meetings, the relay is usually provided through different language families (Germanic, Romance, Finno-Ugric) in order to distribute the workload more evenly and avoid any imbalance in the interpretation that might result from always transiting through just one relay language or language group (SCIC, 2014).

Language regime: This term is used to refer to the active and passive languages of a given meeting.

Conference interpreting in the world

Although conference interpreting was first practised in and continues to have a stronghold in Europe, it has spread quite rapidly and is currently practised around the world. A significant majority of conference interpreters are freelance interpreters who work in the private market (www.aiic.net). However, in some regions and countries, conference interpreters also work as staff interpreters for international or national organizations. The European Union and the organs of the United Nations are important recruiters of interpreting services in the institutional market. Regional organizations and national parliaments also tend to play an important role in some regions and countries. The following section offers a broad overview of the current situation:

Europe: Europe is possibly the most institutionalized conference interpreting market in the world. It currently hosts one-third of AIIC's members (www.aiic.net). While most professionals in Europe are freelance interpreters who work in the private market, there is also a significant number of staff interpreters working for national or international organizations. In countries that host international organizations, like Switzerland and Belgium, those institutions can be the main drivers of the demand for interpretation. The European Union is the most important institutional player for the European market (see the 'European Union' section). Private companies and government agencies are the main clients of conference interpreters who work in the private market.

Asia Pacific: The main users of interpretation services are companies, international federations, governments and non-government organizations (NGOs) – in short, the private market. There are also meetings held by UN agencies, for which the majority of interpreters are sent from the respective UN agencies' headquarters. This is mainly due to the fact that there is a short supply of interpreters in the region who have the required language combinations that are suitable for UN meetings.

The two major international or regional organizations in Asia Pacific which use interpreters are the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in Noumea, New Caledonia, and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (UNESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand. The SPC only uses English and French interpretation, while UNESCAP uses only English, French,

Chinese and Russian. The Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), known as the Khmer Tribunals, have also created a small amount of demand for interpretation services, and they use English, French and Khmer and have four or five staff interpreters. It is not clear how much longer the Khmer Tribunals will last, but likely they will soon come to a close.

Almost all interpreters in the region are freelance interpreters and the region is primarily a freelance market. The number of meetings held by the UN is growing, however, as a result of Asian governments hosting such meetings more often (Jean Pierre Alain, 2014, personal communication).

South America: The main clients of conference interpreting services in South America are the private market (medicine, trade, law, agribusiness, technology and equipment, logistics, energy, telecommunications, universities, etc.), large state-owned enterprises such as oil and gas companies and other government agencies.

The main working languages are Spanish and Portuguese (only for Brazil), in combination with English. The South American market is strictly a 'retour' market. The only major international organization based in South America is ECLAC (UN Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), which is based in Santiago de Chile. ECLAC languages are Spanish, Portuguese and French. The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUL) does not operate on a regular basis and does not have staff interpreters. Also, there are no staff interpreters at any UN institutions in South America, including ECLAC (Branca Vianna and Claudia Cereghino, 2014, personal communication).

Africa: The main clients of conference interpreters are international organizations such as the African Union, regional integration organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and their institutions and specialized agencies, regional parliaments such as the Pan African Parliament and ECOWAS Parliament, and the African Development Bank. The languages used by the African Union and the Pan African Parliament are English, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Swahili and Spanish. ECOWAS uses English, French and Portuguese, while COMESA uses English and Portuguese; the African Development Bank uses English, French, Arabic and Portuguese and UN Agencies such as the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) use the UN languages as well as Swahili. WHO-AFRO uses English, French and Portuguese.

In Cameroon (a bilingual country in which English and French are spoken) and South Africa (in which there are 11 official languages), conference interpreters also work extensively for public agencies. To a lesser extent, interpreters also work for the private market. Most interpreters in Africa are freelance interpreters (Jibola Sofolohan, 2013, personal communication).

North America: In the United States, graduates of interpreting programs increasingly work for the US government, international organizations, the private sector and non-profit/NGO organizations. Most private sector companies in the US will hire conference interpreters on a contract freelance basis. The United Nations and the US State Department are important institutional employers. Young interpreters who pass the US Department of State's interpreting test usually start out as liaison interpreters before moving into seminar and eventually conference work as freelancers. Interpreters can combine work in different settings such as conferences and community settings, including state courts, hospitals and medical clinics in the community sector (Jeff Wood, 2014, personal communication; see also Kelly, Stewart and Vijayalaxami, 2010).

Being a bilingual country, Canada has a considerable interpreting market for all types of interpreting. Through its Conference Interpretation Services and Parliamentary Interpretation Service, both of which report to the Translation Bureau, the government of Canada is by far the country's largest interpretation client. Those two organizations combined have approximately 75 staff interpreters and regularly recruit over 150 freelance interpreters. The number of new

private sector clients joining the ranks of more traditional public sector clients is also on the rise (www.aiic.net/page/1627/conference-interpretation-markets-in-canada/lang/1 – accessed 30 Sept 2014).

Arab countries: In Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the great majority of conference interpreters are freelancers, with the exception of a few staff members in Saudi Arabia within the Organization for Islamic Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank, and some others in Tunisia within the African Development Bank.

The clients of conference interpreters are for the most part international organizations, but there is also demand for interpreting from governmental agencies and ministries (in Egypt), parliaments, some private market organizations, both local and international firms and some NGOs. International organizations cover the UN system agencies and thus require Arabic-speaking interpreters, as Arabic is one of the six official languages at the UN; the main languages are Arabic and English and sometimes French. Arabic booths are usually bi-directional, so interpreters are required to do retour; many organizations prefer an English retour, while others do not insist on it being in English or French (Anne-Marie Greis, 2014, personal communication).

European Union

In the institutional market, the EU is the largest recruiter of interpreting services today. EU institutions currently employ approximately 1,000 staff interpreters (European Parliament: 326, European Commission: 557, Court of Justice: 75 as of March 2014) and work with approximately 3,000 freelance interpreters who have been accredited by EU institutions (Christina Bahr for the EP, Claude Durand for SCIC, Patrick Twidle for CJ, 2014, personal communication).

What makes the EU the largest employer of interpreters is its policy of multilingualism, which recognizes the languages of all member countries as official languages of the organization. The emphasis placed on multilingualism in the EU is largely a result of its 'supranational' character, which sets it apart from 'international' or 'intergovernmental' organizations. While intergovernmental organizations tend to choose two or at most a few languages as working languages (NATO, for instance, uses French and English as its working languages although it has 28 member states), the EU currently has 28 members and 24 official languages (due to the fact that some countries use the same language, such as Austria and Germany, France and Belgium, etc.).

The three main institutions of the EU have extended interpreting services: the European Parliament's Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences, the European Commission's Directorate General for Interpretation (SCIC) and the Court of Justice's Interpretation Directorate. The first two also provide interpretation services for the other institutions of the EU.

Providing interpreting services in the 'complete language regime' with 24 languages (and sometimes even more if the meeting involves the languages of candidate countries or others) is a highly complex task. In order to provide interpretation in and out of 24 languages, a team of 72 interpreters needs to work in booths and cover as many as 552 possible language combinations (Olga Cosmidou, 2014, personal communication).

As these figures indicate, it is important for interpreters working for EU institutions to be competent in a number of passive languages, but interpreters do not need to have a second active language. Having a number of passive languages, from which an interpreter works into his or her mother tongue, is deemed to be more important than having two active languages. This is because the more passive languages the interpreters know, the less they need to use an intermediary language (i.e. relay interpretation) to convey the speakers' messages. In fact, the EU only started to use interpreters with a B language after a bottleneck occurred with the

recent waves of enlargement starting with Finnish. The principle of working into one's mother tongue from a number of passive languages continues to be widely practised, but for some of the 'new' booths (i.e., for languages that became official more recently such as Maltese, Estonian, Czech, Slovak and Croatian), interpreters can be asked to work into B languages which are usually one of the more widely spoken languages (such as English, French or German). This practice generally continues until a sufficient number of interpreters in other booths learn the new languages and start interpreting from them into their A language.

Given the importance of having a number of passive languages, staff interpreters in the EU are encouraged to add new languages to their existing language combinations. Furthermore, freelance interpreters (who are called Auxiliary Conference Interpreters, ACIs) are asked to have certain minimum language combinations depending on their mother tongue. As it stands, it is sufficient for an interpreter with Finnish or Estonian as a mother tongue to have only two active languages or one active and two passive languages (i.e., an AA, AB or ACC combination). However, for an interpreter who wants to sit the inter-institutional accreditation test of the EU for the English, French, German, Italian or Spanish booths, the minimum requirement is to have one active and four passive languages or two active plus three passive languages (i.e., ACCC or ABCC). It is therefore highly advisable for people who are interested in working for the EU to check the language profiles in demand before applying for a test and when deciding to add a new language (http://europa.eu/interpretation/doc/lang_profiles_in_demand.pdf – accessed 30 Sept 2014). The three criteria the EU currently uses for employability are the professional domicile (i.e., proximity to the meeting venue), the number of languages known and quality of performance.

United Nations

One of the other main players in the institutional market is the UN, which has four stations, each of which has its own interpreting divisions (known as the 'interpretation service' in New York and Geneva, and the 'interpretation section' in Nairobi and Vienna). Interpreters are also hired by the regional commissions of the UN in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut and Santiago.

The organization has six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, and two working languages, English and French. All United Nations staff are required to know at least one of the working languages. The conferences and meetings held by the UN bodies may be conducted in all six official languages. Consequently, there are six corresponding language sections (booths) in the Interpretation Service. Normally, only these languages may be used at UN meetings. However, under the UN Charter, any member state may decide to speak in its own language at certain meetings on the condition that they provide their own interpreters who can work into one of the official languages.

Interpreters are identified by the language they work into, which at the United Nations is always their mother tongue in the English, French, Russian and Spanish booths. In other words, an English (booth) interpreter interprets from the other official languages into English. Because certain language combinations at the level required for interpreting work are rather rare, this structure is not applied to the Arabic and Chinese booths, where interpreters work both into and out of their mother tongues. This makes it unnecessary for English, French, Russian and Spanish booths to interpret from Arabic and Chinese directly. Instead, they 'relay' from the Arabic or Chinese interpreters who interpret into English or French.

The largest interpreting service in the UN system is at the UN Headquarters in New York, which provides interpretation during General Assembly and other regular meetings. There are 124 posts for the six languages, and currently, 113 of those posts are filled. During the regular

sessions of the General Assembly, 160 to 180 interpreters are needed. The UN relies on its list of freelance interpreters to meet the demand for interpretation in peak periods (Hossam Fahr, 2014, personal communication).

Interpreters wishing to work for the UN need to pass the exam, and to be eligible for the exam, candidates need to prove that they have studied interpreting or have considerable experience working as a simultaneous interpreter. Additionally, they must have as their main language one of the six official languages of the UN and know two more of the six core languages well enough to interpret from them into their main language. If the main languages of candidates are Arabic or Chinese, they also need to demonstrate an ability to interpret from their main language into another official language (www.unlanguage.org/Careers/Interpret/default.aspx).

Facts and figures

According to the figures issued by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in 2010, simultaneous interpreting is the most frequently deployed mode in conference interpreting both in the private and institutional market. In 2010, 82% of all working days reported by freelance and staff interpreters were carried out in the simultaneous mode, whereas pure consecutive represented on average only 5.5% of all working days ('working days' is used as a reference as conference interpreters tend to work by the day). Whispering constituted just 2.7% of interpreters' work and interpreting with a *bidule* constituted just 3.9%. If whispering and *bidule* work are added to simultaneous interpreting in a booth, the share of simultaneous interpreting increases to 90.6%. Almost all interpreters reported practising simultaneous interpreting (94.4%), whereas consecutive was practised by only 51% of all respondents, interpreting with a *bidule* by 38.7% and *chuchotage* by 40.1% (AIIC, 2010).

Interestingly, however, although the use of whispering and, indirectly, also *bidule* are actively discouraged in the AIIC's Code of Ethics as they tend to create a risk to high quality performance, the use of the *bidule* increased by almost 50% while simultaneous interpretation in booths seemed to be declining in frequency (84.3%) over the six-year period between 2005 and 2010. Consecutive interpreting was also on the rise, from 5.8% of all working days in 2005 up to 6.6% in 2010. *Chuchotage* seems to have remained stable (AIIC, 2010).

According to the same survey, interpreting in 'typical' conference settings such as conferences, meetings of intergovernmental organizations, workshops and training sessions constitutes the main workload for conference interpreters. Interpreting in non-conference settings, such as for the media and in community and court settings constitutes a fairly marginal share of the workload of conference interpreters. Only 17% of interpreters reported working for television, 10% for courts and 3% in community settings, and the number of days that interpreters worked in these settings was also low (AIIC, 2010). Naturally, the AIIC's statistics only cover the responses of interpreters who explicitly refer to themselves as 'conference interpreters'. The situation in the overall market is likely to be more diverse, with interpreters accepting work in a variety of settings (see, for example, Kelly, Stewart and Vijayalaxami, 2010 for the situation in North America). Most signed language interpreters, for instance, work both at conferences and in community settings. On the other hand, the use of signed languages in conferences is on the rise and may eventually lead some signed language interpreters to specialize solely in conference interpreting. The increase in the use of signed languages in conferences is clearly evidenced by the recent decision of the AIIC to open up membership to signed language interpreters.

In any discussion on conference interpreting settings, it is important not to overlook a new setting: remote interpreting (see Chapter 22 in this volume). In remote interpreting, the

interpreter is asked to provide interpretation in a location that is different from the location of the conference interlocutors. That location can be next door to the main conference room or thousands of miles away. While still controversial and not well-liked by most interpreters, according to AIIC's (2010) survey almost 40% of all interpreters worldwide reported having worked at least once with remote speakers and one out of four with a remote audience. In Canada (7.5% of all work days), Israel (25.9%), Spain (6.2%), Germany (6.2%) and the USA (4.2%), interpreting remote speakers and/or remote audiences was noted to be above average. Interpreting remote speakers and interpreting remote audiences have both increased by almost 50% in six years.

Professional code of ethics

As with most professions, conference interpreters have their own code of ethics. AIIC's Code of Ethics, which is currently also used as a reference by a number of national conference interpreters' associations, emphasizes professional integrity, impartiality and confidentiality, but it does not offer specific performance instructions like the codes of other professional organizations that (also) represent court or community interpreters. The Code of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT), for instance, offers clear definitions of 'accuracy' or 'faithfulness' and complements the ethical rules with a code of conduct that explains how ethical rules should be applied in practice (www.ausit.org/ausit/documents/code_of_ethics_full.pdf – accessed 30 Sept 2014). AIIC's code, on the other hand, suffices by saying in Article 3 that 'Members of the Association shall not accept any assignment for which they are not qualified. Acceptance of an assignment shall imply a moral undertaking on the member's part to work with all due professionalism' (www.aiic.net/code-of-ethics – accessed 30 Sept 2014), leaving most of the decision-making about what 'due professionalism' entails to the individual professional.

Whether regulated by codes or not, ethical issues and the ethical responsibility of interpreters are very much on the agenda of both the professional world and academia today. Sparked by the voluntary interpreting services provided at the World Social Forum, and further reinforced by the role interpreters play in wars and zones of conflict, an increasing number of practitioners and scholars are now calling for an 'ethical turn' in interpreting, asking practising interpreters to rethink their ethical responsibility in the light of the powers they serve and the policies they strengthen with their services (Boéri, 2008; Baker and Maier, 2011; see also Chapters 19 and 20 in this volume). This discussion will likely become even more prevalent in all circles in the near future.

Training

Conference interpreter training has come a long way since the first efforts were made to train conference interpreters for the 1928 International Labour Organization (ILO) Conference, followed by the establishment of the first school in Mannheim in 1930, which was later transferred to Heidelberg University (Kurz, 1996). Following in the footsteps of the first university-level interpreting programs in Geneva and Vienna in the 1950s, there are currently hundreds of interpreter training institutions around the world. Most of these offer programs at the undergraduate level and tend to be joint programs in translation and interpreting, but there is also a visible trend towards postgraduate programs specializing in conference interpreting. This is evident in the increasing number of schools taking part in the Schools Survey of the AIIC Training Committee, which only lists postgraduate programs (see <http://aiic.net/directories/schools/finder> – accessed 30 Sept 2014).

An interesting initiative in the area of interpreter training is the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI), which brings together postgraduate programs from around Europe organized around a core curriculum and adhering to clearly defined standards of quality (www.emcinterpreting.org – accessed 30 Sept 2014).

In conference interpreting, there is broad consensus on the basic standards of training. AIIC's fundamental principles in interpreter training (www.aiic.net/page/60 – accessed 30 Sept 2014) have come to be largely shared by other players, such as the EMCI and numerous international and national organizations. The latter's involvement is highlighted by the Declaration on the Training of Conference Interpreters, which was signed by 30 head interpreters of national and international organizations (HINTS, 2012). The best practices supported by all of these actors centre on the importance of offering training at the postgraduate level, using professional conference interpreters as trainers and program coordinators, administering proper entrance and final exams and allowing external jury members on the exam boards to ensure high levels of quality and transparency (see Chapter 25 for a more extensive discussion on training).

In addition to training initiatives, the field has also witnessed the development of more theoretically-oriented academic programs, which focus on training researchers in Interpreting Studies. A considerable number of MA and PhD theses are written each year on conference interpreting, and this upward trend is clearly visible in the growing number of entries in online bibliographies such as the Conference Interpreting Research Information Network (CIRIN) Translation Studies Bibliography (TSB) and Translation Studies Abstracts (TSA).

Conference interpreting as a field of research

Due to its important role in the institutionalization of interpreting both in the professional world and academia, conference interpreting has constituted the main focus of attention in scholarly research on interpreting. Although other types of interpreting have certainly caught up, conference interpreting continues to be an important area of study within the field of interpreting studies. The first study on conference interpreters dates back to 1931, when Spanish psychologist Jesus Sanz (1931) observed and interviewed interpreters with the aim of learning more about their work. Ever since then, an extensive literature has accumulated on the cognitive, social, psychological and physiological aspects of interpreting simultaneously and consecutively at conferences. Various chapters in this volume take up different aspects of this remarkable literature, including one fully devoted to interpreting research (see Chapter 4), as well as separate entries focusing on the different modes of interpreting used in conference interpretation (see Chapters 5 and 6) and the evolution of the profession (see Chapters 1 and 27). Given the comprehensive coverage of interpreting research in the other chapters, this entry limits itself to discussing research that has specifically focused on conference interpreting as a *profession* and briefly surveying the studies on the expectations of consumers, the professional image of conference interpreting and the role perceptions of conference interpreters.

Understanding what the users of interpreting services expect from conference interpreters has been a key concern for the profession (see Chapter 23 on quality). The needs and expectations of the users of interpreting services have been explored by around a dozen small- to large-scale user surveys (Kurz, 1989; 1993; Gile, 1990; Pöchhacker, 1994; Vuorikoski, 1995; Cattaruzza and Mack, 1995; Moser, 1995; Collados Aís, 2002; Weller and Yanez, 1998; Collados Aís *et al.*, 2011).

In a significant number of these studies, which were based on questionnaires, users of interpretation have ranked 'sense consistency with the original message' as the most important expectation from conference interpreting. 'Sense consistency' was also ranked as a top priority

by interpreters when asked to rate which quality criteria mattered most to them (Bühler, 1986; Chiaro and Nocella, 2004; Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker, 2010).

While questionnaire results have consistently converged on the primacy of ‘fidelity to the meaning in the original speech’, various researchers have raised ‘reasonable doubt’ on a number of critical issues with regard to the validity of the quality criteria employed in user surveys, questioning whether all of us are indeed ‘talking about the same thing’ (Cattaruzza and Mack, 1995: 47).

Further critical reflection has centred on whether the same recipient groups share the same expectations. While Kurz (1989) suggested that this was likely, Vuorikoski (1995) argued that individual expectations differ greatly, even among members of the same audience. She emphasized that audience expectations can vary greatly from one meeting to another, even when the topic and interpreters were the same. She also contended that most of the respondents to her survey had a rather functional view of simultaneous interpreting, which led them to use the interpretation available according to their immediate needs. This view was also supported by Weller and Yanez (1998: 79) who claimed that ‘the audience using the interpretation service is not necessarily one uniform body’, and emphasized that even members of a single audience tended to have highly individual expectations from interpreting. Lastly, an impressive large-scale study by the Granada Group (ECIS) led by Collados Aís pointed to the complexity of users’ expectations by showing not only how individual users differ in what they understand from certain ‘quality criteria’, but also revealing the impact of rather subjective factors such as ‘first impressions’ in subsequent assessments of interpreting quality (Collados Aís *et al.*, 2011).

The complex nature of interpreting has also become evident through studies that explore the professional image and role perceptions of conference interpreters (Feldweg, 1996; Angelelli, 2004; Gelke, 2008; Monacelli, 2009; Setton and Guo, 2011; Zwischenberger, 2011; see also Chapter 27 in this volume). Among other findings, this area of research has highlighted the discrepancy between the expectations of users and the reality of interpreting. It has shown that outsiders to the profession, such as the media, expect interpreters to be ‘faithful to the word’ and judge interpreters with this highly subjective yardstick, while insiders to the profession, like interpreters and their professional associations, insist that their task entails the transfer of the ‘meanings’ intended by the speakers and not of the words they use (Diriker, 2009). Interestingly, the tension between describing interpreters as passive intermediaries versus active decision-makers even appears in the discourse of interpreters themselves. While most interpreters define their idealized role as a neutral mediator between languages, interpreters’ readers, blogs and memoirs (e.g. Çorakçı Dişbudak, 1991; Feng, 2007), which contain anecdotal accounts and real-life stories by interpreters, are full of references to instances in which interpreters shape their delivery not only with regard to the linguistic or semantic aspects of the original speech, but also with regard to situational, psychological and other factors.

The discrepancy between the unrealistic and at times conflicting expectations of users and the complex real-life situations in which interpreters need to work most likely constitutes a key challenge in the practice of the profession. This, however, is not necessarily a deterrent, since 84% of all interpreters in the AIC’s Workload Study (2002) actually reported being very satisfied with the challenging nature of the profession.

Future challenges

In the near future, some of the possible challenges for the profession will include the increasing use of remote interpreting in numerous settings, and that will necessitate the development of standards if this is to be used properly. Also, the increasing use of English in conferences (either

alone or as the only 'retour' language) will continue to shape the general demand for the profession as well as the need for particular language combinations of professionals. Another issue is the increasing speed of deregulation, which might have an impact on the number of international organizations with which collective agreements are concluded. Lastly, there is the matter of the development of international standards for the profession, which is gaining particular importance as some national authorities now require national accreditation systems to be enforced for conference interpreting. Such steps toward nationwide standardization have been taken in Italy, Germany and Turkey, and preliminary efforts are under way to develop professional standards for conference interpreting at the international level. Given the importance of the issue, it is clear that significant investments in time and effort will need to be made for such standards to properly materialize.

Further reading

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A comprehensive and cohesive account of Interpreting Studies in all its breadth.
- Pöchhacker, F. and Shlesinger, M., (eds). 2002. *The Interpreting Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge.
An anthology of critical readings in Interpreting Studies.
- Baigorry, J., 1999. Conference Interpreting: From Modern Times to Space Technology, *Interpreting: International Journal of Research and Practice in Interpreting*, 4(1), 29–40.
An overview of conference interpreting since its birth at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference until now.
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A valuable insight into the profession and practice of conference interpreting.
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A book that offers readers with the conceptual bases required to understand the recurrent issues and difficulties in professional interpreting.

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