

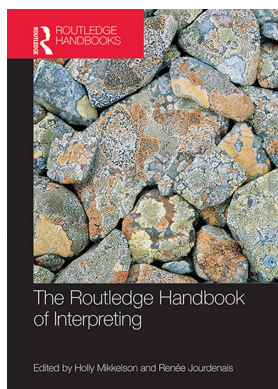
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### Key Internal Players in the Development of the Interpreting Profession

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## 2

# KEY INTERNAL PLAYERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERPRETING PROFESSION

*Julie Boéri*

### Introduction

Interpreting has evolved across time and space out of the influence of a myriad of players. This chapter sets out to explore the development of the interpreting profession from within. Adopting a relational and dynamic approach to the development of interpreting, it examines the unequal and changing power that internal players exert in shaping the ways in which interpreting is theorized, practised, provided, learnt and taught in our societies, and in so doing, in developing the interpreting profession.

The development of the profession has been a matter of concern in interpreting studies (Tseng 1992; Fenton 1993; Pollitt 1997; Agger-Gupta 2001; Mikkelson 1999, 2004; Ozolins 2000; Wadensjö *et al.* 2007; Swabey and Gajewski Mikkelson 2008). This is not surprising, given that our fairly recent discipline was born out of the very rationale of turning this ancestral, societal practice into a recognized profession. In her foreword to the Proceedings of the fourth Critical Link Conference which addressed the “professionalization of interpreting in the community” (Sweden, 2004), Wadensjö sketches various lines of action taken by interpreting players:

People working with interpreting in various spheres of society and various parts of the world are now involved in a process of professionalization. This implies a range of individual and collective efforts, including struggles to achieve a certain social status, suggestions to define standards of best practice, to control access to professional knowledge – theoretical and practical skills – and to control education and work opportunities.

*(Wadensjö 2007: 2)*

Wadensjö’s several references to “control” in the short excerpt above draw attention to the dynamics of power that underpin most processes of professionalization; an aspect that has remained scarcely studied in the case of the interpreting profession. In fact, the most widespread and intuitive approach to the development of the profession has consisted of identifying the key characteristics of other occupations that have reached the status of a profession and using them as

a point of reference for interpreting to achieve the same positive fate. The typical characteristics (or factors) that have been identified and largely addressed are:

- A set of moral values and principles established in a Code of Ethics;
- Standards of Best Practice, providing practitioners with guidance on how to implement the Code of Ethics on the ground in practice;
- A consensual definition of role and function: practitioners identify with a joint distinctive character as a professional community. This is what I refer to throughout this chapter as “professional ethos”;
- A body of theoretical and practical knowledge as well as formal training programmes;
- A system of licensure, registration or accreditation;
- An interpreting industry conformed with by relevant sector agencies;
- A professional body that is representative of practising interpreters;
- An established governmental and/or institutional interpreting policy.

The means to achieve these goals have been addressed by an alternative and complementary approach, put forward by Tseng (1992), which consists of exploring the development of the profession as a cyclical process and a collective effort that involves several players such as the labour market, the state, professional associations, practitioners, etc. Tseng’s (1992: 43) model of professionalization, created for his case study on the emergence of the conference interpreting profession in Taiwan, and applied since then to other areas of interpreting (Fenton 1993; Pollitt 1997; Mikkelsen 1999, 2004; Witter-Merithew and Johnson 2004), is decomposed into four phases of development:

- market disorder
- consensus and commitment among practitioners
- emergence of a strong professional association
- political leverage

Shifting the focus from professions’ characteristics, Tseng foregrounds both the external control (on private, state institutions or users) and the internal control (over practitioners, trainers, trainees, etc.) that occupational groups increasingly exert as they progress towards professionalization.

This chapter adopts Tseng’s relational and dynamic approach but with a sharp focus on players, on their varying perspectives, and their unequal and changing power, rather than on stages of development. This is because its purpose is not to look at the success or failure of specific occupational groups in reaching a specific stage of professionalization, but to explore the overlapping and competing perspectives on the development of the profession among players within the interpreting field. This analysis focuses specifically on “internal players”; i.e. professional bodies as well as training and research institutions, practitioners, scholars and educators, leaving aside “external players”, such as clients and users, dealt with elsewhere (Chapter 3 in this volume). The core of this chapter examines the control wielded by professional bodies over the market. It focuses on two specific professional bodies which have regulated the interpreting market, professional standards and access to education, in the domains of conference interpreting (see the section “Conference interpreting: the case of AIIC”) and sign language interpreting (see the section “Sign language interpreting in the US: the case of the RID”). These two bodies are the International Association of Conference Interpreters (abbreviated under its French acronym, AIIC) and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in the US. Against this backdrop of two overlapping and diverging systems of professionalization, the chapter moves on to discussing recent

developments in the interpreting community with a particular focus on individuals players such as practitioners, researchers, and educators (“Current issues and debates”) and opens up to future directions in interpreting studies (“Recommendations and future directions”).

### **Conference interpreting: the case of AIIC**

Although there are many professional associations of conference interpreters across the world to date, AIIC, which was founded in Paris in 1953, was and remains the main interlocutor of the conference interpreting (CI) profession in the world, given its fast and wide membership expansion across the non-communist world in the mid-20th century and its historical relationship with the most important employers of conference interpreters (see Chapter 3 on external players).

#### ***Lobbying stakeholders***

Several instruments were used by AIIC to enforce respect for interpreters’ working conditions among stakeholders, in both the public and private markets.

In the private market, one such instrument was the rule of the “direct contract” (Keiser 1999: 84–85). It obliged any end-client to directly contract individual interpreters, thus preventing intermediaries (particularly congress organizers) from making a profit on interpreting services provision. In a context of lower supply than demand for interpreters, and of clients’ relative lack of knowledge about simultaneous interpreting, and given the non-existence at the time of electronic communication platforms to locate interpreters, the direct contract rule turned AIIC into a safe and free-of-charge recruiting ground.

However, “AIIC’s practice of unilaterally deciding and imposing standard rates”, in Keiser’s words, “was increasingly hard to accept” among stakeholders (87; my translation from French). Aware of the risk that stakeholders might increasingly look for non-AIIC interpreters, the association entered a phase of negotiation, flexibilized the “direct contract” rule, then abandoned it in 1971, and finally concluded agreements in the congress organizing industry in 1985 (*op. cit.*).

As for the public market, AIIC’s main instrument to enforce respect for interpreters’ working conditions has been and continues to be collective agreements with the most important inter-governmental employers of freelance interpreters, mainly the UN and the EU institutions. These agreements consisted in leveraging freelance interpreters’ labour rights to those of civil servant interpreters: remuneration, working conditions, health insurance, etc. (Baigorri-Jalón 2000). Signed as early as 1969, they have been since then re-negotiated and re-conducted every five years, as evidenced in AIIC’s website section on the sectors with which the association presently negotiates agreements, including the European Union, the Global Union Federations, the United Nations, the World Customs Organization (AIIC n.d.). In the post-World War II socio-economic context, AIIC was thus empowered to regulate the labour market by acting as a trade union and, to the extent that it was the unique interlocutor of the profession, as a free-of-charge interpreters’ agency. However, several court cases against the association in Canada (1982), in Germany (1986) and then in the US (1992–1997), marked a tipping point in the history of AIIC and are revelatory of the loss of regulatory power of professional bodies with the expansion of a neoliberal market economy (Keiser 1999: 88).

In fact, AIIC’s endeavour to improve interpreters’ welfare fell under anti-trust law on the grounds that it is not a trade union (exempted from anti-trust scrutiny) but a professional association: “respondents [AIIC] exist for the profit of their members” (FTC 1996: 113). As attested to by its motto, the primary mission of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is to “protect

America's consumers" by preventing anti-competitive business practices. It is in this capacity that it alleged that AIIC regulatory "scheme deprived consumers of the benefits of price and other forms of competition among interpreters" (*ibid.*). Providing evidence of the close connection between the curtailing of competition among interpreters and the hindering of end-users' access to professional services, the FTC's decision against AIIC was upheld on appeal (FTC 1997). Except for the agreements with the public sector, which remained unaffected by the decision (Keiser 1999: 88), all of AIIC's binding rules were turned into recommendations.

### ***Control of practitioners***

As early as 1957, AIIC adopted a Code of Professional Ethics, whose basic tenet was (and remains) absolute respect for working conditions, in addition to confidentiality and a commitment to excellence. These remain the basic tenets of AIIC's Code of Ethics as it stands at the time of writing this chapter (AIIC 2002).

AIIC established a standard rate which, until 1992, had to be strictly applied by all members anywhere in the labour market (Keiser 1999: 83). AIIC also established the principle of "same responsibility, same remuneration", thus enforcing equality of conditions regardless of gender differences (a lively issue in the early days of the association) and regardless of level of experience. As argued by Keiser, this principle deterred employers from looking for less experienced and more economical interpreters and, in so doing, had the effect of "strongly discouraging the 'prima donnism', so frequent in professions involving other forms of interpretation" (*ibid.*: 85), by which he means "musicians, authors, actors, etc." (*ibid.*: 84; my translation from French).

Another rule intended to curtail competition from novice interpreters is AIIC's restrictive policy on pro bono interpreting. In fact, prior to the FTC ruling, article 13 of the Code of Ethics stipulated that "members of the Association can provide services for free, provided that they cover their travel and subsistence costs (unless they are granted an exceptional waiver by the Council)" (Keiser 2005; my translation from French). Although this policy seems to apply to AIIC interpreters only, the FTC investigation provided evidence of the influence that AIIC wields in the labour market to enforce this policy beyond AIIC interpreters. Focusing on the particular case of the 1984 Olympics, the FTC came to the following conclusion:

When the organizers of the 1984 Olympic games wanted to use student interpreters and pay for their airfare from Monterey, California to Los Angeles, they ran afoul of AIIC's limits of free charitable work, which require members who provide their services free of charge to pay for their own travel expenses and subsistence. "AIIC's restrictions on pro bono work deter entry by novice interpreters working without charge," Judge Timony said. "Absent the rule, student or novice interpreters could seek to work without charge in order to gain experience and make contacts in the profession."

(FTC 1996)

The article restricting pro bono work was then removed by AIIC, and today's professional standards stipulate, under article 5, that

Whenever members of the Association provide their services free of charge for conferences of a charitable or humanitarian nature, they shall respect the conditions laid down in the Code of Professional Ethics and in these Professional Standards.

(AIIC 2012)

In short, non-remunerated interpreting should be governed by respect for working conditions, excellence, and impartiality. There is no longer any reference to the covering of costs by interpreters themselves.

Another AIIC policy that regulates competition among interpreters is that of the professional address. When they work on a paid basis, interpreters are banned from covering their travel and subsistence expenses, which must be charged to the client. AIIC interpreters shall have only one professional address, the one declared and published in the AIIC Directory, and “any change in professional address from one region to another shall not be permitted for a period of less than six months” (*ibid.*).

Until AIIC lost the FTC case, its rules were enforced “with penalties for breach, including warning, reprimand, suspension and expulsion ... Members charged with violating the rules have been investigated and penalized, or have resigned”, as stated in the FTC Initial Decision (1996: 120). However, non-AIIC members have also been pressured to abide by AIIC’s rules, given their reliance on sponsors and referees to get to work: another mechanism of enforcement of the rules which the FTC Administrative Law Judge, James P. Timony identified:

AIIC also used rumour and blacklisting to secure members’ adherence to the rules. Interpreters feared being labelled as undercutters. ... When interpreters deviated from the AIIC rules, they kept their agreement secret, for fear of retaliation by other interpreters ... . Conference interpreters rely on their colleagues for referrals. Interpreters fear being blacklisted by colleagues because much of their referral work comes from other interpreters.

*(FTC 1996: 121)*

Another policy underpinning this “referral” system is that of AIIC membership. As it stands at the time of writing this chapter (AIIC 2002) and as it stood in 1996 (FTC 1996: 15–16), this policy makes candidates reliant on the willingness of AIIC colleagues to vouch for their observance of AIIC rules and regulations. Once they have secured their sponsors and can prove that they have sufficient experience, their application is processed and their name is published in the AIIC Bulletin. Then, for a specific period, candidates may be challenged by AIIC members on their respect for AIIC rules. This policy has undergone some slight changes since 1996. Nowadays, the number of sponsors may decrease from five to three according to language combinations and regions, the minimum number of days of work experience has decreased from 200 to 150 days and the period during which they can be challenged by other AIIC members has decreased from 200 to 60 days (AIIC 2002). Nevertheless, the sponsorship system still prevails, and grants AIIC members the role of gatekeepers of the association and guardians of respect for professional standards.

### ***Lobbying schools***

While formal training is not required to apply for AIIC membership, the association has been proactive on this strategic front of professionalization.

As early as 1959, AIIC established a “school policy” (Keiser 1999) which, at the time, consisted of urging the designers of training programmes to abide by a set of criteria (listed by AIIC Schools Committee, later renamed AIIC Training Committee), in exchange for granting them the association’s recognition (*ibid.*).

As the decades have passed, AIIC’s school policy has shifted from official recognition in the 60s – the schools belonging to CIUTI (the Conference of University-Level Translator and Interpreter Schools) or the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) network

being two cases in point – to the mere listing of criteria-complying schools in AIIC’s School Directory (AIIC Training Committee 2010). Periodically updated since 1959, these recommendations “officially became the yardstick by which the profession rated training standards” (Mackintosh 1999: 72). They state that: “courses should be designed and taught by practising conference interpreters whose language combinations are recognized by AIIC or by an international organization” and interpreting should be taught at postgraduate level (AIIC Training Committee 2010; my emphasis). Earlier versions of the document, which are no longer available on AIIC’s website but are traceable in De Manuel’s (2010) critical review of AIIC training recommendations, required AIIC-accredited interpreters to be involved not only in curriculum design and course instruction, but also in access to training (aptitude tests) and final examinations. They also required that programme curricula should correspond to market demands, thus downplaying the role that the university might play in covering communication needs that lie outside the conference interpreting market:

Access to training, final examinations, curriculum design, and course instruction, should be in the hands of practising interpreters whose language combinations – at least in the case of teachers and curriculum designers – are recognized by AIIC or by international organizations. ... The language combinations offered as part of the regular curriculum reflect market requirements.

*(AIIC Training Committee in De Manuel 2010: 137; translation from Spanish by Maria-Constanza Guzmán and Rosalind Gill)*

It is worth commenting that two alternative training-related policies had been considered but discarded very early in the history of the association: (a) accepting the entry of graduates from recognized programmes, or (b) launching an AIIC international entrance exam for graduates (Keiser 1999: 90).

The abandoning of the entrance exam is regretted by Keiser (*ibid.*: 89), who considers that it would have empowered AIIC to grant (and in so doing, protect) the title of conference interpreter. Instead, it is AIIC members themselves who are entrusted with the role of gatekeepers, since it is they who vouch for candidates within the sponsorship system. Within such a system, criteria for entering the labour market do not exclusively rest upon quality, given that candidates are also judged on their respect for AIIC working conditions on the market and that there are necessarily competition issues between potential candidates and their potential sponsors.

### SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING IN THE US: THE CASE OF THE RID

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was founded in 1965 in the US to maintain a registry of qualified sign language interpreters for improving communication access for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals, hereafter referred to as the “deaf community” (see Chapter 7 for a further discussion of terminology). In contrast to AIIC, which was created by practising and remunerated interpreters who self-identified as “professionals”, the RID was the initiative of mostly non-deaf educators or administrators (Cokely 2000) who could and did interpret but who “did not think of themselves as interpreters” (Fant 1990: 7) and who were holding full-time jobs in addition to their interpreting tasks.

#### **Remuneration**

As Cokely (2005: 2) reports, before the 70s, Sign Language Interpreting (SLI) “was seen as a voluntary and charitable activity that fell to those non-deaf persons with some level of

competence in sign language”. Sign language interpreters perceived interpreting as an act of civil engagement for the benefit of the deaf community: “we did not expect to be paid, we did not ask to be paid because we did not do it for the money. We felt it was our obligation, our duty to do it, and if we did not do it, the deaf person would suffer and we would feel responsible” (Fant 1990: 10).

Interestingly, the RID had no intention, at least at the time of its foundation, to change this situation, as conveyed by Lou Fant’s personal account of the creation of the Registry:

We were eager to recruit, train, and verify the competence of interpreters, but I do not believe that we thought they would become full-time interpreters. It is my opinion that we perceived the new interpreters functioning in much the same way as we had, that is, holding full-time jobs and interpreting on the side.

(Fant 1990: 7)

Thus, contrary to what could have been expected, it is not the creation of the RID in 1965 that was to turn SLI into a regular and remunerated profession. According to Cokely (2005: 13), this shift in interpreters’ status was sparked by full-time employment opportunities in the 70s, in the wake of new legislation for the deaf community: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1973 established increased access for the deaf to public services (particularly public colleges and universities) and, on a less positive note, the 1975 Education of All Handicapped Children’s Act provided for their “assimilation” into mainstream society. As argued by Cokely, this second text “fosters the illusion of educational access and equality” (*ibid.*: 12) but sparked the slow decline of residential schools (where deaf children were learning within their linguistic community) and the enrolment of deaf children in mainstream schools, making the involvement of an interpreter indispensable.

Sign language interpreters became an essential link in this newly configured relationship between public services and the deaf community. Consequently, the 70s were marked by a dramatic growth in the demand for interpreters, particularly in primary and secondary schools. If the emergence of an SLI labour market was encouraged by external players (see Chapter 3), practising interpreters and the RID unsurprisingly welcomed this opportunity to earn a living from their work.

Thus, the RID played a rather passive role in converting interpreting into a regular and paid activity. However, it did have a primary role in determining who would be a qualified interpreter (through certification) and which principles should guide interpreting practice (through a Code of Ethics).

### ***Certification***

It was the deaf community that had historically determined whether and when someone possessed sufficient communicative competence according to how they functioned in the communicative exchange, the trustworthiness they demonstrated, and the serving of the deaf community interests. With the creation of the Registry, members of the RID replaced members of the deaf community in vouching for interpreters, through the early implementation of a membership application policy similar to AIIC. Applicants had to be supported by two RID members, but unlike AIIC, the emphasis was on vouching for candidates’ skills rather than for their respect for working conditions. In the context of increased needs for sign language interpreters and growing membership (500 members in 1974, 2000 in 1980), the weaknesses of this peer recommendation system of application became apparent, as “newer members were unable to sustain a level of quality that was acceptable to the community” (Cokely 2005: 7).



To address this problem, the RID launched a national testing programme in 1972, aimed at certifying interpreters in interpreting, in either American Sign Language (the language of the deaf community in the US), or in English-Like-Signing, i.e. transliteration. According to Cokely (2005: 8), the lack of research on interpreters' assessment at the time and the testing situation itself – i.e. demonstrating competence and trustworthiness to examiners at a single point in time, instead of a process over time, in real situations with users – brought about uneven results in terms of both guaranteeing the skills of RID credential-holders and upholding the deaf community's standards.

In the 1980s, the relationship between the RID and the deaf community, represented by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), became increasingly strained, as attested by the fact that the NAD started to implement certification testing and had its own Code of Ethics for interpreters (Swabey and Gajewski Mickelson 2008). At the turn of the century, this relationship between the two organizations evolved towards fruitful collaboration, as attested by the joint development of the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) at the end of the 1990s (RID 2011).

For a long time, however, interpreters working with deaf children and teenagers in primary and secondary education settings lacked certification or any other credentials (see Chapter 17 on interpreting in education). This is paradoxical when one bears in mind that educational interpreters represent more than half of the population of interpreters (Burch 2002). Lack of certification “led to the perception that those working in K-12 [primary and secondary schools] settings represented the least competent among us” (Cokely 2005: 22). This hierarchy of markets/settings translated into the feeling among K-12 interpreters that “RID is for interpreters who interpret for adults, not children” (RID n.d. b).

Given the weight of the educational sector and the strategic front that education represents for the deaf community's rights, the RID recently endeavoured to welcome this population of interpreters into its organization. In 2006, for example, it began to recognize as certified members of the Registry those practitioners who took the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (the EIPA) written and performance tests and scored 4.0 and higher (*ibid.*). The EIPA was a test designed in-house in the 90s to cover the lack of a method for evaluating the skills of K-12 interpreters.

#### FROM CODE OF CONDUCT TO CODE OF ETHICS

Another front on which the RID has been proactive is that of establishing a Code of Conduct (see Chapter 20 on ethics). As argued by Cokely (2000) in his critical discussion of the RID Code of Ethics, the codifying of the boundaries and guidelines of the work of interpreters serves a double purpose: (1) it establishes a context within which the profession wishes the general public to perceive interpreters' work and (2) it provides a mean for practitioners to be united around a common mission and ideals as well as guidelines on how to attain them. The RID's Code of Ethics is particularly interesting as a case study of the development of the interpreting field, given its progressive history of change and development (Swabey and Gajewski Mickelson 2008) and its influence beyond the USA, particularly in the Codes of the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters, the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada and the Massachusetts Medical Interpreters Association, which emulated and imitated it (Cokely 2000).

RID's first Code of Ethics was established as early as 1965 and, like AIIC's Code, outlined the principles of confidentiality, impartiality, faithfulness, and excellence, but with a different stance on working conditions (item 6):

The interpreter shall use discretion in the matter of accepting compensation for services and be willing to provide services in situations where funds are not available. Arrangements should be made on a professional basis for adequate remuneration in court cases comparable to that provided for interpreters of foreign languages.

*(Swabey and Gajewski Mickelson 2008: 72)*

Interpreters are urged to adapt their fees or occasionally work on a pro bono basis in case of scarce resources, which stands in contrast to arguably more “professionalized” interpreting sectors. This seems consistent with the view of interpreting as an act of civic engagement, which can also be seen in item 12:

The interpreter shall take the responsibility of educating the public regarding the deaf whenever possible, recognizing that many misunderstandings arise because of the general lack of public knowledge in the area of deafness and communication with the deaf.

Thus, even though the RID Code urges the interpreter to “maintain an impartial attitude during the course of his interpreting, avoiding interjecting his own views” (item 2), which shifts away from the advocacy role that interpreters had historically fulfilled within the deaf community, it does frame interpreters as “allies” of the deaf community by establishing a duty to protect it and to redress the general public misperception of deaf people.

In 1978/1979, the Code was reformulated into eight one-sentence tenets covering more or less the same principles as in the original version but with two important differences. The responsibility of interpreters towards supporting the cause of the deaf community disappears and the reference to remuneration is considered as a compensation that interpreters/transliterators shall request “in a professional and judicious manner” (item 5). Remuneration, albeit maintaining the discretion established in the 1965 version, gets closer to becoming the norm. In this sense, the 1978/1979 revisions seem to codify a shift away from the community, in keeping with the 70s legislation referred to earlier, as the interpreter’s profile shifted from a volunteer advocate of the deaf community to an impartial, remunerated professional.

Interestingly, the NAD, which at the time had its own Code of Ethics for interpreters, established respect for the deaf person’s rights and the duty of interpreters to serve as a resource for deaf people (Hoza 2003). This is reincorporated, however, in the major revisions of the text in 2005, jointly carried out by the NAD and RID. As Swabey and Gajewski Mickelson argue, by moving from a duty- or rule-based approach to a more rights-based approach, the Professional Code of Conduct embraces a more “holistic look at the guiding principles, application and decision making” (2008: 61). For further discussion on ethics, see Chapter 20.

### ***Education policy***

The RID establishes a continuous education programme to ensure that their members keep up with the evolution of professional knowledge. Once RID interpreters pass the test and are accredited, they must maintain their certification through (1) maintaining RID membership, (2) applying NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct, and (3) meeting Continuing Education Units requirements by enrolling in college courses, independent studies, RID-sponsored workshops, non-RID conferences or seminars (RID n.d. a).

The RID also establishes standards for certifying education programmes. As in the case of AIIC, which requires schools to employ teachers with languages accredited by AIIC, sign

language training programmes are required to involve certified interpreters in the faculty and to have language fluency as a prerequisite to the interpreting training. Unlike AIIC, however, the focus of these recommendations is more explicit as regards the training pedagogy and the valorization of research in training. This may be due to the fact that the RID has been working collaboratively with several stakeholders within the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE). This commission was founded in 2006 to promote professionalism in the field of sign language interpreter education through the process of accreditation. In a nutshell, as established in the CCIE Accreditation Standards (CCIE 2010), the curricular philosophy should be grounded on a sociolinguistic approach to the deaf and hearing communities and a skills-based pedagogy; contents should range from professional to research, liberal arts, and social sciences. Sign language education standards are thus negotiated among a diversity of players, which is a promising sign that not only professional but also societal interests are defended in the process.

### **Current issues and debates**

Accounting for the development of the profession, however, requires opening up the scope of analysis beyond mainstream institutions and including (groups of) interpreters whose position is rather peripheral in our field (be they professional, *ad hoc*, novice, volunteer, and/or activist interpreters), but who do engage with the role of our profession in society. In fact, the power wielded by key internal players on several fronts such as market regulation, training, or ethics necessarily unleashes dynamics of counter-power.

#### ***Market regulation***

The power that AIIC has exerted in regulating interpreting in interaction with stakeholders and practitioners has not gone without resistance and opposition within the interpreting community. These dynamics of power and counter-power have become increasingly visible to the public with the proliferation of information and communication technology tools.

For example, public institutions' occasional reliance on AIIC interpreters to vouch for skills of potential candidates whose language combination is not covered by public examination, or for the rejection of interpreters' application on the ground that they are not members of AIIC, were reported on the public discussion forum of Babels (the international network of volunteer translators and interpreters, composed of both professionals and non-professionals). The discussion highlighted the internal conflict among interpreters fuelled by the fact that AIIC quite problematically keeps wielding the power of a trade union, a professional association, and a market regulator (Babels 2006).

Internal tensions also emerged with respect to the private market in relation to the provision of interpreters for the Universal Forum of Cultures, a major event which involved 120 interpreters for 5000 days of work between May and September 2004, in the city of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain). The fact that an AIIC interpreter was appointed to organize and select interpreters for the event without any bidding process (a legal obligation when public money is involved), together with the fact that more than half of the selected team came from abroad, and that longstanding Barcelona-based, non-AIIC interpreters' applications had been declined, sparked a battle that went public on an online article of *El País Catalonia supplement* (Riu 2004).

#### ***Training***

Training has also become a front of shifting power dynamics among players. The rising legitimacy of professional players in constructing and disseminating knowledge about interpreting practice in

nascent interpreting programmes of the mid-20th century had the effect of shifting interpreters' profiles as well as their connexions to the community and to the profession.

The emerging figure of the “professional interpreter” between the 50s and the mid-70s – perceived as formally trained in vocational programmes, themselves led by recognized practitioners within academic institutions – sparked a generational shift in interpreting. This shift relegated *natural interpreting* (see Chapter 26) to history and sparked the emergence of the *professional, expert interpreting* profile (Mackintosh 1999; also see Chapter 1). No longer conceptualized as an art, as a gift awakened through the life experience of migrations, diaspora and multilingualism, or community-belonging, interpreting became a technique that can be acquired in schools.

Donovan (2011) argues that academia has not taken over interpreting training programmes and that “in many instances, professional interpreters have managed to maintain or gain control of new university-based courses” (*ibid.*: 121), not only in the pioneering interpreting schools but also in more recent training programmes such as the EMCI, which are largely taught by full-time professionals. In this context:

Training is perceived as a commitment to the upholding of quality, professional standards and conditions. It explicitly aims to transmit a certain vision of the profession and is thus closely bound up with socialization. In such a context, codes of practice are not so much discussed as explained and justified.

(Donovan 2011: 127)

This tends to suggest that the vocational and market-oriented approach to training that is central to AIIC training paradigm (see “Conference interpreting: the case of AIIC”) largely prevails in CI programmes.

However, outside of conference interpreting programmes that are geared towards supplying interpreters for high employability market sectors, training has been largely provided by “practisearchers” – that is, interpreting practitioners holding an academic position – or by a team of both professionals and scholars. Since the academization of interpreting, the successive paradigms and schools of thought (see Chapter 4) bearing on interpreting didactics have shown increased autonomy from the organized profession and increased reflexivity over educational issues of curriculum design and planning in interpreter training (see Chapter 24 on pedagogy.)

Despite interpreter education progress, many interpreters arrive on the job from rather unconventional tracks, showing that the acquisition of skills through life circumstances, on the ground in interpreting practice and in interaction with the communities as well as the institutions they serve, has not been replaced by the academization of interpreting.

This is evidenced in Boéri's (2012) study of *ad hoc* interpreting situations, which she defines as “interpreting initiatives that take place in a context which cannot be catered for by conventional services for reasons that may be geopolitical, socio-economic and/or socio-professional” (121). Within these situations, an interpreters' profile cuts across the professionally-established categories of “natural”, “novice”, “expert”, and “professional”, and they learn their skills within a collective, situational, and dynamic process. This process is not controlled by interpreting institutions, but emerges in interaction and negotiation with the communities they serve. (See Chapter 26 on non-professional interpreters for further discussion.)

*Ad hoc* interpreting learning (Boéri 2010), which has occupied a rather marginal place in interpreting studies, is thus a fertile ground for rethinking the development of interpreting beyond the mainstream and beyond the most institutionalized sectors of the interpreting community, and training interpreters not only for the market but also for society at large (Boéri and De Manuel 2011).

### **Ethics**

Ethics also constitutes a key front of professionalization that is being negotiated across players of the interpreting community. While there has been much debate over ethics and role in interpreting studies, and despite the fact that the “conduit” normative claim has supposedly been questioned in interpreting studies, both scholars and professionals tend to perceive interpreters’ involvement in the communication encounter as restricted to discourse, that is, as “changing language structures and making cultural adjustments within the language in these encounters” (Roy 2002: 351) or as a mere rearrangement of the target discourse (Donovan 2011: 117). This is a restricted view of ethics and role that future generations are likely to be socialized into through training programmes.

In their day-to-day practice, though, interpreters appear to play a much larger role. Even in the area of CI, where these issues are not explicitly discussed, Donovan (2011) finds that interpreters do reflect upon the ethical implications of working for specific clients, such as the Front National (the French far-right party) when it gained seats at the European Parliament. She also finds that female interpreters may choose to tone down sexual insults to avoid giving them an uncomfortable visibility within a primarily male communication encounter.

The interpreter’s role, thus, tends to go far beyond what is established in codes of ethics and the professional ethos that interpreters assume in their meta-discourse (Zwischenberger and Pöchlacker 2010). This is particularly so in frictional encounters (Bahadır 2010; Inghilleri 2008, 2012). For example, Erik Camayd-Freixas, a certified interpreter for US Federal Courts, publicly denounced (2008a, 2008b) the flaws of a mass processing of illegal immigrants working in a meat plant in Postville, Iowa, who were charged with aggravated identity theft. He reported the interdependence between the prosecutor and the judge, the violation of the presumption of innocence, as well as an excessively expeditious proceeding that made the cultural gap between these immigrants (from rural areas) and the legal US culture irreconcilable. Faced with a conflict of interest between his own morality and the professional obligation of confidentiality, he was first tempted to abandon the interpreting assignment, but finally considered himself a privileged witness of this trial and a citizen with a duty to alert the appropriate jurisdictional services and public opinion. Not surprisingly, this choice was met with criticism in professional circles, where the view of interpreters as conduit still prevails (for further discussion of this case, see Morris 2010).

Inghilleri (2012) discusses the dilemmas that interpreters are prone to experience in frictional encounters due to the contrast between their professional principles and individual conscience that emerges in the interpreting exchange. She explores the tension between an interpreter’s “personal” and “professional” morality (*ibid.*: 70–71) and suggests how ongoing debates in interpreting studies may be resolved within the legal field, where questions of impartiality are central to “ensuring equal justice for all” (*ibid.*: 53).

Last but not least, recent developments in activist interpreting (Boéri in press) show that ethics is revisited beyond the realm of the interpreting encounter and extends to the very ways in which our profession is configured, theorized and taught (Boéri and De Manuel 2011). In this connection, the 2007 Declaration of Granada, adopted at the 1st International Forum on Translation/Interpreting and Social Activism, calls for scholars, professionals, teachers, and students to put their knowledge at the service not only of the market, but of society as a whole, to boycott interpreting activities in wars of occupation, to promote linguistic diversity in the field and beyond and, finally, to build a more inclusive and mutually supportive community of translators and interpreters (Boéri and Maier 2010: 156–7). (See Chapter 20 for a more extended discussion of ethics.)

Thus, while professional bodies are no doubt driving forces in the regulation of the market and the profession, practitioners, trainers and researchers, with varying values, interests and positional power, do exercise an influence over the development of interpreting.

### **Recommendations and future directions**

Both AIC and RID have been key players in the regulation of the market, the profession and access to education, and have exercised a powerful influence in their respective domains. As can be inferred from the sections “Conference interpreting: the case of AIC” and “Sign language interpreting in the US: the case of the RID”, both AIC and RID have shaped what may be regarded as two distinct systems of regulation.

Acting as a trade union, a commission-free agency, and a professional association in a context of higher demand than supply, AIC was empowered to enforce its rules during the second half of the 20th century. Anti-trust laws curtailed its regulatory power, but AIC’s rules remain largely unchanged on the ground. Its “recommendations” keep shaping the ways in which interpreting is organized, at least among the biggest public employers, and interpreters targeting the market covered by AIC are likely to find that it is in their best interest to respect such guidelines.

As for the RID, its engagement with professionalization was more focused on the establishment of standards for qualified interpreting practice, with little concern, from the outset, for issues of economic compensation; a front on which it has been a rather passive player. Within the RID system of regulation, quality standards provide a benchmark for a certification exam (access to the profession) and the curriculum design of educational programmes (access to knowledge).

The RID model is widespread beyond SLI in the US and tends to be more transparent for practitioners and prospective interpreters wishing to access education and the professional community, compared to the AIC system, whose mechanisms of coercion are delegated to its members, acting as gatekeepers and guardians of adherence to the rules. Nevertheless, sponsorship-based membership access does not seem to be widespread among professional associations of interpreters, outside of AIC.

The tensions described in the section “Current issues and debates” cut across the regulation of the market, professional practice, and training. They alert us to the need to extend our analysis to players who are not enshrined by any institution but whose practice and theorization may be decisive in the development of interpreting. Taking a broad view of key internal players in the field allows for inclusion within the scope of analysis not only the players that have traditionally occupied center stage in the development of the “interpreting establishment”, but also players that tend to be missing from the mainstream picture of the field, for reasons that may be geopolitical, socio-economic, or socio-professional.

Occupational groups function as complex systems composed of several institutional and individual players. It is the dynamic relationship among these players that shapes the ever-changing nature of this system (Swabey and Gajewski Mickelson 2008). To account for the relationships among key players and the ways in which they configure the interpreting profession, there is a need to combine a top-down approach with a bottom-up approach. The former consists of looking at formalized structures and institutions that are at the core of the interpreting community and the ways in which they inform practitioners’, educators’, and researchers’ ethos. The latter consists of studying informal groups as well as individual players who occupy a rather marginal position within the community, so as to contrast their respective practices and ethos.

This combined approach is a promising way to account for the overlapping and diverging perspectives on the interpreting profession among institutions and groups, across power positions, as well as between the collective and the individual. This analytical description

of the interpreting profession, its organization and mutations requires scholars to engage with the power play that is inherent to the development of any profession, and to provoke and orient changes towards a more beneficial professionalization process for both practitioners and the communities they ought to serve.

This is a particularly important research agenda for interpreting studies, since with the increased connectedness among interpreting actors scattered across the globe, the interpreting community is enlarging and its underlying power dynamics are being reconfigured in ways that may shape the face of interpreting in the years to come.

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