

Translation Competence in Court Interpreting Between Language Learning and Translation Training

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Summary

The success of the translation process in conference interpreting depends greatly on the translation strategy adopted by the interpreter; it is at the same time a matter of translation competencies that the interpreter possesses. Since these competencies are necessary for a safe translation product, conference interpreting is distinguished by its exhaustive nature of being multidimensional activity that covers a wide range of cognitive, linguistic, and cultural competencies that guarantee a safe shift process. The interpretative theory emphasized the components that enhance the conference interpreting competencies that the trainee translator should either himself master, or be taught academically. Those are the questionings that are hereafter developed.

المخلص

يتوقف نجاح عملية النقل في الترجمة الشفهية بشكل كبير على الإستراتيجية الترجيحية التي يتبناها المترجم، إذ تعد في نفس الوقت مسألة كفاءة ترجمية يتوفر عليها المترجم. فإن كانت تلك الكفاءات ضرورية لإنتاج ترجمة سليمة، فإن ترجمة المؤتمرات تتميز بكونها ذات طبيعة متعددة الأبعاد والتي تغطي كما وسعا من الكفاءات من معرفية ولسانية وثقافية تضمن نقلا سلسا للمعنى.

فالنظرية التأويلية في الترجمة تولي أهمية بالغة لمكونات هذه الكفاءة التي تجعل من الترجمة الشفهية ترجمة حقة والتي يعد المترجم الشفهي في حد ذاته مطالب بالتمكن منها لذاته أو أن يتم تلقينها إياه. تلکم هي تساؤلات نعد إلى محاولة الإجابة عنها.

Conference interpreting represents a branch of professional translation that is distinguished by the nature of its functioning, and the tools that the interpreter uses to produce the target text/message. The nature of conference interpreting takes into account the specificity of the task performed by the interpreter to produce a message that meets the parameters of translation quality. The shift from a given linguistic code into another in conference interpreting is centered on specific strategies in which the message is produced, perceived, and performed. Those considerations are different from the environment in which the written translation functions, despite the aspects that are shared between both processes. The presence of the message sender/producer behind the receiver/receptor with the interpreter implies an instant transmission of the message to be translated. The discourse to be conveyed can be either a spontaneous or a written discourse that necessitates the implication of the interpreter through highly linguistic, cultural and cognitive competencies to ensure an adequate translation shift.

“An interpreter receiving a speech never receives linguistic units entirely devoid of context, verbal, and situational contexts but rather receives utterances spoken by a person whose position, nationality, and interests are known to him, speaking with a purpose in mind trying to convince his listeners”¹

Theories of translation adopt different positions that vary according to their epistemological backgrounds that stimulated their positions. They vary according to the importance given either to the process of translation itself or the varied aspects that surround the production of the target text. The interpretative theory or the theory of meaning in translation also called "La Théorie de Lécole de Paris" is originated from the practice of oral translation that its pioneers practiced and noticed that the translation of the oral message necessitates specific procedures, and strategies to be adopted by the translator. Those strategies are more than purely linguistic codes, the fact that implies specific knowledge, and competencies to be fulfilled by the translator to ensure a safe and faithful shift. The interpretative model gives importance either to the process of translation or to the translator himself. The question that I will deal with is the secret of enhancing and ensuring conference interpreting competencies that represent a main manifestation of professional translation, and to what extent are these competencies a matter of the translator's self learning or/and academic training .In other words are these competencies taught or self acquired by the translator in the light of the interpretative theory in translation.

In her description of the interpretation process in conference interpreting Danica Seleskovitch points out:

*"L'interprète de conférence rejoint [...] les musiciens ou les comédiens dont l'art ne consiste pas à reproduire ou à répéter mais bien à interpréter pour être fidèle"*²

The fruitfulness of the knowledge of the translators varies according to the nature of difficulty encountered in the text and/or beyond it. the *complexity*, the *heterogeneity*, and the *approximate* nature of the expert knowledge possessed by the translator, since it is impossible for him to cover the whole range of aspects or fields within the areas in which he work. What actually happens is that they acquire the capacity to get an idea of the subject matter and facilitate understanding between experts belonging to different cultures and in different languages. As a result of the approximate nature of his knowledge, translation competence is always in a *non-finite* state of acquisition that requires translator to continually introduce new knowledge and, hence, to possess the capacity to be *creative*³. In order to attain the desired results translators also have to be aware of the *situationality* of translation and to be capable of adapting themselves to both recurring and novel situations, as well as being capable of dealing with the changing situations arising from the very *specificity* of their work.

The steps of the translation process that are identical to interpreting include

Source text → Original discourse → meaning comprehension → Formulation in the target language → Expression of the meaning in the target language

The real translation in the interpretative theory is a translation that does not give Importance to words, but to meaning of words, conveying

The meaning of a text is independent from the verbal manifestations of the words that compose texts. The same position is divided by the founders of the theory, as well as, researchers that took the same position in this respect Jean Delisle claims that,

*"Traduire consiste, en effet, à dissocier mentalement les notions de leurs formes graphiques afin de leur associer d'autres signes puisés dans un autre système linguistique"*⁴

The interpretative theory recognizes that the translator should possess a highly solid training and further capacities to fulfill successfully his duties. Among these qualifications the

capacity to perceive the discourse in the first language, to decorticate it and extract its meaning, and to express that meaning naturally in another language, he should possess linguistic competencies, and expressive competency, communicative competency, transference competency, a cognitive competency.

Adding to that subject knowledge guarantees full understanding of the contextual situation that militates for a safe understanding of the *vouloir dire* of the text. Furtunato Israël points out that:

*"L'opération traduisante ne consiste pas à transposer les significés d'une langue dans une autre, mais à exprimer avec d'autres moyens un vouloir dire"*⁵

Ensuring a conference interpreting quality is not purely matter of linguistic considerations and knowledge, it is a matter of interpretation of meaning that depends from complicated and varied circumstances. Since conference interpreting its turn is a relatively recent practice that goes to Nuremburg process after the Second World War on the years 1945/ 1946. It met the intention of researchers from different horizons and specialties that agree that the linguistic code alone, cannot enhance a fruitful communicative approach that over passes the anterior back ground knowledge. Difficulty of the process varies according to translation competence that is mainly a prerequisite for a successful conference interpretation. Moreover the assessment process in conference interpreting seems to be more complicated than that in written translation, since the oral message is transitory. Moreover the specificity of this branch implies the use of tools and technological means to perform the process when and where the sender is unique at a given time, whereas, the receptors are numerous in different languages. It includes two types the simultaneous translation and the consecutive translation, the latter is more ancient. The intensification of international relations rendered the use of the first more practical and more adopted in multi linguistic instant communicative situations and /or contexts. Its functioning is centered on the brain storming of ideas, that varies according to the reality or the message either it is read or spontaneously given. That is a matter of specialty or field of the text and the nature of information contained, the style and language register used by the speaker and matter to translation. Danica seleskovitch points out that interpreting in the light of the interpretative theory is totally different:

*"Interpretation focuses on the ideas expressed in live utterances rather than language itself, it strictly ignores all attempts at finding linguistic equivalents"*⁶

Translation competence is a complex concept that has been addressed by a number of researchers in the field of Translation Studies.

Some use the term of *translation abilities or skills* (Hatim and Mason, 1997) while others refer to *translation performance* (Wills, 1989). The notion *translational competence* is similar to Chomsky's (1965) famous distinction between linguistic competence and performance. Nord (1991) employs *transfer competence* and Chester man (1997) called it *translational competence*.

Generally speaking, translation competence is defined following the pedagogical model of competence (the abilities, skills and attitudes needed to carry out an activity successfully) and it therefore affects different aspects of the translator's training (and work), like the need to possess specialized as well as cultural knowledge, are shared with other professions. There are, however, aspects that *are* restricted to the specificity of translation and which constitute the essence of the definition of the concept of *translation competence*.

Seleskovitch mentions the Importance of extra linguistic competencies the interpreter should fulfill, she points out

"The meaning of a word represents no more than an initial approach of the thing or the concept it designates. Familiarity with a vast vocabulary often creates the illusion of having a far reaching knowledge of the corresponding things or concepts. This tends to confusion between absolute and therefore non perfectible, knowledge of the material designation of the meaning i.e. the word and knowledge of the designed object the referent, which can never attain completion"⁷.

She adds that the necessary competency goes beyond language

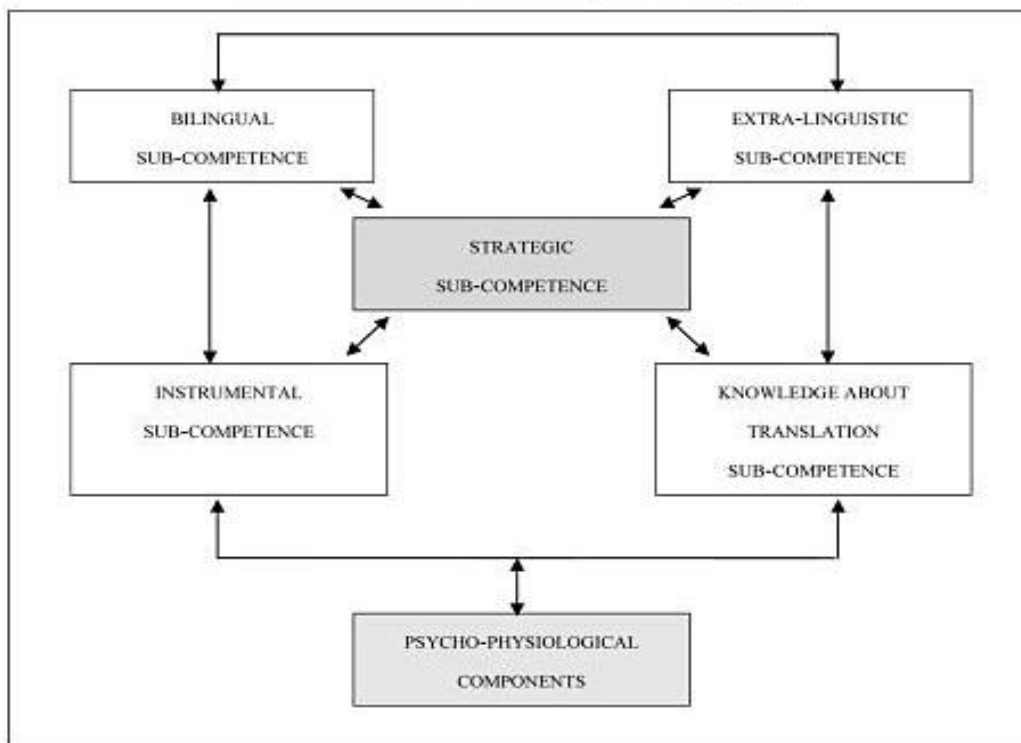
"Ils (traducteurs) devront ajouter aux connaissances linguistiques, au talent inné de l'analyste et de l'orateur, des connaissances très poussés dans certains domaines techniques ou scientifiques"⁸

The importance of previous knowledge in translation make us claim that the lack of this type of knowledge leads to the failure of the translation process since it is a matter of the coupled linguistic and extra linguistic competencies.

"L'interprète doit avoir assez de connaissances dans le sujet traité pour pouvoir l'analyser avec intelligence, mais il n'est pas nécessaire qu'il ait des connaissances du spécialiste: Compréhension et connaissances sont deux choses différentes"⁹

Checking these competencies is a self assessment process in which the cognitive competence intervenes to overpass difficulties. The following model inspired from a group of Spanish researchers that made an experiment related to the appreciation of these com potencies in coordination with text genre propose the following model.

Figure 1 : Translation competence model¹⁰



The various competencies in translation include capacities that go beyond the cognitive knowledge of the translator in conference interpreting to include the communicative capacities that facilitates the comprehension. The conditions that surround the production of the target message ,the spaker s accent ,noise ,the public large or reduced, the technological means used, the nature and aim of the

speech ,and the context of the speech ,its object etc... Neubert claims that the practice of translation and, hence, teaching translation require a single competence that is made up of or could be considered to integrate a set of competencies that include, for instance, competence in both the source and the target languages its traits are

- (1) It is expert knowledge and is not possessed by all bilinguals
- (2) It is basically procedural (and not declarative) knowledge
- (3) It is made up of various interrelated sub-competencies
- (4) The strategic component is very important, as it is in all procedural knowledge

Moreover the linguistic competence is sterile in the absence of complementary knowledge, Seleskovitch adds in this sense.

"Cette connaissance supérieure des langues est d'ailleurs la raison d'être de la présence des interprètes dans les conférences, bien qu'ils soient non seulement des spécialistes des langues mais que leurs formation et leur expérience en fassent également des spécialistes du langage et de la communication"¹¹.

It consists in the capacity to follow the transfer process from the source text to the production of the final target text, according to the purpose of the translation and the characteristics of the target audience. Hurtado Albir

She then cites the following manifestations of competencies.

Communicative and textual, cultural, thematic, professional instrumental, psycho-physiological, interpersonal and strategic, which are intimately related to each other and which, when developed in a particular way, allow translation competence to be acquired.

The *communicative and textual (sub) competencies*. They include the capacity: to understand and analyze a range of different types of (both oral and written) texts from different fields produced in different languages to develop the capacity to produce different types of texts from different fields in various languages and to ensure that the characteristics and conventions of the major text genres and sub-genres used in professional translation and interpretation are shared by all languages.

Conclusion

The conference interpreting process in the light of the interpretative theory entails specific rules that should be admitted to express adequately a meaning that was expressed in a different language. The shift strategies are no more than means that facilitates that, but cannot ensure it. Practice itself is a medium of perfection .Seleskovitch (1968.116) claims that

"Les connaissances acquises en séances ...sont des bribes d'informations disparates qui finissent néanmoins, au bout de quelques années de pratiques, presque inconsciemment, mais dans lequel l'interprète puise sans arrêt lorsqu'il aborde des sujets nouveaux"

The fact that the competencies of the translator are multi dimensional and interrelated depends greatly from the capacity of the interpreter to enhance his competencies for better job achievements. The self learning process is a key success in conference interpreting, since competencies vary from an interpreter to another, and the academic training is matter of homogeneity of courses and syllabuses. The personal contribution and effort to deal with, and face the changing circumstances of conference interpreting is a further guarantee to achieve perfectness that ,depends either from the training of the interpreter as well as from his self learning and engagement for the well being of knowledge. That type of self learning is a continuous learning that is centered mainly on the changing circumstances that affect the development of knowledge under its varied manifestations.

The true conference interpreting resides in the competence of the interpreter that is as the interpretative theory claims a multi dimensional competency that is taught, and individually learned.

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¹ Danica Seleskovitch, *Interpretation, A Psychological Approach to Translating* In *Translation Application and Research*, Edited by Richard W. BRISLIN, Gardner Press INC. New York 1976. p 173

² - Danica SELESKOVITCH, *L'interprète dans les conférences internationales*, Paris lettres modernes minard. 1968, P 65

³ Neubert, A. (2000): "*Competence in Language, in Languages, and in Translation*", in C. Schäffner and B. Adab (eds.): *Developing Translation Competence*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, pp. 3-18.

⁴ - Jean Delisle, *L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction*, presses de l'université D'Ottawa, 1995, P40

⁵ - Fortunato Israël, *Traduction littéraire et théorie du sens* In *Etudes traductologiques*, dirigé par Marianne LEDERER, Paris, lettres modernes, Minard 1990. P 29.

⁶ - Danica Seleskovitch. *Interpretation, A Psychological Approach to Translating* In *Translation Application and Research*, op cit P123.

-Op Cit. P93.

⁸ - Danica SELESKOVITCH, *L'interprète dans les conférences internationales*, p 123.

⁹ - Danica Seleskovitch & Marianne Lederer, *Interpréter pour traduire*, Didier Erudition 2004, P 109

¹⁰ - *The Acquisition of Translation Competence through Textual Genre*, V. Montalt Ressurrecció, P. Ezpeleta Piomo, I. García Izquierdo, the Universitat Jaume I, Spain/ <http://accurapid.com/journal>.

¹¹ - Danica SELESKOVITCH, *L'interprète dans les conférences internationales*, op cit p 125.