

Session VI

A Comprehensive On-site Training Program for Community Interpreters

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As globalization and inter-country immigration intensify, the need for community interpretation is stronger than ever in order to achieve communication and understanding among various community members. In this multicultural world, community interpretation is taking place at an unprecedented frequency, particularly in major metropolitan areas. More and more users of community interpreting service rely on professionally trained interpreters who understand the specific needs of the community and the ethnic or professional culture of the community they serve.

Community interpreters work “in” the community, not in a closed-off booth talking to a microphone. The very nature of face-to-face interaction with clients imposes more demand on interpreters’ ability and experience in liaising between languages, two cultures and oftentimes two systems. However, traditional training for community interpreters falls short in equipping them with the necessary ability and experience. Traditional training focuses on classroom/lab practice using a tape machine. Trainees’ interpreting experience is limited to classroom/lab drill or pair-up practice with other trainees. While lab training has its merit in enhancing interpreters’ mechanical skills, it fails to cultivate interpreters’ resourcefulness and interactive skills in handling real face-to-face situations.

Only in real face-to-face situations can interpreters in training optimize their mental preparedness and exercise their resourcefulness to handle various curve balls thrown their way. However, the majority interpreter training programs in the world have not provided interpreter trainees this type of practical setting to prepare them for the real world. This is where the Advanced Interpreter Program at Simon Fraser University in Canada comes in.

Entering its 20th year, the Advanced Interpreter Program at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver has been providing innovative training in community interpretation since day one. The design of the program curriculum centers around the concept of on-site interpreting field trips. Trainees are taken out of classroom each week to perform on-site interpreting at a variety of organizations, events, functions or conferences. The face-to-face interpreting process is videotaped for post-trip performance review and content analysis. The tape of each field trip is used by the following year’s group as part of the pre-trip preparation.

During weekly field trips, students perform interpretation at various organizations in both the public and private sectors, such as government agencies, institutions of finance, law, health care,

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manufacturing, agriculture, forestry, education, technology, tourism, retail and so on. The field trips are designed and arranged, with great effort, as a means to understand Canadian society and familiarize the trainees with a variety of vocal patterns and accents as well as specialized vocabulary. The unique field trip experience not only gives the trainees hands-on practice in interpretation, it also broadens their knowledge base by exposing them to different fields and industries. This makes the Advanced Interpreter Program a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary program in which student interpreters acquire an understanding of cross-cultural communication, international politics and economies, institutional structures and dynamics, social and cultural studies, and linguistic skills.

As on-site interpreting field trips are the core of the program, great effort and time are devoted to optimize the students' performance and experience at each field trip. What happens before, during and after a field trip can be summarized as follows:

Preparation: At least two hours a week are devoted to guided preparation for each field trip. In most cases, vocabulary handouts and/or literature regarding the content of each field trip will be given in advance. During in-class preparation, the videotape of a past group's performance during the same trip is shown to present the students a preview of the field trip and to give them a chance to do a small portion of interpretation. After the official preparation in the classroom under the direction of field trip instructors, trainees spend more time on their own to research the organization they will visit on the field trip and enhance their understanding of the subject matter related to the field trip.

Field Trip: During each trip, several trainees will be given the chance to interpret for hosting speakers. Field trips come in various forms, such as boardroom presentation, plant tour, demonstration, business negotiation, function, conference speech and so on. The interpreters will not be designated in advance. Most field trips are videotaped, with the hosts' permission, for in-class performance analysis afterwards.

Analysis: Each interpreter's performance on tape is evaluated both by the instructor and the class based on such indicators as accuracy, completeness, register, eye contact, posture, delivery, interactive skills and resourcefulness. The field trip analysis not only reviews the trainees' performance in the spot light, it also gives them a chance to review the content of the field trip, which further deepens their knowledge of a particular industry or field.

This unique, practical methodology has effectively prepared trainees for the "real world" and broadened their understanding of specific community sector culture through its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary practice. The success of field trips relies heavily on the partnership between community members and the Advanced Interpreter Program. Trainees' performance on field trips is the best testimonial of the methodology of the program. It also educates field trip hosting organizations on what effective interpreter training should be. To reciprocate, the Advanced Interpreter Program actively provides interpreting services to the community and responds to input from the community to enhance the program curriculum design. The close partnership further enriches student interpreters' experience in handling face-to-face interpreting situations.

**Probing into the Real Challenge:
A Survey of Taiwan's Conference Interpretation Market**

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Introduction

Conference interpretation is relatively new to Taiwan, spanning only two decades. Even though the profession is still in its early stages of evolution, it has recently experienced a moment of popularity, partly due to the government's new language policy of promoting English. Universities are offering introductory courses in conference interpreting and many students go for postgraduate conference interpretation degrees abroad.

Against this background, it is therefore important to have a clearer picture of the conference interpretation market in Taiwan so as to assess the status quo and trends of the market. It is believed that such information will provide useful insights to the development of the conference interpretation profession and perhaps contribute to future discussions of the government's overall language policy.

Interviewee Profile

This survey was conducted in 2004. Given the condition that no existing data on the population of Taiwan's freelance interpreters is available, the snowballing survey technique was utilized in reaching the samples. A preliminary list was obtained from a simultaneous interpretation equipment rental company, which is also a de facto agent, to serve as the base of sampling. Each interviewee was asked to add to the list names of freelance interpreters not on the list. Before concluding the list, three other SI equipment rental companies reviewed the revised list to verify no name had been left out. This recursive process produced a list of 57 freelance interpreters. Among them, 38 were interviewed with a questionnaire and follow-up in-depth questions by the interviewer. To reduce technical difficulties, all interviews were implemented by one researcher.

The 38 interviewees consisted of 17 male and 21 female, with an average age of 40. The language combinations included Mandarin, Taiwanese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, English, French and Germany, with Mandarin-English being the most common pair at 52.63%. Almost 70% (68.4%) of them held at least a Master's degree and 63.2% of them (24/38) went to T&I schools. One very interesting point was that 81.5% of interviewees (31/38) had an education background of a bachelor's degree or higher in more than one discipline. In terms of experience, the average amounted to 9.9 years.

The Interpretation Market

Due to the relatively limited number of SI equipment rental companies in Taiwan, this survey was able to reach them all and obtained an estimate of 850 rental days in 2003. The 2003 market capacity therefore was estimated to be around 2,833 jobs, adjusted for the impact of SARS in 2003. This indicated that the interviewees covered around 60% of the market share with an average of 44 jobs per interviewee in 2003, which roughly translated into around one job

per week. However, one observation that is rather indicative is that very few of the interviewees (5/38 or 13.16%) relied heavily on conference interpreting as their major income source. For 68.42% of interviewees, freelance interpreting accounted for less than 60% of their income. Other income sources included translation, T&I teaching and others. The 60% market share also served to verify that information resulted from this survey was representative of the Taiwanese conference interpretation market. When divided by interpreting modes, the market shares of simultaneous interpretation and consecutive were found to be roughly 60% and 40%. The largest source of SI cases came from the equipment rental companies while the bulk of CI cases came from colleague referral.

In terms of the subject matter of interpreted events, economics and trade related subjects were the most common at 35.49%, followed by science and technology at 23.64% and political science and law at 13.48%.

Major Trends

1. **Convergence of rates:** Although the definition of a 'full working day' varied between six and seven hours, the daily and half-day rates appeared to converge across all modes of interpreting services. This is a rather interesting observation given the fact that 16 out of 38 interviewees specifically raised the issue of no 'market rate'. A probable explanation would be the role of the agents. Given the competitive conference interpretation market of Taiwan, it might be reasonable to assume that equipment rental companies, working with the same group of freelance interpreters, have gradually worked out a quasi market rate over the years without any form of consultation amongst themselves. This is further confirmed by the finding that only three of the interviewees, all rather junior, had no experience with any equipment rental companies.
2. **Information technology, a tool but not a channel:** This could be observed from different aspects. First of all, the most commonly used tool in preparing for conferences was found to be Internet search engines. More than 70% of interviewees used Internet search engines regularly and 23.7% of interviewees no longer used hard-copy dictionaries. When asked to provide further elaboration, it was pointed out several times that interpreted events usually involved new issues and products that no updated information would be available in hard-copy dictionaries or encyclopedia type of reference. Information technology, however, did not appear to bring in any significant portion of jobs. This is fairly sensible with the theories of Dickens (1996) as well as Rodie and Martin (2001), which point out that the characteristics of the service industry prevent the client from ascertaining the quality of service in advance except from prior experience with the particular service provider. Under such a condition, where service quality cannot be fully disclosed through the Internet, it would be extremely difficult for transactions to occur over the Internet.
3. **Client education and professional organization are of great necessity:** when compared to other markets, Taiwan appears to be more on the laissez-faire side, with freelancers working relatively closer with the clients in dealing with administrative matters. In order to further promote the advancement of the conference interpretation profession, many interviewees foresaw the needs of collective efforts in educating clients and safeguarding interpreters' interests. Towards the same goal, more than half of the interviewees supported a certification mechanism.
4. **Neutral to negative outlook for the future:** When asked about comparing the past three to five years with the future three to five years, it was found that interviewees holding a negative view grew significantly from 10.53% to 21.15%. However, 68% of interviewees were of neutral or positive view. The major reason for foreseeing a downside stems from concern over competition from China. Nevertheless, less than one-third of the interviewees were preparing to explore the Chinese market.

Conclusion

This study is believed to be one of the very few studies (if not the only one) that is able to produce a relatively comprehensive picture of a particular conference interpretation market. The

market size was estimated and the structures of both the demand side and supply side were studied. Findings of this study suggest an emerging role of agents in the Taiwanese conference interpretation market. This is no doubt a clear sign of a maturing market system.

**The Evolving Role of Professional Organizations in the Education of Translators
– A Canadian Perspective**

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The translation profession in Canada is currently undergoing a transition whereby the majority of translators of a generation or two ago, who were mainly self taught or had trained on the job, are increasingly being replaced by university-trained translators. The educational role of professional organizations has had to evolve accordingly. The earliest professional organizations in Canada can trace their origins to collegial attempts by translators to improve the knowledge of practitioners. Some of these translator training programs were eventually to form the nucleus of at least one university translation school. The emergence of university training programs led professional organizations to refocus their educational efforts around their essential role - the protection of the public - by concentrating on assisting their members to meet minimum standards of professional competence. Recently, the educational role of professional organizations has begun to expand to include compulsory upgrading as a prerequisite for maintaining certification. Professional organizations have also assumed an educational role with respect to candidates for certification by providing assistance to those who want to enter the profession, especially through courses aimed at preparing for professional exams. The increasing globalization of the translation industry may well lead to further changes in the educational role of professional organizations as they seek to assist their members in meeting the challenges of the global economy.

Special Wor(l)ds at a Special Court. The Importance of Language(s) at the International Tribunal in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

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The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established by the United Nations and the government of Sierra Leone to try those individuals who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity during the civil war in Sierra Leone. The Court's official language is English, but Sierra Leone is a multi-lingual country with over 20 linguistic groups. Several colliding interests become apparent: Sierra Leonean society, with its various linguistic groups, wants to understand what is going on at the court; the accused and the witnesses are entitled to have everything interpreted into the language of their choice; the international legal community uses a technical language of its own; and the world outside also needs to be informed.

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world and it does not have the resources to support a formal school of interpretation/translation, hence professionalism is a problem. Even if such a school did exist it is unlikely that such a school would be able to assist in developing coping strategies for the court interpreters, all of whom are Sierra Leonean, and who have been affected, in one way or another, by the horrific and pervasive nature of the violence that took place in Sierra Leone.

From a socio-linguistic point of view one of the main issues is the value attributed to the various codes, from a purely structural perspective it is the relative vicinity between English and the English-lexified Creole, Krio, the language most widely used in Sierra Leone (as first language and as lingua franca).

The paper will highlight some occurring problems, address some implications and present and discuss possible strategies and solutions.