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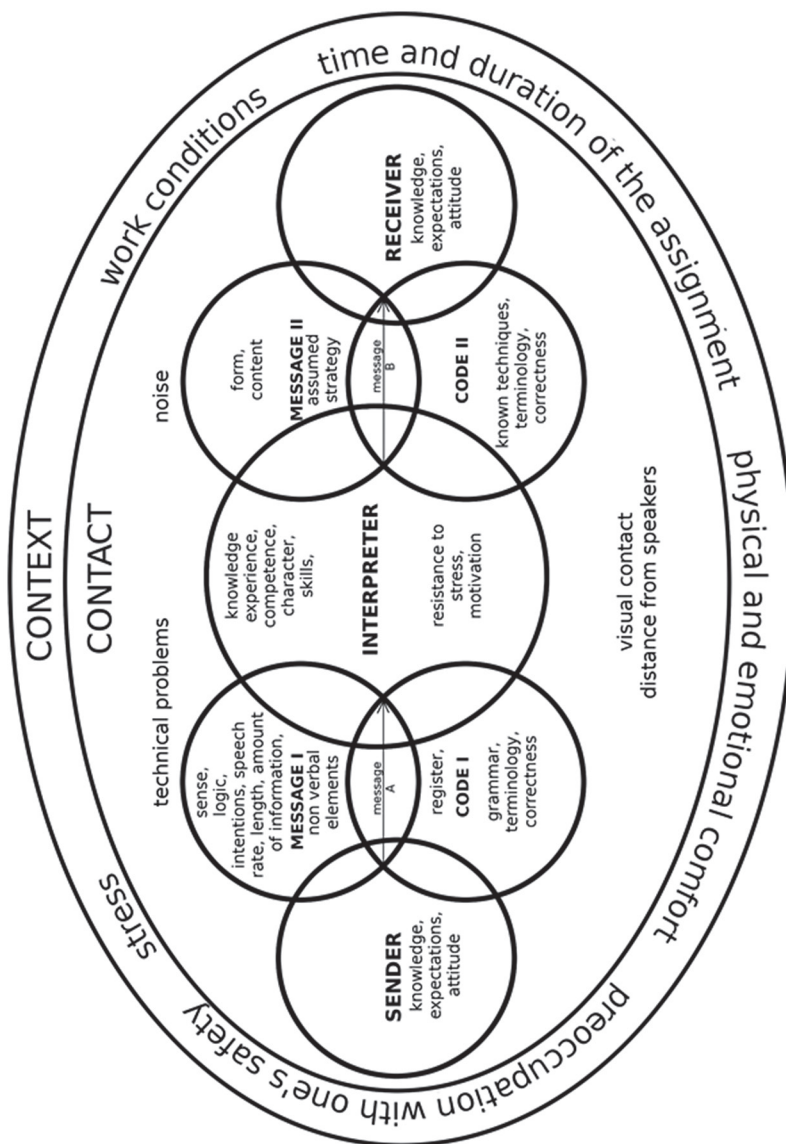
Teaching norms in interpreting

Although interpreting is possibly the oldest translation activity known to man, there are not many studies related exclusively to this issue. For many centuries, this area was not considered to be worth investigating, as most of the so-called interpreters were assigned on an *ad hoc* basis, and even though many efforts were made to train them, most of the language intermediaries known to date were in fact self-taught “professionals” [cf. Roland, 1999]. Even now, with the growing realisation of the importance of the work of interpreters, the discipline still lacks adequate background studies, and valid and complete theories. As a result, most of the solutions implemented in this kind of professional activity have been “borrowed” from the norms established for other types of translation, especially written ones [Wadensjö, 2002]. Possibly the most visible effects of this tendency is the promotion of the rather idealistic vision of the norms (found in many of the existing codes of practice for interpreters, also known as codes of conduct, ethics or professional standards) established for this type of language intermediaries. They often portray the interpreter as a perfect and impartial machine for transcoding a message from language A to language B without adding or omitting anything [Springer, 2010: 169-171]. And even those codes of ethics that offer a more down-to-earth approach (with the notable example of the Polish guidelines for sworn translators, prepared by the Polish Society of Sworn and Specialised Translators – TEPiS) do not always include

solutions to all of the problems encountered by the interpreters in their everyday practice. Therefore, a question arises: where should we look for norms to teach future interpreters how to solve those problems?

As far as the practical problems are concerned, the model of how the elements of communication influence the process of translation, proposed for community interpreting (Table 1), may prove to be useful [Kruk-Junger, 2013: 147]. Although it is a very specific type of translation activity, which can be defined as a form of dialogue interpreting performed in the context of public services [Phelan, 2001: 20], the proposed observations may also be useful in drawing some more general conclusions, regarding the whole professional group. Even if we consider the fact that not all of the aforementioned problems may be present in other forms of interpreting (as, for example, safety issues) or may be troublesome to a lesser extent (like noise), it may be a good starting point for a discussion on what to teach the future interpreters.

As we can see, the factors causing problems in interpreting may be easily divided into groups, according to their relation to a particular element of the act of communication, i.e. the context (time and place of the assignment, comfort, stress etc.), the sender and the receiver (their attitude, knowledge, expectations), the original code (terminology, register, form) and message (logic, speech rate, length etc.), the translator (their knowledge, competences, experience, motivation etc.), the second code (terminology, correctness, known translation techniques) and message (chosen strategy, form of translation and content), and the channel (noise level, technical conditions, quality of contact). This division may serve as an illustration as to what the interpreters may need to take into consideration in their work. One of the most obvious conclusion of the presented model is that the quality in interpretation cannot be measured merely by standards set up for other forms of translation, particularly the literalness of the final product. The success of communication is more likely to depend on other characteristics of the work of interpreters, such as a skilful adaptation of the transferred message to all of the factors that may play a vital role in a specific situation. And only when the interpreters are fully aware of the possible difficulties that may seriously affect the end product they provide will they be able to minimise the negative effects according to the established norms. But where should we look for guidelines on how to solve those problems?

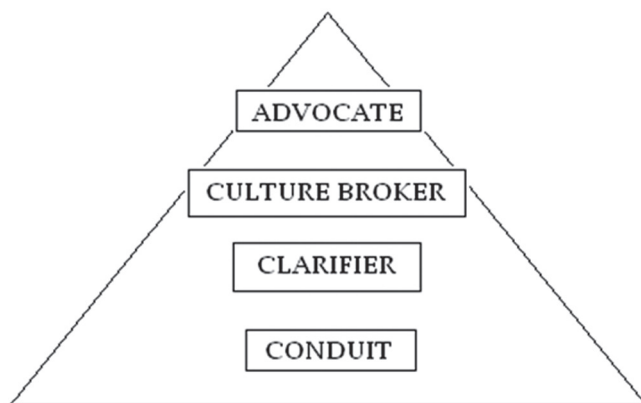
Table 1. Kruk-Junger's Model of Practical Problems in Dialogue Interpreting.

The most obvious source of norms should probably be the legal obligations regarding translators. Unfortunately, as it turns out, there are not that many of them. Those that do exist and are useful in solving at least some of the above-mentioned problems are the following: the law regarding sworn translation (in countries where it is, in fact, regulated), copyrights, and regulations regarding confidentiality. In Poland, the first one is regulated by the act from the year 2004 [Dz. U. z 2015 r., poz. 487] and, not unlike the code of practice proposed by TEPiS, regards only sworn translators and interpreters. Both of the documents, however, may be treated as a guideline for all professionals, especially in the area of behaviour and obligations towards clients. Additionally, in the area of interpreting, the code of ethics proposed by TEPiS offers solutions regarding contact and context, especially as far as the comfort of the interpreter is concerned [www.tepis.org.pl]. The copyright in Poland are regulated by the 1994 act [Dz. U. z 2006 r. nr 90, poz. 631], which includes information that may be considered of the utmost importance as far as the interpreter's attitude is concerned (including, among others, the motivation). As an example we may mention the fact that the final product of the interpretation, although not recorded in any way, is also protected by the copyright law and has the same legal effects as far as contracts and payments are concerned. The confidentiality issues, apart from the norms established exclusively for the sworn translators, are regulated only in the area of personal details (the personal data protection act from 1997 [Dz. U. z 2014 r. poz. 1182]) and classified information (the 2010 law on protection of classified information [Dz. U. z 2010 r. nr 182, poz. 1228]). They may be useful in establishing working relations between the interpreter and the clients as far as the expectations and trust are concerned. As we can see, the existing regulations concentrate mostly on the non-linguistic aspects of interpreting, but are important nevertheless, as this kind of problems is quite common and causes a great deal of doubts.

When it comes to dealing with the text itself or, more specifically, to the translation strategies that may be applied, one of the more down-to-earth approaches to the subject in the recent years is one offered by Helge Niska. In his article about community interpreting he proposes a new model of the roles of interpreter in the communication process. In his "translation pyramid" he clearly distinguishes between almost mechanical transcoding, as proposed by many professional codes of

conduct, and other functions of the interpreter that, nevertheless, may also be valid and useful translation strategies. The latter are the following: explaining misunderstandings, cultural mediation, and even the widely discussed speaking for the client (Table 2). He underlines the fact that although the transfer of meaning will always be the basis of any translation activity, in some situations it is not sufficient to guarantee understanding between the speakers (2002).

Table 2. Niska's Model of the Roles of the Interpreters



This new and rather bold approach is very much a step forward, as it frees the interpreters from the “just translate” rule and gives them the liberty to decide which strategy will be adequate to ensure the success of communication. It is, furthermore, consistent with the *Skopos* theory – much praised in other fields of translation studies – which allows the translator to “interfere” with the original text, including profound modifications and adaptations, as long as they are consistent with the aim of the translation [Nord 1997]. This objective, in the case of interpreting, cannot be established without considering all of the above-mentioned elements of the communication situation. Both of these theories may be a useful tool in choosing a right solution, in view of the communication problems which are encountered. They should, therefore, complement the approaches offered by most of the codes of practice, that suggest that the only acceptable strategy is the exact transcoding of the message.

Unfortunately, the norms related strictly to the translation process do not help to answer all of the interpreter's doubts in view of the communication problems. It is useful, therefore, to "borrow" some norms from other fields of studies, especially as far as professional behaviour is concerned. The cultural studies offer perhaps the most helpful guidelines in this area. The general theories regarding cultural differences offered by Edward Hall [1976] and Geert Hofstede [2001] may prepare the future interpreters to deal with some of the more problematic aspects of context, contact, and also the expectations and attitudes of the client, especially when cultural disproportions that influence the way of communicating are concerned. They may also facilitate a deeper understanding of the different cultures, giving the interpreters the knowledge necessary to become skilful mediators when problems in this area occur. To give one of the most obvious examples, only if we understand the differences between high and low context cultures will we be able to counteract the negative effects of such problems as: the way of speaking and formulating sentences, the duration of the assignment, and the non-verbal communication, among many other things. Other helpful tips can be adapted from the area of business communication research. The ethics and etiquette norms that are obligatory in this kind of interaction may be applied, almost without any changes, to the interpreter-client relationship [cf. Kamińska-Radomska 2012]. One of the most useful tools that may be given to students are the norms related to the assertiveness, especially, but not exclusively, regarding organising the interpreter-mediated event in a way that will ensure the high quality of the final product. Application of this and other business-related norms helps to solve most of the remaining problems mentioned in the proposed model.

Analysis of the existing translation and interpreting curricula offered in the Polish universities leads to the finding that, not unlike existing codes of practice, the norms that are introduced into the plans of studies are derived mostly from the traditionally understood role of the interpreter as an impartial and flawless transcoding machine. The main focus of the training seems to be on such elements of the communication process as the original code and message (usually in the sense of their meaning), the quality and correctness of the translation rendered, and the interpreter's competences. Although they may be considered

by some researchers and teachers the most important elements of the translation process, they do not exist in a vacuum, and therefore should not be analysed and presented in isolation. Other factors, such as the participants, the contact and, obviously, the context, may also present a challenge, and impact the interpreter's role and behaviour, as seen in the proposed model. Therefore, the norms presented to students during their training should offer solutions to the possible problems they may encounter, and also provide them with means to solve them according to the professional standards and ethics. Furthermore, they should not be based exclusively on the idealistic models created for the kind of translations, where the extra-linguistic elements do not take part in the transcoding process, i.e. written ones, but should also include the more practical approaches like Niska's [cf. Baker, Maier, 2011]. It is worth mentioning that there is in fact a growing number of education centres that have begun to see the necessity of a more complex and reflective training in the ethics and professional conduct of translators and interpreters. Unfortunately, there still seems to be a great deal of confusion about what topics the courses should include. The analysis of some of the proposed curricula shows that they rarely provide information on the most common extra-linguistic problems, and the ones they do tackle are being presented in relation to the aforementioned codes of practice. It is only fair to say, however, that some of them offer a refreshing, if somewhat misguided, approach by concentrating on the rules of social etiquette, including issues such as diplomatic dress code, types of official parties, table manners etc. As interesting as the topic may seem, it is hard to imagine a work-related situation where knowing the type of wine glasses or forks to use could be useful to an interpreter, as events where this kind of knowledge is required (i.e. diplomatic or other "high-brow" encounters) do not include interpreters as eating guests, because the protocol does not allow it [Orłowski, 2006]. The obvious conclusion would be that there is still a great need for discussion about the shape and contents of such curricula, especially regarding the most common issues identified by the interpreters themselves, as demonstrated in the presented model of practical problems.

Considering all of the facts gathered and bearing in mind the results of the study, the author of this article has prepared and implemented a course in professional ethics and etiquette at the the Tischner European

University in Cracow in 2013. The proposed curriculum consisted of the following topics:

1. Introduction, in which the definitions of concepts such as ethics, etiquette, morality and professionalism are presented, interpreting is portrayed as a type of communication, and its forms, depending on context, are discussed;
2. Interpreting as an interaction – work conditions are analysed and the main problems and interferences in communication are pinpointed (as seen in the proposed model);
3. The interpreter's role and function in communication – includes the most up-to-date theoretical approaches (including the *Scopos* theory and Niska's model) and introduces existing codes of ethics with the discussion on their usefulness in solving specific problems;
4. The law in interpreters' work, part one – presents the legal status of interpreters in selected countries and offers a critical approach to the existing solutions and new trends;
5. The law in interpreters' work, part two – is devoted to regulations regarding interpreters' work in Poland, including sworn translations, copyright issues, privacy laws, professional secrecy;
6. Etiquette, part one – tackles the problems of behaviour in everyday contacts and rules of different types of communication, discusses the culture of language and non-verbal communication;
7. Etiquette, part two – differences in social and business etiquette are analysed, appropriate behaviour at work and business dress codes are discussed, professional standards in different surroundings are presented;
8. Relations between client(s) and the interpreter – puts forward the broad spectrum of the expectations of clients, suggests appropriate interpreter behaviour in relation to criticism, aggression and manipulation, promotes assertiveness and adhering to one's ethical convictions;
9. Solving ethical problems – practical exercises during which students present their own solutions to a given problem;
10. Mistakes – introduces interpreting strategies and techniques, analyses the most common interpreting errors and *faux pas* in the context of breakdowns in communication. Dealing with one's

mistakes and their consequences is also discussed, covering-up and apologising are debated;

11. Cultural differences – presents types of culture and ethical postures, investigates the role of the interpreter as a cultural mediator, gives examples of communication problems caused by culture, offers the most problematic differences in etiquette and ethics;
12. Revision and conclusions – discusses professional conduct as a result of the assumed etiquette, ethics and moral convictions of the interpreter;
13. Final exam.

The whole course consists of thirteen meetings, ten of which are standard seminar-style lectures, with slideshows, real-life examples and debates about the topic. During each of these classes, students are invited to participate in at least one activity involving a whole group. This might be a brainstorming session to find a solution to a given problem, solving a quiz regarding the topic at hand or making an analysis of some authentic material. One meeting (listed as number nine) is devoted exclusively to solving actual extra-linguistic translation problems. Students, based on known norms, understood as codes of conduct, etiquette, ethics and legal boundaries, have to present their own point of view regarding a situation; they have previously drawn from a pool of about thirty short stories. The examples include, among others, such aspects of the interpreters' work as: receiving gifts, reporting offences, establishing personal relations with clients, possessing previous knowledge of a court case, offering opinions etc. Every presentation is followed by a short discussion about the selected solution to the problem. Additionally, every presentation is recorded and then viewed by the students. The aim of this exercise is to allow the future interpreters to evaluate their own appearance and the way they behave in front of an audience. Ideally, this activity would be performed during a separate class, with longer presentations to get more material for analysis and give students more time to discuss all of the aspects of a "professional look". Unfortunately, due to the time restrictions of the curriculum, this option was not available. The final exam, consisting of five open questions, is preceded by revision of the material and a discussion about professionalism and norms, ethics, etiquette, morality and the interpreter's responsibility regarding communication.

As we can see, the proposed course intends to include all of the existing norms for interpreters, from the most formalised legal obligation, through the criticised and conflicting approaches of the described codes of ethics and Niska's proposal, to the cultural norms deriving from the more general rules of behaviour in a professional context. The proposed curriculum does not pretend to be the ultimate answer to the problem of interpreter training. There is always room for both improvement and discussion about the possible implications of including one topic and omitting another. This particular subject was prepared for students, whose specialisation is in translation and interpreting. It was designed to be a course that would complement more traditional ones, focusing on linguistic skills. Therefore, it includes mostly extra-linguistic aspects of the work of interpreters and concentrates on the most common problems from an ethical and normative point of view. To give an example: when the problem of errors is discussed during traditional classes, students are usually led to believe that good interpreters do not make mistakes. However, this proposed course, with its more down-to-earth approach, intends to provide interpreters with the tools they can use to correct their mistakes in an ethical and professional manner.

In conclusion, the practical problems in interpreter-mediated events show that there is a fair amount of ground that is not traditionally covered in the interpreter training. Furthermore, the existing codes of conduct that are the basis for most of the curricula may be considered inappropriate and out-of-date when compared with current state-of-the-art in interpreting studies. It could be argued that the interpreter training should stop promoting norms that come strictly from the "just translate" approach and concentrate more on other, more practical and realistic guidelines, as, for example, the ones proposed by Niska or the *Skopos* theory. It should therefore include elements that will prepare the students to solve the most common problems according to high ethical standards and tackle such aspects as the role of the interpreter in communication, work conditions, the legal boundaries of the work of interpreters, ethical guidelines, business etiquette, assertiveness, cultural differences, the expectations of clients, taking responsibility for the consequences of one's actions etc. Only then can we expect interpreters to be true professionals, able to deal with everyday problems in an ethical and dignified manner, and last but not least, to take full responsibility for

the communication process, both in ensuring its success or, otherwise, taking the responsibility for its failure.

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STRESZCZENIE

Nauczanie norm w tłumaczeniu ustnym

Niniejszy artykuł przybliży kwestię szkolenia przyszłych tłumaczy ustnych w zakresie norm przydatnych w rozwiązywaniu ich codziennych problemów związanych z wykonywaniem zawodu. W celu ustalenia najczęstszych trudności w pracy pośrednika językowego skorzystano z modelu wpływu poszczególnych elementów sytuacji komunikacyjnej na jakość przekładu, który zaproponowany został w 2013 r. Jak się okazuje, większość problemów wskazywanych przez tłumaczy nie znajduje odzwierciedlenia w proponowanych programach studiów, a w konsekwencji młodzi adepci zawodu nie są należycie przygotowani do rozwiązywania trudności napotkanych w pracy, zwłaszcza gdy chodzi o normy dotyczące profesjonalnego zachowania. Dlatego też proponowany program zajęć zawiera najważniejsze reguły nie tylko z dziedziny ogólnie rozumianego przekładu, lecz także z obszarów pokrewnych, takich jak kultura i komunikacja w biznesie, które wypracowały interesujące rozwiązania i wskazówki mogące pomóc również tłumaczom ustnym w ich codziennej pracy.

Słowa kluczowe: model problemów przekładowych, szkolenie tłumaczy ustnych

SUMMARY

The paper intends to suggest a new approach to interpreter training that would include the norms helpful in solving problems the practitioners encounter in

their everyday work. To establish the desired content of the proposed curriculum, a model of practical problems in interpreter-mediated events proposed in 2013 was used. Not surprisingly, most of the factors presented in the model are not traditionally considered as necessary elements of interpreter training, and quite often young practitioners are not adequately prepared to deal with the problems they encounter in their work, especially as far as norms of professional behaviour are concerned. Therefore, the proposed curriculum includes some of the most relevant norms, not only from the area of translation itself, but also from the cultural and business communication studies that offer some interesting solutions and guidelines that may be applied in solving the problems of interpreters.

Key words: model of interferences in interpreting, interpreter training