



Translation Challenges

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ABSTRACT

No doubt, one of the major challenges in translation/ interpretation is the inadequate translation quality of texts, administrative notes, brochures, etc, as well as poor simultaneous and consecutive interpreting during conferences, trainings and other important events, be it at the national or international level. But in case of written translations the translator has the chance to intervene, correct and proofread the text through proofreaders, but this is something that cannot be done during oral translation. Poor interpretation can even result in the failure of an event. In the worst case scenario, interlocutors misunderstand each other, and get a wrong intellectual, professional picture of each other due to poor interpretation. Therefore, in this paper we have tried to shed some light on the actual problems and challenges in the field of translation, in general and oral interpretation, in particular.

Key words: translation, challenges and problems faced by translators/ interpreters in Kosova, consecutive interpretation, simultaneous interpretation, training of translators/ interpreters.

1. The role of translation

Never have there been so many people in the history of humanity engaged in translation activities as there are today. Everyday, thousands of translators and interpreters facilitate the inter-human, linguistic, social, political, cultural, artistic, scientific and mass media communication between different nations, with their human and pertinacious activity. The role of interpreters and translators in the development of international relations, economics, arts, movies and scientific exchange, is enormous.¹ In our era one can not imagine the conductance, organization, functioning and success of any conference, summit, congress, symposium or meeting, be it international, scientific, political, diplomatic or cultural, without the participation, involvement, engagement, and noble mission of interpreters and translators. Thus, translation has become, not merely a condition for mutual communication, but also an incentive for our progress, co-operation, understanding, tolerance, amiability, peace and stability.²

Recently, in Kosovo as well, scores of young translation experts have been engaged and hired and now exercise the mission and task of the interpreter or translator. They work not only in KFOR, UNMIK, OSCE and EULEX but also in liaison, diplomatic, economic, tourist, political and marketing offices; different embassies, agencies and institutions; various humanitarian, health, educational and cultural

¹ Newmark, Peter (1982) **Approaches to Translation**, Oxford/ New York/- Toronto: Pergamon Press, (p.10).

² Prunç, Erich (2005) **Hyrje në Shkencën e Translacionit**, Prishtinë: Scrib "Papyrus", (p.12)

organizations. With their assiduous efforts, they facilitate communication between international and national representatives, politicians, diplomats, experts, managers and employees. Furthermore, without being so aware of it, they contribute to understanding between two parties, mutual cooperation, deepening of amity and, what is most essential, to the transmission of organization, institutional, legislative, scientific, cultural, state-forming and democratic experience of foreign experts, both into Albanian and other regional languages.

However, translation and interpretation in Kosova before the 1999 war had only been practiced by a few talented and experienced translators, but after the war- due to the sudden, extraordinary need for translation-the skill is being exercised as Vedat Kokona puts it “by those who are in need and those who do it indeed.” They do this for money, says Kokona, and “Mother Nature” calls upon them to work the way it called them and not otherwise. “Mother Nature” is the talent, the gift. The passion to read, understand, adopt and transmit a text, a message, an idea, an opinion into a clear, lucid and original manner. Whereas translators in need as Kokona explains, are those who are not assigned by the “Call of Nature” to work on something and they cannot do it properly, thus they are now dancing like a bear where once they appear funny the other time dangerous. This type of translator possesses no gift of talent, preparation or qualification. They are lazy and believe that interpretation is the easiest thing in the world. They do not accomplish their task: they destroy not only the text and message, but also the style, by misinforming the reader and/or listener.

2. Main types of oral translation

According to linguists translation may be defined as follows: “The replacement of textual material in one language (Source Language) by equivalent textual material in another language (Target Language).”³ Translation is thus defined as a rendering, transformation or transmission of a message from one language into another. While, according to Eugene A. Nida: “Translating consist in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style.”⁴

Usually the mission of the translator/ interpreter is to help and support individuals and groups of individuals to know, to understand and what’s even more important to respect each other and even help them agree with each other on certain issues. However, even on this occasion, the duty of the translator/interpreter is to first understand the message, then translate it into another language and finally articulate the message.

There are two main types (techniques) of oral (verbal) interpretation: simultaneous and consecutive interpretation. While in consecutive translation the translator translates after the speaker pauses to give the interpreter time to translate and transmit the message, idea, thought or sentence, in simultaneous translation the translation is done simultaneously, and hence the interpreter follows the speaker with only a few words behind the speaker. In this type of oral translation the speaker speaks and is almost unaware that he is being translated. Since the translator speaks at the same time with the speaker, he/ she has no need to memorize or jot down what the speaker says. Suffices to note that simultaneous interpretation is more suitable for conferences, seminars and other formal events with large number of participants and requires special translation equipment. In simultaneous interpretation the interpreter is normally isolated in booths.

³ Catford, J.C. (1969) *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, London: Oxford University Press, (p.20)

⁴ Nida A. Eugen & Taber R. Charles (1974) *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Published for the United Bible Societies by E.J. Brill, Leiden, (p.12)

In consecutive translation the interpreter does not start speaking until the original speaker has stopped. When using consecutive translation, one person speaks at a time. Therefore, the interpreter has time to analyse the message, as a whole, which makes it easier for him or her to understand the message and transmit it in a few seconds. Consecutive translation is more suitable for meetings, including smaller number of participants. This technique is less confusing for the interpreter and oftentimes results in a more correct oral translation than simultaneous interpreting for interpreters. Nevertheless, this type of oral translation is very challenging as translators are exposed, visible, and vulnerable. So this technique is very tiring and requires great fluency, concentration and self-reliance.

3. Major challenges of translation

According to Edmond Tupja, a well-known Albanian scholar and translation theorist, apart from interpreters in need or those talented, there are two other categories: sub-interpreters and pseudo-interpreters. According to Tupja, “the first one is accountable, modest, hardworking and give their best, but they lack talent and as a result their translations/interpretations are mediocre and need to be retranslated by another translator, so the proof-reader finds himself in the position of co-translator. The second of these, the pseudo-interpreter, is best described by Kokona, as one who has no gift, knowledge nor wish to work. Unfortunately, this category of translators, as he points out, “is most commonly engaged in written and electronic media, and even in literary translations”.⁵

No doubt, one of the major challenges is the inadequate translation quality of texts, administrative notes, brochures, etc., as well as poor simultaneous and consecutive interpreting during conferences, trainings and other important events, be it at the national or international level. But in case of written translations the translator has the chance to intervene, correct and proofread the text through proofreaders, but this is something that cannot be done during oral translation. Poor interpretation can even result in the failure of an event. In the worst case scenario, interlocutors misunderstand each other, and get a wrong intellectual, professional picture of each other due to poor interpretation. Such a situation can arise due to the lack of responsibility of the organizer, the lack of discipline of participants, poor articulation, and most frequently due to lectures which lack terminology knowledge and accuracy, topic relevance, respect for language styles and underestimate interpreters and interpreting. To avoid such situations the speaker should be aware that he/she is speaking through an interpreter, and in case the speech is confusing, lacking order and logic then the interpreter has no other alternative than to be confused and transmit an unclear message. The speaker should also take into account the rhythm or the pace of the speech. He/she should address in a normal tone and, if possible, follow what the interpreter is doing. Speakers should not talk all at once as the interpreter cannot interpret for them all. Further, they should avoid long and complex sentences or paragraphs and speak in simple, concise and organized sentences. The speaker should take into account the pronunciation as they may easily be misunderstood. A speaker should also avoid using idioms, jargons, acronyms, and specific humour as this may take on the form of an inadequate meaning.

Facilitation and assistance to the interpreters is best provided by the relevant institutions, which employ interpreters, by:

1. In time information on agenda, purpose of meeting and the context of the speeches;
2. Informing them about the importance of the meeting and the level of participants;
3. Defining and informing them about the type of interpretation (consecutive or simultaneous);
4. Ensuring a list of specialized terminology and acronyms to be used during the conference;
5. Providing copies or talking points of speeches or presentations;

⁵ Tupja, Edmon (2003) **PRO TRANSLATORE, Shtjellime Kritike për Pëkthyesin dhe Përkthimin** Tiranë: OMBRA OVG, (p. 61, 62)

6. Meeting the organizer before the events start to answer possible questions an translator/interpreter might have about the meeting format.

After all, the transparency and success of interpretation depends both on the quality and quantity of the preparatory work before the event and on the training, competence and qualification of interpreters. An important role might be played by English departments of the University of Prishtina and State University of Tetova, which in cooperation with international organizations in Kosovo, could send interpreters for language proficiency and specialization in translation abroad. Lately the idea of establishing an Institute for Translation has emerged. This idea, if supported by the international community would enable the qualification, training and professional capacity building of interpreters at the international level. Such an idea is useful, especially now as Kosovo aims to be a part of Euro-Atlantic integration.

4. Conclusion

Taking into account the actual challenges faced by translation in Kosova, we sincerely hope that, in not too distant future the competent institutions, such as are the departments of English at the University of Prishtina and State University of Tetova, in close cooperation with international organizations in Kosova will send interpreters for language proficiency and specialization in translation abroad. Lately the idea of establishing an Institute for Translation has emerged. This idea, if supported by the international community would enable the qualification, training and professional capacity building of interpreters at the international level. Such an idea is useful, especially now as Kosovo aims to be a part of Euro-Atlantic integration.

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