

**The Role of an Interpreter****Linguistics**

**Keywords:** interpreter, role, facilitate, setting, suggestion, skill.

**Kadri Krasniqi****Public University of Prizren “Ukshin Hoti” Prizren 20000 Kosovo****Abstract**

The main aim of this research is to introduce the future interpreters with their role and work activities, suggestions, responsibilities, skills and to familiarize the existing interpreters with what is expected from them within or during an interpreting setting. This research also aims to show or identify different ways and types of interpreting and above all to emphasize the need for mastering the three most essential skills such as; language skills, interpretation skills and interpretation protocol skills and interpretation management skills as well.

**1. Introduction****A brief history of interpreting**

Interpreting has been around ever since human beings have used words to speak and express their thoughts. It always has played an important role in the relationship between countries and people of different origins since the beginning of mankind. However, interpreting compare to translation which proof dates back long time ago to 3000 BC, leaves no proof or written evidence and therefore makes it so hard to establish the time of creation. The use of interpreting became widely known/used in Ancient Greece and Rome. At this time slaves, prisoners and ethnic tribes were forced to learn different languages and interpret for the nobility. During this time and up until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Latin language was the ‘lingua franca’ or the language of diplomacy in Europe and therefore every country had to have some citizens who spoke Latin in order to carry on diplomatic relations. Throughout the centuries the use of interpreting and the use of interpreters became widely spread due to the large number of factors. One of the main factors was religion, for example during the 7 - 8 centuries AD many Arabs were in West Africa trading. Along with trading, they also introduced Islam and the Arabic language to the Africans. Another factor that played a large role of introducing or spreading the interpreting was the ‘Age of Exploration’.

Nowadays, a lot of explorations of new lands, countries and continents took place where people came across other people who spoke a different language and had cultural differences.

The most remarkable advancement in this art, and benefits from interpreting became widely spread in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in particular at the ‘International Labor Conference in Geneva’ in 1927. Since then interpreting has become an industry of its own with huge budgets for many International Organizations and governments. In some countries it has become a necessity for many communities. So the role of interpreters and interpreting rose and spread everywhere in the world and in some countries has become a freelance profession and it is very well paid too. Community interpreting began in Australia during the 70-s from which it spread to Europe and eventually the US. Taking into account the progress and developments made in the last 40 years community interpreting has grown and developed in the world in which continents, countries, cities, towns and to some extend even small villages are becoming increasingly multilingual.

## The role of an interpreter

The role of an interpreter is not just converting one language into another but to bridge the gap between cultures in order to create a mutual understanding of facts / information and what is being communicated between two parties or persons. The role of an interpreter is much more than just understanding a second language. On one hand, the interpreter has to be very good at his/her mother tongue or first language and on the other hand has to be, if possible, even better than in his/her mother tongue. Above all, an interpreter must understand the culture, economic and political differences between two cultures in order to create a smooth and transparent communication between individuals from different cultures.

The interpreter's role during an interpreting session is very delicate and concerning. The interpreter by no means should say, behave or do something that could be considered offensive. Here are few suggestions for interpreters to implement and by any means will avoid them from doing or saying something offensive to someone from another culture or country:

- **Being polite** – as we all know that being polite is a universal rule, it is accepted worldwide as well, to not offend someone. You should never make them feel uncomfortable by being rude. Make sure you are polite at all times.

- **Being straightforward** – by answering simple, straightforward and not interfering during the interpreting session will keep you out of trouble. This is one of the best ways to maintain good relationship and avoid trouble with someone from another culture.

- **Being friendly** – there are no countries or cultures on our planet that do not enjoy/admire someone friendly who smiles. It does not matter where you are, in Europe, South Africa or Middle East, being friendly is a universal way/manner to build relationship and avoid offense.

- **Not making sarcastic comments** – not everyone likes sarcastic comments and they are risky, can very easily annoy / alienate others and should mostly be avoided.

- **Let someone else do the talking** – there are occasions where and when you do not understand the language or culture being spoken or used, it is better to let others do the talking. By doing this will help maintain relationship, keep you out of trouble and avoid any misunderstanding as well.

Another role of an interpreter is to deliver, as faithfully as possible, messages. Those messages transmitted between persons who do not speak English and service providers in a diverse range of health, social and community service settings.

The role of an interpreter should never be confused with the role of a translator, because the translator works with the written word while the interpreter works / deals with the spoken word. The interpreter is always under enormous pressure due to the time limited and the presence of other people in the meeting. Traditionally, the role of an interpreter has been the "black box" or "translation machine", where the interpreter impartially transmits the words of the patient and the physician back and forth, giving no advice or guidance to either side of the encounter (Dysart – Gale, 2007). This means that the interpreter translates the literal words said during the encounter without providing any explanation to the cultural context of the words being exchanged.

However, culture plays an important role in the perception of health, which affects medical logic and communication patterns. Therefore, on one hand the interpreter should provide or assist service providers beyond the language barrier to bridging the cultural gap and on the other hand should be familiar with both, the target culture and the culture of biomedicine and interpret not only the words being said, but also the cultural meaning behind them.

Another role of an interpreter involves listening to, understanding and memorizing content in the original ‘source’ language then reproducing statements, questions and speeches in a different ‘target’ language. This is often done in only one direction normally into the interpreter’s native language, but sometimes also on a two-way basis. Good interpreters can facilitate effective communication between two parties in the following settings:

1. **Large conferences and formal meetings.**
2. **Business functions** - smaller meetings, exhibitions and product launches.
3. **Criminal justice** – proceedings, known as public service interpreter or PSI including police and probation service interviews, court hearing, solicitors interviews and immigration tribunals.

The interpreter can also interpret in various ways: **in person** – whether in the same room or from a nearby conference booth: **by telephone** – when the interpreter is in a different location from the speakers and **via video conferencing and internet-based technologies.**

The interpreter can interpret in several ways:

- **Simultaneous interpretation** – working in a team at a conference or large meeting, where the interpreter sits in a sound proof booth and immediately converts what is being said, so listeners hear the interpretation through an earpiece while the speaker is still speaking. This type of interpreting is very demanding on concentration and therefore interpreters take turn every 30 minutes.

- **Consecutive interpretation** – it is very common in smaller meetings and discussion where the speaker will pause after each sentence and wait while the interpreter translates what is being said into the appropriate language.

- **Liaison interpretation** – also known as ‘ad hoc and relay’, this is a type of two-way interpreting, where the interpreter translates every few sentences while the speaker pauses. This type of interpreting is very common in telephone interpreting as well as in legal and health situation. In this type of interpreting the interpreter supports people who are not fluent in the language being used to ensure their understanding.

- **Sign language interpretation** – interpreters convert spoken statements into sign language and vice versa. Also, interpreting from one sign language to another is another option.

The role of the interpreter at any stage of this complex process involves the following working activities:

- Assimilation of the speaker’s words quickly, including jargon and acronyms.
- Analysis of the sentences expressed in any language by explaining and deciphering them through the usage of another language.
- Building up specialist vocabulary and writing notes to help memory.
- Using microphones, headsets and using the internet to conduct research.
- Preparing paperwork with regard to any agenda before meeting.
- Organizing workloads and liaising with internal departments, agencies and employers.
- Above all working to a professional code of ethics covering confidentiality and impartiality.

Apart from the roles I mentioned above, there is also another role of interpreters to master the three most essential skills such as:

1. **Language skills** – in order to work as an interpreter, one must be fluent in two languages. It is not good enough to take a course about interpreting and pass an exam to call oneself a professional interpreter. But it is strongly recommended to have your Language Skills tested by a reputable institution or agency before you undertake the interpreting course.

**2. Interpretation skills** – it is very hard to learn how to interpret through an online course but it is useful to build your interpreting skills by using the methods and self-directed exercises such as; consistent practice through simulated and real-life experience will strengthen the interpreter's ability to translate confidently and accurately without having to add or change client's words.

**3. Interpretation protocols skills and interpretation management skills** – professional interpreters must follow strict rules of protocol and procedures, which includes Interpreter's Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice. These rules / procedures provide interpreters with guidelines for how interpretation should be conducted - from the moment of accepting the assignment to performing correct introductions and explaining the process to both clients and the service provider.

Furthermore, interpreters also have lots of responsibilities during an interpreting session. There are so many responsibilities but I am going to focus on only some of the most important ones that any interpreter must obey and will come across sooner or later:

- Explain the role of the community interpreter.
- Interprets accurately the meaning and intent of the words spoken.
- Indicate to the speaker if the listener does not understand the language.
- Interrupt for clarification.
- Respects the integrity and right to confidentiality of all parties.
- Does not impose own values and opinions.
- Maintains professional conduct at all times.

Above all a professional interpreter will decline to interpret when there is a conflict between parties and should always stay come and impartial:

- Will participate as an equal member in the service team.
- Will participate in any ongoing interpreter knowledge activities.
- Will reveal and correct any errors made while interpreting.

## **Conclusion**

After having analyzed the role, the skills and the responsibilities of an interpreter and taking into account my own experience in England, both as an interpreter and translator, for four and half years. I would conclude that, 'being an interpreter or translator is not an easy profession as people think and would suggest to anyone who would like to become an interpreter should think twice and go through some tests or exams from a reputable institution or accredited bodies before enrolling to any agencies specialized in translation and interpreting services. When I say it is not easy I mean, 'it is not just the pressure you are on during an interpreting session, but your ability, competence, accuracy, knowledge and any background information about the culture and language you going to interpret. At the end of the day everything matters and will result on the outcome on how you managed to convert the message through as accurately, clearly, understandably, fluently and professionally as possible. Despite all these roles and responsibilities, interpreting is fun and enjoyable.

## References

1. Bassnet, Susan. “*Translation studies*” London and New York, Routledge Third edition. 2002.
2. Munday, Jeremy. “*Introducing Translation Studies*”-Theories and applications. London and New York, Routledge Second edition. 2008.
3. Baker, Mona and Saldanha, Gabriel. “*Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*” New York, Taylor and Francis e Library Second edition. 2009.
4. Delisle, Jean. “*Translators through History*” Philadelphia, John Benjamin’s Publishing. 1995.
5. Wilss, W. “*Translation and Interpreting in the 20th Century*” Focus on German. Amsterdam; Philadelphia, John Benjamin’s Publishing. 1999.

## Internet sites

[www.Ise.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/11/28/lupton-30-tips-writing/](http://www.Ise.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/11/28/lupton-30-tips-writing/)  
[www.prospects.ac.uk/interpreter\\_job\\_description.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interpreter_job_description.htm)  
[www.cisoc.net/en/training/online/community](http://www.cisoc.net/en/training/online/community)