Interpreting and Translation

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Research history: Interpreting studies

The professional practice of simultaneous interpretation developed after a high-profile experiment during the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal in the 1940s. Training programs were then established in Europe to support the emergence of pan-European institutions. The most elaborate system of simultaneous interpreting is currently in use at the European Parliament: 27 spoken languages and 2 sign languages. Soon, interpreting studies emerged from two disciplines: linguistics and cognition. Bodies of literature cover specific contexts such as interpreting in courts, health care, and international asylum hearings (Pöchhacker & Kolb, 2009) or interpreting for specific populations, such as the culturally deaf. To date, nearly all research and theory about interpreting is focused on the activities of the interpreter rather than on interpreting as a socially constructed process of meaning making.

Training professional interpreters remains the goal of most academic programs in interpreting. Over time, interpreting studies has maintained a focus on smooth production of formal linguistic architecture (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and prosody). Cognitive neuroscientists study interpreters in search of discrete mental functions and evidence of intellectual processes. Interpreter trainers seek such knowledge in order to develop aptitude tests and appropriate instructional methods for the development of necessary skills.

Research on interpreting is generally divided into two domains: conference interpreting and community interpreting. Community interpreting includes contexts of daily life and everyday living. These settings are often small groups where turn taking is a major feature of the interaction: for instance, health care and medical appointments, legal situations such as encounters with the police and appearances in court, and applying for and receiving services from government. Conference interpreting settings are broadcast situations: one speaker projecting to many audience members. Conference interpreting tends to be high profile and often includes the use of technology. Examples are high-level political institutions (such as the United Nations and the European Parliament), academic and industry conferences, and other types of platform or stage interpreting, including college classes and public service announcements on television.

Although often not acknowledged, within most conference interpreting settings there are usually also instances of community interpreting, especially during planning

and preparation, and also among hosts, guests, and other participants during the event. Likewise, some community interpreting settings include instances of conference interpreting depending on the particular situation. For instance, public schooling, religious events, and employment contexts may involve peer-to-peer interaction, employee–employer interactions, hands-on trainings, and team or group meetings (community interpreting), as well as lectures, sermons, and presentations (conference interpreting).

Academic criticism focuses on the interpreter as an inaccessible black box whose operations are kept invisible to the participants (Angelelli, 2001) and the inexperience or ignorance of consumers of interpreting services in how to best communicate during interpreted interaction. Research projects investigate interpreter norms and qualifications and describe, empirically, the linguistic challenges of interpreting. This traditional paradigm, which evaluates interpreting as an exercise in linguistic equivalence, is stretched when one considers the social interaction among interpretees and interpreters as coparticipants in a communication event (Wadensjö, 1998). The social interaction paradigm emphasizes interpreting as a practice profession similar to that of doctors and lawyers because it requires constant multilevel decision making that is responsive to contextual and emergent conditions within every unique situation, rather than the rote application of a standard set of trade skills within situations that maintain a high degree of similarity (Dean & Pollard, 2013). A major hurdle identified by practitioners and researchers alike regards the lack of knowledge by users (interpret*ees*) about how to participate well in interpreted communication.

The salient distinction between *interpreting* and *translating* is (contrary to popular opinion) not the mode (written text or spoken words/signs). Rather the crucial distinction is in the dimension of time (Kent, 2014): *interpreting* is a spontaneous interaction among persons communicating with each other in real time. Since people can, and do, interpret "the same words" in multiple ways, translation scholars have explored these differentials. *Translating* aims to establish a permanent meaning about which no negotiation is possible. Organizational strategies of language standardization assume a translation ideal, that is, that equivalence of meaning exists across cultures or can be imposed through the use of so-called "inclusive language" – the consistent use of a lingua franca (e.g., Lauring & Klitmøller, 2016). This logic relies on the equivalence paradigm and reinforces the homolingual bias, which is a tendency to prefer to communicate with others who already "speak the same language" (Kent, 2014).

Research history: Translation studies

Translation studies originated in comparative literature programs in the 1940s and, unlike interpreting studies, has kept pace with paradigm developments in the humanities and social sciences. Two key concepts in translation are *foreignization* and *domestication* (Venuti, 1998). Foreignization refers to those aspects of a translated work that retain elements of the original language in such a way as to remind readers of cultural difference. In contrast, a domesticated translation removes and hides aspects of cultural difference so that readers can absorb the information or story from within their own familiar cultural framework. The paradigm of domestication and foreignization

counters the paradigm of equivalence popular in the common-sense view of translating and pervasive within interpreting studies. Choices made between foreignization or domestication draw attention to interaction and individual agency (technically, voice) – the translator's in particular (e.g., Forman, 1998) – while also invoking the role(s) and responsibilities of audience members/interpretees.

The assumption of equivalence is that there is an automatic correspondence of meaning through linguistic features (e.g., having a word for a thing in the other language) without accounting for or giving attention to the transactional and social processes of confirming shared understanding. Domestication and foreignization highlight the subjective experience of the audience and intended recipients. Domestication (by a translator or interpreter) of an author's language(s) leaves the reader/interpretee with no sense of discomfort or confusion. Foreignization, on the other hand, leaves the reader/interpretee with a sense of being stretched to understand that more may be going on beyond the usual scope of "just the words." In translation, the author's status as interpretee is often neglected because the text is presumed to be static and the outcome oriented focus is on a carefully crafted language product by the interpreter/translator.

Topics of scholarly debate in translation studies regard the circumstances under which domestication or foreignization are called for, when and why one or the other should be prescribed, and to what extent domestication may be hidden within the paradigm of equivalence, thereby contributing to systematic oppression and disempowerment. Taking the temporal dimension into account, it becomes obvious why language difference can play into identity politics if only homolingual/translation-style assumptions of equivalence are the measure of communication competence. When communicators understand the intercultural aspect and engage the back-and-forth interaction needed to build mutual comprehension, then the cultural practices of interpreting set the stage for improved efficiencies, better harmony, and deeply shared understandings.

Research history: Languages in international management

Recently, an increase in attention to mediating language differences in organizations has developed within international management studies (Brannen, Piekkari, & Tietze, 2014). Large corporations have the financial resources and perceived need to control language difference. Management scholars are addressing language difference as an aspect of effectively organizing multilingual workforces, structuring operations across national boundaries, and coping with the challenges of marketing goods and services to diverse publics. Organization and management scholars have, to date, not directed attention to simultaneous interpreting as an important component of social organizing within multinationals. Research has primarily focused on "communication problems" associated with "the language barrier" when managing a multinational corporation whose employees speak different languages. In general, international management research has not explored or bridged findings from language research in national or regional language policies or from the fields of interpreting studies and translation studies.

Language diversity has been studied in the context of corporate language policy and social identity differences within a homolingual paradigm that assumes a single, uniform language is more suited to the control needs of management (e.g., Heller, 2010). Researchers tend to focus on individual, interpersonal, and intergroup effects. For instance, topics include costs/benefits of a person's multilingual/linguistic resources, possible confusion resulting from two speakers of different languages working together, or subgroup identities that form within an organization due to language preference. Studies of the effectiveness of imposing a common corporate language, most commonly English, have generated mixed empirical results. Most notably, "disintegrating effects" have been found to limit, rather than enhance, the ability of organizational leaders to manage effectively because of opposition and resistance among employees to an imposed common language (Piekkari et al., 2005). For instance, there is evidence that English as a lingua franca (ELF) – i.e., conducting all business in English throughout a corporation regardless of native languages used by employees, managers, and sometimes even customers – is an insensitive, short-term fix rather than a sophisticated, long-term solution.

Theorizing about the interaction of language differences in international organizations shows indications of shifting from immediate and short-term individual and group-level effects to longer term social outcomes by looking at organizational and cultural impacts over time. The use of discourse analysis, for instance, has given rise to the concept of *linguascaping* (Steyaert, Ostendorp, & Gaibrois, 2011), that is, of organizing language use based on the accounts people give for specific language choices that they make in social interaction with each other, such as whether to use a lingua franca or a mother tongue in a meeting where everyone is not bilingual. As noted in regard to ELF, forced choice about language use often has adverse consequences on team unity. Despite foreign language anxiety (Neeley, Hinds, & Cramton, 2012) and other well-documented problems of ELF, the strategic use of interpreters at select moments of discomfort regarding language choice and language use is a communication intervention that management and researchers of international organizations have thus far avoided.

The use of new technologies, particularly social media and the desire for instantaneous intercultural communication, opens new terrain for research and development of simultaneous interpretation methods and services. One start-up, for instance, is creating a global language community composed of professional interpreters, multilingual individuals, and monolingual people from any country. Be it during travel or everyday situations of working and interacting within a diverse community, anyone with Internet access could tap into this network for on-demand live interpreting for any language combination.

Relevance of interpreting studies and translation studies to organizational communication

Multinational corporations and other international organizations, public and private, require both interpretation and translation. To date, translation in organizations has

operated within the narrow paradigm of equivalence, and interpreting in organizations is hidden, avoided, or ignored. The key difference between simultaneous interpretation and translation is in the dimensions of time and control. Simultaneous interpretation is a live process enacted in the here and now of a group's social interaction; there is room for learning, correction, and repair. Translation seeks to provide a definitive meaning that allows no variation in sensemaking, regardless of interpretees' inherent cultural diversity.

Distinguishing between a translation motive and the realities of interpretation is relevant to organizations because the assumption that control of meaning is possible by reducing linguistic diversity to one language means ignoring the fact that cultural differences do influence understanding. Controlling meaning through a discourse of language standardization is *homolingual* linguascaping: homolingualism presumes the meaning of words is narrow and predetermined. Homolingualism also ignores the vast diversity in meanings available to individuals who are not fluent in the given language and discounts normal variation of meaning within a common language. The concepts of domestication and foreignization serve to demonstrate that equivalence is a myth and shared or mutual understanding is the result of interactive, communication labor.

What interpreters enable is a flow of communication that can shift and adapt between a homolingual mode (once equivalents have been established) and a pluralingual mode, when cultural differences and the distinctive qualities of different languages are welcomed into play. The tension people experience when using an interpreter is the tension of pluralingualism, when it is obvious that people do not understand the same language but also do not share the same reference points in culture. The presence of an interpreter is a signal that communication may require more attention and focus than usual. Avoiding interpretation does not lessen the reality of difference; rather, refusing interpretation obscures the creativity of individuals who are mutually striving to reach shared understanding.

Future directions

Identifying the positive outcomes of plurilingual interaction is a broad area where future research is warranted because the study of language in organizations must expand beyond homolingual normativity. Homolingualism presumes that language difference promotes social identity divisions, leading managers to conclude that language standardization is necessary. Current research on language standardization presumes the use of a lingua franca in global organizations, often English, for purposes of managerial control and productivity, neglecting the myriad ways in which use of more than one language facilitates work. Future research must address diverse language practices utilized in organizations without formal language policies in order to identify criteria and conditions influencing language choices. Plurilingual benefits must be articulated, including those deriving from interpreting. Research can distinguish between information based and relationship based criteria for individuals' language choices, which may remediate social identity group divisions, enable alternative modes of quality control, and enhance innovation. For example, the interpreter's use of role

space (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2013) may signal that relevant information is available in one language but not in another. Role space refers to alignments and interventions the interpreter performs with specific interpretees in order to assess and confirm mutual comprehension. Currently, the literature represents interpreting that does occur among people at work euphemistically as "language brokering" (van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010) or only as an informal activity. Research into the ways interpreting is downplayed may highlight the adverse effects of relying on ad hoc solutions to communication challenges. The contradictions and competition between homolingual camps cannot be resolved without engaging the questions and opportunities raised by the intentional and legitimated use of interpreting in organizations.

SEE ALSO: Communication Management; Communication Policies; Diversity; Intercultural Communication

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