

## ПЕРЕКЛАДОЗНАВЧІ СТУДІЇ

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### INTERPRETERS IN MULTILINGUAL SOCIETY: ASPECTS OF BILINGUALISM

Aspects of bilingualism in relation to interpreters' training have been investigated in this article. The findings of the research raise the question about whether notions of bilingualism should be considered in more depth by interpreter trainers and assessors and whether an understanding of bilingualism should be included in the university course content.

*Key words: bilingual, interpreting, multilingual society, interpreter education.*

**A**s everything in the world modern education is constantly changing and now it needs new knowledge about human being. Scientific knowledge reflects the demand for widening the perceptions of specific personality development, its inner world, experiences in communication with other people. Existential psychology ideas analysis helps pedagogical thinking to receive new meaning in relation to problems of foreign languages acquisition, creativity and personality self-fulfillment, acquisition of freedom and the skill to be responsible for it, spirit development and conscience education.

Nowadays despite the fact of transition to the multilingual society, intercultural integration at national and international levels, globalization the situation is not so simple to overcome the barrier of language diversity in the world. It still remains possible to do it only through translation where the professional is required to play the role of a middleperson or a person who can decipher meanings from the speaker to the audience. Cultural and linguistic diversity cause new challenges in the field of translation studies and translator/interpreter training, in particular while searching to find a new sense for the cardinal categories on the basis of bilingualism as we have in Ukraine.

We can appeal to thorough and comprehensive research in this particular field mentioning the works of F. Pöchhacker (2004), G. Gile (2000), G. Garzone and M. Viezzi (2002), Ch. Schäffner (2004), E. Gentzler (1993), M. Baker (1996), R.T. Bell (1995), D. Robinson (2003), B. Hatim (1997), S. Bassnett (1995), J. Munday (2001), I.D. Melamed (2001), A. Chesterman (1997) and others. From the second half of the twentieth century until now translation studies has produced numerous approaches, models, concepts and terms. Translation studies have become a mixture of ideas and findings in which it is difficult to find fair consensus. Consequently, one still turns to concepts and different approaches to translation studies to insert some clear points into the collection of theories and findings.

The goal of the present article is to consider the role of bilingual competence in order to build an interpreting capacity regarding skills, knowledge and experience which can be revealed in the training process of future interpreters at universities.

**Interpreter's professional status.** Interpreting and translation studies nowadays are a rich field of enquiry not only for linguists but also for translators' trainers. The profession of an in-

terpreter or translator is undergoing quite a significant change and is becoming more attractive nowadays. More and more students attend undergraduate and postgraduate university courses in our country and in the whole world. Even a number of people who have already been trained in other professions are retraining as interpreters and translators partly to make a career move, partly to specialize in the chosen field. There is quite a significant proportion of translators and interpreters working as freelancers who managed to adjust their careers to their lifestyle and family commitments. This profession can be referred to an innumerable number of occupations with such a high level of flexibility and independence.

Despite the fact that the professions of translator and interpreter are significantly different, we can hear interpreters being called as translators from all around the world. Moreover in Ukrainian there is only one word defining this profession. It's necessary to add the adjective "oral" to the word "translation" in order to understand that we are speaking of interpreting.

The definition itself shows the comparison of translation and interpreting in sharp relief, highlighting the time restrictions, the single presentation of the source text alongside the single realization of the receptor text, and the impossibility of editing the receptor text. All these points are characteristic for interpreting process. Thus the circumstances of interpreting differ from those under which a written translation is produced. The constraints under which an interpreter works have a major influence on the transfer process during interpreting. To add more we have to mention quality criteria on the finished product of interpreting which differ from those of a written translation [12, p. 41].

Talking about the profession of an interpreter or translator first of all, it's necessary to consider the requirements to people who would like to become interpreters or translators. Over the last decade or so, many empirical studies were published by interpreter trainers and researchers. Even there is an opinion that the future of interpreting is unclear because everyone can observe an increasing number of people using English, and they doing without interpreting services. There is another situation when it's possible to hire born or bred bilinguals and use their service.

**Bilingualism in relation to interpreter' training.** Except for hot discussions as to the priority of born and bred / acquired bilingualism we have to realize that the aim of the multilingual education and development of multilingual competence must be rationally derived from the global institutional goals. The phenomenon of national institutional subordinate bilingualism requires a more precise analyses taking into consideration the correlation of the contact languages and establishing common and specific methodological and pedagogical principles.

In the process of each new language learning it is necessary to consider the benefit of two or three language experience. Now it is quite clear that there is a certain hierarchy in the interconnected language learning process which determines the strategies of language teaching and learning as a result of psycholinguistic subordination, so any new language is efficiently learnt based on previously acquired languages.

Talking about interpreters' training and requirements to the candidates of such a training it's necessary to mention the wide-ranging assumption of numerous researchers who state that interpreters need to be bilingual in order to interpret. This would seem to be common sense, given that interpreters work with two (or more) languages, and thus linguistic competence in two languages is a fact. However, the complexity of notions of bilingualism, the difficulty of measuring bilingual language proficiency and establishing the profile of a bilingual individual, mean that questions about what is meant by such an assumption remain difficult to answer.

Aspects of bilingualism in relation to interpreters' training have not been thoroughly researched among researchers and perceptions of bilingualism among interpreter practitioners even less so. The impetus for the study came from the discussions with interpreter educators, researchers and practitioners in which the question had been raised concerning 'how bilingual' an interpreter must be in order to interpret effectively, particularly in relation to the 'B' or non-dominant language. Interpreters are assumed to have a high level of bilingualism.

The key research questions considered in this study were the following: Do the two languages of future interpreters who are bilinguals play a positive or negative role in interpreting? Can they be used in academic process for effective training? Answers to these questions should be found by pursuing two approaches.

First, we are going to review the relevant literature on bilingualism and translation/interpreting, and second, to carry out the empirical investigation with bilingual subjects by means of special methodology on usage the privilege of bilingual's capacity to explore two languages and to investigate the role of two or more languages in the process of interpreters' training.

**Concepts of bilingualism.** We can find at least three very different concepts of bilingualism in the relevant literature. According to the first concept by Bloomfield (1993) and M. Halliday (1964) bilingualism is an exceptional phenomenon which can hardly be found in reality.

The second concept of bilingualism by Haugen (1956), which is absolutely opposite to the previous one, considers this phenomenon to be normal rather than odd.

The third concept of bilingualism, which takes a medial position between the concepts outlined above, means that bilingualism occurs when an individual uses or has to use two languages – or two varieties of one and the same language – in the conduct of her/his daily life [8]. This also means that competence in each of the two languages (or varieties) can vary considerably both with respect to the various skills (speaking, writing, reading and listening), and with respect to the content to be communicated (e. g. the weather, a holiday) as well as the domain of the communication (e. g. an everyday conversation, an enquiry at a car registration office) [8].

Among scholars there is such an opinion that in national institutional environment the situation gets complicated due to the particular type of bilingualism: the level of language proficiency and their interrelation as not static, it gradually changes qualitative and quantitative characteristics [5]. Moreover the learner's performance as well as his or her linguistic and intercultural experience has its progressive character. In such a setting, learners can go through various stages of language acquisition and show various levels of general language proficiency [5].

The analysis of the above mentioned phenomenon which is the basis of speech activities, confirms that the students need to master the core language, as an obligatory condition for developing language activities. The role of the second language as an intermediate link between verbal thinking and accordingly natural development of the linguistic competence should be obviously clarified.

To find out the extent to which reserves of the students' bilingual or multilingual competence could be used in learning foreign languages, it is necessary to define the proficiency level in a second language (L2).

Potentially, the same student can "go up", passing through all the levels of bilingualism, from the lowest up to the highest. Therefore we could define the utmost methodological importance – the mobile dynamic character of the student subordinate bilingualism. The establishment of this fact is crucial for building the performance-based specific methodology and analyzing the teaching/learning process on conceptual level in theory and practice [12, p. 42].

The problem stated is quite important in particular while researching which of the languages (L1 or L2) should serve as a positive support in learning a new foreign language and the influence of which of them should be neutralized to avoid interference. The problem how to make an effective use of language experience the learner has already acquired is worth its further investigating.

The overcoming of inter- and intra-language transfer, the elaboration of adequate automatisms of operating the language units in the process of developing multilingual competences and gaining intercultural experience can successfully be achieved by means of the didactic instruction.

**Psychological model of translation.** To understand the nature of this problem it is necessary to consider the psychological model of translation because this model reflects the real actions of the translator and describes all translation processes. It determines the direction of translator's internal thinking and shifting stages from the original text to the target one. In psycholinguistics it's evident that in bilinguals (here we apply this term to anybody who is reasonably fluent in a second language) the same word recognition system is used as in the L1. According to the Interactive Activation model it means that there are common letter level codes, and the word-level representations of the two languages are held in the same system [6; 9].

In terms of interpreters' training we mean university students, who are from 19 to 22 years old. Adults can make use of explicit awareness to facilitate communicative development due to their higher mental functions and their already existing code in L1 [12]. Thus, adults go from a vis-

ible language (learnt through L1) into automatic language (thinking in L2), while children go from automatic language (thinking in L1) into visible language (through literacy of L1).

So in order to understand L2, adults may involuntarily filter the new language through L1. Consequently, one thing is to teach everything in L2 in an adult classroom, and another is to avoid their internal thinking in L1. Then, adults, having their L1 as a reference, will automatically compare L1 and L2 consciously or unconsciously. In this process they usually use translation for their private speech as a resource to internalize and retain L2 words or expressions. This is applicable mainly in beginners and intermediate students. However, mainly in an advance level, certain students could reach that level of "automatic (or unconscious) translation".

**Bilingual skills and interpreting skills.** In order to work effectively interpreters are expected to have an accepted level of bilingual proficiency in both (or all of) their languages. The professional education programmes for interpreters expect a minimum level of bilingual proficiency for acceptance onto the course.

Considering aspects of bilingualism and their interrelations with interpreting we can assume that they are an under-exploited field of study. However it is possible to find some works where the relation and difference between bilingual proficiency and translation or interpreting competence have been mentioned [1; 2; 4]. So, de Groot and Christoffels compared monolingual and simultaneous interpreting tasks in order to investigate bilinguals' control over their languages [3].

Bilingual fluency and bicultural understanding enables interpreters to analyze a source language message for its meaning and to search for equivalence above word-level in the target language (i.e. semantic equivalence), to ensure the success of any communicative interaction [7; 10]. In addition, it's quite important to mention that a minimum level of bilingualism for interpreters is required in the form of bivocabularism [1; 11], with equivalent vocabularies in the languages they use.

The languages of a bilingual shift and change as their life circumstances change. Bilinguals may suffer attrition in one of their languages because they move away from the community of speakers with whom they used that language. However, interpreters, unlike other bilinguals, are required to have a high level of proficiency in both languages, have functional proficiency in a broad range of linguistic domains, and are expected to maintain their languages at a high level.

We are not going to discuss the assumption stating that all bilinguals are good interpreters or only few can be professional ones. We share the opinion of F. Grosjean who made the distinction between the *regular bilingual* and the *interpreter bilingual* [4]. It can therefore be seen that in addition to balanced fluency in at least two languages, interpreters are also required to have functional proficiency in a wide range of social and professional domains in order to transfer messages between two different languages effectively.

**Implications for interpreter education.** The results of this study have implications for requirements for the interpreters' training and can also be applied more widely to future interpreters' education and practice in a whole.

Interpreters are trained and assessed in both language directions, because bi-directionality is necessary in most interpreting contexts. The findings of our research raise the question about whether notions of bilingualism should be considered in more depth by interpreter trainers and assessors and whether an understanding of bilingualism should be included in course content. Findings also support the need for testing of actual bilingual fluency as a pre-requisite to any interpreter training program. Students should possess at least a certain level of proficiency in both languages before entering into an interpreter training program, and thus before becoming qualified as an interpreter. They should be, and have the perception that, they have bilingual proficiency in order to be able to function as an interpreter.

This study goes some way towards providing more information about the language skills of interpreters, and highlights the need for further study of the nexus between bilingualism and interpreting in order to develop a broader picture of interpreters and bilingualism worldwide.

The research has important implications for the formal assessment of interpreters on entry to interpreter training programs. Screening for bilingual language proficiency is essential but an understanding of the complexity of the profile of bilingual individuals is necessary in undertaking these assessments. An understanding of the bilingual individual drawing on sociolinguistic and

psycholinguistic research can assist in better understanding the linguistic requirements of interpreting and the relevance of long-held views about directionality.

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У статті розглянуто аспекти білінгвізму при підготовці усних перекладачів. Висвітлено проблему особливостей білінгвізму в процесі навчання усних перекладачів в університетському курсі.

*Ключові слова:* білінгвізм, усний переклад, багатомовне суспільство, підготовка усних перекладачів.

В статье рассмотрены аспекты билингвизма в процессе подготовки устных переводчиков. Изучена проблема особенностей билингвизма при обучении устных переводчиков в университетском курсе.

*Ключевые слова:* билингвизм, устный перевод, многоязычное общество, подготовка устных переводчиков.

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