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## *Neutrality in Translation and Interpretation*

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IN DISCUSSIONS of the issue of interpreter neutrality, the anecdotes that interpreters and laypeople share suggest that the traditional perception of the interpreter's role as a neutral conduit of language is at odds with people's real-life experiences. For example, in an interpreted college course, a hearing student described how the class discussion was interrupted by the ASL-English interpreter, who said to the class, "One at a time please. I can't interpret all of you talking at once!" After a lengthy pause, the discussion slowly began again, with an attempt to limit the floor to one speaker at a time.

In another example, a hearing ASL-English interpreter described her exasperation while interpreting an incomprehensible speaker at a professional meeting. She finally admitted to the participants, "Just a minute, I can't understand what you're saying. And if I can't understand you, I'll bet half the people here don't understand you either. I'm sure you don't want to waste your time talking if you're not being understood . . . could you please say that again?"

In yet another account, a Deaf patient described the behavior of a hearing interpreter at a medical interview. The hearing doctor had just completed an examination and was encouraging the patient to make an appointment for surgery when the interpreter surreptitiously signed, "Don't make the appointment yet. Wait until I talk to you outside for a minute." The Deaf patient told the doctor he would take some time to consider the surgery, then met with the interpreter outside. The interpreter informed the man that there was

something about the way the doctor was talking that made the interpreter distrustful, and suggested that the patient get a second opinion. The Deaf man did so, and discovered that he did not, in fact, need the surgery in question.

In each of these stories, the interpreter makes contributions to the discourse that extend beyond mere renditions of other participants' utterances. The interpreters' alleged comments represent attempts to regulate interactions, to change speaker's discourse styles, and to judge people, in part, based on how they speak. More subtly, they represent apparent difficulties faced by the interpreters in attempting to provide access to real-life interactive discourse in which speakers frequently overlap (Tannen 1984), might intentionally speak in ambiguous ways (Kochman 1986), and whose linguistic strategies reveal subtle cues that are identifiable on the basis of cultural information not consciously considered by a native user of the language (Gumperz 1982). Yet, if interpreters really do confront such difficulties and subsequently initiate such contributions to interactive discourse, what is the actual rather than intended interactive relationship between the interpreter (and his or her utterances) and the participants relying on his or her services?

While this question clearly has ramifications regarding an interpreter's relative partiality in an interpreted encounter, it is important to remember that the aforementioned stories are merely anecdotal illustrations of the fact that interpreters contribute in a variety of ways to interactive discourse. As Gile (1990) points out, after many years of theorizing about interpretation on the basis of informal observation, it is necessary to pursue empirical studies of interpretation in order to engage in "a serious discussion of basic issues" (38).

For thousands of years, controversy has centered around the ways in which translators and interpreters can render source messages into target messages in as neutral a manner as possible. Some have argued that literal translations are truer to the original, while others suggest that free translations provide more appropriate renditions. However, until relatively recently, few have examined the utterances of interpreters in order to examine interpreters' contribu-

tions to the discourse of interpreted encounters. Recent sociolinguistic analyses of interpreted interactions indicate that the role of interpreters is not as neutral as much of the literature has either assumed or prescribed. In a recent examination of interactive interpreting, Wadensjö raises an important question with regard to interpreter neutrality: "Given that neutrality is a notion concerning relations, the question concerning dialogue interpreters' activities must be: neutral in relation to whom and/or what?" (1992, 268).

Wadensjö suggests that the interpreter must be neutral with regard to the participants for whom she is providing a service. While interpreters might feel more or less loyal to one or another participant, or to one or another of the participant's goals, the interpreter must keep these feelings separate from her task as an interpreter in order to successfully accomplish it. Wadensjö found that this need to maintain a distance from other participants actually contributed to interpreters' omissions of certain kinds of utterances. For example, when a participant foregrounded the interpreting task through comments such as "Say what he says now," the interpreter did not always provide a rendition of these comments (268); that is, the interpreter did not interpret the comment that had been directed to the interpreter. This example seems to raise an additional issue with regard to Wadensjö's question of neutral relationships: interpreters have the option of remaining neutral in relation to their own utterances, be they renditions of others' discourse or not.

### **Translation and Interpretation**

Both translation and interpretation deal with the rendering of a given text into another language. Frishberg (1990) distinguishes between the two on the basis of form. That is, *translation* refers to written texts, while *interpretation* refers to the "live and immediate transmission" (18) of discourse that is spoken or signed. Both activities share certain commonalities. Regardless of mode, all texts can be seen to be "evidence of a communicative transaction taking place within a social framework" (Hatim and Mason 1990, 2). Moreover, many of the questions that plague the one also plague the other. Thus, the two are born of a similar history. As Roy (1989a, 1993)

points out, assumptions regarding translator neutrality are related to scholarly discussion of the processes involved in the task of transmitting text between languages. The issue of a translator's influence on a text and the question of how to maintain neutrality in translation can be seen as an underlying cause of the historical dilemma in translation studies: literal versus free translation.

Undoubtedly, questions regarding the quality and appropriateness of translations have been in existence as long as the practice of interpreting and translating texts. Although face-to-face interpreting no doubt preceded written translation (Cokely 1992), the development of writing systems first provided the means by which to assess a translator's work. Thus began an unending controversy regarding the qualities that define issues such as accuracy and equivalence in translations.

### *Literal Translation*

Aristotle was among the first to address concerns regarding a translator's influence on the translation. He emphasized the importance of accuracy in interpreting texts (Wadensjö 1992, 12), and the pursuit of accuracy and equivalence has continued throughout history. For instance, in 1506, Desiderius Erasmus, Dutch humanist, philologist, and translator wrote: "I have scrupulously tried to produce a literal translation, forcing myself to keep the shape of the Greek poems, and also their style, as much as possible. My goal has been to transcribe verse for verse, almost word for word, and I have tried very hard to render the power and weight of the phrase intelligible to Latin ears with the greatest fidelity" (from Lefevre 1992, 60). This emphasis on literal translation seems to deemphasize the role of the translator as an "interpreter" of the original text. The goal of literal translation is to pursue equivalency with regard to the form, rather than the content, of the text. The underlying assumption is that it is possible to decontextualize certain discourse units, such as words or syntactic units, and find corresponding units in a target language.

The goal of translating with an emphasis on this approach to establishing equivalence to the source text is problematic, however. Nida (1964) describes two distinct types of equivalence: formal and

dynamic. *Formal equivalence* refers to equivalence of form and content. *Dynamic equivalence* refers to a target text that yields an effect on a target audience that is similar to the effect of the source text on the original audience. The notion of *formal equivalence* has been debated at every level of linguistic structure.

Perhaps the most basic form in linguistic analysis is the phonological unit. Yet, these are most obviously the units that do not translate from one language to another. The issue of phonological equivalence has often been addressed with regard to translation of poetry, where form and content are inextricably entwined. According to German critic, translator, and historian August Wilhelm Schlegel (1803):

Since all metrical forms have a definite meaning, and their necessary character in a given language may very well be demonstrated (for unity of form and essence is the goal of all art, and the more they interpenetrate and reflect each other, the higher the perfection achieved), one of the first principles of the art of translation is that a poem should be recreated in the same meter, as far as the nature of the language allows. (from Lefevre 1992, 80)

While a poet might create the sense of a topic through unconscious or intuitive phonological choices, it is critical that translators analyze such forms as a blueprint for the production of the translation (Ray 1976). It is precisely because of the link between form and essence that some question the translatability of poetry (Firth 1951; Jakobson 1959).

In addressing this question, Hatim and Mason cite an example of a Portuguese poem that, in six words, is able to create an image of an evening tryst so embedded in the phonemic form that an attempt to translate it into Spanish was entirely abandoned (1990, 14). Similarly, questions regarding the translatability of poetry between English and American Sign Language (ASL) have been raised by well-known poet and linguist Clayton Valli (personal communication, Jan. 1995). Once again, the question revolves, in part, around the lack of phonological equivalents between languages.

The search for equivalents can also occur at a syntactic level. In a literal translation, the syntactic structure of a sentence would be

maintained in the target text. For example, the use of a passive construction in one language might affect the order of the words selected in the target sentence, regardless of whether the target language uses a similar structure to convey passive voice, whether passives are a part of the target language, or whether passives convey different cultural meanings in the target language. In certain East African languages, the use of a passive construction carries a negative meaning with regard to some aspect of what is being said (Filbeck 1972). Clearly, equivalence of form could convey a nonequivalent meaning if the syntactic form of an English passive were translated into such a language.

Perhaps the greatest testament to the problems inherent in the search for formal equivalency is the tendency to view literal translation as a continuum. Rather than discussing literal translation as an issue of right and wrong, the literature is full of references to translations that are more or less literal. For example, Newmark (1981) describes broader categories than does Nida (1964), referring to *semantic* and *communicative* translation, categories less extreme than Nida's notion of *formal* and *dynamic*, in which the former focuses on equivalence of form and content while the latter focuses on equivalence of effect (Hatim and Mason 1990). Similarly, Larson (1984) discusses a continuum of translation ranging from very literal to modified literal, to near idiomatic, to idiomatic, to unduly free (17). The pursuit of equivalence through literal translation seems to represent a goal for translators to establish a neutral position for themselves with regard to their rendered texts. However, Matthew Arnold (1861) aptly expresses the question underlying such attempts: "The translator's 'first duty is to be faithful'; but the question at issue . . . is in what faithfulness consists" (from Lefevre 1992, 68). This is precisely the question underlying the notion of free translation.

### *Free Translation*

Just as the search for neutrality in the translator's influence on the *form* of utterances has been a long-standing issue, so has the question of translation neutrality with regard to the *meaning* of a text.

For example, Cicero described free translation as a translation that is produced in an accessible register of the target language, using as many or as few words as necessary to convey the same sense as the source text (Lefevre 1992, 47). However, focusing on an equivalent meaning is as problematic as the notion of equivalence of form. Nida (1964) has pointed out that the meaning of a text does not only reflect the intent of the originator. Meaning is also influenced by the intent of the recipient of the text, the latter being the focus of dynamic equivalence. Once again, it appears that translators face complex issues in the pursuit of equivalence.

Seleskovitch suggests that word-for-word literal translations are not even possible a majority of the time: "There are words which have direct equivalents in other languages, just as there are words which are 'untranslatable.' This is a cliché which, for once, is true, but with one small correction: untranslatable words are the rule, and words which always have exact translations the exception" (1978, 84). The fact that there simply is not a one-to-one correspondence of words between languages has influenced the search for semantic equivalence. Ray (1976) describes the problem of translating the French pronoun *il* into Bengali, a language with pronouns that do not distinguish gender. She indicates that in order to translate the meaning of the original in an equivalent fashion, one must incorporate the notion of masculine, despite the fact that this might require structural changes. Various approaches to determine the semantic equivalents of words in different languages have been developed to aid the translator in trying to avoid making personal or subjective decisions—to remain neutral and not personally influence the text itself. For instance, Nida (1975) discusses the use of componential analysis in the identification of the contrastive features of certain words for translation purposes.

Another example of the search for equivalent meaning can be seen in the translation of figurative language. Herbert (1968) posits that translators should find equivalent expressions, rather than attempting literal translations of such literary devices as proverbs and metaphors. However, Frishberg (1990) cautions that such choices might be situationally dependent. She describes how the substitu-

tion of one literary quote for a quote of similar historical and symbolic meaning in the target language can be appropriate in one circumstance, but not another. She cites an example from Mehta (1971) in which a United Nations interpreter renders a quote from Pushkin within a Russian presentation into an equivalent quote from Shakespeare in the English translation. Frishberg (1990) points out that such a feat would be difficult between English and ASL due to the fact that ASL literature has not traditionally been taught in schools, and thus, ASL literary quotations might not be widely recognized by many audiences (52). Frishberg is not alone in suggesting that situational factors influence such choices in translation (for example, Herbert 1968; Wilss 1982). In fact, the issues that influence translator decisions in the search for equivalence can be described as both numerous and contradictory.

Savory (1968) identifies ten requirements for the production of a good translation. These include the need for a translation to represent both the words and the ideas of the original. As has been discussed here, deferring exclusively to either the words *or* the ideas of a source text can be problematic, while attempting to do both simultaneously exacerbates these problems. What is, perhaps, most interesting about the pursuit of equivalency is that the underlying premise for both literal and free translation appears to be the same: translators should not influence the texts with which they work.

### *Processes*

Much of the research and discussion on interpretation has been influenced by information-processing models that perpetuate the notion of interpreters as machines or conduits (Roy 1989a, 1993). These studies have primarily focused on input (same time + rates), manipulation and segmentation of information (lag + chunking + pauses), and strategies used to cope with information overload.

Examinations of simultaneous interpretation have focused on how interpreters process simultaneous input and output. Welford (1968) described the interpreter's ability to perform these dual tasks by positing that the interpreters actually learn to ignore their own speech in order to focus on the listening task. However, the fact that



interpreters initiate repairs, or corrections, within their own utterances indicates that there is attention to their own vocal feedback (Paneth 1957; Gerver 1974a). With regard to the processing of simultaneous input, Pinter (1969) found that subjects with experience interpreting were better able to repeat sentences and answer yes-no questions and Wh-questions that overlapped (or occur simultaneously) with their responses than subjects with no interpreting experience. Wh-questions are those that in English contain interrogative words beginning with "Wh," such as *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where*. A study of interpreting students showed that the interpreting students are able to recall and comprehend material that has been interpreted better than material that has been shadowed (repeated in the same language), indicating that it is possible for interpreters to cognitively handle more than one task at a time (Gerver 1974b).

Split attention or split memory is an information-processing approach to understanding interpreters' ability to engage in multiple tasks (Van Hoof 1962). Three-track memory, a notion proposed by Hromosová (1972), is an attempt to account for the interaction between short-term and long-term memory as an interpreter stores the incoming source message, retrieves linguistic knowledge of both languages, and articulates the translation. Numerous models of the interpreting process focus on such issues as input and memory and follow theories of information processing (Richards 1953; Nida 1964; Kade and Cartellieri 1971; Chernov 1973; Gerver 1976; Moser 1978).

Early research regarding simultaneous interpretation (Paneth 1957) addresses the issue of how interpreters manage information. Paneth discusses interpreters' use of lag time, segmentation of the message, and the use of pauses as a time to catch up to the original speaker's point in the presentation. Lag time refers to the time difference between the interpreter hearing the input and producing the translation and, for this reason, has also been referred to as "ear-voice span" (Treisman 1965; Oléron and Nanpon 1965). Treisman examines both shadowing and simultaneous interpreting among noninterpreters, finding that interpreting requires a greater lag time than shadowing. The length of lag time is determined, in part, by the

relative difficulty of the input (Oléron and Nanpon 1965). Interestingly, a study of lag time in English–British Sign Language interpretation found that interpreters used a very short lag time (Llewellyn-Jones 1981). In examining ASL-English interpreters, Cokely showed that the length of lag time does influence the quality of the output (Cokely 1992). He indicates that shorter lag times result in a higher number of miscues. Similarly, in a spoken-spoken language interpretation study, Barik (1975) finds that too short a lag yields errors and false starts. Barik also finds that with too long a lag, omissions increase. Because the segmentation of information is critical to accuracy of output, some researchers have focused on how interpreters segment, or organize, information into manageable units.

The manner in which interpreters segment incoming information is inherently linked to the rate at which that information arrives. A study of the effects of input rate on simultaneous interpretation showed that the faster the incoming message, the longer the lag time exhibited by interpreters (Gerver 1969). This study confirmed an earlier estimate of the ideal input rate (Seleskovitch 1965) of approximately 95 to 120 words per minute. The role of lag time in the segmentation of incoming text is addressed by Goldman-Eisler (1972), who finds that frequently lag time consists of syntactic units (such as adverbial expressions). In this study, Goldman-Eisler compares interpreters' segmentations within target output with the original speakers' segmentations in the source message. She finds that very few of the interpreters' chunks match the original segmentation (identity), and that almost half the time interpreters began to translate before a chunk in the source text had been completed (fission). Just over a third of the interpreters' segments involved the linking of two or more chunks from within the source message (fusion). Thus, studies of segmentation and chunking indicate that interpreters influence the structure of the target text.

Research indicates that pauses often serve as unit breaks for interpreters in the attempt to chunk incoming information (Barik 1969; Gerver 1971). Kade and Cartellieri (1971) suggest that interpreters use pauses and redundancies in the original presentation as a time to catch up with the presenter, and Barik (1973) finds that, in practice, interpreters do so. In a study of English-ASL interpretation,

Cokely (1992) finds that 87 percent of pauses are used for this purpose. Pauses have not only been viewed as unit markers, however. Goldman-Eisler (1967, 1968) suggests that within utterances, interpreters use pauses for planning upcoming productions.

Several studies have addressed the ways in which interpreters handle information overload. Interpreters face potential overload problems as a result of the physical and mental demands of interpreting (Brasel 1976). Studies indicate that interpreters do have "adjustment procedures" (Chernov 1969) to assist in such instances of overload. For example, Miller (1964) examines the strategies used by interpreters faced with continuous visual and auditory stimulation. Interpretations include omissions, interruptions of the input, errors, delayings (queueing), systematic omissions (filtering), and reduction in preciseness of output (approximation). Similar categories are identified by Gerver (1969) and Barik (1973). Gerver finds that differences between source and target texts consist of omissions of words, phrases, and longer stretches of text, as well as substitutions of words and phrases. He also finds that target messages include corrections of words and phrases. Barik also identifies specific types of omissions, additions, and substitutions, such as comprehension and delay omissions.

While these studies are experimental in design, Cokely (1982, 1992) has identified similar categories in analyses of interpreters in interaction. In an experimentally designed study of interactive interpreting, Cokely (1982) analyzes the performance of two ASL-English interpreters interpreting medical interviews between a nurse and patient. He identifies four categories of miscues: perception errors, memory errors, semantic errors, and performance errors. In a larger study of ASL-English conference interpreting, Cokely (1992) identifies a taxonomy of interpreter miscues that include not only omissions, additions, and substitutions, but also intrusions and anomalies. Whether experimentally designed or based on natural interaction, studies indicate that information overload influences an interpreter's renditions.

Research regarding the processes involved in interpretation has focused on input, segmentation of texts, and problems associated with information overload. All of these areas relate to the study of

information processing. These studies analyze the nature of the process of interpreting as if interpreters are conduits through which linguistic messages are passed. However, the view of interpreters as neutral conduits has, perhaps, inhibited examination of interpreting as it actually occurs: in sociocultural contexts.

The question of equivalence has been at the heart of the field of translation since it was first born. Even before the birth of Christ, the controversy over literal versus free translation existed. While Aristotle encouraged pursuit of "accurate" translations, Cicero attempted to serve the consumers of his text by making dialect and register choices that matched the needs of his audience. Yet, traditionally, much of the research and discussion regarding translation and interpretation has focused on accuracy and equivalence within the product and has addressed the process as if translators are simply human information-processing machines. In recent years, numerous researchers have stressed the need for research regarding the dynamic process of translation as an interactive communication event (Nida 1964; Anderson 1976; Shuy 1987). Perhaps because of its evolution from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and linguistics (Shuy 1990), sociolinguistics is a field uniquely designed to meet this need.

### **Applied Sociolinguistics: Studies of Translation and Interpretation**

Concern regarding social and cultural aspects of translation is not a new phenomenon. Many scholars have attempted to incorporate one or another of the many relevant sociocultural aspects of interaction. For example, some earlier studies have considered situational factors (Richards 1953; Catford 1965), style (Wilss 1977), and cultural issues (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958). Some have even prescribed goals for translators and interpreters that incorporate various sociocultural aspects of discourse. For example, Casagrande (1954) indicates the need for translators to balance the pragmatic, semantic, aesthetic, and cultural equivalencies. Similarly, Newmark (1974, 1981) discusses diverse issues with regard to translation, including register, context, jargon, metaphor, and cultural allusions. Nevertheless,

in the search for equivalents these various factors, like pragmatic and referential equivalence, often conflict (Hatim and Mason 1990). It is precisely for this reason that the need for a systematic investigation of such factors exists.

With the merging of several relevant disciplines into a new discipline, sociolinguistics, in the early sixties (Shuy 1990), a more cohesive approach to the study of social and cultural issues in translation and interpretation began. Brislin (1976) suggests that sociolinguistic issues are behind what Seleskovitch (1978) describes as the sense that a text conveys beyond the meaning of the words. Moreover, interpretation is not simply the conveyance of meaning between two languages, but rather, between two languages and the communities and cultures of the people who use them (Pergnier 1978). Nida (1964, 1976) suggests that sociolinguistics can contribute to a systematic analysis of the relevant elements in translated texts, including such features as background information about the originator of the message, the text itself, and the recipient of the text (receptor). He posits that "only a sociolinguistic approach to translation is ultimately valid" (1976, 77).

Hatim and Mason have proposed a sociolinguistic model of translation that categorizes issues involved in translation in an effort to impose greater consistency within the discussion of translation (1990). The model is based on three major principles involved in the translation of text: communicative transaction, pragmatic action, and semiotic interaction. *Communicative transaction* encompasses the factors involved in translating the effects of communication. That is, translators must be sensitive to cultural factors and the impact of both the originator and the setting on linguistic output. Cultural differences are also relevant in the notion of *pragmatic action*. Here, the translator must balance the need to incorporate culturally appropriate interactional strategies within both languages. *Semiotic interaction* refers to the need for translators to incorporate equivalent access to ideological aspects of a text. That is, texts often depend on prior textual experiences in order to evoke significant meanings (intertextuality). When recipients of the discourse have not had experience with a particular language and thus, the relevant

prior texts, it becomes the responsibility of the translator to provide a translation that allows the recipients to infer the ideological stances intended in the source.

Several early studies in translation attempted to focus on a communication model, which takes into account the perspectives of the original speaker and audience, rather than an information-processing model, which focuses more on the cognitive processes of the interpreter or translator (Nida 1964; Nida and Taber 1969; Kade 1968; Neubert 1968; and Thieberger 1972). Catford (1965) focuses on the impact of situational variables on language use. For Hatim and Mason (1990), communicative transaction specifically refers to language variation. The types of variations addressed include variation with regard to language use (register) and user (dialect). Of particular relevance is research regarding language variation in ASL-English interpretation. Davis (1989, 1990), in an examination of two ASL-English interpreters, found that both interpreters exhibited patterned incorporations of code switching, or switching between two languages; code mixing, or mixing the use of two languages, perhaps within a sentence or combining both codes (such as mouthing English while signing ASL [Lucas and Valli 1992]); and lexical borrowing, or borrowing words from one language while using another. This is attributed, in part, to a unique situational factor often faced by ASL-English interpreters: one of the "monolingual" parties might actually be bilingual. As Davis points out, "In many interpreting situations, the deaf audience has some degree of written or spoken proficiency in the source language (English). In a sense, the interpretation is needed not because the deaf audience members don't understand English, but because they cannot hear it" (1990, 319).

Because some deaf participants might be fluent in English, a unique form of interpreting has evolved for use by interpreters working with such a population: transliteration. Transliteration has traditionally referred to the translation between English and a signed code for English.<sup>1</sup> In an analysis of a transliterator providing access between a hearing teacher and class and a deaf student in a university course, Winston (1989) and Siple (1995) found that the translit-

eration actually consists of not only “English-like signing,” but has some of both English-like and ASL-like linguistic features. The findings from these studies indicate the importance of sociolinguistic research regarding aspects of the *communicative transaction* in translation.

In a discussion of pragmatic issues to be considered by translators, Hatim and Mason (1990) address such issues as illocutionary force of source and target texts—for example, the function of the text (to request, to demand, etc.) perhaps directly or indirectly—as well as structural features such as the regulation of turn-taking, or the use of pauses and intonation to hold or yield one’s turn in a spoken conversation (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974), and the occurrence of adjacency pairs, which are two-part sequences that occur in conversations, as in greetings (e.g., “Hello” is followed by the response, “Hello”; or “How are you?” by “Fine” in English) (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). In a study of interpreters in legal settings, Berk-Seligson (1990) found that interpreters would sometimes change the pragmatic meaning of source utterances, for example, by using a different grammatical case in the interpretation from that used in the original. In some cases, this left interlocutors with two different perceptions of the interaction.

The presence of interpreters does more than influence interlocutors’ perceptions of an interaction, however. Zimmer (1989) examined the pragmatic influence of an ASL-English interpreter by analyzing the audiotaped English portion of an interpreted interview. She found that the English portion of the discourse included longer pauses, limited back-channeling, and an unusually high frequency of fillers (apparently the result of participant discomfort with the long pauses). While these findings indicate that the presence of the interpreter influenced the structure of the interpreted interaction, Zimmer points out that the interlocutors’ perceptions of one another might also be influenced by the unique features of the interpreted discourse. Thus, a sociolinguistic examination of the pragmatic features of interpreted encounters indicates that interpreters are not entirely neutral with regard to their influence on the perceptions of the

interlocutors. In a study of turn-taking in an interpreted interaction, Roy finds that interpreters clearly influence the flow of the interaction itself.

Roy (1989a, 1993) examined the role of an ASL-English interpreter in the turn exchanges of an interpreted interaction between a university student and his professor. She found that during the overlapping dialogue the interpreter employed several strategies, including controlling the floor, retaining part of a message for later, and ignoring the overlap and interpreting neither of the utterances. She concluded that the interpreter is clearly an active participant in the interaction. Sociolinguistic analyses regarding pragmatic actions also reveal important empirically based information about interpreted interactions.

The factors considered by Hatim and Mason (1990) to be semi-otic in nature include such issues as discourse genre, the texture of the discourse, and the relationship of a current text to prior texts. These features, as relatively intentional strategies (as opposed to dialect, for instance), are considered to be stylistic issues in translation. Winston (1993) provides an example of the importance of discourse texture in interpretation between ASL and English. In her study of the use of space in an ASL lecture, Winston identifies spatial strategies within the lecture that create cohesion within the text. For example, Winston describes how the lecturer creates maps in the space surrounding him and later refers to those spaces (for example, by pointing to them) without explicit reference. She indicates that interpreters must understand the cohesive devices of both languages in order to appropriately translate the meaning of a text. Clearly, sociolinguistic analyses of both interpretation and the discourse of the languages being interpreted are critical contributions to the understanding and evaluation of translated and interpreted texts.

In an examination of the impact of stylistic strategies selected by interpreters, Berk-Seligson (1990) found that court interpreters often translate fragmented source utterances into narrative renditions. In addition, she examined the impact of the inclusion or exclusion



of politeness markers in interpretations presented to “mock” jurors and found that even among different groupings of jurors (based on mono- versus bilingual status), the perceptions of witnesses and attorneys were clearly influenced by the interpretations. In an earlier study of ASL-English interpretation, Cokely (1982) reported similar findings. He analyzed the perceptions of the target recipients of interpretations of a single lecturer, and found both distinctions and limitations in how ASL-English interpreters convey speaker affect. In an interactive analysis of spoken-spoken language interpreted interviews, Wadensjö (1992) examined the function of interpreters’ choices. She found that when interpreters produced renditions (interpretations of others’ utterances), they often altered the renditions for specific purposes. For example, one interpreter provided a rendition of an interviewee response regarding why he had moved from his home country, but omitted specific information about the dates. This information was not apparently relevant to the interviewer, who was interested only in the reasons for the move. Thus, situated analysis of omissions (what Wadensjö calls *reduced renditions*) is in keeping with interactive goals.

While sociolinguistic issues have been recognized as pertinent to the field of translation since long before the term *sociolinguistics* existed, the emergence of sociolinguistics as a field with its own theoretical frameworks and methodological practices has provided a means for the systematic investigation of sociocultural issues impacting translation and interpretation. Although much work remains to be done, one interesting phenomenon that is apparent from the sociolinguistic studies discussed here is that the interpreters under investigation have clearly influenced the interpreted encounters in which they work in all three areas identified by Hatim and Mason (1990): communicative, pragmatic, and semiotic. Yet, as Hatim and Mason point out, while some of these influences are inherent to the process of translation, others appear to be particularly significant to interpretation. Thus, while the processes of translation and interpreting have much in common, it is worth noting some of the dif-

ferences that result from the different modes that translators and interpreters face in their work.

### **The Relevance of Mode**

In discussion of the impact of working within different modes, Nida (1976) considers the written and oral mediums to have a significant impact on the form of the source and target messages. In addition to the written and spoken modes, there is yet a third medium to be addressed: signing. Not only can a distinction be made between translation and interpretation, but also between interpreting with spoken languages and signed languages.

It has been said that the prerequisites to good translation and interpretation are the same. Both require the understanding of the sense of an original utterance and its function within the context in which it occurs (Seleskovitch 1978). However, the amount of time allowed for the production of a rendition has a tremendous impact on the nature of these two distinct processes. For example, because translation conveys messages from and to the written medium, the translator can refer to the original at any time (Wilss 1982). Cokely has outlined the implications of this time factor as follows:

1. The text is permanently at the translator's disposal; thus, the translator is able to review the text in its entirety before beginning to translate;
2. The text and its translation are written; the translator can refer back to previously translated sections and passages;
3. The translation can be reviewed; the translator has the option of seeking feedback from both bilingual and monolingual reviewers;
4. The translated text can be reviewed; the translator can make corrections. (1992, 16)

As Cokely indicates, translators can check their work (themselves or with assistance) and can see the whole source prior to translation with the option to refer back to past portions at any time. On the other hand, an interpreter must make fast decisions regard-

ing the meaning of a text, without necessarily knowing the author's intent or meaning in advance. In translating into a language that denotes gender in pronouns from one that does not, a translator can read ahead to determine the gender of the pronoun's antecedent. However, an interpreter is left with the option of asking the speaker, guessing (risking error), or waiting for the information to be made clear (risking falling behind). An interpreter cannot refer back to prior portions of the discourse and rarely has the opportunity to incorporate feedback from others or to review his or her work before it is made public. Moreover, an interpreter cannot make use of reference materials (such as dictionaries), as translators do (Van Dam 1989). As a result of the time factor, Seleskovitch (1977) suggests that a fundamental distinction between translation and interpretation is that while both aim to convey an equivalent sense of the source message, translators have the time to address linguistic meaning whereas interpreters do not.

A benefit that interpreters receive from the time factor is that they generally have the opportunity to meet the source and recipients of their work. Translators often do not have this opportunity (Landsberg 1976; Wilss 1982). Furthermore, Seleskovitch (1977) suggests that the time limitation faced by simultaneous interpreters can actually be beneficial in the sense that the interaction of time pressures and short-term memory constraints require the interpreter to let go of linguistic forms while retaining the sense that is left behind.

While translation and interpretation can be seen to differ as a result of time constraints, the time factor can also differ with regard to the nature of interpretation. Interpreters can work either consecutively or simultaneously. In consecutive interpretation, the interpreter receives the source message first, and then renders an interpretation of it. The source message can be presented in parts or as a whole. Consecutive interpretation allows the interpreter a certain amount of input (and thus, an opportunity to make closure) as well as the opportunity to take notes. With simultaneous interpretation the interpreter must render a source message, producing a rendition even while listening to the ongoing message, and continue to interpret until the source message stops. Although consecutive inter-

preting is often considered to be the more accurate of the two, simultaneous interpreting is much more time efficient. It is for this reason that simultaneous interpreting first came into wider use at the Nuremberg Trials in the late forties (Ramler 1988).

While simultaneous interpreting is relatively new with regard to spoken language interpretation, it is more or less traditional in signed language interpretation. Although some of the historical developments within the sibling fields of spoken and signed language interpretation are distinct, many aspects of the tasks are quite similar. Because this study will address ASL-English interpretation, it is worth noting the similarities and differences between signed and spoken language interpretation.

In large part, the similarities relate to the issue that is common to interpreting and translation; that is, both require an understanding of the sense of the source text. In addition, both signed language and spoken language interpreters must deal with time factors not faced by translators in the written mode. The simultaneous and consecutive approaches to interpretation are used in both spoken and signed language interpretation. Moreover, concerns regarding the rendering of equivalent messages without intervening in the interaction are common to both forms of interpreting (Roberts 1987). Because of the fact that these issues are similar, many of them have already been addressed.

Several differences exist between the two modes of interpreting as well. One difference is the result of the fact that some of the consumers of signed language interpretation might actually be bilingual individuals who simply do not have access to both languages in face-to-face interaction. In spoken language interpretation, if one or more interlocutors are bilingual (in the languages of the encounter) they are able to access both the original utterance and the interpreted rendition. For Deaf interlocutors who are bilingual in ASL and English, this type of access is not necessarily possible. This difference between signed language and spoken language interpreting underscores the fact that signed language interpreters often work between different modes. That is, where most spoken language interpreting involves the rendering of messages between two spoken languages,

most signed language interpreting actually involves one signed and one spoken language. Thus, the circumstances faced by signed language interpreters are not only interlingual, but intermodal as well (Wilss 1982). This modality difference has potentially influenced expectations of signed language interpreters. Since one mode is visual and the other auditory, it can appear as if there is no interference between the two. However, both the source and the target are distinct languages that require the interpreter's attention. Nevertheless, since one of the languages requires that the interpreter watch the incoming message, signed language interpreters are not in a position to take notes when following the consecutive method.

Aside from issues of modality, there are two additional areas in which signed and spoken language interpretation differ. According to Roberts (1987), spoken language interpreters have historically been treated with some prestige. Conversely, signed language interpreters have had to deal with outdated assumptions that signed languages are primitive nonlinguistic systems. Further, according to Roberts, spoken language interpreters have often worked in conferences and other high-profile settings, while signed language interpreters worked for many years in small group settings.

It has become clear that while both translation and interpretation share many features, the differences between the two are significant with regard to the actual tasks. Similarly, while spoken and signed language interpretation share many features, significant differences between them exist as well. These differences will be relevant throughout the analysis of ASL-English interpreters. Nevertheless, one similarity, the issue of neutrality, is particularly relevant to the task of interpretation. In light of this, it is important to elaborate on a condition that all interpreters inherently confront and that invariably affects the progression of the intended dyadic structure of interpreted encounters: interpreter neutrality is a paradox.

### **The Interpreter's Paradox**

The goal of neutrality is a topic that has pervaded much of the research and discussion of translation and interpreting. In part, this is the result of professionalization. It is also partly due to the "third

party" status of interpreters and the resulting perception of interpreters as mediators. The desire for neutrality (i.e., equivalence) in translation has been shown to be an underlying factor for both sides of the traditional "literal versus free" translation controversy. Furthermore, notions of neutrality seem to be linked to assumptions implicit in early research on interpreting that followed information-processing paradigms. However, the advent of sociolinguistics has provided tools that allow for more systematic investigation of interpreting within the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs. Sociolinguistic investigations of interpreted encounters have raised serious questions regarding the notion of interpreters as neutral conduits. If interpreters have the goal of remaining neutral, this research suggests a contradiction between the goal and the reality of interpreted encounters.

Over time, ASL-English interpreters have attempted to cope with this issue in different ways. Witter-Merithew (1986) describes four models of the interpreters' role that seem to have emerged as a result of the contradiction between interpreters' goals and reality: helper, conduit, communication facilitator, and bilingual, bicultural specialist. The helper model refers to a time when there was no professional organization for interpreters, and most people doing the interpreting were hearing friends and relatives of Deaf people who had some fluency in both languages. The conduit model projects the interpreter as machinelike and came about during early stages of professionalization. As interpreters attempted to fulfill this machine model, problems arose with regard to responsibility for the quality of interpretations and negative consumer perceptions of interpreters. These problems led to the emergence of the communication facilitator model. According to Roy (1989a, 1993), despite minor changes in terms of language attitudes (for example, increasing respect for ASL) and expectations of interpreters' linguistic expertise, the communication facilitator model is very similar to the conduit model. In keeping with the historical progression discussed earlier, the most recent model, the interpreter as bilingual, bicultural specialist, considers situational and cultural factors as relevant to the interpreting task.

Despite the progression of these models historically, ASL-English interpreters do not always function consistently within one model. Roy (1993) suggests that many interpreters still follow the conduit model. McIntire and Sanderson (1995) suggest that situational factors can influence which model an interpreter follows, pointing out that the models are descriptions of practice rather than proactive prescriptions. They argue that for twenty years consumers have not received consistency in the approach interpreters follow.

Interpreters are not the only professionals who face what appear to be contradictions within their work. Researchers interested in studying human behavior have always faced the difficulty of trying to examine the natural, everyday behavior of people when the presence of a researcher is not a part of everyday life. Labov (1972) describes this dilemma within sociolinguistic fieldwork, calling it the Observer's Paradox. Sociolinguistic field-workers might aim to collect discourse as it occurs in daily interaction. However, daily interaction does not include the presence of a researcher. Thus, reality is at odds with the professional's goal. This is similar to the situation faced by interpreters. Interpreters have expressed the goal of not influencing the form, content, structure, and outcomes of interactive discourse, but the reality is that interpreters, by their very presence, influence the interaction.

Interpreters are not merely impartial intermediaries facilitating dyadic interaction. Instead, interpreters function as participants within the discourse, regulating turns (Roy 1989, 1993) and altering contributions in ways that are designed to meet interactional goals established by the participants (Wadensjö 1992). An updated view of interpreters in communication events is proposed in figure 1.1 (p. 24). The three solid lines in figure 1.1 indicate that there is a primary connection among all the participants. The interpreter *and* the participants are all actively engaged in the communicative event. Nevertheless, if interpreters are active participants while rendering the words of others, their participation still seems to be different from that of other participants. Wadensjö describes this seeming contradiction in her description of interpreted encounters: "The whole interaction is a peculiar type of three-party talk with the [interpreter]

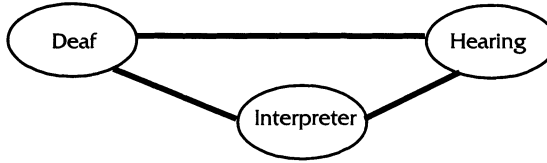


Figure 1.1. Triadic view of interpreting.

as one interactant" (1992, 273). Further investigation regarding the interpreter's contributions to interactive discourse can assist in clarifying this peculiarity.

The fact that interpreters are supposed to provide access to an interaction of which they are, in reality, a part (the Interpreter's Paradox) raises serious questions regarding interpreting practice. If interpreters are participants in an interaction, should they be as free as other participants to influence the structure and outcomes of the encounter? Or, should interpreters begin to recognize the ways in which they can minimize their influence, just as many researchers attempt to cope with the Observer's Paradox. Baker-Shenk (1991) addresses this issue with clear conviction, indicating that there is no such thing as "neutrality" for interpreters. She concludes that it is imperative for interpreters to learn the impact of their choices and to make responsible decisions.

Sociolinguistics provides the theoretical and methodological tools with which to examine the ways in which interpreters influence interactive discourse. This study consists of an examination of the ways in which participants frame interpreted encounters and the function of interpreters' contributions to interpreted medical interviews. To begin the investigation of the influences ASL-English interpreters have on interactive medical discourse, it is first necessary to understand what makes this genre of discourse unique.