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Ebru Diriker

De-/Re- Contextualizing Conference Interpreting

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De-/Re-Contextualizing Conference Interpreting

Interpreters in the Ivory Tower?

Ebru Diriker

Boğaziçi University

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导 读

口译研究是一个较年轻的领域。而会议口译或同声传译一方面由于经常为场面壮观、名人济济的国际会议所采用，给会议口译员涂上了一层艳丽的光彩。几乎同步地将一种语言的演讲传译成另一种或几种语言的行为又给该专业蒙上了一道神秘的光环。另一方面，会议口译是服务性的行业，从属于会议，其特点鲜为会议组织者所理解，任何与会议主旨无关的活动或可能干扰会议的学术观察都很难得到会议组织者的容忍。而且，在会场工作的会议口译员处于高度紧张之中，很少有人愿意将自己的产出作为学术研究对象。这就部分解释了为什么多年来以会议录像、录音作为语料再加上对同一场会议的组织者、与会人员进行采访的实证研究为数不多。也因此证明爱布茹·迪利克(Ebru Diriker)博士所著的《脱离/再入语境的同声传译——象牙塔中的译员？》(De-/Re-Contextualizing Conference Interpreting – Interpreters in the Ivory Tower?)一书是难能可贵的。

本书的基础是迪利克女士于2001年发表的博士论文。她从社会、文化的角度，将会议口译员设在会议语境中，考察社会和文化语境与会议口译员在会场的存在及其口译表现之间的动态关系。用迪利克博士自己的话说，迄今为止的口译研究“大多数采纳认知范式、心理语言范式和神经语言范式(cognitive, psycho- and neuro-linguistic paradigms)”，而她在本书中将会议口译当作“设于语境中的行动”(situated action)来考察。

第一章对迄今为止相关课题的学术研究成果进行了归纳总结，着重分析了社会、文化与口译互动方面的学术活动和科研状况，指出虽然这些年来经常听到要加强社会、文化与口译互动研究的呼声，但实际进行的实证研究为数甚少。很少有人能跳出认知范畴，将会议口译当作“设于语境中的行动”来研究。

第二章描绘了会议口译行为发生的社会、文化环境，从使用者的期待、译员的口译表现和译员行业协会的职业道德等方面阐述了社会对口译员的标准和口译员对自己的定位。作者发现：不同专业组织对什么是出色的口译员的标准是不同的。在理论和抽象或宏(meta-)的层面，行业协会和口译员都一致认为口

译员在工作中应该百分之百客观传达说话人的原意，不让口译员的任何个人因素渗透到说话人原意的表达。可是在实际会议口译中，口译员不仅会调整人称，而且认为这种做法是出色口译表现的不可或缺的一部分。

在第三章中，作者选择2000年在伊斯坦布尔召开的一次哲学国际会议作为实证场所，向与会者、口译员、发言人、会议组织者和其他使用口译的人进行采访，将会议的原文和译文作了录音，然后对语料进行分析，并将在会议中收集的论点和印象与第二章的宏层面的论点进行比较，从而发现两者之间较大的分歧。在这一章内，作者还仔细描述了采集语料的过程，特别说明其中的困难和挫折，为其他学者以后从事类似实证研究提供了宝贵的经验教训。

第四章集中分析了会议发言的录音和两位英语—土耳其语口译员的录音。主要整理了译员在口译过程中发生的人称转换，即从第一人称转为第三人称或含蓄地以第三人称说话或在以第三人称说话时插入以口译第一人称的评论；并分析了次数和原因，与行业要求的第一人称标准进行了对比分析。

第五章将第三章的宏层面的论点与作者在第四章中整理出来的两位口译员在哲学国际会议上的口译行为进行对比，分析了两者之间的共同点和差异，并提出了一个很有意思的结论：行业协会和口译员自己在宏层面上的标准在会议实际语境里并不一定能实现。但是这种标准对外有助于维护会议口译作为专业体系的存在和发展，对内有助于激励每一位有志的口译员向理想境界努力。

作者通过两名口译员在一次国际会议的实际表现来对比分析理想境界与现实的差异，是一项颇有创意的研究。作者在采集会议语料时做得很仔细，分析时做得很详尽。更值得称道的是作者毫不掩饰在收集资料中所遇到的困难，敢于详细描述挫折过程，提出应对措施，并予以解释。这种坦诚治学的态度非常值得提倡。

戴惠萍 (Harry Ping Dai)

上海外国语大学高级翻译学院

Acknowledgments

This book is the result of my growing interest in and fascination with the complex task of simultaneous conference interpreting, an activity that has come to occupy a central place in my professional life for over a decade.

I am indebted to many people for making it possible. First of all, I would like to extend my gratitude to my thesis advisor, Işın Bengi-Öner, for the trust and guidance she has always shown me, particularly while I was writing my Ph.D. dissertation, where the ideas in this book were first presented. I would also like to thank the faculty members of the Department of Translation and Interpreting at Boğaziçi University for providing a rich academic environment. In particular, I would like to thank Saliha Paker for her unfailing support and stimulating Ph.D. seminars on theory, and Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçaglar for always being a very inspiring friend.

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Ebru Diriker
Istanbul, April 2004

Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	1
CHAPTER 1	
Previous literature, key concepts and grounding theories	7
1.1 Simultaneous Interpreting Research	7
1.2 Previous research on actual SI behavior in relation to socio-cultural and interactional contexts	8
1.3 Context	13
1.4 Discourse	18
1.5 Basic theoretical assumptions on “discourse”	19
CHAPTER 2	
Broader social context in SI	25
2.1 Meta-discourse as social context	25
2.2 Meta-discourse on SI	26
2.2.1 Discourse of general reference books	26
2.2.2 Discourse of codes of ethics	29
2.2.3 Discourse of professional organizations	32
2.2.4 Discourse of academia	35
2.2.5 Discourse of Turkish media	39
2.2.6 Discourse of interpreters in the media	42
2.2.7 Discourse of a popular book	45
2.3 Summary	48
CHAPTER 3	
Analyzing an actual conference context	51
3.1 Constructing the corpus: General reflections	51
3.2 Constructing the corpus in this study	54
3.2.1 Topic, date and venue of the conference	54
3.2.2 Conference languages	55

3.2.3	Interpreters, organizer and the recruitment process	55
3.2.4	Permission to record	56
3.2.5	Technical matters	56
3.2.6	Position of the booths	59
3.2.7	My position as the researcher	60
3.2.8	Participants	60
3.2.9	Speakers	61
3.2.10	Preparations, documents and the “assistant” in the booth	62
3.2.11	Turn-taking	63
3.3	Interviews	63
3.3.1	Interview with the organizer	63
3.3.2	Interviews with the speakers	64
3.3.3	Interviews with the interpreters	67
3.3.4	Interviews with the users of SI	74

CHAPTER 4

Analyzing an actual SI performance 81

4.1	Constructing the transcripts in this study	81
4.2	Deciding on a unit of analysis	83
4.3	Exploring the “shifts in the speaking subject”	84
4.4	Presenting the analysis	85
4.5	Analyzing the conference transcripts	86
4.5.1	“Shifts in the speaking subject” in the present corpus	86
4.5.2	Last 25 minutes of the conference interaction	115

CHAPTER 5

Juxta- and counterposing actual SI behavior with the meta-discourse 131

5.1	Juxtaposing actual SI behavior with the meta-discourse	131
5.1.1	Broader socio-cultural context: What the meta-discourse suggests	131
5.1.2	Presence of interpreters: What participant observations and interviews suggest	133
5.1.3	Performance of interpreters: What conference transcripts suggest	137
5.2	Counterposing actual SI behavior with the meta-discourse	141
5.2.1	Implications for SI research	144

Final remarks	147
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Appendix	149
Transcription convention	149
“Shifts in the speaking subject” in the delivery in their order of occurrence during the conference	150
Notes	201
References	207
Index	217

Introduction

Interpreting Studies (IS) can still be considered a young academic discipline. The proliferation of literature is promising both in terms of the increase in the number of publications and the scope of the material. The more recent academic interest in accounting for the diversity of interpreting activities categorized under “community interpreting” is injecting a breath of fresh air into a field which, in its short history, has mostly focused on simultaneous conference interpreting.

Simultaneous Conference Interpreting, which in this book I shall refer to interchangeably as simultaneous interpreting (SI) or conference interpreting, has indeed been the most salient type of interpreting in the 20th century. The boom in the number of international meetings of all sizes has created significant demand for experts in interlingual and intercultural communication, leading to the emergence of SI as a technology-assisted solution to the growing demand for efficient cross-cultural contacts.

SI has always had an aura about it, possibly due to the charm of the large conference halls and highly specialised/institutionalised settings of simultaneous interpreter-mediated conferences. Furthermore, the near-simultaneity of the original speech and its interpretation into another language also seems to have added prestige and created “awe at an impossible task miraculously done” (Shlesinger 1989a: 8).

On the other hand, the scholarly interest in interpreting seems to have followed a hierarchy of its own, with most of the scholarly attention being devoted to the most salient types and features of interpreting (i.e., conference interpreting as the most salient *type* and cognitive aspects of the task as the most salient *feature*). The focus of SI research has varied from experiments on the role of memory and attention during SI to verbal-manual interference tasks, from the lateralization of the brain hemispheres of interpreters to pupillometry tests and the effect of ear asymmetries to information processing models for interlingual communication. Within a field dominated by cognitive, psycho- and neuro-linguistic paradigms, considerably less attention has been devoted to SI as “situated action”. That is to say, the position of conference interpreters as

individuals and professionals working and surviving in socio-cultural contexts, and the interdependency between socio-cultural contexts and the presence and performance of conference interpreters have not been among the major fields of research in Interpreting Studies.

This aspect of SI Research has differed markedly from the emphasis placed on the constitutive and constraining role of socio-cultural, interactional and ideological context(s) in Translation Studies. Starting with the emphasis placed on looking at actual translations in contexts in Descriptive Translation Studies, as well as the almost-parallel emphasis given by Skopos and Translatory Action theories to the situatedness of translation, scholars who have worked with and also critically reassessed the basic assumptions of these theoretical frameworks as well as numerous others who have approached translations from a variety of different perspectives, such as deconstruction, postcolonialism, critical social theory and gender studies, have converged on a view of translation as a cultural and contextual practice and acknowledged the shaping power of socio-cultural and ideological contexts with varying degrees of emphasis. They have also explored the “voice” of the translator and questioned the ideological reasons behind the translator’s seeming non-presence in translated texts. More recently, this interest in the situatedness of translation has expanded to cover the relatively less studied cognitive processing in translation, and attempts have been made to explore the links between “situated translation” and “situated cognition”.¹

Interestingly, the meager interest shown in the relationship between the product and process of SI and socio-cultural and interactional contexts has also set SI Research apart from the literature on other modes of interpreting, especially on community interpreting, which has come to place an almost exclusive emphasis on exploring interpreting in relation to contexts. In Community Interpreting Research, the focus of many studies has been on how the mediation of an interpreter influences the interaction and the relations between the interlocutors, how it reveals, represents, reproduces and occasionally restores power differences between individuals, as well as between individuals and institutions or society at large. Scholars working on community interpreting have been very keen on analyzing and questioning the position of the interpreter, his/her job descriptions, the implications of an interpreter-mediated interaction in and on various settings such as police interrogations, doctor-patient encounters, psychiatric interviews, refugee hearings, etc.

In the research on community, court and sign language interpreting, the traditional notion of interpreters as “conduits” has been challenged (Roy 1990)

and assumptions of neutrality, completeness and accuracy as well as the impact of culture, power, context and language differences have been subjected to a critical (re)assessment (Inghilleri 2000, 2003, forthcoming; Bahadır 2001, forthcoming). Different studies have looked at the role of interpreters as active participants and organizers of the interaction (e.g., Roy 1989, 2000; Wadensjö 1993, 1998); the functions adopted by the interpreters in refugee hearings (e.g., Wurzel 1992; Barsky 1994, 1996); the impact of interpreters in the courtroom (e.g., Berk-Seligson 1990; Jansen 1995; Pym 1999); the moral dilemmas of court interpreting (e.g., Morris 1995, 1998); the position and strategies of the interpreters in political interviews (e.g., Baker 1997; Wadensjö 2000); police interrogations (e.g., Wadensjö 1997; Berk-Seligson 2000); healthcare settings (e.g., Knoll and Röder 1988; Röder 1995; Kaufert and Putsch 1997; Kadric and Pöchhacker 1999); peace operations, war and disaster situations (e.g., Thomas 1997; Bulut and Kurultay 2001; Monacelli 2002), and the active role of interpreters in sign language interpreting (e.g., Grbic 1997, forthcoming; Roy 1989, 2000; Tate and Turner 2002). Thus, the reciprocal impact between interpreters and interpreting and the socio-cultural, communicative, political and ideological contexts has been a major source of interest in the literature on non-conference interpreting.

The lack of major research activity on SI as a contextual activity is also somewhat paradoxical considering the rapid developments in technology that are constantly pushing for a transformation of the environment in which SI-mediated events take place. While the use of infrared systems which replaced wired ones in the 1930s has granted mobility to SI equipment and enabled many places, other than the conventional conference centers, to host SI-mediated events, advances in technology today are paving the way for yet another change in the work environment of simultaneous interpreters by promising them a virtual conference milieu far away from the actual conference venue by means of remote interpreting. Therefore, in contrast to its previous role in expanding the number and scope of places in which interpreters worked, technology seems to be currently working to limit the number and diversity of such environments by re-defining the conference site for conference interpreters as the technical room with remote conferencing equipment, rather than the conference venue where the primary interactants meet. Despite the objections of many professionals, cost concerns are forcing employers, professional organizations and researchers to explore the potential consequences of distance interpreting. From the viewpoint of IS, on the other hand, such developments are pushing the field of SI Research to explore the impact of *remote* SI settings before it has explored

the impact of *actual* conference settings (see, for instance, AIIC's Study on Remote Interpreting (no date)).

Against this background, this study aims to focus on the hitherto underexplored area of the nature of the relationship between the presence and the performance of simultaneous conference interpreters and the socio-cultural and interactional context(s). It intends to do so by approaching the socio-cultural contexts in SI at both the broader (i.e., macro) and the more immediate (i.e., micro) levels. While the study seeks to gain an insight into the nature of the relationship between the presence and performance of simultaneous interpreters and the *broader* socio-cultural context(s) by looking at the representation of the profession(al) in the discourse of various actors/institutions, it also attempts to explore the nature of this relationship in the more *immediate* socio-cultural context(s) by analyzing the presence and performance of simultaneous interpreters at a particular conference. The study attempts to cover this ground in the following way:

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the current literature, focusing on the extent to which Interpreting Research has approached SI as situated action. In doing so, it looks at the previous calls for, as well as actual research on, SI in relation to socio-cultural and interactional context(s). The first chapter also explores and expands on the key concepts of "context" and "discourse" that are used throughout this book and introduces the basic tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis that serves as the main theoretical framework grounding this study.

Following the introduction of the theoretical framework and the critical review of the status of research in this area, Chapter 2 focuses on the broader socio-cultural context(s) in SI by looking at the way simultaneous interpreters and interpreting are presented and represented in our language *on* interpreting, hence, in the "meta-discourse". In exploring the meta-discursive (re)presentation of the professional, this chapter presents a critical survey of the discourses of various actors and institutions in and around SI by scanning the codes of ethics, websites of the professional organizations, popular and general reference books, academic literature as well as printed and electronic media (including both the media's representation of SI as well as interpreters' self-representations in the media). The analysis of the meta-discourse in this chapter seeks answers to questions such as: Which aspects of conference interpreting and interpreters become foregrounded in the discourse of various parties? Who are the "various parties" talking *about* conference interpreting? What do they praise and criticize? How is a "successful" interpreter and interpreting performance defined? What are the general expectations from an interpreter and

interpreting performance? By investigating which aspects of SI are deemed more “desirable”, “correct”, “appropriate”, and “ethical”, the analysis in Chapter 2 seeks to gain an understanding of the larger social, interactional and ideological context in which conference interpreters function and survive.

Following the analysis of the (re)presentation of conference interpreters and interpreting at the broader discursive level, Chapter 3 focuses on the narrower context of a particular SI-mediated conference, a 2-day colloquium held on 29–30 May 2000 at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul on the topic of “Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt: Metaphysics and Politics”. Based on participant observations as well as interviews with the interpreters, speakers, organizers and users of SI, Chapter 3 explores the presence and performance of interpreters at this particular event and highlights the diversity of viewpoints with regard to the presence and performance of interpreters at a single SI assignment.

Chapter 4, on the other hand, complements the analysis in the previous chapter by focusing on the transcribed booth and the floor recordings. It attempts to explore actual SI behavior from the viewpoint of how interpreters use the first person singular (“I”) in the delivery at this particular conference. Based on the analysis of transcripts, this chapter seeks to investigate when and how interpreters shift from using the so-called “speaker’s I” in the delivery. In other words, it attempts to explore when and why interpreters “shift the speaking subject” in their interpretations. While pointing to the similarities, this chapter also explores the differences in the individual approaches of the interpreters. In doing so, Chapter 4 attempts to present an extensive (though inevitably inexhaustive) account of the dynamics of this particular conference and the complex network of relationship between an SI performance and the socio-cultural and interactional contexts.

Based on the analyses in Chapters 3 and 4, Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of how the meta-discourse on SI relates to the findings of the actual SI behavior at a particular conference. By juxtaposing and then counterposing the meta-discursive representation of SI with the tentative findings of actual interpreting behavior during the 2-day conference on philosophy and politics, this chapter develops certain hypotheses on the reasons behind the convergences and divergences between what is *said* and what is *done* in simultaneous conference interpreting.

Finally, the Appendix includes the Transcription Conventions used throughout the study and presents the excerpts and analyses of all of the 58 instances that point to a “shift in the speaking subject in the delivery” mentioned in the previous chapters.

