THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION

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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPATHY IN COMMUNITY INTERPRETING

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Introduction: Quality in interpreting

Traditionally, translation and interpreting studies focused on fidelity or "likeness to the original" (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958) in determining quality. Later, theoretical discussions overthrew fidelity and replaced it with "equivalence" as the core principle to determine quality (Nida and Taber 1982). From that moment, translators and interpreters were empowered to make decisions about whether it was necessary or not to explain, add, or omit parts of the original text/discourse in order to transfer the message and ensure communicative effectiveness.

There has been common agreement about general interpreting principles that could be applied almost to every setting. A study conducted by Kalina (2015) gathered a set of key common ethical principles: discretion, professional secrecy, careful handling of documents received, accuracy, and quality. Rodríguez and Guerrero (2002) analyzed the interpreting ethics codes of twelve countries and provided evidence that impartiality and confidentiality were the only two common principles necessary to ensure quality interpretation. The authors also placed the focus on the persistent gap between theory and practice: "Most noteworthy is the tension between the detached and uninvolved interpreter (often proffered in early textbooks) and the interpreter who actively engages in cooperative acts in a given setting" (2002, 40). Even though newer conceptualizations and wider cognitive models have been introduced over the last years, ethical abilities and moral reasoning patterns that are expected to define community interpreting still highlight detachment as the stronghold of "normative, ethical ideal" (Dean 2015, 40) for maintaining quality performance.

Nevertheless, the challenge when trying to define quality in interpreting is its dynamic nature, which makes it a notion in constant evolution that needs to be adjusted and can often only be measured through users' expectations and needs. In this sense, the multidimensional nature of community interpreting itself makes it necessary to consider adaptability and flexibility as two core principles for codes of ethics in particular settings, in order to meet quality requirements and the changing needs of the interpreter-mediated situation, alongside users' expectations.

Despite the dynamic nature of quality, which hinders measurement, and the fact that it can largely only be approached in terms of the stakeholder's accounts, some best practices for quality assessment and assurance could be suggested (Table 44.1).

Quality, while adhering to rationale standards, as an objective and subjective parameter needs to adapt to a changing reality and needs. Otherwise, quality assessment should be measured on the basis of an evolutionary but consistent approach.

Table 44.1 Elements of quality assessment in community interpreting

Quality criteria in community interpreting		
Reliability	Coherence	Adjustment
Ensure accuracy	Respect the situational and cultural context	Remain attentive to standards of practice
Ensure trustworthiness	'Unpack' the implicit information and nuances of the discourse	Adapt standards to the specific needs of the situation
Remain attentive to the logic of the discourse	Be idiomatic and communicate effectively	Remain attentive to ethics and social responsibility in practice

Interpreters' positioning and roles: Normative ethics, negotiation, and boundaries

Standard ethical principles in community interpreting involve a conscious intention to take no action in order to support communicative autonomy, defined by Bancroft (2015, 362) as "the capacity of each party in an encounter to be responsible for and in control of his or her own communication." Dean (2015) focused on the role of norms as "a necessary step in the process of professionalization of a field of practice." They help define quality service and allows users to compare their own performance (what they do) with expected practice (what they are supposed to do). On the other hand, attention is drawn to the fact that, "while norms can serve to aid practitioners in ethical decisions, they can also serve to hinder ethical processes" (Dean 2015, 2).

Whereas working conditions have evolved since the profession's early stages, principles of faithfulness, impartiality and confidentiality have hardly changed while urging the interpreter "to maintain an impartial attitude during the course of his interpreting" (Boéri 2015, 36). Besides the conduit, normative role, which has been questioned over the past years, Boéry admits that scholars and professionals still "tend to perceive interpreters' involvement in the communication encounter as restricted to discourse, that is, as changing language structures and making cultural adjustments." For this author, this is "a restricted view of ethics" and a role that future generations are likely to be socialized into through training programs.

Drugan, for his part, argues that professional codes for interpreters are "advisory or educational rather than regulatory in force" (2017, 127), so they could hardly cover all the moral and ethical challenges that interpreters may encounter. As a result of that, in situations where there is or could be more than one right decision, Kalina suggests that "a set of ethical guidelines will, in the ideal case, provide criteria that enable the [interpreter] to adopt one of several possible solutions" (2015, 66). Moreover, Peleg-Baker (2014) challenges the common assumption that decision accuracy is impaired by speed of response and argues that mediation expertise can be acquired by yielding skillful automatic judgments. The author claims that the process of decision making in complex, fast-paced and dynamic conditions, such as mediation, is frequently dominated by decisions and judgments that are automatic and intuitive, especially under pressure and in uncertain environments, as is frequently the case in community interpreting.

Over time, the debate in community interpreting has moved from conduit models to a new core value that had been either ignored or neglected: mediation. From an applied and sociolinguistic point of view, interpreters are actors in sociocultural and institutional contexts and, like other players, contribute to shaping the nature of communication. This dynamic nature of interpreting settings led Leneham and Napier to suggest that many of the guiding ethical principles remain "insufficient in light of shifting requirements for interpreters in varying work contexts" (2003, 95).

Along these lines, authors such as Llewellyn-Jones and Lee (2014), Hojat (2016), and Santamaría Ciordia (2017) have supported the interpreters who are powerful agents as active co-participants and

co-constructors of meaning, arguing that the supposed invisibility of the interpreter can be misread as a sign of indifference, rather than neutrality, leading to less openness and cooperation, particularly in more conversational settings and emotionally difficult contexts. Brandt (1979) even goes beyond this by claiming that it would be implausible that a person who shows neither emotional responses nor particular interests could be trusted. Likewise, Dam (2017) labels the demands of neutrality in normative assumptions about what constitutes appropriate behavior as "reductionist ideals, unfulfillable and discomforting."

Norms for interpreters and stakeholders are not necessarily the same. In this sense, Kalina (2015, 71) underlines that "it is essential that all groups should be actively involved when it comes to the definition of standards." Gerskowitch and Tribe (2021, 304) consider this "three-way relationship" as "the most helpful approach," especially in health and social care settings.

Once again, professional integrity is the principle that should regulate the interpreter's action, so as not to turn positive advocacy and the humanization of role models into an intrusive role, with the interpreter taking responsibilities that are beyond their competency, jeopardizing objectivity or projecting their values onto users. Interpreting is not merely a profession, but a social practice responding to basic communication skills. Hlavac (2017, 198) highlights how interpreting studies have undergone a social turn which has allowed "a re-appraisal of phenomena that have never been absent from mediated situations: acknowledgement of social and power relations, advocacy and even activism." In this sense, social responsibility is emerging as a concept intrinsic to many forms of linguistic and intercultural mediation and an important part of community interpreting.

Current perspectives in community interpreting suggest more flexible, context-based procedures, where best practices should rely in a meaningful way on service providers' and interpreters' judgement, flexibility and professional autonomy to avoid losing valuable opportunities for the profession to grow. In this sense, Young (1990, 104), for example, rejects the idea that morality is primarily a matter of impartiality, and even considers the ideal of impartiality "an idealist fiction," since "it is impossible to adopt an unsituated point of view."

On the other hand, the role assumed could also be a reaction to providers' expectations and rarely just a free choice of the interpreter. In part this is because the assumed role is subject to negotiation and highly determined by external factors, the stakeholders being the ones that signal the extent to which they wish to include or exclude the interpreter through linguistic and paralinguistic cues (Santamaría Ciordia 2019, 243). According to Wallace and Nebot (2019), the consideration of such specific factors would lead to different interpreting policies (either instinctive or strategic), different purposes (bureaucratic or enfranchising), and different standards of practice (traditional or innovative).

The so-called 'mythological neutrality' (Bot 2003) should therefore be considered from the point of view of the setting in which the interpreter works; for example, it may be advisable in legal settings, where impartiality is the overriding principle and authorities often demand verbatim rendering, but less so in medical or social settings, where personal involvement may be in the interest of both the patient and the care provider and communication success "can only be offered by the interpreter as he/she is truly the one communicating with the patient" (Moore 2007, 104). Indeed, interpreters need to be able to make congruous, reconcilable ethical decisions in the spectrum between neutrality and advocacy.

Empathy and emotional self-regulation

Treating a person appropriately and respectfully requires emotional and/or cognitive responses such as empathy and sensitivity to the circumstances, needs and values. Eisenberg, Fabes, and Spinrad (2007, 647) differentiate between two types of empathy, affective and cognitive. Whereas the former refers to "an emotional response that stems from another's e motional state or condition" (2007, 647), the latter recognizes empathy as "an awareness [...] of another's state or condition or

consciousness." Similarly, Wispé (1986) writes of the distinction between sympathy and empathy and the need to differentiate between the purposes of each one. While the purpose of empathy is to understand the other, sympathy seeks for the other person's well-being: "empathy is a way of knowing, whereas sympathy is a way of relating" (1986, 318). Although affective distance is key to avoiding emotional overinvolvement (a sympathetic behavior), Hojat (2016, 75) argues that "cognitive overindulgence," a feature of empathy, "can always lead to a more accurate judgement."

This also reinforces Bahadir's (2012) view of empathy in interpreting not solely entailing compassion and solidarity but also including the ability to distance oneself from the interlocutors. Blumgart (1964) referred to this approach as "compassionate detachment" or "neutral empathy"; that is, an emotional appreciation of the user's feelings without becoming engulfed by them.

By the same token, Merlini and Gatti (2015, 141) conclude that "a greater perspective-taking capability is associated with more concern for the others and will less distress in the face of others' negative experience," so the more able we cognitive apprehend another person's perspective, the less self-centeredly distressed and the more other-oriented concerned we were. This cognitive dimension of empathy could therefore be understood as "a means of problem solving to complete the institutional task" (Santamaría Ciordia 2019, 261). That said, it cannot be ignored that interpreters working for public services are exposed to emotional and psychological challenges as a result of working in the front line with people who are emotionally distressed from dealing with difficult situations, often with serious legal implications. Indeed, in the 1980s it was recognized that working under stress can have some immediate and long-term effects on assisting professionals that cannot be ignored, e.g., vicarious traumatization, secondary traumatic stress, professional burnout or compassion fatigue—"the cost of caring" (Figley 1995). In a survey conducted by Crezee et al. (2013), almost 100 interpreters in refugee settings were interviewed and asked whether they felt their training had prepared them for traumatic or sensitive content. Almost half of them (48%) felt that "although training had prepared them to some extent, it was insufficient," and 67% of them recognized that "they had not had access to counselling." They also added that the need for counselling "very much depended on how the individual interpreter was able to cope" (2013, 263–4).

Within this framework, attention should be paid to general and interpreter-specific risk factors, such as a limited control over their work situation, lack of peer support, and the suppression of their own feelings while focusing on expressing others.' In this context, some organizational and individual preventive measures are needed to avert or limit the impact on interpreters. Among the organizational measures, attention could be given to some available tools that interpreters can use to evaluate stressful situations, such as the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS), a self-report inventory designed to assess the frequency of secondary traumatic stress symptoms in professional caregivers (Ting et al. 2005), Professional Quality of Life Scale (Proqol) or the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al. 1997), designed to assess stress in a wide range of human services professionals, based on three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach et al. 1997). Besides that, briefing and debriefing sessions might be provided to mentally prepare for and address any issues arising from interpreting assignments, helping to ensure psychological safety (American Translators Association, ATA Code of Ethics, 2010). Crezee et al. (2013, 268) also highlight the importance of training professionals "to work with culturally and linguistically diverse clients to better equip them to work with interpreters," as well as to alert them to the benefits of briefing and debriefing.

Finally, some individual measures such as coping and self-care strategies would also be advisable, e.g., preparation for the assignment, adjusting workloads to the interpreter's capacity, sufficient breaks, maintaining positive connections with close friends and family, and accepting one's own emotional reactions. Either way, caring for interpreters can reflect well on the profession and this is reliant on raising awareness from authorities, organizations, and individuals of the professional hazards of working as an interpreter, along with recommendations to avoid/mitigate such hazards and protect interpreters' mental well-being and health.

Conclusion

In mediation, language is not just a means of expression but a strategy to access and navigate the unknown, or to help other people do so. The appreciation of the social dimensions of cross-language communication has shifted the interpreter from between to within the encounter. Successful communication means bringing together and understanding perspectives from all three co-participants co-constructing the communication together in interpreter-mediated talk and engaging professional practice while considering natural communicative instincts of those participating.

Daily practice has shown that a complex activity like community interpreting requires ongoing reconsideration of the priorities and particular nature of each setting and situation. Interpreters are leaving behind the image of an invisible conduit to become a valued co-worker. Codes of responsibility are essential for each profession, and the idea that interpreters should strive for professional detachment as a matter of principle is necessary. However, in order to be most effective in their role, interpreters should allow for sufficient 'standardized flexibility' to avoid the risk of over-intrusion, side-lining or alienating the service user, while considering the interpreter as a visible interactor guided by professionalism, cognitive empathy and social responsibility.

Further descriptive studies based on daily practice will help clarify the place of advocacy as an appropriate intervention in specific interpreter-mediated encounters. For that, misconceptions about the advocate role should be cleared up in order to properly describe and understand the rationale of this role and the sector in which it could be advisable and admissible. However, the appropriate use of advocacy in interpreted encounters requires a careful analysis and it should only be used when resolution cannot be reached through less active interventions. Along with this perspective, García Beyaert and Pons (2009) conclude that while both share the same general objective (enabling communication between providers and users), "intercultural mediators tend to intervene more in the interaction, while interpreters adopt less intrusive roles." Once again, the setting must be the key determinant in deciding the interpreting strategies, and every professional should agree to abide by the appropriate ethical challenges in each interpreting setting. Assuming that codes of practice are action guides or interpreting standards, meaningful work and a professional road map in community interpreting should be enhanced by pragmatic rules, perspective-taking capability across a spectrum wide enough to be credible, and transferable to each particular situation.

The fact that many in community interpreting are embracing empathy as a positive strategy to enhance cooperation and work efficiency requires the consideration of some immediate and long-term effects that working under emotional stress can imply. In this scenario, emphasis should be placed on developing awareness of the complexities of interpreting in sensitive settings and the importance for all parties to be well trained, prepared, and debriefed. Self-monitoring and self-assessment for interpreters and interpreters-to-be is also highly advisable, along with the recognition of potentially stressful factors and the development of coping strategies and empathy regulation skills such as perspective-taking capability and compassionate detachment.

Above all, the evolution of the conceptualization of impartiality over the years has relocated interpreting settings towards being social spaces where people intervene and collaborate in a context of trust; furthermore, it provides evidence that confidence in the interpreter's judgment and professional responsibility is essential for successful interpreting and should always consider the micro level without losing sight of the macro level.

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EXACERBATING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN TRANSLATION/ INTERPRETING AS INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION

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Intercultural communication mediated by translators/interpreters (T/Is) can be ubiquitous yet invisible in today's globalised world. It ranges from the foreign movies and shows we watch to the international news we read. Since the cultural turn in translation studies, scholars have raised the idea of T/Is as cultural mediators (Bassnett 2011; Katan 2013). This notion has a growing presence in the academic and practitioner literature (Katan and Taibi 2021; Liddicoat 2016), and various terminologies have been used to describe it, including "cross-cultural mediator" (Bassnett 2011), "'mediator of cultures" (Tonkin and Frank 2010), and "cultural mediator" (Katan and Taibi 2021). However, the emergence of the established role of cultural mediators has led to confusion (Verrept 2019), as these professions tend to have a separate development trajectory and differ across countries (Miklavcic and LeBlanc 2014; Rudvin and Spinzi 2014). Thus, the current study uses *intercultural mediator* as an umbrella term to refer to the role played by T/Is in the process of translation/ interpreting as a form of intercultural mediation (IM).

Similar to conflict management research (Busch 2016), the notions of culture and IM tend to be used in an uncritical manner and are rarely questioned in the translation and interpreting literature. Conceptually, translation studies lack a cogent theory of culture as part of communication (Sun 2003), and the literature is largely based on an idealised notion of the status of T/Is as impartial intercultural mediators (Inghilleri 2005).

Nevertheless, several studies have begun to challenge the underlying assumptions (e.g., Angelelli 2004a, 2004b; Caiwen Wang 2017; Ciordia 2017; Gu and Wang 2021). Past studies on community interpreting, especially medical interpreting, have revealed some of the tensions and controversies in interpreters' IM (e.g., Brisset, Leanza, and Laforest 2013; Davitti 2013; Leanza 2005). In particular, the presence of an interpreter has been found to be more beneficial to healthcare providers than to patients (Leanza 2005) and to education providers than to migrant mothers (Davitti 2013). Issues of trust, control and power, and interpreters' roles have also been explored (Brisset, Leanza, and Laforest 2013; Ciordia 2017).

In comparison, very few studies outside of community interpreting have challenged the assumptions underlying T/Is' IM. Jiayi Wang (2017), for example, drew inspiration from the shift from culturalism to interculturality in disciplines outside of translation studies. Beyond an uncritical use of the notion of culture, interculturality examines how people use the concept of culture in their discourse and actions to justify their behaviours and thoughts, as well as those of other individuals. It