Abstract

The issue is devoted to training court interpreters in Germany. Language interpreting is applied in multinational and international conferences. Moreover, language interpreting is a matter of current interest in court proceedings where court participants are representatives of different countries with different foreign languages and national legal systems. Court translation and interpreting play a distinctive role in legal cases as fair court outcomes depend to a great extent on relevant translation and interpreting.

Nowadays there are different methods of teaching foreign languages across the World. In view of these training court interpreters has been brought sharply into the main focus. The authors analyse training court interpreters in Germany. The role of the court interpreter has been thoroughly substantiated in the issue. Particular emphasis is laid on requirements to simultaneous court interpreters. Simultaneous court interpreters have to know vocabulary in many specific spheres especially in target language so they could perform interpretation process accurately and precisely. The work touches upon some historical aspects of court interpreting as it may be beneficial for interpreting nowadays. Attention is also drawn to different types of interpreting.

Keywords: court interpreter, translator, foreign language teaching, simultaneous court interpreters, legal system

1. INTRODUCTION

Interpretation of complex, multilingual and international proceedings did not live in any identifiable form until around 1920s. Prior to First World War, officials and diplomats of each country all around the world spoke French. Indeed, after recognizing languages other than French as official diplomatic languages, interpreting was created around 1920. (Gaiba, 1998: 27), (Karton, 2008). The first two techniques which were utilized in international conferences were consecutive and whispering interpreting. Interpreting at the League of Nations in Geneva before the Second World War was a shade of meaning of simultaneous interpreting. But simultaneous interpreting has been perfectly developed across recent years. During the First World War, the
need for interpretation was formed and improved at international conferences. In these international conferences, there were participants who were either diplomatic individuals or top-ranking officers with a perfect knowledge of French. They had been chosen deliberately because of their proficiency in French language. (Gaiba, 1998: 28) (Opara, 2011: 175) (Language Outreach by the United Nations n.d.)

1.1 Emerging the demand for interpretation

The first demand for interpretation was emerged from the United States and Great Britain negotiations and correspondences during the First World War which were not formulated in French. Clearly, in such cases, there was a time when the misunderstandings during international negotiations had indeed expressly obstructive effects and results. Consequently, at international conferences and meetings, one of diplomats would usually translate sentence by sentence for those individuals who were unable to understand the working language. The Armistice Commissions which were held in three languages “French, English and German”, are regarded as first experience of consecutive interpreting. Interpreters who worked in these sessions were elected among military or liaison officers.

Subsequently, openings of the Paris Peace Conference were considered as a reason for British diplomats and high ranking officials to insist on selecting English as an official diplomatic language. Since then, each case at diplomatic conferences and meetings could be discussed in French or English and such situations led to emerging the apparent need of oral translation. (Gaiba, 1998: 28) (Language Outreach by the United Nations n.d.) (Opara, 2011: 175)

After establishing the Nations League and the meetings of the International Labour Organization, the need for interpretation was obviously recognized. At these meetings, depending on the subject of discussion, participants discussed diplomatic issues, economic issues, workers’ rights or labour issues which were actually practical guidelines for conducting the conference stream to a logical accomplishment. There is no doubt that dealing with these specific technical subjects at such conferences and meetings highlighted the need for professional interpreters to perform the translation/interpretation activity and conduct the communication process. Furthermore, while communicating with some groups of representatives who were not able to speak neither English nor French, the need for interpreters was obvious. These interpreters whispered the translation of proceedings in their languages and interpreted their utterances consecutively. (Gaiba, 1998: 28)

The establishment of the first school for interpreters in Geneva in 1941 was derived from the expanded demands for employing interpreters in different communicative situations. In this new founded school, the whispered and consecutive types of interpreting in only four languages were taught. This school was the only one in the world that train professional interpreters mostly for the National League in Geneva. (Gaiba, 1998: 29) (Opara, 2011: 175)

2. MAIN TYPES OF INTERPRETING

The main types of interpreting are as follows: simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, whispered interpreting (chuchottage), court interpreting (legal interpretation), and community interpreting, remote interpreting. (Al-Zahrani 2007: 16) The authors emphasize on court interpreting in Germany.

2.1. Training court interpreting in Germany

Today simultaneous interpreting is trained at hundreds of universities, schools and professionalized institutions all over the world including Germany. In Germany as one of the pioneers in applying the court simultaneous interpretation system special attention was drawn towards this field. The regulations of the European Convention on Human rights (ECHR) specify that the translation and interpretation process in the field of “civil law matters” and also “prosecution issues” should be described in details.

In order to achieve this object, it is perfectly necessary to train well qualified professional translators and interpreters with a “double-competency”. According to H. Piprec, doubled-competent interpreters are professional interpreters who have very high-specialized knowledge of legal and judicial terminology. (Piprec, 2014). Interpreters should possess excellent knowledge of source and target languages and also extensive information about cultural and educational background. Interpreters should be well qualified in some essential prerequisite of simultaneous interpreting activity such as self-confident and composure.

Furthermore, simultaneous interpreters should have capability to maintain their calmness in extraordinary nerve-wracking situations. For simultaneous interpreters, proficiency and fluency in foreign or second language have been regarded as more important than proficiency and fluency in first or source language. In
other words, simultaneous interpreters have to know vocabulary in many specific spheres especially in target language so that they could perform interpretation process accurately and precisely. Interpreters are trained in such a way that they could accomplish their interpretation tasks at professional level.

Passing an entrance examination successfully is regarded as an onset point of many interpreting training programs. This examination specified the proficiency language level of volunteers for interpreting training programs. The language proficiency level of volunteers with two or more languages was assessed in terms of their professional knowledge. Interpreters need both aspects of knowledge in order to perform a successful and accurate interpretation activity. In other words, applicants are examined on general information as well as on personal quality. Three main factors should be taken into consideration at the beginning of training: interpreters and translators should have a good command of their working languages, sufficient knowledge of the themes and subject-matters from the texts or speeches. They also should have both declarative and procedural knowledge about translation. Formal and professional training for court interpreters give them an opportunity to realize and appreciate their full potential, apply these full potentials in interpreting performance and professional skills more rapidly without further formal education. (Sigurðardóttir, 2012)

In Germany, translators and interpreters should obtain an official certificate. With this certificate, certified individuals as sworn translators and interpreters are permitted to translate, sign and seal the official documents and certified individuals as sworn interpreters are permitted to interpret for courts and other public departments and administrations. The administration of the oath is an official department in which translators and interpreters must swear to God and all ethical standards of their translation and interpretation tasks should be performed faithfully, accurately and completely. This procedure occurs at the regional court of one’s residence. Only German citizens and those foreigners who have permanent residence in Germany could obtain this opportunity to formulate the translation or interpretation certificate application. The translation or interpretation certificate is issued in the relative federal state. (Stejskal, 2013)

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Interpreter training programs at high educational level commenced in Europe in the 20th century. Obviously there were specific forms and periods for training interpreters in any professional field. Although all interpreters’ training courses and programs were almost similar, there were also some specific varieties that were formulated according to the aims of training and interpretation. For instance, scheduled educational requirements and training programs for conferences interpreters were different from those for court interpreters. Indeed interpreters were trained in such a way that they could accomplish their interpretation tasks at professional level. (Sigurðardóttir, 2012)

We believe that high quality specialists (translators or interpreters) enhance their professional level following the new trends in their profession. The most important thing for interpreters is to comprehend the new terminology that could be beneficial in judicial outcomes.

Court interpreting is a specialized type of interpreting that takes place in legal setting. It takes place mostly in police stations, lawyer’s offices, legal firms, courts. The term setting is often used to refer to a specific location, where the interpreting takes place (court room, prosecutor’s office, police station etc.). Court interpreters are expected not only to have a good command of the working pair of languages, but also extensive knowledge of legal terminology used in court proceedings. The role of court interpreters is to ensure their client’s right to a fair trial by providing assistance in overcoming the language barrier, not to ensure client’s actual comprehension of the procedure.

REFERENCE


Sigurðardóttir, S. J. (2012) Interpreters Roles, What is an interpreter and how can he or she gain from a typology of interpreter - mediated even. Sigillum Universitatis Islandiae.