

Linguistic interpretation services in European institutions

FOREWORD

Icía ALONSO-ARAGUÁS and Mariachiara Russo (GIR *Alfaqueque*¹, USAL)

Universidad de Salamanca/ Università di Bologna/Forlì /
itziar@usal.es / mariachiara.russo@unibo.it

In the previous CLINA monograph (vol. 3 no. 2 December 2017) we proposed to approach the interpretation services in different international organizations, especially the United Nations and to a lesser extent others such as the OECD, in order to know the work of their linguistic services, their particularities, their demands, the challenges they face today and their future expectations. The volume we are presenting now is entirely devoted to institutions belonging to the European Union (EU).

Multilingualism has been one of the hallmarks of the European construction since its inception, and the multilingual oral communication undoubtedly represents an important guarantee of accessibility and transparency. It includes not only the use of the official languages and their real time interpretation in the working meetings of the different institutions, but also an ambitious policy of document translation into the official languages and a careful communication policy with the citizens of the member countries that guarantees them the right to ask and be answered in their

1. <http://campus.usal.es/~alfaqueque/index.html>

own language². Responsible for these last tasks are the translation departments of the European institutions, particularly the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) of the European Commission.

More than 60 years after the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, 1952), and the European Economic Community (EEC, 1957), the EU is still one of the most important multilingual environments worldwide when it comes to the number of official languages present in its institutions (from the initial 4 languages in the ECSC to the 24 at present, with 552 different language combinations), the volume of interpretation work it generates and the number of professional interpreters that integrate their linguistic services. For example, only the interpreters of the DGI-SCIC Directorate-General for Interpretation of the European Commission (529 officials and 3,000 freelancers) work in about 40 daily meetings, approximately 10,000 a year, for the Commission, the Council and other institutions³. The conference interpreting linked to the services provided by the European institutions constitutes a leading professional market and its decades-long trajectory has gone hand in hand with the evolution of the profession itself (Thiery, 2016).

Its repercussions have been remarkable: on the one hand, it has served as a reference for professionalization in other areas that so far had been largely unrelated to the conference interpretation, such as judicial interpretation⁴. One of the best examples is the regulation since 2010 of the judicial interpretation service in courts of the Member States, that should be facilitated in criminal proceedings, whose quality is directly linked to the procedural guarantees under directives 2010/64/EU and 2012/13/EU, both of them transposed with unequal success in the different EU countries (Gascón Nasarre 2017).

Besides, specialized training in conference interpreting has adopted since 2001, as a reference for European curricular models, the quality standards of the Directorate-General for Interpretation of the European Commission (DGI-SCIC) and the European Parliament (DG-LINC) (Sawyer 2015: 98-99). Fifteen universities integrated into the European Higher Education Area –which emerged from the Bologna process and counts with 48 Member States- currently converge in the EMCI Consortium (European Masters in Conference Interpreting) under the auspices of the Commission and the European Parliament, and around 40 universities benefit from the various pedagogical

2. On this communication policy of the European Commission, cf. Koskinen, K. (2010) 'The Biggest Hurdle is the Language Issue': Translating and the European Commission Communication Policy.

3. Source: DG Interpretation. *2017 Annual Activity Report*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/annual-activity-report-2017-interpretation_en Last accessed: 30 June 2018.

4. EULITA – European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association was born in 2009 in order to guarantee the necessary quality in the translation and interpreting services for national courts of the Member States, similar to the European courts of justice.

assistance and cooperation programs –both on-site and virtual- of the DGI-SCIC and/or the DG-LINC.

Hence, issues related to research, training and practice of interpretation in European institutions have a particular academic interest and have justified a second monograph devoted exclusively to them. The works we collect here will help the readers better understand the extent to which the interpretation services of these institutions have contributed to keeping the old dream of multilingualism alive. They will also allow them to explore their most recent trajectory lead by expert researchers in Interpretation Studies, the interpreters of the European Commission and Parliament themselves, and also of the specialized teachers who are training nowadays the future generations of interpreters.

The works gathered here compose a wide range of issues and methodological approaches. The volume begins with two innovative contributions framed in the history of interpretation studies: one made by Marta García Gato, *Training interpreters for the European project: the first interpreting internship of the European institutions*, which is immersed in the origins of interpretation services belonging to the precursor institutions of the current EU. Through an exhaustive search of written sources in the historical archives of the European institutions and oral testimonies of many of its protagonists, the author offers us a suggestive journey to those first steps of multilingualism that formed the foundation of the European project.

The evolution of the conference interpretation as a profession completes a new stage in the next chapter, *Reconstrucción del nacimiento de la cabina española en la Unión Europea: un proceso de profesionalización* (Reconstruction of the birth of the Spanish booth in the European Union: a process of professionalization), a journey lead by Angélica Pajarín Canales following the steps of the first generations of interpreters who integrated the Spanish booth in the EU. It is a meticulous study of ethnographic character that documents the history, but also the sociological and professional profile of the Spanish booth once Spain was incorporated in 1986 into the European Communities. The author has used a huge amount of quantitative and qualitative data, gathered from archives documents, surveys, interviews and a meticulous field work as an observer in the work environment of the Spanish booth. Thus, in line with other works of historical and ethnographic reconstruction of the profession (e. g. Baigorri Jalón, 2004 and 2014/2000, Duflou, 2016), Pajarín's work focuses on the institution and the actors of this historic period.

Back in the 21st century, the following chapters are devoted to several of the challenges posed by the daily practice of conference interpreting in Europe and the need to adapt to a situational context subject to numerous external variables. Some of these challenges largely coincide with those already detected in the interpretation services of the European Parliament and other multilateral exchange forums, such as the UN and the OECD: a great thematic diversity, an increasing speed of speeches

-mostly read-, accents and the predominance of English as a *lingua franca*, among others⁵.

In their work entitled *Simultaneous Interpretation of Neosemanticisms in EU Press Conferences: Translation of 'Hotspot', 'Relocation', and 'Resettlement' into Dutch and German*, Mathieu Van Obberghen, Rita Temmerman y Koen Kerremans refer to the thematic diversity and, more specifically, to the lexical variability introduced by the recent topics in the press conferences of the European Commission. After introducing the theoretical bases that explain how words can acquire new meanings, sometimes even more specific, due to the evolution of human activity in certain sectors and the dynamic context of use, the authors highlight the different strategies of simultaneous interpreters with this phenomenon when translating the keywords of the new actions undertaken by the EU in the refugee crisis. It is an observational study limited to the performance of some interpreters in the Dutch and German booths, which, however, points to different tendencies depending on the language combination and in which individual creativity also plays an important role.

The need to adapt specialized training to real working conditions and to the institutional demand is behind the didactic proposal of mixed learning presented in the following chapter by María Dolores Rodríguez Melchor, professional interpreter and trainer in a postgraduate course in conference interpretation belonging to the EMCI network. The optimization of distance learning resources and the close cooperation between universities and institutions are the basis of the pilot project that she poses in her work: *Pedagogical assistance for the XXI century: the interaction between DG-SCIC, DG-INTE and Universities in the field of blended learning for interpreter training*. Rodríguez Melchor explores in detail the multiple possibilities offered by virtual resources to design a didactic methodology capable of improving the performance in the teaching-learning processes and of turning the students into a conscious protagonist of their own evolution.

Alexander Drechsel, Mirja Bouchard and Marcin Feder present an example of good practices in the continued training of interpreters sponsored by the IAMLADP (International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications) and co-organized by the linguistic services of the Parliament and the European Commission: *Inter-institutional training cooperation on the use of tablets in interpreting*. In line with the paperless workflow policies present in the EU and other international organizations for ecological and economic reasons, the authors conducted the first pilot training course on the use of tablets in the booth to manage the large digital documentation. The article describes in detail the design and modalities in which this course was taught under the webinar modality, whose good reception by the 13 participating interpreters, coming from different continents, highlights the need

5. Cf. the studies by Baigorri-Jalón, J. and Travieso-Rodríguez; Donovan; Ruiz Rosendo, L. and Diur, Marie 2017; and Seeber, which are published in 'Interpreting in International Organisations. Research, Training and Practice', *CLINA* 3:2, 2017.

to reinforce the inter-institutional collaboration to promote the biggest dissemination of knowledge possible about the use of new technologies in the interpretation booth.

A new challenge, addressed in this case to the backbone of the interpretation services of the European institutions, is the one addressed by Karin Reithofer in the chapter entitled *Interpreting and Multilingualism in the EU: Leave or Remain?* It offers a bold and realistic update of the old aspiration to multilingualism as opposed to a phenomenon that is evident in our globalized world, and therefore in the EU: the consolidation of English as a *lingua franca* (ELF). Based on an abundant and updated bibliography on ELF and linguistic policies, the author introduces us to the regimes of the working languages in each EU institution and, what is even more interesting, shows us the impact of the ELF use on users, interpreters and interpretation services. Finally, from her experience as a freelance interpreter in the EU, she adds a series of proposals to face this already unstoppable phenomenon.

The works that we have gathered here represent, as already announced in the title of the volume, a diagonal reading about the past and the future of the EU's interpretation services in the 21st century. The different perspectives from which the authors reflect (research, training and practice) offer diverse approaches that illuminate a complex and constantly evolving reality. The many challenges posed today at the very heart of the most multilingual organization of our century should not hide the *raison d'être* of the European construction project begun in 1952. The differences, also the linguistic ones, make up the fabric of a European identity, which is the result of miscegenation and diversity. Let us not forget, thus, what Umberto Eco never tired of remembering: the language of Europe is translation.

THE PUBLISHERS

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- BAIGORRI JALÓN, Jesús. 2014/2000. *From Paris to Nuremberg: The Birth of Conference Interpreting*. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: Benjamins. Transl. by Holly Mikkelson and Barry S. Olsen from *La interpretación de conferencias: el nacimiento de una profesión. De París a Nuremberg*. 2000. Granada: Comares.
- BAIGORRI JALÓN, Jesús. 2004. *Interpreters at the United Nations: A History*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca.
- DUFLOU, Veerle. 2016. *Be(com)ing a conference interpreter: An ethnography of EU interpreters as a professional community*. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- GASCÓN NASARRE, Fernando A. 2017. «La Directiva 2010/64/UE: antecedentes de hecho, fundamentos de Derecho y claroscuros de su transposición en España». *PuntoyComa – Boletín de los traductores españoles de las instituciones europeas*, 152 (marzo-abril 2017), 19-31.
- KOSKINEN, KAISA. 2010. «'The Biggest Hurdle is the Language Issue': Translating and the European Commission's Communication Policy», in Alonso, Iciar, Baigorri, Jesús and Campbell, Helen J.L.(eds.) *Translating Justice. Traducir la justicia*. Granada: Comares, 61-71.

- SAWYER, David B. 2015. «Curriculum», in Pöchhacker, Franz (ed.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*. London-New York: Routledge, 96-99.
- THIERY, Christopher. 2016. «Staff interpreters and the founding of AIIC». *aiic.net* April 26, 2016. Accessed May 30, 2018. <<http://aiic.net/p/7613>>.