

Bridging the gap between Public Service and Business Interpreting: The Way Forward

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Abstract

The need for both public service interpreting (PSI) and business interpreting (BI) is increasing. Globalisation means not only do we need to communicate in order to create business, hence the need for business interpreters, but it has also opened the door for travel and immigration and to a different type of communication, hence the need for public service interpreting services. An interpreter is the link in all the above cases. In the past, the interpreters used were persons who could speak the two languages fairly well (or not, in the case of some of the rare languages). Nowadays, the issues raised in interpreting are so critical, that the need for training is ever increasing.

Training needs are different in order to meet the difference in interpreting needs. To ensure appropriate and suitable training approaches, it is vital to determine the difference in training needs, if any.

This paper will separate the needs for those receiving public services interpreting and those in conference and business interpreting. It will discuss who receives which type of interpreting and their expectations, and then how the training needs to be tailored to match those needs.

Training in both methods include coping techniques, although the focus could be slightly higher in one rather than the other; the vocabulary used and needed would be different as PSI is localised while business interpreting is globalised.

The paper will discuss how the emphasis in PSI interpreting is on ethical issues as well as certain vocabulary; eye contact is paramount and the cultural aspect plays a large role in this mix; while in conference interpreting culture does play a significant role but not as much as in PSI where the recipient may be vulnerable and the issues therefore extremely sensitive; training in this is therefore vital. The register used in PSI may be different to that in business interpreting and this is reflected in the training process. Stamina is an aspect that must not be dismissed lightly in business interpreting; the student must be seen as a whole, so stamina building is important in addition to voice training.

Finally, the calibre of applicants for PSI courses is different to those going for business interpreting courses; data should be obtained to see if this affects their training requirements and therefore if training schedules need to be adjusted accordingly. Some choose to make

the move from PSI to business interpreting, others already move in both domains; however, this must not be mistaken by thinking the move can be smooth in either direction.

Key words

Interpreting, Business interpreting, Public services interpreting, Training Requirements

1 Introduction

Globalisation means not only do we need to communicate in order to create business, but it, and the continual political upheavals in many parts of the world, has also opened the door for increased travel, immigration and to a different type of communication (hence the need for public service interpreting services). An interpreter is the link in all cases. In the not so distant past, the interpreters used were persons who could speak two languages fairly well, or not necessarily so well in some cases, for example an interpreter between Arabic and English with absolutely no training but just the ability to speak those two languages may be used as an interpreter: this person may speak Arabic quite well, in fact he certainly would do so if Arabic was his mother tongue, but only when using his own dialect. Ask that interpreter to use formal Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic) in a court case, and this interpreter would struggle if he had not had enough training in that mode. Then ask the same interpreter to use formal English, and again he may struggle preferring to use colloquial terms rather than formal ones if he gained English as a language from communicating daily with native speakers of English rather than gaining it through the academic route (for example saying 'innit?' rather than 'isn't it?'). Arabic is spoken across 22 countries, some of its speakers are not quite native speakers of the language, for example the minorities in the Arab World, such as the Kurds, may speak Arabic well but not necessarily so when it comes to nuances or when it comes to Modern Standard Arabic. The issues raised in interpreting may be so critical, that the need for training is ever increasing, especially at a time where litigation generally in the UK has started to follow the theme in the USA and there may be a day when interpreters may be sued for negligence that may be a direct result of lack of training.

2 Terms of Reference

Before we start with this article, it would be useful to define some terms used within it to ensure clarity.

Community interpreting is the interpreting which takes place in the public services to facilitate communication between officials and lay people at police departments, immigration departments, social welfare centres, medical and mental health offices, schools and similar institutions (Wadensjö, 2001: 33). Business interpreting falls under the umbrella of conference interpreting, which is mistakenly seen as interpreting only at high level

multilateral diplomatic conferences; this is not the case, conference interpreting, according to Pöchhacker (2004:16) covers almost all fields of inter-lingual and intercultural communication; therefore, one could talk about not only political or diplomatic conferences, but also medical, technical, agricultural or financial conferences or meetings. So today we see business interpreting that spans into mergers, contractual negotiations, factory tours or site visits, financial meetings, trade fairs or indeed meetings within the same company but at different sites simultaneously (video conferencing). This means the business interpreter will sometimes find himself in a mix of formal and informal interpreting situations, unlike what is thought (i.e.: The business interpreter can only face formal situations).

Business interpreting can be labelled under other terms, such as Liaison interpreting, Dialogue interpreting, Conversational or Commercial interpreting (Mason, 2001:ii), due to the nature of the job, where there is face to face interpreting (interpreter- mediated-interpreting).

3. Are Business Interpreting and Public Services Interpreting really different?

The questions raised here are: Can business interpreters (BI) and Public Service interpreters (PSI) ever work as a team in the workplace? What is it that places the two fields of interpreting apart in the mind of some people and what is it that can bring them together in the minds of others?

To answer these questions, we need to look at a couple of aspects such as interpreting techniques and the training provided for both types of interpreting.

3.1 The environment of Business Interpreting and Public Services Interpreting

Both types of interpreters work in various settings that are similar to a large extent. For example, the business interpreter can be called upon to interpret in business meetings that are about mergers (legal interpreting), or he can be used on site visits such as factory visits, or his services may be called upon for business meetings during contract negotiations or financial negotiations or even in a different setting altogether for Health related matters. The Public Service Interpreter could equally be seen in various settings such as interpreting at a solicitor's office or court for legal interpreting, or on site at home visits or visits to hostels and the like, or to interpret at the Council for Housing contracts with tenants which may include negotiating the finances of that tenant or finally in health settings at clinics or hospitals.

Below is a table that shows how the two types can meet when it comes to the settings an interpreter finds himself in:

PSI	BI	Agreement?
Legal issues (courts)	Legal issues (mergers)	Y
Site visits (Homes)	Site visits (factories)	Y
Contracts (Housing)	Contracts (Business)	Y
Finance	Finance	Y
Health	Health	Y

Table 1: types of interpreting situations encountered in BI and PSI

We can see from the definitions (and Table 1) that the two types of interpreting do not differ greatly from the settings aspect, so how can it be possible to break the phantom barrier that exists between the two and bridge the gap which at the moment is quite wide? Let us look more closely at other aspects.

3.2 Interpreting techniques used in both fields

3.2.1. Consecutive interpreting (CI):

This is where in public services the speaker talks for a couple of sentences (sometimes he only says a single utterance) and the interpreter renders those sentences into the target language. Normally there is no need for note taking as the intervention is quite short although this is increasingly changing. In business interpreting settings the length of interventions is longer where the speaker may talk for 10 to 15 minutes at once; here the need for note taking and using our memory would be paramount.

3.2.2. Simultaneous interpreting (SI):

In public services this is equivalent to what is called ‘whispered interpreting’; here no equipment is used (no booths) and the interpreter is physically next to his clients (maximum 2 clients) whispering into their ears (Jones 1998: 6). In court or police settings in PSI, this is generally done for a single client. On the other hand in business interpreting, SI may be done in a booth with equipment; this includes a microphone and a headset. In the booth, there will always be two interpreters who take turns every 20 to 30 minutes. This can vary, where in some business settings, there will be no booths or equipment, and this is where it meets up with the PSI model and the interpreter may find himself whispering to a maximum of two of his clients (one on each side).

3.2.3. Remote interpreting (Also known as telephone interpreting).

This type dates back to the 1950s although it only became widely used in the 1980s and 1990s. This method also includes video conferencing, used greatly in courts where the victim is young or a vulnerable adult or the client could be the defendant but to save on travel costs, the video conference could be set up between the prison or the Custody Suite and the court room. The difficulty in this type is the lack of face to face contact, making the situation stressful for the interpreters as this will require extra effort to focus and to show their presence despite their actual non-presence (Moser-Mercer, 2005b) in addition to the lack of visuals that give the interpreters instant feedback on their performance. Any possible required intervention from the interpreter is also hard to undertake adding to the stressful situation. However, this method is used in both PSI and BI proving that the two types of interpreting do co-exist.

3.2. 4. Sight translation (also called sight interpreting by some),

which is a cross between interpreting and translation; it is where you are given a document in the original language (OL), you read it then render the text orally into the target language (TL). This method is often required when the client in both business and PS interpreting needs an insight into a foreign-language document. In court or at the police station for example it could simply be a document that the police want the gist of; in a health setting it could be a patient consent form. As for business interpreting, the document could be one the client wants a summary of the main points in a letter or contract.

Table 2 compares the techniques used in both types of interpreting:

Technique	PSI	BI
Consecutive	√	√
Simultaneous	√	√
Remote	√	√
Sight Translation	√	√

Table 2: Interpreting techniques

Again, we see from the table above how the different types of interpreting could be utilised by both types of interpreters reducing further the differences perceived by some.

3.3 Training requirements:

Let us look at the training requirements for the types of interpreting we are discussing. Training to be discussed here includes memory training, training in linguistic, cultural and ethical considerations plus coping techniques such as paraphrasing, note

taking, the use of synonyms and the increase of general knowledge of the interpreters. Both types of training are constrained, but only to a little extent, by the exams set by the governing bodies, so for example, PSI training has a larger emphasis on sight translation as this constitutes a major part of the PSI exam. In contrast, it has a minor part of BI training as it does not form part of the exams, but due to the possible need of a business interpreter to interpret some documents from time to time, this method is practised twice in the full academic year (once a semester).

3.3.1 Memory Training:

Memory is defined as 'the ability to remember things' (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary). Memory training is a vital part of interpreters' training; interpreters have to ensure they develop their short term memory. Normally people do not focus enough to retain information when they are spoken to; however, interpreters must concentrate enough to remember chunks of information that sometimes reach the length of 15 minutes (in consecutive interpreting). There are 2 types of memory: the first is our *mechanical memory* which is the basic recall of facts, figures, and lists and so on. This is generally in a linear fashion and the facts to be recalled may or may not be related, for example items on a shopping list. The other type of memory is our *logical memory* in which we concentrate more on the links between words, the reasoning and the line of argument. It tends to be far less linear in structure. An example is when we recall details of an incident. The logical memory is called upon in most interpreting cases; this is because we do not interpret words in isolation, but rather concepts and ideas. The use of both memory types can also be called upon where we need to remember lists in addition to ideas all within the same chunk of spoken text, for example when a politician talks about reform and adds a list of future reforms he would like to implement. Training of memory is important, Lambert (1989: 89) found that there is poor recall when we try to listen and speak simultaneously. In training our memory we need to establish the reasons why we forget, such as the lack of focus and the lack of visuals that aid memory in addition to the difficulty to retain information that we find complex or totally new to us. We also look at the enemies of focus such as lack of sleep, poor nutrition, stress, busy lifestyle and noise pollution (Tipper, 2007:40, Cole, 2009: 250). The keys to memory are repetition, emotion, imagination, motion and association. An interpreter must learn to identify key words that he needs to remember, and to ask questions when unsure of something and to take notes as all these would aid his short term memory.

3.3.2 Paraphrasing:

Other training skills required include paraphrasing where students are trained to develop the ability to represent the essential meaning of the given message in another way (in a different structure) while retaining the meaning of that original message (Coughlin 1989: 109). This method is quite useful in consecutive interpreting but not as useful in

simultaneous interpreting where there is no time for the interpreter to search for synonyms or different syntactic structures (Al-Zahran 2007: 85). Paneth (cited in Pöchhacker (b) 2008: 37) recommends that interpreters should not have silences in their rendition but that they should use a descriptive phrase of the original and carry on.

3.3.3 Synonyms:

A synonym is defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary as: 'A word or expression that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the same language'. The use of synonyms is encouraged in class with a focus on the subtle differences between synonyms. This exercise should be practised in both languages used by the interpreters.

3.3.4 Note Taking:

Note taking is the practice of taking down symbols of parts of the speech to enable the student to render that speech into the target language efficiently. The student should be able to recognise the key words and ideas that are vital to the speech and note those down in symbols that would jog his memory a short while later. Training is vital in this as students tend to write things down in words rather than symbols and they tend to try and write everything down; they need to be shown the best strategies to use in order to make this as efficient as possible. Note taking is given the lion share of training for business interpreting as there seems to be a huge need for it when rendering 15 minute speeches. It is vital that students are reminded that they need to note down ideas not words (Jones 1998: 67-70). Notes are seen to be taken in order to jog memory and also to relieve memory (Jones 1998: 45-49). It is also important to remember to note down the first and last statements as the first statement is usually not part of the speech and hence will have no cognitive context and may be easily forgotten, while the last statement carries usually the conclusion of the speech (Seleskovitch and Lederer 1995: 32f).

3.3.5 Linguistic Skills:

Linguistic skills such as the use of proverbs, metaphors and idiomatic expressions should be included in both types of training in addition to the different registers an interpreter may face depending on who he may be interpreting for. Alexieva (cited in Pöchhacker (b) 2008: 224) sees the importance of the interpreter's command of languages especially in the cases where the source language is not the native language of the interpreter and where this will affect his verbal and non-verbal rendition, for example in literally translating metaphors rather than finding an equivalent therefore leading to structures that are either non-existent in the target language or worse they mean something totally different. It has to be pointed out at this stage that the vocabulary used in PSI training is quite different from the vocabulary used in BI training, and that is because the vocabulary in PSI is mostly for public services such as health, police and the courts (Law), housing, immigration, employment and

consumer laws and the like; trainees of PSI have little or no need to be exposed to some of the vocabulary used in BI training such as finance, the environment, sports, trade and economy and so on. This perhaps will be the biggest challenge that would face public service interpreters when trying to make the move into business interpreting, but it is not an impossible task to achieve with a little reading and preparation in advance of any given assignment. In contrast, this challenge does not exist to the same extent for business interpreters who wish to move into public service interpreting as they are already exposed to most of the terms used in public services (Law, immigration, consumer affairs and social policy); they do however need to improve on their in-depth knowledge of these matters (for example, familiarise themselves with the judicial system of the country, police ranks and so on).

3.3.6 Cultural Knowledge:

In addition to the above, cultural differences should be highlighted, such as the inappropriate use of jokes and taboo words in addition to non-linguistic issues such as gestures. Alexieva (cited in Pöchhacker (b) 2008: 224) sees that for interpreters to be mediators in any situation requires a few parameters one of which is the interpreter's command of both languages in addition to their familiarity with both language cultures. What one culture might find acceptable, the other might find quite offensive. These differences materialise even more when the cultures are quite distant, such as between Western and Eastern cultures. In addition, the significance of such taboo shows up in different ways in different societies, varying from prohibition, obligation, to strict regulation (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990: 57) and these are issues the student of interpreting must be highly aware of.

3.3.7 Ethics:

Ethical considerations must also be raised in both types of training as well. This includes introducing the students to the various existing professional codes of ethics and conduct and allowing time to discuss specific points of those codes. This includes scenarios where the student faces dilemmas and needs to respond in accordance with those given codes of conduct.

3.3.8 General Knowledge:

Finally the students' general knowledge is continuously observed and they are encouraged to read as much as possible on matters that may crop up in their professional lives; we have seen that memory loss is partly attributed to lack of knowledge of subject matter, hence removing this obstacle helps in the retention of spoken speeches. This is not solely for BI students; students of PSI courses also need to improve their general knowledge as they may be in the middle of a legal case that suddenly moves in the direction of medical or financial matters so they cannot claim that as they work exclusively in legal contexts that

they have no need to improve their general knowledge. Gillies (2004: 28) emphasises the importance of gaining general knowledge when he talks about how transferring words from one language to another is one thing but that to reach the ideal situation is for the interpreter to totally understand the concept of the subject matter so they can really speak fluently using idiomatic expressions in their active language. He emphasises how interpreting becomes much easier when we know and understand the subject matter.

3.4 Time allocation for each training aspect

Based on two training courses taught by the same tutors, one of the courses being a Masters degree in conference interpreting and translation and the other in public service interpreting, law option, the following table (Table 3) has been put together to compare the training time allocated for each activity mentioned earlier; this is not to say all institutions allocate the same time for each activity; some institutions may allocate little time for most activities, while others omit some and focus on merely the techniques of interpreting rather than the coping techniques as well. Ideally, all activities should be seen and undertaken in training of both types and at a level that would be at the least of medium time allocation.

It must be noted that the perception of time allocation is seen in the context of interpreting related modules only. This means, the percentage seen across the full year training course does not take into account non-interpreting modules such as IT training, Interpreting Studies or Consultancy Business. In addition, the time allocation refers to the formal hours set aside for those activities; most activities are given more time, but ad hoc, hence this time has not been taken into account here.

In the conference interpreting course, which has business interpreting embedded as a full module, the time allocation for each activity is as follows: For memory training two full sessions (4 hours) are allocated at the early stages of the course. As for paraphrasing, initially a single session at 2 hours is given then ongoing exercises weekly at 10 minutes each time over 24 weeks = 240 minutes which equals 4 hours, hence the annual total per academic year is 6 hours. Synonym exercises are equal to paraphrasing at 6 hours. Note taking takes the lion share of the interpreting student's training as it is taught intensively for the first two weeks which is 8 hours and then at 20 minutes at the end of each lesson twice weekly over the remaining 22 weeks = nearly 15 hours. Add the initial 8 hours which gives a total of 23 hours of note taking training over the academic year. Linguistic skills are gained continuously through continuous feedback in each session and although this is hard to quantify it does go into the bracket of high time allocation. As for non-linguistic skills, again this takes place through regular and on-going feedback, but only in some of the modules, as it is not valid as a point of discussion in some modules such as simultaneous interpreting or in translation where the client is not in direct contact with the interpreter, therefore although it is considerable, it would be categorised under low to medium time allocation. Ethical

considerations are discussed during the academic year, but this only takes over a small period of time at about 1.5 hours per academic year. Cultural awareness takes place informally too, although special speeches are chosen deliberately for one week in addition to the cultural project where students travel to different parts of the UK to learn about British culture; they return to give presentations to the whole class about the cultural aspects they had learned in addition to some cultural aspects specific to their own home countries. This means that time allocation for culture goes into the field of medium exposure. A voice coaching expert comes in for 3 hours a year. Finally for general knowledge, the students are asked weekly about information of current and past issues ranging from politics, trade and economy, history, finance, education, sport, religion, culture and so on. This takes about ten minutes a week making it a total of 4 hours per academic year. In addition to that, general knowledge is increased continuously by the very fact of the lecturer varying the themes of the texts chosen for interpreting on a weekly basis.

In comparison, for public service interpreting training (law option) memory training is given very little attention as is voice coaching (zero hours) and general knowledge (zero hours). Paraphrasing and synonyms have higher priority than in BI partly due to the nature of the assignments the interpreter will be undertaking. For each 4 hour lesson, paraphrasing and synonym practice may take a fifth of each of that lesson (High time allocation). Note taking training is undertaken, but due to the smaller chunks of intervention usually seen in PSI, the need for notes, although important, is not as paramount as it is in BI where the interventions are much longer. But due to its importance even in smaller amounts, note talking gets medium time allocation of about 45 minutes in a 4 hour lesson. Linguistic skills are continuously supported in PSI training in each class; this is hard to quantify accurately but it constitutes about 15 -20 minutes for each 4 hour lesson. Ethical considerations take a large chunk of the lessons in PSI training, which is not surprising considering the nature of the job; the time allocation for this is high; about 2 entire lessons are given specifically for this in addition to ad-hoc ethical problems that crop up from time to time. Finally, cultural issues are discussed in great detail in PSI training, sometimes this may be embedded within the ethical lessons when discussing dilemmas with the trainees; formal time allocation for cultural issues is not as high as it is for paraphrasing in PSI training but it is still high enough to be in the medium to high time allocation zone.

The table below shows a summary of the time allocation for some parts of the training for both types.

Training Type	PSI Time Allocation	BI Time Allocation
Memory training	Nil- Low	Medium
Paraphrasing	High	High
Synonyms	High	High
Note taking	Medium	High
Linguistic skills	Medium	High
Non-Linguistic skills	Medium	Low-Medium
Ethics	High	Low
Cultural issues	Medium- High	Medium
Voice coaching	Nil	Low
General knowledge	Nil- Low	High

Table 3: Time allocation for coping techniques for student interpreters

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, we can see that the needs for PSI and BI clients are similar, not only that, but their expectations should be equal in that they should receive all the information accurately and in the linguistic style their mother tongue language requires and in as professional a manner as possible. The training requirements have been seen as similar although the intensity of some aspects differ from one to the other, for example in BI the focus is higher on note taking than it is in PSI training, but sight translation is higher in focus in PSI training than in BI. Coping technique training in both should be equal as should be the increase in general knowledge level. The working environment in both may be dissimilar, but this is not always the case and indeed the stamina required is equal in both which is an aspect ignored totally in PSI training. In contrast, the importance of non-linguistic gestures is not always the focus in BI training (eye contact), nor are the ethical issues which are

normally a large focus in PSI training. Cultural aspects must be pointed out in both types of training despite the different level culture plays in each where in public services, especially in legal and medical contexts, the interpreter is dealing with sometimes extremely vulnerable individuals, but equally in BI interpreting, some issues may be sensitive and in need of a cultural understanding on the part of the interpreter. In addition, there is a need in PSI training to ensure the students are trained at various register levels as they will be dealing with different levels of people while in BI the chances of this occurring are less due to the fact that most of the clients will be professionals of a low grade at least; however, it must be remembered that the interpreter may be assisting at dinners so he may come across the need for a different level of register and hence the students should be made aware of the different registers required on some occasions. Both students should be trained for stamina and directed towards specialist voice coaches in order to preserve their most important asset: their voices.

Seeing that the training and client needs between the two types are not so far apart, it could be suggested that interpreters between the two types of services are interchangeable, but sadly this is not the case despite the evidence of the existence of some transferable skills such as paraphrasing, note taking, cultural and ethical training. Further research into the reasons why this is the current situation is needed but on the face of it, the reasons could be first of all financial as the pay for BI far exceeds that of PSI and hence business interpreters are overly protective of their client base; this further intimidates the public service interpreters who enter the training with lower expectations of income and possibly with lesser starting qualifications. Secondly, currently in the UK there is no separate training for BI; it is done as part of full conference interpreting training, mostly at MA/ MSc level; unfortunately this furthers the imagined gap between the two types of interpreters. The need of such joint courses may be something Higher Education institutions may need to look at; indeed due to the non-existence of such courses currently in the UK, it may be a profitable move to create such a course that meets the changing needs of our markets.

At the moment the calibre of applicants for PSI courses differs from those applying for conference interpreting (in which they automatically obtain BI training), this would be hard to change as there is a huge need for some rare language PS interpreters, even if they are untrained, which means that we in the UK are left in a situation where any training is better than none; but it is increasingly the case that PSI holders are seeking further qualifications in interpreting such as the Masters in interpreting and in contrast, some MA holders are taking the PSI course and exam to enable them to work in that sphere in the hope to widen the scope of their experience. If this number of interchanging interpreters increases annually, then there is hope of proving that the gap is not unbridgeable and that business interpreters and Public Service interpreters can indeed work as a team in the workplace someday; the

two fields are not that far apart from each other as some think; it is possible in fact to think of ways to bridge the existing gap, such as a joint training programme that combines the strengths of either training and discards their weaknesses while still bearing in mind that students need to exit with an award suitable to fulfil requirements to register as interpreters in their chosen field.

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