

## CHALLENGES OF INTERPRETATION IN MEDIA

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### ABSTRACT

The subject of research in this article is the challenges of interpretation in media. The purpose of the work is to theoretically interpret the mass media discourse in the context of modern society and practice of media communications. The study of mass media discourse considers the features of the platforms, its production and importance, as well as its representation. The work uses a set of methods: descriptive, comparative and interpretative methods.

**Keywords:** interpretation, media, television interpretation, accent, interpreters, conference, discourse.

Working as a television interpreter for world leaders can be a prestigious assignment but at the same time, it is also a challenge due to the risks involved. An error by the interpreter resulting in misinterpretation of the dignitary can be a major embarrassment not only to the interpreter but also to the governments the leaders represent.<sup>1</sup> This problem may be slightly less daunting for a television interpreter if he or she is not doing live interpreting of the leader in question. However, the interpreter can be in the studio watching the footage of the leader speaking and is attempting to meet the demands placed on them by the speaker's material. In that event the interpreter can sometimes encounter problems. However, conference interpreters usually encounter a less risky work environment as meetings and conferences are not major news events commanding live coverage. In addition, the interpreter may also get an opportunity to correct any errors he or she may have made.

“Interpreting the remarks of political leaders is a risky task for the interpreter because these remarks are political statements that sometimes contain sensitive issues. These may bring a negative consequence in a bilateral relationship if they are misinterpreted or rendered incoherently,” according to Isak Morin (2011).<sup>2</sup> He cited the cases of how interpreters for the Indonesian and Mexican Presidents on two

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<sup>1</sup> Houbert, F. (1998). Translation as a communication process. *Translation Journal*,

<sup>2</sup> Morin, I. 2011. Interpreting the Remarks of World Leaders. *Translation Journal*.

occasions caused major loss of face for their governments, which had to be corrected by diplomatic intervention. Tracing the history of interpreting, it emerges that as a professional modern discipline it is rather young and still evolving. How vital the role of interpreters is can be determined by watching world leaders in one-to-one meetings accompanied only by their interpreters. From political summits, to conferences, and from religious discourses to sports events, interpreters are omnipresent the world over.<sup>1</sup> A good interpreter not only needs to know the language they translate, but also the culture, history, and linguistic context of the source language as well as the target language, to get a better grasp of the content they are interpreting and to provide the best output. The importance of interpreting in a world without borders is increasing, and there is a need to study and improve the art, with a view to upgrading the skills of interpreters with better training and ongoing professional development. In this context interpreting assumes a key role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and in bringing world leaders and communities closer.

Merriam-Webster defines accent as “a way of pronouncing words that occurs among people in a particular region or country, and dialect is a form of a language that is spoken in a particular area and that uses some of its own words, grammar, and pronunciations”.<sup>2</sup> Speaking with an accent or switching to a dialect while speaking both pose major hurdles for an interpreter. The English language is today the leading conference language globally and the world’s lingua franca. English is widely spoken in many countries in the world, and at international conferences, the participants from countries whose mother tongue is not English sometimes speak highly-accented English. Moreover, within English-speaking countries also there are various accents and dialects. The speakers’ unfamiliar accents are problematic for the interpreter who is sometimes at a loss to understand what is being spoken. Thus the interpreters, according to Gile’s (1997) Effort Models, are forced to devote much processing capacity to the Listening and Analysis Effort, which therefore slows down production or leads to substantial loss of information. The interpreter has to spend more time listening carefully to the speaker to take in and recognize the words being spoken and then production lags as they cannot keep up with the speaker. This process adversely impacts the output quality of the interpreter. Their Listening and Analysis Effort also suffers as they try to deal with the highly-accented speech.<sup>3</sup> Accent can sometimes help

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<sup>1</sup> Jones, R. (2002). *Conference Interpreting Explained*. Manchester: St Jerome.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com//>

<sup>3</sup> Brown, G and Yule, G. 1983. *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

comprehension of the interpreter if they are familiar with that accent. However, heavily accented English is one of the major challenges facing the interpreter and may affect their overall performance.

Many speakers are witty. They often use humour as a technique to engage the attention of the listener. A joke may have a cultural content and without that sometimes the joke may not be understood or appreciated by the audience. The interpreter is at times put to the test when they are required to convey the sense of humour as well the cultural context of the joke in its entirety, so that the listener is able to understand, enjoy, and appreciate the joke. It is not always easy to reproduce a joke in the SL to a matching version in the TL, as what someone may find funny in one culture may not be funny and may even be offensive in another. Here the broader concept of jokes and humour in different cultural settings are outlined, and the difficulties an interpreter may face in translating different types of jokes are highlighted. In addition, suggestions on how best to cope with the interpretation of humour will be provided. The interpreter cannot simply state that the speaker has just uttered a joke; if they do so, they are not fulfilling their duty to interpret.

Interpreting is a challenging task, involving difficulties with individual speakers, culture-bound references, environmental factors, to name a few, and even more so in the conference and television interpreting setting. This study aims to investigate the challenges facing conference and television interpreters and the strategies they employ when exposed to real-time conference or television settings.

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