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COMMUNITY INTERPRETING IN SERBIA – CURRENT SITUATION AND PERSPECTIVES[1]

Abstract: *Community interpreting is a specific type of interpreting for individuals or small groups in a local community in medical, educational, housing, social security and legal areas. Community interpreting in Serbia has not been a part of formal education at any level for decades. The paper defines the concept of community interpreting in a way we believe it should be understood in Serbia, describes typical settings in which it is practiced, and makes an attempt to establish what the current situation in Serbia is. It also outlines the most recent efforts invested in Serbia regarding the university education for this profession.*

Introduction

Community interpreting may be the oldest form of translation activity, practiced even before people started to write. And yet, as said by Merlini and Favaron, although the activity itself has been practised for decades, community interpreting as a scholarly subject was long neglected, being perceived as a blurred, uncoordinated and disparate area lacking the glamour and scientific attractiveness of the two major modes of conference interpreting, i.e. simultaneous and consecutive interpreting (Merlini, Favaron 2003: 205, 206).

Community interpreting is different from other kinds of interpreting by emotional involvement on the part of an interpreter which may vary depending on the situation, while the interpreter is required to remain professional at all times. In addition to good linguistic (language) knowledge, this type of interpreting requires a good extralinguistic knowledge about cultures, religions, etc. A community interpreter must also have good interpersonal skills/intelligence. Why is then training/education for this kind of interpreting mostly neglected?

Thirteen years ago Mikkelson (2004) wrote that "lack of recognition of the social value of interpreting services, poor working conditions and inadequate remuneration still plague social service or community interpreting" and said the professionalization was needed. This means there should be standards for training and practice, but also the recognition of the profession both among the public and the potential clients. One of the ways to do it is to provide adequate education/training that will help set adequate standards for the profession, which will ultimately lead to better working conditions and promotion of the profession.

What is community interpreting

According to Gonzales et al (1991: 29), community interpreting has been defined in a variety of ways, ranging from the kind of interpreting that takes place informally in neighbourhoods and community agencies, and is performed by amateurs or ad hoc interpreters, to a more formal occupation involving practitioners with some training in medical, legal, or social service interpreting (Mikkelson 2004).

Another term which is used to refer to the same type of translation activity is "public service interpreting" (in United Kingdom) and "cultural interpreting" (in Canada) (D'Hayer 2012: 237). There are other terms used, which include "dialogue interpreting" and "ad hoc interpreting", but "community interpreting" seems to be the term most widely accepted in the literature (Mikkelson 2004). What needs to be said here is that community interpreting includes both natural and sign languages.

"Community interpreting" is the term most often and most widely used to refer to a specific type of interpreting language for individuals or small groups in a local community and in situations which typically include medical, educational, housing, social security and legal areas. In addition to being fluent in the language they are interpreting, the interpreters must also know

the public services involved, they must be aware of the cultural and racial implications of their work and they are expected to stick to the Interpreter's Code of Ethics.

Remael and Carroll (2015: 2) offer their definition of community interpreting, saying that they "consider community interpreting or public service interpreting to be any form of bi-directional dialogue interpreting, implicating a triadic constellation with a client or clients, one or more end users, and an interpreter". They also say that it covers a wide range of settings (such as hospitals, courtroom, or refugee camps) and participants (tourists on pleasure trips, but also resettled migrants and refugees).

Community interpreting should provide balance between those seeking access to a community or public service and those providing such services, ensuring for the former to do that on the same level as a native speaker of that community and allowing the latter to fulfil their legal obligations providing equal services to all sectors of the population (Remael and Carroll 2015: 2).

According to Carr et all (1997), "community interpreting enables people who are not fluent speakers of the official language(s) of the country to communicate with the providers of public services so as to facilitate full and equal access to legal, health, education, government, and social services.

There are other problems related to community interpreting. More than a decade ago Mikkelson (2004) wrote about the problems the community interpreting must overcome in order to become recognized as a profession. Among numerous obstacles on the way to professionalization there is first of all "confusion of the professional title" (Tseng 1992: 63 in: Mikkelson 2004). The public, but also people from professions other than translating and interpreting, usually do not understand the difference between the two and also often misuse the terms. Another obstacle to professionalization cited by Tseng (in: Mikkelson 2004) is the lack of a systematic body of knowledge exclusive to the profession. It is a source of great frustration to translation and interpretation professionals that anyone who has any familiarity, no matter how rudimentary, of a foreign language thinks he can interpret and translate. There are also public misconceptions about the profession, one of them being that interpreting "is an effortless activity that can be done by any bilingual" and that interpreters are "machines that do code-switching automatically from one language to another". Consequently, the clients think that it is easy to evaluate the quality of the interpreting services they are receiving (Mikkelson 2004).

Roberts (1994: 133-136) presented the guidelines for the professionalization of community interpreting. She advocated 1) clarification of terminology

(i.e., settling on a clear definition and a universally recognized name for the occupation); 2) clarification of the role(s) of the community interpreter; 3) provision of training for community interpreters; 4) provision of training for trainers of community interpreters (a very important issue that Tseng does not address); 5) provision of training for professionals working with interpreters; and 6) accreditation of community interpreters.

In Serbia community interpreting services are most often rendered by sworn-to-court interpreters, who are selected by the Ministry of Justice based on relevant criteria.[1] It has not yet been recognized as a profession per se. A lot has yet to be done in order for community interpreting to become a recognized profession, at both international and national level.

As for those in need of community interpreting services, in comparison with other countries, such as for instance the USA, where there are a lot of communities whose members live there and do not speak English and who might need the services of community interpreters in various settings, in Serbia these services are most often required by foreign citizens or the people with hearing impairments.

Why is community interpreting different

First of all, as said earlier, we have to say that community interpreting differs from conference interpreting for instance in that the services are rendered to the residents of a certain community and not to conference delegates, businessmen or diplomats. Roberts (1994) identifies other distinctions that set community interpreting apart from conference interpreting, the most important among them being that they primarily serve to ensure access to public services, that their presence in the communication process is much more noticeable that the presence of the conference interpreter, and that they are often viewed as advocates or "cultural brokers" who go beyond the traditional neutral role of the interpreter.[2]

Most often community interpreting is practised within medical, legal and social services contexts respectively. The different interpreting contexts do not only involve linguistic differences, but also differences concerning

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1 This selection process differs in Vojvodina and the rest of Serbia to a certain degree.
2 For more details on this see in: Roberts, R. (1994). "Community Interpreting Today and Tomorrow", in Peter Krawutschke, ed. *Proceedings of the 35th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association*. Medford, NJ: Learned Information, 1994, pp. 127-138

interpreter's ethically and socially expected role (Vargas-Urpi 2012). There are questions of power, ethics, impartiality, roles and conflicts. Interpreters "have to adapt to a great range of different circumstances and expectations" (Kalina 2015). The interpreter therefore has to be aware of the rights and obligations each participant has in a specific setting, which may vary from one setting to another (Kalina 2015).

Community interpreting is actually interpreting in asymmetrical setting, since it usually takes place between an expert representing the powerful side (the state, local authority) and a client (e.g. tourist, migrant), with different levels of education and often widely differing cultural backgrounds. This imbalance has a bearing on the register used by the primary participants, and the interpreter needs a high degree of intercultural sensitivity and empathy to take the different perspectives, registers and interests into account (cf. Hale 2007: 31f in: Kalina 2015). Such asymmetrical settings comprise the majority of legal settings (court, police) where the expert side is represented by judges, lawyers, police officers, etc., and the client is a suspect, defendant or a victim or witness. In healthcare settings the interaction is generally between a medical expert (doctor) and a patient.[1] In asylum hearings where an officer interviews an applicant, this imbalance is particularly blatant.

Interpreters have to assume responsibility for their actions and decisions, which is sometimes difficult, e.g. when a client regards an interpreter as his or her ally just because s/he belongs to the same ethnic group (cf. Hale 2008: 102f; Andres 2009: 132f, in: Kalina 2015). Moreover, interpreters in such settings obtain information that is often very personal and not intended for them, and its handling requires a high degree of confidentiality (Gentile et al. 1996: 59).

As for impartiality, interpreter is often a mediator between different cultures, which sometimes may imply taking sides – in general supporting the weaker side. It is difficult to delineate how far an interpreter may go in taking one side without giving up his/her trustworthiness for the other side (Kalina 2015: 75). According to Niska, "it is not far-fetched to assign the function of cultural mediator to the interpreter. After all, to be able to interpret 'linguistically' the interpreter needs cultural knowledge as well. But his knowledge is not necessarily that of an expert" (1995: 299f in: Kalina 2015: 76). In some situations, it may be appropriate for an interpreter to give up his/her impartiality or neutrality. If, for example, an interpreter is expected to offset inequalities that result from different cultural traditions by drawing the attention of one side to circumstances that have not been communicated

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1 For a detailed discussion see Pöchhacker & Shlesinger 2007; Mićović, 2013.

by the other, this is called 'advocacy' (cf. Andres 2009: 139 in: Kalina 2015: 73).

Andres (2009: 133 in: Kalina 2015: 76) emphasizes the conflicting responsibilities and role expectations especially in the field of community interpreting, where impartiality may not necessarily be a guiding principle and it is the personal responsibility of the interpreter to determine where and when one side needs more than a verbatim rendering. The Code of Professional Conduct of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID 2005), for example, does not include impartiality among its main tenets, and sign language interpreters in general do not always regard themselves as impartial (Kalina 2015: 76).

As for the role of interpreter, according to Gentile et al. (1996:31), there are two role perceptions. One is how the interpreter perceives his/her own role and task, the other is how society and the general public view the role of the interpreter. Legal experts in many countries want the interpreter to act like a machine and render literal translations, whereas the medical expert may prefer either a committed or a detached interpreter. So obviously, the discussion about the role of an interpreter focuses on the 'conduit' approach (machine-like transfer of words), on the one hand, and the interpreter as an active participant acting as a cultural mediator on the other (Kalina 2015: 79). In Kalina's opinion (2015: 79), these two approaches do not constitute separate concepts between which one has to choose; in any communication situation there will be at least some degree of mediation by the interpreter (cf. Kalina 2011).

To be able to act in full awareness of these challenges, an interpreter must be properly trained, highly qualified and rely on codes which offer guidelines for their informed decisions. Identifying possible and unacceptable roles or role expectations must therefore be part of interpreter curricula so that the role an interpreter assumes can be adapted to the setting according to its requirements (Kalina 2015: 80).

Education for community interpreting in Serbia – current situation

As it has been mentioned earlier, community interpreting as a separate profession has not yet been recognized in Serbia, and there is still not an adequate term for it in Serbian language as well. As for the scope of work community interpreters cover, it is currently covered by sworn-to-court translators/interpreters ("sudski prevodilac/tumač").[1] The title is most probably

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[1] Formerly it was only "court interpreter" or "sudski tumač".

coined because these interpreters are appointed by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, and they take the court oath, after which the Ministry registers them in the registry of Permanent Court Interpreters and Translators. As of 2010, the title has also changed to differentiate between "court translator", which refers to translators/interpreters of natural languages, and "court interpreter", which refers to interpreters of sign languages.[1] In our opinion, the generally accepted term for the profession or title should be discussed by practising professionals and other language experts, but a possible term may be "tumačenje/tumač u zajednici". There is also no specific education or training for community interpreters either.

The overview of universities which offer language studies in Serbia suggests that as far as undergraduate studies are concerned, the number of courses and corresponding syllabi vary. In general, these courses focus more on theories and types of translation, although there are few courses which offer some practice. In our opinion, this is quite appropriate and acceptable for this level of education since undergraduate language studies are more general and intended to produce both teachers and translators.

As far as master studies are concerned, the situation is better. The overview of faculties/universities in Serbia shows that they all offer master programs. However, as with undergraduate studies, most of them focus on language and literature and not on translation and interpreting. This is why we shall only focus on and present the two of them that offer master studies related to translation and interpreting, in other words the two master programs we consider relevant for the paper.

Rather comprehensive and elaborate master studies are offered by the Faculty of Philology, University in Belgrade – Master in Conference Interpreting and Translation – MCIT. This is a new programme, which is the result of several years of preparations with the support of the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission and TEMPUS project Reforming Foreign Language Studies in Serbia (REFLESS). The curriculum is also well conceived and covers all areas a conference interpreter and translator should know. In addition to this there are two courses – Translation as Sociocultural Mediation and Sociolinguistic Aspects of Translation, which are also important for community interpreting. The MCIT courses are given in Table 2 below.

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[1] Pravilnik o stalnim sudskim tumačima, Službeni glasnik RS, br. 35/2010

I year	
I semester	
Mandatory courses	
1.	Serbian language (A) 1
2.	Studies of written and oral translation
3.	Techniques of written and oral translation 1
4.	Translation of economic and political texts 1 (Serbian/English, Serbian/German, Serbian/French)
5.	Introduction to consecutive interpreting 1
Elective courses	
1.	English language 1
2.	German language 1
3.	French language 1
4.	Introduction to a professional field: economics
5.	Introduction to a professional field: law
II semester	
Mandatory course	
1.	Serbian language (A) 2
2.	Techniques of written and oral translation 2
3.	Translation of economic and political texts 2 (Serbian/English, Serbian/German, Serbian/French)
4.	Introduction to consecutive interpreting 2
5.	Introduction to European legal system and institutions
6.	Translation technologies and research for oral and written translation
Elective courses	
1.	German language 2
2.	French language 2
3.	English language 2

II year	
III semester	
Mandatory courses	
1.	Introduction to profession and professional ethics
2.	Translation technologies
Elective courses	
1.	Conference interpreting 1
2.	Technical translation 1
3.	Audio-visual translation 1
4.	Introduction to literary translation
5.	Translation as socio-cultural mediation
6.	Localization
7.	Sociolinguistic aspects of translation
IV semester	
1.	Professional practice
2.	Final thesis
Elective courses	
1.	Conference interpreting 2
2.	Technical translation 2
3.	Audio-visual translation 2

Table 1. Courses offered by the Faculty of Philology, University in Belgrade – Master in Conference Interpreting and Translation – MCIT (source: http://www.fil.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/studProg/master/MAS%20-%20 Konferencijsko,%20strucno%20i%20audiovizuelno%20prevodjenje.pdf)

Similar studies are also offered at the Faculty of Philosophy, University in Novi Sad – Master in Conference, Technical and Audio-visual Translation. Although in general the majority of master studies last one year (or two semesters) following four-year bachelor studies, these studies last two years (or four semesters). This is also something which is required by the specific characteristics of the profession of an interpreter/translator. The studies are well conceived and comprehensive, and the curriculum includes a number of

mandatory and elective courses, such as Introduction to translation studies, Translation of business and legal texts, Introduction to consecutive interpreting, Translation technologies, but also the courses such as Career development and professional ethics and Translation technologies and tools, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

I year	
I semester	
Mandatory courses	
1.	Serbian language A1
2.	Introduction to translation studies
3.	Translation of business and legal texts 1 – English, German and French
4.	Introduction to consecutive translation 1
Elective courses	
1.	English language with German language 1
2.	English language with French language 1
3.	Introduction to a professional field: economics
4.	Introduction to a professional field: law
II semester	
Mandatory courses	
1.	European legal system and institutions
2.	Research and preparation for written and oral translation
3.	Serbian language A2
4.	Introduction to translation studies - seminar
5.	Translation of business and legal texts 2 – English, German and French
6.	Introduction to consecutive translation 2
Elective courses	
1.	English language with German language 2
2.	English language with French language 2
II year	

III semester	
Mandatory courses	
1.	Career development and professional ethics
2.	Translation technologies and tools
3.	Career development and business ethics - practice
4.	Research paper
5.	Final thesis
Elective courses	
1.	Conference interpreting 1
2.	Technical translation 1
3.	Audio-visual translation 1
4.	Introduction to literary translation
5.	Intercultural competences and mediation
6.	Localization
IV semester	
Elective courses	
1.	Conference interpreting 2
2.	Technical translation 2
3.	Audio-visual translation 2

Table 2. Courses offered by the Faculty of Philosophy, University in Novi Sad – Master in Conference, Technical and Audio-visual Translation (source: http://www.ff.uns.ac.rs/studijski_programi/2015/MAS/Konferencijsko%20 strucno%20audiovizuelno%20prevodjenje-2015.pdf)[1]

As it can be seen from the tables above, the courses offered by these two faculties cover almost all aspects of interpreter's/translator's job and are very similar. The emphasis/focus is still on conference, technical and audio-visual interpreting. It can be noticed that community interpreting per se is not visible in the curricula, although some courses may cover it partially. Although the training is not specifically intended for community interpreters, it may provide

[1] More details on the curriculum are available at: http://www.ff.uns.ac.rs/studije/master/ studije_master_prevodjenje.html

the students with the knowledge required to start practicing the profession. However, the potential community interpreters will still have to learn more through their own experience.

What are the perspectives

As we have seen from the previous section, community interpreting is still not a part of formal education at any level in Serbia. In order to overcome this situation, the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade has been working on a proposal for the new MA program in Interpreting – Master's in Glocal Interpreting Services or MAGIS. This initiative was launched as the result of informal consultation with the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.* Bearing in mind their internationally recognized excellence in translation and interpreting academic programmes, an idea was born to create a new and innovative MA programme in interpreting with two equally strong strands, one in conference interpreting with a focus on small area languages, and the other with a focus on public service interpreting in different socio-cultural and political contexts. It is also the result of the already existing academic ties, as well as intensive teachers' and students' exchanges among the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*, *Università di Bologna - Forlì*, and *University of Belgrade,* since the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade has made efforts to become a regional centre of excellence in translation and interpreting.

The Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) MAGIS is a two-year Master's programme which aims to become a reference in the field of Interpreting Training around the world. It will deliver 120 ECTS credits under the joint cooperation of three Higher Education Institutions (HEI) from three programme countries: Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) in Spain, University of Bologna at Forlì Campus, in Italy and Germersheim, in Germany, and two Higher Education Institutions (HEI) from two partner countries: University of Belgrade, in Serbia, and University of Donja Gorica, in Montenegro. The aim of this joint Master's degree is to cater to the growing demand all over the world in the field of linguistic mediation. Although the professional interpreting market varies from country to country, there is an increasing international demand for linguistic mediation professionals who can work in both the private market and the international institutions, at all levels of government and in courts of law.

This particular Master's programme aims at linking the interpreters' competences by taking into consideration the diversity and multilingualism

of the 21st century, the programme stresses the fact that various interpretation contexts should be understood as a continuum, with distinction between conference interpreting at one end, at the international level, and public service and community service interpreting at the opposite end, at the intra-social level (Pöchhacker 2004: 12).

The proposed programme hinges on two axes. First, the programme emphasizes the importance of training increasingly versatile conference interpreters with broader and more varied language combinations who can adapt to changing professional scenarios – interpreters who are necessary not only at the international level, but also in more local contexts, where populations are increasingly diverse in origin. This first axis of the programme places special emphasis on Small Area Languages (SAL), hence the participation of three universities in countries with SALs: Serbia, Montenegro and Spain (Catalonia). SALs are standardized linguistic varieties used in all communicative domains in given geographic and political entities, i.e., states and autonomous regions, which have a relatively small number of native speakers (even though they are often counted in millions), and which are relatively invisible in the international public arena.

Second, the programme targets interpreting contexts in the glocalized public sector and community interpreting in different socio-cultural and political settings (i.e., countries across the world) in which there is a dire lack of competent interpreters who can skilfully work with customers from different social strata, and linguistic, as well as cultural, religious and racial backgrounds (in the both public sector, e.g., medical and legal services, NGO activities, educational contexts, but also in more or less informal communicative settings); to present themselves as mediators ready to establish a functional and purposeful dialogue between individuals in need of interpreting services and different actors in the public sector and within multilingual and multicultural speech communities. In the present-day glocalized world of different types of mobility, in which communicative repertoires are varied, often fragmented and highly dependent on information technologies, a strong need has been identified in the interpreting sector (and in the public service and community interpreting sectors in particular) to make the most of individuals' inter- and intra-lingual as well as transcultural competences.

In terms of professional education and training of future interpreters, in both conference and public service interpreting, only the so-called 'world languages' have any real presence in the European context. There are no European joint Master's programmes that include languages such as

Catalan or Serbian, a fact which makes native speakers of these languages extremely vulnerable in the European job market, in a social, cultural and professional context which has long proclaimed its espousal of linguistic and cultural diversity. Moreover, there is a chronic lack of professional training opportunities in SALs in the international arena. The 21st century Europe is also marked by increased migration from non-European regions, which means that some parts of Europe are particularly prone to a large influx of speakers of a wide variety of languages (e.g., note the consequences of the migrant crisis in the Balkan countries). With respect to community interpreting, the program follows into the footsteps of the recommendations made by the *Special Interest Group on Translation and Interpreting for Public Services* (2011) and standards defined when it comes to minority, migrant and heritage languages in public service and community interpreting. It is based on action research oriented sociolinguistic approach to interpreting which is viewed as a dialogical, emphatic, multimodal, multidimensional, and multilingual/translingual communicative event which requires high degrees of social awareness, critical thinking on the part of the interpreters, coupled with the capacity to engage and maintain communication in both formal and informal settings with heightened degrees of languages and cognitive cultural models of people they interact with.

Semester 1	
1.	Initiation in Interpreting. Consecutive
2.	Sociolinguistic, institutional and intercultural foundation for interpreters
3.	Initiation to Simultaneous interpreting
Semester 2	
1.	Intermediate Consecutive
2.	Intermediate Simultaneous
3.	Intermediate Simultaneous
Semester 3 – CONFERENCE INTERPRETING	
1.	Consolidation Consecutive
2.	Consolidation Simultaneous
3.	Master Thesis Preparatory work

Semester 3 – PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETING	
4.	Techniques of liaison and bilateral interpreting and intercultural mediation
5.	Fields of Public Service Interpreting
6.	Role plays
7.	Master Thesis Preparatory work
Semester 4 – CONFERENCE INTERPRETING	
1.	Advanced Consecutive
2.	Advanced Simultaneous
3.	MA Thesis
Semester 4 - PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETING	
1.	Introduction to a third language
2.	Internship
3.	MA Thesis

Table 3. Proposed structure of the new MAGIS

It remains to be seen how MAGIS proposal will develop in the future, since the outcome depends on many factors some of which are beyond the power of the participating universities. However, the initiative has been launched and we hope that the outcome will be successful in the end.

Conclusion

The authors have made an attempt to give an overview of community interpreting in Serbia since the topic that has not been discussed much so far. We have first addressed many definitions of community interpreting and then also tried to explain why it is different from other kinds of interpreting and what problems have to be overcome in order for community interpreting to become a recognized profession. Among many conditions to be fulfilled, it is important to have a universal definition and universally accepted term for this occupation, and then the appropriate education and training.

The overview of situation in Serbia suggests that some baby steps in that direction have been taken, at least concerning education. There are two master programs that cover all aspects of interpreter's/translator's job, the focus still being on conference, technical and audio-visual interpreting. At

this point this is a good start, since although the education is not specifically intended for community translators/interpreters, it may provide the students with the knowledge required to start practicing the profession. The potential community translators/interpreters, however, will still have to learn more through their own experience.

In order to improve professionalization of community interpreting, in addition to good quality formal education programs, which has already started to develop in Serbia, we also need to have additional training and improve the public knowledge on the profession. This is a task which might be taken by professional associations that are also very important, since they can represent the interests of community interpreters, on the one hand, and develop and enforce the code of ethics, on the other. They can also offer additional training courses and introduce the public and potential clients to the importance of hiring a trained professional for a particular job. This is not an easy task and will require a lot of effort and time but it will be worth eventually.

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