

## The interpreter in (inter)action: Divergent renditions in consecutive interpreting

Şeyda KINCAL<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This paper aims to present and discuss the findings of the author's PhD thesis on consecutive interpreting in context (Eraslan 2011). After putting forth the rationale for and laying the foundations to the study, it will provide part of the results pertaining to the analysis of the real-life interpreting performance of an interpreter at two events within the same macro-context. The events will be described within a multi-layer approach to context. Thus, the institutional, socio-cultural, and situational contexts will be briefly mentioned. The discussion will focus on the involvement and active role of the interpreter reflected at the utterance level through the differences between the original speech and the target speech framed as divergent renditions (Wadensjö 1998) at two events. These divergent renditions include instances where the interpreter employs various strategies in the interaction, taking an active role and assuming responsibility depending on user expectations as well as contextual and situational factors.

**Keywords:** Consecutive interpreting, interpreter's role, context, divergent renditions

### Çevirmen etkileşimde: Ardıl çeviride uyumsuz aktarımlar

#### Öz

Bu çalışma, yazarın bağlam içinde ardıl çeviri üzerine yazdığı doktora tezinin bulgularını sunmayı ve tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır (Eraslan 2011). Çalışmanın yola çıkış nedenleri ve temelleri ortaya konulduktan sonra aynı makro bağlam içinde iki etkinlikte görev alan bir çevirmenin sözlü çeviri performansının analizine ait sonuçların bir bölümü sunulacaktır. Etkinlikler, çok katmanlı bir bağlam yaklaşımı çerçevesinde betimlenecektir. Dolayısıyla, kurumsal, sosyo-kültürel ve durumsal bağlamlara da kısaca değinilecektir. Bu çalışmadaki tartışma, uyumsuz aktarımlar (Wadensjö 1998) çerçevesinde orijinal konuşma ile hedef konuşma arasındaki farklılıklar incelenerek, çevirmenin aktif rolünün ifade düzeyine yansımalarına odaklanacaktır. Uyumsuz aktarımlar, çevirmenin bağlamsal ve durumsal faktörlerle kullanıcı beklentilerini dikkate alarak aktif rol ve sorumluluk üstlenerek, etkileşimde farklı stratejiler uyguladığı durumlardan oluşmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Ardıl çeviri, çevirmenin rolü, bağlam, uyumsuz aktarımlar

### 1. Introduction

Consecutive interpreting is among the types of interpreting that are commonly used; however research on consecutive interpreting is scarce compared to simultaneous interpreting. Studies in consecutive

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Mütercim Tercümanlık Bölümü (İngilizce) (İzmir, Türkiye), eraslan.seyda@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4713-1537 [Makale kayıt tarihi: 07.08.2020-kabul tarihi: 20.09.2020; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.792498]

interpreting are mainly on note-taking and other issues that consider consecutive interpreting as processing. However, consecutive interpreting can well be seen as interaction, having shared concerns with community interpreting in intra-social settings besides conference interpreting in international settings.

This paper aims to present the partial findings of a broader study (Eraslan 2011) that explores the complex role of the interpreter in context. The existing literature will be briefly reviewed and conceptual foundations will be laid – referring to the key concepts of role and context – followed by a statement of the research question to be explored in this paper.

### 1.1. Literature review

Consecutive interpreting has mostly been dealt with in terms of note-taking (Gillies 2005, Rozan 1956/2002, Herbert 1952) and training (Gillies 2001, Ilg & Lambert 1996, Dollerup & Loddegaard 1992, Bowen & Bowen 1980).

There are two significant models of consecutive interpreting as a cognitive process. One of them was presented by Otto Kade (1963). Accordingly, consecutive interpreting consists of the following phases: First, the source-language text, is received in acoustic-phonetic and conceptual terms, second, conceptual content is analytically processed and stored, third, conceptual content is formulated in target language, fourth, target-language text is adapted, and fifth and last, optimum rendition is formulated (cf. Pöchhacker 2011: 297).

Another model is Daniel Gile's Effort Model of consecutive interpreting. The fundamental claim of this model is that, for the Listening and Analysis, Short-Term Memory, Speech Production and Coordination efforts, a limited processing capacity exists (Gile 1995: 169). According to Gile, listening and reformulation phases constitute consecutive interpreting. The interpreter listens to the source speech and takes notes in the listening phase. During the phase of reformulation, the interpreter interprets the speech taking into account notes and memory (Gile 1997: 202). Thus, these models consider consecutive interpreting as a process that involves the comprehension and reformulation phases. Accordingly, the information stored in memory and notes is used while interpreting a speech consecutively.

Consecutive and/or dialogue interpreting has also been explored as interaction. The two notions central to the discussions in this study, which approaches consecutive interpreting as interaction, are role and context. The interpreter's role was discussed as early as 1976 by Anderson. He referred to "the man in the middle" assuming responsibility to the parties, with the potential to influence "the evolution of group structure" and "the outcome of the interaction" (Anderson 1976/ 2002: 209). A significant academic work on dialogue interpreting conducted in legal, medical, and social service settings is that of Wadensjö (1998). Bringing forth "the interpreter-mediated encounter" forming "part of various social, cultural, and subcultural contexts", this study emphasizes the unique coordinating aspect of the interpreter's role (Wadensjö 1998: 82). This unique role was also discussed in sign language interpreting with reference to the interpreter's active involvement in the interaction and turn-taking processes (Roy 2000). With a survey on conference, community, and court interpreters, Angelelli (2003) focused on how interpreters perceived their own role, questioning the notion of "invisibility". Their own perceptions of their role, far from invisible, are significant in terms of its effect on interpreters' performance and on cross-cultural communication.

The central notion of role has also been dealt with more recently especially with respect to community and healthcare interpreting (Van de Mierroop 2012, Bot & Verrept 2013, Zimanyi 2013, Hlavac 2017, Vranjes, Brone, Feyaerts 2018). The issues of quality and user expectations, however, are relevant as regards the user and interpreter perspectives, i.e., user and interpreter surveys, analyzed in the broader study, and will not be included in this paper.

The other key concept that will be reviewed in this section is context. The “social turn” (Pöchhacker 2006) in interpreting studies has led to an approach to interpreting that views it as part of institutions and therefore the society at large has emerged. This led to research on interpreting with a focus on situational and contextual factors (e.g. Pöchhacker 1994, Diriker 2001, Eraslan 2011). Context has been used in interpreting from various points of view. Setton has analyzed interpreting in context as framed by Relevance Theory. Accordingly,

Conference interpreters are expected to aim for the best possible simulation of whatever contexts (additional to the shared milieu) are common to the majority of their addressees, which might typically include current affairs, a knowledge of international law and organizations and their procedure, and a body of specialized technical or local (‘insider’) knowledge specific to the meeting (Setton 2006: 379).

Hence, context in interpreting includes information derived from previous utterances, the premises, memory, as well as perceptions of the physical environment (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 139-141).

This multi-level understanding of context has been a major point in Ian Mason’s work on dialogue interpreting (Mason 2006a, 2006b). Mason draws on Relevance Theory to bring forward the need for a “mutual cognitive environment” in order for parties in an interaction to understand each other. The interpreter might compensate for the lack of a mutual cognitive environment between the parties. The interpreter’s decisions to make additions, omissions, manipulations, embellishments, and changes, and to give explanations, clarifications, examples, and comments, or not to do any of these should be considered “in the light of what might have been said but was not” (cf. Eraslan 2011: 29).

These decisions to make changes in the original speech will be examined in the framework of a multi-level context that consists of the textual, the interactional, and the institutional levels. The institutional framework is not included due to space restrictions. At the interaction level, the events in which the interpreter is observed will be described and at the text level, divergent renditions will be explored in order to seek answers to the research question stated below.

## 1.2. Research question

In line with the above-explained approach to the key notions of role and context, the present paper aims to address the research question:

- Is there any difference between the interpreter’s role observed at two events with different levels of formality and interactivity in the same institutional context?

## 2. Methodology

This study has been designed as a case study, focusing on interpreter-mediated pre-accession seminars in Turkey, with the coordination of local public institutions and support of international organizations. According to the fieldwork approach, the analysis is conducted on naturally occurring data obtained

from real-life contexts. Although the broader study consists of multiple research methods and data sources (user and interpreter surveys, interviews, and video-recordings), the focus of this paper is the video-recordings of two interpreter-mediated events described below.

### **2.1. Data sources**

Due to its objective of analysing the interpreter's role, video-recordings were obtained with the official permission of related institutions and approval of the participants. 6 sessions of video recordings were obtained from Event 1, each session lasting half an hour. In total, 180 minutes of interpreted speech was taken from this event. Interpreted interactions from Event 2 to be analysed in this paper consist of about 30 minutes (29' 28") of video recordings.

In order to analyse the interpretation, the recordings were transcribed. Due to the differences between spoken and oral language, transcripts cannot be expected to represent everything in the original. The transcription convention by Du Bois et. al. (1993) was used with minor changes in accordance with the objectives of this study.

As for the unit of analysis, the interpreter's decisions and strategies to make changes in the original speech, e.g. to add, omit, summarize, explain will be discussed in the frame of divergent renditions borrowed from Wadensjö (1998: 106-108).

### **2.2. Description of the events**

#### **2.2.1. Event 1**

The first event consisted of a training seminar held within Human Resources Development through the Vocational Education and Training Project. The Project was funded by the EU and organized by Turkish Ministry of Education. The participants were 20 vocational education teachers in Turkey and the trainer was a vocational training expert from Macedonia. The sessions were highly interactive, with a lot of questions and comments from the participants. The speaker turns were short and the trainer was speaking at about 80 words per minute, and usually stopped and waited for the interpreter. There was only one interpreter working consecutively between English and Turkish in both directions. She had interpreting experience at training seminars; hence she was familiar with the type of event. The expert and the interpreter were standing up in front of the group, using a PowerPoint presentation and flip charts, and the participants were seated at a table, just like in a classroom. The interpreter, knowing the participant profile well and aware of what could be expected of her, was very active, helping with tasks and coordinating the interaction.

#### **2.2.2. Event 2**

The second event was a meeting on the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Heritage. Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism had organized this meeting. The speaker, an expert from Canada, and the interpreter were seated at a table located on a platform. Both of them used microphones as the meeting took place at a conference hall. The speaker turns were longer – about a minute – and the expert was speaking much faster – at around 140 words per minute – compared to Event 1. Also, the stretches of talk were longer. There were 25 participants at the meeting, however no question and answer dialogues. The interpreter took notes and interpreted from her notes. She was familiar with the topic of the meeting

and was able to prepare in advance. Unlike Event 1, Event 2 was a formal event without any discussion. Hence, the interpreter's rendition was unidirectional and there was no interactivity.

### 3. Analysis of divergent renditions

#### 3.1. Divergent renditions in numbers

In order to have an overview of the divergent renditions observed during interpretation, first the types of divergent renditions in both events will be given in numbers. Table 1 and Table 2 indicate the divergent renditions observed in the interpreted events under study.

**Table 1.** Divergent renditions in Event 1.

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6	Total
Non-renditions	4	9	6	26	24	3	72
Zero renditions	6	1	3	6	3	4	23
Substituted renditions	2	3	2	4	0	1	12
Reduced renditions	3	0	6	5	5	1	20
Expanded renditions	16	25	20	20	17	37	135
Summarized renditions	0	2	1	3	9	0	15

**Table 2.** Divergent renditions in Event 2.

Non-renditions	Zero renditions	Substituted renditions	Expanded renditions
4	5	14	9

#### 3.2. Divergent renditions in actual interpretation

In this section, an example of divergent renditions identified in the speech will be given. The letter S denotes the Speaker whereas the letter I denotes the interpreter. Divergent renditions are underlined in both source and target speeches and the translation of the interpreter's rendition. The example given as an excerpt in order to provide a holistic view of the interaction is briefly discussed after the excerpt, followed by an overall discussion on divergent renditions. More examples could not be included due to space restrictions.

## Excerpt

1 S zero rendition	<u>Before talking about the cultural policy survey</u> , I'd just like to speak briefly a bit about some of the work we have underway as a civil society organization <u>around the convention</u> and to talk about <u>the possibility of Turkish cultural organizations getting involved in those exchanges with groups in other countries.</u>
2 I expanded renditions	<u>Simdi kültürel politikaların tekrar gözden geçirilmesiyle ilgili çalışmalardan bahsetmeden önce</u> , sivil toplum organizasyonu olarak yaptığımız çalışmalardan bahsetmek istiyorum ve tabi ki Türkiye'de bulunan kültürel organizasyonlar, yurt dışındaki diğer benzer organizasyonlarla <u>nasıl bir alışveriş içerisine girebilirler, fikir alışverişini anlamında</u> , bununla ilgili yorumlarda bulunmak istiyorum. <i>Now before talking about the attempts on revising cultural policies, I'd like to talk about our work as a civil society organization and to talk about how cultural organizations in Turkey can make exchanges, exchanges of opinions, with similar organizations abroad.</i>
3 S	This is our first exchange with the Turkish cultural organizations. Yesterday <u>a colleague from Setam</u> mentioned the meeting with the French coalition organized some years ago, we are working towards a second congress or coalitions in Brazil at the end of May, May 29 to the June first. We have already established contacts with some other cultural organizations in different regions, recently in the coalitions established in Djibouti, Caribbean regional coalitions and their works. In both those cases, we are very hopeful that they will be present at our congress which will take place in Salvador, in the state of Baja, in Brazil and if there is interest flowing out of the 2 days of discussions we have had today we would certainly hope that a representative of the Turkish cultural media can join us as well.
4 I substituted rendition  non-rendition  expanded rendition	Türkiye'deki kültürel organizasyonlarla aslında bu anlamda ilk fikir alışverişini bu toplantı çerçevesinde gerçekleştiriyor olduğumuzu söyleyebiliriz. Tabi ki bunun öncesinde dün <u>Setam başkanının</u> da bahsetmiş olduğu gibi Fransız koalisyonuyla birlikte bir araya gelinen ve yapılan bir toplantı olmuştu. <u>Bununda ilgili olarak da ilerideki, gelecekteki çalışmalarımızdan bahsetmemiz gerekirse 2009 yılında, yani bu yıl 29 Mayıs- 1 Haziran arasında Brezilya'da 2. Kongremizi gerçekleştireceğiz ve farklı ülkelerden temsilciler katılacak. Örneğin, Djibouti'de yeni bir koalisyon kuruldu. Karayipler'de yeni bir koalisyon kuruldu. Bunların da bu 2. kongremize katılacaklarını ve böylelikle fikirlerimizi onlarla da paylaşabileceğimizi düşünüyorum. Salvador'da, Brezilya'da gerçekleştirilecek bu kongre ve bu 2 günlük yaptığımız toplantı sonrasında, eğer ki sizler de bu konuya ilgi duyuyorsanız, bu kongremizde Türkiye'den de bir temsilcinin bulunmasından mutluluk duyacağımızı belirtmek isterim.</u>
	<i>In fact this meeting is our first exchange of opinions with cultural organizations in Turkey. And as yesterday <u>the head of Setam</u> mentioned, a meeting was held also with the French coalition. <u>Related to this, to mention our future studies</u>, in 2009 we will have our second congress in Brazil between May 29 and June 1 and representatives from different countries will participate (in this congress). For instance, a new coalition has been established in Djibouti. Also a new coalition was established in the Caribbeans. I think they will, too, attend our 2<sup>nd</sup> congress and thus we will have the chance to exchange opinions. This congress will be held in Salvador, Brazil and after this two-day-meeting here, if you are interested in this issue, <u>I'd like to state that we'd be glad to have a representative from Turkey with us.</u></i>

(Eraslan 2011:180-181)

This excerpt is taken from the recorded interpretation at Event 2. Following the introduction to the meeting, in which the speaker introduces himself, the speaker mentions the achievements related to the convention and what remains to be done in Turkey. The interpreter does not talk about the convention, rather she makes a comprehensive explanation as to the efforts that might be undertaken in Turkey (2). In the latter divergent rendition, likewise, the interpreter is more explicit than the speaker, whereas in the former divergent rendition she does not render “around the convention”. This might be due to the fact that the convention had already been mentioned in the introduction. Following this zero rendition and expanded rendition, the interpreter makes a substituted rendition, translating “a colleague from Setam” as “the head of Setam”, taking into account her own previous knowledge on the topic (4).

Moreover, in the same turn, the interpreter makes a further remark – the underlined phrase regarding future studies – although the speaker does not mention this at all. All in all, this excerpt includes one zero rendition, one substituted rendition, one non-rendition and two expanded renditions. Thus, this excerpt includes divergences from the original speech, however, due to the nature and features of the event, they are not visible to the audience and the speaker as interpreter interventions.

### **3.3. Discussion on divergent renditions**

#### **3.3.1. Non-renditions**

Non-renditions are the interpreter's utterances that do not exist in the original speech. It can be seen on Table 1 that the interpreter's non-renditions are considerably higher in number at Session 4 and Session 5. This can be due to the fact that the interpreter's involvement in the interaction in terms of content besides translation is much more evident during group work. Non-renditions constitute the type of divergent renditions that are encountered the most frequently in Event 1 following expanded renditions, pointing to the active role the interpreter assumes in the interaction.

In Event 2, few non-renditions have been observed consisting of an apology (one) and remarks on the previous parts of the speech (three). Thus, they are not the interpreter's own contribution or initiative due to the features of the event.

#### **3.3.2. Zero renditions**

Zero renditions are the parties' utterances that are not translated by the interpreter. They include instances where the interpreter misses the original utterance or she does not feel the need to render them. There are also cases in which the participants have discussions among themselves. Zero renditions, however, are fewer than expanded renditions and non-renditions in Event 1.

Zero renditions have been observed in Event 2 as well, though not many in number. In this event, the interpreter cannot ask questions for clarification. Likewise, the participants cannot intervene either, due to the formality of the situation. On the other hand, the interpreter was able to get prepared prior to the event and the material was made available for her, which might account for the low frequency of zero renditions.

#### **3.3.3. Substituted renditions**

Substituted renditions are the parties' utterances that are not translated by the interpreter. They include both reduced and expanded renditions. In Event 1, substituted renditions are encountered the least frequently compared to the other types of divergent renditions observed. This might be attributed to the fact that the interpreter can ask questions if and when needed, therefore does not feel the need to substitute items.

In Event 2, substituted renditions are the type of divergent renditions that are encountered the most frequently, which might be because the interpreter cannot ask questions or consult the speaker or the participants.

### 3.3.4. Reduced renditions

Reduced renditions are the parties' utterances that are partially translated by the interpreter, thus include less explicit information. They are observed much less frequently compared to expanded renditions in Event 1. Reduced renditions are made either because the interpreter assumes the utterance rendered is clear enough, or when she misses part of the original utterance and cannot (or does not) compensate for it.

No reduced renditions were observed in Event 2.

### 3.3.5. Expanded renditions

In expanded renditions, the interpreter renders the speech more explicitly than the original speech. As seen on Table 1, the most frequent type of divergent renditions are expanded renditions in Event 1. The nature of the event – the fact that it consists of training seminars – and the characteristics of the event – high levels of interactivity and lack of formality – might account for the fact that expanded renditions are very frequently encountered. The interpreter makes a lot of explanations and clarifications, which are allowed for, tolerated, and even expected in this setting.

Expanded renditions in Event 2 are more frequent compared to zero renditions and non-renditions, however fewer than substituted renditions. Besides occurrences in which the interpreter is more explicit, in this event, there are also parts of the target speech where the interpreter uses expanded renditions to gain extra time or to make the speech more formal in accordance with the features of the event. This usage of expanded renditions was not observed in Event 1.

### 3.3.6. Summarized renditions

Summarized renditions are quite few in the recordings. These are usually the cases where the interpreter renders the actions of the groups in group work to the speaker. She prefers to summarize these as opposed to her general strategy of being explicit in this event.

Like reduced renditions, summarized renditions were not observed in Event 2 either.

## 4. Conclusion

Whereas zero, reduced, summarized, and substituted renditions are similar in frequency, expanded renditions are the most frequently encountered type of divergent renditions followed by non-renditions in Event 1. Thus, the interpreter is allowed to make many explanations and clarifications reflected by expanded renditions at the utterance level. As discussed above, this reflects the active role and involvement of the interpreter in the interaction influenced by the nature and features of the event, the style of the speaker, observed to be elliptical, as well as user expectations – corresponding to context at the interaction level or situational context – embedded in the broader institutional context.

Unlike Event 1, substituted renditions were the most frequently encountered type of divergent renditions in Event 2 due to the impossibility of asking questions in this setting. Summarized renditions are the least frequent type in Event 1 as the interpreter was able to ask questions in order to clarify unclear points. Reduced renditions and summarized renditions are not observed in Event 2 as understanding on the interpreter's part should be thorough in order to reduce or summarize the

utterances in the original speech. Non-renditions and expanded renditions, which are encountered very frequently in Event 1, revealing what is added, explained, or clarified by the interpreter, are rather infrequent in Event 2. The interpreter's strategy to gain time might account for the fact that expanded renditions are relatively high in number. The few instances where the interpreter is more explicit than the speaker can be considered as an exception. This again underlines the interpreter's active role and involvement in Event 1 contrary to her role in Event 2.

Thus, even within the same institutional context, the interpreter's attitude, as reflected in divergent renditions, is very different in two events with different levels of formality and interactivity. This finding points to the influence of context defined as the nature and features of the event and user expectations on the interpreter's role and involvement.

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