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An Overview of Football Interpreting in Turkey and Interpreters' Views

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Abstract

Sports area, where many different nations and cultures come together, has been one of the biggest factors that increase intercultural communication. Football, one of the biggest fields in terms of sports, succeeds in bringing together the different cultures on a common ground. It has always attracted the most attention for years and has become an international industry. This interest of humanity in football has enabled the sector to reach very large masses financially. The language of sports and football has its own technical terms and jargon. People who will work in this field should have not only the terminology of this area but also a background knowledge of the field. As a field of study that brings together different nations, it is one of the most important sectors where translators and interpreters are needed the most. In this study, football interpreting has been mentioned as an important translation area and sector. The main aim of this study is to inform the new interpreters in the field of football interpreting about this sector, the subtleties and achievements of the profession. The main data of this research consists of interview questions and answers received from professional football interpreters. This study not only aims to provide information, but also analyses the translator profile with real one-to-one interviews. With the extensive information provided by the professional interpreters in the field, the details of the process have been clarified and the mastery of the work has been revealed. As a result of the interview, some conditions provided to translators while working in sports clubs, not much known information until now about the first entry of interpreters into the profession, types of contracts in the profession, financial gain, professionalism of this sector, professional association, advantages/disadvantages of the profession and social rights of translators have been revealed.

Key words: Interpreting, Sports Interpreting, Football Interpreting, Profession, Sports Clubs

Türkiye'de Futbol Tercümanlığına Genel Bir Bakış ve Tercüman Görüşleri

Özet

Birçok farklı milletin ve kültürün bir araya geldiği spor alanı, kültürlerarası iletişimi artıran en büyük etkenlerden biri olmuştur. Spor anlamında en büyük alanlardan biri olan futbol, farklı kültürleri ortak paydada buluşturmayı başarmıştır. Yıllardır her zaman en çok ilgiyi çekmiş ve uluslararası bir sektör haline gelmiştir. İnsanlığın futbola olan bu ilgisi sektörün finansal olarak çok geniş kitlelere ulaşmasını sağlamıştır. Spor ve futbol dilinin kendine has teknik terimleri ve jargonu vardır. Bu alanda çalışacak kişilerin sadece bu alana ait terminolojiye değil, aynı zamanda alan bilgisine de sahip olması gerekmektedir. Farklı milletleri bir araya getiren

bir çalışma alanı olarak mütercim ve tercümanlara en çok ihtiyaç duyulan en önemli sektörlerden biridir. Bu çalışmada önemli bir tercüme alanı ve sektörü olarak futbol tercümesine değinilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı futbol tercümanlığı alanına yeni başlayan tercümanları bu sektör, mesleğin incelikleri ve kazanımları hakkında bilgilendirmektir. Bu araştırmanın ana verilerini profesyonel futbol yorumcularından alınan mülakat soruları ve cevapları oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma sadece bilgi sağlamayı amaçlamamakta, aynı zamanda çevirmen profilini gerçek bire bir görüşmelerle analiz etmektedir. Futbol tercümanlığı olan alanda profesyonel tercümanları tarafından sağlanan kapsamlı bilgilerle sürecin detayları netleştirilerek işin ustalığı ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Mülakat sonucunda tercümanların spor kulüplerinde çalışırken sağladığı şartlar, tercümanların mesleğe ilk girişi hakkında bugüne kadar pek bilinmeyen bilgiler, meslekte sözleşme türleri, maddi kazanç, bu sektörün profesyonelliği, meslek birlikteliği, mesleğin avantaj/dezavantajları ve çevirmenlerin sosyal hakları ortaya konmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Çeviri, Spor Çevirisi, Futbol Çevirisi, Meslekleşme, Spor Klüpleri

INTRODUCTION

Sports is a national activity where cultures come together while incorporating many disciplines. Intercultural interaction, which emerged with the development and spread of sports in the globalizing world, has begun to require interpretation between different languages and interpreters to be employed in this field. Dozens of cultures in this area need a communication bridge. The profession of interpreting undertakes this bridge in two separate ways, both written and oral. Sports interpreting as both written and oral emerges as a sub-branch of the field of interpreting and thus, interpreters have an important role in this area. As Uyanık (11) outlined it should not be forgotten that the role of an interpreter is basically to enable people or groups from different cultures to communicate with each other. Interpreters have to keep themselves alive and dynamic in sports. Besides, as Ünsal (12) stated, each branch of sport has its own technical and special vocabulary, its own jargon, cliché and even slang. Sports translator comes into play to convey these technical terms to the audience outside the profession.

Interpreters working in this industry not only perform translation duties, but also become a part of the technical committee of the football club or act as an assistant of a football player. A football interpreter should always keep an equal distance from teachers, managers and players, and should not take any sides. He/she needs to master the language and be able to manage stress well. An interpreter of a foreign player or coach who comes to the team is in the position of being hand and foot from the moment that player or coach arrives in the country. His/her translation service is not only the translation of the directives given during the match, but also continues to provide translation services in environments other than sports.

Sports clubs need an interpreter within their own club, as they do work for which large budgets are allocated. A sports interpreter can be a salaried employee who is on duty whenever the club needs it. Since foreign athletes have to solve their language problems, they work in every relevant environment, from training to meetings, from press releases to interviews on television. The comforting aspect of this interpretation field is that since the parties involved in the interpretation process such as interpreters, trainers and team members are not variable, content and terminology may not vary as much as other fields; however, it is an area with a high level of stress because it is a business with big money.

This study deals with football interpreting, which is the most well-known and most common business field of sports interpreting in the field of interpreting. When we consider today's conditions, football interpreting is both a fun and an interesting field. The task of the interpreter is to ensure that the parties with different cultural backgrounds understand each other (6). As Linell (7) stated, "the speaker communicates within the framework of certain situations and contexts in his own physical and social environment and conveys his message to the other person". This situation reveals the need for translators. From this point, it is important to understand the level of professionalism of football interpreting, which is a part of sports interpreting, and the duties undertaken by this profession in Turkey. In this direction, the ways of meeting the interpreting needs of the clubs and football federations that compete at the highest level in the national leagues and their translation policies are tried to be discussed.

Sport Interpreting as a Profession

In the case of many sports teams, a specific type of such formal - or forced - multilingual setting exists. These have recently started to rely more heavily on players from other countries. Because of the inflow of international players into national leagues, most national sports organizations now have a quota on the number of foreign players who can play in teams. The team's makeup is then determined not only by the players' appropriateness (and financial availability), but also by nationality politics, with players periodically switching citizenship to comply with external laws. Professional sports teams might be thought of as unique examples of multilingual workplaces. This is because multilingual and multinational groups are created in the same way: individuals are brought together based on their talents and availability rather than their own social preferences. Sports teams, in this sense, are formal groups, as opposed to informal social organizations, in which, an individual normally selects his or her participation as a result of a reasonably free decision (2). In order to reach a common goal, sports teams are similar to work teams in that all players must coordinate their activity. Having multilingual and multinational groups cause the need of interpretation. Consequently, interpreters are needed in all international sports events, as a companion/host in international sports organizations such as the Olympics, winter games, summer games, or when experts and players speaking different languages are brought together, such as press conferences and panels. (1).

If sports interpreting is considered theoretically, in this subtype there are two types of modals. These are 'mode' and 'modality'. The former one refers to ways of how it is done and it includes both verbal and oral sports interpreting. On the other hand, the latter one refers to its context. Interpreter has to know not only one nation's language but also its cultural items because interpreter must ensure communication between different cultures at most accurate level. In addition, a sports interpreter must have the terminology of field, technical knowledge and variety of fields thanks to its interdisciplinary nature as well. Most of the sports associations and translation offices that provide translators to the sports industry emphasize that it is very important for the translator to have knowledge of the field of work and the terminology in this field (4).

Sports interpreters can do consecutive interpreting (interpreting after a speaker), liaison interpreting (interpreting between and after speakers) or simultaneous interpreting ("interpreting almost as the same time as the original speaker from a booth or whispering in the ear of the client" (4). They can translate at press conferences, sports clinics, on the field or in the race. They can be placed next to the athlete or translated from a television studio. Most of the sports interpreting that we can observe as viewers takes place in front of a television camera, in some countries this activity is sometimes carried out by sports commentators or television presenters or even former players who speak the target language and are experienced as communicators (4) and these translations made in the field of sports are followed or watched by many people. Therefore, translation or interpreting, especially in the field of sports, is a profession that requires care and must be done elaborately by the experts.

Football Interpreting as the Subtype of Sport Interpreting

When we consider the transformation of football based on its historical process, it has been revealed that football has become a more organized and appealing phenomenon to the masses with its institutions and organizations established in the process. As a result of these changes, football players have become global players, and both linguistic, cultural and economic changes have occurred in the field. Football interpreters have started to appear especially in our country as a consequence of all the developments in the field. Football interpreters have determined their own positions with their duties and responsibilities at many points of the field.

The importance of the language phenomenon in the field of football is increasing day by day. Football players, managers, broadcasters, sports writers, clubs are the global representatives of this field. One of the obstacles encountered in this area is communication. Although there is a perception that the language of football is common in general, when football players make a new transfer, they need to communicate from their daily lives to their professional lives in the adaptation to the new country they transfer to. In this communication, the main mediators are the interpreters however, they should be aware of the importance of

their own profession and the need of their own presence. From this point, the need for interpretation and interpreters, especially in international tournaments, is very high, which is highlighted by the fact that football has a lot of culture. At the 2014 World Cup, there were 32 national teams and 15 different languages spoken by these teams. This multicultural situation has become very important for the interpretation sector and it has created the need for interpreter. Interpreters were divided into two as volunteers and experts, and they worked in many areas to facilitate the operation of this multicultural organization. When we look at the employment of interpreters in Europe, we see companies that cooperate with clubs. These companies are large companies that have gathered the profession of football and interpreting under one roof and will develop and carry forward football interpreting, which is a sub-branch of sports interpreting. The wide range of players brought by the cultural diversity in Europe has highlighted a scenario that requires an interpreter for many foreign languages. In this process, it is seen that they use former players, existing players, language courses or rarely professional interpreters in intra-club communication rather than using contracted interpreters. Until recent years, the profession of football interpreter in Turkey was referred to as "the interpreter of the team", "the interpreter of the player", "the interpreter of the X coach" and there was no term such as "sports/football consecutive interpreter" (1). This situation in Turkey shows that football interpreting is still not official. Interpreters are under the titles called technical staff, administrative staff or support team of the clubs. Football interpreting in Turkey is carried out by employing contracted interpreters who will work full-time or by employing full-time interpreters to meet the interpretation needs of the Turkish Football Federation for international meetings and events. At this point, the importance of being aware of football interpreters as a profession emerges. As Katar (5) expressed, "Translating Professional Standards" published in the Official Gazette in 2013, which have an explanatory and decisive quality on subjects such as the definition of the profession, its place in international classification systems, working environment and conditions, are extremely important for football interpreting, as in every branch of translation. As a matter of fact, a football interpreter who is aware of these standards and cooperates with his colleagues and other stakeholders in the field of translation will be more conscious of his rights and will be able to act appropriately in possible problems he may encounter regarding the working environment, job description or other issues.

In football press conferences, the whole range of interpreting modes is available, but the most popular choice is consecutive interpreting, which is reasonably straightforward to organize and does not require any specialized equipment. Simultaneous interpretation in the booth is also uncommon in pre- and post-match news conferences in domestic league games, as well as during official player presentations: just a few prominent teams have the appropriate equipment in their stadiums such as Real Madrid CF, FC Barcelona, FC Bayern Munich, and Arsenal FC. Simultaneous interpreting, on the other hand, is often favoured in the final rounds of international tournaments: because these events are really multilingual, simultaneous interpreting is the only realistic way to present many language versions at the same time FIFA and UEFA each have their own Chief Interpreters who hire conference interpreters with the necessary language combinations and coordinate with interpreting equipment and technical support providers (8, 9). In fact, above all, football interpreting fits the definition of liaison interpreting, especially in press conferences and intra-club communication. Despite the wide range of situations, the interpreter's role in press conferences appears to be fairly straightforward: if a foreign player or coach does not speak the official language of the press conference (L1), the interpreter interprets the questions into the foreign language (L2) and the interviewee's responses into official language (L1); similarly, if questions are asked in L2 by a foreign reporter (and answered in the same language by the coach or player), they are interpreted into L1(8, 9). Thus, as Uyanık (11) indicated, "sports interpreting is a consecutive interpreting service provided by an interpreter working for a team, coach or a player in sports clubs and sports organizations. There is a need to define the place where sports interpreting finds itself among the types of interpreting.

Beyond all this, as Dinar (3) expressed, ensuring that the players learn the language of the country they live in can be another solution. However, despite all these differences and difficulties, the fact that a football player who has transferred to any country has a command of the language of the country he is in at least enough to fulfill the basic communication requirements, whether through the club's service or his own will and possibilities, is important both in communication within the club and in relations with the media. It will be useful in the social relations of the football player. Therefore, the method of getting help from the

language teacher, which is one of the solutions for the communication problem of the clubs, is mostly shaped by the personal interest and desire of the football player (3).

As can be seen, football interpreting is an important field that closely concerns the whole world and the football industry. For this reason, it is essential that this field is professionalized and that translators are given the necessary rights. From this point of view, in this study, based on the views of translators, various opinions will be put forward on points such as the pros and cons of the profession.

METHOD

The method of this study, in which research was conducted on football interpreting, is a qualitative research and a questionnaire was applied with open-ended interview questions directed to interpreters working in the football interpretation sector. In the survey, questions were asked to the interpreters of the teams whose names are widely heard in the football industry. Serkan Gürbüz, whose name will be the first to be heard when the roots of the industry are explored among these interpreters, also answered the questions posed. In addition, interviews were held with the translators of Beşiktaş, which is extremely successful in the Turkish Super League ranking in today's football community. In addition to the four big sports clubs, translators working with the very successful and frequently heard clubs Caykur Rizespor and Konyaspor also responded to the survey. The interpreters contributed to the research in a very sincere and helpful way. With the answers given to these interview questions, findings about the professionalism, advantages and disadvantages of the profession in the football interpreting sector, the economic situation offered by the sector to interpreters and social rights have been revealed. In this part of the study, the data obtained from the interviews with interpreters working freely or affiliated with a club in the football sector will be mentioned. Questions about the processes of starting the profession, whether they are contracted or not, the income they provide from the profession, social rights (health insurance, compensation, retirement, etc.), professionalism, association of profession and the advantages and disadvantages of the profession will be presented in this section and the answers to these questions will be discussed in the conclusion section of the study.

After the subject of the study was chosen, necessary research was carried out. This process took approximately two weeks. After this step of the study, the implementation phase was started. First of all, the method to be used in this implementation was decided as an interview message, then the names, social media or e-mail addresses of the interpreters working in the teams were searched. After all this information was obtained, it was said that they wanted to interview one by one. This process took some time. The waiting time to receive feedback from translators even reached two weeks. As the last step, interview questions were sent to football interpreters via e-mail. They conveyed their answers to the questions digitally. The interview, which is one of the main data collection methods of the study, includes important opinions and thoughts of the football interpretation sector and interpreters about the profession.

In this study conducted for the football interpreting sector, the number of interpreters who answered the interview questions was sufficient to collect the data intended to be obtained from the interpreters currently working in the field, although it was very few. In the light of these data, it is thought that the findings obtained for the football interpretation sector will contribute to the literature and other academic studies to be conducted in football area.

Data Collection

Within the scope of the interview conducted for football interpreters, seven questions were asked to the interpreters, and the questions were gathered under four main headings as shown in Part 3. In this context, six different interpreters were reached and answers to the related questions were received.

Data Analysis

The general purpose of the questions in the interview is to obtain information about the profession in the light of the experience gained by the interpreters working in the field and to raise the awareness of the new interpreters who will participate in the field.

The first question asked how football interpreters entered the sector. In this question, it is aimed to find out how interpreters first started the sector, how they decided to enter this sector, whether they were interested

in this field before and whether they received training in this field. In the second question, they were asked whether they worked as freelance interpreters in the sector or as contractual with a club. This question aims to determine whether interpreters are freely exercising this profession or are in agreement with a club. Another purpose of the question is to find out whether the profession requires the contract. The third question is about whether their income from the profession is sufficient or not. Considering today's economy, it was tried to reveal with this question whether the income obtained from this profession is sufficient to satisfy the interpreter beyond meeting the needs of the interpreter. The fourth question asked to football interpreters is what kind of social rights (health insurance, compensation, retirement, etc.) they have and what improvements can be made in this regard. This question aims to reveal what social rights the profession offers interpreters, the differences arising from clubs and the type of contract, and how the interpreter is affected by it. In the fifth question, the professionalism level of the sector and how professional they found football interpreting as a profession were asked. This question aims to reveal how professionally perceived by those who perform the profession of football interpreter and the effect of the responsibilities of the profession. In the sixth question, whether there is a professional association for football interpreters and, if any, the membership status of interpreters was asked and afterward they were asked whether they are satisfied with the services and cooperation provided by the association to get information about the sector and membership status of interpreters. Finally, in the last question, the advantageous and disadvantageous aspects of the profession were asked. This question aims to comprehensively address the positive or negative aspects of this profession by those who perform the profession for interpreter candidates who are interested in the profession and are considering doing this profession in the future.

FINDINGS

Interpreters Stepping into the Profession

The entry of the six interpreters interviewed into the sector is different from each other. In general, many of the interpreters entered the profession spontaneously at an unexpected time. However, the situation of the remaining interpreters is slightly different. Generally, it comes to mind that those who perform the interpretation profession have graduated from the relevant department. However, when we look at the answers given by the interpreters, it has been seen that their aptitude for foreign languages can be effective in their inclusion in this field. In this case, of course, among the interviewed interpreters, there are exceptional ones who have been involved in the field with their diplomas. In line with their interest in the field, some of them have been trained in this process and some of them have started to work with different tasks in the field of football. However, the common point that they all meet is that they eventually undertake the task of interpreting in this field. After starting this task, they all progressed with love for the profession in general terms.

Contract Type and Financial Gain

Considering the type of contract, most of the interpreters said that the football interpreters were not contracted but an insured employee, like a salaried staff of the club. Since their insurance is based on a high amount, this is considered as a contract for them in a way. However, an interviewee interpreter stated that she worked freely, performed simultaneous and consecutive interpretations in many different fields, and saw football interpreting as only one department in a wide range. Freelance interpreter stated that she does not earn a satisfactory level because she is not affiliated with any club, while a translator working under a contract with a club that had a good season stated that his earnings were quite sufficient. It is seen that the common opinion of the interpreters who are affiliated with a club is at a satisfactory level especially in large clubs in terms of financial gain. There are also interpreters who think that a football interpreter receives extras in addition to the fee, and when they come together, they think that a good income is earned. Of course, when we look at the beginning times of the history of the football translation industry, this financial gain is higher, but when we consider the impact of the economy in today's conditions, it is seen that this situation has decreased now.

Professionalism and Association of the Profession

The opinions of the six interpreters interviewed about the professionalism are different from each other. The opinion of one of the interpreters on this issue is that football interpreting is not professional enough, the Turkish Jaurnal of Sport and Exercise /Türk Spor ve Egzersiz Dergisi 2023 25(2):173-180 178 functioning of the system is simpler than it should be, but this situation can be resolved very quickly with the necessary inspections and developments. The common view of some of the interpreters is that the interpreter does not only work as an interpreter in the club, but is also assigned as the assistant of the players in the club. They think that the perspective of the clubs is important at this point. They also say that the interpreter should be on an equal footing between the club, players and club officials. On the subject of association, the common answer of interpreters is that there is no association. Many interpreters think that a step should be taken in this regard. They say that the association will both help the interpreters to make their voices heard and make the sector more professional and institutional in itself.

Advantages/Disadvantages of the Profession and Social Rights of Interpreters

As the advantages of the profession, the answers given by the interpreters are within the framework of financial gain, the environment provided by business life, working with qualified people and travelling. Interpreters stated that financial gain is higher than most of the sectors if they had a successful season. They also stated that they like the working environment offered by this industry and that people who like to appear in front of the camera can be satisfied with this profession. Interpreters, who watched TV as a child and got together with the football players they admired, stated that the industry is very exciting in this regard. Travelling is seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage. Because while some of the interpreters are married and even have children, some of them live a single life.

In terms of disadvantages of this sector, interpreters state that although the profession looks like a fairy tale from a distance, it also has disadvantages that can be gathered under a few headings such as the opposite of the profession to family life, the profession creating too much stress and the interpreter being in a very critical position, sometimes not being able to have a settled life, and not having specific days.

Considering social rights, interpreters state that they have the same rights as employees in other corporate professions. They can benefit from opportunities such as compensation, retirement, health insurance. They also expressed that they do not have any rights specific to them, they are not privileged because they are interpreters, and because they are a part of the technical team, the labour law comes into play in compensation and similar issues.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the method applied throughout the study, together with the findings obtained about the subject under investigation, it can be concluded that football interpreting is more dominant than other types of sports interpreting in line with the findings worldwide and focused on this field. The findings obtained in line with the answers given by the interpreters to the questions are as follows. First of all, considering today's economy, it has been concluded that financial gain is at a lesser level than in the past, but this situation may change if a good season is spent within the club. In general, when working hours are evaluated, financial gain is actually at a more satisfactory level than many other professions. Another point where the answers received from the interpreters meet in the common denominator is that they generally work without a contract. It has been revealed that there is no difference from other professions in terms of insurance and other social rights. Thirdly, the answers received in terms of professionalism of the profession differ when Turkey and abroad are considered separately. Indicating that the situation in Turkey can be improved, the interpreters stated that there is no association in the field. They said that an association to be established would also improve the professionalism. Finally, regarding the advantages/disadvantages of the sector, the most emphasized issues are financial gain and the business environment brought by the sector.

As a result, this study, which has been added to other studies in the field of interpreting and football interpreting, is based on scientifically obtained data from the field and while it outlines the functioning of the profession, it contains information that will guide the interpreters who will be new to the field.

It is seen that the common point that emerged from the answers of the interpreters who worked in different clubs working as professionals in our country is that football interpreting is now a professional sector and a professional job definition should be made as in other professions.

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