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*Review*

# Technological Tools for Interpreters

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**ABSTRACT**

Unlike translators, for whom a number of computer -assisted tools are available, interpreters have not yet benefited from the same level of automation. Their work continues to rely on traditional methods. During my professional experience I have had plenty of opportunities to know and sometimes to use several computers – assisted tools. But regarding the interpreters, they have not yet benefited from the same level of automation. Their work continues to rely on traditional methods. At this point, I agree with author Alexander Drechsel that as his article "Interpreters versus Technology: Reflections on a Difficult Relationship: Parts 1 and 2" points out that the interpreting industry has had an uneasy relationship with technology. Despite that, due to the new role of interpreter in the global world and the growing need for highly professionals' skills in order to provide excellent services in every field like the public sector, medical and legal, there is a growing interest in developing tools addressed at interpreters as end users. I think that we are on the verge of many technological developments that I think and hope will bring more support and innovation to interpreting. Although, the number of these technology tools is still very low and they are not intended to cover all interpreters' needs. In this paper I'd like to share my researches and knowledges regarding some technological tools and applications available for interpreting training and practice.

**Keywords:** Interpreters, technology, tools, interpretation, terminology, glossaries, training.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Often the two processes, interpreting and translating are cited interchangeably as closely related linguistic fields, but each has a distinct role to play in certain situations. The difference between interpretation and translation, at first glance, lies in each service's medium: interpreters translate spoken language orally, while translators translate the written word. The two processes have similarities like deep cultural and linguistic understanding, expert knowledge of the subject matter, and ability to communicate clearly. However, in the situations on choosing from the two, it is important to recognize what is the difference between them.

Interpretation isn't word – for - word translation of a spoken message. Interpreters need to rearrange the source language, within context, maintain its original meaning, but rephrasing idioms, colloquialisms, and other culturally – specific references in a manner that the target audience can understand. In certain environments, the interpreters need to act like diplomatic mediators and in many cases need to be good public speakers. For more they need to deliver their message instantly, either in unison or immediately after the original speech, with no help from speech, dictionaries, or other materials. An interpreter's only resources are experience, a good memory, and quick reflexes.

Perhaps the biggest difference between interpreters and translators is that most translators use computer – aided – tools in their work. Even though a myriad of computer – assisted tools are available, interpreters have not benefited from the same level of automation and innovation like translators have. Their work relies still by and large on traditional or manual methods. But today, although the number of technology tools addressed at interpreters as end users is still very low and they are not intended to cover all interpreter's needs, fortunately the interest towards them is growing more and more.

## 2. INTERPRETING MODES

Based on the mode of delivering the original message, interpreting is divided in two main categories: simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. In simultaneous interpreting the interpreter gives the target message more or less the same time that source message is produced, whereas in consecutive interpreting the interpreter waits and takes notes in the meantime until the speaker has finished before beginning the interpretation.

Relevant authors and reputable interpreting institutions such as ITI (WEB1) or AIIC (WEB2) have their own classifications. But the most frequent interpreting modes encountered in industry literature and offered by company services are as below:

• Whispered interpreting – a subcategory of simultaneous interpreting whispered into the listener's ear for which no specialized equipment is required.

• Conference interpreting – takes place in multilingual conferences and can be either simultaneous or consecutive, depending on the technical equipment available.

• Business interpreting – used for smaller groups or business meetings, visits to a foreign country, etc. Can be either simultaneous or consecutive, working on both directions for two parties.

• Court interpreting – interpreting services provided in a legal setting such as courts of law.

• Tele interpreting (also remote or offsite) – is done through a remote or offsite interpreter using a telephone (phone interpreting) or via video (video remote interpreting). It is mostly consecutive but can also be simultaneous.

• Community interpreting – is used to enable people that aren't fluent speakers of the official language of a country to communicate with the providers of public services in order to facilitate access to legal, health, education, government and social services (Roda Roberts).

## 3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR TECHNOLOGY

Except for tele interpreting where the interpreting services are off-site, the most interpreting services are on-site, meaning that the clients are in the same place where the interpreters do the services. This limits the possibility to use a suite of technological tools to assist the on – site interpreters and as I know from my researches such a system has not yet been developed. But in the same time, we have to admit that nowadays, in order to provide the most reliable interpretations services, the use of technology is required to create a "real-time" communication experience.

According to Trusted Translations (WEB3) – leader in interpretations services, the best interpretations services are accomplished by using a closed wireless communication system with special microphones, headsets and transmitting equipment. Depending on the physical environment and the confidential nature of the information, different technologies are used.

There are two major technologies in simultaneous interpretations – FM/RF and IR. FM (or referred to as RF for Radio Frequency equipment) is a technology similar to that used by radio stations and can cover wide distances and penetrate walls. IR (or Infrared), is used normally in smaller indoor settings for more secure communications less susceptible to interference. IR normally requires line-of-site.

But if talk about the technological tools for interpreters more chances for their development are with regard to two important processes for the interpreters: preparation phase, prior to any interpreting service, where interpreters, in order to get ready for their work, need to acquire as much information and specialized knowledge as possible, once they know the settings and the topics of their service, so they can start preparing terminological resources such as glossaries, managing documents and so on. And the second process is the training of interpreters at various stages and in different modes.

## 4. TERMINOLOGY TOOLS FOR INTERPRETERS

According to Cabré, (1996, p.16-23) "terminology is the set of units of expression and communication which allow specialized knowledge transfer". The phase of terminology's preparation is very important for both simultaneous and consecutive interpreters. Correct terminological use presents an important quality parameter for interpreters because use of terminology in interpretation can influence client's perception to interpreters.

The interpreting process cannot be interrupted (not the same as in written translation). For this reason, interpreters need to acquire additional linguistic and specialized knowledge largely prior to the interpreting process. Even though some interpreters still store information and terminology on scraps of paper or excel spreadsheets several tools are developed to meet the needs of them.

The interpreters, most of the time, use the glossaries that are alphabetical lists of terms in a particular domain of knowledge with the definitions for those terms. Traditionally, a glossary includes terms that are either newly introduced, uncommon, or specialized. A bilingual glossary is a list of terms in one language defined in a second language or glossed by synonyms (or at least near-synonyms) in another language.

In a general sense, a glossary contains explanations of concepts relevant to a certain field of study or action. At this purpose I'm briefly describing below some of technological tools that have as their main feature building of glossaries so important for the interpreters.

## 5. INTRAGLOSS

Is a useful and excellent glossary-building tool for interpreters and can be used to make preparation for a conference fast and easy. Is created by conference interpreter Dan Kenig[1] and software developer Daniel Pohoryles. The aims of this software are to "cut the preparation time of interpreters by as much as 50%." To get his purpose, Intragloss offers a number of tools for reading and comparing documents, identifying terms, searching for equivalents online, and creating term lists and multilingual glossaries. It is available for Mac computers, whereas a Windows version is still in the works. Includes a user's guide and fast customer support via email.

Intragloss is organized hierarchically, into domains and assignments. Domains generally reflect specializations, and assignments usually represent a single interpreting job, for example "Cell Phones" is a domain and "Madrid Expo 2015" is an individual assignment. Every Intragloss assignment is by

[1] Active AIIC Member since 2014 (AIIC is an international non-profit organisation representing professional conference interpreters worldwide).

default bilingual, and includes a bilingual assignment glossary. Each assignment glossary has at least two columns, for the source and target language terms.

Each domain has a domain glossary, which is automatically populated from the individual assignment glossaries in the domain. Since a domain can include assignments with different language pairs, a domain glossary can be multilingual. Referred to the example given by the author Josh Goldsmith in his article "The Interpreter's Toolkit: Intragloss - a useful glossary-building tool for interpreters (Goldsmith, 2017)", "Paris Expo 2015" and "Madrid Expo 2015" are two bilingual assignments – an English/French assignment and an English/Spanish assignment. Both are part of the "Cell Phones" domain, which has a trilingual English/Spanish/French glossary including all of the terms from every assignment in the domain.

Every Intragloss assignment can include one or more documents supporting several input formats including pdf, word, ppt, pages and keynote. Cited the same author: "I usually import everything I receive from conference organizers and any other materials I find while preparing for an assignment into Intragloss, and use these documents to develop term lists and multilingual glossaries".

Intragloss has also a built-in web browser, which means that is possible to import one or more webpages into a given assignment. This is an especially useful feature, since interpreters often prepare from online sources in addition to the documents provided by conference organizers. Intragloss also offers search features to quickly pull up terms while in the booth, but these pale in comparison to other glossary management programs, like Interpreters' Help or Interplex. But cited Josh Goldsmith: "Nevertheless, Intragloss is a versatile, easy-to-use program that significantly decreases my preparation time. Despite a few minor bugs, it's my go-to tool when preparing for nearly every interpreting assignment…Intragloss is indeed a robust, time saving tool."

Intragloss is one of the most expensive pieces of interpreting software: at $49 per month, $99 for three months or $269 per year, an Intragloss subscription is rather pricey. But also offers discount for students enrolled in interpreting programs. Below are some important features of this tool:

• Building glossaries using the online search function - creates a new assignment (and a new domain if needed), opens any related documents or websites in that assignment, and starts reading through the documents and fleshing out the glossary. It offers two different tools for building glossaries: online terminology search and terminology extraction from parallel documents that would be pre-selected websites – which can include online dictionaries, parallel corpora tools, and terminology portals.

• Comparing documents and building glossaries from parallel documents in a short time – it is the case when interpreters do work for international organizations and often receive sets of parallel documents in various languages. Once a translated file is attached to a document imported before Intragloss displays the original and translated files side by side.

• Creating a monolingual terminology list – reading through a document just received in case of no time available, intragloss can create a monolingual terminology list with "unknown" terms. This list will be downloaded and printed out at a later moment in order to look up these terms or discuss them with colleagues.

• Downloading glossaries - the program exports glossaries in .txt and .doc formats, which the developers claim is "spreadsheet-" and "word-processing compatible." But cited Josh Goldsmith "On this front, I think Intragloss falls a bit short."

• Importing glossaries – allows to import pre–existing glossaries and multilingual lists too.

• Viewing, sorting, and searching through glossaries – possibility to display domain glossaries in flat and tabular layouts, to search all the entries, acronyms and remarks in every language in the glossary, to sort your lists alphabetically by a given language, and finally, to search an assignment glossary by order of appearance or synchronize the document(s) to see where the term first appears. But according these features Josh Goldsmith recommends: "I use Intragloss for preparing glossaries, but other tools from intragloss' competitors for searching through them while on assignment."

• Quickly preparing an assignment glossary - by default, when one or more documents are imported into Intragloss, the program automatically highlights all the terms that are already in the domain glossary and creates an assignment glossary including all these terms and their translations. It is possibile to click on a term to see it in context, scroll through and search this glossary, see a glossary for a single document, or extract this glossary – "an incredibly useful tool for quickly deriving a small, assignment-specific glossary from a much larger one." (Goldsmith, 2017)

• Merging documents with glossaries for simultaneous with text or sight translation – in case of being sent a speech that will be read out during a meeting, but with translations for all of the key terms provided. That's what this merge feature aims to do – annotate a document to include the translations of every term in the glossary.

## 6. LOOK UP

This is a terminology tool developed by experienced conference interpreters and translators for use during simultaneous interpreting and while translating. Their philosophy was the combination of their knowledge on translation and that of the world of computing.

LookUp's graphical user interface is intuitive enough to support simultaneous interpreters while working in the booth and technical translators working as freelancers or as part of a translation or localization team. Its price is around € 99,00(+tax), but for student is available LookUp University Edition that is free of charge, limited to 180 days and/or 10000 terms and prolongation maybe requested with student ID verification. It can be customized for any particular environment.

Below I'm describing briefly his features:

• Working language – can provide up to five languages: English, Deutch, Spanish, French, and Italian.

• Project/Subject – it is recommended to build related groups of words. Any new term entered into LookUp will automatically be grouped into the subject and project previously steed as default on the button "Project and Subject".

• Enter terms – enter terms and other data into LookUp. If the term entered is already in the database, LookUp will display it in order to avoid the redundance. All terms are automatically assigned to the subject and conference defaults selected earlier and will by default be displayed in the form of a two-column table.

• In the Booth – for searching and filtering the terms, for examples to display all terms of a whole subject, sub subject, or conference, or only the terms belonging to a certain session within a conference.

• Instant Search – to search for terms, during simultaneous interpreting for example, simply entering any part of them (3 -4 letters).

• More features as: Easy Import – to import legacy terminology; Printing – to print and publicate the terminological data; Housekeeping – to reorganize large amount of entries; Advanced Lexicography – to add more information regarding a given term; Confidence rating – allows to rate the confidence level of any given term (for example "booth solution", "verified" or "team consensus"); Cascading filters – allows to cascade a conference and subject information; Concept fields – enables to not only store semantically and/or logically related terms with any given term but also to display these relationships in a graphical representation.

## 7. INTERPRETBANK

This tool has been originally developed at the Faculty for Translation and Interpreting of the University of Mainz/Germersheim as a PhD project by Claudio Fantinuoli (WEB4). It is considered as the leading computer-assisted interpreting tool developed to support professional interpreters during their work, from assignment preparation to interpretation. InterpretBank for Windows and mac OS supports interpreters in the creation, management, memorization of glossaries as well as on facilitating terminology retrieval, even during interpreting. Glossaries can be easily accessed from desktops and laptops and from any mobile device, like an iPad or an Android tablet, even without Internet connection. It is very worthwhile to create high-quality glossaries, and to easily access them, in the booth or in a face-to-face situation reducing dramatically the effort and the time involved in writing them. While creating a new glossary, InterpretBank suggests translations automatically thanks to integrated high-quality terminological resources (e.g. IATE). It is possible to integrate preparatory documents and

presentations, and automatically extract terminology and key concepts (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch) from the texts.

InterpretBank is already used by hundreds of professional interpreters around the world who work freelance or for major institutions such as the European Union and belong to a professional association, such as AIIC.

The software's owners suggest (WEB5) "If you are an educator teaching translation and interpreting technologies, consider using InterpretBank in your courses. We have a program for collaboration with educators.... We would like to facilitate universities offering classes or workshops on computer-assisted interpreting (CAI) and offer 3-months free licenses (one term) to teach InterpretBank. You can distribute these licenses to your students. If you wish to permanently install InterpretBank on your lab computers, we can provide a campus license or a fix number of licenses to a cheap price."

## 8. TOOLS FOR INTERPRETER TRAINING

Daniel Gile in his book "Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training" speaking about the importance of translator and interpreter training stated that "it is increasingly recognized that formal training in Translation schools is the most practical way to teach and test abilities to provide the market with reliable professionals and the number of translator and interpreter training programs has been increasing sharply in many parts of the world."

As interpreters start becoming more visible in the world and the best interpretation services are provided by highly skilled professionals who are able to show emotional resilience in extreme circumstances, are good listeners, have an extensive vocabulary and are enthusiastic about perfecting their skill set, their training programs has become a very important factor.

Due to the growing dependency on computers in every workspace, the logical consequence was the combination of traditional training programs and that of the world of computing. So, the software developers respond to technological needs and wants.

There are currently a number of applications used for the training practice. Some of them are useful for managing text and audio files like GoodReaders and Documents, some others besides voice recording, allow the conversion into several audio formats, editing and quality improvement like AudioNote, Notability, VoiceDictation, VoicePro.

More, there is a very limited set of integrated tools that assist interpreters during their services or when training. For example, Black Box is a computer-assisted interpreter training tool developed by Melissi Multimedia Ltd (U.K.) and was released on March 2005. It includes dedicated authoring functions to create simultaneous, consecutive and liaison interpreting exercises, as well as sight translation exercises, and several new and improved user functions. It has been developed as a computer tool to support the

teching and learning of interpreting, that means, to complement existing teaching methods in interpreter training.

By providing professors with this user-friendly, flexible tool, it is hoped that they will exploit to the fullest the opportunities offered by today's mass media and technology in order to reduce the time needed to create materials for students' self-study hours.

Annalisa Sandrelli (Forlì, Bologna) at her paper "Designing CAIT (Computer-Assisted Interpreter Training) Tools: Black Box" describing the features of this powerful tool staded that "Creating interpreter training exercises in the program is no more time-consuming than preparing class materials in the traditional way for example finding suitable audio or video tape recordings or a speech transcript, and then highlighting the possible sources of difficulties for students, including cultural references, specific syntactic structures, language-pair related aspects, etc. Moreover, materials produced with Black Box by different universities could be exchanged to save time and expand the range of available speeches (topics, accents, speaking styles, etc.). Finally, Black Box makes it possible to establish a strong connection between class activities and self-study hours: for example, teachers can use the first part of a recording in class and then make the rest available to

trainees through the program. Thus, teachers can feel confident that the self-study hours

actively work as reinforcement activities and contribute to consolidating the techniques and

principles presented in class."

Finally, recently some other web-based environments have been created to provide interpreters and students with a wide range of exercises, and complete speeches to practice simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. These websites are very useful for students and for novice interpreters who are willing to practice and improve their interpreting skills.

For example, Interpreter Training Resources is meant as a compilation of material and links that can be of direct practical help to trainee conference interpreters and their trainers and is an attempt to fill a gap and help interpreter to train more effectively.

There are some great websites to practice interpreting as:

• Speechpool, a repository of speeches specifically geared towards interpreters, and interpreters upload their own speeches in a variety of languages, so there is a wide variety of languages and topics to choose from. There are also often brief introductions to help getting an idea of what the speech is about, and sometimes even key terminology that wanted to look up beforehand (Jonathan Beagley, French-English Translator & Interpreter | Researcher in T&I) (WEB6).

• EU Speech Repository where are lots of different speeches on there, and some are quite difficult, so it's a particularly good resource if a challenge is needed. (Jonathan Beagley, French-English Translator & Interpreter | Researcher in T&I).

## 9. CONCLUSION

Technology tools open up a new world of possibilities for interpreters for both processes, services and training. The interpreter has become more visible in the world and the best services are provided by highly skills professional. So due to an increasing interest of interpreters towards the technology as a opportunity for their professionality the software developers are designing a number of tools to fulfill the necessary requirements of interpreters. These tools cut down preparation time significantly, and make it easier to prepare glossaries for an assignment supporting the interpreters to prepare faster, smarter and better.

But, as I mentioned above in my study, these tools are supporting more the consecutive interpreter and mainly in the preparation phase of their interpretation's service. As an interpreter I think that there is an urgent need to develop technologies that automate the entire process, increase the productivity and the labor-intensive activities of an interpreter (either in the preparation stage, before their interpreting service or during it). At the same time, it is important that developers rely on user's feedback need to design new tools and improve existing ones.

The aim of these tools is not to replace translators and interpreters by computers because even the latest technology and up-to-date machines cannot replace the human brain when it comes to language transfer. Finally, as a professor, I strongly recommend to consider these technological tools as a teaching and training support for both future and novice interpreters. I also have faith that interpreters can develop an amicable relationship with technology by giving these types of tools a spin.

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