Public Service Interpreting in Scandinavia: Challenges and Current Developments

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Qualitätsstandards zur Qualifizierung von SprachmittlerInnen, 18 Juni 2018
Adila’s pot plant
Stina, Sw-speaking caregiver
Medina, arabic-speaking caregiver
Elsa, Sw-speaking resident
Ewer
Tray with soil
Mess of soil on the table
Adila, Arabic-speaking resident
Multilingual practices and pedagogical challenges in elderly care

- Funding from the Swedish Research Council 2014-2017
- Principle Researchers: Gunilla Jansson & Cecilia Wadensjö
- Department of Swedish & Multilingualism, Stockholm University
The broker’s discourse strategies

- Anticipating the resident’s worry,
- Giving voice to complaining
- Translating some key words
- Rephrasing and explaining talk

BROKERING – A PRACTICE IN ITS OWN RIGHT
Ad hoc-interpreting – definitions

- Bilingual participants, **volunteering**, sporadic and on the spot interpreting, solving **temporary** communicative problems (Müller 1989, Traverso 2012)

• **Untrained** persons, **assigned** to perform an interpreting task (Bührig & Meyer 2004, Meyer et al 2010, Meyer 2012)
Review of 2000 medical articles (Flores 2005)

- Focus on negative effects
- No distinction between educated and non-educated interpreters
- Informants’ experiences and evaluations
  - of what?
  - on which grounds?
Interview studies – an example


- Result: Family members sometimes preferred professional interpreters and sometimes to interpret themselves.
• “There were informants who found it important that professional interpreters transfer the information literally and objectively [---].” (Hadziabdic et al 2014: 162).

• **Cementing** informants’ naïve understanding of language and interpreting

• “Objective interpreting” – a **contradiction in terms**: Interpreters are active **subjects**

• even if interpreters share the **ideal** of performing neutrally, serving two parties
• A communicative *pas de trois*
  
  (Wadensjö 1998:12)
First language assessment in Swedish schools of newly arrived children

- To inform placement decisions and educational planning
- Interview in the student’s strongest language
- Language assistance often necessary
Multilingual staff or interpreter?

Multilingual staff as interpreter

The Head master of the school decides who will participate in the assessment encounters. Multilingual staff are an important resource. They have knowledge of the Swedish school and school system, and often also about the pupil’s reference frameworks from previous contexts. This dual competence can make it easier for the pupil to tell about previous experiences.

Professional Interpreter

The school can also use a professional interpreter. Interpreting can be done on-site, via phone or using video equipment. It is important that the interpreter is well prepared and has received information and material in advance.

From: The Swedish National Agency for Education Information for head masters and teachers, p. 7
Assessment of literacy via a third party

- How do multilingual staff perform what is understood as interpreting?
- What impact does the performance have on the child’s possibility to show his/her knowledge and skills?
- ...and on the teacher possibility to assess this knowledge?
- ...and on mother tongue teacher’s possibility to make use of their actual competence?
Data, so far...

- 9 video recorded encounters (11,5 h.)
- ...in 6 languages
- 5 encounters with mother tongue (non-Swedish) teachers assisting
- 4 encounters with interpreters taken from an interpreting service provider
- A Swedish teacher writes the assessment protocol
- The mother tongue teacher’s role: “They just translate, they like don’t affect anything”
Spanish – mother tongue teacher
1. S: e::h then last question on the text is if you could in
   your own words, re-tell what the text was all about
2. M: can you tell in your own words what the text is about
3. P: a::m (.) that a person, who was a bit disappointed
4. he wanted to test some other food or, that is, not the
   same [and
5. M: [he who was angry POINTS AT TEXT
6. S: mhm
7. M: he was about to taste other what’s that e::h starters
8. S: mhm TAKES NOTES
10. S: mhm TAKES NOTES
12. S: mhm TAKES NOTES
13. (0.5)
14. P: LOOKS AT M e:h then to stop him from feeling disappointed in this way mm he himself says that he will
15. P: cook him another meal or an alternative [or
16. M: [he said to
17. (xxx) from the restaurant?
18. M: and as he was not liked for food. he said to owner,
19. S: mhm, TAKES NOTES
20. M: on restaurant, if he can fix,
21. S: mhm, TAKES NOTES
23. (0.5)
24. **P:** and when he gives it to the customer (.) he tested a new method for preparing potatoes.

25. **M:** and the owner on restaurant, to make happy his customer,

26. **S:** mhm TAKES NOTES

27. **M:** did eh another method,

28. **S:** mhm TAKES NOTES

29. **M:** with potatoes.
S: and what did he do what kind of method was that?
M: and what kind of method was that, that he used what did he do with e::
P: he used the potatoes, fried them and put a bit of salt on top
M: took the potatoes and fried potatoes and put salt
S: mhm TAKES NOTES
### Sammanställning

Eleven visar förståelse för textens innehåll genom att

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sammanställning</th>
<th>Ja</th>
<th>Till viss del</th>
<th>Nej</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>svara på frågor på raderna</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>svara på frågor mellan raderna</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>återberätta huvuddragen</td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sammanvägd bedömning

Sammantaget visar eleven en grundläggande förståelse av texten

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</table>

Övriga kommentarer om elevens läsning:

x läser texten högt. Tolken säger att x inte läser texten flytande. Flera ord i texten är svåra för henne. Läser utan intonation.
When competence in languages and interpreting are insufficient:

- ... imprecise renditions,
- ... non-idiomatic talk
- ... the interaction is fragmented, lacks flow
- ... there is lack of coherence between speakers’ contributions (Nilsen 2005: 200)
Preliminary results

• Assessment of literacy via a third party: Whose performance is assessed?
• Naïve conceptions of “the interpreter”
• Limited understanding of challenges in interpreting
• ...of the interdependence in interaction between interpreters and those they assist
Child-care clinic

Mother: да то есть буквально- и мы- в начале у нее-

yes that is literally- and we- at the beginning she had-

Mother: приходила- мне это очень беспокоит,

I came- I’m very worried about this,

INT: [mm

Mother: [я все время приходила к врачу: что это?

[all the time I’ve come to the doctor: what is this?

Mother: они говорят, все хорошо, все хорошо (.)

they say: everything ’s okay, everything ’s okay (.)

Mother: а я же видела, [что-то такое

but I saw, didn’t I [something so
Child-care clinic continued

INT: [mhm, mm och jag har varit, väldigt orolig hela tiden,
[mhm, mm and I’ve been, very worried all the time,

Midwife: [aa

INT: [jag har, frågat läkaren eller e:::h sjuksköterskorna he::la
[l’ve, asked the doctor or e:::h the nurses a:::ll the

INT: tiden. va- va kan de bero på?
*time: wha- what may be the reason?

Midwife: aa,

INT: a de e okej, [de e okej. [de e inget att oroa sig [för.

that’s okay, [that’s okay. [that’s nothing to worry [about.

Midwife: [mm [mm [jaa,

[mm [mm [yeah,
Child-care clinic continued

Mother: то есть- а это?

that is- but this?

Midwife: de va- [problemet-

that was- [the problem-

Mother: [вообще бывает? вот ЧТО это такое?

[in general this happens? so WHAT is this?

Mother: потому что я:::

because I:::

INT: men e::h det händer, alltså- och vad är det

but e::h this happens, that is- and what is it

INT: egentligen? vad kan det bero på?

actually? what can be the reason?

Midwife: ja de-

yeah that-
Competences needed for interpreting

- High level competence in two languages
- Knowledge of relevant subject matters
- Knowledge of institutional routines and logics
- Ability to evoke the parties’ confidence
- Ability to interpret,
  - To simultaneously analyse, memorise and retrieve information
  - To effortlessly switch between languages
  - To simultaneously render ongoing talk and manage the discourse flow
Public service interpreting in Scandinavia
Everyday misperceptions

• ...anyone who knows two languages can perform as interpreter

• ...good interpreting implies “literal” or “word-for-word” translation

• ...those others needs an interpreter, I don’t!
Hanne Skaaden
Der zwei-seitige Dolmetscher
Development of PSI in Sweden since the 1970ies?

• Working conditions?
• Salaries?
• Possibilities and incentives for basic and further education?
The key role of interpreter education