Bistra Alexieva

A TYPOLOGY OF INTERPRETER-MEDIATED EVENTS

THE COMMUNICATION EXPLOSION in the twentieth century, particularly its second half, has given a new impetus to the study of translation and interpreting, on which much of our lives now depends. Today, translator- and interpreter-mediated encounters vary tremendously in terms of their settings, modes, relationship among participants and other factors, posing a major challenge to the theory, practice and didactics of interpreting in particular.

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The demarcation lines proposed by Salevsky (1982: 80–86) are particularly interesting and worth summarizing briefly in our current context. Salevsky . . . distinguishes types of translation and interpreting on the basis of the way in which these three activities relate to a set of seven parameters:

- Repeatability/non-repeatability of the activity;
- The object of the activity, in terms of whether the translator has at his or her disposal the whole text or portions of it;
- The unfolding of one of the constituent activities with respect to another: whether reception, for example, is performed relatively independently of the other two activities or whether it runs parallel to realization;
- Temporal conditions: whether the speed of the process and the time allotted for its completion are subject to any restrictions;
- Spatial conditions, in terms of the physical location of the communicants in space;
- Mode of reception of the original text: via the visual or auditory channel, and with or without the use of technical equipment;
- Mode of realization: whether the translated text is written or spoken, and whether it is relayed with or without the help of technical equipment.

On the basis of these parameters, Salevsky goes on to define twelve varieties of written translation (which do not concern us here) and six varieties of interpreting. The latter are based on an initial distinction between Consecutive Interpreting (CI – two sub-varieties) and Simultaneous Interpreting (SI – four sub-varieties).

CI may be (a) with note-taking, or
(b) without note-taking.
SI may be (c) in a booth, without a written source text – this is "SI proper", with unrepeatable reception of the source text via the auditory channel alone, and with the use of technical equipment,
(d) in a booth, with a written source text; the text is thus received via two channels: the auditory and the visual,
(e) with the interpreters in the conference hall rather than in the booth but provided with the necessary technical equipment (headphones, microphones, partitions, etc.), or
(f) in "half-voice" (chuchotage); this type is described as being closer to CI, because it is carried out without technical equipment and ensures immediate contact and feedback (Salevsky 1982: 85).

We may well want to question the validity of one or two of these categories, but Salevsky's attempt at categorization is useful overall because it goes beyond the traditional reliance on mode of delivery as the basis for elaborating a typology of interpreting events and makes use of a variety of relevant parameters.

1 Towards a "multi-parameter" typology of interpreter-mediated events

Interpreter-mediated events have traditionally been categorized in the literature on the basis of single parameters. One such parameter is the communicative situation or context in which the event occurs. Thus various writers have used such classifications as "conference interpreting" (irrespective of whether it is conducted in consecutive or simultaneous mode; see, for instance, Glémet 1958: 105–22, Gile 1990: 2–5), "court interpreting" (Berk-Seligson 1990, González *et al.* 1991, Edwards 1995), "community/dialogue interpreting" (Wadensjö 1992, Schweda Nicholson 1994, Zimman 1994), and even "TV interpreting" (Delabastita 1989: 193–218, Gottlieb 1994: 271–73, Gambier 1994: 275–76, Alexieva 1996).

Other "single-parameter" categories are based on the nature of the input text in interpreting. Such texts may be distinguished in terms of (a) their "substance" (phonic in the case of a spoken utterance, phonic and graphic in cases where the interpreter has access to a written version of a speech, or graphic only in the case of sight translation; see Salevsky 1982: 85, Alexieva 1978: 61–63), (b) their position on a continuum of orality vs. literacy (i.e. whether the text is more oral-like or more written-like; see Shlesinger 1989: 11–46), and (c) the intertextual relationships obtaining between a speaker's contribution (an SL micro-text) and the whole body of texts delivered at a conference (the macro-text); see Alexieva (1985: 195–98, 1994: 181–82).

[. . .]

I would like to argue here that it is more productive to adopt the "multi-parameter" approach exemplified by Salevsky's model and that more parameters should be included in order to account for the greater variety of interpreter-mediated events that take place today. The additional parameters that I would like to see included concern (a) the various elements of the communicative situation: *Who* speaks, to *Whom*, about *What, Where, When* and *Why* (and for what purpose, see Chernov 1978: 139–44, Gile 1990: 16–18), rather than simply the temporal characteristics of delivery and the spatial coordinates of communicants, and (b) the nature of the texts involved in the event, not just in terms of topic (in answer to *What* above) or the "whole" vs. "segment" distinction proposed by Salevsky, but also in terms of the way the text is built, whether it is more oral-like or written-like, and the intertextual relationships obtaining between the individual texts which constitute the macro-text of an interpreter-mediated event.

The attempt to account for all or even most of the variables involved in real-life interpreter-mediated events confronts us with a major methodological difficulty. The huge range of phenomena to be accounted for and the difficulty we have so far experienced in attempting to classify them suggest that the boundaries between these phenomena are likely to remain fluid and that we cannot expect to delineate clear-cut categories. It is therefore my contention that prototype theory offers the most reliable model for our current attempt to develop a typology of interpreter-mediated events. Rather than attempt to describe these events as rigid categories, we should approach them as "families", with central members (prototypes) and peripheral members (blend-forms) being identified on the basis of their position on a scale or continuum (Lakoff 1987: 57). This approach has already been applied to the categorization of written translations (Snell-Hornby 1988: 29–36) and the initial results look promising.

In attempting to develop a typology of interpreter-mediated events, it is also important to bear in mind that interpreters mediate across cultures, and not just across languages. Thus "the communicative situation involving the interpreter is always and by necessity an instance of intercultural communication" (Kondo and Tebble 1997: 150). It might therefore be useful to think of interpreter-mediated events in terms of the degree of their cultural embeddedness, and to attempt to locate them on a scale of "universality" vs. "culture-specificity". In the discussion which follows, I will be making frequent reference to the question of universality vs. culture-specificity and the way this feature interacts with various parameters in determining the nature of an interpreter-mediated event.

2 Parameters of categorization

We may proceed to develop our proposed typology by grouping the parameters we wish to investigate under two broad headings:

- Mode of delivery: this allows us to distinguish between (i) a non-stop delivery of the source text and simultaneous production of the target text, and (ii) a

consecutive delivery of the source text (in chunks of varying lengths) followed by the production of the target text. This distinction also involves differences in the use, or non-use, of ancillary equipment, the specificity of the setting and the nature of the contact and distance between participants.

- Elements of the communicative situation, namely: the primary participants (Speaker and Addressee), the secondary participants (Interpreter, Organizer, Moderator), the topic discussed and the way it relates to the communicative context, the type of texts used in the communication, the spatial and temporal specificities of the communication, and the purpose of communication or goals pursued by the participants.

Some of these parameters may of course be refined by introducing more subtle distinctions between, for example, language-only texts and texts containing non-linguistic or visual material such as formulae, graphs, tables, etc., or indeed texts which rely heavily on accompanying non-verbal signs such as facial expressions and gestures.

The above broad distinction is useful as a starting point, but we now need to take each of the proposed parameters and attempt to elaborate it in more detail, relating it both to the other parameters and to the question of universality vs. culture-specificity of interpreter-mediated events.

2.1 Parameter 1: mode of delivery and production

A prototypical **simultaneous interpreting** event (or SI proper) is characterized by non-stop delivery of the source text and parallel production of the target text; this simultaneity can only be achieved with the mediation of ancillary equipment (headphones, microphones, partitions, etc.). Hence, communication between the primary participants – speaker and addressee – as well as between the primary and secondary participants – mainly the interpreter(s) – is not direct. A corollary of this is a greater distance, in terms of physical space, between speaker and addressee(s). The distance between these primary participants and the interpreter is usually greater still, because the booths can be outside the conference hall and the interpreters may not even be able to see what is going on inside the hall: monitors meant to provide visual contact are often out of order.

The indirect nature of the communicative act and the physical distance between the participants inevitably diminish the role of kinaesthetic and proxemic factors and affect the non-verbal behaviour of all communicants. This is particularly the case with the speaker, since the very awareness of the necessity to use a microphone activates his or her self-monitoring mechanism for obvious reasons, resulting in a more formal, less culturally-marked communicative style, certainly when addressing a large international audience. [. . .]

Chuchotage, or "whispering" (or interpreting in "half-voice"), is a peripheral type of simultaneous interpreting. It is usually resorted to when it is not feasible to use ancillary equipment, for instance when interpreting has to be provided for one or two speakers of a minority language. The very fact that the interpreter has to whisper means that the physical distance between him or her and the recipient of the

translation cannot be too great. Physical distance between communicants usually reflects social and personal distance (Hall 1972a: 278–82), and in this case instead of the "social-consultative distance" it ought to be, the distance between interpreter and addressee becomes more like a "casual-personal distance", varying between 18 and 30 inches. By contrast, the distance between addressee and speaker is usually greater, and – if accompanied by a culturally marked verbal and/or non-verbal behaviour on the part of the addressee (usually a member of a minority group) – may hamper communication between the primary participants themselves.

The limited distance between interpreter and addressee clearly has a bearing on the significance of kinaesthetic and proxemic factors, and more specifically the proxemic dimensions of posture and the touch, thermal and olfactory (smell) codes. There are cultures, for example the American culture, in which "the olfactory sense is culturally suppressed to a greater degree than any of the other senses" (Hall 1972b: 263). The touch code similarly varies among different cultures: it is very different in the Mediterranean region and the Balkans vis-à-vis, say, Northern Europe. Chuchotage is therefore an interpreter-mediated event in which culture-specific factors tend to play an extremely important role, particularly in terms of communication between interpreter and addressee.

Consecutive interpreting displays more variation in terms of the use of ancillary equipment and physical distance between participants. Although it is a direct, face-to-face communicative act, the use of ancillary equipment is not precluded: for example, a consecutive interpreter may have to use a microphone in larger meetings and rallies. Communication in consecutive interpreting can therefore be equipment-mediated. In terms of distance, the direct nature of the communication, particularly where it is not mediated by microphone, implies the co-presence of speaker, addressee(s) and interpreter(s). The physical distance between participants is therefore not great, though it remains much greater than in the case of chuchotage. The wide tables usually used in political and business negotiations can provide optimum proxemic conditions that reduce the impact of cultural differences in the way people share space. [. . .]

Norms relating to the location of the speaker in space, for example whether he or she is standing away from other participants or sitting with them around a table, may also vary across cultures and inevitably influence the dynamics of communication. [. . .]

Liaison interpreting may be classified as a peripheral member of the CI family of interpreter-mediated events. As in CI, there is a consecutive pattern of delivery of the source text and production of the target text. However, in liaison interpreting the communication tends to consist of spontaneous, improvised pieces of spoken discourse and the setting and communicative intention tend to be more "personal": LI tends to be used, for instance, in doctors' practices and welfare appointments rather than conferences and large business meetings. The nature of the communicative situation precludes the use of note-taking (which is common in consecutive interpreting) and the turns are therefore shorter.

The most important features of liaison interpreting, from our point of view, concern the nature of contact and distance between the primary participants. Contact here is direct: it is not mediated by ancillary equipment and is characterized by a greater intensity of interaction, involving the engagement of all (or almost all)

senses. Each participant pays a great deal of attention not only to what the other participant says but also to the way he or she behaves (eye contact, body language, etc.). Feedback in this context is immediate due to the frequent interchange of roles (speaker and addressee). The interpersonal nature of this type of event (Yudina 1982: 117–28) is perhaps its most important feature and determines the function of all linguistic and non-linguistic codes employed in the exchange.

Unlike in chuchotage, the distance between participants, including the interpreter, has to be close in social/personal terms ("casual personal" rather than "social-consultative" in Hall's terms). Thus all the issues discussed under chuchotage acquire even greater significance here: in the case of chuchotage, failure to recognize culturally relevant differences may affect the relationship between the addressee and the interpreter, but in liaison interpreting such failure may lead to irreparable disruption in the communication between all participants.

To sum up, the mode of delivery (non-stop vs. consecutive) determines the value of two extremely important factors in terms of the cultural specificity of the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of primary and secondary participants, namely: (a) directness of contact (whether the event is mediated by ancillary equipment), and (b) distance/proximity between the primary participants themselves, as well as between them and the interpreter(s). I suggest subsuming "directness of contact" under "distance vs. proximity" and will come back to this important dimension of cultural specificity in the conclusion.

2.2 Parameter 2: participants in interpreter-mediated events

This parameter may be investigated in terms of five factors: degree of command of the source and target languages, involvement in the textual world, status, role and number.

The first factor, **command of languages**, concerns the degree of the speaker's command of the SL and the addressee's command of the TL and the familiarity of both participants with the two cultures. Where the source language is the mother tongue of the speaker, the communicative act usually involves contact between only two languages and cultures. However, there are cases where the source language is not the native language of the speaker and the speaker's first language and culture may therefore affect his or her verbal and non-verbal performance. Non-native speakers of English, for example, often use literal translations of metaphoric expressions known in their culture; such expressions may not mean anything in English or, worse, they may mean something entirely different.

The addressee's command of the target language and familiarity with the target culture are also highly relevant: conference participants often receive the speaker's message via an interpreter in a language other than their mother tongue. This is extremely important because non-native speakers of the target language, in the role of addressees, may partly or totally misinterpret a message. Knowledge of the target language on the part of the speaker may also be culturally relevant, not only in terms of sensitivity to the background of his or her addressees but also because such knowledge gives the speaker greater power over the interpreter, whose performance he or she is then able to monitor.

The second factor concerns the primary participants' **involvement in the textual world**. Participants in an interpreter-mediated event may be involved in the discussion (explicitly or implicitly) as text entities, i.e. they themselves or the countries, organizations or institutions they represent may form part of the textual world. Alternatively, the participants may not be part of the textual world: at a conference on anthropology, "man" may be, and usually is, a textual entity, while the author of the paper is not, i.e. the subject of research is not identical with its object. The position of an interpreter-mediated event on this scale of "involvement" vs. "non-involvement", like its position on the "distance" vs. "proximity" scale, can help us determine the degree of its cultural embeddedness. Closeness to the "involvement" end will imply deeper cultural embeddedness. For example, critical remarks on the organization a participant belongs to, made by another speaker, may trigger various reactions on the part of representatives of different cultures, showing different degrees of explicit, culturally marked emotive involvement in the argument.

The third factor has to do with the **status** of participants, or the power relationships involved in an interpreter-mediated event. In this context, the major bases of power derive mostly from the social status of the primary participants institution-wise (their institutional affiliation and position within the hierarchy) and expertise-wise (their prestige as authorities on the issues discussed). The speaker's command of the target language, particularly in consecutive and liaison interpreting settings, also lends him or her more power, not only vis-à-vis the interpreter (by monitoring the latter's performance), but also vis-à-vis other primary participants who are not familiar with the source language. Knowledge of both languages gives a participant the advantage of hearing each utterance twice, as well as more time to plan his or her next move in the negotiations. Age and gender may also influence power relations and this may vary across cultures. Research has shown that male speakers generally tend to dominate female speakers, especially in terms of control of topics, and to interrupt in turn-taking (claiming a turn and holding the floor).

An atmosphere of equilibrium and solidarity is likely to pertain where speaker and addressee enjoy equal status; where they do not, varying degrees of tension may result, depending on source and target cultural norms of behaviour (Brown and Gilman 1960/1972: 109). This is highly relevant in "facework", i.e. what we do in order "to have our ego recognized and taken account of, to have one's views heard, and to some extent accepted by others, or at least have others accept one's right to have them" (Mulholland 1991: 68). Face-saving strategies may vary substantially across cultures (*ibid*: 92–93), because they depend to a large extent on the rigidity of the social stratification system, the need for deference towards participants who hold a superior position, age and gender differences, and a variety of other factors. For example, using titles and honorifics to acknowledge the status of the addressee while downgrading one's own (*ibid*: 92), or using the "first name" move, may be interpreted differently across cultures.

Also of particular significance here is the difference between individualistic and collectivistic ethos, i.e. between what Hall (1973) describes as "low-context" and "high-context" cultures, with the former assigning greater power to the individual and the latter to the group. As Ting-Toomey suggests, "interactions across the divide between low-context and high-context cultures are particularly prone to confusion" (1985; in Cohen 1991: 25). However, Cohen himself points out that such

a dichotomous model "involves simplifications and stark contrasts" (1991: 25). In line with the prototype model adopted here, we should perhaps treat the two cultural prototypes as extreme points on a continuum rather than in terms of a clear-cut dichotomy.

Finally, the social status of the interpreter, as well as his or her level of education, age and gender may also contribute to the level of equilibrium or tension in an interpreter-mediated event, depending on the cultures involved. The greater the imbalance in power between the primary participants, and between them and the interpreter, the higher the risk of increased tension.

The **role** of the participants in an interpreter-mediated event is particularly relevant in cases where it does not coincide with their social status outside the conference hall, that is, when people of unequal power have to participate in a conference as equals. This kind of situation may generate a great deal of tension, especially when representatives of high-context cultures are involved. The roles set for the primary participants (speaker and addressee), as well as those of the chairperson (organizer or moderator), may conflict with their claims to power in a number of ways. [. . .]

Interpreters may be tempted to exceed their brief, or definition of their role, where they feel superior to either speaker or addressee in terms of age, gender, knowledge of topic (this applies mostly when a specialist in the field is acting as an interpreter), communicative skills, or command not only of the source and target languages but also of the respective cultures and specific norms of behaviour relevant to the communicative situation. [. . .]

For the sake of simplicity, the two dimensions of status and role discussed above may be conflated into a single scale of "equals/solidarity" vs. "non-equals/power", along which we may attempt to locate culturally marked ways in which the primary and secondary participants in an interpreter-mediated event typically attempt to exercise power in a given culture.

Finally, the **number** of participants in an interpreter-mediated event is also relevant, since smaller gatherings create a cosier atmosphere which is conducive to a lower degree of self-monitoring. This, in turn, tends to result in a higher incidence of culture-specific verbal and non-verbal behaviour. We may use a further scale here for profiling interpreter-mediated events: "formal setting" vs. "informal setting". Larger conferences and televised events will occupy a position closer to the "formal" end of the scale, while liaison interpreting, chuchotage and smaller gatherings will be closer to the "informal" end.

2.3 Parameter 3: the topic of an interpreter-mediated event

The nature of the issues discussed at an interpreter-mediated event constitutes another important parameter which determines the location of the event along the "universal" vs. "culture-specific" continuum. The major distinction to be drawn here is between the textual world of scientific knowledge and that of human interaction.

Topics related to science and technology tend to revolve around relatively more objective and universal issues and are therefore less culture-specific. Discussion of such topics entails little or no involvement of the participants as text entities:

participants do not normally form part of the textual world in this context. By contrast, the textual world of human interaction consists of issues which directly address the way people (individuals or organizations) interact with one another; such issues are usually discussed in an attempt to arrive at a group decision and find solutions which are important to the participants themselves or to the institutions they represent. Interpreter-mediated events which address such issues are inevitably characterized by a higher degree of subjectivity and greater involvement on the part of participants in the textual world where they figure explicitly or implicitly as text entities. [. . .]

The topic of an interpreter-mediated event therefore contributes to its location along the "involvement" vs. "non-involvement" scale discussed under 2.2. above (the primary participants' involvement in the textual world).

2.4 Parameter 4: text type and text building strategies

In addition to the topic of an interpreter-mediated event, the participants' text building strategies – the way they use language to express their communicative intentions – will also have a bearing on the degree of culture-specificity of the event. In particular, differences can be seen at work with respect to the degree of reliance on oral vs. literate strategies (Shlesinger 1989: 10–15) and the observation of what is known as the "Cooperative Principle" (Grice 1975).

Interpreting is generally associated with the spoken mode, but research has shown that mode is not the only determinant of text type. Even texts delivered orally can have varying degrees of orality or literacy, and this distinction has already proved useful in interpreting research (see Shlesinger 1989). Shlesinger uses five criteria to determine the position of a text on the orality/literacy scale:

- Degree of planning: whether a text is improvised/spontaneous or has been prepared prior to delivery; this has an impact on coherence and semantic density;
- Shared knowledge: knowledge that the addressee is assumed to bring to the discourse; this has a bearing on the autonomy of the text. A high level of autonomy is associated with the literacy end of the scale;
- Lexis: use of literary, colloquial or unmarked words and expressions;
- Degree of involvement: i.e. the degree to which a speaker may feel personally involved in the discussion of a particular topic with a particular group of people as interlocutors. Texts positioned towards the literacy end of the scale exhibit less ego-involvement, less addressee-involvement and less involvement with the topic of discussion (Shlesinger 1989: 33); and
- The role of non-verbal behaviour: this is particularly important in the way "spoken-like" texts are produced (*ibid*: 35–42).

The degree of planning, i.e. whether the speaker "reads" a written text or delivers it more or less spontaneously, reflects a text-building strategy which, to a certain extent, seems to be dependent on culture-specific norms. [. . .]

The degree of planning influences the speaker's choice of lexis and

syntactic structures (Shlesinger 1989: 10–61); it may also determine the cultural embeddedness of the text and the entire event, mainly with regard to the following parameters:

- Use of culture-specific imagery, making the text more difficult to interpret. The speaker may not be aware that he or she is using culture-specific imagery, particularly in the case of a lower degree of planning, or complete improvisation;
- Use of paralinguistic (non-verbal) means of expression, including facial expression, gestures and tone of voice. These means of expression can be highly culture-specific and therefore difficult to interpret;
- Use of, or reference to, culture-specific knowledge which is only available to members of the source-language community. More difficulty is experienced when the source language is not the speaker's mother tongue, and the culture-specific knowledge therefore relates to a third language and culture community. This makes interpretation of the source text heavily dependent on cross-cultural intertextual relationships (Alexieva 1994: 181). [. . .]

Apart from the orality vs. literacy dimension, there is also the question of norms of communication [. . .]. Different cultures seem to vary in the way they interpret the details of the cooperative principle and the notion of relevance. For example, the maxim of quantity can have a variety of instantiations, since what the speaker may consider "required" in a given context could be different from what his or her interlocutors deem to be the case. This has an impact on negotiating strategies employed in different cultures (Mulholland 1991: 68–93). Thus a speaker may withhold some piece of information at a given point in order to manipulate the outcome of the negotiation; this strategy is quite common in some cultures. If the addressee belongs to a culture in which this strategy is not used, he or she will not consider the speaker's contribution adequately informative and this could naturally lead to problems. [. . .]

Interpreter-mediated events may be located on a "cooperative/direct" vs. "non-cooperative/indirect" scale in terms of negotiation strategy. This should help us capture differences in the interpretation of Grice's maxims and the notion of optimal relevance in such events.

2.5 Parameter 5: spatial and temporal constraints

Spatial constraints seem to be more significant and culturally relevant than temporal constraints, particularly with respect to the location and setting of an interpreter-mediated event.

The location of an event can be discussed in terms of proximity to or distance from the speaker's home country. If the two locations coincide, the speaker tends to feel more at home and his or her performance may be characterized by the use of more culture-specific lexis and strategies: there tends to be less self-monitoring on the part of the speaker in these contexts. By contrast, where the event is located away from the speaker's home country, he or she will tend to be less complacent

and to use lexis and strategies that are likely to be understood by an international audience. Interpreters who have interpreted for the same person at home and abroad confirm that where the event is situated outside the speaker's country, the speaker tends to use less body language and to show more modesty in sharing space.

The setting of an interpreter-mediated event is also important in terms of whether the "space" in which the event takes place is reserved for the primary and secondary participants alone (as in community interpreting in health care institutions) or shared by other people (as in media events and press conferences). In the first instance, the participants will enjoy greater privacy and a more relaxed atmosphere, which is conducive to less self-monitoring and greater use of culturally marked behaviour. In the second case, there is less privacy, more self-monitoring and hence less culturally marked behaviour on the part of participants.

Distance and privacy both contribute to the degree of formality of an event and may be used to locate it along a continuum of "formal" vs. "informal" setting.

2.6 Parameter 6: the goal of an interpreter-mediated event

Individuals, groups of people and representatives of institutions may want to get together for a number of reasons and with a view to accomplishing a great variety of goals. In spite of such variety, we can factor out three main parameters which may help us group interpreter-mediated events in terms of the goals pursued by the individual speakers, other participants and the event as a whole:

- Knowledge exchange: some events are organized to allow exchange of knowledge, to impart information, or to demonstrate the validity of something which is external to the speaker in the sense that he or she is not personally involved in the textual world as a text entity. Participants in events of this type can be expected to share the same or at least similar goals.
- Arriving at group decision: some events are organized in order to work out a common strategy or arrive at solutions for problems shared by all participants, whether individuals or institutions. The implementation of proposed solutions, however, may depend on institutions or authorities external to the participants. A shared goal facilitates discussion, reduces in-group conflict and makes it easier to arrive at a decision. In this context, simpler negotiation strategies, usually of the more direct type, tend to be used.
- Conflicting goals: some events are organized to discuss issues that are of vital importance to all participants, but resolving these issues may involve curtailing the rights and/or harming the interests of some of the participants. This naturally creates conflict and complicates negotiations. Cultural differences in terms of choice of negotiation strategy tend to become more prominent, especially if the division of participants into "interest groups" coincides with their division into "cultural groups". International political negotiations and interviews with political leaders provide typical examples. Baker (1997) describes a televised interview during the Gulf War between Trevor McDonald and Saddam Hussein, where "the gulf that separates the two cultures involved . . . [wa]s so wide, and the political positions of the parties

concerned so irreconcilable, that each participant set out not to communicate a point of view or to reach some form of compromise but to destroy the other party's position, to expose him, and to reassert his own position". It is of course possible to mitigate the conflict of some events of this type, but only if the concessions required from some of the participants are minor and the outcome is expected to benefit all participants, as in the case of conferences which address global issues of war and peace, environment, health, and so on.

The location of an interpreter-mediated event along a scale of "shared goals" vs. "conflicting goals" is highly relevant in shaping its internal structure, predicting levels of stress, and understanding the nature of the tasks that the interpreter has to perform.

3 Conclusion

An interpreter-mediated event may be located along a continuum of "universality" vs. "culture-specificity" using a number of scales that I have suggested in the previous discussion, namely:

- "distance" vs. "proximity" (between speaker, addressee and interpreter);
- "non-involvement" vs. "involvement" (of the speaker as text entity);
- "equality/solidarity" vs. "non-equality/power" (related to status, role and gender of speaker and addressee, as well as the interpreter in some cases);
- "formal setting" vs. "informal setting" (related to number of participants, degree of privacy, and distance from home country);
- "literacy" vs. "orality";
- "cooperativeness/directness" vs. "non-cooperativeness/indirectness" (relevant to negotiation strategies);
- "shared goals" vs. "conflicting goals".

Of these, I would argue that the most important scale in terms of determining the degree of culture-specificity of an event is "distance" vs. "proximity", which relates to the distinction between simultaneous and consecutive interpreting and the role of kinaesthetic and proxemic factors. "Non-involvement" vs. "involvement", "equality" vs. "non-equality", and "shared goals" vs. "conflicting goals" come next and determine the location of an event on the other scales. For example, the position of an event on the scale of "shared goals" vs. "conflicting goals" can help us predict those features which will determine its position on the scale of "cooperativeness" vs. "non-cooperativeness" in terms of negotiation strategy.

Identifying the degree of culture-specificity associated with a given type of interpreter-mediated event should allow us to make more reliable predictions about the role that the interpreter typically has to play in such an event. For instance, events located towards the "universal" end of the continuum (those closer to the lefthand side of the scales listed above) require the interpreter to act simply as an interlingual mediator, what Kopczyński describes as a "ghost" (1994: 192–5): the interpreter does not have to perform any "repair" operations in order to avoid hitches in com-

munication, and his or her presence may even remain largely unnoticed. This type of situation is particularly common in events located closer to the "distance" end of the first scale, that is in simultaneous rather than consecutive or liaison interpreting.

By contrast, the task of the interpreter in events located towards the "culture-specific" end of the continuum (those closer to the righthand side of the above scales) is more difficult to perform, and the interpreter therefore has a more important role to play: he or she has to actively intervene in the communication to prevent misunderstanding and smooth cultural differences, for instance to explain differences in the use of body language, as in the case of the head movements denoting "Yes" and "No" in English and Bulgarian. In other words, the more an event is embedded in a particular culture (speaker's, hearer's or both), the greater the role of the interpreter as intercultural mediator and "repairer" and the more visible he or she becomes.

[. . .]

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