The Community Interpreter and/or Intercultural Mediator Teacher Profile

Competences of the teacher of community interpreters and/or of intercultural mediators

Nike K. Pokorn, Tamara Mikolič Južnič

Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

ABSTRACT

The aim of the chapter is to discuss the importance of continuous education of teachers and of the official certification of the professions of a community interpreter and of an intercultural mediator. The chapter provides a framework of reference for competences of community interpreter and intercultural mediator teachers that was created by the partners in the TRAMIG project. The framework of reference identifies five principal competences that each teacher of community interpreters or intercultural mediators should strive to acquire throughout their career: field competence, interpersonal competence, organisational competence, instructional competence, and assessment competence. A distinction is made between the competences of community interpreter teachers and those of intercultural mediator teachers, in particular in the area of field competence. The trainees are asked to identify their strengths and weaknesses regarding the provided list of competences.

Keywords: teacher profile, trainer profile, educator profile, competence framework, framework of reference, community interpreter, intercultural mediator.

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter proposes a framework of reference for competences of community interpreter and/or intercultural mediator teachers, which should be used as a guideline, enabling the description of achievements of individual teachers in this field. Prospective teachers are not expected to have all these competences when entering the profession; it is, however, envisaged that teachers of community interpreters and intercultural mediators are actively engaged in acquiring the competences proposed in each of the five areas throughout their career.

2 POSITIONING

The chapter is based on the document *The EMT Translator Trainer Profile: Competences of the trainer in translation*, produced under the auspices of the European Master's in Translation (EMT) by Yves Gambier, Federico Federici and Nike K. Pokorn in 2013 and on the TIME project definition of the profile of trainer of intercultural mediators (2016). Additional inspiration was found in the research focusing on translator trainers, such as the works by Sonia Colina (2003), Dorothy Kelly (2008), Daniel Gouadec (2007), the project paper by the Consortium for Training Translation Teachers (CTTT) and in literature dealing with interpreter training (Andres and Behr 2014, Gile 1995, Manuel Jerez 2004, Sawyer 2004, Setton and Dawrant 2016, Viaggio 1992, Wadensjö 2013).

3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

3.1 THE TERMS "COMMUNITY INTERPRETER" AND "INTERCULTURAL MEDIATOR"

This chapter discusses the competences of the teachers of community interpreters and intercultural mediators. With the use of the terms "community interpreter" and "intercultural mediator" in this chapter we do not want to imply that these terms should be used interchangeably or that there is no difference between the two professions, and we do not want to impose any particular denomination in order to harmonise the terminology. Although we are aware that in some parts of Europe, in particular in France, Italy, parts of Belgium and Germany the terms corresponding to "community interpreter" and "intercultural mediator" tend to be used interchangeably and the role boundaries are often unclear (Martin and Phelan 2010), we believe that despite the fact that community interpreters and intercultural mediators share the same working environment and assist the same groups of people, there are some important differences between the two professions (cf. Pokorn and Mikolič Južnič 2020).

In this chapter the term "community interpreter" refers to a professional who performs oral or signed translational activity between the societal language used by service providers and the language of the service users who are not proficient in the societal language in order to assist these individuals to access the services provided by public institutions and to assist service providers in their job. Community interpreters thus transfer verbal or non-verbal messages in real time between the language of the service provider, which is typically the societal language(s) of the country, and the service user who uses the language of a specific language and/or ethnic group. Community interpreters would typically assist the allophone population (i.e. the population with limited proficiency or without the knowledge of the societal language) to establish communication in educational, healthcare, administrative and police settings. Since community interpreters facilitate communication between parties who do not share a common language, they are therefore always involved in encounters involving at least three participants. Community interpreters may also be asked to perform sight translation and translate documents in both working languages when applicable and needed to facilitate equal access to public services.

The term "intercultural mediator" refers to professionals who assist allophone citizens when they lack cultural awareness and understanding of the system and, consequently, cannot access and benefit from basic quality social services, such as quality education, primary healthcare and political participation in the host country. Intercultural mediators would typically engage in encounters that are dyadic in nature and that require a bilingual or multilingual speaker, but do not necessarily demand interpreting skills. Their principle aim would therefore be to empower allophone citizens by informing them of their rights and helping them make choices. They also assist service users and service providers to establish successful communication by resolving any potential cultural misunderstandings. Typical tasks of intercultural mediators would thus include: providing information on the available healthcare and social services and administrative procedures, assisting service users to navigate the healthcare system and different social services (by accompanying them and assisting them with the paper work), providing psychosocial support in healthcare settings, collaborate in health education and in the promotion of healthy lifestyle, contributing to different events in order to enhance intercultural communication and inclusion (Verrept 2019, vii-viii; TIME 2015, 4–5).

3.2 THE TERM TEACHER

The use of the term "teacher" instead of the term "trainer" in this chapter is deliberate. Although we do not consider training, teaching and education as opposites but as complementary activities, we believe that any high-quality education of community interpreters and/or intercultural mediators should not be narrowly vocational: it should not only enable students to acquire particular skills which

are needed to perform interpreting or intercultural mediation, but should also transform the students' outlook and their mind. The term "teacher" is therefore preferred over the term "trainer" because we are convinced that teachers should not only have practical experience, but also theoretical knowledge in order to adequately prepare their students for a professional role as reflective practitioners.

4 COMPETENCES OF THE TEACHER OF COMMUNITY INTERPRETERS AND/OR OF INTERCULTURAL MEDIATORS

The competences listed below are not presented in order of importance. They have each been classified into one domain for the sake of clarity, although some competences may be argued to belong to more than one domain.

Figure 1: Competences of community interpreter & intercultural mediator teachers.

4.1 FIELD COMPETENCE

- Ability to perform any task assigned to the students according to the quality standards required in professional practice, in particular, language proficiency and intercultural competences.

- Knowledge of the professional field including:
 - Community interpreting-related or intercultural-mediator-related professions;
 - Constraints of interpreting or intercultural mediation projects (e.g. time/budget/qualities);
 - Domains of specialization in interpreting-related or intercultural-mediator-related professions;
 - Market requirements;
 - Operating procedures and tools used in professional community interpreting or intercultural mediation;
 - Scholarship and research relevant for the course;
 - Foreseeable development of the professions.
- Community-interpreting-service or intercultural-mediation-service provision competence:
 - Knowledge of the existing standards and specifications;
 - Ability to critically analyse these standards and specifications.

For **community-interpreter** teachers: Ability to perform the tasks and sub-tasks involved in the community interpreting-service provision (including planning, terminological preparation for the interpreting task, mastering techniques used in consecutive interpreting and possessing highly-developed listening, memory, note-taking and delivery skills, knowledge of interaction dynamics);

For **intercultural-mediator** teacher: Ability to perform the tasks and sub-tasks involved in the intercultural-mediation-service provision (including planning, terminological preparation for intercultural mediation task, knowledge of the cultural specifics of the cultures involved in the mediation process, knowledge of the legal framework of functioning of the host country, language mediation).

4.2 INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE

- Ability to integrate into a teaching team and work as part of a team.
- Ability to identify, adopt, apply and critically assess a code of professional ethics for community interpreters and translators or intercultural mediators and for teachers.

- Ability to teach students how to apply and critically assess codes of professional ethics for community interpreters and translators or intercultural mediators.
- Ability to establish suitable learning environments for students.
- Ability to manage time and resources.
- Ability to teach students time and resource management.
- Ability to manage stress.
- Ability to teach students to work in sensitive settings.
- Ability to teach students to deal with trauma-informed interpreting.
- Ability to create collegial networks (e.g., to provide support to other colleagues in the field and receive it from others.).
- Ability to teach students how to manage stress.
- Ability to take decisions and explain and justify them.
- Ability to train students in decision-making and how to prioritize.
- Ability to take into account all the relevant constraints depending on the situation, and explain them clearly (specifications, deadlines, budgets, etc.).
- Ability to introduce students to the relevant constraints depending on the situation (specifications, deadlines, budgets, etc.).

4.3 ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCE

- Ability to understand students' needs and expectations in relation to the overall programme.
- Ability to design a community interpreter-training or intercultural mediation curriculum or an understanding of the rationale for an existing interpreter-training or intercultural mediation curriculum.
- Ability to articulate the learning progression assumed by the programme (e.g. as manifested in the order in which modules are taught).
- Ability to design a course syllabus or an understanding of the structure of an existing course syllabus.
- Ability to update the programme or a course in anticipation of and in response to changes to the profession.

4.4 INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCE

- Ability to specify the tasks to be performed in relation to each course or module component.

- Ability to explain the learning objectives of the subjects taught.
- Ability to break down the educational components into tasks and sub-tasks drawing on the relevant theoretical knowledge.
- Ability to encourage students to become aware of the challenges and issues involved in the task and sub-task in the relevant field(s), e.g. drawing on the relevant theoretical knowledge.
- Ability to draw up a lesson plan by integrating Interpreting Studies or Intercultural Mediation scholarship and research relevant into teaching.
- Ability to create a list of all the tasks relevant for a given lesson and organize them in terms of priorities, sequences, time available and overall syllabus.
- Ability to create the course or module materials.
- Ability to create content and choose the appropriate teaching method (e.g. virtual learning environments, seminars, tutorials, etc.).
- Knowledge of the findings of interpreting or intercultural mediation didactics and the ability to integrate them into training (e.g. ability to use appropriate methods for teaching and learning).
- Ability to incorporate the process and outcomes of relevant Interpreting Studies or Intercultural Mediation research and scholarship.
- Ability to use existing professional and specialist tools and integrate them into training.
- Ability to motivate students.
- Ability to encourage students to develop: precision, a focus on quality, curiosity, learning strategies, and their ability to analyse and to summarize.
- Ability to encourage students to develop a critical approach during the execution of tasks.
- Ability to stimulate reflective thinking (i.e. self-reflexivity).

4.5 ASSESSMENT COMPETENCE

- Ability to define assessment methods and criteria to evaluate each task relevant to the course.
- Ability to assess students' entry level.
- Ability to assess students' level of attainment (competences they have acquired and competences they lack).
- Ability to evaluate a curriculum, syllabus and lesson as a self-reflective practitioner, re-assessing practices, knowledge, and competences at regular intervals.

- Ability to adapt to the results of the evaluation of a curriculum, syllabus and a lesson.

5 ACTIVITIES

Make a list of the competences that you already have and a list of those that you still need to acquire. Identify five competences that you need to acquire most urgently. Work in pairs and compare your lists.

6 FURTHER READING

Cirillo, Letizia, and Natacha S.A. Niemants, eds. 2017. *Teaching Dialogue Interpreting: research-based proposals for higher education*. Benjamins Translation Library 138. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

This collective volume, which explicitly focuses on teaching community interpreting, is a highly valuable source of materials for teachers of community interpreting, and it could also be used for refresher courses and teacher training courses. It provides guidance on how to teach medical, court and business interpreting, interpreting for the media and telephone interpreting. Among others, the individual chapters also discuss how to use theatre techniques, role playing and visual prompts in community interpreting classes.

Kelly, Dorothy. 2005. *A Handbook for Translator Trainers: A Guide to Reflective Practice*. Manchester: St Jerome.

Although this monograph is not the most recent one, it provides a wealth of guidance and practical assignments for teacher education courses. The handbook was written for translator teachers, but it can easily be adapted for interpreter teachers.

TIME project partnership. 2016. *Part I: Trainer profile and learning content*. Accessed August 25, 2020. http://mediation-time.eu/images/TIME_O5_Trainer_Course_Part_I.pdf.

TIME project developed a training course for trainers of intercultural mediators for immigrants. All the material is available online and is designed for self-study.

Wadensjö, Cecilia, ed. 2013. *Training the Trainers: Nordic Seminar on Interpreter Education / Utbildningen av utbildare: Nordiskt möte om tolkutbildning*. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet. Accessed August 25, 2020. http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:643719/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

This collective volume brings the selected presentations from the 2012 Nordic interpreter trainers' network's meeting and contains six chapters written for interpreter teachers. Five contributions are written in English, and one in Swedish. Among others, contributions focus on experiential approach in interpreter training, on teaching interpreting ethics, and on the use of Wikis, blogs, Skype and Youtube in the education of community interpreters.

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