

I'm his friend, I'll translate: The German comedian Kaya Yanar performs the community interpreter

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Abstract

In teaching of interpreting, internet videos are used as authentic source texts for practicing interpreting skills. But the use of videos is broader. In this case, a video sketch by the well-known German-Turkish comedian Kaya Yanar serves as a demonstration of Community Interpreting (CI) and at the same time has a motivating function. Kaya Yanar satirizes prejudices and clichés about members of “foreign” cultures, as well as their typical reactions in everyday situations. In this particular video, an unemployed migrant comes to an employment office to enquire about new job opportunities, but this time he takes a friend as an interpreter to help. Using this method, it is possible to inductively and playfully analyse the caricatured phenomena and relate them to certain theoretical aspects of CI, such as sociocultural space, situational context, de-professionalization of CI, intra-lingual translation, migrant prototypes, the interpreter and the German official, stylistic (register) differences between source and target text, appearance and verbal expression, emotionality of conversation partners, unintentional and intentional interpreting errors and the power of the interpreter. This didactic model is intended mainly for Slovak students who speak German, but the video can also be used more generally in interpreter training for the intercultural analysis of stereotypes.

Keywords: community interpreting, interpreting training, migration, stereotypes, didactic model

Introduction

The present paper is a set of didactic instructions and model of how a particular video can be used in interpreting training. It is aimed at students who have German among their working languages and who are interested in Germany. But the video is also suitable for those who want to learn about community interpreting and interrelated cultural-communicative aspects.

For the use of internet videos in language teaching, it is essential that two aims are observed:

- to present authentic examples and initiate imitation and individual learning,
- to train awareness of phenomena, draw comparisons and connect theory with practice (see Bohušová 2009).

The advantages of videos are the easy accessibility of authentic and simple verbal and non-verbal material. But video platforms also have disadvantages: copyright violations, questionable content and polarizing humour. Humour which amuses some may offend others, and this must be taken into account when selecting material for training purposes.

Amateur videos will not be referenced in this article. In professional videos only trained communicators like moderators, newsreaders, actors and comedians are used – all of which are skilled and trained speakers who master the correct standard pronunciation as well as orthoepic or orthophonetic (or substandard, pluricentric etc.) deviations in order to achieve the intended effect. As a rule, they speak standard language to address the widest spectrum of recipients. In the same way, podcasts can be a good source for language training (see also Adamczak-Krysztofowicz and Stork 2009, Bajusová and Bohušová 2018).

To increase the effectiveness of interpreting lessons (see Mügllová and Bohušová 2005), recordings of authentic speeches and discussions are used to enable the students to adapt themselves in their later professional lives to the authentic language use of native and non-native speakers.

When using internet videos, the following didactic scheme must be observed:

- define the goal of the use of video,
- select appropriate video material,
- define the methodological steps,
- motivate students to do follow-up homework to increase individual learning and desire for repetition, as the video can be used at home as well and similar videos can be sourced and shared or recommended among classmates,
- adopt a multi-skill approach for the purpose of developing language level: transcribe the text word for word, re-narrate the text, transform the dialogue into an essay, explain the punchline or “payoff”, prepare a personal opinion statement etc.

In the next section these recommendations are explained in detail.

1 Kaya Yanar and his sketch “*Der Dolmetscher*” (“The Interpreter”)

A prerequisite for the presentation of video is that the students recognize and accept the material presented to them. As an introduction into the topic of community interpreting, Kaya Yanar’s sketch “*Der Dolmetscher*” (“The Interpreter”), from his television comedy programme “*Was guckst du?*” (“Whaddaya Looking At?”), is highly appropriate.

It is a sketch based on exaggeration, comedic escalation, parody and humour, but it also features a real situation, one drawing from both reality itself and perceptions thereof. On the one hand, the humour has to be considered as such; on the other hand, the humour only works because it is so close to the reality – or at least the popular perception – of communication with authorities.

The main actor, Kaya Yanar, is very well known in Germany. Both critical and empathic, his comedy benefits from the fact that he is a migrant himself, but fully integrated into German society. He straddles the invisible border between

local (German) and foreign. The combination of his Turkish-Arabic-German origin and his talent as an actor enable him to personate Turks, Indians, Russians, Arabs, Swiss, Chinese etc. He satirizes the ever-present topic of integration and ironizes the clash of cultures in a fully politically incorrect manner. The US magazine *Time* emphasized this an article headlined “Whaddaya Looking at?”. Others regard him as simply “more relaxed about foreigners” (see Bofante 2001, Mohr 2002, online).

In these times of massive hybridization (see Huťková and Bohušová 2016), Yanar comprises both a neither-nor and an as-well phenomenon at the same time, with a sharp eye in both directions: the local and the foreign. He dares to mock both sides and tries to find the false notes in both cultures and to unmask the disharmonies of intercultural discourse. Ultimately, he derides stereotypes, hate, communication habits and perceptions through the lens of his own culture and his experiences or quasi-experiences. Moreover, in Yanar’s comedy, emotions or impressions are expressed through the nonverbal sound of languages unknown to the listener. He obviously knows that the foreign is either admired (attributed social prestige) or dismissed as unusual, annoying, not good enough. The power asymmetries (see Andres 2009) behind these impressions have deep roots and various manifestations.

Plot of the sketch



Stills from the video: Yanar, Kaya. “Der Dolmetscher” (online)

There is a German official in an office. We can hear knocking on the door. He says, “Come in!” and two persons enter the room. “Oh, Mr. Ergül – and who are you?” he asks the second person, who responds “I’m his friend, I’ll translate.” The official hopes that their communication will go more smoothly this time. Mr. Ergül is obviously a Turkish migrant looking for work. His friend knows both languages and wants to help him to communicate with the German authorities. At first glance the three communication partners seem very different. The official says to the interpreter: “Okay, please translate: Hello, Mr. Ergül.” In this moment the viewer understands how the interpreting will proceed. Not between languages, since then

the jokes would be incomprehensible (one would need a solid knowledge of Turkish and German), but between different stylistic registers of German. He translates the official's formal wording into a context-inappropriate, familiar, emotional, simple language, strengthened by a foreign accent. In his re-translation for the official, the interpreter speaks in perfect formal German.

Until recently, Mr. Ergül worked as a locksmith, but he was fired because he stole a power drill. To the interpreter he admits this, but the interpreter in turn explains the situation in verbose legal language, emphasizing the innocence of his friend, who claims that his firing was prompted by excessive professional activity. The official listens carefully and seems to be satisfied by this explanation. Thereafter he offers him a job as a packer. Mr. Ergül makes the typical three-fingered money-counting gesture and asks: "How much?" The interpreter translates: "What can I expect in the way of compensation?", and the official mentions a rather high amount. That causes the interpreter to change his strategy immediately and to being translating incorrectly. He explains to the candidate in a vulgar, emotional style that the authorities want to betray him, causing him to lose his temper. He jumps up, curses in his native language, threatens the official and leaves the office. The interpreter pretends not to know the reason for this outburst and indicates that he himself is interested in the job.

2 Didactic recommendations for effective work with the video

The video can be presented as an instructive example of a typical situation in community interpreting. It should be emphasized, however, that it is not documentary in nature, but acted satirically. Nevertheless – or perhaps for this very reason – many aspects of community interpreting can be learned from the video. The student's task is to detect these and enumerate, analyse and generalize them.

Step 1: Multiple viewings of the sketch are recommended.

Step 2: In general, it is necessary to have the particular responses repeated by the students, explain them and translate them in order to make the content and linguistic nuances understandable.

Step 3: Analyses: As this is not an assessment of attitudes or opinions, but a learning process beginning with observation, analysis and interpretation, the analysis can be explicitly led by the teacher.

Table 1: Observations

The following aspects may be observed in the analyses:	
The persons' roles, appearance and clothing	The German official – grey suit, unobtrusive tie, blond, glasses, large physique, making a calm, even boring impression. Mr. Ergül – very colourful shirt, trimmed hair and moustache The interpreter – also trimmed, a shirt and a solid-coloured sweater. Both have black hair. Remark: As a rule, it should be mentioned that the foreign communicators have made visible effort to look well kempt.

Communication situation and venue	Labour office, the official is a native, large desk acts as a barrier between the communication parties, the official has the authority to make the decisions.
Interpreting as service, public interest, interpreter as a person in the background	The interpreter covers up the theft. In the end, he is the one with the power to shape the communication to the advantage of whomever he chooses.
Language	The official – quiet speech, clear, objective, emotionless. The migrant – familiar, emotional, terse, near the end in a foreign language. Because of the context, the viewer understands his message of anger and dissatisfaction. The interpreter – changes between standard language and casual register, high degree of stylistic-lexical heterogeneity.
Interpreting	Not a professional interpreter, no obligation of objectivity, no intuitive neutralisation/downplaying of inadequate language elements (A) or content segments (B): Example A Official: You work as a locksmith? Interpreter: Are you a locksmith, or what? Migrant: You bet I am! Interpreter: Yes. Example B Migrant: a brief account of the stolen power drill Interpreter: an explanation in the migrant’s defence (for neutralization and neutrality see also Rudvin 2002, Bohušová 2017).

Step 4: Generalization/conceptualization

In this step the aspects of community interpreting significant to translation theory are inferred from the processed observations through inductive reasoning (multiple references in the literature, see Hale 2012, 2015, Pöchhacker 2000, Pöllabauer 2005, Bischoff and Loutan 2000 etc.).

The following aspects are treated:

Table 2: Aspects of community interpreting

Observations, evaluations	Aspects of community interpreting in research (who acts, where, how?)
Migrant as person in need, typical of Germany – a Turk	Community interpreting is mainly connected to migrants, but the target groups are heterogeneous: migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, asylees, working migrants, families, patients, minors, minorities, pupils, students etc.
Appearance, clothing, politeness customs, in this case German vs. non-German, broken language, differences	Stereotypes in this category (if something seems foreign and unknown) aggravate communication, stigmatisation of foreign accents (see also Bohušová 2010). An “intersocietal communication situation” as opposed

between social classes/communities	to conference interpreting, where intrasocietal communication takes place, i.e. between members of the same or similar social class, education, mindset, financial situation; see also international vs. intrasocial, community-based.
Labour office	A typical sociocultural context; others would include immigration police, migration offices, refugee camps, medical and therapeutic institutions, police, notaries, courts, social offices, schools, universities (Erasmus students), companies (working migrants); informative, helpful websites of ministries, NGOs, media etc. can also be included.
At the beginning the friend announces that he will translate.	Terminological problem: Mix-up or insufficient differentiation between oral interpreting and written translation.
The interpreting person is a friend, not a competent person; an unqualified layperson	A typical mediator in CI is a non-professional interpreter, often a migrant who has been in the given country for longer. The practice of CI is suffering from de-professionalisation. The job is not well paid. This is suggested by the efforts of the layperson interpreter to get a well-paid job by tricking the interlocutors.
The end of the interpreting session is not successful; the target of the communication was not achieved.	A lack of professionalism on the part of the ad hoc interpreter, lack of expertise, objectivity (compare Winter 2011), responsibility and adherence to the task.
The translator makes mistakes: "I'll translate." "They're trying to f**k you over."	Unintentional (A) and intentional (B) defects in the translation. A: "I'll translate" means "I'll interpret." B: At the end he intentionally interprets unfaithfully to his own benefit.
Downplaying the theft	Unconditional loyalty is often expected from friends and compatriots. Result: the objective, faithful interpreting, is not achieved (see Bohušová 2011).
Switching between official language and the colloquial, familiar register	This is a typical observation of CI. It is not relevant if it is intralingual interpreting as in the sketch or interlingual as in real situations. The vertical stratification of oral expressions can be present permanently, e.g. official German vs. emotional/casual/broken language. The communication partners cannot change their phraseology. Therefore, the interpreter is expected to know dialect or regional varieties, both receptively productively (and not the standard language) (see also my student's thesis on regional interpreting in Styria, Austria, Zabari 2015).

Step 5: The introspection phase

The principal task is to mention what students perceive as typical and what as unusual in this sketch. Apart from humour, one could discuss the discrepancies

between expectations and presentation. On the other hand, the confirmation of personal expectations can be analysed and the explanations for that can be given.

Step 6: The fun factor

This video can also be used as the basis for a shadowing exercise, followed by interpreting the dialogue. This is more an aid for deeper understanding than a serious interpreting task.

3 Some remarks on teaching community interpreting in Slovakia

Community interpreting, or *Kommunaldolmetschen* in German, is only partially included in the education of future interpreters in Slovakia. In my praxeology course, however, a great deal of time is devoted to this topic. Among the Slovak terms used in the field are *úradný tlmočník/prekladateľ* (official interpreter/translator), *úradný preklad* (official translation) and *úradné tlmočenie* (official interpreting), used to describe such work in Slovakia (e.g. for legislative institutions) and for international institutions.

Official interpreting is used in courts, law enforcement and other state institutions at binding events (i.e. marriages, interrogations, medical examinations etc.). The work of official translators is regulated by Act No. 382/2004 Coll. on Court Experts, Interpreters and Translators. Slovakia's Ministry of Interior maintains an online list of certified, i.e. "sworn", interpreters fulfilling the requirements of this law (see JASPI-WEB, online).

CI has also been the subject of some scholarly studies in Slovakia, e.g. Tužinská (2011, 2020), Opalková (2013), Opalková et al. (2013), Štefková (2018) and others.

The practice follows the recommendations of EULITA – the European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association: legal translation/interpreting and the ISO 13611 standard: 2014 Interpreting – Guidelines for community interpreting. In accordance with international developments there are efforts to view official interpreting and translation as activities in the public interest (public-service interpreting and translation). CI is usually provided to those who require it, but it is still in need of a uniform, precise terminology.

The possibilities of formal study in Slovakia are as follows: There are no tertiary education programmes specializing in CI, official translation or court interpreting, but they play a key role in the general study of interpreting and translation. No systematic terms exist for the study of translation and interpreting. The usual title of such programmes is "Foreign Language and Culture" (e.g. "English language and culture"). Moreover, the fields of study at Slovak universities are currently being reorganized and the reform will unify all language-related programmes under the title "Philology".

To be included in the ministerial list of interpreters and translators, one must first pass an examination. For years, paid trainings and courses have been offered to

prepare for the examination, but they are voluntary. There are almost no instructions for the beneficiaries of official translations and interpreting from the authorities (courts, attorneys and others).

In 2012, Slovakia's most in-demand languages for translation were (status 2012, Štefková 2018) German, English, Italian, Hungarian, French, Dutch, Russian, Polish, Spanish and Ukrainian. The most in-demand languages for interpreting were (status 2012) Hungarian (due to the country's large Hungarian minority), Russian, German, English, Polish, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, French, Italian and Dutch. CI is mainly focused on the migration situation. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM, online) has had a national office in Slovakia since 1996; its website offers both Slovak and English versions and offers many statistics regarding the ratio of foreigners in the population, legal and illegal migration, asylum affairs and minorities. However, one can also assume that there is currently a great deal of interpreting and translation for migrant workers. The IOM website has the latest numbers of employed foreigners in Slovakia (June 2020, IOM, online): most of them are from Ukraine, Serbia, Romania, the Czech Republic and Hungary, as well as Vietnam, the Russian Federation and China.

Slovakia's Ministry of Interior has also an English version of its website. Its subsections are "Asylum", "Migration" and "Foreigners". The ministry's sub-institutions include the Office for Migration, a reception camp in Humenné, detention camps in Opatovská Nová Ves and Rohovce, and an integration centre in Zvolen.

Conclusion

In his performances, Kaya Yanar offers a light satirical viewpoint, and the results are, so to speak, "pearls of listening" (see also Brendel and Lange 2009). He is known as the interpreter of situations, the interpreter of Absurdistan, a tourist guide in his own country and a multicultural voice miracle (see also Mohr 2002, online). He impressively depicts the issues through the view of a sharp, multicultural entertainer. If this is accepted, the nature of the appearance and reality of the phenomena can be better understood.

The video discussed herein is appropriate as an easy introduction into the topic of CI. It is a good example to demonstrate to Slovak students what kinds of circumstances CI is performed under, because it shows experiences from another country that is known for its integrative efforts. The question if these efforts have been successful, can be addressed in a more detailed discussion with students. The analysis of the circumstances of CI should also show that there are many more addressees among migrants who can benefit from CI (minorities, workers, students, patients, etc.), and therefore CI should be understood in a broad professional and social context.

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