On Interpreting as Collaboration: "There must be a will from the whole society to create access to interpreters".

Interview with **Elisabet Tiselius**, Stockholm University

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Dear Elisabet, I am really excited to welcome you at Vilnius University and I am looking forward to your keynote talk on establishing trust in research later on. As we have agreed, we could start from your research field in interpreting studies, namely, cognition processes in interpreting and how they are researched. Could you expand on that, please.

Yes, I have several legs, or areas of interest, in my research. The topic of my conference talk is about the area where I have pursued research about research ethics, and the ethical researcher. But my core research — and what I did my PhD about — is cognition in interpreting, and how cognitive processes are necessary for, but also put limits on, interpreters.

Cognition has always been the core, I think, of research into interpreting, because that is how interpreting research started. When research on and about interpreters started, it was within the area of cognitive psychology because people felt that — or cognitive psychologists felt that — this act of interpreting that had been seen then at the Nuremberg Trials after World War II seemed so impossible to perform. You know, was it really possible to listen, transfer, and speak at the same time? And therefore, there was a lot of research — or not a lot because there was not a lot of research on interpreting at all in the beginning — but there was some research on interpreters' cognitive processes in the late sixties and early seventies, although they did not necessarily call it that. And then mainly that was about, you know, how was this possible? Was there a difference between very advanced bilinguals and interpreters?

In your research, you use the terms cognitive processes and cognitive load. What do they comprise? What are the cognitive processes and the cognitive load that interpreters experience?

Any human who performs a task needs a lot of cognitive processes to complete that task. Tasks as simple as tying your shoelaces or standing up from a chair — everything that is not automatised requires some kind of cognitive process. You need to understand what to do, and the different steps it requires to fulfill the task.

And in interpreting, these cognitive processes are linked to the acts of understanding or perceiving that something is a message, and that this is a message in another language, and that my task is to understand the message, and transfer it into another language, i.e., produce what I have understood in the other language. So, all that is a series of cognitive processes, involving everything from hearing, to identifying a message, to finding the right words. These are brain processes, or the cognitive processes, involved in interpreting and cognition. If we take a step back even to the concept of cognition, cognition is everything that we have at some point mentally learned and understood. It can be something where we almost do not know that we have learned it. This means that that it is not part of the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system means that our heart is beating or we are breathing thanks to the nervous system controlling it, but that is not cognition. As soon as we start talking or thinking — the process that involves something in our brain which makes us react to things consciously, or makes us produce words or think about things — very roughly put – everything that involves thinking is part of cognition. And the cognitive processes, they are the specific processes necessary to perform a task.

When the cognitive load — meaning everything that is involved in carrying out a particular task, and thereby taking a toll on the mental processes — becomes too big, and we do not have mental resources enough to deal with our task, then we fail our task. It is very obvious in interpreting — as in many other very demanding tasks — because, we have two languages and a meaning transfer that we are dealing with, and there is also the time limit. We cannot stop and look up a word, or ask someone else to explain the meaning (at least not in simultaneous interpreting). We need to produce that same string of words immediately, in another language. This situation is a sort of an extreme cognitive activity. We need our cognitive processes to perform it, and there is a certain amount of cognitive load involved in order to perform it. When we can handle the cognitive load, we perform it perfectly well. And when we cannot, we either produce gibberish, we stop interpreting, or we hand it over to our colleague or anything else. This idea of how cognitive load impacts the interpreter has also been part of interpreting research since the early days, examples are the models by Moser-Mercer and Gile, for instance[7].

[7] Moser-Mercer, Barbara. 1997. Process models in simultaneous interpretation. *Machine translation and translation theory* 1(3). 3–18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/9783110802474.3.
Gile, Daniel. 1997. Conference interpreting as a cognitive management problem. *Applied Psychology* 3. 196–214.

So apparently, we are discussing simultaneous interpreting where the cognitive load is comprised of three simultaneous activities, i.e., you have to listen and understand the message in one language, to process it and to produce a message in a different language, all at the same time.

This is where I think that we have both as interpreters and researchers — and maybe also clients of interpreting — gone a little bit wrong or have not understood correctly the characteristics of other modes of interpreting for all those years. The process of interpreting became visible when the interpreters sat there in the Nuremberg process, and they were speaking and listening at the same time, and it was the first time anyone saw that. It was felt intuitively that this process must be super difficult, *because* it is simultaneous, and therefore much of the research into cognition in interpreting focused on simultaneous interpreting.

But in fact, we should look at other modes of interpreting. For instance, there is the long consecutive interpreting where the interpreter takes notes for a long time, maybe up to five or six minutes, and then they interpret from their notes. There are clearly also huge cognitive demands and a great cognitive load handled by that interpreter. Then there is also the short consecutive, which is what happens in community interpreting or in public service interpreting where you and I speak two different languages in a small bilingual encounter, and there is an interpreter here to help us. And the interpreter typically works utterance by utterance. So, I will say something and the interpreter will break in at a suitable time when I stop or when I make a little pause or so. The interpreter will immediately interpret that short utterance. Researchers, and perhaps also interpreters, have believed that this is an easy, or less cognitively demanding form of interpreting, because the interpreter immediately renders the speaker's utterance. The interpreter does not have to deal with the constantly incoming speech, as in simultaneous. The speaker says a short utterance and then they are silent, hopefully. And the interpreter can interpret that short utterance calmly. So therefore, "we" (researchers and interpreters) believe that this is not very cognitively demanding. But then we forget that the interpreter has to deal with the two languages at the same time anyway. I do not have to speak while listening, okay, but I have to plan my production while I am listening. And I have to plan it in the other language. In research on monolingual speech production research, it has been discovered that we plan our utterance while the other person is speaking[8]. It rarely happens in a monolingual conversation that I stop and then there is a silence, and then you continue, right? Normally, I make a fraction of a pause, maybe not even an audible pause, and you immediately start speaking. So,

[8] Levinson, Stephen C. and Torreira, Francisco. 2015. Timing in turn-taking and its implications for processing models of language. *Frontiers in Psychology* 6, 731. http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00731

while you have been listening to me, you have been making assumptions about what I say. Then you plan and prepare your answer. It demands two overlapping processes, but only one language. The (short) consecutive interpreter has to do that as well — plan the speech, transfer it into the other language, and handle the communication.

What the (short) consecutive interpreter also does — which simultaneous interpreter does not have to deal with — is finding the right time to break in. In monolingual conversation, depending on the language this turn-taking while interpreting is delicate. For example, you do not interrupt very much when I speak, because we both belong to a Nordic tradition where people do not interrupt each other. However, if we belonged to a more Latin tradition, it would be considered impolite if you did not interrupt me, right?

As if I were not listening and following what you are saying, without reacting.
Exactly. So even if there is not as much overlap, as in the Latin tradition, there is still a very short time between when I speak and when you start speaking. These bilingual turn-taking requirements are cognitively demanding for interpreters. And there is also the fact that the interpreter cannot remember what has been said for an unlimited amount of time. If I do not take notes, I cannot remember forever. So, at some point I have to start to interpret, to deliver my message, or I will forget it.

And as an interpreter, when I sit there in a dialogue interpreting encounter, I have to find the right moment to break in, i.e., the moment when I still remember what to say, and the moment when I do not very much interrupt a speaker. We will not be happy with the interpreter, if the interpreter says, stop, I need to interpret now. That is a very annoying interpreter. But the smooth interpreter will look for short — you know — not even a pause, but a nuance, a hint of a pause, in my utterance. Maybe I stop to breathe a little, or maybe it sounds as if I am going to stop my sentence. And then the interpreter will start speaking immediately[3].

Following nonverbal signals, and body language?
And the interpreter will also use body language to break in.

To show that you are forgetting that I am here?
Or not even showing that. If I speak and I have someone here beside me, and that is the interpreter, maybe the interpreter does not even have to make a very visible body sign. It may be enough to just lean a little bit forward or to breathe in and prepare to start speaking, and that will stop me, right? Just as in a conversation between you

[3] Brône, Geert, Bert Oben, Annelies Jehoul, Jelena Vranjes and Kurt Feyaerts. 2017. Eye gaze and viewpoint in multimodal interaction management. *Cognitive Linguistics* 28 (3). 449–483. https://doi.org/10.1515/cog-2016-0119

and me. The skillful interpreter will deal with that as well. So now we have perceiving and understanding the message, dealing with your own cognitive load, knowing when you have to start interpreting in order to get the message through, and transferring it, of course, into the other language. And this is all ongoing at the same time as I'm speaking. Therefore, I argue that there is a lot of simultaneous activity going on in dialogue interpreting as well. Although we think that it is not at all simultaneous. It is considered consecutive because the speaker stops, and then I interpret. But in fact, there are a lot more levels of simultaneity in dialogue interpreting too, although we do not listen and speak at the same time.

And in terms of ethics and dialogue interpreting, there are so many more ethically charged situations to handle. First of all, because it is in community interpreting where dialogue interpreting mostly happens — I would not say that it is only in community settings, but to a large extent it is in community settings. So, you are interpreting in a police interview, in a hospital, during a medical consultation, in court. And in all these situations, there is a lot of emotions going on. It is easy to say that the interpreter should be neutral and impartial. And of course, he or she must. I am a very avid fan of being neutral and impartial. But that does not mean that I can leave the emotional or ethical issues aside. As an interpreter, I still have to handle how the people react to each other, and adapt my own interpreting accordingly. I have to decide in what way I should render a very difficult message. It does not mean that I should not render it, but I have to adjust to the language of the other person so that it is rendered with for example the same register, and so on. All these types of ethical decisions — and I would also like to slip in the concept of discretionary power here, the interpreter's decision on how to render the message — all these decisions have to be made and are put on top of the already cognitively challenging situation of interpreting the message.

It seems then that the concepts of simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting are slightly misleading in terms of cognitive loads interpreters experience when they work. Consecutive interpreting does not mean consecutive cognitive loads that come one after another. They are still simultaneous. Plus, there is this emotional ethic, moral decision making that interpreters need to deal with. Could you explain in more detail the concept of the translator's discretionary power? In your article[10] you deal with the researcher's ethical decisions and discretionary power while observing interpreters. But here we are discussing the interpreter's —
The interpreters own discretionary power.

[10] Tiselius, Elisabet. 2018. The (un-) ethical interpreting researcher: ethics, voice and discretionary power in interpreting research. *Perspectives*. 747–760. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2018.1544263

So what do they decide to do or not to do?

Let us start with the concept of discretionary power. Discretionary power is exercised by the interpreter or the civil servant or other person who has to deal with individuals and their individual cases and situations, but as a representative of the law or rules and regulations, and the institution. So, the laws or the rules and regulations are a sort of a frame that states how things are going to be dealt with. If we take a civil servant who is dealing with the person who comes to apply for allocation of money because they have had a child, there is a set of rules that decide whether they are eligible for that type of allocation. You have a child, a child is of a certain age, you are the parent of the child, et cetera. But then there may be a lot of other factors that are also part of this decision, which were not put down in the law, because the law cannot describe every individual case. However, it is in every individual case for every individual we are going to decide. We are not supposed to make decisions based on our own gut feeling. But still there is a little marge of maneuver where you can decide whether the mother in this case has the right to a family allocation or not. The public servant exercises discretionary power when interpreting the law.

The same is true for the interpreter, who has the ethical guidelines. I am going to translate exactly what you say. Everything that is uttered in the room will be translated. I will translate in the first person. I will take notes and destroy my notes after I have finished interpreting. There are all these sets of ethical guidelines for the interpreter to follow. Yet, we all know that a word cannot be translated by the exact same meaning in the other language. There is always a little leeway on which word to choose, first of all, on where to put the stress in a certain sentence, or which verb to choose, perhaps, in a certain context. All this is part of the interpreter's discretionary power.

The interpreter makes small decisions all the time, which will, in one way or the other, affect how the person is perceived by the other person. There is this classical study about court interpreters' politeness and how it affects jurors' impression of a witness[11]. People listened to a witness statement with and without politeness markers and it turned out that they judged the witness reliability differently depending on the politeness markers. It is a tiny, tiny change you would not even think of it as such as an interpreter, because you adapt to the language of the court, right? But because you adapt to the language of the court, you may change how the person who does not share the language perceive the person. Cecilia Wadensjö[12] has a classical example at the beginning of her book where there is a translation from Russian into Swedish in court. The Swedish judge formulated their question in such a way that the most

[11] Berk-Seligson, Susan. 1988. The impact of politeness in witness testimony: The influence of the court interpreter. *Multilingua* 7(4). 411–440. https://doi.org/10.1515/mult.1988.7.4.411

[12] Wadensjö, Cecilia. 1998. *Interpreting as Interaction*. London: Routledge.

logical answer was a 'no', but when translated into Russian the same sentence leads to a logical answer 'yes'. In Russian the person answered just that, *da*, which everyone in the courtroom could hear and understand. But the interpreter translated the answer as 'no'. Wadensjö shows with this example that in such a situation the doubt is put on the interpreter as everyone is able to hear what the witness actually said in Russian, while the logical answer to the Swedish question is 'no'. This type of linguistic decisions is part of the interpreter's discretionary power. The interpreter does not break the rules when choosing a 'yes' instead of a 'no' or whatever word would have been the most logical one in a word for word context. The interpreter decides in what way the meaning is best rendered.

I understand. I have this experience as an interpreter myself where there is the different logic on how to answer a 'yes/no' question in Lithuanian as compared to English. Can I ask you a slightly personal question related to my own experience in community interpreting? I participated as an interpreter in criminal procedures — in the investigation phase, not in court — with a foreign investigator and a Lithuanian suspect. Of course, in the room, there were some officials from the Lithuanian side present, and there was this investigator who was a foreigner asking questions. It was not an English to Lithuanian interpreting, and I was the only person, in fact, able to communicate with both parties. The foreign investigator was formulating their questions in such a way that I understood what they meant but if I translated the questions the way they wanted them formulated — and the investigator was trying to put some emotional pressure on the suspect in the case — actually, they would not get the answers they were aiming for. There were certain nuances that would not be understood in Lithuanian due to cultural differences. So I had to deal both with the emotional pressure the investigator was putting on the suspect as they would in a normal monolingual situation and also with their formulating the questions that were not actually effective in my culture. Even now, I am not sure whether I was making the right decisions in this situation as an interpreter…

I would say that it is very, very difficult to know if you made the right decisions then, because one of the problems with police interviews is that the police, regardless of country, learned already at the police academy, and then during their service, a certain type of interview techniques in order to get the information they want. And these types of interview techniques are, of course, developed in a monolingual context.

They know, as you say, how to put pressure or make people contradict themselves, and then come back to why they contradicted themselves there, and also, of course, how to create a relationship of trust, for instance, with the suspect. They do this by

using these interview techniques. But then as the suspect comes from another culture, all these interview techniques are not necessarily useful. As an interpreter, what you need to know is what type of technique the policeman is looking for.

If you do not convey the dialogue the same way, then you sort of destroy what the police are aiming for. But on the other hand, you might not be able to convey it in the exact same way, because just as you say, then you destroy the message, and you will never get the answer the policeman is looking for. This is a really delicate area and a grey zone there. But it is good to understand, I think — and we try to teach this to our students in Stockholm — that there are different types of interview techniques both for doctors and for the police. Obviously, you cannot teach interpreting students everything but we can make them aware that there is a system, so you can try to follow the system as much as possible. For instance, the classical no, no is when the policeman asks an open question and you translate it as a closed question. So just knowing the difference between an open and closed question is important, right? But then these are the easy ones. And then there are difficult ones, discourses developed in one language and one culture, and which must be conveyed to the other language and the other culture. Therefore, it is really difficult to say whether, you know, did I do the right thing or not? But what is very easy to say is that what the interpreter uses in the example you gave is the discretionary power on deciding on what is the best way to convey this in order to get the same reaction or information that I would have had I been speaking the same language.

Yes, thank you. I am not sure whether this type of interpreting — community interpreting — is explained to the students here who are mostly taught the 'classical' simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting techniques. I think it is a very interesting and important area.

Yes, I also think it is important. Although I would argue, and I have argued that in another article[13] I wrote, that there are very few differences between conference interpreting and community interpreting. Probably more similarities than differences. The differences are mainly if you look at how much interpreters are paid and who uses their services. Still there are a lot of areas where you have to use different techniques and have a different understanding of the situation.

However, if you come from a pure community interpreting training — if I look at the students we train in Stockholm — they would not understand, or I know they do not unterstand — the sort of rules of the game in pure simultaneous conference

[13] Tiselius, Elisabet. 2022. Conference and Community Interpreting – Commonalities and Differences. *Routledge Handbook of Conference Interpreting*, edited by Michaela Albl-Mikasa and Elisabet Tiselius. London: Routledge. 49–64.

interpreting. And they would not be very good simultaneous conference interpreters, even if they could master the technique. But I also know that vice versa, when we have our conference interpreting students who want to go on to do community interpreting, we also offer a supplementary course for them because we believe that if they come with their techniques, they will not be very successful community interpreters to just to start.

So these are two different sets of skills to be taught.
But the way we teach simultaneous and consecutive in a simultaneous and consecutive class, and the type of simultaneous and the type of consecutive that you teach for conference interpreting are of one kind. Then there is another type of simultaneous and consecutive that we would teach for community interpreting. And when we teach the ethics of conference interpreting, it is different from the ethics of community interpreting. It does not mean that it cannot be done to the two groups. It just means that you cannot assume that one is of equal value for the other.

Okay, this is really very interesting. Elisabet, you mentioned that one of your PhD students is doing research in the understanding of professional self-concept of interpreters. Could you explain that idea a little bit?
So this is another aspect that we know very little about. How much does the professional self-concept impact the cognitive load of the interpreter? I think, it is an important question and interesting to look more into. And I am very happy that my PhD student Nereida Betancor Sánchez is exploring the idea of the impact of a strong professional self-concept, but maybe I should first of all explain what this professional self-concept is. The professional self-concept comprises everything you know, all your experience, and how you understand yourself in the situation where you find yourself as a professional. I think, it was first launched in interpreting studies by Dörte Andres[14]. And then it has also been discussed by Ricardo Muñoz Martín[15]. The idea is that in any given situation as an interpreter — because now we are speaking as interpreters here — you bring your previous experiences as well as your training. Depending on how often you have been in a situation, you have a certain security in how you handle that typical situation. This is your professional self-concept. And for

[14] Andres, Dörte. 2011. *Ein integrativ konzipiertes Dolmetschprozessmodell.* Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai: Philologia 1. 81–103.

[15] Muñoz Martín, Ricardo. 2014. Situating translation expertise: A review with a sketch of a construct. The development of translation competence. *Theories and methodologies from psycholinguistics and cognitive science*, edited by John Schwieter and Aline Ferreira. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2–56.

somebody who has a long experience and a long university training and is well paid, that person has probably a very strong professional self-concept. They can go into a situation — and now I am thinking about conference interpreters — and know how to handle that situation, and also be assertive as a professional. Now, this is not to say that experienced community interpreters do not have strong professional self-concept either, they do. If you are a professional, experienced, trained community interpreter, of course, when you go into an interpreting situation you know how to handle it. You have your professional security and pride and experience. Naturally, this interpreter has a strong professional self-concept in that situation as well. But community interpreters typically have a less secure place in society. They are less paid. They often have an immigrant background. They often belong to a group who is socioeconomically more vulnerable. Many of them are untrained. This means that in the society as a whole, their status as interpreters is lower, let us say, than the status of conference interpreters, meaning that this might also impact their professional self-concept.

The question is then, if I have this slightly weaker professional self-concept, how much does that impact my cognitive abilities? There is very little research on that, but a study on translation students showed that bad evaluation impacted translation performance.[16]

Along this line, an interpreter who thinks that this is not really a profession, this is something I just do because I speak two languages and I get paid, but it is just a temporary job, and then I will do something else. How much does that impact your cognitive ability to handle this very advanced task?

Apparently then you have less support from all the professional guidelines and rules and experience, which give you confidence. So the hypothesis would be that an interpreter with a strong self-concept will be better at handling their cognitive load. And vice versa, somebody who is insecure in the position as a community interpreter for a variety of reasons might have this cognitive load increased by their insecure self-concept.

Exactly. Now, how we — or, she, Nereida Betancor Sánchez, will be able to test that, and if it's at all possible to make that link, we do not know yet, but it is an interesting thought. She is developing an experiment where we hope that she can at least get an indication of whether there is at all something behind this idea or not.

[16] Rojo, Ana and Caro, Marina R. 2016. Can emotion stir translation skill? Defining the impact of positive and negative emotions on translation performance. *Reembedding translation process research*, edited by Ricardo Muñoz Martín. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 107–130.

At the same time, it seems very much like very ethically sensitive experimental research to do, because you have vulnerable communities and you have people who are interpreters coming from vulnerable communities...
What we are thinking is that we can do it by putting the two professional groups [of interpreters] in situations that they master very well, and situations that they master less well, i.e., put a conference interpreter in a community interpreting situation and a community interpreter in a conference interpreting situation, and then see how they perform. We are not, you know, not trying to put a stamp on you and tell you that you can probably not do that. We try putting two groups into situations in which they are more or less familiar with, and look at if there are differences in their performance, and then we can take it from there.

So what phase is this research in?
In a very early stage, pilot stage. It is going to be a long way before we have results.

Designing the experiment, and thinking of the variables and —
Stuff like that. Identifying variables, designing the experiment, recruiting possible participants, which is a big issue as well.

Of course. How long, time wise, do you think, do you expect it —
To take? She has three years or two and a half left of her PhD. So, I hope that in three years from now we will see some results.

We will be expecting some report of the outcome.
Yes, I am looking forward to see where this will lead. She has also done a questionnaire study, of different groups of interpreters' perception of themselves with a type of status indicator. Looking at, you know, how I see myself as a professional. That is also part of this research trying to identify whether there are differences between the two groups.

So there are some preliminary results, aren't there?
Yes, she is close to publishing that. But that is another experiment, of course.

That sounds very promising. Another area that we planned to discuss today was the relationship between the research and industry, and training interpreters.
The market is so different in different countries. For instance, in a country like France, which I know a little bit better now than before, if we talk about community interpreting, there are companies hiring community interpreters because the employment law in France is quite strict. You cannot work as a freelancer for a company for an eternity.

Therefore, there is a situation where fairly well-trained interpreters are employed, and they provide interpreting to different sectors, either on site or over the phone. But then, because interpreters have to be employed by the companies, there are not very many interpreters. If there is a need for interpreting in a "small" language, or if the interpreters working in a "big" language are all busy, then there are no interpreters available. And in that case, we are back to 'your uncle is helping you'. Also in France, the training of interpreters mostly takes place at master's level. This means that the training of interpreters for languages of a lesser diffusion is not always accessible. You are not considered a trained interpreter if you have not taken a university education, and if the language is not taught at university, it adds further difficulties. Since, in order to be considered a trained interpreter, you have to have completed interpreter training at master's level. As a result, in contexts like the French one, there is either well-trained public service interpreters who are often employed, or no access to an interpreter at all.

As a language minority, a person coming from a smaller language, you may have access to an interpreter in a language (other than French), which is foreign to you, but you can still understand. Then you deal with interpreting in a language which is available, but which is not your native language.
Yes. You mean, like for instance, if you are from Kazakhstan, but use a Russian interpreter because you maybe also speak Russian?

Apart from the EU parliament, I do not think you can easily get a Lithuanian interpreter in the hospital at all.
And then you would have to use English, for instance. Yes. And as in my example, the Kazakh person would have to use Russian, right?

And then, we have countries like Sweden where the interpreting industry is quite well regulated, and there is also a lot of training for interpreters, but where everything is based on freelance. There are very few community interpreters who are employed by a company. We have agencies, which will sell interpreting services, but the interpreter works through the agency as a freelance agent, basically. In that system, there is quite good access to interpreters, and it is fairly easy, you know, to access the different languages. The supply and demand chain is fairly balanced.

But since there is no requirement for interpreters to have either education or licensing or anything similar, there is very little incitement for interpreters to actually train or get an education. A person who speaks Farsi, which in 2015 was a highly demanded language, as there is no demand for any degree or any authorisation in interpreting, that person would work as an interpreter without any formal training. This is of course also devastating. As a result, despite the fact that there is, in theory, both access to training

and a very well-developed system to provide interpreters for everyone, one still would not have access to professionally trained interpreters. It is almost as if you just asked 'the uncle' to help, except that 'the uncle' came through the agency.

Right. Different legal regulations result in very different situations in the market.
Exactly. And then, you have markets where there is absolutely nothing. Now, I am talking about the countries, which have systems for providing interpreting to the public services. There are many countries, and in Europe as well, where at best, the nurse will have a list of people who can interpret into the most needed languages. I think that the EU directive for interpreting in court had changed a lot — at least for the countries in Europe, and at least in court — on how interpreters are provided.

In Lithuania, I believe there are stipulations in the code of criminal proceedings that if you get into a situation where you have to deal with investigation by the police you have the right to have somebody who will explain things in your native language or other language that you can understand. Theoretically, the codes imply the right for interpreting but there is no regulation in place that would provide for implementing this right. I believe there is a gap there. And there was a draft of a law that could provide this type of regulation of interpreting and translation services, which has never been passed yet. In Lithuania, the situation is that interpreting and translation services are mostly provided by agencies who assign projects to freelance translators and interpreters.
And then one hopefully has a good interpreter. But it could also be anyone.

Of course, bigger agencies require some qualification or they kind of test the candidates. They often have their quality assurance systems in place, which allow them to select translators and interpreters with good skills. But there is no guarantee when you are the receiver of the service at all.
And what about the current situation in Lithuania with the Ukrainian refugees, are they usually in need of interpreters, or do they have a common language in some way?

I believe from my experience that Russian is used quite often. It is not necessarily correct and comfortable for the refugees, but I think the Russian language is used a lot as an intermediary language. Some agencies have committed to providing translation services for Ukrainians cost free or at a reduced rate. They kind of volunteered their services. I am not sure whether such services are still available now as they were at the beginning on the 'we need to help them wave', which is receding now, I think.

And in Lithuania, typically, are interpreting services free of charge? I mean, it was, you said in the beginning for Ukrainians, but are they free of charge in general? If you go to the hospital and you need an interpreter, who pays for the interpreter?

I am not sure about that. I am sure that during the criminal investigation procedures, I was part of, the suspects did not have to pay to be questioned by a foreign investigator.

But that is also, I think, in the directive that you have the right to understand the language of the court without any fees for you.

I cannot answer that without looking into it first.

Well, this is really the crux, I think. We live in a world that gets more and more globalised. We cannot believe that if we do not deal with it, they will learn the language and everything will sort itself out.

If we ignore it, it just goes away.

I think that it is a situation that every country needs to deal with. It is caused by different flows of people, whether they are migrants or refugees, or any people flowing between countries, within Europe and on the global level. And whoever they are, when they end up either in court or in hospital for whatever reason, they need this basic understanding of what is happening to them, and the court and the hospital needs to understand them. And we cannot easily ensure that, since it is hard to forecast which languages will be needed. I mean, it would be easy if we knew that in the next 15 years we would need Arabic, Turkish, Somali, and Russian, and we train interpreters in these languages. But it does not work like that either. Suddenly there is someone speaking Kiswahili that shows up and we need an interpreter for them.

In order for the system to be resilient, I think that we need both strong training and research, and a strong language industry working together. For the good of the public finances, we do not want it to be hugely expensive, and we want the people needing interpreters to have access to them more or less free or at least not to a huge expense. Therefore, we need people who can stand up for the profession as such, and the right to an interpreter as such, as well as a solid training system, which the university system is part of. I think if the university system can argue for the necessity of training interpreters — in my case, translators of course too — and do that together with the industry, seeing the need for people with that training. And then maybe we can, especially for bigger languages, like Finnish, which has always been important in Sweden, or Arabic, which is big in Sweden right now, we will always have a core of trained interpreters, and they have some work. We do not know if they will work full-

time or not, but they will at least carry the profession. There will come odd languages, of course, but if there is a strong core of trained interpreters, it is also easier to host these smaller groups of people who will need interpreters quickly. The community can provide quick training for people who need to act as interpreters. The computer industry say that AI will take over, and maybe that will happen soon, but not soon enough. We need to have a solution here and now.

If we have a strong profession, it is easier also for smaller languages to integrate, be quickly trained, which requires a strong society, a strong industry, and a strong training. In Norway, for instance, they have now passed a legislation on interpreting and the right to interpreters, which also highlights from the state side that we need to work with this system.

The training institutions quite naturally come in as the provider of these interpreters, and the industry as the organisers. Unfortunately, it feels like the state in many countries is thinking that 'if we ignore it, it'll go away'. And the language industry is thinking, 'I can earn some money here'. And the university is saying, 'if you don't have a master's degree, you cannot open your mouth'.

So instead of cooperation, there is competition and cost saving, and profit smelling a little bit, which results in... We actually visited Translation Studies Department in Aarhus (Denmark) a few years ago, and they said that there were a lot of language departments that were closed due to cost savings. And the only ones left were like English and French, big languages. So instead of opening possibilities, for a variety of languages, they actually closed them.

That is an excellent example, because languages were seen to not be profitable. So, they had closed down a lot of their language departments and language training programmes. They had two very good interpreting and translation training programmes in Denmark when I did my conference interpreting training in the early nineties. There was one at Copenhagen University, which was the interpreting training providing interpreters for the European institutions. And then there was a smaller one at Aarhus University where they taught translation among other things. I think there was some kind of bilingual assistant training with some part of interpreting. All that was closed down. Denmark also decided to discontinue their interpreter authorisation, which they thought was not needed anymore. And when the global landscape changed and refugees arrived, even to Denmark. There was no system in place for people who needed interpreting services. We often forget that it is not just the immigrant or the refugee who needs an interpreter. A doctor treating a patient needs the interpreter, of course, because otherwise it is veterinary medicine. If we want to understand the problem and get the patient out of hospital as soon as possible, then it is easier to do that if you understand what they

are saying. Anyway, Denmark ended up in a situation where they literally had no interpreters, no interpreter training, no institutions where they can train interpreters, not even EU-interpreters, because everything had been closed down. This means that they have to start all over again. They have just restarted the conference interpreter training, but now in Aarhus. I think there is also a private company providing some type of public service interpreter training. Everything has to be reinvented, which in the end cost a lot more money. You know, a resilient system was closed down with the argument that it would save money, instead it led to increased costs, and a lot of trouble.

I have one more key point about the industry. I have the impression that the interpreting profession often tell the trainers or the researchers, 'you have to come to us and prove with research that this is how we should work'. For instance, 'we can only work so many hours because research says that we are not good anymore after that.' Or 'we cannot work on distance because research says that it's bad for us,' or 'there must be two interpreters when we interpret because research says that otherwise it's not good.' They come to research and say, 'show us the papers so that we can prove it to our clients.' I understand that no one wants to make unfounded claims. Of course, you want your claims to be true, but when you put that much trust into research, it seems like very much wanting to create truths that will never change.

What I think interpreting needs is a strong professional organisation like any trade union that can say 'these are as many hours that we should work', 'this is how many people should be in a team', and 'this is how many assignments we can take per day.' Like AIIC for conference interpreting. All these things are based on evidence. Evidence based practice tells us that an interpreter who works more than 30 minutes alone is not a good interpreter. Everybody knows that who works as an interpreter. You may go for an hour, but after that, even in dialogue interpreting, you should be stopped. This is the job of the professional organisation. And they are the ones who can, hopefully, be the sounding board when the government comes and says, 'we want to organise the interpreting services for court. What is your idea about this?' The professional organisation can also talk to the industry and say, 'you can't pay us less than a certain minimum wage a month because we actually have three years of university training, and we are providing an advanced service. On top of that we also have to be able to support our family.'

The professional organisation can also come to the researcher and say that, 'hey, we'd really like to know how much worse an interpreter gets after 30 minutes working alone. Can you devise a test for that?' And then the researcher or the institution or whoever gets that question can say, 'yeah, I can try to do that if you want me to. And by the way, here is some research that has already been done. I can summarise it for you

and you can use it when you talk to people, but you have to decide on your own which part of this you're going to use.'

In the same way, the professional organisation can say, 'we believe that when you train interpreters, you put a lot of hours into simultaneous interpreting. But actually, what we need is whispered interpreting in court, could you make a course for that?' And the university can say, 'yes, this term we have money to do it so we can do it.' Or 'sorry, that's not part of what the government ordered us to do, but you are welcome to put pressure on the government'. And so on.

That is the job for professional organisations.
Exactly. There must be a will from the whole society to create access to interpreters for those immigrants and doctors, in our case. Or maybe, we want our Swedish booth or our Lithuanian booth in the EU to function well for our politicians. And because we as a society want interpreters there, we want to train them.

And I can hear a response in Lithuania, 'the market will solve it'. I can hear a cultural difference in the way you talk about the situation.
Yes, but if we look at how the interpreting market has developed over Europe, I think that the answer is that the market will not solve it on its own. We can compare the spoken language interpreting situation to sign language interpreting, at least in the Swedish case. Our deaf citizens have been in a truly precarious situation and they had very little access to society as a whole. However, they managed to show that they are part of our country and that they will not go away. And of course, with the movement for the rights of people with disabilities, deaf people were able to show they have the right to have access to community services and to the community as a whole. It is my right as a deaf person to go to university and to understand the teaching. And similarly in many other countries, deaf people have been able to create a demand for sign language interpreters. So, sign language interpreters in many countries are trained at university and fairly well paid.

The reason for the difference between the situation for the sign language interpreters and for community interpreters of other spoken languages is that there is a strong group of users of their services who has expressed their need for them and their need for high quality services. But if we believe that the same would be true for immigrants, and that they would be a strong enough power for demanding interpreters, I would argue that they will most likely immediately be told to learn the language.

Yes, you have to adapt...
Exactly. And the doctor who sees the immigrant for 15 minutes and is trying to decide whether to send them for laboratory testing or to send them home will not have the time to sit down and write a demand for interpreters to the central hospital board

either. Yet, for interpreting services, in some cases, there is a lot of money in it for the providing industry. For the service provider, the agency, there is a lot of money because of, for instance, the EU directive. Since interpreters must be provided in court, and in some countries also in hospitals, there will also be a lot of happy companies saying, 'sure, we'll provide interpreters', almost for free.

At the expense of the people who do the job.
Exactly. But, who is paying for that? Well, ultimately, I think that society is paying for that. We send people home who are very ill, which will cost you more than if we could treat them quickly in the first place and send them home better. We are sending people to prison who might not need to go to prison, and who cost money for years when they could be free and contribute by working in the society. Or we send the wrong person to prison and the right person goes free. So unfortunately, I am not sure that the market is the answer to our prayers.

I am not quite sure either.
In Sweden as well. And what annoys me most in Sweden are service providers who earn much money while not providing a high-quality service, when they actually have all the possibilities to provide very good interpreting services.

We will hear some presentations about the working conditions during the conference. There is one researcher from the UK who talks about 'Uberisation' of translation[17]. And, Elisabet, you also write about the ethics of the researcher...
Some ideas for one of the latest articles I wrote about ethics in research[18], and which is also the topic of my talk on Saturday came from a PhD student summer school where we talked about informed consent. As a researcher, how do you get real informed consent, how do we make sure that people actually give you informed consent, not just because they like you, or because they think that this is a fun thing to do. The consent form is often too long to read, and participants sometimes just agree without reading it. So what is your position as a researcher in that? This is what I will try to talk a little bit more about on Saturday.

Elisabet, thank you very much for the interview.

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17 Gökhan, Fırat. 2022. Uberisation of translation: impacts on working conditions. The talk at the international conference *Translation, Ideology, Ethics: Response and Credibility*. Vilnius University. Vilnius, 22-24 September 2022.

18 Tiselius, Elisabet. 2021. Informed Consent: An overlooked part of ethical research in interpreting studies. *INContext: Studies in Translation and Interculturalism*, 1(1). 83–100. https://doi.org/10.54754/incontext.v1i1.4