Chapter One Professional Interpreting: its Nature and Quality

1. Professional Interpreting: a service activity with a communication function
The progress of modern science and technology has succeeded in eliminating most of the barriers in human communication. However, the language barrier, or the diversity of human languages, the seemingly everlasting biblical Tower of Babel, has proved insurmountable today. It is this barrier that created the need and justified the ever-growing significance of professional interpreting, which plays an indispensable role in interpersonal and intercultural communication.

1.1 Communicative Nature of Professional Interpreting
1.1.1 Intercultural Communication and Interpreting
Interpersonal communication involves intra-cultural communication and inter-cultural communication. The former means the communication between people with a shared cultural background while the latter refers to the communication between people from different cultures.

According to Larry L. Barker, in intra-cultural communication, 7 main elements are involved: a) a sender/encoder of communication, who conveys b) a message c) through a channel to d) a receiver/decoder, which e) responds via f) feedback. However, none of these elements is meaningful outside of g) a situation or communication setting in which it may be interpreted (Larry: 1990). Larry has described these 7 elements in the following model:

![Communication Model]

In this model of communication, Sender makes the decision to communicate and also determines what the purpose of the messages is. He sends the Messages through a certain or mixture of several Channels. Receiver performs the act of interpreting...
messages, and at the same time responds with a certain feedback, either positive or negative. Upon receiving the feedback from Receiver, Sender also responds accordingly, thus making the communication process proceed on. Here, in inter-cultural communication, due to the existence of language barriers, if without the help of interpreter, Receiver cannot understand the message “received”, therefore, he cannot signal back. Without the feedback for his message, Sender will find it impossible and meaningless to send another message, thus blocking effective communication. It is in these multi-cultural and multi-lingual situations that interpreting is required.

1.1.2 Interpreting—the facilitator of communication

The barriers to effective inter-cultural communication are so enormous as to make the failures or breakdowns of communication frequent. Diversities of linguistic and non-linguistic factors appear to be insurmountable, while cultural differences present untold complications for smooth and effective communication. Interpreter is, in this case, a kind of middleman, one who belongs to two language-culture contexts, and whose Janus-like role faces squarely in two directions: Sender and Receiver. He must serve as a receiver of one message in one language while being a sender of a message in another language. This message must have a different form, but at the same time provide an equivalent content.

We can now define interpreting as “the oral transposition of an orally delivered message from a source language to a target language, performed in the presence of the participants”. (Slype: 1983). Its aim is to bridge the language and culture gaps in the inter-linguistic and inter-cultural communication.

1.2 Professional Interpreting, its characteristic of being professional

1.2.1 A service done on a financial basis

If we follow the above definition of interpreting as “the oral transposition of an orally delivered message from a source language to a target language, performed in the presence of the participants”, then the interpreting activity in real life will be found in several contexts. In a word, there are non-professional interpreting and professional interpreting. For instance, the most widespread non-professional variety of interpreting is the occasional help given to friends, relatives, or tourists during visits, sightseeing, shopping, etc. One other type of non-professional interpreting is the in-class interpreting training in which interpreting exercises are done by the trainees and evaluated or corrected by the trainers.

Professional interpreting differs from all these in one respect, that is, professional interpreting is a service done on request and for a financial reward. For example, suppose you are a English major at Xiamen University, one of your former American teachers comes to visit form the States and you offer him the help to be a tour guide and interpreter during his visit here, it is very clear that this is a free help and hospitality to an old friend, which differs form the case in which you are hired and
paid by a tourist agency to guide and interpret for some American tourists. Professional interpreting is paid for by a Client, here a client may be a person, company, governmental department or an governmental or non-governmental organization which calls for the interpretation and pays the interpreter, and this client need not be the sender or receiver in such a inter-linguistic or inter-cultural communication.

1.2.2 Interpreting as a Profession
Interpreting is both an old and new profession. There have been interpreting activities since antiquities. According to historical records, as early as in the Zhou Dynasty(1100B.C.-770B.C.), official interpreters emerged in China and were called as “寄”, “象”, “狄”, “译”. Since the Han culture was much more sophisticated and developed than those of the national minorities at that time, the communications among them were limited to verbal communications, so those professionals were all acting as interpreters, and they did make great contribution to the cultural exchanges and integration between Han Nationality and other minority groups.

After that, in Tang Dynasty, interpreting and translation promoted the introduction and popularization of Buddhism; in Qing Dynasty, interpreting and translation introduced the achievements of western science and technology to China; and during the New Cultural Movement which broke out in 1919, new thoughts of science and democracy were introduced into China via interpreting and translation; after the founding of People’s Republic of China in 1949, New China made great achievements in the diplomatic area, which naturally led to a sharp increase in the demand of interpreters and translators, and at the same time the success of diplomatic work should be attributed to the development of interpreting and translation; a sharp increase in interpreting and translation occurred since 1970s after Chinese language became one of the six working languages in UN; what really made the difference was the adoption and implementation of the reform and opening-up policy since 1979; a substantial increase of international exchanges and communications emerged between China and the outside world, which brought a true unprecedented increase in interpreting and translation activities in various fields.

On the worldwide basis, just like in the communications among different nationalities in ancient China, interpreting and translation activities also occurred in the early western civilizations. However, it is only since the end of World War I and the international crises that followed that interpreting has developed into an internationally recognized profession. Consecutive interpreting made its recognition at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919; simultaneous interpreting came to the stage after World War II, first being used at the Nuremberg Trials in 1945, and then at the United Nations. Ever since then, interpreting has penetrated into various social sectors from political to economic, cultural, scientific and technical sectors.
1.2.3 Conclusion

As Daniel Gile pointed out, “Professional Translation is essentially a service activity with a communication function, performed in a professional setting with a professional aim in mind, and constrained by this setting.” With the service offered by interpreter, the seemingly insurmountable barriers between Sender and Receiver are overcome. The receiver can understand the Message from the Sender and at the same time make his feedback understood by the Sender. As a result, the Sender can constantly modify his communicative acts and send back feedback. In this way, the communication between Sender and Receiver who are from two different cultural backgrounds turns out to be smooth, effective and “natural” as the intra-linguistic and intra-cultural communication.

Professional Interpreting is therefore a professional act of verbal communication. It has two chief features: it is an act of communication, and it is considered to be a profession. So professional interpreting is certainly subjected to the rules of both its communicative and professional natures.

2. What is the Quality of Professional Interpreting

When we talk about the quality of something, we usually think of what is good or not good, or even bad. To put this in a more scientific way, Quality refers to the degree of excellence of a degree of conformance to a standard. As we have discussed, professional interpreting is a service activity with communication function, performed in a professional setting with a professional aim in mind, and constrained by this setting, therefore, when we talk about the quality, the degree of excellence of this service activity, we shall investigate from its natures of being communicative and professional.

2.1. Communication and Quality

2.1.1 Effectiveness in Communication

Since interpreting is “essentially a service activity with a communication function”, quality of interpreting is actually the quality of such an act of communication. It has been agreed upon by communication studies that “effectiveness appears to be a common criterion by which communication is judged”. As interpreting is an act of communication, the effectiveness of this act of communication should be one of the references to which interpreting quality is judged.

According to Stewart Tubbs and Sylvia Moss in their book *Interpersonal Communication*, communication is effective when the stimulus as it was initiated and intended by the sender corresponds closely with the stimulus as it is perceived and responded to by the receiver. The following is an equation they put forward:

\[ \text{R meaning/S meaning} = 1 \]

Here S stands for the sender who generates the response and R stands for the receiver.
who receives the response. Communication is whole and complete when the response sender intends and the response receiver provides are identical. As a matter of fact, we never reach it, we approximate it. And the greater the correspondence between our intention and the response we receive, the more effective we have been in communication.

2.1.2 Elements in the effectiveness of the act of communication
a. Sender/Speaker
Sender makes the decision to communicate and determine what the purpose of the message will be: to inform, persuade, or to entertain. In order to achieve the intended aim, Sender also chooses a certain channel to convey his message. Any inadequate knowledge about the Sender, his cultural background, status, intention, even personal preference will add the difficulty to the interpreting.

Aims and Intentions
In the process of professional interpreting, the communication is triggered by the Sender with certain aims and intentions. Basically, communication aims at entertaining, informing, persuading or stimulating. However, in the professional interpreting setting, these are multi-layered. Communication theoreticians often speak of three different layers, namely, phatic layer, catharic layer and informational layer. A phatic layer consists of chitchat or small talk in order to help build a personal relationship; a catharic layer is aimed at releasing emotions; and an informational layer is aimed at providing information.

However, not all layers are equally active in a sender’s conscious mind, and not all are equally powerful in shaping the message that is eventually verbalized. When called on to work, the interpreter therefore has to bring into account more than one level of aims in serving the sender’s interests. In professional interpreting settings, the source language speeches are essentially informational. They usually have three immediate aims behind, namely, aims of informing, explaining and persuading.

For instance, an interpreter is asked to work for a sales promotion session by an American industrial equipment producer that is specialized in producing the cranes for industrial usage. We can easily identify those three immediate communication aims behind the speech made by the sales representative of this manufacturer, who is an American. Firstly, he is aiming to inform all the potential buyers at present that they have just produced a brand-new type of crane in China, and provide the information of the performance parameters of the new crane, and finally the address, telephone, and fax numbers to contact if interested; secondly, he might also intend to explain to the audience why the price of this piece of equipment is comparatively high, and the reason lies in its technological innovation and lead in this trade; his final and utmost aim is to convince the audience of the quality of such a new product, and talk them into purchasing it, transforming the potential buyers to real payers, so as to reach the purpose of sales promotion.
Content and Package

According to Daniel Gile, in most verbal communication acts, in order to achieve an aim, the Sender issues a verbal signal, written or spoken, which consists of informational content (the Message) and its package. In speeches, the package is made up of the words and linguistic structures of the speech, as well as the voice and delivery, plus a non-verbal signal. In other words, Package refers to the linguistic and peri-linguistic choices made by the Sender and to the physical medium through which they are instantiated.

Let us follow the example the author made in the previous section. In order to achieve the three aims in the sales promotion, the sale representative may consciously make up his speech by using a lot of technical terms and even jargons in order to impress the receivers of his solid technical background, by using a lot of figures and graphics in order to make the introduction sound and look more objective and reliable, by delivering the speech in a less formal linguistic structure and using more eye contacts and communication with the audience in order to build up a closer and friendly relationship with the potential clients.

Although mostly all Senders will be fairly careful and deliberate in packaging their speech aims and content, there is also much information transmitted unintentionally by Senders in the package: mistakes may show their low level of education, an accent may indicate the country or part of country they are from, hesitations or unexpected stops in the speeches may betray nervousness. However, what the Interpreter needs to do in order to reach the effectiveness of an intercultural or inter-linguistic communication is to try his or her best to facilitate the successful achievement of all the information the Sender consciously aims to convey.

b. Receiver
Receiver is at the opposite end of the communication line. The effectiveness of a message is also dependant upon him in the process of communication. Receiver has also his own intentions before and in the process of communication. He may respond by sending back positive or negative feedback to Sender. Therefore, the interpreter should obtain as full information about the receiver as possible before he does the real interpreting.

c. Interpreter
Though described as “invisible man” in his own community, interpreter does have his own attitudes, presets, prejudices and preferences, etc. Once in a while, he finds himself in communication interaction that may be in conformity but sometimes contrary to his own. To overcome this contradiction, a high level of tolerance, understanding, and personal poise is required of every interpreter. He must evaluate his own attitudes carefully and try to set them aside. Another factor within the interpreter is that sometimes interpreter is less likely to get the full message when he
decides what is to be said before it is said. He rushes to decision before he has enough of the message to make such judgment, which often leads to misunderstanding and misinterpreting. The effect of “jumping to conclusion” suggests that interpreter must listen carefully, actively and fully to the message either from Sender or from Receiver, and have the courage to play the role of “scapegoat”.

d. Environment
Professional interpreting does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place in a professional setting with the presence of sender, receiver, interpreter and even client, in which there usually exist some objective and subjective factors that may not always be friendly. For example, there may be background noise, ventilation, spatial arrangement between sender, receiver and interpreter, reliability of simultaneous interpreting facilities, time constraints for advance preparation and for the interpreting itself. All these factors can vary greatly. Interpreters must be able to adapt to them, and work out at a satisfactory level, or sometimes they have to make a request for a change.

2.2 Professionalism and Quality
As we have discussed, professional interpreting is not just an act of communication, its quality is not only subject to the effectiveness of communication, but also to certain professional rules.

Client and Interpreting Quality
The interpreter is paid by the client to do the job; he shall always remember he is providing service to the client. The Client pays the interpreter and need not be the Sender or Receiver. And without exception, they have aims that may not tally with Sender’s or Receiver’s. Daniel Gile points out in his book of Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training as follows:

As for the client, who pays for the work done by the Translator (interpreter), his or her interest may be solely commercial and can be linked to the logistics of the operation rather than to the effect of the Sender’s message on the Receiver. When such contradiction materialize, they are not without practical consequences: a client such as a translation agency may want very speedy translation service in spite of the high loss of readability or terminological accuracy of the output that this may lead to.

As a result, interpreter should take into full account the specific purpose or requests of the client upon accepting a task.

Interpreting Quality and the Profession
The interpreter shall facilitate the communication across languages and cultures consistently, competently and impartially. A good interpreter must not only be able to achieve an effective communication that is satisfactory to sender, receiver and client to the largest extent, but also abide by certain codes of conduct, behave in an
appropriate and professional way so as to assure a good reputation of the interpreter himself or herself and that of the profession.

On one hand, professional interpreting’s nature of being professional requires us to assess its quality from a professional standpoint, on the other hand, proper assessment of its quality is of great help to the wholesome development of professional interpreting as a profession.

Almost all the interpreting practitioners are aware of or even somewhat worried about the low social status of the profession. The fact is the interpreting market comprises of all kinds of interpreters. They vary from the low-end non-professional linguistic mediators to the highly professional, qualified experts. The majority of them belong to the former, and most of the people seldom have the chance to see the latter ones, it is therefore understandable that the general social status of the profession is below the top level.

However, if proper quality assessment of professional interpreting is carried out, layperson will get to know what is real professional interpreting which will certainly be followed by the gradual advancement of the social status of the profession. For instance, like other profession such as lawyer, it will be helpful to set up a certain qualifications accreditation rules or standards to govern the profession. Thus, a certain scientific and authoritative standards will certify the qualified professional interpreters so that the market can be standardized and institutionalized, and laymen will be able to distinguish the professional interpreting from non-professional one.

2.3 Conclusion
As explained above, professional interpreting is a service activity with a communication function. Therefore, generally speaking, if an interpreting is carried out in an appropriate professional manner and succeeds in facilitating the effectiveness communication between the source language sender and target language receiver, then such an interpreting is of good quality. In the author’s point of view, this is the basic principle that the quality assessment of Professional Interpreting is to follow.

However, it should be also pointed out that the Interpreter is instrumental in facilitating the communication between Sender and Receiver, but cannot guarantee the success. For instance, the Sender’s statement may be inadequate; the Receivers may lack the necessary background knowledge, intellectual aptitude, or motivation to receive the message. In such cases, regardless of the Interpreter’s competence and efforts, the success of the communication is in no way guaranteed. It follows that the degree of success in the communication act cannot be taken as the sole principle of interpreting quality, which leads to the variability of quality assessment the author is going to cover in the next chapter.
Chapter Two Variability of Quality Assessment

1. Introduction
According to Andrzej Kopczynski, quality of professional interpreting can be viewed in at least two different ways, linguistic and pragmatic. In its linguistic sense, quality is viewed as a set of rigid standards of equivalence in content and form between spoken messages in Language 1 and Language 2. People can use a fullest possible translated text as a reference to see what the interpreter omitted, added or replaced and why, so as to measure the degree of equivalence to the original source language text. In its pragmatic sense, quality is not an absolute value, it is contextually determined. In other words, context “complicates” the problems of quality in that it introduces situational variables that might call for different priorities in different situations of translation. Andrzej Kopczynski lists the following variables in “complicating” the quality assessment of interpreting:

- the speaker, his status and the status of the receptors,
- the speaker’s intention in issuing the message,
- the speaker’s attitude toward the message and the receptors,
- the receptors’ attitude toward the message and the speaker,
- the interpreter, his/her competence, judgments, attitudes and strategies,
- the form of the message,
- the illocutionary force of the message,
- the existing norms of interaction and interpretation of a speech community,
- the setting.

As we have discussed above, professional interpreting does not take place in a vacuum, it is a service provided to other people associated with a verbal intercultural communication process in a professional setting. All these actors have their own aims, intentions, and are at different positions. Besides these human factors and the configuration among them that are affecting the quality assessment of professional interpreting, there also exist some other technical constraints that make the precise quality assessment difficult. However, even if it is extremely difficult, if not possible to give a precise or unanimous assessment of the interpreting quality, are there general standards that we can follow to a certain extent? The author will try to cover these issues in the forthcoming sections.

2. Variability in Perceptions
2.1 Positions

2.1.1 Sender/Speaker
In translation, Sender is generally unaware of the translation setting, and frequently does not even know the text is being translated. But in interpreting, Sender is generally aware of the fact that he is being interpreted, and interacts with Receiver. In consecutive mode, they can listen to the target language speech, and in some cases, if they happen to possess sufficient knowledge of the target language; they are in a good position to assess the quality of the interpreting. In the simultaneous mode, Senders cannot hear the target-language speech, and can therefore only check it to a very limited extent through the reaction of the Receivers, if there is any.

2.1.2 Receiver
Although he has no way to check directly the fidelity of the target language text, Receiver can judge the clarity, linguistic acceptability, terminological inaccuracy, and logical consistency of the interpreting. He may be able to identify inaccuracies if the interpreter’s output contains inconsistencies or gross errors.

In consecutive interpreting, if receivers understand both languages well enough, they are in a relatively good position to assess the quality of interpretation regarding the accuracy of individual segments, though they may not be able to note all the omissions because of the large quantity of information involved and the fact that they do not take notes as the interpreter does.

In simultaneous mode, the conference delegates can listen only either to the original, or to the interpretation. They can check some words or groups of words, but it is extremely difficult to listen to the whole target-language speech and to the whole source language speech while it is being interpreted.

Moreover, different from translation in which a reader can often obtain the source-language text for verification purposes, in interpreting, doing same thing for the speeches is very difficult unless both the source and target language speeches are recorded. Unfortunately, usually few people will bother to do that. Even if such recordings are available, the comparison process is lengthy and tedious, it is therefore not practical.

2.1.3 Client
According to Daniel Gile, “Professional Translation is done on request by the client and for a financial reward.” This client pays the interpreter and need not be the Sender or Receiver. When the Client is neither the Sender nor the Receiver, chances are that he or she does not read the translation or listen to the interpretation and does not know much about the subject. He or she is therefore not in a good position to assess the quality of the Interpretation, and relies mostly on feedback from the Receivers or from the Interpreters. In some other cases, however, the Client does have interpreting competence and does check Interpreting quality as a service to other actors. Then in
such a case, the Client is at a very good position to assess the quality.

2.1.4 Interpreter
The Interpreter is a Receiver and a Sender at the same time; he has a good understanding of both the source language and the target language. However, usually the Interpreter tends to know less about the subject, the aims and respective interests of the Sender and the Receiver, and particularly less familiar with the terminology compared to the Sender and the Receiver. While doing their work, the interpreters are always engrossed in complex cognitive operations under great time pressure, particularly in the simultaneous mode, they are therefore not in a position to assess the quality of their output. Usually after the work, the material for comparison is gone and words have disappeared from the minds. However, in translation, translators are in a much better position to assess the quality of their own work with the material at hand and much more time to scrutinize.

2.1 Motivation and attention
In the actual practice of professional interpreting, quality assessment also to a large extent depends upon the motivation and attention of the participants in the communication.

As the author has explained above, in interpreting, unlike translation, all parties concerned are aware of the communication situation, including possible difficulties associated with the inter-lingual and sometimes inter-cultural message transfer. Since generally all parties wish to communicate, more cooperation including that from speaker and receiver can be expected from them in interpreting. In other words, although the Interpreter essentially works alone, he may be helped through on-line interaction with both Sender and Receiver. This interaction often enables interpreter to monitor, modify and adjust his interpreting. However, all parties involved in communication may have outstandingly different intentions or motivations, which may sometimes result in the harmonious cooperation between them, but sometimes, if more than not, bring about conflicts of interest. As stated by Kelnter, “One of the most obstacles to the transmission of information between two persons in the degree to which they fail to accept or actively reject each other.’” (Kelnter: 1973). This is particularly true regarding the persuading aim, as the Receiver, whose interest may be different from the Sender’s, may not want to be convinced. Conflicts of interest between Sender and Receiver probably lead to full-scale or partial-scale withdrawal by either party. Again, the withdrawal will result in the full or partial loss of information contained in the message. The conflicts between them will therefore prevent Interpreter from understanding the genuine intention of either party and interpreting accordingly. This means that Interpreter can often be a very good middleman between the Sender and the Receiver, but cannot guarantee the fulfillment of their communication aims. It follows that the degree of success in communication cannot be considered as the sole principle of Quality Assessment.
Besides the aims or interest conflicts with the Sender, Receivers may have different attentions on even the same piece of interpretation. Let us go back to the example of sales promotion in the first chapter. When the Sales Representative is delivering his speech, the audience he faces consists of people with different backgrounds. They tend to listen to only part of the presentation given by the Sales Representative, either because not all the information is relevant or interesting to them, or because the concentration required to listen carefully to the whole speech is very exhausting. For instance, the experts or specialists in the audience such as the potential buyers, competitors tend to focus more on the technical part of the presentation; while the laymen such as journalists tend to listen to the commercial part of it. They therefore tend to judge quality at different standpoints of view, which often leads to surprisingly diverse assessments of the quality of the same piece of interpretation. Obviously, for a professional interpreter who is normally not an expert in such a field as crane production, the greatest barrier in a successful interpreting in this case must be the existence of terminology. Even though the interpreter has been given time and material to prepare before the presentation, he or she is in no way able to reach the knowledge level of those experts at present. It follows that, in this case, those laymen in the audience such as journalists, who are at a same or even lower knowledge level of this trade, tend to give a more favorable evaluation of the interpreter’s job than those experts who are more sensitive and fastidious about the accuracy of terminology.

2. Classification of Professional Interpreting
According to different criteria, interpreting can be divided into many types. Actual quality assessment varies from one type to another.

3.1 in terms of mode
3.1.1 Consecutive Interpreting
Consecutive interpreting is performed when the speaker has finished part or the whole of his speech. It is formerly the sole mode of interpreting before the emergence of simultaneous interpreting. It demands a reproduction from a combination of memory and notes whatever the original speech has intended to convey on the audience. In consecutive interpreting, the interpreter has time to analyze the message as a whole and can control his own speaking speed, rearrange the speech and make some corrections. Therefore, as far as quality assessment is concerned, a higher standard of accuracy, completeness, logic and intelligibility is expected in consecutive interpreting than in other types of interpreting.

3.1.2 Simultaneous Interpreting
Simultaneous interpreting is usually used for meetings with more than two working languages; otherwise, the process of the meeting will suffer greatly from the repetition of the same message in several languages. In simultaneous interpreting, the interpreter only lags a few seconds behind the speaker and renders by means of earphones and microphones. Simultaneous interpreting is quite stressful as the interpreter works at
the pace imposed by the speaker and is not provided time to analyze the message as a whole. Therefore, in terms of quality assessment, simultaneous interpreting tends to require a higher standard of delivery, clarity than consecutive interpreting.

3.2 in terms of setting
3.2.1 Conference Interpreting
Conference interpreting as a profession began to take shape only around the turn of twentieth century. However, after the Second World War, with the great increase in the exchanges among various countries and regions regarding politics, economics, science and technology, conference interpreting is increasingly demanding. Conference interpreting is usually carried out at a formal international occasion with the presence of high-level government officials, scholars or experts from various sectors in the society. Therefore, conference interpreting is required to have a comparatively higher standard of interpretation quality itself and appropriate professional behavior than in those less formal interpreting settings.

3.2.2 Community Interpreting
Community Interpreting is to facilitate those people whose first or preferred language is not that of the host country to gain easier access to public services. This takes place more often in those countries that have more immigrants from abroad, such as the United States and some European countries. Conference interpreters have to deal with a wide range of things in daily life. A higher requirement of the familiarity with the procedures, cultural knowledge and terminology is entailed.

3.2.3 Court or Legal Interpreting
This setting ranges from the courtroom to any office that renders legal services. Compared to other types of interpreting, it requires a higher standard of the familiarity with legal terminology, procedures and the interpreter’s personal behavior in terms of reliability and confidentiality.
Chapter Three The Criteria of Quality Assessment

As we have discussed above, since Professional Interpreting is generated in and constrained by the social and economic context, there are many factors and constraints that hamper the precise assessment of the quality of Professional Interpreting. However, as stated by Daniel Gile, there is basically a consensus on some quality criteria that are more or less independent of the context. They are ideational clarity and message completeness, linguistic acceptability, terminological accuracy, fidelity, delivery and appropriate professional behavior. Although due to the variables we have mentioned above, different degrees of importance may be attached to them in different cases, basically, they are still useful and worth of being discussed in detail.

1. Ideational Clarity

1.1.1. Ideational Clarity— the basic requirement

According to Halliday, in the first place, language serves for the expression of content: it has an ideational function. It is through this function that the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding.

In the intra-cultural communication, language, the so-called verbal stimuli, is the chief channel the Sender chooses to send the message. Language functions as a channel to express the Sender’s experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding.

In inter-linguistic or inter-cultural communication, with the existence of language barrier, the communication is hampered and it is where the Interpreter comes to play. Interpreter’s job is to reformulate the speech content from the source language into the target language. That is to say, the target language output shall function the same as the original source language input regarding the expression of the source language Sender’s experience of the phenomena of the real world. In other words, the Interpreter is required to reformulate the speech content into the target language as clearly as possible so that the Sender’s aims and intentions in the communication can be achieved. Therefore, ideational clarity shall be the basic requirement for an interpretation.
1.1.2 Comprehension and Ideational Clarity

A French translator once said, “Traduire, C’est comprendre et faire comprendre.” which means Translating is understanding and making understood. This has been advocated by some scholars: “The basic principle is that an interpreter cannot interpret what he does not understand” (Kurz 1988); “Only by understanding the author’s meaning thoroughly can the translator be sure to choose the best available words and to present them in the best possible structure”. Thus, it appears that a source language text cannot be interpreted or translated until it has been “understood”. However, we have to ask ourselves just what it means to understand a text; what it is in a text that has to be “understood” by the interpreter so as to achieve the ideational clarity.

a) General Comprehension

For an Interpreter, it is essential to understand the functional and logical infrastructure underlying sentences so as to be able to reproduce it in the target language. As we all know, neither interpreting nor translation is an automatic word-for-word reproduction. It is not always possible to transcribe a source language structure into a parallel linguistic structure, and when it is, the result is more often than not clumsy or even linguistically unacceptable, as can be seen in word-for-word translation that are sometimes published in conference proceedings and even in scientific journals.

Semantically, sentences in informative texts can be represented as network-like structures, which in most cases consist of three types of components:

a. Nouns and noun-phrases that indicate persons, objects, ideas, actions, etc. They can be referred to as Nominal Entities

b. Adjectives, adjective-like words, and clauses that describe these persons, objects, etc. (such as “large”, “small”, “good”, “attractive”), as well as statements of existence, disappearance about them (“X exists”, “Y has grown”). These can be referred to as Attribute.

c. Structures and occurrences of rules of grammar (declensions, word order, etc.) that establish logical or functional links between these persons, objects, or concepts. These can be referred to as a Link.

Let us examine the following sentences in the above-mentioned method:

(A box represents a Nominal Entity; a circle represents an attribute; while a line represents a Logical Link)

a. The tiger (Nominal Entity) is fierce (Attribute).
b. Common (Attribute) interests (NE) bring (Link) mutual (Attribute) cooperation (NE).

c. A war was broken out (Link) between Serbs (NE) and Croats (NE).

In c., the sentence can be reformulated as “Serbs and Croats were in a war”, “A war was broken out” can therefore function as a Link. Actually, for most sentences, there are several possible formal representations with different Link, NE, and Attribute allocation. While the basic logical and functional message is the same, languages make it possible to refer to an action by a verb or a noun, which changes the Entity composition of the sentences, as shown in sentence c., and therefore, their representation as network. This also applies to long and complex sentences; they can be represented in many ways, depending on how their various components are decomposed into sub-assemblies. Let us examine the following sentence:

The best organizational framework seems to be a working group that possesses a mandate aimed at negotiations within the committee with the ultimate objective of working out a treaty.

This sentence can be modeled as:

The best organizational framework seems to be X
Attribute  Noun  Entity           Link          NE

Where X is:
- a working group that possesses a mandate aimed at negotiations within the
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