

The Interpreter as Cultural Mediator

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Abstract / Introduction

This paper introduces the general scope and background of a doctoral research project on cultural mediation in business encounters mediated by an interpreter, and aims to show how the interpreter's intercultural sensitiveness and competence can lead to better understanding between the two parties.

The growing number of intercultural encounters that has followed globalisation and major immigration flows has led to rising interest in intercultural studies. Actually, many such meetings happen with the mediation of an interpreter, who acts as both a linguistic and cultural mediator. Against this background, the paper analyses encounters in business contexts involving Italians and U.S. Americans. Due to the introductory nature of this presentation, resorting to certain over-generalisations will be rather frequent, especially when dealing with the cultural characteristics of large groups of people. The reason for this is simply to help better identify the three main fields that the research project aims to combine, that is interpreting studies, intercultural studies and Italian/English business communication.

This article is composed of three main parts. The first part briefly introduces the parameters based on traditional definitions of culture which can be of particular interest to this study. The second part is a brief overview of interpreting settings and techniques, defining the extent to which cultural mediation is possible in each. The third part focuses on liaison interpreting in business settings, arguably one of the contexts in which the interpreter can give a greater contribution to communication in terms of cultural mediation.

In this work, the term 'interpreter' will be used to refer exclusively to professional interpreters, thus leaving out all those figures who occasionally use their knowledge of other languages to facilitate communication between two or more people not speaking the same language.

1. Culture and intercultural encounters

Over time and across disciplines, culture has been defined in innumerable different ways, depending on the field of study and the historical, geographical, social and political context in which the definitions were produced. This paper does not claim that any of these definitions is better than others, but simply emphasises the role that cultural elements play in communication from the interpreter's perspective.

Successful intercultural communication is very difficult to achieve, as it involves a great number of factors, e.g. language (verbal communication), body gesture (non-verbal communication), the use of time, space and silence, etc., which differ from culture to culture. For all of these reasons, bridging the gap between two people or groups of people who employ an interpreter 'simply' because they do not speak the same language is a very delicate task. Admittedly, impartiality is one of the major ethical requirements for interpreters, which means that, as a rule, an interpreter is not allowed to give his/her opinion, or to alter in any way what a speaker expresses through his/her language: "The formulation of the message is the responsibility of the other parties; the interpreter's responsibility is to interpret" (Gentile, Ozolinis and Vasilakakos 1996, p. 48). However, Taft (1981, p. 59) states that "[...] mediation between cultures requires *the communication of ideas and information* from one cultural context to the other. This is analogous to the process involved in linguistic translation, even though there is more to mediation than mere translation" (emphasis added). Given that literal translation is generally not considered advisable

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(Schäffner, 1996; Katan, 1999), it is essential to find out the extent to which an interpreter can 'mediate' rather than merely 'translate' in order to improve the communication flow.

Of all the aforementioned factors affecting communicative events, this paper will focus only on the style of communication, the concept of time and the use of silence, since these are the elements that require greatest attention on the part of interpreters.

1.1 The style of communication: high- and low- context cultures

In order to analyse the complex relationship between culture and communication, I am going to base my observations on the concepts of high- and low- context cultures as defined by anthropologist E.T. Hall. According to this theory, when people communicate, they assume the listener already knows something about the subject under discussion. In *low-context* communication, the listener knows very little and must be told practically everything. In *high-context* communication, instead, the listener is already 'contexted' and so does not need to be given much background information (Hall, 1989). Of course, no culture can be said as existing exclusively at one end of the scale; it is more correct to say that in each culture more elements of one end or the other will be prevailing. In this respect, we may agree with Vincent Marrelli (1989) who states that a distinction is necessary, for example, also between the high-context cultures of Far Eastern and South East Asia on the one hand and those of the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Latin America on the other.

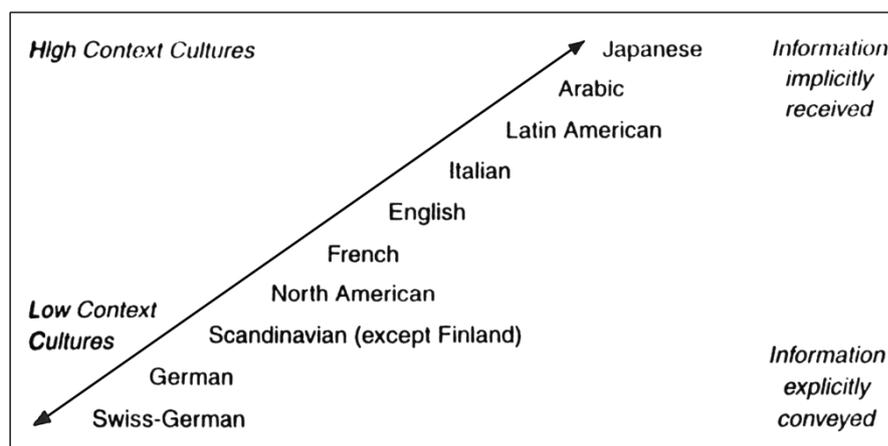


Fig. 1 Context ranking of cultures (Katan, 1999)

Broadly speaking, most of the Germanic and English-speaking cultures are low-context. Here, communication relies on explicit statements and very little is left to the listener's interpretation and imagination. In low-context cultures, *what* is said is more important than *how* it is said: speakers follow a linear, cause-effect logic, and – especially in business communication – often provide plenty of data and statistics as supporting evidence of what they are stating.

The English language appears as a very effective communication tool for low-context cultures, since it reflects a belief in objective reality and is structured in such a way as to clearly identify agent and action. In addition, English is noted for the vast size of its vocabulary, and words with slightly different meanings enable the language to be used in a very flexible way to express fine variations or shades of thought with great precision and without the need to paraphrase too often. English speakers like messages that are direct, explicit, rational, concise and informationally dense. Therefore, they might find it difficult to interact with a speaker using long, complex sentences and, in some cases, even regard such a communication style as reflecting a lack of commitment and interest on the part of their interlocutor.

High-context cultures attach great importance to implied meaning and non-verbal communication. In these cultures, the communication style is indirect and relies heavily on the listener's intuition and co-operation:

“People raised in high-context systems expect more of others than do the participants in low-context systems. When talking about something that they have on their minds, a high-context individual will expect his interlocutor to know what’s bothering him, so that he doesn’t have to be specific. The result is that he will think around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one. Placing it properly – this keystone – is the role of his interlocutor. To do this for him is an insult and a violation of his individuality” (Hall, 1989 p. 113).

Platt (2002) states that the interactions happening in high-context cultures are mostly implicit, i.e. coded, circular, indirect. Rather than by the actual utterances, the meaning is carried by the body language, the setting, the relationship between the people involved.

For its mixture of low and high context characteristics, Italy is generally placed midway between the high and low ends of the context spectrum, with Southerners closer to the high context end than Northerners. By tradition, Italians consider their language as an instrument of eloquence and use long, complex sentences to achieve greater expressiveness when conveying their ideas. To an Italian, therefore, the direct approach of a low-context speaker may easily sound overfrank, blunt and even rude also when this is not intended.

Mediating an encounter involving speakers who are far from each other on the high/low context scale is quite a complex task for the interpreter. As Angelelli (2000, p. 581) points out, by means of his/her knowledge of the two cultures involved, s/he has to “decode and encode the message in such a way that the meaning and form may transfer into the language of the second party to produce the same effect that they would have produced in an audience who shared the first party’s language”. The ultimate theoretical ideal is that the communication flow must be the same as if there were no translation at all. If we consider translation and interpreting as a “communication of ideas and information” rather than simply the mediation between different linguistic codes, it seems clear that any such process implies a shift from a high context mode to a lower one and viceversa. In this shift, the interpreter alone has the responsibility of providing each interlocutor with the amount of context that is most appropriate in his/her culture to reach complete understanding.

From a more strictly linguistic standpoint, it can be observed that the use of honorifics and of different language registers, closely connected to the culture-specific idea of politeness, also differs greatly from culture to culture and therefore faces the interpreter with difficult choices. “Across cultures [...] one recognizes what people are doing in verbal exchanges (e.g. requesting, offering, criticizing, complaining, suggesting) not so much by what they overtly claim to be doing as in the fine linguistic details of their utterances” (Brown and Levinson, 1987 p. 57). Different degrees of politeness may need to be adjusted by the interpreter to the most suitable form in the target language/culture. When translating from English into Italian, for example, the interpreter may need to transform the generic title *Mr* or *Mrs* into one of the more specific professional titles *Ingegnere*, *Dottore*, or *Avvocato*, depending on the exact status of the person. Geert Hofstede (2001, p. 21) states that “In some cultures and subcultures, being polite to the other person is more important than supplying correct information”. The consequence of this on the interpreter’s work is that sometimes the ‘filters’ imposed by politeness may make the message quite ambiguous to an outsider and therefore require a higher degree of mediation. In the Italian/English language combination, it is worth noting that Italian – like several other languages – has two different ways of addressing a person: *lei* (third person singular) is used to show respect or keep one’s distance, and in formal contexts; conversely, *tu* (second person singular) is more informal and shows familiarity or a higher position e.g. an adult to a child. In contrast, English has only one form of address, *you*, which is used in all situations regardless of the degree of formality. This difference can be conveyed in English only by keeping the language register quite formal when an Italian uses the *lei* form, and a more relaxed one to translate the *tu* form. Wierzbicka (1986) also notes that,

when translating a request from Italian into English, the interpreter should make use of more indirect expressions instead of imperatives. The Italian “*Mi dica che cosa ne pensa*²” (which is an imperative but is perfectly polite in Italian), for example, would sound too imposing on an English speaker. Consequently, an interrogative (“What do you think?”) or conditional form (“I’d like to know your opinion”) would be recommended.

1.2 The concept of time

Low-context cultures can generally be classified as achievement cultures, and they are, as Hall (1989) termed them, ‘monochronic’, viewing time as sequential and highly scheduled. To them, time is an absolute. High context cultures, on the contrary, tend to be ‘polychronic’, that is they are apt to be involved in a lot of different activities with different people at any given time.

Cultures that have a linear concept of time (identified, very broadly, with low-context cultures) view time as a precious commodity to be used, not wasted (“time is money”); they schedule and measure time in small units (days, hours, minutes) and consider punctuality and promptness a basic courtesy as well as a proof of commitment. In order to get more things done in the shortest time possible, they concentrate on one task at a time and dislike interruptions (Hall, 1989; Reynolds, 2003).

On the other hand, for cultures that view time as flexible (Southern Europe, Mediterranean countries, Latin America), time is not an absolute value. When people and relationships demand attention, time can be manipulated or stretched, and the passing of time will be ignored if it means that conversations or human relations will be left unfinished. Compared to U.S. standards, for example, business life in Italy is more relationship-focused (Lewis 1999; Reynolds 2003; Frank 2003). Hall (1989, p. 150) states that “Polychronic cultures often place completion of the job in a special category much below the importance of being nice, courteous, considerate, kind, and sociable to other human beings”.

In a meeting involving participants with different concepts of time, and therefore a completely different frame of mind as far as planning, scheduling, punctuality and deadlines are concerned, tensions may arise quite easily. I would argue that it is the task of the interpreter/cultural mediator, on the basis of his/her intercultural competence, to make sure such different attitudes do not become the source of major misunderstandings. Gentile (1996) states that when extra-linguistic problems arise in a meeting, the interpreter should always try to facilitate mutual understanding either by briefing the participants beforehand whenever possible or by interpreting in a more diplomatic way so as to soften the atmosphere and allow the negotiation to proceed.

1.3 Turn-taking and the use of silence

Discussion styles and the rules of turn-taking play a very important role in communication. This is even more so in events mediated by an interpreter, since each interlocutor will follow his/her own rules, which are dictated by the culture s/he belongs to. For the Anglo-Saxons, when A stops B starts: it is not polite to interrupt. The more verbal Latins, instead, do so quite often: B will frequently interrupt A and vice versa to show how interested s/he is in what the other is saying. Finally, in the oriental style of communication, when A stops, a pause follows, and only after that will B start. Westerners often interpret this moment of silence as a failure in communication, whereas in oriental cultures it is a sign of respect to take some time to process the information without talking oneself (Trompenaars, 1997).

Misinterpretation of a different style of discussion in a business encounter may lead to a negative outcome of the meeting. As mentioned above, silence received as an answer to an offer may be perceived by a Westerner as confusion, as a negative response or even as anger at the speaker or the proposal. Conversely, rush to fill the silence or insistence on getting a prompt answer may prove irritating and offensive to an individual belonging to a more ‘listening’ culture.

² “Tell me what you think.”

Since any interpreting event is an intercultural encounter in itself, interpreters translate for people who – besides speaking different languages – have a whole set of values, norms and habits that are specific to their culture and influence their way of communicating. It appears essential, therefore, that the communication strategies of the interlocutors – based on their respective cultures – are mastered by the interpreter both passively (so that s/he can recognise them) and actively (so that s/he can use them appropriately). In this sense, in addition to being bilingual, that is being proficient in the two languages involved in the interaction, the interpreter needs to be bi-cultural, that is have a deep knowledge of and strong ‘feel’ for both cultures, and use this skill to avoid misunderstandings and communication failure.

2. Modes of interpreting

Interpreting intended as the oral transfer of messages between speakers of different languages is one of the oldest of human activities, although its professional status has been recognised only quite recently. Modern interpreting is generally believed to have started during the Versailles peace talks in 1918-19, when a number of military officers were called to act as interpreters for the British and Americans who could not speak French. At the end of World War II, advances in technology first made simultaneous interpreting possible, thus allowing a greater number of languages to be translated at the same time (Gentile, Ozolinis and Vasilakakos, 1996). Although much has changed since then both in terms of public recognition and of technique, interpreting activities can still be grouped into three major categories – simultaneous and consecutive interpreting in conference settings, and dialogue/liaison interpreting. A further form of interpreting, *chuchotage*, is normally used in combination with consecutive or liaison interpreting. When one or more (normally not more than three-four) people in a meeting do not speak the language used by most of the attendees, the interpreter whispers the translation into the listener’s ears almost simultaneously. The main advantage of this technique is that it permits to save time (as compared to consecutive interpreting) and money (as compared to simultaneous interpreting, which requires costly technical equipment).

2.1 Simultaneous interpreting

Despite being one of the most recently developed systems, simultaneous interpreting has become ‘the’ interpreting form most people easily recognise as a professional activity. International conferences provide the most frequent setting for this kind of interpreting: here, people from different countries gather to discuss the latest developments in particular fields, often highly technical and group-specific. As Angelelli (2000) points out, in such cases the members of the audience have similar professional and educational backgrounds, share interest and competence in a particular subject and belong to the same *speech community*. In this context, the interpreter has almost no interaction with either the audience or speakers, mostly because of the physical barrier represented by the booth in which s/he works. Pöchhacker (1992) states that, in simultaneous interpreting the extent and feasibility of cultural mediation is often extremely limited. It is also important to note that the lapse of time occurring between the original utterance and the translation is too short to allow any major rephrasing or cultural mediation on the part of the interpreter. Gile (2001) emphasises the ‘time pressure’ to which simultaneous interpreting is subject.

2.2 Consecutive interpreting

As a rule, simultaneous interpreting is used when a convention has several official working languages. Consecutive interpreting, instead, occurs when there are few speakers using a different language from the majority of participants. Consecutive interpreting does not involve tight time constraints, since the interpreter and the speaker alternate in taking the floor. It requires the interpreter to take notes in a special kind of shorthand during the speech and to deliver the translation at the end from memory and the shorthand notes. The lapse between the original speech and the translation gives the interpreter time for re-phrasing, summarising (when and where

possible) and bringing in any cultural references that should – in his/her opinion – seem necessary to better convey the intended message.

Simultaneous and consecutive interpreting are generally referred to as conference interpreting because, as mentioned above, they are mostly used in international conferences and in a number of formal situations. In such circumstances, a speaker will normally prepare the speech in advance in order to make sure s/he will be able to say all s/he wishes to in the allotted time. As a result, speeches will tend to be informationally dense and leave little margin for improvisation.

2.3 Liaison interpreting

When consecutive interpreting is performed in less formal contexts, normally without a rigid distinction between the audience (mainly listeners) and speakers, it is normally called dialogue, community or liaison interpreting. In this paper, I will use the denomination ‘liaison interpreting’ because, in my opinion, it better conveys the idea of interpreting as a ‘link’, a connection between people. Liaison interpreting is characterised by a dialogical communication mode, and can take place in a variety of settings, from business premises to hospitals, police offices, the factory floor, and virtually any other place. Interpreting provided in favour of immigrants, in doctor-patient encounters or in the courtroom implies a wide gap in status between the two interlocutors. In contrast, in business meetings the two parties usually hold similar positions, and have a shared educational and professional background. In other words, we may say that culture is the real gap between the parties. Liaison interpreting in business contexts is the main focus of this study since it is arguably one of the settings in which the interpreter’s cultural mediation can be most important to the two parties.

3. Liaison interpreting in business settings

Before interpreting became a recognised profession, linguistic mediation was provided by occasional, non-professional interpreters who served in the public administration, in commerce, in religious life and in the armed forces. Most of them were people who had learnt other languages through particular life experiences, e.g. serving on merchant ships, being war prisoners, or living in frontier regions. They were acting as a ‘liaison’, that is “as a link to assist communication or cooperation between groups of people”³. In my view, this is arguably the main function played by interpreters in all situations, regardless of the technique used. However, as highlighted in par. 2, in liaison interpreting the interpreter has a much wider margin for cultural mediation than in any other situation.

The dialogical communication mode that characterises liaison interpreting introduces a great number of unpredictable variables in the conversation, which are due to the greater spontaneity of the utterances. As a matter of fact, whereas in conference settings the speeches are – to a great extent – prepared in advance (see the many speakers who actually read out a written text), in liaison interpreting each utterance depends strongly on the previous remark of the other interlocutor. As a consequence, a greater number of culture-bound factors come into play, such as turn-taking patterns, more or less direct responses, as well as a range of kinetic elements. The task of the interpreter is made even more complex by the fact that the interlocutors do not follow a pre-determined train of thought (as it happens in presentations at conferences), overlap frequently, and thus generate confusion.

In liaison interpreting, the interpreter and his/her clients often sit round a table with no physical barriers standing between either of them, which helps the creation of a rather informal atmosphere. As a consequence, in such situations the interpreter is not seen as an external element, but rather as one of the team, so that both parties will often address him/her directly, or ask for advice about what to say and how to behave in any particular situation which they recognise as ‘different’ and unpredictable on the basis of their cultural background. The more intimate situation

³ The *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, in *The Oxford Pop-up English Language Reference Shelf* (2000)

gives the interpreter the chance to ask for occasional repetition or clarification of some segment of conversation; in addition, the considerable personal involvement can also be a source of greater fulfilment for the interpreter. However, this sense of involvement might impair the interpreter's professional performance, by placing him/her in a position of considerable power vis-à-vis the clients (Gentile, Ozolinis and Vasilakakos, 1996).

Liaison interpreting is very often provided in business contexts: typical examples include import/export negotiations, discussions between members of a subsidiary company and its foreign owner or between a businessperson and a foreign consultant. International business exchanges have become more and more common over the last decades, thus multiplying the encounters involving businesses that are the expression of two different cultures and consequently show differing approaches to business-making, to the concepts of time and space, to interpersonal relations, etc. Business negotiations are in any case a delicate matter, and they are even more so when cultural issues come into play to make communication more difficult.

Ehlich and Wagner (1995) define a negotiation discourse as one where the participants refer explicitly to their goals and interests. When the interpreter represents the only channel of communication, therefore, the two parties will make sure s/he understands that goal clearly. So, we may say that the two parties *and* the interpreter come together in a common effort to conclude the negotiation satisfactorily. In this view, therefore, the interpreter's main responsibility is to contribute to the participants' purpose "to convey accurate messages and to get things done by whatever means available" (Gentile, Ozolinis and Vasilakakos, 1996 p. 121).

3.1 Case discussion

The last part of the paper focuses on an encounter that took place at a trade fair on business incentive travel in Naples, Italy. The transcription reports part of a conversation between a hotel promoter and a buyer; both the promoter and the interpreter are Italian, from the Naples area, while the buyer is from the U.S. A literal translation is provided immediately after every utterance in Italian.

At the point where the transcription begins, the promoter is describing a hotel to the buyer.

TRANSCRIPTION KEY

P	Promoter	+	Short pause (less than one second)
B	Buyer	++	Longer pause (more than one second)
I	Interpreter	//text//	Words/concepts added by the interpreter in the translation
(???)	Tape untranscribable	TEXT	Syllable loud or heavily expressed
<u>Text</u>	Literal translation	. , ? !	Roughly indicate intonation
text:	Lengthening of previous sound		

- 1 P La piccola beauty farm è supportata dalle stufe di Nerone.
The small beauty farm is supported by the stufe di Nerone.
- 1a I // There is // a beauty farm // in the hotel //, and this is (???) in conjunction with // other
 1b spas in the area – which are called // Stufe di Nerone.
- 2 B + 'Cause the area is very spa: ++
- 2a I //Yes, it's a volcanic area //.
- 3 P E poi di' che c'è la solfatara come territorio che giustifica appunto la presenza delle acque termali.
And then say that there is the Solfatara as a territory that justifies the presence of thermal waters.
- 3a I The thermal waters are there because of // this area which is called // Solfatara, // which is a
 3b sort of sulphur++- it's actually a volcano //++
- 4 B OH!
- 5a I // But it's not like a mountain, with a crater, it's sort of flat:, and hilly ++ and you see like

- 5b *boiling water on the ground //.*
 6 B ++ So you can feel... OH!
 7a I // *And you can smell the sulphur in the air //.*
 8 P Like Ischia.
 8a I // Yes //, like Ischia, +// *you can go and visit the place – you walk through these things –*
 8b *which is quite interesting //.*

One of the most interesting things that can be noted in this dialogue is the fact that the interpreter does much more than merely translating what the promoter says. In (1), the promoter refers to the “stufe di Nerone” without explaining in more detail what these are or even asking her interlocutor if she has ever heard about them. She mentions this place (which has a strictly local connotation) as if she were mentioning an internationally recognised landmark such as the Statue of Liberty. She is simply ignoring the cultural problem, probably due to little experience in dealing with people from different cultural backgrounds. In (1a-1b) the interpreter fills this information gap by defining the “stufe di Nerone” as “other spas in the area”. The introduction of this piece of information seems to rouse the buyer’s attention, as (2) shows, with the buyer trying to confirm her assumptions about the area being rich in spas.

The same process occurs when the promoter refers to “Solfatara” (3), where again the interpreter defines it by using two key words (3a-3b): “sulphur” and “volcano”. The reaction of the buyer (4) could be interpreted as surprise, not only because of the intonation used, but also on the basis of a more cultural explanation⁴. In (5a-5b) and (7a), the interpreter tries to respond to what she arguably interpreted as interest and surprise on the part of the buyer (4 and 6) by providing additional information on the volcanic area of Solfatara.

After remaining silent during this exchange of information between the interpreter and the buyer (3a through 7a), the promoter comes into the conversation again (8), introducing a comparison with the island of Ischia (also of volcanic origin and famous for its spas). Interestingly, she does so in English, which means that she was probably following the previous part of the conversation, in which she ‘monitored’ the information provided by the interpreter. The fact that she did not interrupt her to try and re-establish herself as one of the two leaders (together with the buyer) of the conversation, could be interpreted as an appreciation of what the interpreter was doing in terms of cultural mediation. And actually, at the end of the encounter, the promoter thanks the interpreter for her “precious help”, arguably not only out of courtesy but of actual recognition of her contribution to the exchange of information.

Interestingly, at the end of the meeting the buyer makes arrangements with the promoter to visit the volcanic area North of Naples which was mentioned. Therefore, even though we may not say that this request was *only* the result of the interpreter’s direct involvement (the buyer may have “felt” there could be something interesting about the promoter’s business), it is nonetheless interesting to remark that the interpreter’s direct participation in the conversation did not have any negative effects nor was it seen as an intrusion.

Another remark about this dialogue is the fact that in (3) the promoter addresses the interpreter directly (“and then say”). This is an interesting recognition of the interpreter not only as

4 To fully appreciate the content of this interaction, it is useful to know that the area surrounding Naples is rich in phenomena of volcanic origin. Most people, however, associate this volcanic activity only with Vesuvius, which is the most famous landmark of Naples. Interestingly, while Vesuvius is presently in a dormant state, there is an area North of Naples (the Phlegraean Fields, including also the *Solfatara* and *Stufe di Nerone* mentioned in this excerpt) where volcanic activity is considerable.

a “discreet, if not invisible [...] walking generalist translator of words” (Katan, 1999 p. 12), but as someone who is directly involved in the ongoing conversation, ‘one of the team’⁵.

In conclusion, it appears that in this particular situation the intercultural sensitivity of the interpreter makes her recognise the need for additional information to clarify some of the things the promoter refers to. We could say, in this sense, that the level of context in the promoter’s style of communication is too high, because a number of references to local entities (therefore specific to the promoter’s culture) are taken for granted (see par. 1.1). The interpreter recognises these elements and this communication problem and, in her translation, she uses her cultural (the knowledge of the specifically local elements) and intercultural (the acknowledgement of the communication “gap”) skills not only to make sure the communication flow is not interrupted but also to facilitate and even stimulate the exchange of information. As Hall points out, in choosing a communication strategy, one must decide how much time to devote to contexting one’s interlocutor. “A certain amount of this is always necessary, so that the information that makes up the explicit portions of the message is neither inadequate nor excessive” (1989, pp. 92-93). The interpreter must recognise the communication strategy used by each interlocutor and, when such strategy appears unsuitable to produce the effect intended by the speaker, s/he may choose to accommodate it to the expectations of the recipient. This seems to find support, among others, in Kondo (1990, p. 63), who points out that “the consummate *communicator*, whether he is a professional interpreter or not, is a person who can put himself in somebody else’s shoes, so to speak, so that he would be able [...] to adopt two or more world views and thus imagine how a certain message [...] would be decoded or interpreted by the receiving party” (emphasis added).

4. Conclusion

The starting stages of this research project have shown a great potential for further research to be carried out in the field of interpreting as a form of intercultural communication. Hopefully, through the combination of empirical data and theoretical analysis the multidisciplinary approach of this study will contribute interesting insights into several disciplines, ranging from intercultural communication to interpreter training and business communication.

⁵ In this respect, it is important to know that in this situation the interpreter was hired by the fair organisers and had never worked with either the promoter or the buyer before.

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