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Interpreter Training in Sweden

Community Interpreter Training in Spoken Languages in Sweden

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze the community interpreter training program in Sweden and, based on the results of two research projects, describe structural conditions and shortcomings. The authors discuss Sweden's laws and regulations, the changing demand for interpreting service in society, the open access ideology within adult education associations, and the limitation of economic resources for fulfilling the demand for trained interpreters. Interpreter training in Sweden is built on public-service needs in the areas of social insurance, the labor market, health care, and court interpreting. It is focused on factual knowledge and terminology and devotes little time for developing aspects of ethical rules, the role of the interpreter, and technical issues. In order to make progress possible it is important to use existing research and theory to develop didactics for community interpreting training.

Key Words: interpreter training programs, community interpreting, ethics, technique, didactics, theory

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1. Introduction

I am an interpreter, since I have training and authorization. I dislike it when people ask me if I work as an interpreter. I am an interpreter.

As part of a project investigating the field of community interpreting in Sweden, we asked interpreters, “When did you identify yourself as an interpreter?” Livia, the respondent quoted above, aptly characterizes the feeling of many interpreters that their profession is highly skilled but it is one accorded low status. Livia is not alone in her consideration of the difference between a skilled and trained community interpreter and an interpreter without any qualifications (cf. Hale, 2007). In 2005, the Swedish government report *Interpreter Training: New Demands, New Forms* recognized the importance of competence among community interpreters in Sweden (Statens offentliga utredningar 2005). The report led to the establishment of a national, consolidated, state-financed basic training program that reformed training for interpreting in spoken languages. The aim of this article is to examine this program and the conditions for community interpreting training in Sweden.

Our findings are based on the results of two joint research projects conducted at the Department of Cultural Studies, Lund University, Sweden, between 2008 and 2011: *The Interpreter: A Cultural Intermediary* and *Behind Closed Doors. The Importance of Interpreting for the Rule of Law and for Integration, With Special Focus on Separated Minors* (for more information on these projects in English, see www.tolkprojektet.se). To achieve our overall aim to examine and analyze the role of the community interpreter and interpreting services in Sweden, we interviewed and observed interpreters, public-service providers, non-Swedish-speaking clients and patients, interpreting agencies, and procurers, as well as interpreter training and authorization programs.

1.1. Definition of Terms

Our focus is specifically on community interpreter and community interpreting as they are defined by Franz Pöchhacker (1999, pp. 126-127):

In the most general sense community interpreting refers to interpreting in institutional settings of a given society in which public-service providers and individual clients do not speak the same language. . . . Community interpreting facilitates communication within a social entity (society) that includes culturally different sub-groups. Hence, the qualifier “community” refers to both the (mainstream) society as such as its constituted sub-community (ethnic or indigenous community, linguistic minority, etc.).

In the Swedish language there is no single term for *community interpreting*. A strict translation would be *contact interpreting*, signifying the role of the interpreter as making contact possible between different parties who do not speak the same language. Other possible terms are *public-service interpreting* (Skaaden & Wattne, 2009), which relates to the definition of community interpreting, while terms such as *dialogue interpreting* (Mason, 2001) and *liaison interpreting* (Gentile, Ozolins, & Vasilakos, 1996) refer to contexts in which the

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interpreting is performed in two language directions by the same person. For the purposes of this article, in most cases we use the short terms *interpreter* and *interpreting*.

Additionally, the term *public-service provider* denotes the professional that buys the interpreting services and use interpreters in her/his work with non-Swedish-speaking clients and patients. Private companies, financed by tax revenue and caring for clients/patients are part of the public service. We also use the terms *client* or *patient* to refer to the non-Swedish-speaking users of the services. Both parties are considered as equally dependent on interpreting.

In this article, we will give a general description of how the training program is organized in Sweden, including content, planning, and practice, and we analyze possibilities and shortcomings; and we discuss educational development within the field of community interpreting training in Sweden. The main focus will be on the conclusions we have made from our research. Our research may be understood in an international context, because many of the aspects of community interpreter training we discuss are similar in other countries, although the structural conditions for community interpreting training differ.

2. Method and Material

Interviews with 26 community interpreters working throughout Sweden comprised the main data source for our study. Livia, quoted above, is one of our interviewees. Half of the participants in our study were men, half were women, and half were “authorized” interpreters (in Sweden, community interpreters in spoken and sign languages can be authorized after being tested; we explain this process in greater detail below). Other countries have similar systems for authorization, licensing, certification, or other professional accreditation (cf. Hale, 2007; SOU, 2005). When we began the interviews in 2008, some of the interpreters had extensive experience (up to 30 years); others had as little as 3 months experience. Only one of the 26 interpreters was a native Swede. Furthermore, the interpreters had been active during different periods and in different contexts; thus, their languages and nationalities reflect periodic migration flows to Sweden. The interpreters agreed to meet us on three different occasions.

The interviews were ethics-tested in accordance with the Ethical Review Act of 2003. We informed the interviewees that their responses would be confidential and received consent from all participants. At the end of the project, interview transcripts and observation records will be housed at the Folk Life Archives at Lund University, with names and details changed to protect anonymity.

In the interviews we used an open approach, in which the interpreter was invited to speak freely about and reflect upon his/her work experiences. In the first interview we asked three questions: How did you come into the interpreting profession? How would you describe your role as an interpreter? and When did you identify with the interpreting profession?

In the second interview, we asked each interpreter to select five interpreting situations in which they had experienced an ethical dilemma. During the interviews we discussed these experiences in relation to rules of professional ethics for interpreters as they are formulated in *Good Interpreting Practice* (2010), a “principle-based” guide for authorized interpreters that prescribes what the interpreter *should* do in different situations. (All the participants in our research were familiar with *Good Interpreting Practice* and reported that they try to comply with it; the document is often used by interpreting agencies and in interpreter training.) We also talked about what the interpreter *can* do (Brander de la Iglesia, 2010). It was during these interviews that training and the possibility of authorization were raised, for example, in this comment:

I had worked as an interpreter for a couple of years before I got training. Then, I noticed that there were a lot of things I didn't know about interpreting, about interpreting ethics and how to act, how to speak, how to sit. How did I manage and how did I *dare* to do interpreting before I got my training? (Zacharias).

Other participants explained how training gave them pride and a social context, something they often miss in their daily work, as they mostly work alone (Gustafsson, Fioretos, & Norström, 2012; Norström, Fioretos, &

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Gustafsson, 2012). Meetings with teachers and fellow students also offered an opportunity to discuss ethical dilemmas or other questions with colleagues, and participants considered these just as important as the courses themselves. In the third interview, we followed up on different themes such as interpreting for children, working conditions, union work, and training.

We conducted an extended field study during a 2-year period (2008–2010) among 40 interpreting students in the national consolidated training program for community interpreters in spoken languages at a folk high school.² The training was carried out as distance learning, and it was provided in seven languages: Arabic, BCS (Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian), Lithuanian, Romany, Rumanian, Russian, and Turkish.³ The material collected at the folk high school consists of 10 interviews with students and teachers, field notes, descriptions from observations of 10 weekend meetings, and notes on the students' work and their discussions on the web platform First Class. (For further discussion about cultural analysis and ethnological method, see Frykman & Gilje, 2003; Geertz, 1973; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Additionally, as part of our research we attended meetings and examinations at four interpreter training providers.

In Sweden, the organization of the training program for community interpreters in signed languages differs from that for interpreters of spoken languages; in order to compare differences and similarities, we observed training for community interpreters in signed languages, conducted interviews with teachers and students, and participated in joint training for signed language and spoken language interpreters.

We attended joint meetings for teachers and supervisors from all seven community interpreter training programs in spoken languages in Sweden. We also arranged a reference group of five teachers and training providers with whom we met on five occasions to discuss our data, analysis, and results.

3. Literature Review

In an overview of the international field of community interpreter training, the Australian researcher, interpreter, and trainer Sandra Hale (2007) states that a fundamental condition for the training of interpreters is that such training is recognized among professionals, such as public-service providers and interpreters, and among clients/patients as a need in society.

Hale (2007) describes how, in many countries, community interpreting is not a recognized profession and is undermined by poor institutional financial support. She portrays a situation in which training is not compulsory, the possibility for authorization/certification is limited, and unskilled interpreting is performed by “natural interpreters” such as relatives and friends. Whenever community interpreter training is arranged, Hale (in line with several other researchers, e.g., Valero Garcés, 2003; Niska, 2005; Taibi & Martin, 2006) argues that there exist three main challenges: recruiting suitably qualified teaching staff, attracting students with adequate bilingual and bicultural competences, and deciding on the most relevant course content and most efficient teaching methodologies. These challenges are also apparent in the papers and articles about training presented at Critical Link conferences and appearing in their publications. These articles are often based on research embedded in a national context and describing specific cases. Authors discuss content, pedagogical issues, the use of on-campus or distance learning, and assessment of interpreting performance quality (cf. Avery, 2003; Blignault, Stephanou, & Barrett, 2009; Fowler, 2007; Lee, 2009; van den Bogaerde, 2007). In a Scandinavian context, the writings of Englund Dimitrova (1991), Wadensjö (1992), Niska (2004, 2005), and Skaaden and Wattne (2009), for example, have contributed to the advancement of the training programs for community interpreters. Internationally, authors

² The folk high school is a form of nonacademic adult education that has existed in Sweden for over 100 years. Approximately 150 folk high schools in Sweden are financed by grants from the state and/or county councils. The main purposes of folk high schools are to strengthen and develop democracy, to bridge educational gaps, and to raise the level of education and cultural awareness in society.

³ To be compared with the most commonly interpreted languages used in 2010: Arabic, Somali, Dari, and various Kurdish languages.

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such as Roy (2000), Angellelli (2004), and Pöchhacker (2010), for example, have developed theories about community interpreting as a profession.

3.1. Research Questions

From the research literature we learn that different countries and languages (spoken and signed) share the same challenges for community interpreter training. In the following, we focus on five question areas inspired by the literature:

Who should provide training and authorization? Should it be the state, regions, municipalities, specialized companies, and organizations such as the Red Cross, the UN, institutions or interpreting agencies?

What competences should educators have? Are professional interpreters best suited to be teachers, or should they be professionals with academic qualification?

What form, content, and length should the training programs have? Is it necessary to conduct training in classrooms? How can the Internet and distance courses be developed? Should the training be general, covering all parts of community interpreting, including social services, health care, and the judiciary? Or should interpreters specialize in a certain area from the beginning?

What knowledge and skills are the training supposed to impart? How are the professional qualities to be assessed? What kind of technical devices should interpreters be able to handle? How should the balance between practice and theory be handled?

Should the role of the interpreter be strict, or be defined more as a mediator with extended agency? Should the role be different in various settings, situations, or contexts?

The complexity of the five questions mentioned above is developed and analyzed below with Sweden as an example, starting with an explanation of the structural conditions in Sweden.

4. Interpreting Services in Sweden

Every day many encounters occur among public-service providers and non-Swedish-speaking clients and patients. These encounters often require access to a community interpreter. There are no current statistics showing exactly how many hours of interpretation take place in Sweden or the costs of interpreting services. Within the public sector, the total interpreting time in 2004 was estimated to be 650,000 hours in more than 120 languages (SOU, 2005). Undoubtedly, the number of hours has increased since then. We estimate that the interpreting time in 2009 was most likely between 1.2 and 1.5 million hours in about 170 languages in the whole of Sweden. In addition, many interpreted meetings are carried out by untrained interpreters, family members—including children—and friends. These meetings are never included in the statistics.

Several different laws and ordinances determine state responsibility for interpreting services, but there is no coherent set of rules and regulations. In short, the right to and obligation for interpreting is based on four fundamental principles: citizen participation, the right of the individual to equal treatment, the right of national minorities to their languages, and the right to plead one's case within the justice system.

Interpreting services in Sweden are publicly funded, and access to an interpreter is thus a cost-free right for all clients and patients. It is the public-service employee who calls for an interpreter if he/she finds that it is required; the client or patient cannot book an interpreter on his/her own initiative. Aside from the supervision of authorized interpreters carried out by the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency (KamK), there is no supervision of interpreting services, which has received much criticism.

To conclude, community interpreting is a recognized need in Sweden and the government takes responsibility for interpreting services (cf. Hale, 2007). We have identified four means with which the state assumes this responsibility (Norstrom et al., 2012): First, through the authorization of interpreters. Second, via the document

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Good Interpreting Practice. Third, according to the Public Procurement Act (2007), all public authorities at the state, regional, and local levels must procure interpreting services in the open market. Last, the government supports community interpreter training.

4.1. Training of Community Interpreters

Following the regulation of immigration to Sweden in 1967, it became increasingly clear that trained community interpreters were needed for communication between individuals with no knowledge of Swedish and public employees, in order to guarantee legal security (SOU, 1972). Interpreter training programs have therefore existed in Sweden since the end of the 1960s, built on public-service needs in the areas of social insurance, the labor market, health care, and the courts. The Swedish Immigration Board and municipal immigrant service bureaus led the development of these programs, initially at the Nordic Folk High School and then at other folk high schools, study organizations, and universities in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Lund.

In 1975, the government adopted a new policy for integration (Prop. 1975). Immigration and minority policy aimed to give members of language minorities the possibility to express themselves through their own language and cultural identity—within the frame of a community-wide Swedish interest. The policy embodied three ideals: equality, freedom of choice, and cooperation. Community interpreter training in spoken languages has since then been regarded as an “immigrant issue” in line with the integration policy goals of 1975 (cf. Niska, 2004). The Administrative Procedure Act (1986), however, specifies that a public authority should use an interpreter “when needed.”⁴

In 1986, the Institute for Interpretation and Translation Studies (TÖI) was established at Stockholm University. TÖI has since been responsible for the allocation of government support to folk high schools, study organizations, and universities. Furthermore, TÖI coordinates interpreter and translator training, training supervision, educational development, the production of teaching materials and interpreter dictionaries, the promotion of research, and collaboration with other Nordic countries. (On July 1, 2012, the responsibility for allocating government support to folk high schools and study organizations was moved to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. It is unclear who will take over the other tasks of TÖI.)

Evidence that the need for interpreting within the public sector is paramount can be found in the government report *Interpreter Training: New Demands, New Forms* (SOU 2005), which was released in connection with the establishment of Immigration Courts, located at three of Sweden’s administrative courts (Stockholm, Malmö, and Gothenburg), in 2006. The National Courts Administration demanded higher interpreting competence, and resources were allocated to TÖI specifically for training for more in-depth knowledge within court interpreting. The report led to reforms of the general training possibilities for community interpreters in spoken languages, which will be further explained below.

In addition to these training initiatives, there are three other state-financed interpreting training programs. Training to become a sign language interpreter for deaf and deaf-blind persons is run by seven folk high schools. The training is between 3 and 4 years of full-time studies on campus and is classified as post-upper-secondary vocational training. No previous knowledge of signed language is required, and the first year is dedicated to learning sign language. Community interpreters in signed language are trained in the same public service areas as those in spoken languages. In addition to those areas and subjects, the following 2 or 3 years include language and communication theory, personal development training, video-based interpreting training, and practice with professional interpreters in “real” situations.

Since 1957, the Armed Forces Interpreter School (part of the Armed Forces Intelligence and Security Centre) in Uppsala has been training interpreters for the specific needs of the armed forces. No previous knowledge of languages other than Swedish is required. The program comprises three terms of full-time studies, of which the

⁴ The formulation “when needed” does not imply a right but gives the public-service provider the right to decide whether an interpreter is called in. The Act does not mention the need to call in authorized or otherwise professional, well-educated interpreters.

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third involves special training for field work in the areas of the world in which the respective language is spoken. Currently, interpreters are trained in Russian, Dari, and Arabic. Military training is also included. Students apply via the National Service Administration on the basis of their upper-secondary certificate.

A conference interpreting training program is offered at Stockholm University, with the first term concurrent with the community interpreting program. The conference interpreter training program gives special competence for interpreting at public events with many participants and often in international contexts, for example, within the EU.

The working conditions and status of these three interpreting training programs as well as the status of the signed language, armed forces, and conference interpreters differ from the situation of community interpreters in spoken languages in several essential aspects such as payment, possibilities of getting assignments, working conditions, and status (Pöchhacker, 2010).

In 1976, the state began to offer authorization of community interpreters. Authorization testing and supervision of authorized interpreters is administrated by KamK. The authorization test is offered in 40 languages, including signed language and national minority languages such as Sami, Finnish, and Romany. In total, there are more than 1,100 authorized interpreters, approximately 900 in spoken languages. Authorized interpreters may do a second test (written and oral) for a specialization in medical or court interpreting. Students trained at Stockholm University receive their authorization when they take their exam; candidates from the nonacademic training programs at folk high schools and study organizations have to do a special test to achieve authorization.

5. A New National Consolidated Training Program

After almost 40 years of local initiatives, the results of the governmental report (2005) led to the creation of a national consolidated training program under the auspices of TÖI. It is state-financed, uniform, and equivalent to one term of full-time studies. The training is offered by seven different study organizations and folk high schools. The study organizations give evening classes over 1 year, and the folk high schools give distance training over 2 years, meeting on site during certain scheduled weekends and otherwise using the Internet. Another route to the interpreting profession is to complete higher education courses in interpreting at Stockholm University (Interpreting and Translation I, Interpreting II–III, and a bachelor's course). These courses require previous knowledge of a language other than Swedish (60 ECTS).

Based on severe criticism of the situation before 2006, important new elements were introduced in the consolidated training program. These elements include previous knowledge testing, exams and assessment of interpreter candidates, compulsory language supervision in every featured language, and links to every subject area. A short course on asylum interpreting was introduced as well as common course literature.

The consolidated training program consists of six modules. The introductory module deals with the interpreting profession, ethics, and technique. This is followed by modules in social insurance and labor market interpreting, health care interpreting, jurisprudence basics, supplementary jurisprudence, and asylum interpreting. All modules include factual subject knowledge about public service areas, interpreter ethics, interpreting techniques, interpreting exercises, and language guidance. After each module there is a written examination on factual knowledge and an oral interpreting test. After completing the training program, students may take preparatory courses for authorization. A total of 40 training programs have been completed during 2006–2011, and a total of 517 interpreters in 36 different languages—including Arabic (149), Russian (60), Polish (39), Somali (37), and Spanish (36)—have finished the training. A total of 77 students, in seven different languages, graduated from the community interpreting program at Stockholm University between 2000 and 2011.

An important change in the new training program is the introduction of admission tests. In order to be admitted to the program, applicants must have completed at least upper-secondary education or the equivalent. A selection is made from the languages applied for and then those selected are called for 1 day of previous knowledge testing. The test consists of four parts: a written test about laws and society in Sweden, translation of phrases from

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Swedish to the source language, and two interviews—one in Swedish that tests active and passive language use and one in the source language that tests language level and aptitude.

After a few years of training students, a discussion began about the need to increase the demands on interpreter candidates, because too many of the candidates possess too low a level of education, insufficient knowledge of Swedish, and inadequate study techniques. This is confirmed by the low throughput of about 50%.

During our observations at a folk high school, we met 40 interpreter candidates, mostly women, from various backgrounds. The candidates included municipal employees, truck drivers, hospital caretakers, teachers, home care assistants, primary-school teachers, cooks, and secretaries. They were all of working age, and all had been born outside of Sweden. Some were already active as interpreters. The majority had decided to try interpreter training on their own initiative, most because they needed work and because they already had at least two languages “for free.” Some began interpreting while they were still students in the program, and some chose not to complete the training, because they were assured of getting assignments anyway. Some stopped because they realized that there was not enough demand for their language and felt they would never be able to support themselves as interpreters. The lack of future progress as a professional community interpreter makes aspirants hesitant, and it stops people from considering such training. This seems to be a common problem in many countries (Ozolins, 2000; Skaaden & Wattne, 2009).⁵

There is no specific training for the teachers in the training programs. Often, the teacher is an interpreter with long experience or one of the regular teachers at the folk high school or study organization. The same person might teach one or several of the modules as well as supervise language and interpreting training. Courses and seminars for language supervisors and teachers are infrequently arranged.

Conditions for language supervision vary. For many languages, there are no dictionaries available, which puts high demands on the language supervisor. In one example, a language supervisor of Somali showed us a compilation of 2,180 terms for the “supplementary jurisprudence” module that he and some colleagues put together themselves during a visit to Somaliland. Whereas this supervisor worked for many years visiting judges and lawyers, listening to court proceedings, and putting together useful material, teachers of many other languages have access to such material from the beginning.

Teaching is conducted partly according to traditional models such as lectures, literature studies, and practical interpreting training. Apart from physical meetings with lectures and language supervision that begin and end each module, distance training builds on the peer group method (Biggs, 2003). The candidates study and work together on the Internet-based platform First Class. As discussed in Skaaden and Wattne (2009), distance training is a necessary and efficient solution in a large and sparsely populated country. In Norway, a coherent community interpreter training program was introduced in 2004, 2 years before Sweden’s program. The Norwegian training program is also based on Internet-based distance courses, and in some aspects it uses similar pedagogical ideas about peer groups. Skaaden and Wattne (2009) refer to the experiential learning theory, which implies that the students and their experiences are a main source of learning. The exchange and exploration of experiences is mainly performed in peer groups on a Web platform with two “rooms” with both synchronous chat channels and an asynchronous forum channel (Pallof & Pratt, 1999; Skaaden & Wattne, 2007). The teachers introduce different subjects to discuss, mostly ethical issues. In Sweden there are also “rooms” for communication via the Web platform, but the tasks and issues are focused on factual knowledge or terminology.

Sweden’s interpreter training program relies heavily on interpreting exercises using prepared role plays connected to the subject area. Most of the role plays are written by one person with extensive experience both as an interpreter and as a teacher. All role plays are written in Swedish and include current terms from each subject area, as well as idiomatic expressions and various types of jargon that can be linked to, for example, age, gender,

⁵ Ozolins (2000) explains this lack of professional progress as a consequence of community interpreting (he uses the term *liaison interpreting*) being an institution-driven field, unlike conference interpreting, which has been a profession-driven field. This fits with the situation in Sweden in which the institutions (migration board, health care, police force, social service, etc.) have been the ones leading the development of interpreting. At no point could these institutions have depended upon a ready-made profession, even though institutions have generally supported accreditation or certification systems that are directly relevant to them.

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or level of education. In line with Hale's (2007) description, the teachers we interviewed and observed struggle with the role plays. They find scripted dialogues useful for controlling content, grammatical structures, and vocabulary, but they are often stilted and artificial when performed. On the other hand, unscripted, improvised dialogues are useful for spontaneity but often lack depth of content and richness of language. In such improvisations, the richness of language is determined by the proficiency of the students, and that is a limitation.

The role plays could also be used to discuss ethical dilemmas and practical experiences. We have, however, noted that these are seldom discussed; teaching is dominated by factual knowledge in the subject areas, terminology, and language exercises. There are few discussions about ethical issues, except in the first module. There is no communication or language theory and no training for interpreting situations other than face-to-face. Exercises are only rarely recorded or videotaped. In addition, there is not as much didactic discussion about distance teaching as there is in other countries (cf. Skaaden & Wattne, 2009).

After having passed the final exams, students receive a training certificate. These exams are in many ways similar to those used in the authorization tests by the KamK. There is an ongoing debate about this (cf. Wadensjö & Englund, 2010). Some interpreting teachers see this as a good idea, as the consolidated training program is intended as preparation for authorization. Other teachers do not think this is reasonable and would like to see the training program assess aspects of interpreting that are not assessed in the authorization tests. Today, the tests are focused on knowledge and accuracy, which is of great significance. But as Skaaden & Wattne (2009, p. 75) state about the training program in Norway, "Interpreting is definitely a skill-based subject—it is something you do, not just something you may read and talk about." Therefore, we argue that the act of interpreting should be considered more in the training programs themselves as well as in the examination.

6. Changing Demand and Lack of Financial Resources

The consolidated training program for community interpreters is in many respects an improvement. Most apparent is the use of examination and certification, which makes it possible to quantify the competence of the interpreters and guarantees acquisition of a certain amount of factual knowledge and terminology. Still, it is a short training program and, according to providers of the training, there is a need for development. This resembles the situation in many countries (Hale, 2007; Taibi & Martin, 2006). Below, we discuss some basic problems of the Swedish training program and possibilities for the future.

The continuously changing demand for community interpreters in languages new to Sweden makes it difficult to predict interpreting needs and, thus, training needs. Interpreting agencies, however, do have knowledge of and maintain statistics on the varying demand for interpreting services (even on a daily basis), varying geographical needs, and requests for certain languages. This knowledge could very well be used in the planning of training, if cooperation with the educators were developed.⁶ Within Scandinavia, the tradition of adult education within folk high schools and study organizations is based on open access, student participation in forming the course outlines, and no examinations. For the community interpreter training program, special stipulations allow initial tests and minimal demands of at least upper-secondary education or equivalent and examinations. But the idea of open access means that it is not possible, or even desirable, to direct the applicants in terms of language, for example. The training program for interpreters is open to anyone who wants a career within this profession. Everybody who passes the test has a chance whether the language is demanded by public-sector providers or not. The languages that will be available for training are therefore in reality (primarily) directed by the applicants' linguistic background and competence, not societal demand. On several occasions we have seen teachers and training providers frustrated by and critical of this "ideology of open access." They argue that it is wrong to train

⁶ The first interpreting agencies in Sweden were established in the 1970s and for a long time interpreting services were offered primarily by municipal immigrant service bureaus. Since the 1990s, private agencies have been competing with the municipal agencies. The basic function of providing interpreting services is the same for all agencies, but there are considerable differences in the conditions under which municipal and private agencies operate.

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interpreters in languages for which there is no demand—it is wrong from the perspectives of the student, the users of interpretation services, and the taxpayers.

The right to interpretation in Sweden, as we have mentioned, is regulated by several laws and ordinances, and the government has different means for fulfilling state-sponsored interpreting services (Norström et al., 2012). It is most important to maintain the state-funded training program and provision of authorization (SOU, 2005:37; Report 2012:2), but the financial resources are limited.⁷

As mentioned, the training program for interpreters in signed language is much longer than the community interpreting program in spoken languages in which, during the equivalent of one term, the students learn thousands of new terms collected from four different professional areas, in both source and target languages; it is hoped that they also learn how to grasp ethical issues and interpreting techniques.

In summary, as many teachers, students and training providers argue, the training program has to be seen as a start. It could be considered as a basic program and it *should* be complemented with other courses. In reality, there are few possibilities for attending training courses on higher levels, because such courses are almost nonexistent. The shortage of resources is a problem for TÖI, as it cannot expand the training programs to include more students, and it can only infrequently offer and develop higher courses.

There is a constant need for new skilled and trained interpreters, but instead of supporting TÖI to meet the need by developing and expanding training possibilities, the government cut back on funding. As a consequence, the agencies that provide community interpreters with assignments have started their own training programs, parallel to the national program. This will help to fill the lack of trained interpreters in the right languages, but these courses will not give the participants a certificate.

The changing and unpredictable demand for interpreting service, the open-access ideology within folk high schools and study organizations, and the limitation of resources for fulfilling the demand of skilled and trained interpreters are all issues with which the interpreting field in Sweden must contend. Often, however, there is no real discussion or debate, although the resolution of these issues is essential to ensure the quality of the existing training program.

7. Research, Theory and Didactical Development in Community Interpreting Training

One question asked in the planning of the national consolidated training program for interpreters in spoken languages was: What is the trained and examined person supposed to know and to do? Within pedagogical didactics this is framed by three questions: *What* will we offer the student, *why* will we offer it, and *how* will we offer it? Other questions were about assessment and how to measure interpreting skills and knowledge. Still, the new program is built upon the personal and practical experiences of several professional interpreters and teachers, some of whom have been involved in interpreter training since the 1970s, when training first started. The training program is therefore quite static and resembles the training programs of the 1970s both in structure and content. Society and professions within different sectors of society have obviously changed since then. In order to catch up with these changes, it is not nearly enough to train interpreters with updated, current factual knowledge and terminology. The development of new modes of communication over the telephone and Internet as well as the development of different of models for interviewing, making investigations, making decisions, and so forth, are just as important. The major part of interpreting today takes place within sectors in society that did not exist in the 1970s, for example, the Migration Board and the extended social and health care system. To meet these changes, new courses need to be developed and, perhaps, old ones replaced.

⁷ There is a need to increase the number of authorized interpreters and also the number of languages for which examination is possible, but the government has been unwilling to allocate sufficient funds for the development of authorization. During 2011, however, the Swedish Agency for Public Management investigated the possibilities for development of the authorization system (Report 2012:2).

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In addition to the scarcity of funding for the programs themselves, no government funding for research is given to TÖI; research is externally funded. One consequence of this limited funding is that there is no guarantee for knowledge accumulation and continuity within the community interpreting field. Additionally, no funds exist for developing educational science or didactics within community interpreting in Sweden, which has a direct effect on the training program, as Hale (2007, p. 178) argues: “However, teaching these areas will not be effective if it is not underpinned by theory of interpreting or informed by the results of research.” Roy (2000) agrees that successful teachers are those who base their teaching strategies on theory and research.

Today, in Sweden most teachers and language supervisors are active interpreters themselves and therefore have practical experience. Few have pedagogical training and even fewer are researchers or have access to theoretical studies about community interpreting. The course literature is focused on factual knowledge and terminology about social insurance, the labor market, health care, and the judicial system and asylum policies. The students read no texts about research or theory. Discussions about the complexity of the role of the interpreter, ethical issues, and technique therefore tend to end up in particular and concrete situations rather than general and/or theoretical discussions. And because the training program does not teach the theory underpinning technical issues and ethics, these skills are not part of the examination for authorization.

8. Training in Ethical Rules: Good Interpreting Practices

Finally, we highlight ethical skills and the role of the interpreter. In 2009, the Migration Board, together with the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL), took the initiative to develop a training program for interpreters within the field of sexuality. The Migration Board had observed that several interpreters could not handle their personal bias against LGBT persons.

Obviously, an interpreter has to handle his/her bias when it pops up, and the field must develop methods to support new interpreters to handle this. During the course we observed there was quite an open use of racist, sexist, and prejudicial jargon, and one teacher told us that, in his experience, there are many stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes toward Swedish people and society among interpreter trainees.

During observations and interviews we were surprised to find that many interpreters do not take time to reflect on themselves and their role. Several were convinced that they “automatically” become neutral and impartial simply because they say so in the introduction to an interpretation. It is, however, easy to overstep the border of good practice, as the biases we observed exemplifies, and such bias is difficult to identify without self-knowledge. For an interpreter to remaining neutral with respect to the content of the interpreted encounter and impartial in relation to the parties involved requires knowledge, experience, and self-awareness. Many examples from our interviews show that interpreters may be emotionally caught by surprise when they do not possess the appropriate tools for dealing with a certain situation. Impartiality and neutrality require techniques and a consciousness about the interpreter’s role and its limitations, as well as an awareness of others’ potential expectations of the interpreter.

Again, for the sake of comparison, we can look to other training programs. Training for signed language interpreters in Sweden includes thorough and ongoing training of self-knowledge and methods to handle personal bias. In Norway, as described in Skaaden and Wattne (2007), the four main goals of the community interpreter training are all related to skills and link doing and thinking through structured reflection; the ultimate aim is to give the students a well-founded basis for handling challenges in real life, how to prepare, how to learn more, how to deal with ethical dilemmas, and so forth. In Sweden the aim of the training program is similar in theory, but in practice it is hardly fulfilled.

One tool that could be useful for developing the didactics of training in ethical skills is the idea of *self-reflection*, which deals with methodological questions regarding inner considerations. Such training might concern reflections on how a given interpreting situation is handled and on the relationship with the others in the interpreted encounter. This kind of reflection would give interpreters tools to distance themselves from their work and to look at their role; what the interpreter *can* do as well as what is not possible within the framework of what

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the interpreter *should* do. An important issue in the discussion about self-reflection concerns *cultural awareness*, that is, the knowledge that the interpreter is a cultural being with frames of reference and cultural conceptions (and prejudices and jargons). Training in self-reflection would help interpreters handle their own reactions and give them a deeper understanding of their role, of being impartial and neutral, of the obligation to observe silence. These are all important components of the interpreter code of ethics (Kaufert, Kaufert, & LaBine 2009; Skaaden & Wattne, 2009)

Training in the ethics of the interpreter's role is important also in an international context, because there are different approaches and traditions in different countries. Angelelli (2004), for example, argues that rather than prescribe what the interpreter's role should be during an interaction based on an ideal model like the one stated in the Swedish document *Good Interpreting Practice* (2010), a new theory could describe the interpreter's role based on situational practices in different workplaces. It would also consider the interpreter as a visible, forceful individual with the possibility of influencing the meeting. Additionally, if we are to regard interpreting as a situational and relational activity, we cannot compare, for example, health care interpreting with legal interpreting or conference interpreting. Different competences are required in different sectors, and this also affects the interpreter's role and training.

Missing in Sweden is a discussion about specialization, about training interpreters for various roles with different ethical requirements depending on the sector of society they are interpreting within. Precisely for that reason, it might be constructive to look more closely at international ideas and research for how interpreters might become specialized. Based on that, a critical analysis could be made of the more rigid and uniform interpreter's role that exists in Sweden. In light of terms such as *cultural intermediary*, *detective*, *lawyer*, or *gatekeeper*, the neutral and impartial position advocated by *Good Interpreting Practice* becomes clearer, as do its limitations and, above all, its possibilities.

9. Conclusion

Community interpreting is a complex profession that demands a wide range of skills, including language, factual knowledge, techniques, and the ability to handle emotions and social relations in all sorts of environments and settings. Training in the complexities of this profession is fundamental and it should be compulsory. The importance of training for community interpreters must be recognized and supported by society and, as a result of this, further developed and debated. Many scholars and professionals, in Sweden and internationally, concur with this view (Hale, 2007).

Sweden's existing consolidated training is a good starting point for a career as an interpreter. For progress to be possible, it is nevertheless vitally important to use existing research, to develop didactics for community interpreting training and to produce theory about community interpreting. As noted in the literature review, there is a wide range of research within this field dealing with interpreting training and didactical issues such as content, interpreting skills, pedagogical issues, the use of on-campus or distance training and assessment, and interpreting performance quality, that is, what competences and skills should an interpreter have and how are these measured and assessed. Research and training programs for teachers could be developed using existing literature and research to inspire training providers and teachers. Interpreting theory and results from international research would thus be implemented and pushed further with the goal of creating better training and progress within the whole field of interpreting services in Sweden. For interpreters in spoken languages, the debate would be part of professional recognition and higher status, equivalent with the status of signed language interpreters.

The concrete needs and demands of interpreting are identified in the everyday exercise of authority, and it is in the everyday meetings that equal rights and legal, medical, and social security are meant to be secured (Corsellis, 2000; Norström et al., 2012). Ultimately, providing society with skilled and competent community interpreters is the duty of the public-service providers tasked with ensuring clients'/patients' rights to equality and legal, medical, and social security. Public-service providers, clients, and patients should never have to question whether their community interpreters are qualified to serve them.

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