Knowledge management in the simultaneous interpretation of LSP conferences

© Dipl.- Dolm. Martin Will
Introduction

• Name: Martin Will
• Profession: Conference interpreter
• Main occupation: Finishing PHD
• Aim of this presentation: Give an overall view on dissertation; only main results as official submission not done yet
• First presentation, then questions.
Structuration

• 0. Problem statement, object & aim
• 1. State of the art
• 2. Theoretical foundations
• 3. Own model (formal problem solution)
• 4. Theoretical method for putting the model into practice
• 5. Verification of the method
• 6. Summary & perspectives for further research
• 7. Literature & appendixes
0. Problem statement – professional factors

- High fluctuation of clients and topics is typical for the profession of conference interpreters (CI).
- „Technical“ conferences important part in the job distribution; on these assignments, CIs are called to work for experts with a common and specific knowledge at least partially unknown to outsiders/CI (LSP conferences).
- Normally no time/resources for CI to acquire same knowledge as the audience.
- Paradox Nr. 1: Laypersons (CI) work for experts
0. Problem statement – working parameters for Interpretation

- Simultaneous reception & production of texts
- Spontaneous, unpredictable utterances by participants
- Translation cannot be interrupted, strong dependence from performance of the speaker.
- Paradox Nr. 2: Paid result of the CIs work (simultaneous interpretation) has to be produced when conditions are most problematic.
0. Problem statement – example from real life

• The s-survey was done as a mail-out questionnaire with a telephone follow-up. It was a sample group of one-thousand-five-hundred-and-fourteen corporations out of approximately a hundred-and-sixty-seven-thousand-ninehundred-and-fifty-one Canadian-controlled private corporations in Ontario. Now, what this means is that these are companies that are not traded on the stock exchange. Therefore the ownership of them is controlled by the actual owner-managers, although they're not necessarily small businesses, and in fact some of the ones in our study were quite large.

• Wir sa traten brieflich an die Unternehmen heran und_s waren insgesamt eintausendfünfhundertvierzehn Unternehmen von insgesamt hundertsiebenundsechzigtausendneunhundert Familienunternehmen, die unter kanadische Kontrolle stehen. Das bedeutet, dass das Unternehmen sind, die n·nicht an der Börse notieren, die Eigen das Eigentum ist mehrheitlich in den Händen der · Familie, wenngleich das oft keine Kleinunternehmen sind. Manche der Unternehmen in der Studie sind relativ gross. ...
0. Problem statement – analysis of the target text

- **Missing terms** in German version
- **Wrong link** between various terms (owner-manager/ Familienunternehmen/private corporation/ börsennotiert).
- Result: Comprehensibility of interpretation threatened.
0. Problem statement – basics for an adequate interpretation of the example

- Adequate interpretation depends on „right“ LSP knowledge:
  - Individual term knowledge: To know the corresponding denomination for owner-manager (Eigentümer-Unternehmer) as well as the content of the two concepts in both languages.
  - Structured term knowledge: To know the link between individual terms by placing them into a structured relationship. This would make an erroneous assignation like „private corporation“ – „Familienunternehmen“ – „Börsennotation“ – „owner-manager“ impossible.
- ..which has to be used in the „right“ way:
  Individual and structured term knowledge must be gathered according to the specific working parameters of simultaneous interpretation. It must be constituted in such a way that it can be used at the latest when it is needed for a specific interpretation.
0. Object & aim

**Object** of the PhD project:
The LSP-knowledge contained in oral and written conference texts that has to be known or constituted in order to assure an adequate simultaneous interpretation of the related conferences.

**Aim:**
To describe what knowledge structures have to be assembled by the CI and how these structures are to be constituted and used according to a method suitable to the specific working parameters of simultaneous interpretation.
1. State of the art (only simultaneous interpreting)

- Interpreter is mainly considered a specialist for producing a linguistic result (constitution of the "correct sense" is more important than "correct terminology" which is more important than specialized knowledge in a specific field of knowledge).
- Necessary knowledge is gathered in different preparatory stages (before, during and after a specific conference).
- It is stored in glossaries.
- Interpreter seen as "last generalist" (sort of human encyclopedia) constantly up to date.
1. State of the art - deficits

• Conflicting & unclear approaches (terminology can also be regarded as specialized knowledge etc.)
• Claims not differentiated. What „knowledge“??
• No clear indications about content and organization of preparatory stages, sources, „raw-material“, how the input is used etc.
• Glossaries not suitable: Polysemy, do not contain specialized knowledge.
• Conclusion (paradox No. 3): No clarity.
1. State of the art: Intuitive solution

- Problem statement centered around 2 aspects:
  - **What LSP** knowledge structures does a CI need?
  - And **How** does he/she constitute them?
- Tentative solution: To describe the „What“ and „How“. Result leads to a method for the implementation of the knowledge management for CIs in LSP conferences.
2. Theoretical foundations

• 1) Model for the description of individual terms within texts (Gerzymisch-Arbogast).
• 2) Model for the integration of individual terms into larger systematically organized structures (knowledge systems) (Mudersbach).
• 3) Model for the description of conditions under which these LSP entities can be constituted and used for simultaneous interpreting (Will).
• 1 + 2 = „WHAT“, 3 = „HOW“. 
3. Own solution

• Considers that LSP knowledge appears at 2 levels: Isolated In individual texts (f. i. conference texts) and embedded in a coherent and structured context within reference texts (f. i. databases, handbooks, encyclopedia).

• Starting point for the knowledge management are always individual texts; the terms which they contain are to be interpreted holistically as single elements of an overall structure (knowledge system).

• Precondition: The conceptual content must be clear for the recipient (CI). This may imply the use of reference texts.

• A meaningful assignation implies a differentiation of the relevant knowledge systems. This is achieved by placing the individual terms into a structured functional hierarchy. Its granularity depends on the source texts and the individual knowledge of each CI.

• Bond between an individual term and its position in a holistically structured knowledge system is considered as the basic knowledge element for understanding and producing LSP texts (Structured Terminological knowledge Entity – TKE)
3. Own solution

Fig. 1: Structured Terminological Knowledge Entity - monolingual
3. Own solution

- Important preconditions:
  - CI has to work out the relevant knowledge systems in departure and target language.
  - The individual elements within each knowledge system have to be compared as to their conceptual content and their function.
  - The constitution of the knowledge systems must be done in a rational and relevant way according to the conditions/tasks of each stage.
  - The entities which are constituted must be usable for the production of the target text (interpretation).
3. Own solution

Fig. 2: Recall-oriented data model: Structured TKE in departure and target language
3. Own solution

- Knowledge management stages:
  - I. Preparation of assignment
  - II. Conference
  - IIa. Preparation of individual interpretation
  - IIb. Individual interpretation
  - IIc. Revision of individual interpretation
  - III. Revision of the assignment
3. Own model – „How“?

- I. No restrictions due to text reception and production factors: Differentiated constitution of knowledge systems according to existing departure text and subjective interest of CI. Progression: Texterm, Systerm, Holon, target Holon. All constituted entities are structured TKEs in departure and target language.
- II. Limitations increase with approaching individual interpretation:
  - IIa. Selective completion of existing knowledge through constitution of new (partial) entities: If possible structured TKEs, otherwise parts of it (to be completed as soon as possible).
  - IIb. Recall of existing structures (or „emergency solution“).
  - IIc. Revision of deficits from IIb (with means of IIa)
- III. No restrictions due to text reception and production factors: completion of partial structures constituted in stage II into structured TKEs within existing and/or new knowledge systems (see stage I).
4. Theoretical method for putting the model into practice

- Application of the constraints/aims of the different stages to the constitution of TKEs.
- Method consists in 31 steps distributed over 5 individual stages.
5. Verification of the method

- Based on „Pöchhackerkorpus“ = Transcripts of authentic and coherent discourse texts produced during an international conference on SMEs (ICSB-conference: 24-26.6 1991 in Vienna) as well as the conference documentation used for preparation (provided by Franz Pöchhacker).
- 5 texts: 3 for stage I; 1 for stage IIa, 1 for stage IIb. Stage IIc and III based on stage IIa & IIb.
- All departure texts in English, produced by native speakers.
6. Summary and perspectives for further work

• First complete and coherent description of knowledge management for CI: Content, sources, method, conditions.
• Clear cut positions regarding previous (controversial) claims within interpreting practice and literature.
• Possibility for improving CIs performance (to be checked out in an empirical investigation)
• Didactical usage.
• Implementation via the computer.
The end

• ..for now....

• Thanks for listening!