

The Interpreter as Actor: Towards a Theatre-Informed Interpreting pedagogy

El intérprete como actor: hacia una pedagogía de la interpretación de lenguas que implique el teatro

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ABSTRACT

One of the many ways in which metaphorical language has been used to describe spoken language interpreting has drawn on the similarities the interpreters' work shares with that of stage actors endeavouring to imitate the style and demeanour of different speakers. The parallels between interpreters and actors, however, run much deeper: both share a similar relationship with the written and spoken word; both rely on their verbal and non-verbal communication skills to encode and decode information transmitted in real time in front of an audience; both receive immediate feedback on their performance and rely on similar tools when preparing for one. By outlining the main areas in which their working and training paths intersect, it is the aim of this study to attempt to chart the interfaces between interpreters and actors and thereby contribute to the development of a theatre-informed interpreting pedagogy.

Keywords: interpreting, acting, improvisation, role-play, training, theatre

RESUMEN

Una de las maneras más recurrentes, entre las muchas que utiliza el lenguaje metafórico para describir la interpretación del discurso hablado, hace referencia a las similitudes del trabajo de los intérpretes con el de los actores teatrales que imitan el estilo y la conducta de diferentes hablantes. El paralelismo entre intérpretes y actores, no obstante, es más profundo: ambos comparten una relación similar con la palabra escrita y hablada; ambos se basan en sus habilidades de comunicación verbal y no verbal para codificar y decodificar la información transmitida en tiempo real al público; ambos reciben retroalimentación inmediata de su actuación y emplean herramientas similares cuando se preparan para actuar. Al marcar las áreas en las que se ven relacionados su trabajo y su formación, el presente estudio traza lo que tienen en común intérpretes y actores, y contribuye al desarrollo de una pedagogía de la interpretación que implique el teatro.

Palabras clave: interpretación, improvisación, interpretación teatral, juegos de rol, formación, teatro

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1. Introduction

The rich variety of attempts made over time to describe the agents and processes involved in spoken and sign-language interpreting has inevitably led practitioners and researchers to use a plethora of epithets, similes, and metaphors to refer to interpreters as well as their work and role in cross-linguistic/cultural interactions. As a result, interpreters have been portrayed, among others, from “robotic conduits of information” (Roy 2015: 298), “language machines” (Roberts-Smith 2009: 14), and “drivers of public transport” who come across people from all levels of society (Kelly 2007: 36), to “subtitle[s] to a foreign film” (AIICUSA 2012), “walking dictionar[ies]” (Graves 2013), “phonographs”, as well as, rather unflatteringly, “a piece of gum on the bottom of a shoe – ignored for all practical purposes, but almost impossible to remove” (Morris 1999: 8, 7). One of the figurative ways frequently, albeit fleetingly, used to describe interpreters has drawn on the perceived similarities their work shares with that of stage performers, particularly actors (e.g. Weale 1997: 308; Hale 2007: 13; Bischoff and Loutan 2008: 22; Harding 2014; Beckwith 2016). More specifically, the analogies of interpreters to actors have highlighted two main features that appear to be shared between them.

The first centres on the notion of imitation or pretence and is aligned with the stereotypical understanding of an actor in Diderot’s terms as “every personage who departs from what is appropriate to his state or his character” to present something that “is false and mannered” (quoted in Fried 1980: 99-100) – a notion deeply rooted in the long history of mistrust the theatre has endured as a perceived counterfeit practice akin to deception (Barish 1981). Accordingly, it has been argued that interpreters (as well as translators) have “something of the actor in them, the mimic, the impersonator” in that they too “make a living pretending to be” someone they are not, consciously trying to evoke a “willing suspension of disbelief” in the recipients of their services, i.e. their audience (Robinson 1997: 24, 109). The same sense of suspicion can arguably be further identified in references to interpreters as actors being required to “capture the personality of the person who is speaking” (Harding 2014), perform “the same part in a different way” (Hale 2007: 13), play “different roles at different times depending on the nature of the interaction” (Mikkelsen 2013: 392) or become a “speaker’s alter ego” (AIIC 1999) by “slipping into the skin of the man who [is] speaking” (Mydans 2005).

The second feature that has been highlighted as common between interpreters and actors is their attempt to render themselves invisible or transparent in front of an audience in order to offer an unobstructed view of those they (re)present. Accordingly, as Torikai points out (2009: 2), interpreters are often described in Japanese as “*kurogo* or *kuroko*”, a term borrowed from the *kabuki* theatre convention of stagehands being assigned with helping the protagonists with their elaborate costumes and movement on stage as well as with moving scenery and props between or during acts. Hiding behind a mask and dressed fully in black so as to blend with the background, a *kurogo* works in the shadow of the leading figure trying not to draw attention to his own onstage presence and actions the same way that interpreters have for long been encouraged to fashion their work in accordance with the principles of impersonal participation and unnoticeable presence (Angelelli 2004a, 2004b; Martínez-Gómez 2015).

Yet is it only pretence/imitation and invisibility/transparency that bind interpreters and actors together or are there further parallels to be found between them? And if so, how widely and deeply do they run? By juxtaposing their work and training practices, it is the aim of

this article to chart the interfaces between spoken language interpreters and stage actors, thus offering an account intended to serve as a working framework for a theatre-informed interpreting pedagogy.

2. Text and Speech

In addition to sharing the same ancient roots as activities that predated the invention of writing (see Pöchhacker 2004: 9, for interpreting, and Westlake 2017: 3-4, for the theatre), interpreting and acting are bound to the same fundamental modes of spoken interaction. Except for lines delivered in unison by a chorus, the utterances produced during the enactment of a dramatic text are limited to the monologues or dialogues of the fictional characters. Similarly, spoken language interpreting is restricted to the rendering of either unidirectional utterances produced by one speaker or bidirectional ones produced by different participants in an encounter, who assume in turn the roles of speaker/addresser and listener/addressee. The typological division of dramatic dialogues into “duologues” conducted by two figures and “polylogues” conducted by three or more (Pfister 1993: 141) appears to be also applicable to the case of interpreter-mediated communication. As Anderson points out, dialogue interpreting does not refer exclusively to the triadic constellation of two monolingual speakers and one bilingual interpreter but is to be understood as an “interaction among *at least* three persons” (Anderson R. W. 2002: 210; emphasis added), which could expand to involve both multiple speakers and multiple interpreters at the same time (see Khoon 2008).

In addition to being associated with oral discourse, interpreting and acting also share a similar dependence on written texts. The same way that a theatrical performance may rely to a different extent, or even not at all, on a pre-written script, an interpreter-mediated encounter may involve the delivery of scripted, either fully or partly, and/or unscripted utterances (Alexieva 1997). Seen through the theatrical lens, the varying degrees of association of interpreting events with a written text allow arguably for their conceptualisation as different instances of “a ‘staged’ discourse” (Kadrić 2014: 455) within the continuum of devised and text-based theatrical performances (Oddey 1994; Radosavljevic 2013). Text-bound conference presentations, for example, could be likened to the conventional staging of a play that is based on a detailed script (mainstream theatre). Interpreter-mediated encounters in community settings, on the other hand, appear to lie closer to performances that rely on a scenario rather than a fully-fledged playtext (improvisational theatre), or seek to blur the lines between planned and spontaneous speech and/or between active performers and passive spectators (street theatre).

Although the fictional nature of the written texts commonly used for theatrical performances clearly distinguishes them from the non-fictional ones that interpreters are usually confronted with, one should keep in mind that it is not unlikely for the two to cross over to the opposite side: non-fictional texts taken from primary sources, such as minutes of proceedings, reports, letters, diaries etc., are frequently used for staging purposes (documentary theatre), the same way that dramatically constructed fictional texts are employed for interpreting training and assessment purposes (role-play scenarios). Furthermore, it is not unlikely for both interpreters and actors to be confronted with a blend of fictional and non-fictional elements in a single text. For interpreters this may happen, for example, in political speeches containing direct quotes or paraphrases, with or without a reference to the original sources, from plays (Atkins

and Finlayson 2016), operas (Green 2004) or Hollywood movies (Branston 2006). Actors are usually confronted with such blended texts in the satirical sketches of variety shows or the re-enactment of historical events in films and documentaries.

The fact that the written texts involved in interpreting and acting are meant to be presented orally allows also for the identification of similarities between the styles used for their delivery. The recitation of written material that interpreters are regularly faced with, especially in (press) conference settings, for example, seems to bear close resemblance to a dramatic reading as experienced in readers theatre performances. The more memory-dependent presentations of scripted information in business or community settings, on the other hand, appear to lie closer to the actors' enactment of playtexts as presented in mainstream theatre performances.

Written texts appear to also have a similar effect on the actors' and interpreters' own delivery. As Shlesinger points out, for example, simultaneous interpreters have "a consistent tendency" to diminish in their renderings "the orality of markedly oral texts and the literateness of markedly literate ones" by eliminating any speech disfluencies from the former (e.g. false starts, repetitions, self-corrections etc.) and by using more cohesive devices in the latter (1989: 170). Similarly, actors seek to increase the 'literateness' of their lines by using pauses and intonation when confronted, for example, with the limited, or even lack of, punctuation signs in monological speeches of classical plays (see Stanislavski 1948/1980: 129-140). At the same time, they are also known for disregarding a playwright's literal language when on stage in favour of a more comfortable, oral presentation style (see Lewis 1958: 31-89; Stanislavski 1948/1980: 110).

3. Action and Reaction

The fact that interpreting and acting events may be linked to pre-written texts does not mean, however, that both actors and interpreters will be equally prepared for their presentation. Unlike actors, interpreters do not always know what type of 'performance' they will be participating in on any given occasion. This involves not only cases where speakers present written material they did not share with the interpreters, or when they deviate from their notes adding new information, but also when they choose to depart altogether from the speeches they have provided interpreters with and deliver an oral text instead, even on formal occasions. The address of the Dalai Lama to the European Parliament in 2008 as part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue may serve as an example of the latter case. As Graves relates (2013), having gotten the speech to be delivered beforehand, the staff interpreters made sure to carefully prepare for the occasion as no one wanted "to be caught inventing new spiritual sayings for the Dalai Lama". To their surprise, however, the speaker began his address saying that he did not wish to repeat the "points [he] already mentioned in [his] written statement" and carried on delivering a 20-minute-long unscripted speech (Dalai Lama 2010).

This notion of unpredictability, which is considered as part and parcel of interpreting leading to the frequent description of one of its main attributes as "crisis management" (Renfer 1992: 174; Gile 2009: 191), is further accentuated by performance 'crises' of a smaller scale that interpreters arguably share with actors. Scattered references to such cases include overcoming one's stage fright (Bale 2016; Setton and Dawrant 2016) or microphone fright (Alex-

ieva 1997), as well as fumbling or fluffing one's renditions when confronted with a speaker's use of "unpredictable vocabulary or unpredictable associations of the well-known vocabulary" (Makarová 1994: 207). Likening the need for interpreters to maintain control of their presentation and be able to think on their feet to that of actors who need to quickly recover when forgetting their lines (Cho and Roger 2010; Graves 2013), interpreter trainers have sought to explore how improvisation exercises borrowed from theatre pedagogy could be used to hone their trainees' reflexes. Although closely linked to role-playing activities, which will be discussed at a later stage, what sets these exercises apart is that they are a) performed without any preparation of or coordination between the participants and/or b) that they are framed within specific "content" and/or "functional constraints", that is, they include a set of limitations with regard to what the characters portrayed can(not) do and/or say during their fictional interaction (Magerko et al. 2009: 117, 120; Medler and Magerko 2010: 484). The main types of theatre-based improvisation exercises that interpreter trainers have described in their accounts can be grouped into the following categories:

3.1. Verbal, Text Based Exercises

Makarová (1994: 208) offers a rich description of text-based improvisation exercises aimed at training students to "continue interpreting without interruption" while relying on partial pieces of information. Starting with simple word games (e.g. completing sentences with missing words or expressions), students gradually move on to interpreting *prima vista* speeches delivered at varying speeds, either live or through recordings, which include pronunciation (e.g. accents), articulation (e.g. lisps, stammers), grammatical (e.g. incorrect use of noun gender, singulars/plurals) or syntactic challenges (e.g. verb-object relation) as well as different types of delivery distracting sounds (e.g. throat-clearing, coughing) and speech disfluencies (e.g. hesitations, verbal shorthand, digressions etc.). Setting aside the interpreting component of the exercises, one can arguably recognise in Makarová's work an attempt to develop a "verbal agility" in her trainees, a notion known to theatre professionals as the ability to "verbalise on the run" bridging "the schism between expression and thought" (Spolin 1963: 178, 184). A similar attempt at facilitating such verbal readiness can also be diagnosed in the second type of improvisation exercises used by interpreter trainers.

3.2. Verbal, Non-Text Based Exercises

Kadrić (2011, 2014) and Cho and Roger (2010: 155) outline how non-text based theatrical games could be employed to improve trainee interpreters' "generic skills in areas such as memory, concentration, problem solving, confidence and message delivery". Although the exercises described in their works (e.g. group narration of a story with each member being allowed to use either only one word at a time or a particular opening line every time) do not include an interpreting component, they all have the potential to be carried out in a language other than the participants', A language which could give them the added benefit of "extra practice on intonation, phonology [,] pronunciation of problematic phonemes" (Bendazzoli 2009: 163).

3.3. Nonverbal Exercises

Bendazzoli (2009), Cho and Roger (2010), and Kadrić (2011, 2014) provide a description of a variety of nonverbal improvisation activities used to hone not only trainee interpreters' generic skills mentioned above, but also their bodily communication (e.g. by mirroring facial expressions), creativity (e.g. by using objects in unconventional ways to perform everyday actions), stress management (e.g. through relaxation and breathing exercises), and public speaking skills (e.g. through articulation and movement exercises).

In addition to aiming at harnessing their presentation skills and sharpening their instinctive verbal reactions to unexpected situations, improvisation exercises provide trainee interpreters, just as they do to actors, with an opportunity to develop their “bodily-kinesthetic [...] intelligence” (Robinson 1997: 56). By familiarising themselves with the ways in which “posture, gesture, facial expression, voice inflection, the sequence, rhythm, and cadence of the words themselves and any other nonverbal manifestation of which the [human] organism is capable” can affect the encoding and decoding of messages exchanged between participants in communicative events (Watzlawick et al. 1967: 62), interpreters and actors are able to become intimately aware of the fact that their presentations are equally grounded both in linguistic codes, which represent a “strictly standardised system of rules that guarantees a relatively high level of explicitness in the decoding process”, as well as in extralinguistic “indices and icons [that] are much more ambiguous” (Pfister 1993: 9).

4. Communication and Interaction

The role of extralinguistic or nonverbal communication in interpreting has been explored in a variety of studies that have sought to determine how its constituting elements, such as gaze and eye contact (Mason 2012; Vargas-Urpi 2013; Krystallidou 2014) or body posture and gestures (Viaggio 1997; Galvão 2009), can affect interpreter-mediated encounters in different communication settings. However, unlike the unquestionable value that theatre professionals place on body language and the wide consensus among them that “behavior trumps words in impact” (Koppett 2001: 79), interpreters appear to be divided about the importance of nonverbal communication in particular cases. Whereas, for example, both empirical (Bühler 1985; Rennert 2008) and non-empirical studies (Poyatos 1997; Viaggio 1997; Weale 1997) have underlined the need for having direct visual access to both audience and speakers when interpreting in simultaneous mode, a suggestion that has even been adopted as a guideline by professional interpreting associations (AIIC 2011), it has also been pointed out that interpreters do not appear to rely on the information provided by the speakers' body language and facial expressions for their renderings (Anderson L. 1994; Tommola and Lindholm 1995; Bacigalupe 1999; Sineiro de Saa 2003). Nevertheless, setting aside the case of interpreter-mediated monologic talk, for which conclusive evidence with regard to the role of metacommunication has yet to be produced (Pöchhacker 2004: 128), interpreters are clearly in agreement that nonverbal behaviour plays a cardinal role in bilateral or multilateral interpreter-mediated encounters (Wadensjö 1998).

The “flow of talk” (Goffman 1981:13) between the alternating roles of a speaking *I* and a listening *you* in any duologic or polylogic exchange depends on the cyclical transmission of

information units through both verbal and nonverbal (back-)channels and codes, which may either complement or contradict each other (see Poyatos 1997 for interpreting, and Pfister 1993 for the theatre). In order to decode the information transmitted during each turn of a discussion, interpreters are consequently required to consciously engage not simply in a linguistic, but rather in a “*multimodal* monitoring” of the primary participants’ output (Davitti and Pasquandrea 2017: 107; emphasis in the original). At the same time, however, they also need to monitor their own verbal and nonverbal activity as they too participate in the discussion both as speakers and listeners (Weale 1997). Monitoring one’s own communicative behaviour as well as that of another is a requirement shared also by actors, who have to stay receptive to each other’s verbal and embodied actions as well as in control of their own; not only during performances that rest more heavily on improvisation, but also in those that have sought through the rehearsal process to define in detail how all stage interactions will unfold. In other words, the “feedback loop” that determines the relationship between the actors and their audience through their reciprocal exchange of stimuli (Fischer-Lichte 2004/2008: 39) is also at work between the actors themselves when on stage, who rely on each other as “immediately accessible human being[s] immersed in the same fictional world [to provide] a source of affective stimuli [...] for empathetic reasons” (Hill and Blair 2010: 9).

Paying attention to the verbal and nonverbal production of all parties-at-talk is important for interpreters for an additional reason that arguably sets them apart from actors. According to Wadensjö (1993: 108), the normative view of an interpreter-mediated conversation implies that the interpreter “takes/is given every second turn at talk”; something akin to the orderly fashion in which actors manage their exchanges on stage. As she points out, however, empirical data demonstrate that it is the interpreters who coordinate the conversation by rendering (or not) the utterances produced by the speakers and/or by taking interaction-oriented initiatives towards them, such as requesting clarifications, providing explanations, inviting them to start, stop or continue talking. By assuming, either implicitly or explicitly, the responsibility of managing the turn-taking order among the interlocutors, interpreters function both as performers in and directors of the communicative event. Although it is not uncommon for actors to also direct and act in a theatrical or film production, the two roles not only do not overlap, but they are not allowed to. As the Russian actor and director Yevgeny Vakhtangov pointed out to his student-actors, “God forbid that your actor’s eye, which helps you to ‘associate’ with your colleagues on the stage, should turn, even for a minute, into a director’s eye, which watches your partner and encourages or criticises him” (Gorchakov 1959: 64). Unlike actors, however, interpreters cannot afford to stay within the limits of their own character/role and not to assume directorial duties. In the absence of any guidance or script detailing the content and development of the interaction, they are responsible for securing that all parties at talk stay ‘associated’ with each other and ensuring that there is no loss in the exchange of information.

5. Audience and Feedback

The audio-visual spotlight in which interpreters and actors are placed, even when they are not engaged in speaking, highlights not only the fact that they are both meant to be “seen and heard”, but also that the notion of audience constitutes “an integral part” of their work (Cho and Roger 2010: 154). However, although the conventional understanding of an audience

implies having visual access to the creators of a presentation, neither actors nor interpreters always share the same location with the recipients of their work or communicate with them through sight. In addition to performing live in front of spectators assembled in an auditorium or a recording studio, for example, actors may at the same time, or even exclusively, reach their audience remotely (TV drama, live streaming of performances, cyberperformances) and only in sound (radio plays). Similarly, interpreters may find themselves working either face-to-face (community interpreting) or isolated from the participants in an encounter (conference interpreting) as well as neither sharing the same location (video remote interpreting) nor having visual contact with some or all of them (telephone interpreting). Considering this, one could argue that although both interpreters and actors present their work “in real time for immediate use by an audience” (Pöchhacker 2004: 19), it is not viewers but rather listeners (attendees of conference or theatrical performance; booth mates or supporting actors) and/or speakers-turned-listeners (primary participants in interpreter-mediated or stage exchanges) whom they consistently address and by whom they are being observed. Despite this, and rather surprisingly given the continuing emphasis placed on its importance (Viaggio 1992; Lambeau 2006; Gudgeon 2011; Ahrens 2018), the development of interpreting trainees’ vocal techniques (e.g. breath control, vocal projection, articulation/diction etc.) appears to be a far less common feature of their curricula compared to actor training programmes, which almost invariably include voice or speech classes.

Regardless which side of the ‘footlights’ it may originate from and whether visual or auditory, the constant observation of actors and interpreters is inevitably coupled with a continuous and, perhaps more importantly, immediate feedback on their performance. The feedback received may be verbal and/or nonverbal in nature and range from homogeneous group reactions (e.g. laughing, clapping) to personalised responses coming from individual members of the audience (e.g. questions, comments). Interestingly, although in the case of acting the latter practice is usually frowned upon and regarded as intrusive (heckling), for interpreters it is something rather expected; not only in dialogue interpreting settings, where interpreters enjoy a symmetrical two-way communication with the primary participants, but also in monologic interpreting scenarios. As Graves (2013) points out, for example, with regard to simultaneous interpreting in conference settings,

[i]f an interpreter makes a mistake, in 99% of cases it’s immediately obvious and somebody will immediately pick up on it. So, either someone you are sitting with in the booth will write down what it should have been and you can correct it, or somebody in the room will either say very directly “The interpreter just made a mistake” - and they will do that - or they will say to the speaker “I am sorry. Did you just say that 98% of...?”, and the speaker will say “No, I didn’t. I said 89”.

Graves’s account underscores two interesting points. The first one is the backstage activity taking place during interpreter-mediated events. Just as in a theatrical production, interpreters rely on the invaluable assistance not only of light, sound and/or IT technicians, but also of their own peers (boothmates in simultaneous interpreting or team interpreting members in consecutive interpreting), who may act as theatre prompters writing down “numbers, acronyms, and names”, or as stagehands looking up “an unexpected term” that keeps coming up (AIICUSA 2012), assisting them with locating documents (VEGANetwork 2005) or even having some coffee or tea brought to them (Rioja 2010). The second point is that the instantaneous feedback

interpreters receive on their work can reach them even behind the deceptive “security of an interpreting booth” separating them from their audience (Bale 2016: 8), often causing them to apologise for their renderings (see Diriker 2004: 86-90). Contrary to the conventional understanding of an actor’s audience as having “neither the right nor the obligation to participate directly in the dramatic action occurring on stage” (Goffman 1981: 125), an idea challenged by Augusto Boal to whose work we shall return shortly, the receivers of an interpreter’s presentation will not hesitate to interrupt it whenever necessary in order to confirm the accuracy of the information transmitted. This is not to say, of course, that actors do not experience similar interruptions. On the contrary, receiving on-the-spot feedback lies at the heart of every rehearsal process, whether for a particular performance or during training, with the actors’ work stopping at any point that needs to be corrected or clarified before the next piece of information is conveyed. Yet whereas actors receive such instant corrective feedback when rehearsing, but not when performing, it is arguably the opposite that holds true for interpreters. As Setton and Dawrant point out, the suggestion that “more ‘intrusive’ forms of feedback are both feasible and beneficial” during training has only recently challenged the widely shared conviction that interpreter trainers should “never interrupt a student’s performance” (2016: 37).

6. Fiction and Reality

The differences between the interpreters’ training and work experiences brings to the fore one of the most challenging aspects of their preparation, that is the replication of ‘real-world’ conditions in the classroom. Borrowed from the theatrical realm, one of the main tools used to bridge this divide are role-plays, which have been employed since the 1970s to simulate interpreter-mediated interactions for teaching and awareness-raising (Cirillo and Radicioni 2017) as well as for assessment purposes, especially in dialogue interpreting settings (Corsellis 2005; Wadensjö 2014).

To recreate professional interpreting practice conditions, trainers have relied not only on different types of acting material, such as accounts of the trainees’ own interpreting experiences (Kadrić 2014, 2017), transcripts of authentic interpreter-mediated events, and carefully scripted scenarios (Hale and Gonzalez 2017), but also on different types of participants to enact the roles of the interlocutors in the devised encounters, such as volunteering non-interpreting students as well as professional interpreters and actors (Bansal et al. 2014).

Rather more recently, researchers have also sought to explore the educational affordances of taking role-plays outside the conventional classroom and into the photorealistic 3D renditions of interpreting settings (e.g. court room, doctor’s office, meeting room etc.) in web-/avatar-based Virtual Learning Environments where trainees can work individually with pre-recorded bilingual dialogues as well as interact in real time for common practice not only with each other, but also with potential clients of interpreting services (Brown et al. 2013).

Despite role-plays being considered as “the key method for developing interpreting and discourse management skills” (Pöchhacker 2004: 187), their effectiveness in recreating life-like interpreter-mediated events in community settings has been treated with scepticism. According to Stokoe (2011) and Niemants (2013), role-plays, especially scripted ones, fail to elicit authentic linguistic and communicative reactions from the participants because they a)

present in a degraded way how the interlocutors' utterances are likely to be formulated in real situational contexts and b) distort the actual risks at stake in real-life encounters (e.g. a client's health is replaced by a student's exam mark). To counteract these drawbacks, interpreter trainers have sought to utilise role-plays as tools for exploring rather than for performing a scene; a notion reminiscent of the improvisation-based acting *études*, i.e. staging variations of different scenes or themes of a play, which were employed at the Moscow Art Theatre (see Gorchakov 1959: 10-20, 110-138).

To engender real reactions from their trainees, Niemants and Stokoe (2017) tackle interpreting role-plays using the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM), developed by Stokoe (2011), which begins with the presentation to students of real audio-and/or video-recordings of interpreter-mediated interactions displayed synchronously with their transcripts and paused at specific points. At every stopping point, students are asked to project themselves into the role of the interpreter and suggest possible renderings of the primary participants' utterances before the way the discussion actually unfolded is revealed and analysed.

Krystallidou's method (2014) follows a similar pattern with the addition of an extra stage, as students are asked to act out transcripts of authentic interpreter-mediated encounters prior to watching the video-recordings and juxtaposing them with their own presentations.

Finally, Kadrić's approach (2014, 2017) rests more directly on theatrical premises as it seeks to capitalise on Augusto Boal's *Forum Theatre*, a technique developed in the 1970s as one of the forms the Brazilian director brought forward under the umbrella term *Theatre of the Oppressed*. At the heart of *Forum Theatre* are the spectators of a usually short, either improvised or rehearsed, performance dealing with a social or political issue. After the presentation by the actors, the spectators are invited to actively engage with its development by voicing their evaluation of the events portrayed and then coming on the stage to participate in different renderings until the matter or situation reaches a satisfactory conclusion. Building on the idea of utilising theatre as "rehearsal for action in real life, rather than an end in itself" (Boal 2006:6), Kadrić's role-plays begin with students recreating scenes from personally experienced interpreting situations. Following that, both participating and observing students are asked to identify how different elements of 'oppression' entailed in the presented scene(s), such as "complex, technical texts, dialects, comments, interruptions [...], or statements by one of the parties, which would not have been made in a direct, non-mediated encounter", could affect an interpreter's performance (2017: 283). Having proposed solutions on how best to overcome these challenges, the students then re-enact the same scene(s), thus exploring "a palette of possible alternatives of their own invention" to the same scenario (Boal 2006: 6).

By facilitating the students' engagement with questions pertaining, among other things, to behavioural and rendering strategies and solutions available at different points during the course of an interpreter-mediated encounter, as well as to the role and "parameters of professional ethics [in] the praxis of interpreters" in cross-linguistic/cultural communicative events (Bahadır 2011: 189), these approaches to role-playing appear to be primarily geared not towards perfecting the trainees' language skills but rather towards developing their meta-cognitive skills, which have long been established as key in the fostering of adaptive expertise (Moser-Mercer 2008). Being structured around observation and analysis, the proposed uses of role-plays for interpreters arguably function as the equivalent to the actors' table-reads, which

similarly aim at enabling performers (as well as other production members) to acquire a deeper understanding of the events and characters that will be portrayed by collectively enquiring into different aspects of the script or screenplay (e.g. action timeline, motives and objectives, historical/cultural references, physical/technical challenges etc.) with the director, “almost like a teacher, relentlessly probing with questions [their] responses to the text” (Leach 2008: 136).

7. In Lieu of Conclusions: Prospects and Challenges

This article set out to outline the main areas in which the working (nonverbal communication, handling of presence/absence of text, reception of audience/peer feedback, etc.) and training pathways (improvisation exercises, role-playing activities, etc.) of interpreters and actors intersect, highlighting the ways in which elements from theatre have been used to inform the training of interpreters.

The points raised are, of course, anything but exhaustive. Not only could those mentioned be expanded upon and explored in more detail (e.g. settings and duration of interpreter-mediated encounters vs actors’ performances; conflicts involved in simultaneously directing and participating in theatrical performances vs interpreting events, etc.), but more points could be included. Among those are, for example, the similarities and differences between the criteria used for an actor’s and interpreter’s admission to a training programme (audition versus aptitude test); the background work carried out by actors on the dramatic characters (script analysis) and by interpreters on their clients (working with interpreting brief); the effect on actors’ and interpreters’ presentations of what is known in theatrical parlance as ‘Dr Theatre’, i.e. overcoming debility to maintain quality in performance, among others.

What was hopefully illustrated, however, is that a more systematic investigation of the common grounds that interpreters and actors share is warranted not only for reasons of mere conceptual juxtaposition. As reflected in the works of those drawing on these analogies in training interpreters, tapping into the work of actors is also, if not to say primarily, of practical interest as it is directly linked to the development of skills and competencies that are essential in professional practice, especially in community interpreting settings. Leveraging the educational benefits of a theatre-informed interpreter training, however, is arguably subject to three key interrelated parameters that need to be taken into account. Although their analysis falls beyond the scope of the work at hand, they are offered here as suggestions for future exploration.

The first concerns the synergies between interpreters and actors, which, so far, have only sporadically come into being, primarily for research purposes (Cho and Roger 2010) or as part of extracurricular activities (Bendazzoli 2009), and, perhaps more crucially, have been exclusively addressed to interpreting trainees. By increasing their frequency and extending their scope, interactions with acting professionals could offer more opportunities to interpreting trainees for extensive practice as well as to their trainers for developing a deeper understanding of the ways in which the apparatus of acting could be used to refine existing and design new training methods and tools.

The second parameter is related to the identification and subsequent ‘acculturation’ of actor training approaches and/or practices that could suit the needs of interpreter training. By the same token that, for example, *Forum Theatre* was selected among the branches of Boal’s *The-*

atre of the Oppressed to sensitise trainees to the social and ethical issues at play when working as interpreters, elements from other actor training techniques could also be cherry-picked and used as (part of) instructional scaffolding to refine their vocal (e.g. Cathrine Sadolin's *Complete Vocal Technique*) and improvisation skills (e.g. Viola Spolin's *Theatre Games*) or prepare them for the physical (e.g. *Alexander Technique*), psychological/emotional (e.g. Konstantin Stanislavsky's *System*) as well as environmental (e.g. Jerzy Grotowski's *Poor Theatre*) challenges embedded in interpreting assignments.

Finally, the last parameter that needs to be considered concerns the integration of acting-based activities into the interpreters' training curriculum. As was pointed out, role-plays and improvisation exercises are already being used as part and/or independently of interpreting courses/modules. Despite this, there is hardly any information regarding the decisions and selections made for their inclusion at specific study level(s), their progression in terms of duration and difficulty, their place in the sequence of other lesson activities or the criteria used for the summative and/or formative assessment of the trainees' work or the feedback provided on it. This lacuna calls for a more detailed discussion on the pedagogically and situationally optimal ways in which acting-based training tools are to be employed for interpreter training purposes, especially in prospect of their more systematic use.

Notwithstanding the challenges involved in addressing the above considerations, there is little doubt that seeking to further reflect on and engage with the ways in which, paraphrasing Schleiermacher, 'the interpreter could be brought closer to the actor' and 'the actor closer to the interpreter' offers a unique opportunity to see interpreting theory, practice, and training/pedagogy in a new (spot)light.

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