

Changing Paradigms and Approaches in Interpreter Training

Perspectives from Central Europe

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Chapter 9

From Conference to Community Interpreter
Education: The Transformation of Interpreter
Education in Slovenia

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9 From Conference to Community Interpreter Education

The Transformation of Interpreter Education in Slovenia

Nike K. Pokorn and Tamara Mikolič Južnič

The aim of the chapter is to determine whether the current education of interpreters in the Republic of Slovenia responds to the needs of the society. In order to do that, the chapter first briefly outlines the development of the education of Slovene interpreters from its beginnings to the present. By drawing on the results of a nationwide survey of language-support needs in Slovene healthcare institutions from 2016, which gathered responses of 564 healthcare workers, and on statistics of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia providing the countries of origin of applicants for international protection in Slovenia in the period between 2013 and 2019, the language needs on the contemporary Slovene society are outlined. These needs are then compared to the results provided by a nationwide survey of interpreters and sworn interpreters from 2020 ($n = 123$), focusing on language combinations they offer and identifying different settings in which they work. The results of this comparison show that there is a serious mismatch between the needs of the society and the existing language profiles of professional interpreters in the market, which results in the fact that *ad hoc* interpreters are used for almost all the languages of newly arrived migrants with negative consequences for society at large. The chapter concludes with the description of educational efforts aimed at remedying the situation: first, a short specialisation program for sworn interpreters introduced in 2018, and second, the education of teachers of community interpreters for Albanian, Arabic, and Persian which took place from 2019 to 2020.

Introduction

The chapter¹ aims to determine whether the current education of interpreters with Slovene as language A in the republic of Slovenia responds to the needs of the contemporary society. After the definition of the main terms used in the chapter, we outline the development of the education

of interpreters with Slovene as language A and pay special emphasis on education carried out in the Republic of Slovenia. In the next section, the changing needs of the Slovene society, which gradually became a country of increased immigration of speakers of languages that were not traditionally present in the Slovene society, are described by reporting on a nationwide survey in Slovene healthcare institutions from 2016 which focused on the language-support needs caused by the presence of different groups of newly arrived migrants. These results are supplemented with the statistics on the countries of origin of applicants for international protection in Slovenia in the period between 2013 and 2019. The next section focuses on the profile of contemporary professional interpreters working in the Slovene market. The profile is determined through a nationwide survey of conference interpreters and sworn interpreters from 2020, focusing on the language combinations they have and identifying different settings in which they work. In the last two sections, the contemporary efforts to meet the interpreting demands of the society in the educational field are outlined and conclusions are made.

Definitions of Main Terms and Concepts

Throughout the chapter we will use the term interpreter “education” more often than interpreter “training” that is traditionally found in Translation Studies literature (see, for example, Chiel 2018; Delgado Luchner 2019; González Davies & Enríquez Raído 2016; Someya 2017). Although the terms “education” and “training” are sometimes used as twin concepts, Educational Studies tends to differentiate between them: for example, according to Buckle and Caple (2009: 9), “education” refers to a process or activities whose aim is to enable students to develop knowledge, skills, values, and understanding, which help them define, analyse, or solve a broad range of problems, while the term “training” refers to an educational effort enabling students to modify or develop skills, attitudes, or knowledge through learning experience with an aim to achieve effective performance in a particular activity. According to Peters (1966: 30–33), education transforms the students’ outlook, while training is more limited and lacks the wider cognitive implications arising from education. If education then transforms the mind, training is directed towards acquiring more practical skills for particular ends (Holt 1983). Since numerous tasks in interpreter education aim at enabling students to acquire particular skills which are needed to perform interpreting tasks, we sometimes use the term “training”. This does not mean, however, that we believe that interpreter training is narrowly vocational and that it consists of the transfer of skills only. In fact, as do many other researchers (e.g. Chitty 1990; Harbison 1973: 52; Moursund 2005: 89), we believe that although education and training are different, they are not mutually exclusive, since training is in fact just the practical application of education. Indeed,

several activities and experiences in interpreter training programmes are in fact a mixture of both education and training: for example, numerous practical interpreting tasks involve ethical dilemmas, which means that students, on one hand, acquire practical interpreting skills, and, on the other hand, by focusing on the ethical dimensions of the task, also transform their own general attitude and outlook.

Similarly, we also use the terms “teacher” and “trainer” interchangeably in the chapter. Following the definition of the terms in *Terminology of European Education and Training Policy* (2014), the terms “teacher” and “trainer” in this chapter refer to “a person whose function is to impart knowledge, know-how or skills to learners in an education or training institution” (2014: 114). For the purposes of this chapter, the term teacher education or teacher training will be used to refer to a program of education and training designed to equip (prospective) teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviour, and skills they need in order to effectively teach or train (Aydin & Kecik 2018: 357).

Finally, the term “community interpreters” (also called public service interpreters, interpreters in institutional discourse, dialogue interpreters, or liaison interpreters) refers to those individuals who help establish communication that enables people who do not speak the societal language, or who do not speak it well, to access services provided by public institutions (cf. ISO 13611:2014).² Contrary to conference interpreters, who by definition work at multilingual meetings (AIIC 2004), community interpreters tend to work in educational and healthcare institutions, at human and social services, or in public administration or police settings.

The Origins and the Development of the Education of Slovene Interpreters

Interpreter education with Slovene as language A does not have a long tradition in Slovenia. Although Slovenes were among the most prominent “Governmental Translators” (*Gubernialtranslatoren*) already at the end of the 18th century in the Habsburg Empire, collaborated actively in various terminological commissions (Wolf 2015: 82–86), and were also practicing interpreting as a profession (for example, there were 113 sworn interpreters with Slovene-German combination working in Vienna between 1864 and 1918 [Wolf 2015: 74]), there was no interpreter training provided for the combinations with the Slovene language at the training institutions of the time, such as, for example, the Oriental Academy in Vienna (Wolf 2015: 104–109). After World War I, when the lands traditionally inhabited by the Slovenes became part of new political structures, i.e. of the short-lived State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs (1918), the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (1918–1929), the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929–1941) and then the Socialist Federal

Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1991), no interpreter training for Slovene existed in these states, despite the fact that Slovene was one of the three official languages of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Interpreters could be educated using Slovene in their language combinations, however, in Austria and Italy. In Austria, at the University of Graz, Slovene was one of the 16 languages provided at the very opening of the institute in 1946; however, due to low student numbers, it was not offered for 15 years, from 1958 until 1973 (Leikauf 1997: 18–19). When Professor Erich Prunč, a Carinthian Slovene, was nominated the head of the Graz Institute in 1988, Slovene became one of the languages continuously offered in the Graz interpreter training programme. At the University of Trieste, which started training interpreters in 1954, the possibility to study Slovene as one of the languages was added in the academic year 1972–1973 (Scarpa 2009: 6, 22), and it gained the status of language A in 1998–1999, when also a specialist course for conference interpreting was introduced (*ibid.*: 37). In 2001, following the European reform of higher education, interpreting became an MA study, however, training in Slovene is rarely carried out due to a low student intake. All Slovene professional interpreters until the 21st century were thus either trained abroad or were self-taught. Despite this lack of education in Slovenia, Slovene interpreters worked professionally in the market and in 1973 founded the Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters with an aim to promote the profession of conference interpreting as well as the use of Slovene as a language of communication at international conferences.

After 1991, when the Republic of Slovenia became an independent state, and after signing an agreement of associate membership with the European Union in 1996, the need for translators and interpreters from and into Slovene significantly increased. While translators had already been trained in Slovenia (for example, from 1987 to 1997 the Department of English at the University of Ljubljana, the oldest and largest university in the state, offered third- and fourth-year students of English the possibility of choosing a translation track), interpreters were not. In addition to that, the needs for trained translators in the market were greater than the university output. In 1994, therefore, Ljubljana University signed an EU-funded TEMPUS agreement with 10 translator and interpreter training institutions from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Germany, and Austria with the aim of developing a curriculum for translator and interpreter education at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana. After three years, in 1997, the first 80 students enrolled in the course at the newly founded Department of Translation Studies in Ljubljana. Students were able to choose Slovene as language A, English as language B, and German, French, and Italian as C languages. The study lasted four years, and the students were given the possibility of choosing an interpreting module in years 3 and 4 of their

study. Initially, the education focused exclusively on educating conference interpreters. Responding to the need for further specialisation, in 2002 the Ljubljana department introduced a new one-year post-graduate course in conference interpreting and became a member of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting network (EMCI) in 2005. In the same year, the department accredited a new two-year MA programme in conference interpreting, which became operational in the academic year 2007–2008, when it replaced the former one-year post-graduate course. Both programmes have been continuously supported with funding and staff by the European institutions (Maček & Schlamberger Brezar 2019). At the University of Ljubljana, interpreter training has been provided for Slovene and English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. However, not all language combinations are offered every year – the only two languages that have continuously been present in the programme are Slovene and English.

The only other institution providing education for interpreters is the University of Maribor, the second largest university in Slovenia. In the academic year 2001–2002 the university introduced the programme Translation and Interpreting (Nuč 2013), which provided training for combinations with English and German. In 2008 a new Department of Translation Studies was founded, and from the academic year 2011–2012 onwards it has been offering, besides a BA programme in interlingual studies, also a two-year MA programme in translation and interpreting. In this programme, students can choose between three tracks: translation, interpreting or translation and interpreting. The possible language combinations are Slovene-English, Slovene-German, or Slovene-Hungarian (Zupan 2018).

Initially, both programmes were focused on training conference interpreters, mainly in response to the increased need for Slovene interpreters in European institutions.

The Gap Between the Training and the Current Needs in the Local Market and Society

After joining the EU in 2004, Slovenia gradually changed into a country of increased immigration of speakers of languages that were not traditionally present in the Slovene society (Gorjanc & Pokorn 2013). These changing needs of the society triggered some further amendments of interpreter education: for example, a course of dialogue interpreting was added to the Ljubljana MA conference interpreter training programme in 2012. However, the languages offered to interpreter students at both higher education institutions (HEIs) remained the aforementioned languages spoken in the European Union. In order to see whether the languages offered in interpreter education in the Republic of Slovenia

correspond to the needs of the society, we have designed several questionnaires and analysed the available statistics on the languages present in contemporary Slovenia and compared the obtained results to the language profiles of interpreters active in the Slovene market.

In this section we first present data on the language needs in various segments of Slovene society – in healthcare and in refugee and migration-related settings. This is followed by the results of a questionnaire focusing on the profile of Slovene interpreters from 2020.

Language Needs in Healthcare

In 2016, the project “Designing a Multilingual Aid for Better Communication of Migrants with Healthcare Personnel”, initiated and co-financed by the Slovene Ministry of the Interior with the help of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union, was launched with the aim to create a multilingual tool for those healthcare workers who were experiencing language problems in their work. One of the first steps of the interdisciplinary team, consisting of Translation Studies, Medical Anthropology and Sociology researchers, physicians, and nurses, was to gauge the extent of language-related problems in the Slovene healthcare system, and to determine which languages Slovene healthcare workers encounter in their working environment. For that purpose, an online questionnaire was designed and distributed in September and October 2016 to the members of the Medical Chamber of Slovenia and of the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia (see Pokorn & Lipovec Čebren 2019 for details). The questionnaire was completed by 564 healthcare providers (63% nurses, 27% doctors, 6% dentists, and 4% other healthcare staff such as physiotherapists, speech therapists, radiology engineers, and similar). Though the number of respondents is small (1.6%) compared to the total number of healthcare providers in the country (over 25,000, according to the official statistics³), the sample of 564 healthcare workers is nevertheless large enough to provide a reliable insight into the language barriers in the Slovene healthcare system, considering that 94% of the respondents reported that they had regular encounters with patients who do not speak or understand Slovene. Since geographically these respondents were spread across the country (Mikolič Južnič 2019: 16–28), we concluded that language-related problems were present in all regions of Slovenia and that no area, no matter how remote from the urban centres, remained monolingual.

The questionnaire focused, among other things, on the languages spoken by the Slovene healthcare providers as well as on those spoken by foreign patients in the Slovene healthcare system. First, the respondents were asked to evaluate the level of their knowledge of the foreign language(s) they spoke on a three-point scale (elementary knowledge, fair knowledge, proficient knowledge of the language) or indicate that they

do not know the language. They were given an open list of five languages (English, German, French, Spanish, and Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and Montenegrin [BCSM]), but were also able to add additional languages that were not on the list.

The results showed that among the Slovene healthcare providers, the two most frequent – and best – known languages were English (77% of them claimed to have a fair or proficient knowledge of the language) and BCSM (70% of them claimed to have a fair or proficient knowledge of one of the languages in this group). The knowledge of other languages was rarer: only 17% and 10% of the respondents indicated that they had fair and proficient knowledge of German and Italian respectively, while only a few respondents indicated that they spoke French, Spanish, or Russian. Finally, some languages (Ukrainian, Latin, Arabic, Japanese, Hungarian, Portuguese, and the sign language) were spoken by only one respondent each.

In view of the fact that more than just elementary or intermediate language knowledge is needed in order to conduct a medical examination, we were also interested in the level of foreign language proficiency of Slovene healthcare providers. The results of the questionnaire showed a considerable gap between the level of knowledge of English among nurses compared to that of doctors: the former declared a considerably lower level of English. For example, while 30% of all nurses self-evaluated their knowledge of English as elementary, only 4% of physicians defined their knowledge of English as basic. Similarly, according to the questionnaire results, nurses also have a poorer knowledge of BCSM and German compared to that of doctors and dentists (Milavec Kapun & Pokorn 2019: 48–65). Shifting perspective, other research has shown that patients with no knowledge of Slovene who enter the Slovene healthcare system, such as applicants for international protection, also have very basic knowledge of English and find it difficult to cope in healthcare settings without additional language support (Pokorn & Čibej 2018a, 2018b).

Second, healthcare providers were also asked about the languages spoken by the patients in the Slovene healthcare system. The respondents were given an open list of 20 languages and were asked to indicate whether they had encountered speakers of these languages in their working environment. They were also given a possibility to add languages that were not on the list. Furthermore, they were also asked to pinpoint those languages that cause most communication problems. As shown in Figure 9.1, non-Slovene-speaking patients in the Slovene healthcare system most frequently speak BCSM, English, and Albanian, followed by German, Italian, and Macedonian. But while healthcare providers might feel rather confident in their knowledge of BCSM and even English, the languages they have the most trouble understanding are by far Albanian, followed by Macedonian and German.

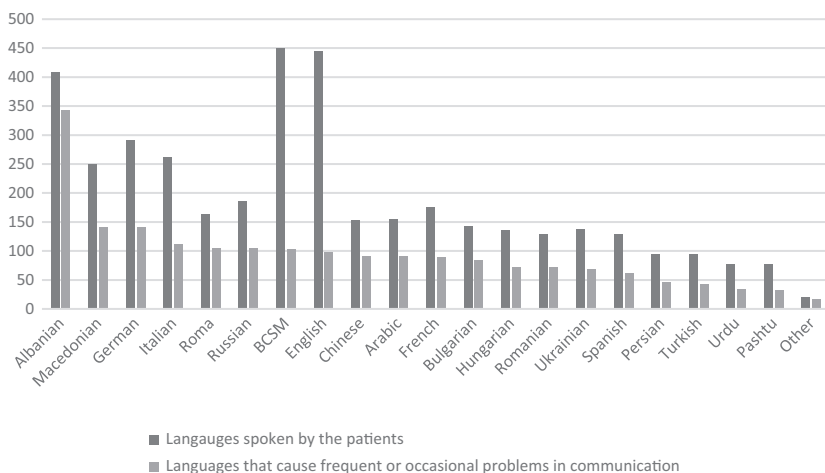


Figure 9.1 Number of respondents who work with patents that speak individual foreign languages and languages that cause frequent and occasional problems in communication

When asked which strategy they employ when they have to treat a patient who does not speak Slovene, Slovene healthcare providers most frequently use a *lingua franca* ($n = 417$), with English overwhelmingly being the most frequently used language (68% of respondents), followed closely by BCSM (60%), though the use of the latter is limited to communication with patients from the former Yugoslav republics. Other languages are used as *lingua francas* much more rarely (German is mentioned by 29% of the respondents, Italian by 20%, French by 15%, Spanish by 11%). But when this strategy is not successful, healthcare providers resort to all sorts of other strategies to ensure communication during the medical examination. The second most frequent communication strategy adopted by Slovene healthcare providers is the use of *ad hoc* interpreters, that is, the relatives or other persons accompanying the patient ($n = 365$). The third was, alarmingly, the use of mimic, gestures, and drawings ($n = 301$). The fourth most frequent strategy was the use of bilingual medical personnel ($n = 256$), the fifth was the use of intercomprehension (each person speaking in their own language, which provisionally works only among closely related languages) ($n = 249$). The sixth strategy was the use of online dictionaries and machine translation tools ($n = 224$), and the penultimate strategy, surpassing only the use of other employees working in a healthcare institution (e.g. cleaning personnel) ($n = 165$), was the use of professional interpreters ($n = 179$). The reason that this language support is so rarely employed is mainly due, as we shall discuss, to the fact that trained interpreters are simply not available for several languages mentioned earlier.

Language Needs in Asylum Procedures and Work Permit Applications

In the previous section, we explored the current language-support needs in the Slovene healthcare system. However, this is not the only section of society that has recently been experiencing communication challenges due to the presence of a variety of languages of spoken by newly arrived migrants. In order to see whether also other segments of the society, for example police, public administration, educational institutions, and social services, experience similar problems, additional information has been obtained from the reports of the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of Slovenia (*Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve* Republike Slovenije [MNZ] 2020). The Ministry started collecting and publishing data on the countries of origin of all individuals who applied for international protection in the Republic of Slovenia in 2013; the latest report covers the year 2019. We have added up the statistics published for each year for the period of seven years from 2013 to 2019 and defined the official languages spoken in the most common countries of origin. During this time, a total of 7,962 persons applied for the international protection in Slovenia and they came from the Middle East, Asia, Africa, the Balkans and other countries around the world. The official languages of the countries of origin, from which more than 100 persons applied for the international protection in Slovenia, are shown in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 Official languages of the states of origin of asylum seekers in Slovenia

<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of persons</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Official languages</i>	<i>Other important languages</i>
Syria	1547	19	Arabic	
Algeria	1257	16	Arabic, Berber	Algerian Arabic (Darja), French
Pakistan	1235	16	English, Urdu	Punjabi
Afghanistan	913	11	Pashto, Dari	
Morocco	548	7	Arabic, Berber	Moroccan Arabic, French
Iran	442	6	Persian	Azeri, Mazandarani, Gilaki
Iraq	343	4	Arabic, Kurdish	
Turkey	198	2	Turkish	
Kosovo	169	2	Albanian, Serbian	Bosnian, Turkish, Gorani, Roma
Bangladesh	147	2	Bengali	English
Tunisia	139	2	Arabic	Tunisian Arabic, French
Eritrea	112	1	/	Tigrinya, Arabic, English, 7 other national languages
Libya	103	1	Arabic	Libyan Arabic, Berber, Italian, English

To define the actual languages spoken by asylum seekers in Slovenia (over 30 languages were identified in Table 9.1), in October 2016 a questionnaire was circulated to the residents of all asylum seeker centres in Slovenia (a more detailed analysis of the responses is available in Pokorn and Čibej 2018a, 2018b), in which, among others, a series of questions were aimed at determining the mother tongue of the applicants for international protection and any foreign languages they might speak. The response rate was 46% ($n = 107$), and the respondents were mainly male (70%) and on average 31 years old (their age ranging from 15 to 60). Several questions in the questionnaire were devoted to identifying the respondents' mother tongue, that is, their dominant language or L1: they were asked which languages they spoke within their family, in the educational system, which languages they read or pray in, in what language they follow the news or watch television, etc. Based on these data, we identified the mother tongues of the respondents, which for the majority of asylum seekers (60%) were Arabic ($n = 31$), Persian ($n = 27$), or Kurdish ($n = 20$). Other but much less frequent mother tongues were Russian ($n = 8$), Tigrinya ($n = 5$), English ($n = 4$), Igbo ($n = 4$), Albanian ($n = 4$), Pashto ($n = 3$), and 18 more with 2 or fewer speakers.

Asylum seekers were also asked to indicate their knowledge of foreign languages: the results show that most of them (88%) have indicated that they speak English, but several (27%) also identified Slovene as a foreign language they understand. Other languages mentioned by more than 10 people were Arabic, French, and German.

Another important aspect regards the respondents' self-assessment of their proficiency in foreign languages. The respondents had to self-assess their foreign language proficiency in four basic language skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) on a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 indicating a basic user and 5 a proficient user. On average, they rated their competence in English 3, with a significant difference for productive knowledge, i.e. in speaking and writing (2.9), and passive knowledge, i.e. in listening and reading (3.1). The interviews that were later conducted with a representative group of applicants for international protection revealed that they largely overrated their level of English-language proficiency (Pokorn & Čibej 2018b).

Further relevant data were obtained from the statistics published by the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MNZ 2019). According to the statistics, on December 31, 2019, there were 167,438 foreigners with a residence permit or a certificate of registration of residence in Slovenia. Table 9.2 presents the first ten non-EU countries, the citizens of which officially resided in Slovenia on December 31, 2019.

The overview of residence permits shows that apart from migrants from former Yugoslav republics (including Kosovo), the most frequent countries of origin of foreign workers in Slovenia are the Russian Federation and Ukraine, China, the United States, and Thailand. The languages of

Table 9.2 Overview of residence permits in Slovenia in 2019

Country	Permanent residence permit	Temporary residence permit	Total
Bosnia and Herzegovina	46,712	42,893	89,605
Kosovo	15,765	10,934	26,699
Serbia	8,043	13,386	21,429
Northern Macedonia	10,039	5,505	15,544
Russian Federation	1,445	2,202	3,647
Ukraine	1,397	1,256	2,653
China	1,014	559	1,573
Montenegro	647	445	1,092
United States of America	218	361	579
Thailand	216	163	379

these countries are therefore BCSM, Albanian, Macedonian, Russian, Ukrainian, Chinese, English, and Thai.

To conclude, the results show that the most common foreign language encountered in Slovene public services such as healthcare is BCSM, which is also supported by the fact that the vast majority of residence permits in Slovenia in 2019 were issued to the individuals coming from the former Yugoslav republics where the so-called Serbo-Croatian functioned as *lingua franca*. The presence of the speakers of these languages, however, does not represent at the moment an important societal and linguistic challenge, since BCSM are still comprehensible to a considerable portion of the Slovene population. For example, 70% of all healthcare workers who responded to our survey claimed to have a fair or proficient knowledge of BCSM. In view of this fact, we can assume that the presence of BCSM in Slovenia is not seen as problematic by Slovene public service workers. On the contrary, the languages that were considered to cause most comprehension problems in the Slovene healthcare system were Albanian, Macedonian, and German. If we add to this the most common languages spoken by applicants for international protection (Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Berber, Dari, Turkish, Albanian, and Bengali) and the languages of those who hold work permits in Slovenia (BCSM, Albanian, Macedonian, Russian, Ukrainian, Chinese), we can conclude that in Slovene public services there is a stringent need for a linguistic support at least in Albanian, Macedonian, Arabic, Russian, Ukrainian, Persian, Chinese, and Kurdish.

The need for the language support in these languages is further strengthened by the fact that the results show that a considerable portion of Slovene public-service providers have only elementary knowledge of English (e.g. 30% of all nurses who responded to our survey), and that newly arrived migrants are also very rarely proficient in the use of this most widely spread *lingua franca* of the contemporary world.

The Present Interpreting Market

As we have seen, the number of languages present in Slovene public services is quite varied and, in the case of healthcare providers, it does not match the foreign languages Slovene public-service providers know and master. In an ideal setting, public-service users and/or providers should be able to use an interpreter when such language barriers occur. However, the question is whether the languages of the interpreters working in the Slovene market correspond to this need.

To answer this question, we checked the working languages of Slovene sworn interpreters⁴ and of the members of the Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters (ZKTS).⁵

Sworn Interpreting

In 2020 there are 481 registered sworn or certified (cf. Hlavac 2013) interpreters in Slovenia, and they work with 37 languages (listed in Table 9.3).⁶ It should be noted, however, that the vast majority of sworn interpreters in Slovenia are interpreters in name only: despite their official name, they mostly translate written official documents, and only some of them interpret in sworn and other official situations. In order to become a sworn interpreter, a candidate needs to pass the certification exam, which consists of a translation task and an oral examination focusing on the knowledge of the Slovene legal system; however, interpreting skills are not tested. The certification then allows sworn interpreters to work in all public-service settings and to be included on the list of sworn interpreters published on the official website of the Ministry of Justice. Since it is not discernible from that list which of the sworn interpreters also works as an interpreter, we designed a special questionnaire in which we inquired about their profile. The results are reported later in this chapter.

If we compare the working languages of sworn interpreters to the languages that are currently most needed in the Slovene public-service institutions, we see that while there are numerous sworn interpreters available for German and English, there are only 13 certified for Albanian, 12 for Macedonian, 8 for Arabic, 14 for Russian, 1 for Ukrainian, 3 for Persian, none for Chinese, and 1 for Kurdish.

Conference Interpreting

The Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters (ZKTS) is the only association of conference interpreters in Slovenia and lists 44 active conference interpreters who work with 14 languages. In order to become a member of ZKTS, the applicant has to hold a degree in conference interpreting, work with at least two foreign languages, provide proof that they

Table 9.3 Working languages of sworn interpreters

<i>Language</i>	<i>No. of sworn interpreters</i>
German	168
English	127
Croatian	64
Serbian	52
Italian	35
French	31
Bosnian	17
Russian	14
Albanian	13
Macedonian	12
Spanish	12
Serbian	10
Hungarian	9
Arabic	8
Bulgarian	8
Polish	7
Chinese	6
Czech	3
Montenegrin	3
Persian	3
Portuguese	3
Romanian	3
Slovak	3
Greek	2
Japanese	2
Dutch	2
Turkish	2
Finnish	1
Flemish	1
Kurdish	1
Latin	1
Punjabi	1
Swedish	1
Ukrainian	1
Urdu	1

have worked at least 120 days as conference interpreters, and hand in recommendations of at least three sponsors. This means that ZKTS members are all well-established conference interpreters. As seen in Table 9.4, the vast majority of the members work with English. Other relatively frequent languages (represented by at least five interpreters or more) are German, Croatian, Italian, French, Serbian, and Bosnian.

Comparing this list to the list of languages most needed by Slovene public services, we see that there are four members of Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters with Russian as languages B or C, only one with

Table 9.4 Languages of the members of Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters

	<i>No. of interpreters</i>		
	<i>Language A*</i>	<i>Language B</i>	<i>Language C</i>
Slovene	42	1	1
English	0	21	14
German	2	9	9
French	1	4	5
Italian	0	5	6
Croatian	1	2	8
Serbian	2	1	5
Russian	0	3	1
Arabic	1	0	0
Spanish	1	0	1
Bosnian	0	2	4
Macedonian	0	0	1
Portuguese	0	0	1
Polish	0	0	1

* ZKTS follows AIIC's definitions and uses the term "language A" to refer to the interpreter's mother tongue or another language mastered at the same level; "language B" refers to a language the interpreter can interpret into; "language C" refers to a language an interpreter can interpret from.

Macedonian as language C, and one with Arabic as language A. There are, however, no members with Albanian, Ukrainian, Persian, Chinese, or Kurdish as their working languages.

A Nationwide Survey of Conference and Sworn Interpreters

Since the data taken from the websites of ZKTS and the Ministry of Justice were insufficient for a clear picture of the profile of the interpreter working in the Slovene interpreting market, we have designed a nationwide survey of conference and sworn interpreters. We adapted the questionnaire that was used for the nationwide survey of conference interpreters in 2016 (Fornazarič 2016) to our needs and sent it in June 2020 to the members of ZKTS ($n = 44$), to the alumni of the Interpreting course of the Department of Translation at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana ($n = 36$), and to all sworn interpreters on the list of Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Slovenia ($n = 481$). The introduction to the questionnaire stressed that only practising interpreters are invited to complete it. Since two respondents nevertheless stated that after graduating in interpreting, they never worked as interpreters, we eliminated their answers. We thus received 123 valid answers, which means that the response rate was 22%.

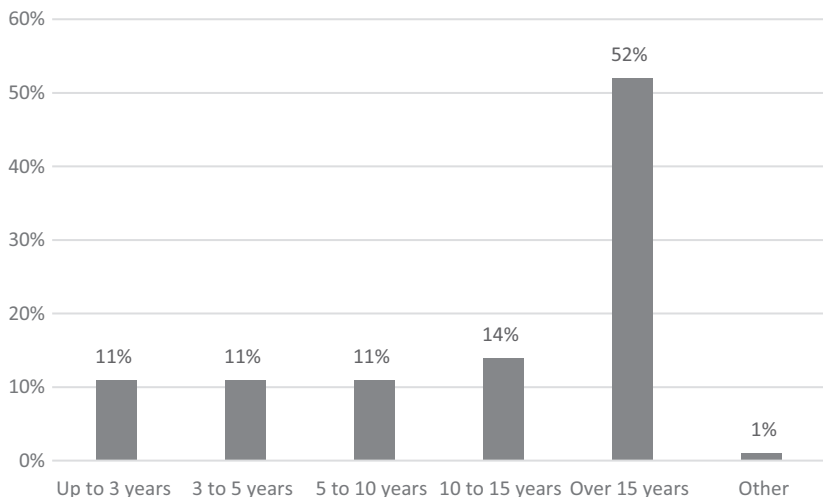


Figure 9.2 Interpreters' experience

Regarding the educational background of the population sample, the results of the survey showed that more than one-third (36%) of the respondents were not graduates in language-related professions but were either lawyers (16% of the total), or architects, engineers, and similar. The second largest group were graduates of philological departments (29%), followed by graduates of interpreting studies (20%), while 7% did not answer the question.

The extensiveness of the respondents' work experience is shown in Figure 9.2. The category "other" comprises those respondents that either are not active (anymore) or have not answered the question.

In an attempt to define the profile of an interpreter working in the contemporary Slovene market, the questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, addressing several aspects of an interpreter's work. In this chapter we report only on the following three questions: the working languages, directionality of interpreting, and the settings in which they work.

The respondents were asked to provide a list of their working languages and list them into three categories (languages A, B, and C). We ordered them according to descending frequency (see Table 9.5).

To sum up, a total of 23 different foreign languages are on the list. Out of 25 EU languages, the respondents listed 15 (Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, and Spanish). In addition, active interpreters on the Slovene market provide their services in four other Balkan languages (Albanian, Bosnian, Macedonian, and Serbian), and in Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic. If we compare that list to the list

Table 9.5 Interpreters' working languages

<i>Language A</i>	<i>Language B</i>	<i>Language C</i>
Slovene	English	English
Croatian	German	Croatian
Serbian	Slovene	Serbian
German	Serbian	German
Italian	Italian	French
English	French	Italian
Albanian	Croatian	Dutch
Arabic	Russian	Spanish
Bosnian	Arabic	Bosnian
Hungarian	Spanish	Polish
Macedonian	Bosnian	Portuguese
Spanish	Macedonian	
Bulgarian	Czech	
French	Chinese	
Greek	Polish	
Japanese		
Romanian		
Russian		
Slovak		

of the languages most needed by Slovene public-service institutions, none of the respondents indicated that they work with Ukrainian, Persian, or Kurdish.

In view of the fact that community interpreting is characterised by interpreters working in both directions, we were also interested in whether the respondents practice interpreting into B. When asked in which direction they interpret most frequently, 61% answered that the quantity of interpreting into the A and B languages is roughly the same, 20% work more often into their A language, 17% more into the B language, while 1% only work into their A language (the remaining 1% did not answer the question). These results show that the vast majority of the interpreters (98%) on the Slovene market, at least occasionally, work in both directions. This result seems to suggest that they also overwhelmingly work in public-service settings.

Another important aspect is the type of interpreting, which is related to the setting in which the interpreting takes place. In general, respondents most frequently perform consecutive interpreting (59% perform it frequently and 14% occasionally), followed by simultaneous interpreting (36% frequently, 16% occasionally). Whispered interpreting in business or community interpreting settings is sometimes or frequently performed by 35%, and dialogue interpreting by 23% of the respondents. The cross-comparison of these results with demographic information indicates that 38% of sworn interpreters who responded to our survey work only in

consecutive mode, 36% occasionally or often do whispered interpreting in dialogue settings, e.g. in police or legal settings, and 14% frequently also interpret simultaneously in conference settings, while the rest tend to engage in conference interpreting only a few times a year. The results also show that conference interpreters very rarely step out of the conference setting: only 15% of all conference interpreters who have responded to the questionnaire indicated that they frequently also practiced dialogue or community interpreting. Finally, the results of the questionnaire show that only 6% of all sworn interpreters have received an interpreter education or training.

The Most Pressing Needs Today

The results of the nationwide survey thus show that practising conference interpreters on the Slovene market rarely work as community interpreters within the public-service setting, and that sworn interpreters are used instead. But even if trained and experienced conference interpreters work as community interpreters, the analysis of the language profiles of the members of the Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters (ZKTS) shows that the association has only one active member with Arabic, four with Russian, and one with Macedonian, while no other language from the list of the most needed ones in Slovene contemporary society is offered by any of its members. In addition to that, the language profiles of the sworn interpreters do not completely correspond to contemporary societal needs: fewer than 15 sworn interpreters are certified for languages that we identified as creating most language barriers in Slovene public services, such as Albanian ($n=13$), Macedonian ($n = 12$), Russian ($n = 14$), Arabic ($n = 8$), Chinese ($n = 6$), Persian ($n = 3$), Ukrainian ($n = 1$), and Kurdish ($n = 1$). Sworn interpreters, as said earlier, are not tested for their interpreting skills during the certification examination; it is therefore not surprising that the results of the questionnaire seem to indicate that most of the sworn interpreters, in fact, rarely practice interpreting: 65% ($n = 51$) of those sworn interpreters who answered the question state that their income from interpreting is 20% or less, since they interpret only a couple of times a year (or less). One sworn interpreter for Polish, for instance, commented: “I am invited to interpret in court two or three times a year, sometimes the hearings are even cancelled. I do not interpret at notaries. I do not like interpreting and avoid it if I can”.⁷ This means that many of the sworn interpreters do not work as interpreters but only as sworn translators. Finally, the results of our questionnaire show that sworn interpreters are normally untrained for interpreting: only 6 (i.e. 6%) of the sworn interpreters who responded to our questionnaire are trained in interpreting, and only one of these who have interpreter education has one of the languages most needed in Slovene public service as his working language (i.e., Arabic), which

means that the pressing language-support needs of Slovene public-service institutions are not being adequately met.

The Response of the Field of Training

Slovene HEIs tried to respond to the changing needs of the society: the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Ljubljana already in 2007 joined an EU-funded project focused on designing a curriculum for medical interpreting (Ertl & Pöllabauer 2010). Three years later, in 2010, a national research project formulated a proposal for a one-year community interpreter training programme (Gorjanc 2013). Despite these efforts, the lack of sustainable financing and qualified teachers prevented the launch of any education for community interpreters for years (Gorjanc & Pokorn 2013). To alleviate the problem, first, a short specialisation course (worth in total 17 ECTS credit points) was introduced by the University of Ljubljana in the academic year 2018–2019, which focused on providing training for interpreters working in court and public administration (Maček & Schlamberger Brezar 2019); and second, an effort has been made to address the issue of the lack of trainers for community interpreting course with language combinations, including the languages in need by Slovene public services. As a step in this direction, six institutions joined forces (University of Ljubljana, University of Trieste, Oslo Metropolitan University, Aristotle University at Thessaloniki, the National Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia, and the Local Health Authority of Reggio Emilia), i.e. four translator and interpreter training HEIs, a national institute of public health, and a department of research and innovation functioning within the framework of a provider of health and social care, with an aim to train the trainers for community interpreting and/or intercultural mediation courses. After delineating the profile of community interpreters from that of intercultural mediators, which proved to be quite a challenge (Pokorn & Mikolič Južnič 2020), the first step of the project, *Training Newly Arrived Migrants for Community Interpreting and Intercultural Mediation* (TRAMIG), was to define the profile of trainers of community interpreters, which was closely modelled on the EMT trainer profile and defined five competences that every trainer of community interpreters needs: the field, instructional, organisational, assessment, and interpersonal competences (TRAMIG 2019). This document was then used as a basis for the organisation of four international workshops that focused on assessment, project-based learning through immersion (i.e. on teaching methodology on how to introduce practical training, such as placement or internship, into the program), on project-based learning through simulation (i.e. on how to introduce simulations of real-life assignments in the classroom) and on methodology of teaching community interpreting with special emphasis on role plays and teaching in pairs. The

participants at the workshops were teachers from the project partner institutions and volunteer language experts for the languages that are particularly needed in the project partners' societies and who had no training in community interpreting teaching but already work as community interpreters or intercultural mediators. TRAMIG workshops thus welcomed 15 volunteers, whose working languages are Persian, Arabic, Albanian, TWI, Ghomala, Bengali, Kurdish, and Romanian. All of them also speak English, which was the language used at TRAMIG trainer-training workshops. Special emphasis was paid on training these volunteers to be able to work in tandems in community interpreting courses and thus to help bridge the gap between the expertise in interpreter training that is available at interpreter training HEIs and the expertise in the knowledge of languages needed by the society that the volunteers had. In order to do that, the consortium upscaled the so-called "tandem teaching", developed by the project *Training in Languages of Lesser Diffusion* (TraiLLD), for the needs of training community interpreters. Tandem teaching is a form of collaborative teaching, where the language experts, who have the knowledge of the societal language and the language that is needed by the society, work with trained interpreter educators in pairs (Driesen 2016). The Department of Translation Studies of the University of Ljubljana decided to train the language assistants for Albanian, Arabic, and Persian, i.e. for the languages that at the moment prove most challenging to different public services in the Republic of Slovenia. Participants of workshops have organised local seminars after every workshop for other trainers in community interpreting and intercultural mediator programs, persons working as community interpreters and intercultural mediators, teaching staff of the partners' institution and other interested parties with a goal to transfer the knowledge gained in the project. The short-term aim of the project was thus to train the trainers for Albanian, Arabic, and Persian, who would be able to engage in collaborative teaching in community interpreting courses, while its long-term aim was to launch a full-fledged community interpreting course for languages that at the moment prove most challenging to different public services in the Republic of Slovenia.⁸

Conclusion

Currently, numerous European societies, including the Republic of Slovenia, face the problems of linguistic diversity. Newly arrived migrants are often not granted equal access to public services because of the lack of linguistic support which impedes their linguistic, economic, and social inclusion. The Slovene society does provide training to interpreters with working languages of Slovene and English/German/French, occasionally also Italian and Spanish, who work as conference interpreters and mainly respond to the need of political institutions. However, it does not train community interpreters for the languages of

newly arrived migrants, i.e. for the languages that are currently most urgently needed by Slovene public services. In order to respond to this need, we believe that HEIs with experience in educating translators and interpreters should share the know-how they have in interpreter training with the knowledge on migrant inclusion that is held by public-service institutions responsible for public health promotion and integration of migrants, institutions training healthcare and social workers, NGOs, and other specialists helping migrants to access and benefit from public services. Such collaboration would enable HEIs to reach the interpreting students from the communities they traditionally do not reach, and consequently to create and uphold the training of professionals who will be able to establish high-quality multilingual communication in public services and thus eventually assist newly arrived migrants to successfully include into the linguistic and economic mainstream of the host country. We owe that to the newly arrived migrants and to the society we live and work in.

Notes

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- 2 <https://www.iso.org/standard/54082.html>.
- 3 The Medical Chamber of Slovenia had 10,430 members in 2016, and the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia listed 14,797 members.
- 4 A list of active sworn interpreters and their working languages is available on the following webpage of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Slovenia: <https://spvt.mp.gov.si/tolmaci.html>.
- 5 A list of the members of Slovene Association of Conference Interpreters and their working languages is available here: <https://www.zkts.si/imenik>.
- 6 Two languages are not included in Table 3.3: Slovene sign language and the Gothic script.
- 7 Translated from Slovene by the authors.
- 8 The intended programme is described in detail in Gorjanc and Pokorn 2013. In brief, we first plan to introduce training for combinations between Slovene and Albanian, Arabic, and Persian, i.e., the languages that are, according to our analyses, most challenging for Slovene public institutions at the moment. The educational program is designed in such a way to allow the introduction of other languages as well, since we anticipate some further changes in the societal needs. Through TRAMIG stakeholders' forums we have built a network with stakeholders in this field (e.g., healthcare institutions, NGOs, and government bodies for the support and integration of migrants) who will encourage the migrants who already work as community interpreters to enrol in the course. On the basis of the current analyses, we expect no more than 10 trainees for each language combination.

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