

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Twice invisible: Intermediate-level student interpreters, interculturality, pedagogy and paradigms

Stuart D von Wolff<sup>1</sup> and Anu Viljanmaa<sup>2</sup>

*University of Eastern Finland / University of Tampere, Finland*

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This article reports on an intercultural innovation in teaching interpreting that has both theoretical and applied pedagogical implications. Vital for any interpreter are listening/speaking skills, accurate memory recall, and conceptual thinking and organisational skills, but problems related to straddling culture are often the most stressful, especially since an 'objective' ideal is often imposed upon interpreters. As teachers and researchers, we were keenly interested in exploring the problems encountered when devising intercultural exercises, how interpreting students experience authentic interpreting situations, and their thoughts on identity. The impetus for our innovation evolved against the backdrop of intensifying Finnish internationalisation and an increasing intercultural context. We exposed our intermediate-level student interpreters to complicated intercultural dynamics by making excursions to authentic settings and inviting international students to be our audience. Pedagogically this was meaningful, since our audience truly did not understand Finnish. Moreover, audience members were multi-cultural, reflecting 13 different languages. Such settings require adaptive reduction and addition. Our data consist of learning diaries and an online survey that examine the student interpreters' perceptions of themselves in intercultural settings, and the impact these had on their identities as 'invisible' interpreters. Our study thus presents a challenge to the paradigm of interpreter invisibility.

**Key words:** interpreter training, intercultural communication, identity, invisibility, reflective diaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Email: [stuart.vonwolff@uef.fi](mailto:stuart.vonwolff@uef.fi)

<sup>2</sup> Email: [anu.viljanmaa@uta.fi](mailto:anu.viljanmaa@uta.fi)

*Universities still lack an entrepreneurial spirit, are too academically oriented and do not make relevance of their programmes to the needs of the labour market a sufficiently high priority.*

(European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities [ESMU], 2008, pp. 1-2)

There can be no doubt that Finnish higher education is undergoing a redefinition of function, as are universities elsewhere (Evans, 2004), and much about our teaching practices in Finnish higher education has changed. Universities have redefined themselves – or been redefined – in relation to a corporate doctrine, and what it means to be an effective teacher in the university context becomes fixed against this regime. As teachers in the Finnish higher education context, we find this acutely relevant, ideologically disturbing and pedagogically provocative. Organisations such as ESMU issue admonishing statements such as the one above – scarcely veiled threats, actually – and as teachers in higher education, we feel the weight of being re-conceived as instruments of European economic enhancement.

Stelmach and von Wolff (2011, p. 65) remark on the effects of the architecture of the current neo-liberal, political ideology and trend for higher education in Europe, and note that it has “been well described by scholars and variously named as corporatization, commercialization, entrepreneurialism, marketization, and McDonaldization<sup>3</sup>. Whatever terminology one adopts, scholars converge on globalisation, or even hyper-globalisation (Olssen, 2006, p. 262), and Stelmach and von Wolff (ibid., p. 65) point out that this is the “backdrop against which universities have adopted a corporate ethos geared toward knowledge production as the tenet of the global economy<sup>4</sup>. This has serious implications for teaching in higher education, and for Finland, in particular.

For some time now, we have been reflecting upon the repercussions of the realities of teaching against this backdrop, but we have also noted the positive, untapped potential present in Finnish higher education due to ever-increasing internationalisation, ironically perhaps brought about by hyper-globalisation. In particular, as teachers in a university interpreting and translation programme, we were certain that we could exploit our circumstances and increase interaction between our local Finnish students and our international exchange and degree students in a specifically academic context. We exposed our intermediate-level student interpreters to authentic intercultural situations, and examined their perceptions of themselves in these settings, and the impact these had on their identities as interpreters. This field experience also tied into the prevalent view at our university concerning two points: greater academic involvement of international students in courses that have in the past not involved or welcomed them as much as they could have, and practical exercises that are specifically linked to real life work assignments and situations.

At a time when university resources are being severely curtailed, we believed that inviting international students to participate in our course activities would be welcome by

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<sup>3</sup> Such scholars include Amit, 2000; Ball, 2007; Bok, 2003; Evans, 2004; McSherry, 2006; Ritzer, 2008; Shattock, 2009; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Soley, 1995; Sumner, 2003; Turk, 2000; Vargo, 2003; and White, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> In this regard Stelmach & von Wolff reference in particular Evans, 2004; Shattock, 2009; Polster & Newson, 2009; and White, 2000.

the administration for a few reasons. We anticipated that administration would embrace our proposal, since there was minimal cost involved with our venture, and the department would be recognised for increasing its international student engagement. Administration also regarded our undertaking as an original novelty, at a time when “words like ‘innovation’ and ‘creativity’ are favourably used to link the work of academics to the knowledge economy” (Stelmach & von Wolff, 2011, p. 76). Finally, by writing academic research papers related to their experiences on this course, these international students were to gain credit by examining a culture-related issue, considering what they learnt through the interpreted sessions, and then tying these into research essays on topics from the Humanities and Social Sciences. These essays were then edited by a different group of Finnish translation students, whose English was very advanced and at near-native level. This provided a further intercultural opportunity for these students to interact academically and develop both their writing and intercultural communication skills. The academic writing stage of the course will be reported elsewhere, but we point out that clearly this also added value to our undertaking from an administrative perspective, too.

### **The Research(ers) in Context**

We are both multilingual and have a fair deal of personal intercultural experience, and we have both worked as interpreters and translators in various settings. We are both professionally and academically keenly interested in interpreting, translation, intercultural communication, and the challenges presented by all three of these in the context of teaching in higher education, and were excited that our little project allowed our research and teaching interests to converge.

As mentioned earlier, we felt the pressures of our current teaching environment, and wanted to harness some of the international, intercultural potential in a positive and meaningful pedagogical manner on one of our interpreting courses. At the time of our undertaking, we were both teachers in the University of Tampere’s Multilingual Communication and Translation Studies programme. The University of Tampere was the first – and at that time the only – Finnish member university in the European Master’s in Translation [EMT] programme. The EMT is a partnership between the European Commission and institutes of higher education that offer master’s-level translation programmes, and its goal is to establish a consistent standard of quality, based on valid, skills-oriented competences geared towards today’s market. Thus, any training innovation that is linked to the actual workplace is viewed in a positive light. Although we are currently focused on interpreting, our interpreting students will *ipso facto* graduate from an EMT programme; as such, interpreting exercises and assignments that are clearly linked to realistic work commissions are also viewed propitiously within our EMT context. Hence, we were confident that university administration and potential employers would all endorse our novel approach to interpreter training.

To focus on interpreting and translation in practice, on the surface, the difference between interpreting and translation is the mode of expression: whereas interpreters deal with spoken language and translate orally, translators deal with written text. Both interpreting and translation presuppose a love of language and culture, and a thorough

knowledge of at least two languages. However, the differences in the skills, and talents needed for each job are vast, and that has implications for training these students. Two basic types of interpreting are differentiated: consecutive and simultaneous. Simultaneous interpreting is most often associated with the UN General Assembly or the European Parliament. Consecutive interpreting, though, is also quite important, if not as high profile. A visitor to Finland delivering a talk or lecture in, for example, English to a Finnish audience will speak in stages and then pause for the interpreter to convey the sense of what has been said. These speaking turns can last between 2 and 5 minutes, sometimes even longer. This kind of consecutive interpreting served as the environment for our study.

Whereas a translator might have strong productive skills in only one language, depending on the direction of translation specialization, and usually into one's mother tongue, most interpreters translate in *both* directions, *on the spot*, without the use of any dictionaries and few if any memory aids. The term 'mother tongue' is common in Finland, a context in which it easily parallels the Finnish 'äidinkieli'. It is understood to mean "one's native language; a first language" (Oxford English Dictionary). Finland is an officially bilingual country, but overwhelmingly people are forced to choose between either Finnish or Swedish, for example, for services and in certain administrative contexts, such as voting, taxes, health care, and the like, not to mention the school system! We are aware that the current Finnish reality perpetuates an often artificial dichotomy, but at the same time, must acknowledge that these are the terms in common parlance. We use the term mother tongue here in describing our international audience, whereas our student interpreters' languages are classified according to AIIIC standards and conventions. The International Association of Conference Interpreters (in French, *Association internationale des interprètes de conférence*, hence the abbreviation) refers to interpreters' working languages: A = native or best 'active' language; B = 'active' language commanded with near-native proficiency; C = passive language, allowing 'complete understanding' (Pöchhacker, 2004, pp 20-21). No matter which working languages are involved, an interpreter must be able to cope with the psychological and even physical pressures of this on-the-spot situation. An interpreter has to be able to multitask quickly and seamlessly; an interpreter has to work cooperatively in a team, with other peers – certainly simultaneous interpreters need to work in pairs, at least – and step up and save a colleague in a difficult situation. One must be both detail-oriented, but also be a 'big picture' person; many occupations require the one or the other, but relatively few require heightened skills in both. Consequently, the physical and psychological factors become apparent when we add the intercultural spanner into the works.

It is crucial that interpreters develop accurate, short-term memory skills, note-taking skills, technological dexterity, but equally importantly, they must be able to adapt to and cope with any *unpredictable* hiccoughs that may occur in any 'live' situation, without losing one's *sang froid*. Unlike text translation, it is impossible to pause to think or to review a few previous pages. All this has great implications for teaching student interpreters, and, in the beginning, the students practise through simulation exercises and role play. Interpreter training does, of course, involve authentic settings and site visits, but these usually occur at a later stage in one's training. We wanted to introduce

the authentic, intercultural setting into our curriculum at a much earlier stage, specifically because of the challenges it presents.

### Interpreting and Interculturality

In the introduction of their recent work, Dervin, Gajardo and Lavanchy (2011, p. 2) mention the intercultural encounter that takes place between a wide, multidisciplinary range of subjects, which include linguistics, didactics, sociology, education, psychology, anthropology, and gender studies.

By bringing translation and interpreting studies to the intercultural table, we hope to extend this family of disciplines, not least because interpreting and translation clearly implicate language as *sine qua non*. We see the addition of our discipline as fraught with both interesting and fruitful potential, especially given that translation and interpreting studies is in itself, an *interdiscipline*.

Although this activity has been in existence for millennia, not until recently has there been any systematic study of translation, and of the cultural contexts in which the Source and Target texts (ST and TT) are embedded.

Susan Bassnett put it succinctly a few years ago (2002, pp. 2-3), in stating that “in the 1970s, during a decade of great upheaval in terms of literary and linguistic theorizing, with structuralism giving way to post-structuralism and deconstruction, and with the advent of feminist and gender theory, cultural and media studies and new historicism, the fledgling discipline of Translation Studies emerged”. Please note that the term TS is overwhelmingly understood in English to include interpreting studies. Mary Snell-Hornby (2006), who deemed TS an interdiscipline, noted that our discipline has grown in importance, as issues of intercultural communication have been highlighted by the impact of globalization and new electronic media. In the approximately 50 years or so of its development, the focus of translation scholars has also varied, and TS even underwent a relatively recent, so-called “cultural turn” in the 1990s, when the object of our discipline turned to the translation norms that prevail at different moments in different cultures, as well as post-colonial translation theory.

Variegated definitions<sup>5</sup> of culture and inter-culture reflect the fascinating trajectory of perspectives on these concepts. For us, language and culture are inextricably interdependent and intertwined, nor can one speak of interculture without recognising the presence at least on some level – overt or subtle – of language. Dervin, Gajardo and Lavanchy (2011, p. 5) note that:

“The prefix **inter-** points to the idea that cultures are separated from one another, but available to be linked by messengers, ‘intercultural’ translators and facilitators...The way these messengers and their competences are represented depends not only on the comprehension of the notion of culture but also on the way the cultures, and the persons supposed to bear them, are conceived.”  
[emphasis added]

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<sup>5</sup> Theorists that have posited interesting definitions include, but are not limited to, Kluckhohn & Kelly, 1945; Hall, 1959, 1966, 1976; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963; Useem & Useem, 1963; Damen, 1987; Hofstede, 1991; Porter & Samovar, 1994; Lederach, 1995; Bennet, 1997; Byram, 1997; and Kramsch, 1998.

Interestingly, as far back as 1964, Eugene Nida (pp. 160-161), author of the seminal work *Towards a Science of Translating*, noted the challenges that culture presents to translators and interpreters:

“When the cultures are related but the languages are quite different, the translator is called upon to make a good many formal shifts in the translation. However, the cultural similarities in such instances usually provide a series of parallelisms of content that make the translation proportionately much less difficult than when both languages and cultures are disparate. **In fact, differences between cultures cause many more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure.**” [emphasis added]

Almost 50 years later, Apostolou’s (2009, p. 11) comments relating to the challenges faced by today’s interpreter echo back to Nida’s 1964 observation. Namely, “the problems related to straddling culture and language **are often most stressful**”. [emphasis added]

### **Conceptual Orientation and Research Questions**

Interpreting studies research examines a vast number of issues: interpreters’ psycholinguistic processing skills, cognitive functions, aptitude testing, strategies, and of course, language competency (cf: Nolan, 2005; Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, 2002, among other works). In recent years, researchers have been considering the challenges of culture, (inter)cultural identity, and creativity (cf: Apostolou, 2009; Bischoff & Dahinden, 2008; Horváth, 2010; Jacquemet, 2009; Lee, 2009; Lehtinen, 2008; Olohan, 2000; Torikai, 2010; Zwischenberger 2009). Concomitant with this development has been growing interest in teachers of interpreting students, culture, and the research/practice divide (cf: Lai & Mulayim, 2010; Scarpa, Mussachio, Palumbo, 2009; Shlesinger, 2009; Takeda, 2010). Of particular relevance are recent studies considering interpreter ‘invisibility’ (cf: Bahadir, 2001; Angelelli, 2004; Diriker, 2004; Torikai, 2009; Valero-Garcés, 2007; Wadensjö, 2008).

Andrew Chesterman (2001, p. 21), a formidable authority in the field of translation and interpreting studies, asserted that:

“any rigorous academic discipline progresses by way of hypotheses: first discovering and proposing them, then testing them, then refining them. Otherwise we are condemned simply to go round and round in circles and to reinvent the wheel forever. There is no difference here in principle between hard or soft sciences, nor even between empirical and hermeneutic approaches.”

We should like to state upfront that we do not adhere to Chesterman’s approach, nor do we seek or apply the terms of ‘validity’ or ‘generalisability’. For us, interpreters are not, nor should they be, invisible entities, and this stance has clear consequences for us as teachers in higher education. As teachers, we wondered about ourselves at the beginning, how we saw ourselves, how we viewed (inter)culture, what our identity was, and what problems we might encounter when devising novel intercultural exercises for

our students within a discipline heavily branded by the notions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘interpreter invisibility’. Invisibility and objectivity have traditionally been assumed and asserted as pivotal for the professional interpreter, and until recently, authorities and sanctioned pedagogical standards have steered clear of culture. Wadensjö (2008, p. 199) invokes the image of the interpreter’s experience as “a non-person’s ‘invisibility’”, vis-à-vis persons in power, and also calls into question current practices and experiences: “interpreters’ ‘invisibility’ is also ‘real’ in the sense that they perform actions that remain unnoticed by the parties they assist” (ibid).

In her seminal work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler asks: “To what extent is ‘identity’ a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience?” (p. 23) Butler’s concern is, of course, with deconstructing gender identity by challenging the male/female sex binary and its role in constructing “gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 202). While we are not claiming to have undertaken a Butlerian analysis of our students or profession, we felt that moving away from ‘invisibility’, acknowledging culture and embracing identity were crucial. Gender is not a performance by a gendered subject that is ontologically *a priori*, but rather, is a series of performances (Hey, 2006), which “constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express” (Butler, 2001, p. 341). In other words, the subject does not precede the action, but rather, the actions, or performances, produce the subject (Hey, 2006; Nayak & Kehily, 2006). The repetition of performances legitimates and re-produces a gender category. Caught between the parties for whom the interpreter is required, we posited an extension of the notion of performativity to the construction of ‘invisibility’

Butler’s deconstruction of gender identity is both a theory and a methodology; her anti-essentialist, anti-foundationalist critique reaches between and beyond Foucauldian notions of the power of discourse into psychoanalytic theory to show genealogically how “discourse could secure compliance to psychic as well as social norms” (Hey, 2006, p. 7). It is readily apparent that our particular interest in Butler’s work is far broader. Specifically, Butler’s theory of performative identities, outside of psychoanalytic exigencies, may be useful for examining how interpreter identity is influenced, shaped, constitutive of and constituted by the expectations, standards, regulations, rules and practices of contemporary translator training, and how, through translator training practices, culture, intercultural and the interpreter’s culture are successively, iteratively obliterated. Thus, our central research questions focus on the ‘Twice Invisible’: the absence in a university context – both pedagogical and until recently, in the research arena – and the invisibility in the ‘real, authentic’ field and the assumed and asserted extant standards; we wanted to explore issues in teaching intercultural communication skills to our student interpreters, and invoke the notion of identity.

In the field of interpreting pedagogy one speaks of authenticity, which is understood to apply to a number of interpreting elements, such as setting, assignment and audience, for example.<sup>6</sup> While not an actual, paid interpreting commission *per se*, our exercises were devised to include quite a number of authentic elements, which included moving outside the artificial classroom setting to authentic interpreting field settings, presenting our students with the kinds of assignments in which intercultural exercises would be real (i.e. moving beyond theory, simulation and role playing), and

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<sup>6</sup> A number of Interpreting Studies scholars have commented on authentic elements recently, including Kurz 2002; Kutz 2002; Takeda 2010; Mäkinen 2008; Vik-Tuovinen 2008; Schopp, 2005, 2006.

most crucially, involving a multicultural group of international students who genuinely did not speak Finnish, but were motivated to understand the message that was being shared. Hence, we asked ourselves the following research questions:

1. How do our interpreting students experience authentic, intercultural interpreting situations? (How do they describe these experiences in their own words?)
2. What impact do these authentic experiences make on these student interpreters, insofar as their perceptions of their own role and identity are concerned?
3. What kinds of problems do we, as teachers of student interpreters, encounter whilst devising (novel) intercultural exercises – especially considering that we would be introducing them into the curriculum at an earlier stage?

### ***Translator Training and the University of Tampere (Finnish) Context***

International and exchange students often have enriching experiences abroad, but many voice disappointment in the low level of interaction with the local or 'domestic' population students. This coincided with our institution voicing how limited financial resources are. Although administration theoretically approve of any teaching innovation, they were particularly welcoming of a teaching innovation that did not incur great costs.

We exposed our student interpreters to authentic intercultural dynamics and complications much earlier than usual in our interpreting curriculum, starting with our first real consecutive interpreting course. Both years, we had 7 students on this course, all of whose working A-language was Finnish.

All of these students had a one-term, basic and compulsory course behind them, in which all students were exposed to consecutive interpreting exercises. On our intermediate-level course, consecutive interpreting exercises grow more challenging in terms of length, complexity of thought and sophisticated vocabulary. We hoped our innovation would allow our students to gain self-confidence, and to do so in a pleasant, intercultural environment.

Twice in each class, we made excursions to local historical settings, and invited 12 international students to be our audience. The international students were eager to sign up for these free, interpreted tours. Even though they knew that the interpretation into English would be by students, we quickly received dozens of email messages from interested students, and the International Student Office contacted us about the level of interest expressed. So, we exposed our intermediate student interpreters to authentic intercultural dynamics, and potential complications.

Pedagogically, this was meaningful, since our Finnish students interpreted for an audience who truly did not understand Finnish. They interpreted museum and other guides primarily into English, their working B-language, but whenever an audience member had a question, our students also had to interpret from English into Finnish.

With one exception, the audience for whom they were interpreting did not speak English as their mother-tongue, rather represented 12 different languages. In addition to the one native speaker of English, our 24 (total) international students were speakers of: Arabic, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Japanese, Korean, Romanian, Russian, Tamil, and Turkish. So, our groups were multilingual and multi-cultural, and our interpreters had to adapt to all kinds of authentic cultural conditions.

We knew that our innovation had been quite successful as far as our international students were concerned for a few reasons. The International Office told us they had had very positive feedback from the students who attended. Those who attended told other international students, and so the International Office wanted to know when we would be arranging additional outings. We, (the instructors), also received many positive messages from the international students who were happy for this opportunity, and who commented on the quality of the interpreters' English.

### **Pilot Study and Method**

We carried out our pilot study over two years, within the context of our aforementioned intermediate-level, consecutive interpreting course. We consider this a pilot study, since we were somewhat tentative about the scale of our proposed innovations and potential negative effects on our students' experiences. The feasibility of some aspects and settings of our intercultural interpreting exercises could have also proved problematic. We certainly wanted to foster a positive and encouraging atmosphere between the Finnish interpreters and international students, but we also anticipated setting up subsequent intercultural interpreting exercises differently. This being the case, we also 'expected the unexpected' and were hoping to learn from the first stages of our study, and revise our research questions and methods. Hence, pilot study.

Our data are mainly qualitative and consist of learning diaries completed while the students were attending our course, and an online survey, which was administered well after our course had concluded (1 to 2 years) so that we might consider the longer-term affects for our teaching. The diaries were analysed and categorised largely following the methodology set out by Alaszewski (2006) in his *Using Diaries for Social Research*, and based on his work we devised our qualitative online survey questions.

To gather our data, we invited students via e-mail to participate in an online, anonymous survey. We ensured informed consent through our explanation of context, process, risks (none known), potential benefits, confidentiality and anonymity, and right to withdraw at any time. As an incentive, we held a draw for a €25 gift card. Participation in this study was not a requirement; students could register for the draw, yet opt out of the study in its entirety. Clicking on the link and moving past entry to the gift card draw constituted consent. Students could grant total, partial, or withhold permission in terms of our using their learning diaries. These were written in either English or Finnish, or a mixture, and this decision was left up to the students. They could complete as little or as much of the online survey as they wished, and respond in either English or Finnish.

## **Results**

### **Online Survey Descriptive Quantitative Data**

Of the 14 students eligible to complete the survey, all were women. We knew that 1 person could not be contacted, and of the remaining 13 students, we had 11 responses (78.5%), relatively evenly distributed between the two years we offered this course, each year having had 7 students participating: 5 respondents (71.4%) from one year

and 6 respondents (85.7%) from the other. Most of the online survey questions were qualitative and open-ended, but we did ask 2 descriptive quantitative questions. The first asked students to rate on a 5-point Likert scale their experiences fulfilling the role of interpreter in an authentic setting, specifically for the multilingual/multicultural audience: 4 students (36.3%) reported this to be very positive and the remainder, 7 students (63.6%) reported this to be positive. Our second quantitative question asked students to reflect 1 to 2 years later on whether they felt the authentic intercultural field work exercises were: a) beneficial to; b) detrimental to; or c) of no impact upon their competence as an interpreter. All 11 of our respondents felt that the authentic intercultural exercises were beneficial to the development of their interpreter competencies.

### **Qualitative Data: Online Survey and Diary Selections**

The 11 respondents had unrestricted space to respond to the four following open-ended questions. We also included an additional fifth unrestricted box for any additional comments to ensure that people could volunteer their thoughts and experiences.

When asked to describe how they had prepared linguistically and culturally for the authentic interpreting situations, students all mentioned culling venue information and specific (specialised) vocabulary terms, i.e. linguistic preparation was unanimously focused on LSP (language for specific purposes) concerns, but did not take into consideration in advance such issues as different grammatical structures, for example. Regarding cultural preparation, this was reported in terms of reflective preparation, but no other action was reported, nor were other sources or authorities consulted. Students expressed concerns that some situation “subjects... foreigners might not be familiar with”; one student stated that: “I thought about the actual interpreting situation, and what that would require. For instance, things related to contact with the audience, suitable expressions for the situation, use of voice, etc.”.

When asked to describe what challenges they anticipated with an intercultural audience, students mentioned terms and vocabulary, as well as acoustics. A number of students mentioned ethical pressure. For instance, one respondent said: “I felt the pressure of an audience relying solely on me, since they do not understand any Finnish”. Quite a number of students – eight – had concerns regarding the audience’s receptive English language skills. Their comments included the following: “I suspected a non-native audience would not be familiar with terms”; “problems with the audience not understanding some words, audience being unfamiliar with many of the subjects”; “I should not use complicated word[s] and pick a slightly more simple or more common one instead, since it would be realistic to expect that my English skills might be better than the skills of some of the people I would be interpreting for”; “some terms or cultural phenomena might be unfamiliar to the audience”. Two interpreters voiced concerns regarding internal audience members’ productive English skills: “Another thing that I worried about was that if someone in the audience wanted to ask something from the presenter, I would not necessarily understand their accent”; “somebody from the audience would ask something that I wouldn’t understand”. One interpreter did express concern about her own productive skills: “some words that I would pronounce either

incorrectly or unclearly, which would make it more difficult for the audience to understand me.”

When asked to provide examples of challenges they had not anticipated, and how they overcame these challenges, many (7) students mentioned the level of intercultural awareness that the audience would have. Comments included: “Getting across some culture-related things that might be self-evident for Finns but unfamiliar to others”; “...come across phenomena that were very Finnish, but I trusted the tour guides to take the foreign audience into consideration”; “conveying the message in a manner that our audience would understand”; “...the differences in communication style between Finns and others, e.g. the distance between the participants, and the ‘formality’ of Finns in their communication.” All students mentioned nervousness, and some gesticulation. Their comments included: “but I used my hand to point into things”; “[didn’t] expected (sic) the speaker (in Lenin Museum) to speak as fast as she did. It was also unexpected that she managed to cram so much information and details”; “fortunately I got some help from the audience”; “It was sometimes hard to understand what was being said in Finnish, which came as a bit of a surprise”; “During the first interpreting session the speaker said something I didn’t really want to translate for a multicultural audience (he called Russian tourists pompous or pretentious or something). I simply omitted the word.” This last comment is obviously quite revealing, and makes us reflect on building in awkward, even uncomfortable, but ethically imperative content in our courses in the future.

Finally, when asked how the authentic exercises were different from the in-class exercises, the students all remarked how they “Just felt more real”. Over half of the students (6) reported the “task taken more seriously”. Quite a number of respondents mentioned the double-edged sword of the audience not knowing Finnish: on the one hand, this came as a relief, but on the other hand they felt the weight of the ethical responsibility (“these people really were relying on me to understand”).

### **Ironies and Implications**

We find it somewhat ironic that the very phenomenon – globalisation – that has given rise to a deleterious climate in higher education, should also, through the subsequent rise in internationalisation also bring about circumstances that foster intercultural enrichment. We are convinced that there are general, pedagogical inferences that we may apply in planning our future interpreting courses, and also believe that our innovation could have broader implications for teaching intercultural awareness to interpreting students. Clearly, our study also presents a challenge to the dichotomising paradigm and entire notion of interpreter invisibility.

In the future, we hope to include international students in similar exercises, and insofar as feasible, increase this content. We have also now identified the degree to which English played a special role in this setting, where the international audience did not share one common mother tongue, nor did they speak as mother tongue the B-language (English) into which the session speeches were interpreted. In a forthcoming study (KäTu 2012 MikaEL Proceedings), we analyse the comments that students recorded in their learning diaries while on the course and compare/contrast these with the online survey comments made 12 to 24 months after course completion. We note

the importance of inculcating exercises with ethically difficult and challenging topics earlier on in the programme. We hope to bring culture and identity into our course to a much more heightened level, and ask students to reflect specifically on culture, intercultural, invisibility and their identity in their learning diary entries...just as we expect we shall be doing ourselves.

### Notes on contributors:

Fluent in English, Finnish, French and German, **Stuart von Wolff** (University of Eastern Finland) has taught translation and interpreting at a number of universities. His research interests are inter-disciplinary and in addition to interpreting and translation studies, they embrace issues in pedagogy in higher education and philosophy.

**Anu Viljanmaa** has been teaching German and English interpreting at the University of Tampere for several years. She is an experienced translation project manager and an active, certified interpreter (EMCI). Anu's research interests focus on interpreter training, particularly computer-assisted interpreter training (CAIT) and students' internalisation of interpreting competences.

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