Presenting simultaneous interpreting: Discourse of the Turkish media, 1988-2003

When and why conference interpreting caught the attention of Turkish media, and how they consequently represented professional interpreters to the general public.

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This paper looks at how simultaneous interpreting and interpreters were presented in the Turkish press and television from September 1988 through March 2003. The materials analysed include newspapers, magazines, journals, TV news and programs. The study provides insight into when and why the profession enters the limelight in the Turkish media and explores the divergences and convergences in the views and attitudes reflected by the voices of press and the professional interpreters themselves.

1. Introduction

As in other professions, discourse on simultaneous interpreting is closely intertwined with the image and status of the profession and the professional. Without doubt, one source of discourse exerting a significant impact on the profession of simultaneous interpreting (SI) is the media.

For many years, essentialist approaches to language have remained dominant, assuming a one-to-one correspondence between objects and the discourse of various actors and institutions on these objects. Descriptions and portrayals of objects have been accepted as a mirror reflection of the objects ‘out there’. Today, most contemporary approaches to language, including social constructivism, critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, among others, share the view that language is a socially-conditioned construct. According to critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 1989, 1992, 1995, van Dijk 1987, 1991, 1993; Wodak 1996), the basic assumptions of which guide this paper, ‘discourse’ is not to be seen as a neutral presentation of the ‘real’ object, but as a re-presentation of the socio-cultural and ideological expectations, demands and perspectives with regard to that object. In our case, the object is ‘simultaneous interpreting’, and an analysis of the discourse within this framework is a worthwhile activity - not because such an effort will help unfold the ‘truths’ and ‘realities’ of SI, but because it will hint at the socio-cultural factors which shape and are shaped by the discourse on the subject.

Accordingly, the focus in this article is on the discourse of the Turkish print and broadcast media from September 1988 to March 2003. The aim is to explore when simultaneous interpreters and interpreting become visible in the Turkish media and which aspects of the profession(al) are highlighted by the members of the media and professional interpreters respectively.
The materials analysed here are taken from the press collection of a large interpreting agency in Turkey and the personal archives of colleagues associated with the agency: a total of 48 news items that make direct references to the profession(al). These 48 items do not pretend to cover everything on SI discussed in the Turkish media during the nearly 15 years in question here. For one thing, despite the meticulousness of the agency, archiving the news on SI is hardly the highest on its list of priorities. Secondly, I – as the researcher - have not been able to peruse the personal archives of all the associates. Therefore, the material analysed here is not exhaustive but rather indicative of some of the general trends and attitudes.

My analysis of the material at hand focuses mainly on the following questions:

1. When do simultaneous interpreting and interpreters become visible in the Turkish media? That is to say, what occasions a discourse on SI?
2. Which aspects of the profession(al) are foregrounded by the voices of the media?
3. Which aspects of the profession(al) are foregrounded by the professional interpreters?

2. When and how do the Turkish media report on simultaneous interpreting?

Regular periodic references and articles on SI are only found in the career magazine Kongre which targets a select group: conference and exhibition organisers, travel agencies, hotels, etc. The editor-in-chief of the magazine, published monthly since 1996, happens to be a conference interpreter and trainer. Kongre provides information about upcoming conferences, rates the quality of conference organisations, mentions the names of the interpreters working for these organisations and includes a column devoted to SI.

Except for these regular references in Kongre, news on SI in the Turkish media is sporadic. Interestingly, however, many of these sporadic news items focus on SI for certain recurring reasons and exhibit certain recurring discourse patterns:

To start with the first, a significant share of the media discourse on SI in Turkey (34 out of 48 news items) occurs and approaches SI in relation to one or a combination of five reasons, which I call ‘discourse-generators’:

1. **Big Events** (in which interpreters play a crucial role),
2. **Big Money** (which interpreters allegedly earn),
3. **Big Mistakes** (which interpreters allegedly make),
4. **Big Names** (which some interpreters have), and
5. **Big Career** (which some items promise SI can be).

Secondly, the media discourse on SI exhibits certain recurring patterns. For instance, when voices of the media (commentators, reporters, columnists, etc.) report on SI, they generally base their judgments on four criteria: fluency of the delivery, comprehensibility of the delivery, synchronicity with the original speech, and loyalty to the original word. Here we note, however, that while professional interpreters speaking to the media (often in interviews) also place significant emphasis on ‘loyalty’, they differ markedly from the media members by emphasising ‘loyalty to the original meaning’ rather than ‘loyalty to the original word’.

In what follows, we first take a closer look at the discourse of the voices of the media and then focus on the discourse of the professional interpreters to explore the divergences and convergences between the two.

2.1. The discourse of voices of the media

**Big Events:** Without doubt, the use of SI at important events such as intergovernmental summits...
and VIP visits, as well as in live coverage of international conflicts and wars has been the main
discourse-generator for SI in the Turkish press and television (22 of the 48 news items analysed here
refer to SI in the context of a major event or conflict). A considerable portion of these ‘Big Events’
turning the eyes of the media to SI since 1988 have been wars and terrorism (9 out of 22 news
items). In addition to the crises in the Gulf, live coverage of the attacks on September 11, wars in
Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and, most recently, the war in Iraq have triggered media attention to the
profession(al)².

The live coverage of the Gulf War in 1991 certainly initiated a flurry of attention to SI in the media.
Once the war had started, many Turkish TV channels began to broadcast the live coverage of the
international news channels. During the first days of the war, nearly all channels tried to make do
with their in-house staff (anchors, reporters, translators, etc.) as interpreters. The difficulty of
interpreting CNN and other news channels live, however, resulted in traumatic attempts; the initial
public image of SI was quite negative. As professional simultaneous interpreters gradually took over
the task, the difference in the quality became very apparent. The words of one magazine follow
( Tempo; 03-09.02 1991, all translations from Turkish mine):

As televisions went for the live coverage of war with CNN, the viewers of TRT started
suffering anguish and exasperation with announcers who could not keep up with what
was said, who remained silent for minutes without uttering a word, who were incapable
of building decent sentences, who were incomprehensible and who interpreted
inaccurately. With the establishment of a team of simultaneous interpreters, the viewers
were relieved from suffering gastritis pains in front of the TV.”

Clearly, this excerpt highlights fidelity (“interpreting inaccurately”), synchronicity (“failing to catch
up”) and fluency (“long silences” and “lack of decent sentences”) as critical quality criteria in SI. It
criticizes non-professionals for failing and praises professional interpreters (relieving viewers of
gastritis pains!) for fulfilling the same criteria.

Despite this earlier lesson in quality, many TV channels repeated the mistake of trying to make do
with non-professionals interpreting from international news coverage when the US launched another
large military action against Iraq on 17 December 1998. By the following day, poor quality of SI on
the TV channels was already in the news:

This year our TV channels have been caught unprepared. It seems they could not
arrange for ‘professional’ interpreters. Knowing English well and doing ‘simultaneous
interpreting’ are two different things. [The two anchorwomen] know English well. They
tried their best to decipher CNN. TRT and NTV did what they should have done by
matching the voice of a professional who can interpret fluently with the scenes on the
screen” (Sina Koloğlu; Milliyet; 18.12.1998).

Once again, ‘fidelity’ (“deciphering CNN”), ‘fluency’ (“interpreting fluently”) and ‘synchronicity’
(“matching the voice of a professional with the scenes on the screen”) are highlighted as defining
features of professionalism in SI; non-professionals are criticised for failing in these performance
criteria.

The role of the live coverage of the crises in the Gulf proved so powerful in introducing SI to the
public opinion that even recent articles continue to refer to it:

Let us recall the Gulf War period once again. One of the leading TV channels of the US
is broadcasting live from Baghdad. The broadcast is in English, but for days on end we
watch its direct Turkish version. And, as a nation, we become acquainted with new
concepts and personalities. The Desert Fox, Peter Arnett and simultaneous interpreting
are the first that come to my mind” ( İş ve Finans Dergisi; 02.03.2003).
Finally, by the second Gulf war in 2001, even the media has noticed how wars channel attention to SI. Here is a passage referring to the association of SI with live coverage of wars on TV:

**REMEMBERED IN WARTIME...** It smells like war again. Ever since the attacks of September 11, foreign officials have been delivering statements and organising conferences. Simultaneous interpreters who convey all these correctly, immediately and in a comprehensible manner have re-entered our lives” (Milliyet; 30.09.2001).

As this excerpt shows, SI is expected to be faithful, fluent and synchronous. Again ‘faithfulness to the original’ is deemed critical. Here is how one columnist who has observed conference interpreters working at a European Summit expresses his admiration for them for remaining loyal to the ‘letter’ (!) of the original speech:

Imagine you are giving a speech at a conference where, as soon as you utter your first syllable, your words are interpreted into eight languages all at the same time. Pleasant and virtuous ladies who puff away on fags inside the booths interpret every sentence you utter letter by letter into English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch and Greek” (Hadi Uluengin; Milliyet; date unspecified).

The corpus analysed in this article also demonstrates that the Turkish media tend to turn their attention to SI when they glimpse a problem in interpreting at a major event. In the following excerpt, a well-known columnist criticizes the use of consecutive interpretation by means of relay (from Turkish into Italian via English and vice versa) during a press conference of the new Turkish Prime Minister in Rome:

Whoever organised the press meeting demonstrated how much we deserve Europe(!). The viewers, audience and some 250 journalists, TV reporters and commentators must have ridiculed the situation, saying “These people [Turks] say they want to be European, but they are not even aware of the existence of simultaneous interpreting” (Milliyet; 15.12. 2002).

Thus the failure to employ proper professional interpreters in ‘Big Events’ also generates media discourse on SI. This was especially apparent prior to Italian prosecutor Di Pietro’s visit to Turkey, and surfaced again as a criticism of the U.N. Habitat Conference in Istanbul:

**NO INTERPRETER FOUND FOR DI PIETRO AND HIS WIFE...** The fact that Di Pietro is a lawyer and speaks in a southern accent has rendered it impossible to find an interpreter for him” (Milliyet; 19.01.1995).

No one organised interpreters for the Habitat Conference” (Yeni Yüzyıl; 06.05.1996).

**Big Money:** Interpreters allegedly earning ‘Big Money’ hit the press during the late 1980’s. Between 1989 and 1991, three out of seven news items on SI in the media focus on the money interpreters earn. To cite two excerpts:

They interpret in three languages. They earn 250.000 [Turkish Lira] a day” (Milliyet; 02.09. 1989).

“Having interpreters at a conference starts from 8.5 million TL” (Hürriyet; day and month unspecified, 1989).

With the live coverage of the Gulf War, however, the power of ‘Big Money’ as a main discourse-generator seems to have weakened (with a total of 41 between 1992-2003 producing only
one focused on the income of interpreters and two others – interviews – referring to income as an ancillary issue. One reason for the decline in the ‘Big Money’ discourse is probably the shift of media attention to other aspects of SI once the profession(al) had become better appreciated during the Gulf crises. Another reason may be the liberalization of the Turkish economy, which may well have rendered the fees of interpreters relatively insignificant after the 1980’s in comparison with income earned elsewhere. Despite a general weakening in the ‘Big Money’ discourse, the media will occasionally insist on turning the spotlight back onto the income of the interpreters if they can spot something ‘scandalous’, as in the following news item in which a conservative daily attacks parliamentarians of the government for wasting public money on SI:

MONEY WASTED ON INTERPRETING. Even though the Turkish Grand National Assembly employs numerous interpreters, the Speaker and various committee members have allegedly brought home extra ‘interpreting invoices’ for their travels abroad. Hundreds of millions of lira are said to have been paid to the interpreters Orfan Köksalan, an MP from the Motherland Party, employed on his travels abroad” (Zaman; 12.12.1996).

Big Mistakes: ‘Big Mistakes’ that interpreters (allegedly) have made also shift the attention of the Turkish media to SI (3 news items in the present corpus focus specifically on ‘Big Mistakes’ while 3 others mention mistakes during interviews with interpreters). In focusing on ‘Big Mistakes’, the voices of the media again tend to base their judgments on ‘fidelity to the original word’:

Germany’s Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel has referred to the comments of Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz that were misunderstood due to an interpretation error as “unacceptably tactless”. In a meeting in Antalya with German and Turkish news correspondents, Mesut Yılmaz, referring to the German Chancellor Kohl, said that “Old friends cannot become enemies”. These words, however, were interpreted as “Our old friend Kohl is our new enemy”, leading to new tension between the two countries. Kinkel declared, ‘The most recent statements of Mr. Yılmaz on German-Turkish relations have been tactless. Apparently Mr. Yılmaz is not aware of the harm he is causing our bilateral relations with his statements’” (Ahmet Külahçı; Hürriyet; 03.04.1998).

The two other news items in this category involve interpreting mistakes that led to misunderstandings at the European Parliament in deliberations particularly sensitive for Turkey; these concerned a session on PKK activities in south-eastern Turkey and a vote on the customs union agreement.

Big Names – According to the material in the present corpus, the renown of some interpreters also attracts attention to SI (10 out of 48 news items). Six of the ten news items in this category feature one well-known actress who also works as a conference interpreter; and another two, an interpreter/translator who received an award for his translations. The remaining two items deal with veteran interpreters who have made a name for themselves in the field over long years. Such items generally appear as interviews and therefore allow the interpreters to express their views on SI (for the analysis of this discourse, see section 2.2)

Big Career – Last but not least, seven of the items analysed in this study present SI as an attractive and lucrative profession. The following is one excerpt that portrays SI as an ‘attractive’ career, focusing on ‘loyalty to original word’ and ‘simultaneity of the rendition’ as the most distinctive and challenging aspects of the profession:
YOUNG GIRLS NO LONGER LONG TO BECOME MODELS. The favourite profession of today is simultaneous interpreting. Simultaneous interpreting has as many challenging aspects as attractive ones. At conferences, you need to get across every word that leaves the mouth of speakers (...) During a very important meeting is it easy to bear the responsibility of simultaneously interpreting all the words a speaker utters without making any errors in a different language?" (Milliyet; 02.09.1989).

As we see, the discourse of voices from within the Turkish media was repeatedly triggered by specific discourse-generators (‘Big Events’, ‘Big Money’, ‘Big Mistakes’, ‘Big Name’ and ‘Big Career’). In their discourse on SI, the voices of the media focused on SI in relation to these discourse-generators only. A significant proportion of discourse representing the voices of the media either focused on ‘scandalous’ aspects of the use or non-use of simultaneous interpreters and/or criticised SI performances on the criteria of ‘loyalty to the original word’, ‘fluency’ and ‘synchronicity’. Most particularly, ‘loyalty to the word’ (and even ‘letter’ of the original) was touted as the most critical criterion of ‘professional’ interpreting. The prioritisation of ‘loyalty to the original word’ seems to conform to the views of certain Media Studies scholars who argue that “the production of news [takes] place within the boundaries established by dominant values” (Iyengar and Kinder 1987: 24) and “encourages the adaptation of a convoluted way of simplifying things” (Altheide 1976: 9). The voices of the media have judged professional vs. non-professional interpreting and good vs. bad interpreting by these criteria and either praised or criticized individual performances of SI according to how fully (in their opinion) the performances fulfilled these criteria.

2.2. The discourse of interpreters reflected in the media

Although both the discourse of the voices of the media (i.e., that of commentators, reporters, columnists, etc.) and the discourse of the interpreters reflected in the media have generally been triggered by the same discourse-generators, there are notable discrepancies between their re-presentations of the profession(al). The most striking difference involves the issue of ‘loyalty’. While voices of the media have stressed ‘loyalty to the word of the original speech’ as the defining aspect of SI, professional interpreters addressing the media have repeatedly underscored that their task was to render the ‘meaning’ and not the ‘words’ of the original message. In the following excerpt from an interview, a professional interpreter gives her definition of SI:

Interpreter: Conference interpreting is the exact transfer of an idea voiced in one language to another. I’m saying ‘idea’ here because conference interpreting and interpreters are not parrots – if I may say so – who only interpret whatever words they hear” (Stüdyo İstanbul Programı; TRT 2; 25.09.1995).

Clearly, in contrast to the emphasis on a word-for-word and even letter-by-letter (literal) rendition of the original message in the media’s re-presentation of SI, the professional interpreter here quite specifically emphasizes the importance of rendering the ‘ideas’ in the original speech. Perhaps disappointing the expectations of the media, the interpreter equates “translating words” with “parroting”. Here is yet another professional interpreter’s definition of SI:

Interpreter: “Conference interpreting is the maximum transfer of ideas and opinions voiced in one language to another (...) It is about conveying ideas into another language in an intelligible manner” (Cumhuriyet; 04.09.1989).

Furthermore, seemingly at complete odds with the media’s emphasis on ‘loyalty to the original word’, professional conference interpreters add that the task of interpreting entails an ‘interpretation’ of the original message:
Interpreter A: “People who interpret bring in their own interpretation, they bring in something of their own” (Metis Çeviri 1988: 127).

According to the following interpreter, ‘interpretation of the original message’ is an aspect of interpreting that differentiates SI from translation:

Interpreter B: “Some colleagues who do a lot of translation complain that written translation actually slows them down. A very good translator is someone who knows the most crucial words but, as we said in the beginning, in oral translation there is **interpretation**. The difference is apparent in the name of the tasks.” (ibid: boldface indicates words pronounced in English during the interview).

On the other hand, in an interview with a widely read daily, the actress/interpreter mentioned above also supports ‘interpretation’ as an intrinsic part of both acting and interpreting, saying “I’m always interpreting whether on the stage or behind the microphone” (Sabah; İş ve Finans Insert; 02.03.2003).

Despite the emphasis they place on the ‘interpretation’ involved in interpreting, most professional interpreters are quick to insist that their ‘interpretation’ of the original message does not imply any ‘intervention’ or a ‘deviation’ from the meaning in the original. For instance, the same interpreter who suggested that SI always entails an ‘interpretation’ hastened to add that interpreters always access and transfer the meanings intended by the original speakers:

Interpreter B: “The message has to be conveyed very precisely. You cannot allow even the smallest deviation or the smallest intervention. For instance, you may not agree with the speaker. In fact, you may be people who advocate two completely different ideas. However, the only reason for your presence there is that you are an interpreter. You have a mission to fulfill. You are doing **interpretation**, but the message must come across exactly” (Metis Çeviri 1988: 130-131, boldface indicate words pronounced in English in the interview).

Interesting, however, is that although professional interpreters underscore that their ‘interpretation’ never means actively shaping the message to be transferred, their anecdotes often refer to instances where interpreters have become actively involved in shaping the communication between interlocutors. For instance, two interpreters asked during a TV interview to recount a true-life incident, tell about an interpreting assignment where they had begun interpreting dialogue between a top representative of the Council of Europe and an Uzbek Minister only to realize that the Turkish and Uzbek language (thought to be closely related with one another) actually offer very little in common to the untrained ear. As it was too late to complain, the interpreters recount how they had to continue, guessing at what the Uzbek Minister was saying. They admit that some of their guesses created puzzled looks on the faces of the two interlocutors (Stüdyo İstanbul Programı; TRT2; 02.06.1997).

Another professional interpreter asked during a TV program whether professionals actually interpret the manner and styles used by parliamentarians in the original addresses, laughs and explains that interpreters often have to “rephrase” Turkish parliamentarians; if they did not to do so, “everybody would think the interpretation was bad” (ibid)⁴.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of “faithfulness to the original meaning” and the need for “interpretation” in interpreting, professional conference interpreters have also stressed that SI requires special talents – a wide range of personal knowledge and skills – as well as professional qualifications. Here is one example:

Interpreter: “Only people with special talents can overcome the difficulties of this
profession (...) Universal knowledge, a full mastery of the mother tongue, a versatile brain, empathy for other’s thoughts, a talent for acting, stamina, a smiling face and patience, physical and psychological fitness, knowledge of current events, and neutrality are needed to become an interpreter” (Cumhuriyet; 04.09.1989).

To sum up, in contrast to the rather simplistic re-presentation of SI by the voices of the media, the re-presentation offered to the media by professional interpreters is more complex. Interpreters’ discourse on the profession(al) deviates remarkably from that of the media’s voices in two issues. First of all, in contrast to the media’s emphasis on absolute loyalty to the word (or the letter) of the original utterance, professional interpreters underline the importance of loyalty to the original meaning. Secondly, and again running counter to the media’s expectations of remaining faithful to the original word, professional interpreters stress that the task of interpreting involves an ‘interpretation’ of the original message. In this, they hint at the active role of the interpreter in the interpreting process. The latter comes most often to the fore when interpreters are asked to recount specific (and hence ‘contextualized’) instances of SI. In such anecdotes from their real-life experiences, professional interpreters almost always recount instances in which they personally exercised judgment, making critical decisions and/or playing an active role in shaping the communication.

However, once the same interpreters return to a general and de-contextualised description of SI (i.e., when they describe SI without referring to concrete situations), they tend to resume the more conventional discourse on SI, again carefully underscoring that their ‘interpretation’ of the original message always coincides with the meaning in the original.

The voices both of the media and of professional interpreters carefully underscore the importance of professionalism in SI. Both portray SI as a special profession that must be practiced by special people with special talents, skills and training.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to survey the news coverage on simultaneous conference interpreters and interpreting in the Turkish press and television broadcasts from September 1988 through March 2003. The material at hand (a total of 48 news items) has been analysed in respect to three questions in particular: (1) When is a discourse on SI likely to appear in the Turkish media? (2) Which aspects about the profession and the professional have been foregrounded by the members of the media? (3) Which aspects of the profession(al) have been foregrounded by professional interpreters addressing the media?


As to the second question, the analysis shows that the focal points of the media’s discourse include the great differences between professional and non-professional interpreters and various ‘scandalous’ aspects regarding the use or non-use of SI in different occasions. We see that the voices of the media rather simplistically assume that a word-for-word equivalence between languages is possible; thus they foreground ‘loyalty to the word (and even ‘letter’) of the original message’ as the most significant criterion in SI. They also see ‘fluency’ and ‘synchronicity of the delivery’ as significant characteristics of professional SI. When presenting, praising or criticizing SI, members of the media tend to use these criteria, most particularly ‘loyalty to the original word’, as reference points.

As regards the third question, the analysis highlights one most important distinction in the way professional interpreters represent SI in contrast to the approach of the media. Rather than
emphasizing ‘loyalty to the word of the original message’, professional interpreters emphasize remaining ‘loyal to the meaning of the original message’. In doing so, they also point out that the task of interpreting entails an ‘interpretation’ of the original message. Thus they seem to suggest an active involvement of the interpreters in understanding and formulating the meaning of the original utterance for transfer into another language. The involvement of the interpreters in shaping the delivery has proved most visible when professional interpreters recount real-life experiences. In anecdotal and hence ‘contextualised’ accounts of real-life events, interpreters almost always refer to the instances where they had become personally involved in shaping the delivery. However, as soon as interpreters shift back to the more general and hence de-contextualised discourse on SI, they carefully underscore that their ‘interpretation’ of the original meaning always coincides with the meaning in the original message; by no means does it ever imply a deviation or involvement. By adopting such a discourse, professional conference interpreters may be reconciling the element of active involvement implied in ‘interpreting’ the meaning of the original message with the quest for absolute detachment imposed by the voices of the media in their demand for absolute ‘loyalty to the original word and letter’.

In closing, it is important to recall that even though all instances of discourse analysed in this study address the same ‘object’ (i.e., simultaneous interpreting), the portrayal or (re-)presentation of the ‘object’ may vary markedly depending on the identity, position and intentions of the one depicting the profession(al). Dichotomies and contradictions in the discourse, most especially the different approaches to ‘fidelity’ in SI, go a long way in explaining why ‘Big Mistakes’ features as an important discourse-generator in the Turkish media. Likewise, these distinct approaches also explain why professional interpreters who highlight an active role of the interpreter in the interpreting process continually underscore that this active role does not imply an intervention in the message of the original speaker.

Despite the differences in their views on fidelity in SI, both voices of the media and the interpreters themselves converge on the importance of professionalism in SI, agreeing that only professional interpreters should be entrusted with the task of simultaneous interpreting.

Notes

1. In this paper, I refer to ‘Simultaneous Interpreting’ rather than ‘Conference Interpreting’ because the news items analysed here refer to live broadcasting as well as interpreting in booths at conferences. The common denominator to both seems to be the mode of ‘simultaneous’ interpreting.

2. With the live coverage of the war in the Gulf, followed by NATO’s intervention in Yugoslavia, some leading Turkish news channels started recruiting freelance interpreters to interpret developments round the clock. Following the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia, two news channels, CNNTurk and NTV, decided to employ professional interpreters. Both have continued to call upon their interpreters regularly, recruiting freelancers only for round-the-clock live coverage in times of crisis, such as the 9/11 attacks and clashes in Afghanistan and Iraq. Other channels have also come to realise the importance of SI, even though this awareness has not always led to the use of professionals. Interestingly enough, the use of SI in the live coverage of wars has become so popular that one channel, established just before the 9/11 attacks, actually pirated the voices of the interpreters working for other channels and went on the air by superimposing the voice of interpreters being broadcast by another TV channel onto the live images from CNN.

3. Since the publication of this article in The Interpreter’s Newsletter - especially after 17 December 2004, which marked the opening of EU accession talks with Turkey - there has been a marked increase in the number of news focusing on SI as an attractive career. Most of these focus on the
importance of interpreting in the EU, pointing out the increased demand for conference interpreters expected during further integration.

4. Indeed, there is a popular book on SI by a professional interpreter (Çorakçı-Dişbudak 1991). Written with a great sense of humour, it includes numerous anecdotes from the author’s professional experience. All her reminiscences highlight how the interpreters exercise judgment, make critical decisions and actively shape the delivery. However, as is the case with the discourse adopted by professional interpreters in this survey, in her general discourse on SI (i.e., when she does not refer to SI in a particular situation), the author carefully underlines that despite the ‘interpretation’ involved, simultaneous interpreters work like ‘electronic devices’, never intervening in the original message.

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