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Interpreting as a linguistic human right and the Slovenian situation

The contemporary Slovenian linguistic situation is increasingly marked by multiculturalism and multilingualism. These factors are becoming a major linguistic challenge not only in Slovenian culture, but also globally. In order to ensure linguistic rights as basic rights and the equal treatment of all before the law as well as in other social spheres, translation and interpreting are becoming a necessity; the regulation of this professional area, which is defined by a society's socially weakest members, is indicative of the level of democracy in a society. This article presents the Slovenian linguistic situation from the perspective of the need to ensure interpreting for the community, illustrated by a critical discourse analysis of examples from community interpreting, taking into account information gained by direct observation and interviews. The highest legislation in Slovenia, the Constitution, generally guarantees linguistic rights in public settings, yet the implementation depends on specific laws for certain areas, thus ensuring interpreting in the public service sector in Slovenia only in limited environments. In line with Slovenian legislation, interpreting is formally regulated, structured and organised in court and asylum procedures, while no services are offered in general social and healthcare settings (exempt from sign language interpreting). Consequently, the balance of power between parties in an interpreter-mediated interaction differs respectively: whereas power relations in environments with accredited and managed-for interpreters stay rather balanced, they show discrepancies in other settings, where interpreting is managed through improvisation and goodwill of all parties involved, meaning that speakers of foreign languages are often left to themselves and thus at an inferior starting point. Slovenian situation will be observed through a set of necessary steps to achieve comprehensiveness in community interpreting service, defined in Ozolins (2000), from primary steps, like interpreting training and accreditation, to secondary ones, like policy planning and professional development. The presentation will end with suggestions how to improve the present situation and with plans how to regulate the profession in Slovenian society, considering that an integrated arrangement of community interpreting is nowadays necessary, ensuring linguistic rights as basic human rights.