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Could you give us some information about the BKTD and its mission?

Hande Güner: BKTD was established in 1969. In 2009, we will be celebrating our 40th anniversary. At the moment, BKTD has 72 members. Although conference interpreting has become a popular profession in Turkey only recently, the history of the BKTD shows that the profession dates back many years. BKTD carries out activities to inform all relevant parties about professional standards in interpreting for the purpose of promoting professional rules and ensuring their implementation at conferences. In this way, we aim to enhance professionalism in conference interpreting in line with national and international standards.

How would you assess the development of your profession in Turkey?

Hande Güner: As a result of increasing openness in the 1980s, there were important developments in the conference sector in Turkey. The need for conference interpreters grew in the 1990s and 2000s as the conference sector developed. In the 1980s Hacettepe and Bogazici Universities established the first Departments of Translation and Interpreting Studies, followed by Bilkent University. Today, there are quite a number of similar departments in many universities. Centers of Excellence providing graduate level training in conference interpreting have been established at Bogazici and Bilkent universities in the last 3 years with the support of the EU for the purpose of training conference interpreters fluent in at least two languages other than Turkish. Many BKTD members are involved in training because support from professional conference interpreters is essential for the training of interpreters. These efforts for training new interpreters are important in matching demand in the conference sector.

How does a conference interpreter prepare him/herself for a career?

Hande Güner: Everyone who speaks a foreign language can not become an interpreter. It is important to have good training. However, it is also important to work with more experienced colleagues throughout one's career in order to learn more and benefit from their experience.

What kind of a dialog does the BKTD have with the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)?

Hande Güner: Established in 1953, AIIC is headquartered in Switzerland. It has approximately 3000 members from all over the world. Membership to AIIC as well as to the BKTD is made by an individual application. All 32 AIIC members in Turkey are also BKTD members. In 2006, when AIIC membership in Turkey exceeded 25, we were able to establish an AIIC Region according to AIIC rules and since then, one

of our members represents Turkey on the AIIC Board. We exchange information with AIIC about professional developments in Turkey and in the world.

Are international standards in interpreting implemented in Turkey?

Hande Güner: BKTD works to ensure that international standards are fully implemented in Turkey. The basic rules of our profession are well established and they must be implemented in Turkey as elsewhere. We publish Professional Working Conditions for Interpreters and ask conference organizers to comply with these conditions. In addition to professional competence, technical standards constitute one of the important means allowing the interpreter to carry out his/her tasks. We organized some information meetings about technical standards in interpreting and succeeded in establishing ISO standards for technical infrastructure in interpreting as Turkish Standards by applying to the Turkish Standards Institute.

How does the BKTD work with the sector?

Hande Güner: The primary target audience for the BKTD is its membership as well as non-member interpreters while technical service providers and professional conference organizers make up the second and third groups of stakeholders. BKTD carries out information meetings for interpreters and organizes events to promote Turkish ISO standards among technical service providers. This year in September, BKTD will organize a conference with the participation of EU officials and AIIC President for the purpose of informing organizers about professional standards in interpreting, professional rules and technical infrastructure. We are also in contact with universities teaching conference interpreting.

How important is a conference interpreter for the success of an international conference?

Hande Süer: A conference interpreter's job is to make it possible for two sides who do not understand each other to speak the same language. This communication constitutes the most important part of the conference. In a multilingual conference, interpretation is very important.

How do conference interpreters prepare for a meeting?

Hande Süer: They prepare for the topic. If the topic is highly technical, a briefing may be requested. Interpreters may be working at conferences with different topics every day. Therefore, it is important that documents such as the program and texts of speeches are provided and, if necessary, a meeting is arranged with the organizer.

Are conference interpreters specialized on specific topics in Turkey?

Hande Süer: Looking at the number of conferences organized on specific subjects, we see that the distribution does not justify specialization of the interpreters in any specific field. Therefore, conference interpreters in Turkey must have a good grasp of terminology in many subjects.

How do you foresee the development of conference interpreting in Turkey in line with developments in the conference sector?

Zeynep Yanat Kırçal: Conference interpreting will be more important as the conference sector grows. The need for interpreters will increase as the sector grows. Training provided at universities such as Bogazici and Bilkent will be very important

at this point. This training will help conference interpreting as a profession develop with new colleagues.

Is there sufficient number of interpreters in Turkey to meet the demand?

Nazan Kızıltan Süzer: For the moment, it seems that the needs of the sector can be met. There could be an increase in domestic demand in line with the developments in the EU accession of Turkey and the increasing number of interpreters working with European institutions.

Hande Güner: In Turkey we work mostly in Turkish and English. We also have colleagues working in French, German as well as Italian, Spanish and Russian to a lesser extent. However, we have, for example, no interpreters working in languages like Finnish, Japanese or Chinese. When we require these languages, we call on our AIIC colleagues abroad and bring them to Turkey. As the sector develops, we will need “well-trained conference interpreters”.

What will be the effect of the EU accession process on conference interpreting?

Nazan Kızıltan Süzer: EU norms will have a positive impact on interpreting. Many BKTD members have worked in EU buildings since the beginning of accession talks. There are 23 official languages in the EU and interpretation is provided into and from all of these languages. Booths are set up to seat at least three interpreters and the working conditions are very good. With respect to the EU, there could be more need for interpretation at subcommittee meetings as well as during delegation visits.

According to your professional rules, must a conference interpreter interpret every word?

Hande Güner: This has to do with one of the most important responsibilities of the interpreter. The speaker is responsible for the content of his speech. An interpreter may never take the place of the speaker or speak on his/her behalf.

Hande Süer: A conference interpreter must interpret the speech as close to the original as possible.

Zeynep Yanat Kırçal: If a conference interpreter does not provide the full/correct interpretation, s/he will have effectively denied the recipient of that speech a chance to respond.

Nazan Kızıltan Süzer: A conference interpreter must allow both parties to understand each other as though no intermediary exists. For example, s/he must reflect the speaker’s tone.

Do conference interpreters get training to improve their diction?

Hande Güner: No, we didn’t, but it is important to speak your native language well. Most people focus on foreign languages when thinking of conference interpreters whereas interpreters must first speak their native language well.