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Interpreter-assisted Speech-language Intervention in Poland: Needs, Possibilities and Prospects (Współpraca polskiego logopedy z tłumaczem – potrzeby, możliwości i perspektywy)

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LOGOPEDYCZNA PERSPEKTYWA

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WSPÓŁPRACA POLSKIEGO LOGOPEDY Z TŁUMACZEM – POTRZEBY, MOŻLIWOŚCI I PERSPEKTYWY

Streszczenie

W związku ze stale ewoluującą sytuacją demograficzną na świecie logopedzi coraz częściej mają do czynienia z klientem bilingwalnym/wielojęzycznym. W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań sondażowych prowadzonych wśród polskich logopedów, dotyczących ich opinii na temat możliwości współpracy z tłumaczem podczas interwencji logopedycznej. W badaniu sondażowym, w którym wykorzystano autorski kwestionariusz (Gawęł, Węsierska, 2014), wzięło udział 206 logopedów z całej Polski. W badaniu rozpoznano takie kwestie, jak opinie logopedów na temat obecności zjawiska bilingwizmu w Polsce, ich ocena własnego przygotowania teoretycznego i praktycznego do pracy z klientem bilingwalnym i ewentualnej współpracy z tłumaczem oraz postrzeganie roli tłumacza w tym procesie. Badanie ujawniło konieczność upowszechniania wiedzy o zjawisku bilingwalności/wielojęzyczności, jak również opracowania rozwiązań systemowych i zainicjowania specjalistycznych szkoleń dla logopedów i tłumaczy z tego zakresu.

słowa kluczowe: bilingwalność, wielojęzyczność, wielokulturowość, logopedzi, tłumacze, interwencja, współpraca

Interpreter-assisted speech-language intervention in Poland: needs, possibilities and prospects¹

Summary

Due to the constantly evolving global demographic situation, speech-language therapists (SLTs, also: speech-language pathologists – SLPs) have to deal with an increasing workload of bilin-

¹ Preliminary study results were presented at the II International Conference: *Bilingualism, multilingualism and multiculturalism: education, globalization* (Katowice, 19/11/2014) (paper by K. Gawęł and K. Węsierska: *Polish speech-language therapists/pathologists attitude towards collaborations with interpreters: preliminary results*); while the final results were presented at the California Speech-Language-Hearing Association Annual Convention (Long Beach, California 06/03/2015) (poster by K. Węsierska and K. Gawęł: *Interpreter-assisted Speech and Language Services: Survey Findings in Poland*).

gual/multilingual clients. This article presents results of a survey conducted among Polish SLTs aimed at investigating their views with regards to the possibility of collaboration with an interpreter during therapeutic intervention. The original version of the questionnaire (Gawel & Węsierska, 2014) used in this survey was filled out by 206 respondents from different areas across Poland. The following issues were addressed in the study: the SLTs' views on the incidence of bilingualism in Poland, their self-evaluation of the extent of their theoretical and practical preparation for working with bilingual clients, the SLTs' views on the likelihood of collaboration with an interpreter, and the SLTs' perception of the interpreter's role in this process. The results of the study indicate the need to raise awareness of bilingualism/multilingualism, as well as to develop solutions at a systemic level, and introduce professional training programs for SLTs and interpreters.

keywords: bilingualism, multilingualism, multiculturalism, speech-language pathologists/therapists (SLPs/SLTs), interpreters, intervention, collaboration

Introduction

Although migration has existed since the beginnings of human history, in the past, it appeared to occur at a slower pace and in smaller amounts. Today, the pace has accelerated because of more efficient ways of transportation and communication. Nevertheless, the reasons for moving have remained the same: the search for a better economic life, political reasons, joining family, or simply adventure. Changing countries most often implies adjustment to a new language and culture that results in a difficulty to communicate with natives due to the lack of a shared language. Access to various types of services, such as educational (school), community (banks, stores, recreational activities), medical or various clinics which specialize in specific health and allied-health matters is often facilitated by an interpreter who serves as a bridge for communication between individuals who do not have a common language. This article, will specifically address the current trends, needs and perspectives in the collaboration process between speech-language therapists (SLTs) and interpreters/translators (I/Ts) when the SLT and the client do not speak the same language. The information presented is based on recent research conducted with SLTs in Poland.

A linguistic perspective on interpreter-assisted services for bilingual clients with communication disorders

The collaboration between an SLT and an interpreter taking place during speech-language intervention for bilingual clients touches upon various aspects of applied linguistics, therefore, making the issue interdisciplinary.

Firstly, it may be approached from the perspective of Translation (and more prominently) Interpreting Studies. Interpreting in a clinical setting of speech-language therapy is considered community interpreting as its goal is “to enable individuals or groups in society who do not speak the official or dominant language of the services [...] to access these services and to communicate with the service providers” (Hertog 2010: 49). Interpreting scholars claim that the setting of speech-language therapy is one of the hardest and most distinctive forms of community interpreting (Gentile et al. 1996) and the fact of information loss is underlined, especially in cases where an ad hoc interpreter is used (Pöchhacker & Kadric 1999). Nevertheless, the issue is not of mainstream interest in Interpreting Studies, especially in Poland. Though it is mentioned by some scholars, e.g. Tryuk (2006), it is discussed far less than other community interpreting settings such as hospitals, courts, foreign office, police, etc.

Secondly, the main issue of this paper is intertwined with the issue of bilingualism, which itself constitutes a multidisciplinary subject. Bilingualism has been tackled by neurolinguists (F. Fabbro, Ch. A. Perfetti), language-acquisition specialists (C. Baker, J. Cummins, H. Deacon, A. De Houwer, J. Paradis), psycholinguistics (L. M. Bedore, P. Bernardini, Marc H. Bornstein, F. Grosjean, N. K. Lesaux, L. Verhoeven), cognitive linguists (E. Bialystok), and of course speech-language therapy scholars (L. Cheng, B. Goldstein, K. Kohnert, H.W. Langdon, E. D. Peña). It should be noted, however, that the occurrence of speech and language disorders in bilingual individuals has not been proven to be any greater than in monolingual people and this paper is not focusing on that angle, but aims at studying the availability of the services for bilingual people.

Finally, given the complexity of the phenomenon of bilingualism and the significant variability that exists among the linguistic skills of multilingual clients all over the world, serious challenges emerge before the SLT. The most prevalent topic discussed in SLT literature is who should provide speech-language therapy services to bilingual clients (a bilingual clinician or a monolingual therapist or a bilingual therapist who does not share the same language with the client, with the assistance of an interpreter). Interpreter-assisted services for bilingual clients have been discussed by various speech-language therapy specialists and have been examined in many multilingual countries, e.g. the USA (Weiss & Kostich 2007; Langdon 2008), Canada (D’Souza, Kay-Raining Bird & Deacon 2012), Australia (Roger & Code 2011).

Growing importance of bilingualism and multiculturalism in the modern world

Today, nearly 7 billion people who inhabit our planet communicate in as many as over 6000 different languages and dialects (Ethnologue 2013), and there are more bilingual individuals than we may think. Therefore, why is it necessary to have recourse to an interpreter/translator? The answer is simple, because the likelihood that two bilingual individuals will speak or read the same two languages or even speak two languages with the same fluency in every context (see the concept of non-balanced bilingualism: Kohnert 2013) is quite slim. Therefore, the involvement of an interpreter or translator may be necessary to mediate communication between those individuals or to understand written material in the other language². Over the last century, an increasing number of immigrants has settled not only in the United States, which traditionally has been considered as one of the most popular destinations, but also in Canada, Australia, and even Europe. Fifty or sixty years ago, Great Britain, France, and Germany, for example, were populated by persons who spoke, for the most part English, French, and German as well as various regional languages. However, a new wave of immigration, resulting from the aftermath of WWII and the independence of several countries in Africa and Asia in particular, has created the many threads of a new tapestry of languages and cultures in several parts of Europe as well. French continues to be the official language of France, but Arabic is now spoken by many residents, as well as Portuguese; Polish, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, and Yoruba can be heard in Great Britain; while in Germany other prevalent languages include Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic and Russian and many other languages. Most often these immigrants do not speak the majority language of the country where they immigrated at all, or are not very fluent. Additionally, their reading skills in the new language may vary as well.

Due to its geopolitical situation, Poland had been a multilingual/multicultural country bridging the East and the West for centuries. During the mid-war period more than 30% of Poland's society comprised non-Polish natives (Krajewska-Kula & Łukaszuk 2010). This changed after the WW2 when Poland became an almost monolingual country as a result of the Holocaust,

² It is important to make the distinction between interpreter and translator although the two terms have been used interchangeably. In either case it means to convey the message from one language to the other, but *interpreting* is performed orally whereas *translation* is done in writing.

forced migration and newly established borders. The two turning points towards multilingualism and multiculturalism in Poland's modern history are definitely the establishment of the democratic system in 1989 and, more recently, joining the European Union. Although the population of Poland is far less diverse than in the United States, the statistics are increasing. In the 2011 census more than 180 thousand people from a total population of 40 million declared that their mother tongue (i.e. L1) is other than Polish. However, the census and recent data provided by the Foreign Office have shown a significant increase in: the number of people using a language other than Polish at home, number of Polish children born abroad, scale of re-emigration, number of Poles living abroad, and number of foreigners living in Poland. All of these aspects contribute to growing multilingualism and multiculturalism in Poland.

Intervention for communication disorders in the culturally and linguistically diverse population of the U.S.

Formal background

In the United States (U.S.) specific federal laws and state laws require that students who are referred for possible special education services be assessed in their first language (L1) if English is their second language. This law exists since 1975 with the implementation of PL-94-142 and was reauthorized in 2004 with IDEA (Individual Disabilities Education Act). In 1985, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) recommended that when a speech-language pathologist (SLP)³ cannot provide services in the student's language, the collaboration of a trained interpreter is necessary (ASHA 1985). Even though certifications for various interpreting specialists have been issued (medical, court, deaf), training and certification of interpreting services in educational settings such as schools or allied health professionals such as SLPs or audiologists, has not been developed. Even after 30 years, there are only a few resources that outline procedures on how to collaborate with interpreters and translators in the communication disorders field (Langdon & Cheng 2002; Langdon, Siegel, Halog & Sánchez-Boyce 1994) with an upcoming publication (Langdon & Saenz, in press). And only counted training programs have been outlined (Fradd, 1993; Manuel-Dupont & Yoakum 1997; Matsuda & O'Connor

³ In the United States the SLT is referred to as SLP (Speech-Language Pathologist).

1993). However, training of interpreters and SLPs is not formalized and varies in quality. Several surveys by Caesar and Kohler (2007), Hammer et al. (2004) and a recent dissertation by Palfrey (2013) indicate there is a need to adequately train both the interpreter and the SLP to collaborate in order to offer fair and equitable assessments and services to students who speak other languages than English and their families. Langdon and Saenz (in press) describe this process in great detail by relying on the most recent information available for suggested practices in other specialized fields where the services of interpreters are needed.

Developed strategies for working with interpreters

There are three situations where the collaboration from an interpreter is necessary to ensure the fair assessment of a client whose proficiency in much lower compared to other. The first situation is during an *Interview*, which is performed in order to gather background information. The second is during *Assessment* where the interpreter is asked to interact directly with the client using his/her first language to observe, record and analyze how s/he responds and communicates. The third situation involves *Conferences* where the SLP reports the results of the assessment and writes treatment goals.

There are three steps that should be followed for each one of the three situations: *Briefing* (introductory step), *Interaction* involving the client, and *Debriefing* (closing remarks). These form the BID process introduced by Langdon and Cheng (2002) and advocated by ASHA.

In all situations, the SLP and the interpreter should decide, agree about and be aware of the issues listed below in order to function as a unanimous team.

- The mode of interpreting (simultaneous or consecutive⁴ where the latter is preferred);
- The information to be requested or shared;
- Scope of responsibilities and the roles of each person on the team should be defined at the initiation of the interview or conference for everyone present: the SLP is the one who is in charge of the meeting, the interpreter needs to remain neutral but may assist as a cultural broker as well;
- All participants should be seated so that they can face each other;
- The interpreter should interpret all that is said, including nonverbal messages (e.g. intonation denoting emotions), avoiding the use of reported speech and any summarizing;

⁴ Also referred to as *sequential* in the field of speech-language therapy.

- The SLP should use short sentences, pause between ideas if necessary, avoid using idiomatic expressions and “professional jargon”;
- Review and report issues during the debriefing, and set the goals for future collaboration;
- Decide on the method of assessment in advance, as the number of testing materials available in other languages than English or Spanish, and a few other languages, which are available to assess the speech and language skills of clients is quite limited. McLeod and Verdon (2014) list various tests in as many as 19 languages, but the majority are for monolingual speakers of those languages. The use of translated tests which have not been calibrated to the norm meeting certain standards shall not be used, therefore, there may occur the need to base the assessment fully on observation and language samples which will require interpreter’s insight into client’s L1, which s/he has to be aware of;
- Only in exceptional circumstances, should one ask an adult family member or friend to serve as an interpreter, also because of the confidentiality matters. In no circumstances, should minors be asked to interpret, because of issues of confidentiality and the task may be beyond their linguistic and cognitive abilities. ASHA provides guidelines for selecting professional interpreters.

Challenges and desired directions for SLPs and interpreters in the U.S.

In spite of the long standing multiculturalism/multilingualism in the US and the presence of laws which ensure that clients who are learning a second language are assessed fairly, the US society is still learning how to assess these clients in a fair manner with the collaboration of an interpreter when bilingual SLPs who speak their clients’ languages are not available. Current and future bilingual SLPs are being educated on how to provide services in the language which is spoken most frequently, which is Spanish, although there are many as 400 different languages represented throughout districts in the country. Collaboration with interpreters was suggested by ASHA (1985) thirty years ago. However, the process of this complex interaction has not been formalized for various reasons: (1) There is no mandated training or certificate for those interpreters who work in educational settings with teachers, psychologists or SLPs; (2) Therefore, to satisfy minimal requirements almost anyone who is bilingual is asked to do the job and few SLPs adhere to the protocols that have been suggested; (3) The interpreters’ work and value is not recognized as very

important and difficult, and the person is not respected or compensated fairly for these services; (4) SLPs do not receive sufficient training on how to prepare and work with interpreters and, (5) It is very time consuming process as it is almost like assessing the client twice, in L1 and L2.

Speech and language intervention for bilingual clients in Poland

As a result of the dynamic geopolitical and socio-demographic changes, Poland has also witnessed a growing number of diverse clients requiring speech-language services mediated by a professional interpreter. Although this issue is not very widespread in Poland yet, its presence and implications are becoming more and more noticeable. The biggest challenges Polish SLTs have to face in this area are: the insufficient training for conducting fair assessments suited for multilingual clients, and the lack of standardized diagnostic tools to assess multilingual clients and materials to provide therapy (Węsierska 2014). Although this continues to be a challenge worldwide, it is only in the last few years that this issue has been of concern to SLTs working in Poland.

Interpreter-assisted speech and language services: survey findings in Poland

Goals

The main goal of the study was to establish the readiness of Polish SLTs to conduct assessment and therapy of multilingual clients with the assistance of a professional interpreter. The ‘readiness’ mentioned above was explored in terms of the SLTs’ willingness to collaborate with an interpreter, awareness of the problems, adequate training and the presence of formal procedures concerning services for multilingual clients.

Methodology

The data was gathered on the basis of a survey addressing the following issues: the need for interpreter-assisted speech and language services in Poland, SLTs’ views on interpreter’s competence and role, and the protocol of collaboration between SLTs and interpreters. The survey consisted of 5 demographic questions and 22 main questions (both open-ended and close-ended) and was

distributed in person and via email to Polish SLT practitioners. The study encompassed 206 participants who represented most provinces of Poland (Dolnośląskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lubelskie, Lubuskie, Łódzkie, Małopolskie, Mazowieckie, Opolskie, Podkarpackie, Pomorskie, Śląskie, Wielkopolskie). All participants were female which is typical of the profession in Poland. The respondents displayed a wide range of professional experience (from less than five years of experience to more than twenty), however, the majority worked as SLTs for less than 10 years. The surveyed SLTs worked in different settings, including educational, medical and private clinics, though the majority of them provided school and preschool SLT services.

Results and discussion

Almost half (46.7%) of the respondents admitted that they had had bilingual or foreign clients who required interpreting. Nevertheless, these instances happened occasionally (not more than once or twice a year) or rarely (once or twice per six months).

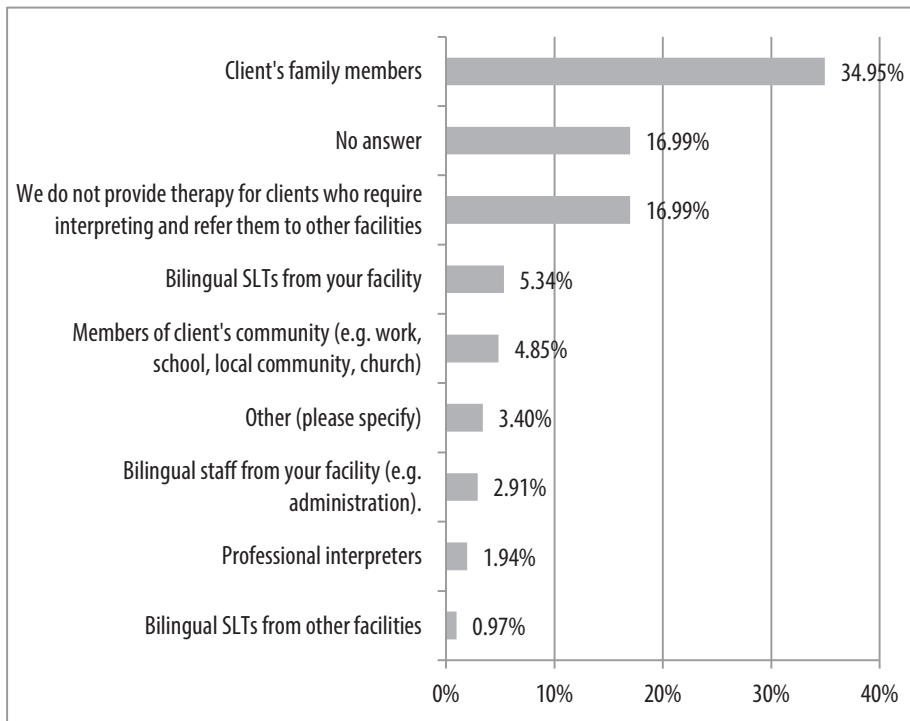
The most common languages requiring interpreting were **English** (30.58%), **German** (10.68%) and **French** (4.37%). Other languages mentioned by the participants included Russian, Spanish, Italian, Vietnamese, Dutch, Korean, Czech, Japanese, Serbian, Danish, Macedonian, Turkish, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Greek, Croatian and Arabic. The clients requiring interpreting were mostly preschoolers and primary school students. This observation may, however, be co-dependent with the fact that the majority of the participants worked in the school setting.

The results show that when the SLTs were faced with providing assessment and therapy requiring interpreting, their first interpreter of choice was a member of the client's family (34.95%). The second most popular choice was refraining from providing services (16.99%). Only 1.94% of the respondents used the services of professional interpreters (see Figure 1). Nevertheless, the SLTs were not consistent in their choices. Not only did they shift between professional and various ad hoc interpreters, they also used services of different people within the same type of interpreters.

The lack of consistency when it comes to the choice of interpreters often hinders therapy and rapport. It may stem from various reasons. Firstly, one may observe the lack of relevant procedures and protocols of collaboration with interpreters and providing therapy for multilingual clients. 88.83% of SLTs admitted their facility did not have any regulations concerning that

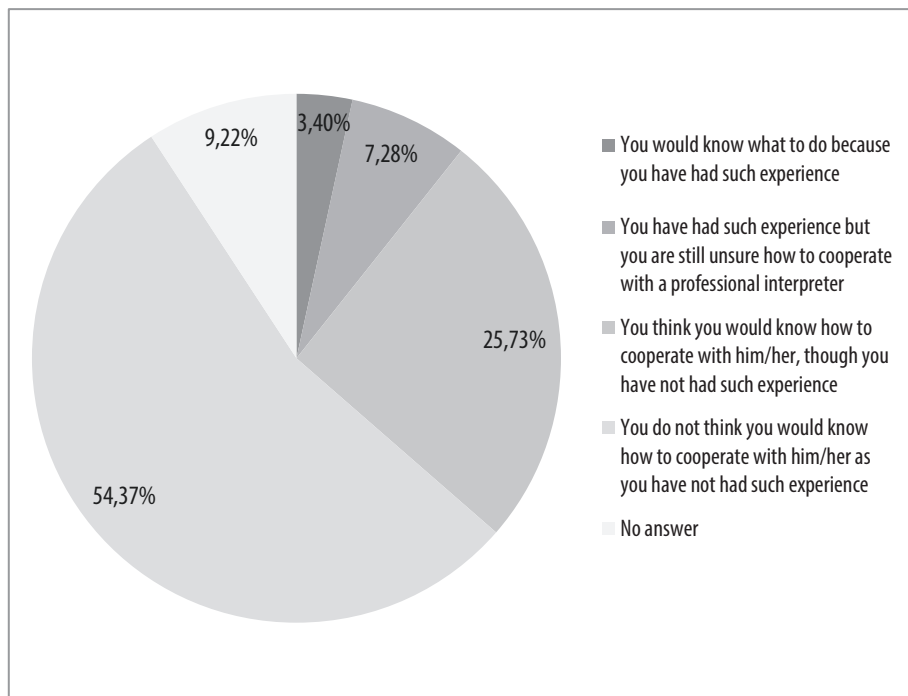
matter, while 10.68% refrained from answering that question, probably due to lack of awareness or knowledge on that matter. The surveyed SLTs pointed out that their facilities lacked standardized protocols and also funds for providing therapy for bilingual clients with the assistance of the interpreter. Moreover, around 1/3 of the respondents believed that they could not expect their supervisor's support, were they to provide the mentioned services. In other words, the SLTs felt that in such cases they would be left to their own devices and provisional solutions, such as using the client's family members as ad hoc interpreters.

Fig. 1. SLTs' choices of interpreters for bilingual services



Secondly, the SLTs point at their lack of experience. Vast majority of the participants admitted that they had not had the experience of working with an interpreter, and the few of them who had such an opportunity, were still not sure whether their knowledge would suffice in case of intervention involving a bilingual client. This is presented in Figure 2 below.

Fig. 2. SLTs' evaluation of their experience and knowledge of cooperating with interpreters



Finally, the SLTs lack proper training. Though more than 47% of the participants said that they had come across the issue of multilingualism in their SLT education, only 3.4% had been trained to work with an interpreter.

The SLTs' perception of an interpreter was studied in regards to a few factors: interpreter's competences, interpreter's role in providing therapy in collaboration with the SLT, and expectations towards interpreters. According to the respondents' opinions the most valued competences of an interpreter were: exceptional knowledge of the foreign (74.76%) and the Polish language (53.88%) and being familiar with speech-language therapy (47.09%).

Table 1 below shows the SLTs' views on the scope of interpreters' responsibilities. The most prevalent expectations towards interpreters concerned two major areas: providing information about the client's speech/language disorders occurring in L1 (directing the SLT's attention to speech/language problems – 41.75%, describing the disorder – 42.23%), and helping to avoid misunderstanding (by directing the SLT's attention towards cultural differences – 48.06%, and asking supporting questions – 42.72%).

Tab. 1. SLTs' expectations towards an interpreter

SLTs' expectations (The interpreter should...)	n*	%*
Direct SLT's attention to speech disorders which occur while client is speaking his/her L1	86	41.75
Describe the disorder which occurs while client is speaking his/her L1	87	42.23
Name the speech disorders which occur while client is speaking his/her L1	33	16.02
Direct SLT's attention towards significant cultural differences which may impair SLT-client rapport	99	48.06
Ask supporting questions to avoid misunderstanding between the client and the SLT	88	42.72
Simplify the SLT's statements for the client	37	17.96
Point out possible trouble-spots for understanding	53	25.73
Summarize long passages	16	7.77
Help to fill in the documents (questionnaires, etc.)	55	26.70
Answer client's questions to the SLT if he/she knows the answer	24	11.65
Sight-translate assessment tests if they are not available in Polish	99	48.06
Use clarifications if s/he notices that the client does not understand some matter	40	19.42

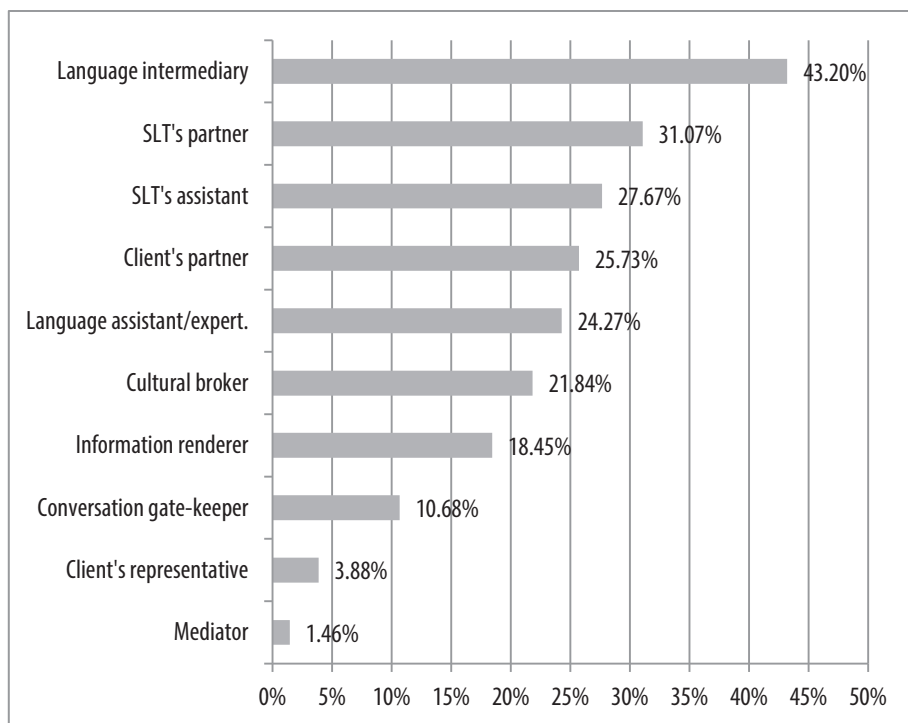
*Respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer

SLTs' expectations, however, do not correspond with their worries and reservations concerning collaboration with interpreters. Although nearly half of the respondents pointed out that they wanted the interpreter to sight translate assessment tests, none of them expressed their concern about the validity of the results obtained this way, which may be a major issue (cf. Roger & Code 2011). Relatively few SLTs were worried about establishing good interpreter-SLT rapport and maintaining a balance in the client-interpreter-SLT triangle. Most of the worries concerned interpreter's competences, qualifications and personal traits. This proves that Polish SLTs are not accustomed to working in therapeutic teams and cannot spot the possible problems that may occur in the process of a collaboration effort.

The SLTs had various opinions when it comes to the roles of an interpreter (see Figure 3 below). They usually perceived the interpreter as a language intermediary (43.2%). However, among other interpreter's roles they quite frequently mentioned SLT's professional partner (31.07%), SLT's assistant (27.67%), the client's partner (25.73%), a language expert (24.27%), a cultural broker (21.84%), and an information renderer (18.45%).

Other listed roles (i.e. mediator, client's representative and conversation gate-keeper) were not popular amongst the participants, which is quite justified as they were proposed by the scholars for other community interpreting settings, such as court, police station, immigration office, bilateral business meetings, refugee camps, etc. (Note: the % values do not add up to 100 as the participants were allowed to choose more than one role).

Fig. 3. SLTs' opinions about the roles of an interpreter



*Respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer

Conclusion

The results have shown that there are instances where services require the assistance of an interpreter, and that the frequency of these instances is growing. SLTs lack theoretical background and practical tools, and often refrain from providing therapy for non-native speakers of Polish. Therefore, certain measures need to be taken to change the state of events.

Practical implications for Polish speech and language services

Due to the changes in Poland associated with an increased mobility of the citizens of our country in the past few decades, as well as greater interest among foreigners for settling in Poland, Polish speech-language therapy must be prepared to meet new challenges such as delivering services to bilingual clients or

to those for whom Polish is a second language. Although the challenge so far is only a small-scale phenomenon in Poland, this study has shown that a large proportion of the respondents faced this issue in their work place and most of them were forced to find a temporary solution. Therefore, given a global trend in the speech-language therapy field to implement evidence-based practices and because of the socio-demographic changes taking place in Poland, application of some of the procedures developed in countries where the SLT-interpreter collaboration is a typical challenge and daily practice, appears to be the best choice to follow. The main objective should be to familiarize SLTs with the phenomenon of bilingualism and its correlation with speech-language therapy field. Further steps may include: adaptation of the protocol for collaborating with interpreters proposed by Langdon and Cheng (2002) and Langdon and Saenz (in press), consultations and presentations delivered by international and local experts, introducing the topic of multilingualism to university SLT programs on a larger scale and preparing and training interpreters in the field of speech-language therapy. It is also necessary to solve some practical issues such as securing funds for interpreter services. An ideal situation would be to introduce these topics in university curricula for SLTs and interpreters. Another step, which could also be considered, would be to introduce professional training sessions for current SLTs and interpreters to support them in setting up the basis for their collaboration.

Actions are currently underway in response to the survey. An educational poster about bilingualism is being distributed⁵. International seminars and conferences on this topic were organized at the University of Silesia (2013, 2014)⁶ and University of Lodz (2014) as a way of improving the understanding of the phenomenon of bilingualism/multilingualism/ multiculturalism. In order to meet the needs of SLTs, two editions of professional workshops were also delivered (in 2013–2014).

Training highly qualified community interpreters is also gaining importance. Although the vast majority of university interpreter-training programmes focus on conference interpreting, more and more universities are introducing community interpreting courses or even specializations, e.g. FTSK Germersheim, Magdeburg in Germany, Surrey in Great Britain, Western Sydney in Australia (cf. Hale 2007: 265) and, quite recently, University of Silesia in Poland.

⁵ Preventive poster *B... jak bilingwizm = dwujęzyczność; (B...as in Bilingualism)*, disseminating the idea of bilingualism has been developed and produced in cooperation with researchers from the San José State University (H.W. Langdon), the University of Silesia (J. Przyklenk, K. Węsierska), the University of Lodz (A. Płusajska-Otto) and the Polish Logopedic Society (I. Michalak-Widera).

⁶ Read more at: <http://www.fil.us.edu.pl/ijp/index.php?s=aktualnosci>

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