The Interplay Between Public Diplomacy and Interpreting in The Light of Interpretive Theory of Translation (Theory of Sense)

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Abstract

Public diplomacy has recently come to the fore as a field that gains importance in international relations. Defined particularly as 'soft diplomacy', public diplomacy does not only describe the relations among nations but also plays an extremely pivotal role in the promotion of socio-cultural structures of the countries in the current stage. In this manner, several countries establish relevant institutions and agencies relating to public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is accordingly becoming an indispensable area in foreign affairs. This being the case, the interplay and interaction between public diplomacy and interpreting which bears the utmost importance in international relations have mostly been neglected. Therefore, this study aims at studying the contributions of interpreting to public diplomacy under the light of the interpretive theory of translation (theory of sense or théorie du sens)

Keywords: public diplomacy, soft power, interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, interpretive theory of translation

1. Introduction

Recently public diplomacy has come to the fore more than any time in the past and turned into a field where academic studies and research are conducted not to mention numerous articles, theses, and books authored and published. Public diplomacy is also a discipline elaborated at the graduate level. This increasing interest in the field has urged scholars and researchers to probe into the connections between public diplomacy and several other social fields. Thus, the connection between translation/interpreting and public diplomacy has also been focused on though at a restricted level attributing more emphasis and priority on the interplay between translation and public diplomacy. There have been several studies conducted regarding public diplomacy across the entire globe including Türkiye yet no in-depth analysis exists as to the interplay between interpreting and public diplomacy which drives this present study to fill in a gap and pave the way forward for future studies to lean on the subject.

It is widely known that interpreting alongside translation plays a vital role in public diplomacy. Public diplomacy agencies require interpreters both at the level of diplomatic representations and non-governmental institutions. This requirement is growing on a daily basis depending on the roles and developments assumed by public diplomacy.

This present study aims at assessing interpreting within the framework of public diplomacy as an academic and diplomatic field and analyzing the interplay between public diplomacy and interpreting. The study discusses this interplay within the scope of the trail blazing interpretive theory of translation (théorie du sens- hereinafter referred to as theory of sense), developed by Lederer and Seleskovitch. The study delves into the potential benefits of this theory to interpreting as a practice. Therefore, the study tries to suggest a response to the research question of 'Can interpreting contribute to serve to the objectives of public diplomacy?' This study is the first ever written academic work in this particular field and aims at suggesting the idea that the link between interpreting and public diplomacy and the roles played by interpreters in strengthening public diplomacy may be further studied in the future with several seminal research. Hence, this study limits itself with its possible contributions to the field of public diplomacy and stresses that the opinions offered by this study are entirely subjective and do not target reaching any definitive idea or results.

1.1. Literature Study

Theories of translation are generally considered to be applying to written translation only. Though it is not possible to talk about too many theories of interpreting an eminent interpreting scholar Pöchacker (1995) suggests that theories of written translation also apply to oral translation or interpreting while Jungwha (2013) rejects this argument and refers to an 'interpretive theory of written translation'. Chesterman (2009) on the other hand blends these two opinions and develops a mixed concept of 'TranslaTOR' to refer to both translation and interpreting. The theory of sense (théorie du sens) developed by scholars of interpreting Lederer and Seleskovitch from the Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies of the Sorbonne University refers mostly to a transition from practice into theory as: "...it is composed of a deep understanding of the source text, distinguishing the grammatical form from words, and expression of the understood thoughts and feelings felt in another language ...." (Özcan, (2019), pp., 589-590 as quoted from Lederer (1994) p., 11) Seleskovitch argues that interpreting is not only a transfer of expressions from one language into the other and prioritizes the meaning (Su, 2019) and defines it as "...transforming from the source language into meaning and a thought that may be transferred into any language without considering the words used in the original language if consciously behaved..." (Diriker (2009) p., 78 as quoted from Seleskovitch (1977). Kang (2013) suggests that the theory of sense focuses on the translated (or interpreted) content and argues that Seleskovitch considers the interpreter as a

mediator transferring the meaning rather than the words (both implicitly and explicitly) between the two languages. Lederer, as another essential developer of the theory, refers to the need for shared knowledge between the speaker and learner with a view to ensuring meaning. (Kang, 2013). Lederer, therefore, takes all non-lingual elements seriously apart from lingual elements. (Durukan & Çokövün, 2015). Jongwha (2003) argues that the interpretive theory is based on four main pillars as: '1) command of the native language, 2) command of the source language, 3) command of relevant world and background knowledge, and 4) command of interpreting methodology. (p., 2). Yunyan (2020) refers to deverbalization which is dissociating word from meaning and reformulating the meaning as an important part of the theory. Another leading developer of the theory of sense, Herbulot (2004) considers the theory of sense to have two main principles as: '… UNDERSTANDING and SAYING… p., 308). Göktaş (2014) considers the theory of sense as an approach that puts the interpreter at the center, while Delisle (1980) assesses the theory as the interconnectedness of meaning and extra-lingual elements. Lederer (2006) on the other hand defines it as establishing communication amongst mechanisms. bringing along diverse and different definitions of the theory while Pagura (2012) focuses on deverbalization which he needs further analysis and research as part of studying the theory of sense.

1.2. Methodology

This study is a qualitative study. As Creswell (2014) notes qualitative research is based on "… exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). As qualitative research is based on a theoretical basis, this study tries to suggest a connection between the interpretive theory of translation (theory of sense) and interpreting within the context of public diplomacy as an emerging and outstanding academic field. This leads to an inherent link between the objective of the study and its theoretical background which is built upon the suggestion of Haradhan (2018) leaning on the connection between the goals and theoretical basis of a researcher in qualitative research. Furthermore, this study is also based on Denzin and Lincoln's (2007) argument in not suggesting a definitive methodology and mainly limits itself with rendering a theoretical analysis and linking this analysis with an emerging academic and diplomatic field within the scope of interpreting. This qualitative research is also based on the premises developed by Saldanha and O'Brien (2013) with regard to researching translation (interpreting) as a social discipline.

The following section of this study will concentrate on defining and giving a historical perspective of public diplomacy, which will be followed by analyzing public diplomacy practices across the world by selecting major examples, and the study into interpreting and its links and presence in public diplomacy. The study will then study the theory of sense as well as

its implications on interpreting and public diplomacy which will be organized in the form of a discussion. This will be followed by a short conclusion regarding the subject matter.
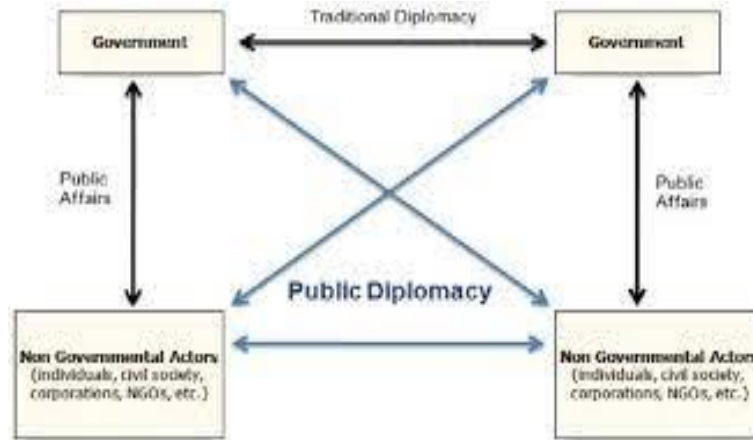
2. Public Diplomacy

2.1. Public Diplomacy and History

Diplomacy is no longer defined with a conventional understanding or is no longer a field that is simply conducted by diplomats but has gained new dimension so as to suggest several new categories of diplomacy as sports diplomacy, trading diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, digital diplomacy, public diplomacy, etc. (İskit, 2915). Public diplomacy should thus be considered within this new understanding and categorization. In this context, public diplomacy refers to the type of diplomacy where mass media, public relations, and engagement with non-governmental organizations come to the fore. This requires conducting diplomacy not via conventional means and diplomats of foreign service but with the participation of all other actors in this particular process, heralding a new era of diplomacy (Aydemir, 2018). Providing several definitions with a historical perspective Nihal Y. Karakoç (2015) refers to public diplomacy as one of the emerging areas where translation and interpreting become important. Comparing the public diplomacy practices in Türkiye, the United States, and Japan, Yasin Yaylar (2020) makes an in-depth analysis of public diplomacy and further suggests a link between conventional diplomacy and various types of diplomacy (trade diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, digital diplomacy, niche diplomacy etc.) where he bases public diplomacy at the core of new diplomacy, and refers to the concept of 'soft power' which best describes public diplomacy in distinguishing the new diplomacy from conventional one which is based mostly on 'hard power' which refers to the use of military power and coercion and imposing economic sanctions, etc. It was Joseph S. Nye (2004) who essentially defined and theorized 'soft diplomacy' as his name is now associated with public diplomacy everywhere in the world. Analyzing the role of soft diplomacy in Turkish public diplomacy, İbrahim Kalın (2011) defines soft power as: 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments (p. 8). In this context Kalın further suggests '…A country's soft power capacity defines the success of its public diplomacy… The acceptance of a country's policies as legitimate by others also defines that country's soft power capacity. (pp. 8-9). The following diagram displays the interplay between conventional diplomacy and new diplomacy where public diplomacy plays a crucial role:

Figure 1

Relationship between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy

(Gurgu & Cociubran, 2016, p. 128)

Public diplomacy does not hold a long history and the academic research of the term only dates to 1965 when Edmund Gullion from the School of Law and Diplomacy University founded the Center for Public Diplomacy and coined term public diplomacy. This initiative was followed by its use and employment by the United States Information Agency (USIA) as a governmental policy in 1990s which also coincide with the creation of the term 'soft power' by Nye to refer to public diplomacy (Gurgu & Cociubran). In this process, public diplomacy has gained importance and impetus in the post-Cold War period leading to the present time with the new dimensions and numerous areas it relies on. As this study will not focus on the history of diplomacy and public diplomacy, the researcher just intends to give a brief understanding of the topic and its past. The history of interpreting and diplomacy (with the inclusion of public diplomacy) has been studied in detail by several scholars (Angelelli, 2004; Baigorri-Jalon, 1984; Delisle and Woodsworth, 2012; and Roland, 1999) who require further reading to probe into this matter. Studies and research are in progress as regards public diplomacy, yet the studies conducted so far into public diplomacy's role or interplay with translation and interpreting are scarce waiting to be further expanded and multiplied.

2.2. Public Diplomacy Practices

As public diplomacy gains importance and comes to the fore as an emerging field, its importance was recognized by all relevant countries particularly those developed countries as well as the countries in developing. In this context, governments are establishing public diplomacy institutions as they are backed by non-governmental organizations, diasporas, cultural organizations as well as business cycles that all play a major role in shaping the foreign policy of a country under the scope of the new diplomacy explained above.

As a leading country in the realm of public diplomacy, the United States is a good example of a country that brings together all its governmental and non-governmental capacities under the banner of the Undersecretariat for Public Diplomacy reporting to the Department of State, as well as various cultural exchange programs, international aid and peace initiatives, cultural events, global brands, etc. Japan also comes to the fore as its Ministry of Foreign Affairs takes the lead and plays a crucial role in addition to the international Japanese media outlets and cultural representations of the Japanese nation like animes, Japanese traditional sports and attire. (Yaylar, 2020). Cognizant of the rising importance of public diplomacy, other leading countries like South Korea, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Russian Federation, Brazil, and many others also refer to the same means as a combination of public and private initiatives to further enhance their diplomatic presence and interests in their own regions and/or across the entire globe (Aydemir, 2018). Türkiye also has adopted a sound public policy as it builds upon its long-lasting foreign policy tradition led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs alongside the roles assumed by the Turkish trading community as well as a wide range of Turkish diaspora living across the world, especially in western countries. Analyzing the role of public diplomacy in Türkiye's new diplomatic initiatives particularly taken in the past two decades, Kalın (2011) studies Turkish public diplomacy within the scope of Nye's 'soft power' concept and argues that Türkiye's values and cultural and political dynamics define its soft power and distinguished the country from others as regards its cultural and historical ties in the region. In this respect, Kalın suggests that Türkiye's public diplomacy does not much resemble other countries and rather has a unique and unprecedented character.

Almost every country and government have its own public diplomacy institutions, reflecting their peculiar diplomatic past and foreign affairs strategies. As this study focuses on the interplay between interpreting and public diplomacy, the details of public institutions per country will not be dealt with in detail.

3. Interpreting and Public Diplomacy

Interpreting is mostly defined in two categories as consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting not to mention several other types of interpreting like escort interpreting, whisper interpreting, community interpreting, etc. Consecutive interpreting is conducted almost in all media as the speaker delivers his/her speech while the interpreter takes necessary notes. On the other hand, simultaneous interpreting is held with necessary technical equipment as the speaker delivers his/her remarks and the interpreter interprets the message of the source language into the target one simultaneously without the need to wait for the speaker to end his/her speech. Though this is a very broad definition of interpreting, several studies have been

held to provide more information regarding interpreting both in theoretical and practical terms (Doğan, 2009; Diriker, 2005; Pöchhacker, 1995; Gürçağlar, 2011).

The interplay between interpreting and diplomacy and the role of interpreters in diplomacy including public diplomacy have been studied and dealt with particularly by Delisle and Woodsworth, 2012; Angelelli, 2004, and Baigorri-Jalon, 1984. It is mostly believed that there is a natural link between interpreting and diplomacy as put forth by Delisle and Woodsworth (2012): "Interpreting and diplomacy have tended to overlap... The further back we go in time, the more difficult it is to draw a clear line between the two..." (p., 274). This natural and historical link unavoidably renders it almost impossible to study diplomacy (with all its forms) without interpreting it and vice versa. However, the link between public diplomacy and interpreting has not been much studied so far which drives this present study to be amongst the first research to fill the vacuum and provide an opportunity for future studies.

The connection between public diplomacy and interpreting normally applies to the connection between the former with translation. Therefore, the studies on public diplomacy and translation also refer to interpreting and vice versa. However, as this present study solely focuses on interpreting, the translation-public diplomacy connection will not be touched upon here. What comes to the fore is particularly interpreting and interpreter's role in diplomacy in general and public diplomacy in particular. This role bears utmost importance in forging a foreign policy strategy for the countries in today's world and brings along an 'interlingual mediation' bridging gaps between cultures and diplomats (Sawyer, 2012). This bridge referring to the notion of 'cultural diplomacy' as a major pillar of public diplomacy is directly referred to as a '...diplomatic action emerging from the communication requirement. Cultural diplomacy, therefore, constitutes a fundamental area for public diplomacy' (Çakır & Çetin, 2022, p., 1185). Interpreting and public diplomacy's interplay was also studied in respect of the 'tactful role' assumed by the interpreter acting as both a diplomat and lingual mediator between the two sides of a diplomatic conference (Helmer, 2019). This role is also considered to have a geopolitical aspect in addition to its cultural perspectives which renders interpreting a 'multi-disciplinary' field in public diplomacy (Çakır & Çetin, 2022). This approach conforms to the 'soft power' characteristic of public diplomacy, rendering interpreting and public diplomacy two inter-lined areas of study (Çakır & Çetin, 2022). Furthermore, the cultural aspects of interpreting in public diplomacy are further studied with a historical understanding and perspective (Baranyai, 2011). In this respect, Boggs (2015) studies interpreting within the context of U.S. public diplomacy and probes into analyses of speeches, monologues of U.S. diplomats to conduct a functional study where he comes up with impacts of communication as well as different methods of speaking and occasions in public diplomacy. Bloggs' study plays crucial importance as to the inherent and practical link between interpreting and public

diplomacy making interpreting an essential part of public diplomacy. Karakoç (2015) also discusses in detail by giving examples from Türkiye and the world, the professional roles assumed by an interpreter and the strategies and methods employed by interpreters in public diplomacy as a major discipline of diplomacy.

As mentioned in the studies above, interpreting's and interpreters' role in shaping and implementing public diplomacy cannot be denied. Though this role was not much studied at an academic level, interpreters come more to the fore as public diplomacy develops and requires support from interpreters, particularly in transferring culture-specific items in a diplomatic setting (Arslan, 2023). Aware of this fact, this study tries to put this inevitable relation (between interpreting and public diplomacy) into the theory of sense with a view to helping to explicate interpreting's implicatures on public diplomacy as an emerging field of study and practice.

4. A General Discussion: Theory of Sense and Interpreting in Public Diplomacy

This study argues that the theory of sense developed by Lederer and Seleskovitch alongside some other scholars may help to better understand the interplay between interpreting and public diplomacy, an area not thoroughly studied before. The study suggests that the theory of sense focuses on a deep understanding of the source language and culture with a view to accurately transfer the message into the target language. This entails the interpreter to concentrate on and attribute priority to the meaning rather than restricting himself/herself with strict grammatical rules. The transfer of 'meaning' plays vital importance in public diplomacy as it conforms to the goals of public diplomacy to promote the cultural characteristics of a particular country in other countries. Furthermore, as defined by the theory of sense, interpreting is focused on the content of the message as well as the shared or common language used between the speaker and the hearer which entails the accurate transfer of the content within the scope of its meaning. The fact that the theory obligates the interpreter to be in grasp of his/her native language, the source language, related cultural background, and the respective interpreting methodology that applies, puts the interpreter in a position to have detailed knowledge about the cultural content and background of the languages he/she is interpreting in, which creates an indispensable link between the interpreter and public diplomacy. This link also builds upon the outstanding role played by interpreters in transferring the accurate message with a view to serving the goals of public diplomacy.

In this framework, interpreting can play a vital role in public diplomacy as conventional diplomacy does no longer apply and diplomacy is conducted with the participation of other relevant actors as detailed above. Therefore, interpreters make an inestimable contribution to shaping public diplomacy and working for public diplomacy institutions. The theory of sense may serve as a good theoretical basis for linking interpreting with public diplomacy as content,

meaning, and shared knowledge and the transfer of sense are of great importance for interpreting in public diplomacy to facilitate the goals of public diplomacy.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzes the interplay between interpreting and public diplomacy under the light of the theory of sense as a groundbreaking theory of interpretation that was developed on the basis of interpreting practice. As mentioned above, this study suggests that interpreting can substantially contribute to the goals of public diplomacy and assist public diplomacy institutions. In this context, the study tries to respond to the research question as 'Can interpreting contribute to serving the objectives of public diplomacy?' Based on these principles of a qualitative research method, this study suggests that interpreters contribute to public diplomacy institutions across the globe and holds that theory of sense can help to explain the interplay between interpreting and public diplomacy due to its influence on interpreting studies and the weight given to the transfer of meaning and shared knowledge that play pivotal roles in public diplomacy. This study on the other hand does not argue that these suggestions are definitive and holds that further and more detailed studies should be conducted in the future to delve into the interplay between interpreting and public diplomacy.

Disclosures

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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