

International Interpreting



Paul Michaels gives his fascinating insight into the educational and entertaining experience that he shared with 14 delegates from across Europe at the eflsi winter school

When I saw that the European Forum of

Sign Language Interpreters (www.efsl.org) winter school would have a performance arts theme and be led by Zane Hema, I jumped at the chance and was delighted to get a place along with UK interpreters, Bibi Lacey-Davison and Paul Pryce-Jones.

The winter school was held in Nitra, Slovakia, about an hour's drive from the capital, Bratislava. It is also the home of EFFETA; an institution for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in Slovakia. They were the perfect hosts to the 14 participants from Austria, Belgium, Serbia, Slovakia, The Netherlands and the UK. The objectives of the school were to:

- ▲ Have a clearer understanding of the Performing Arts domain and how this differs from another domain
- ▲ Analyse text for translation
- ▲ Identify the main factors that impact on analysis including audience design
- ▲ Discuss how the interpreter may work as a performer
- ▲ Discuss how to align the interpretation of text to the performance happening live
- ▲ Develop strategies to help deal with complex texts
- ▲ Practice interpreting a range of texts
- ▲ Perform a mini-showcase and have fun

Breaking the ice

At the start of the winter school, the ice-breaker was... different, to say the least. Unlike many courses where people go round the room and say who they are, we had to don a feather boa and do a catwalk introduction. Walking up and down, striking a pose and revealing a little (and in some cases a lot) about ourselves, was fun. It immediately relaxed everyone and bonded the group.

A very interesting discussion followed as to the different perceptions of interpreting throughout Europe in the performance arts domain. It was so interesting to hear how audiences feel interpreters should interpret across Europe. Our colleagues from Belgium, for example, were telling us how they tend to stand still when there is an instrumental element to a song. They have received feedback from the deaf community to say that because there are no words, they should not be interpreting the 'music'. Other colleagues described how they might 'sway' in time so show the rhythm and pace of the music.

Working together

We were paired up with a partner for the duration of the school so that we could read and practice each of our interpretations, and



Language was no barrier at efsli

discuss what the texts meant to us and how we would like the pieces to be read.

The Shakespearean piece, Sonnet 18, was the text I was most worried about. I had never translated Shakespeare and thought it would be something that I couldn't do. However, I decided to research exactly what the text means and dissect it line by line. I found a website (www.shakespeares-sonnets.com) which was really useful as it explains the meaning of the text in detail. I discovered that Shakespeare, although undoubtedly a challenge to translate, is not unachievable, and can even be enjoyable. Have a go yourself.

For my poem, I chose 'And Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou (<http://bit.ly/47itJ0>), about overcoming racism and oppression. I enjoyed interpreting it as there was an opportunity to play with language and use role-shift to emphasise the determination and spirit of the author. My short monologue was 'Tea Party' by Harold Pinter. I'd not seen or read the

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play but we discussed the text as a group, considering what may have happened in the play leading up to this part. This was a useful exercise and really helped me to get into character.

For my song, I chose 'I Don't Care if the Sun Don't Shine', sung by Patti Page, because half the song was serious and slow and half comic and fast. A fun thing to do!

It was fantastic to see how each person made the performances their own. Regardless of whether I knew the native sign language of the interpreter, I could enjoy their interpretation because everyone made their interpretations so accessible to an international audience.

All in all, the workshop was fantastic. It was the second efsli school that I'd been to and it most certainly won't be the last. Attending a shared learning experience is a good way to meet colleagues from overseas and understand how they work in their native countries. There's a very high standard of trainer and everything is overseen by Marinella Salami, the Head of Training and Development for efsli.

I'm looking forward to seeing my fellow students at the efsli conference in Salerno, Italy in September. We may be found in the bar doing a signed song!

