Language Interpreting and Oral Translation in Surveys

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Outline

- Written or scripted questionnaires

- Why use oral translation or interpreters?

- Oral translation in surveys

- Interpreting in surveys

- Best practice versus survey necessities
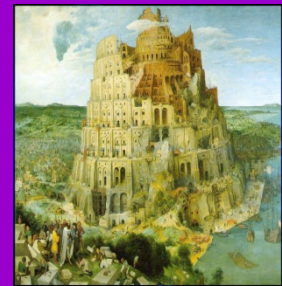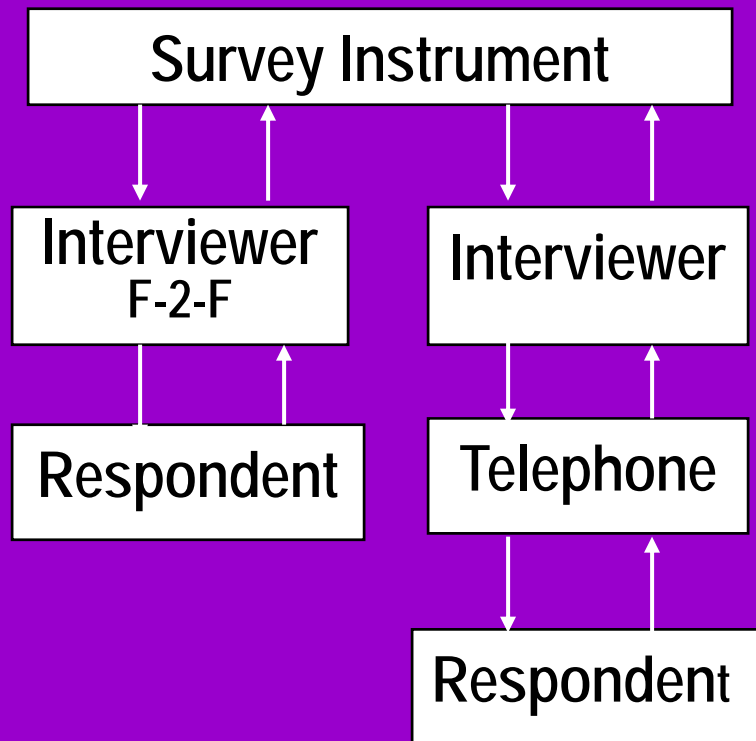
- Outlook for research and practice

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Written or scripted questionnaires

A written or "scripted" version is available for the interviewer to follow according to instructions.

- Basic aim of standardized questionnaires is to reduce unwanted sources of error through interviewer effects.

- Interviewers provided with "script" to follow faithfully.
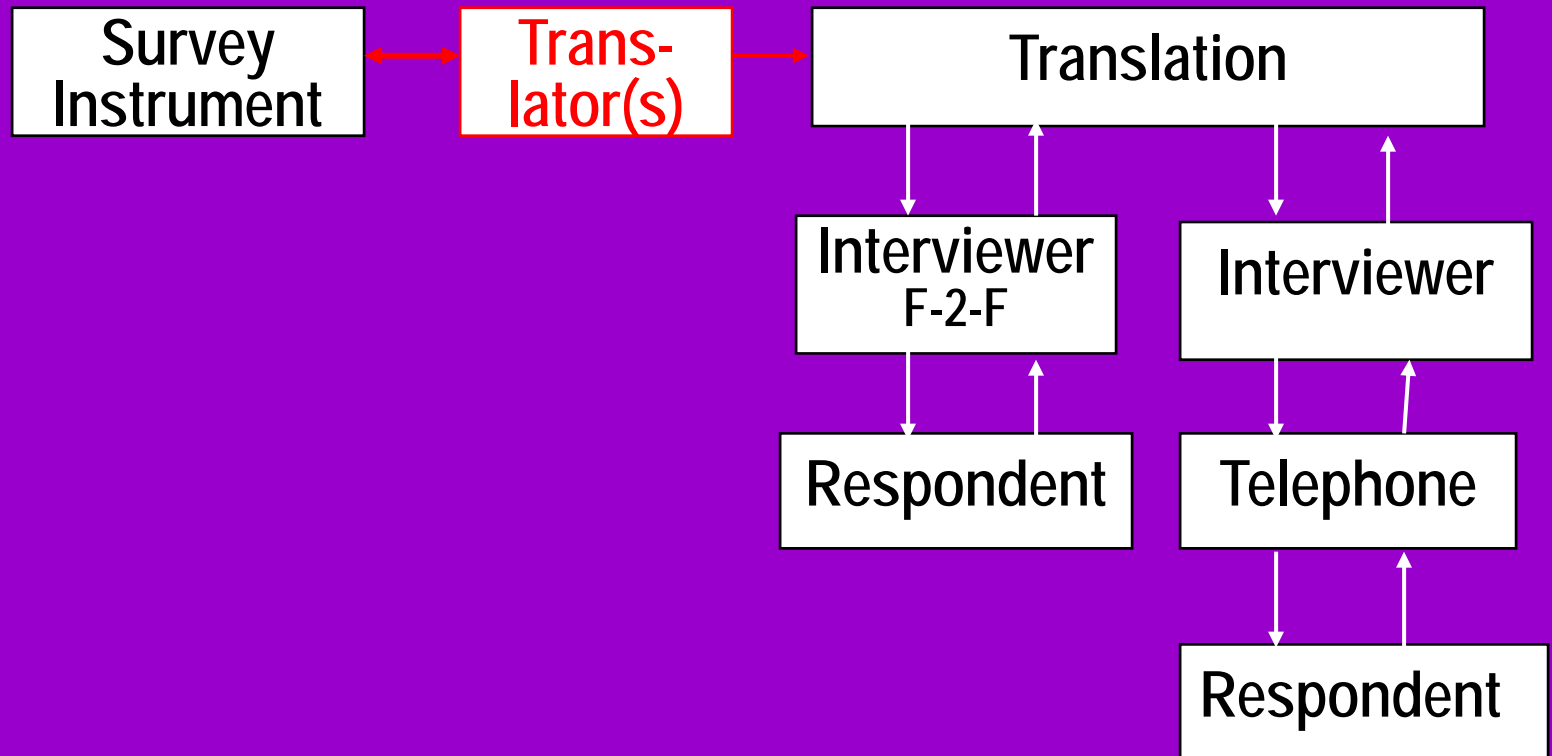
Written or scripted questionnaires

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│    Survey Instrument    │
└─────────────────────────┘
     │  ↑          │  ↑
     ↓  │          ↓  │
┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│  Interviewer │  │  Interviewer │
│    F-2-F     │  │              │
└──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
     │  ↑          │  ↑
     ↓  │          ↓  │
┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│  Respondent  │  │  Telephone   │
└──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
                       │  ↑
                       ↓  │
                  ┌──────────────┐
                  │  Respondent  │
                  └──────────────┘
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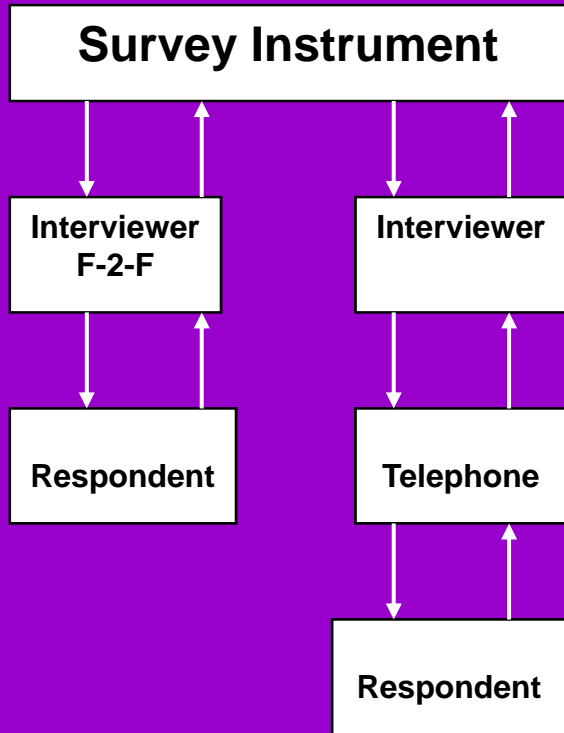
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Terminology

- **Translation** :
  (1) transfer of meaning between languages
  (2) time for research, reflection + revision
- **Interpreting** : translation in "real time"
- **Source Language (SL)** : the language translated out of   (cf. ST)
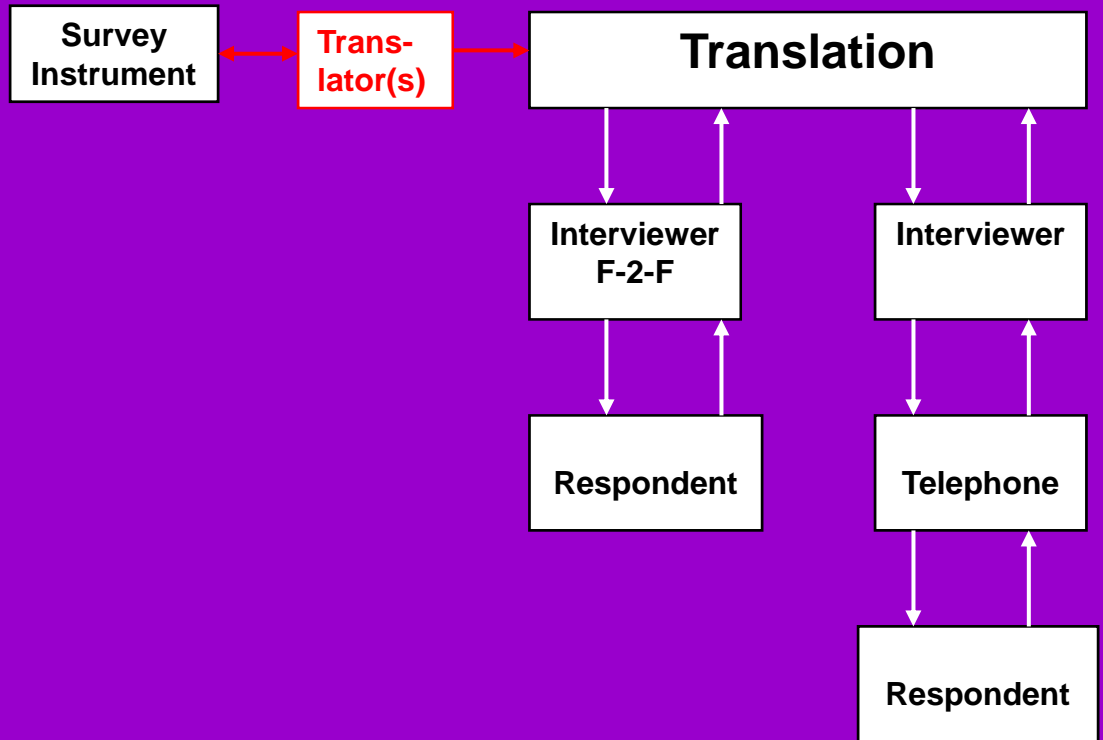- **Target Language (TL)** : the language translated into   (cf. TT)

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Definition : TRANSLATION

```
┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────┐     ┌────────────────────────────┐
│   Survey     │ ◄──►│  Trans-  │ ──► │       Translation          │
│  Instrument  │     │ lator(s) │     │                            │
└──────────────┘     └──────────┘     └────────────────────────────┘
                                         │   ▲            │    ▲
                                         ▼   │            ▼    │
                                   ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
                                   │  Interviewer │  │  Interviewer │
                                   │    F-2-F     │  │              │
                                   └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
                                         │   ▲            │    ▲
                                         ▼   │            ▼    │
                                   ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
                                   │  Respondent  │  │  Telephone   │
                                   └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
                                                          │    ▲
                                                          ▼    │
                                                    ┌──────────────┐
                                                    │  Respondent  │
                                                    └──────────────┘
```

Scripted

Translated

Survey Instrument

Survey Instrument	↔	Trans-lator(s)	→	**Translation**

Interviewer F-2-F		Interviewer

Interviewer F-2-F		Interviewer

Respondent		Telephone

Respondent		Telephone

	Respondent

	Respondent

Definition : ORAL TRANSLATION

Oral translation in surveys: translation made orally (or signed), not written down

- Two people involved: interviewer and respondent

- The interviewer can speak both the language of the questionnaire and the language of the respondent

Definition : ORAL TRANSLATION

The interviewer conducts the interview in the language of the respondent (TL) by:

- silently reading the question **and**
- orally translating (sight translating) the questions into TL as s/he conducts the interview
- hearing responses in TL, silently translating + coding the answers in the SL questionnaire

Definition : ORAL TRANSLATION

Survey Instrument	Survey Instrument

Translation

Translation

Interviewer
F-2-F

Interviewer
F-2-F

Translation

Translation

Respondent

Telephone

Respondent
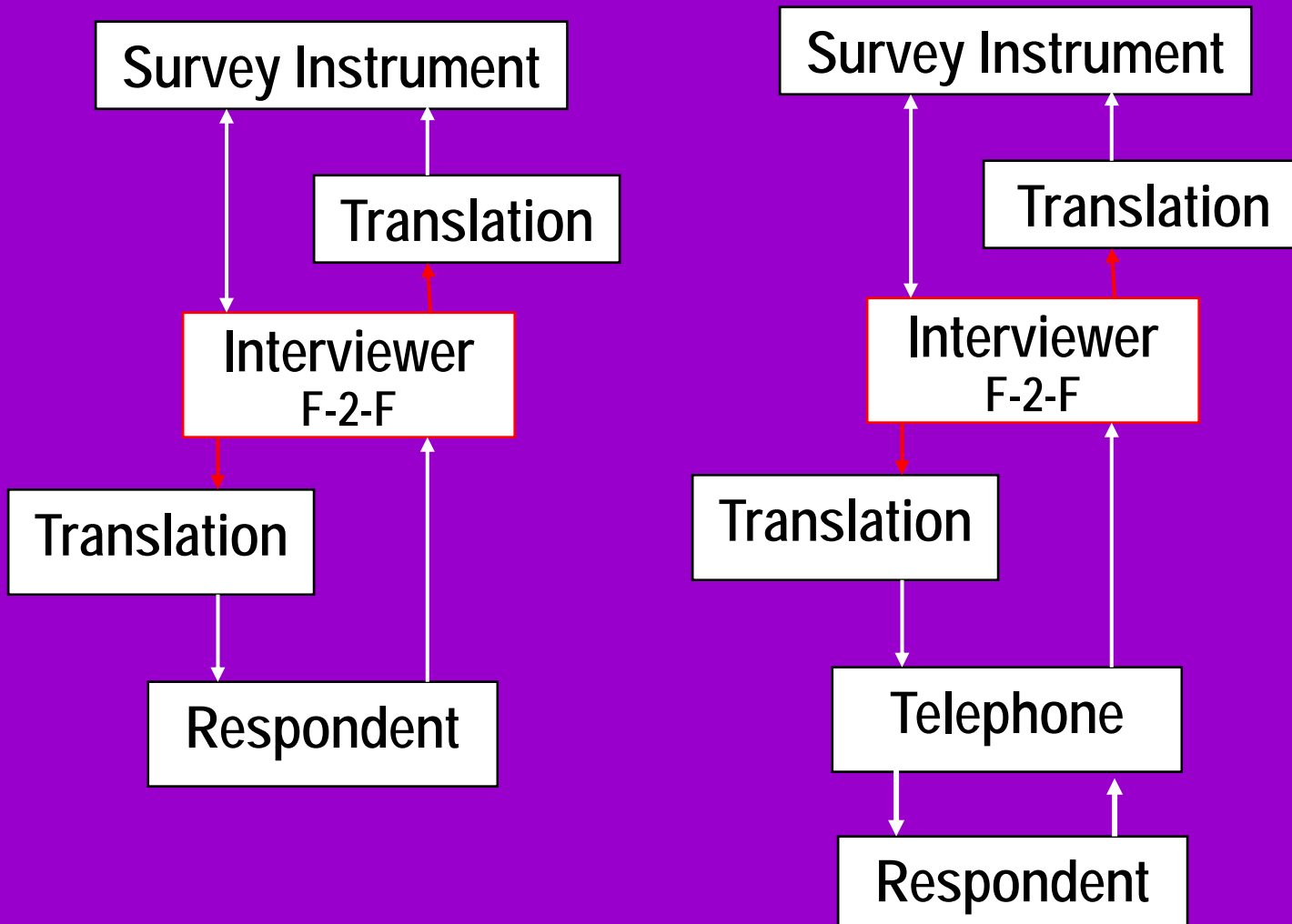
Drawbacks : ORAL TRANSLATION

- Multi-tasking increased burden (dual role)

- No record of what asked or answered

- Stimulus depends on translation quality

- Variance between interviewers and within interviewers (consistency)

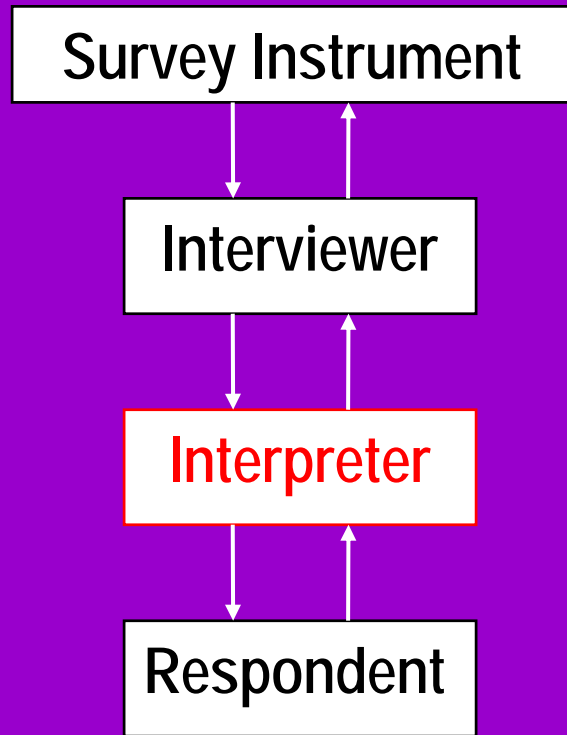- Handling of dynamics (interruptions…) => deterioration of interviewer performance (e.g forgetting to probe...)
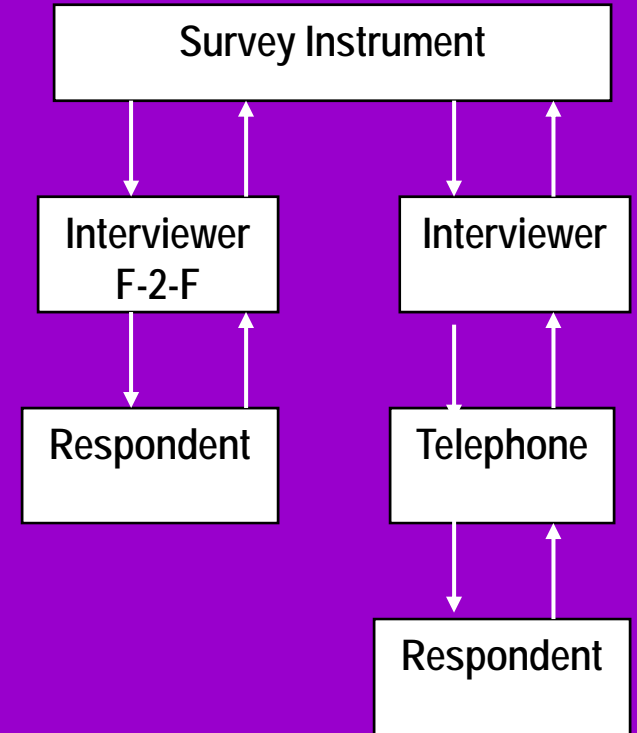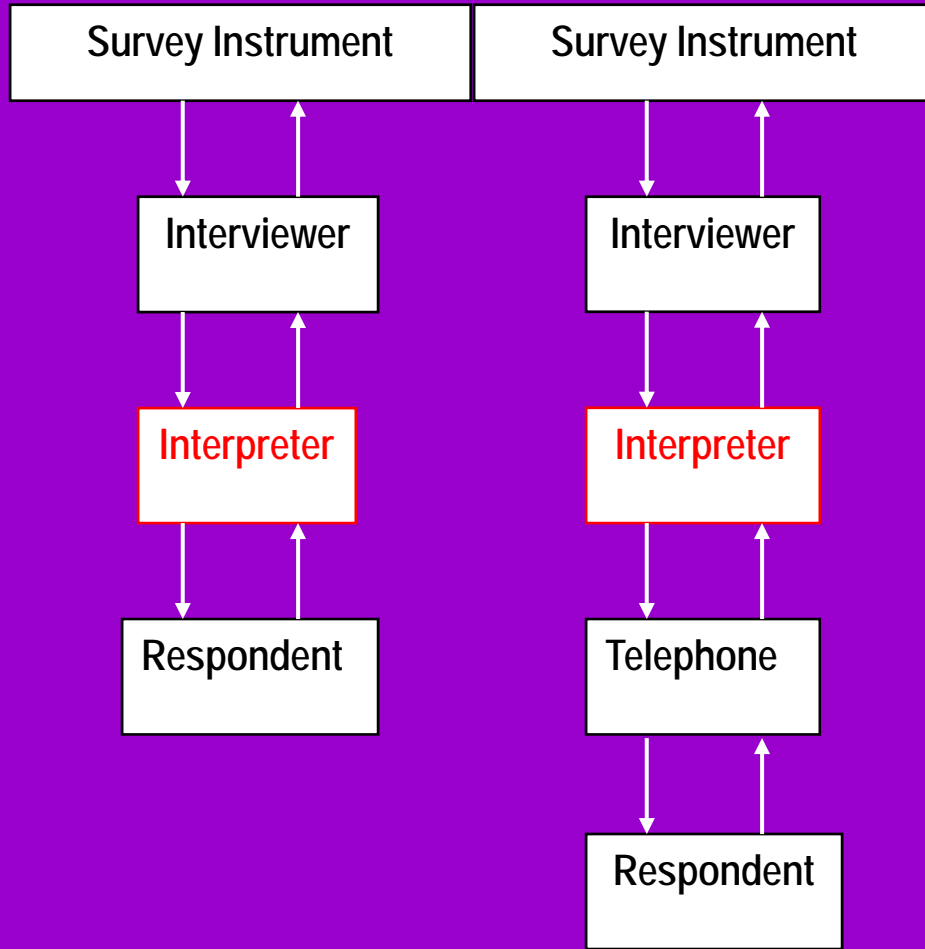
Definition : INTERPRETING

- Three people involved; interviewer, interpreter, respondent
- The interviewer reads off the scripted question in the SL.
- The interpreter interprets into the TL for the respondent.
- The respondent replies in the TL.
- The interpreter interprets the response into SL.
- The interviewer codes the answers in the SL questionnaire

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Definition : INTERPRETING

Survey Instrument

↓↑

Interviewer

↓↑

Interpreter

↓↑

Respondent

Survey Instrument

↓↑

Interviewer

↓↑

Interpreter

↓↑

Telephone

↓↑

Respondent

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INTERPRETING - SAME LANGUAGE

Survey Instrument	Survey Instrument		Survey Instrument	
Interviewer	Interviewer		Interviewer F-2-F	Interviewer
Interpreter	Interpreter		Respondent	Telephone
Respondent	Telephone			Respondent
	Respondent			

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Models of Interpreting

CONDUIT   **CONTROLLER**

⟷

word-for-word   adaptation
machine   advocate
invisible   present

Models of Interpreting

CONDUIT   FOCUS ON   SOCIO-   FOCUS ON   PARTICIPANT   HELPER   CONTROLLER

FORM   CULTURAL   FUNCTION   MISSIONARY

ADVOCATE

(form in context)

WORD-FOR WORD   ADAPTATION

MACHINE   DISEMPOWERING

⟷

CODE OF CONDUCT

⟷

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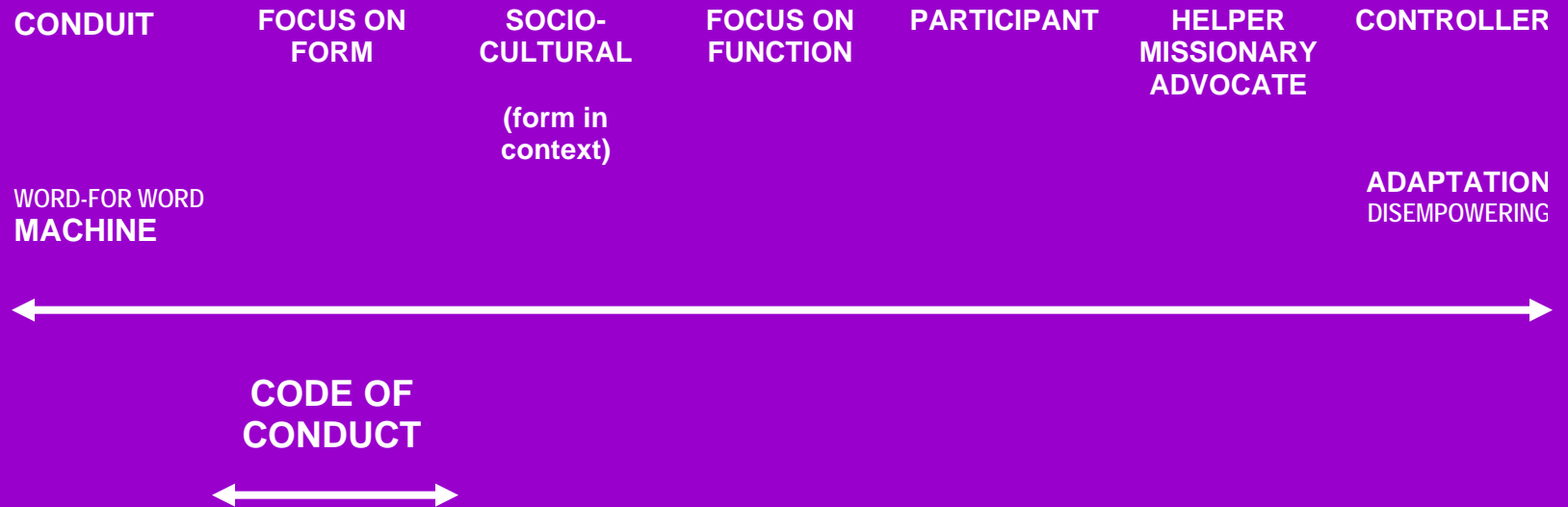
Modes of Interpreting

UNHCR

simultaneous (+ *chuchotage*)

consecutive

summary

verbatim (word-for-word)

Desire for "verbatim" interpreting

- **LEGAL FIELDS**

  (especially: police witness + suspect interviews, cross-examination in court, etc.)

- **MENTAL HEALTH**

  (e.g. mental health status interviews)

Desire for "verbatim" interpreting

=> **"forensic interpreting"**   (Wilson & Perez)

i.e. Interpreting in communicative events when language is used as a means of "diagnosis"

If interpreters used in surveys...

"forensic interpreting"

may be best strategy **?**

Drawbacks : INTERPRETING

- Inconsistency - increases variance in data
- Interpreter-quality dependent
- No record of what asked + answered
- Understanding of survey interviews
- Length + cost
- Interpreter interventions (length -> respondent + interviewer burden)

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Best practice for survey translations

Use scripted source questionnaire matched with scripted translated questionnaire

BUT

What if there's little choice?

Practical reasons, such as:

- Unpredictable language needs
- Need to incorporate unexpected
- Need to interview languages "rare" for given context

Unavoidable:

- May meet with languages without standardized written form (e.g. sign languages)

What if there's little choice?

Is oral translation preferable to interpreting?

?

How best to prepare?

- preparation for interviewers (-> interpreting)?
- preparation for interpreters (-> interviewing)?

When telephone involved, who is face to face
+ with whom?

Research needed

Starting points from Translation & Interpreting Studies

- Language competence (x 2)

- Interpreting / Translating competence

- Survey work - practices + procedures

- Subject field knowledge

Research needed (2)

1. Consider (oral) translation / interpreting at design stage (e.g. "instructions")?

2. Guidelines ⟶ interviewer
   + Training   interpreter
               (respondent)

3. Implementation tools (glossary...)

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Oral Translation + Interpreting

often driven by **expediency**

However, **quality survey practice** calls for careful planning, training, implementation + research !