

Cezar-Cristian Florea, University of Bucharest

## **Interpretation: the added value of a profession**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today I want to tell you how I decided to become an interpreter. It is an interesting story as it wasn't planned for me to become an interpreter. I hadn't dreamed to become one since I was a child and until three years ago I didn't even know much about interpreting. It simply happened that I was at a turning point and I decided that I wanted to do something with my life.

I graduated as a communication specialist and I gained some experience in the media. At one moment I could afford to take one year off work in order to follow my dream. I started to study thoroughly to become a voice actor and a news anchor. The hard work seemed to pay off. I represented a high hope of the classes as the trainers and the colleagues encouraged me to imagine that I was to become a real established voice of the Romanian media.

Disaster struck me when I started to look for jobs: I found out that I had serious health problems and that I needed complicated nose surgery. As I was lying on the hospital bed after the first intervention – almost crying – my mother held my hand and told me ironically: “Well... didn't you want to lead an interesting life?!...”

I knew from the beginning that I had to deal with at least two years of physical and mental recovery. But, as the voice acting career was to be put on hold for an undefined period, the question remained: what was I going to do with my life?

I knew that I was good with words and my English and French were at a decent level so I decided to become a translator. In the end I attained some sort of success. I had won the depression battle and I had passed a series of dead-end jobs that had the single purpose to help me pay the bills. I had started working as a translator but I was still feeling that something was missing. I wasn't a man that could stand in front of the computer more than 40 hours a week, hidden in the house. I missed the adrenalin. I yearned for being in the arena and getting in touch with a lot of people, living all sorts of experiences.

So one day I found out that the University of Bucharest had an MA Program in Conference Interpreting. Some loud bells rang in my head suddenly. That would be my dream job! I decided to participate in the entrance examination to gain some experience. I thought that I was going to fail the first attempt as I had absolutely no interpreting experience and I planned to come back one year later. To my big surprise I was admitted.

As classes started in autumn I felt that I had walked the door to a completely new world and I promised myself that I was going to make the best of this opportunity. The enthusiasm from the beginning was soon transformed in shock and frustration. Most of my colleagues had already studied interpreting and they were much better than me. Their notebooks looked like an alien language to me. The following months were really hard as I passed through many sleepless nights, watching cartoons at 3 AM with a cup of herbal tea in my hand and internally screaming.

Somehow I managed to pass all the exams from the first semester and I found my calmness as I finally realized how hard I had to practice. In fact I had committed for a lifelong project. The journey was going to have its inevitable bumps. But, as I dedicated myself 24/7 to this beautiful profession, I finally raised my level. Last year I have even passed the exam organized by the Romanian Government and now I have the right to work as an interpreter for the

Romanian judicial system. Interestingly enough, my first clients were millionaires. The first one was a Frenchman trying to buy two expensive houses in Bucharest and the second one was a lady from Indonesia who is passing through a complicated divorce. She and her ex-husband now have to deal with the special needs of their child and they also have to divide some important companies. My job is to go through serious research, to concentrate, to be present and offer them the best communication act. I know that the trials couldn't have been possible without the presence of an interpreter and the adrenalin rush that the courtroom gives me is almost addictive.

In the end I can tell you that interpretation gave a meaning to my life and transformed me into a better person as I understood that I had to remain humble (in a positive way). Interpretation helped me get up when I was at the bottom and it made me understand that if I want to be an authentic professional I have to study without cease. I am still nervous when I have to deliver a speech but in the morning I am not afraid any more. Now I begin my days with curiosity as there is no routine in this profession. I look forward to raising my level again and embrace my future challenges. I hope I learned my lessons from the hard experiences that I have been through and that I will use them to make other people's life better.

Thank you!