Having been commonly viewed as a part of translation studies, interpreting studies has started to look for its own place. Thus far, interpreting activities have been related to non-literary oral translations, e.g. in business, legal, or academic settings, while literary translations have been exclusively discussed as written translating activities only (Chambert-Loir, 2000; Gunila and Rogers, 2003; Landers, 2001; Lefevere, 1992). In other words, it is very difficult to find, a specific discussion on a possibility of literary interpreting existence, if there is any at all, let alone a discussion of literary interpreting itself. In mamaca, an oral tradition of Madurese people, there exists a unique traditional profession, namely juru teges ‘interpreter’¹, which potentially demonstrates the existence of literary interpreting. This preliminary study seeks potential evidence of literary interpreting through describing the work procedure of juru teges. The study focuses on two themes of four suggested by Pöchhacker (2001): product and performance, and practice and profession. Performances of three mamaca groups in Sumenep were audio-visually recorded. The data of the study are transcriptions of source and target (translated) texts. The source text is both in written and oral form: the written form is a text called Nurbuwat, written in Old Javanese using a modified Arabic writing system; the oral texts are the performances of the reading performers in Madurese language. The target texts are the utterances of juru teges during their performances. Interviews were also taken to collect additional data on the role of juru teges outside their performances. The work of juru teges clearly demonstrates transference of meaning from one language to another language. Thus, they perform a translating activity. However, as the work of juru teges only exists during the oral performance, their performance is a one-time presentation, thus exhibiting the distinctive nature of interpreting, which is ‘immediacy’ (Pöchhacker, 2001). The juru teges never use references or read any text during their performance. They rely solely on their memory instead. In term of memory use suggested by Hale (2003), the work of juru teges can be categorized as an activity of so-called ‘consecutive’ interpreting, which displays an overlap between translating and interpreting. However, to get a stronger justification, this study needs further investigation requiring data on performances of other texts in mamaca and investigation on their actual language knowledge which will have to involve literary and non-literary texts from other cultures.

Please join us at 3:30 in 571 EPB for refreshments.

¹Considering the aim of the study, I am fully aware that it is too early to use this term. However, I use this term for convenience and in preserving the assumption. It might be more comfortable for some to read it as ‘(presumably) interpreter’. I would not find the term ‘translator’ harmful to use, but it might, I would say, diminish the basic ideas of the study, which are orality and interpreting studies.