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### **SIMULTANEOUS INTERPETING: PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES**

Interpreting intended as the oral transfer of messages between speakers of different languages is one of the oldest of human activities, although its professional status has been recognised only quite recently.

Despite being one of the most recently developed systems, simultaneous interpreting has become 'the' interpreting form most people easily recognise as a professional activity. International conferences provide the most frequent setting for this kind of interpreting: here, people from different countries gather to discuss the latest developments in particular fields, often highly technical and group-specific. As Angelelli (2000) points out, in such cases the members of the audience have similar professional and educational backgrounds, share interest and competence in a particular subject and belong to the same *speech community*. In this context, the interpreter has almost no interaction with either the audience or speakers, mostly because of the physical barrier represented by the booth in which s/he works. Pöchhacker (1992) states that, in simultaneous interpreting the extent and feasibility of cultural mediation is often extremely limited. It is also important to note that the lapse of time occurring between the original utterance and the translation is too short to allow any major rephrasing or cultural mediation on the part of the interpreter. Gile (2001) emphasises the 'time pressure' to which simultaneous interpreting is subject.

Translation and interpreting are increasingly being acknowledged as core areas of research. Rather than a subfield of linguistics or cultural studies, translation studies has become an interdisciplinary field in its own right. Its remit encompasses, extends and surpasses a range of issues with which other disciplines have traditionally engaged from different perspectives.

The translator makes possible an exchange of information between the users of different languages by producing in the target language (TL or the translating language) a text with identical communicative value with the source (or original) text (ST). This target text (TT, that is the translation) is not fully identical with ST as to its form or content due to the limitations imposed by the formal and semantic differences between the source language (SL) and TL. Nevertheless the users of TT identify it, to all intents and purposes, with ST – functionally, structurally and semantically. The functional identification is revealed in the fact that the users (or the translation receptors – TR) handle TT in such a way as if it were ST, a creation of the source text author.

The structure of the translation should follow that of the original text: there should be no change in the sequence of narration or in the arrangement of the segments of the text.

The aim is maximum parallelism of structure, which would make it possible to relate each segment of the translation to the respective part of the original. It is presumed that any breach of parallelism is not arbitrary but dictated by the need for precision in conveying the meaning of the original. The translator is allowed to resort to a description or interpretation, only in case «direct translation» is impossible.

As a kind of practical activities translation (or the practice of translation) is a set of actions performed by the translator while rendering ST into another language. These actions are largely

intuitive and translators who are best suited for the job, who are well-trained or have a special aptitude, a talent for it, naturally achieve the best results.

The theory of translation provides the translator with the appropriate tools of analysis and synthesis, makes him aware of what he is to look for in the original text, what type of information he must convey in TT and how he should act to achieve his goal. In the final analysis, however, his trade remains an art. For science gives the translator the tools, but it takes brains, intuition and talent to handle the tools with great proficiency. Translation is a complicated phenomenon involving linguistic, psychological, cultural, literary, ergonomical and other factors.

The conditions of oral translation impose a number of important restrictions on the translator's performance. Here the interpreter receives a fragment of the original only once and for a short period of time. His translation is also a one-time act with no possibility of any return to the original or any subsequent corrections. This creates additional problems and the users have sometimes; to be content with a lower level of equivalence.

In simultaneous interpretation the interpreter is supposed to be able to give his translation while the speaker is uttering the original message. This type of translation involves a number of psycholinguistic problems, both of theoretical and practical nature. When it takes quite the same amount of time as the source language matter flows and the interpreter faithfully conveys its content, it is referred to as *simultaneous interpreting/translating*. Integral part of the interpreter's training, as are special exercises and principles to develop simultaneous interpreting skills.

**The first principle is:**

Before starting to work with any new training exercise, explain its potential value or psycholinguistic and professional reasons and explain how it can be used or adapted by interpreters later in other circumstances.

**Example:** a self-training exercise to improve or achieve full attention and concentration and to make both hemispheres work synchronically.

<p><b>Visual image</b> – Associate a visual image with a word or name to help you remember them better. Positive, pleasant images that are vivid, colorful, and three-dimensional will be easier to remember.</p>	<p>To remember the name Rosa Parks and what she's known for, picture a woman sitting on a park bench surrounded by roses, waiting as her bus pulls up.</p>
<p><b>Acrostic (or sentence)</b> – Make up a sentence in which the first letter of each word is part of or represents the initial of what you want to remember.</p>	<p>The sentence «Every good boy does fine» to memorize the lines of the treble clef, representing the notes E, G, B, D, and F.</p>
<p><b>Acronym</b> – An acronym is a word that is made up by taking the first letters of all the key words or ideas you need to remember and creating a new word out of them.</p>	<p>The word «HOMES» to remember the names of the Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior.</p>
<p><b>Rhymes and alliteration</b> – Rhymes, alliteration (a repeating sound or syllable), and even jokes are a memorable way to remember more mundane facts and figures.</p>	<p>The rhyme «Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November» to remember the months of the year with only 30 days in them.</p>
<p><b>Chunking</b> – Chunking breaks a long list of numbers or other types of information into smaller, more manageable chunks.</p>	<p>Remembering a 10-digit phone number by breaking it down into three sets of numbers: 555-867-5309 (as opposed to 5558675309).</p>
<p><b>Method of loci</b> – Imagine placing the items you want to remember along a route you know well or in specific locations in a familiar room or building.</p>	<p>For a shopping list, imagine bananas in the entryway to your home, a puddle of milk in the middle of the sofa, eggs going up the stairs, and bread on your bed.</p>

## **Pre-Exercises**

The first two weeks of the semester can be devoted to fast reading, skimming, scanning and reading comprehension activities. Those activities will enable students to speed up their reading and get the gist of the text that they are working on in the shortest possible time.

### **Exercise 1**

In the beginning, the students are given a text (250-300 words) in their native language and are asked to read the whole text in 20-30 seconds. Then, they are asked general questions about the subject of the text. In the second phase, they are asked more specific questions (such as names, dates, places, etc.) before they are asked to read the text for the second time. This time, they are given 10-15 seconds to find the specific information. Lastly, the students are given enough time to read the text thoroughly. This time, they are asked comprehension questions. The same exercise is repeated with the texts written in L2. The aim of this exercise is to develop reading comprehension and fast reading skills.

### **The second principle is:**

Increase the self-confidence of my students particularly where their memory is concerned. This is definitely necessary because almost all of them complain about not being able to memorize new information or retain certain pieces of important data in their short- and long-term memory (STM and LTM).

**Example:** an exercise with interesting information, which is used in order to demonstrate to students that they can easily remember quite complicated data so long as it is *important* or *interesting* to them. The dictation may be in either language or may swap between the two languages once self-confidence is gained and the exercise is being used purely to train STM and LTM.

For example, the instructor asks students what they expect from a text entitled «Painful changeover to Euro». The students produce key words by brainstorming on the subject. In the beginning they may wander from the subject and produce irrelevant keywords. However, as they begin to use their passive knowledge and make logical connections they will come to the point. Then, the instructor randomly chooses keywords from the text and asks students to make logical connections between those keywords and form a bold outline of the text. The aim of this exercise is to enable the students to use their passive knowledge and make logical connections between the facts. Following this exercise, the students are handed out the original text and are asked to check if their outline and assumptions are correct. Then they read the text one more time by using fast reading techniques and mark the unknown words. However, the instructor does not explain those unknown words at this stage.

### **The third principle is:**

Work hard on the students' concentration and level of attention from the very beginning.

**Example:** An exercise with distractions, like extra sounds, excessive gesticulation, etc. This kind of «distractive modeled environment» I call «training in obstacle conditions». Any instructor can create his or her own list of distractions, depending on the level of the group or the specific aim.

### **The 4th principle is:**

A new exercise has to be very clear and straightforward in order to be understood and worked through the first time (with a short debriefing afterwards). Next time, the training exercise has to be difficult (an authentic or nearly real-life level of difficulty). A «*real-life level of difficulty*» refers mainly to the speed of presentation or the sentence complexity, or a lot of specific vocabulary.

### **The 5th principle is:**

To focus on the message of the sentence/paragraph rather than the meaning of the word

One of the problems that perplex students is the presence of unknown words. This problem also slows down the reading speed of students and disables them to deal with other problems they face in sight translation. In fast reading process, when the student encounters an unknown word, or a word that is difficult to pronounce, his/her reading speed will slow down. However, in a slow and meaningful reading process, he/she either will be able to guess the meaning of the unknown word by using contextual clues or will realize that the word is not crucial for understanding the message of the whole text. In some cases, however, the word may be directly related to the message and it may cause problems in translation if the word is omitted or ignored. Bearing this in mind, the lec-

turer may choose texts that may help students to deal with unknown words. The following strategies can be applied on the sample texts:

14. To focus on the message of the sentence/paragraph rather than the meaning of the word.

Sample text: «If anyone is asked to *rate* a person, whom he knows sufficiently well, on a number of personality variables, he will tend to be influenced by his general opinion of the person. If he has a *high opinion* of the person he will tend to rate him high on all desirable qualities, and vice versa if he has a *low opinion*. (C.J. Adcock: Fundamentals of Psychology)

15. To guess the meaning of the word by using contextual clues Sample text: If you were to place a human brain on a table in front of you, you would notice that it is divided neatly into two halves vertically from front to back: these are the right and left *cerebral hemispheres*. And each hemisphere is further divided into four so-called lobes: the one at the front (the frontal lobe) is responsible for controlling movement and for some aspects of emotions; the *occipital lobe* (at the back) deals with sight, the lobe at the side (the temporal lobe) is an important memory store; and the *parietal lobe* (at the top) has a vital role in comparing and integrating information that flows into the brain through the sensory channels of vision, hearing, smell and touch. (Richard Leakey and Robert Lewin: People of the Lake)

Firstly, this is because the trainee interpreters studying the MA in Interpreting *de facto* have to have a «sufficient» level of proficiency in L2 and L3. The main reason is that general skills such as reading, writing, textual analysis and vocabulary are taught in the first two years. The first exercises to be used in a sight translation course will be directly related with those basic skills.

It is necessary to recognise that most of the modern schools of interpreting (undergraduate and PG level) use a lot of linguistic methods in their teaching practice, working on vocabulary on a word-to-word basis and on sentence, paragraph and whole text structures, as well as providing a huge amount of theoretical information. At the same time they ignore (or simply *omit*) certain psycholinguistic techniques – which are essential for any professional interpreter (working with both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting – SI and CI).

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Below are a number of techniques used in the aim of which is to develop a number of skills that are essential for any interpreter.

### **1. Listening**

This mainly requires a lot of attention and concentration, which is why it is necessary:

16. To introduce some «distracting» or «annoying» elements such as sounds (background noises), flashing lights, excessive gesticulation, etc. in order to make it more difficult/impede aural recognition;

17. to work simultaneously with two different texts both in L1;

18. to work simultaneously with two different texts both in L2;

19. to work simultaneously with two different texts: one in L1 and the other in L2;

20. to use «shadowing», i.e. reading the text aloud while the trainer reads the same text simultaneously, introducing some new elements (changing figures, names, tenses, verbs, adjectives, etc.) with the comparison of the two texts at the end;

21. to introduce *phonemic* shadowing which involves repeating each sound exactly as it was heard without waiting for a complete meaning unit. This specific skill helps to develop the mechanical aspect of simultaneous interpreting, in other words the ability to listen and speak simultaneously.

### **2. Selective Listening combined with phrase shadowing/paraphrasing**

16. While practicing the so-called «selective listening», the trainee is exposed to two different verbal messages. Each incoming message is presented to one ear through headphones. In such a case, the trainee is receiving two different incoming messages simultaneously. The task consists in «switching off» one of the ears through which comes the «irrelevant» message and focusing all the attention on the «relevant» verbal text. This specific training concludes either with phrase shadowing of the «relevant» incoming message or with later paraphrasing it.

### **3. Understanding**

Requires mainly language guessing and predicting skills.

– Speed of presentation in L1 is very important: train interpreters for the highest speed possible.

– Dialects and individual particularities of articulation (including defective ones) is another area for training. It is especially important for European languages such as English, Spanish or French.

– The capability for good linguistic guessing, predicting and anticipating elements in sequence can be trained by introducing unfinished sentences in both languages (L1 and L2). This training is also especially important to develop the interpreter's ability to «edit» unfinished or cut phrases produced by some people in their spontaneous speech.

### **4. Memorize the information in L1**

This requires skills such as instant, short, medium and long-term active memory. It is necessary to work on:

- the capacity to encode and decode texts using any symbol system (for consecutive interpreting);

- a good ear for any foreign names and toponyms;

- a good ear for figures and measures;

Special training is required for all of these skills. Very useful exercises include:

• memorising poems, prose, radio news;

• regular dictation on figures, names and measures first in L1, then in L2 and finally mixing both languages in one dictation.

### **5. Translation A (mentally)**

Requires important skills such as the ability to compose edited texts based on certain key-words (or symbols for consecutive interpreting) or good «editing» and text compression. Such skills need special training using the *key-words* methodology. The main options might be as follows:

• No previous presentation of any text, key-words are given in L1 and the task is to make an «edited» sensible text in L1.

• No previous presentation of any text, key-words are given in L2 and the task is to make an «edited» sensible text in L2.

• No previous presentation of any text, key-words are given in L1 and the task is to make an «edited» sensible text in L2.

• No previous presentation of any text, key-words are given in L2 and the task is to make an «edited» sensible text in L1.

• No previous presentation of any text, key-words are given in both L1 and L2 and the task is to make an «edited» sensible text in L1.

• No previous presentation of any text, key-words are given in both L1 and L2 and the task is to make an «edited» sensible text in L2.

**6. Translation B (*sight*)**

- sight translation;
- sight interpreting.

**7. Verbalization**

Verbalization and «editing» imply the «re-telling» or paraphrasing ability training which starts in L1 using key-words and some common symbols and then continues in L2.

**Conclusions.**

The training of future interpreters should necessarily include some psycholinguistic training, taking into account the fact that a major part of the work depends on the self-training of the students. The instructor's role, to aid self-preparation, is to provide some useful guidelines and exercises that can be used outside the language laboratory, without an instructor and without any sophisticated equipment.

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