Main problems of language and communication in interpretation

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Abstract
Interpretation is more instantaneous than translation. Human beings have always made use of intermediaries in order to communicate from one language to another. Through the years, interpretation has become into a revolutionary activity practiced by elders of the profession such as Kaminker and Herbert amongst others. Generally interpreters, specially those who are in training courses deal with various difficulties related to the speaker, the listener, the language and the message during the process of interpretation. Thus, the objective of this research is to learn about the main problems of language and oral communication with which students of interpretation deal the most. The methodology consisted of a bibliographical research on consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. Field work consisted in the design of a questionnaire to be answered by a sample of students in advanced courses of interpretation. The information was compiled and analysed using the data collecting technique of the qualitative research. The findings enumerated the difficulties encountered related to the practice of interpretation. This work might be useful for students, professional interpreters and translators, beginners in these fields and instructors.

1 Introduction
An interpreter is a person who converts an expression of a source language into an equivalent expression in a target language. The interpreter's work is to convey every semantic element and feeling of the message that the source-language speaker is directing to the target-language audience. Interpretation is the practice of oral and sign-language communication, simultaneously and consecutively, between two different languages. Interpreting and interpretation are provide a description for this process.

Professionally, interpreting depicts the act of facilitating communication from one language form into its equivalent, in another language. Interpretation denotes the message rendered into speech, sign language, writing and non-manual signals. A big amount of people confuse translation with interpretation. The main difference is that translation is written, while interpretation is verbal.

In order to interpret a text the interpreter must be able to receive and understand the incoming message and then express it’s meaning in the target
language. Interpretation is also held to a different standard of accuracy than translation. While interpreters try to achieve total accuracy at all times, details of the original speech can be omitted from the interpretation into the target language, without a pause. Interpreting occurs in real time, in the presence of the parties for whom the interpreter renders an interpretation. In order to accomplish this task, the interpreter must go through an overlapping series of cognitive processing activities. These include: attending to the message, concentrating on the task at hand, remembering the message, comprehending the meaning of the message, analyzing the message for meaning, visualizing the message nonverbally, and finally reformulating the message in the target language.

Seleskovitch (1978) compresses these tasks into three steps, noting that the second step includes the, Immediate and deliberate discarding of the wording and retention of the mental representation of the message. (Seleskovitch, 8); interpreters often refer to this as “dropping form.” By discarding words, structure etc. of the source text the interpreter is free to concentrate on extracting and analyzing the meaning of the text, and conceiving strategies for reformulating the message into the target language. Consecutive and simultaneous interpreting employ the same cognitive processing skills, with the only difference being the amount of time that elapses between the delivery of the source utterance and the delivery of the interpretation.

2. Objective

The objective of this research is to learn about the main problems of language and oral communication with which students of interpretation deal the most.

3 Methodology

The methodology consisted of a bibliographical research on consecutive and simultaneous interpretation.

The professional interpreting services are mainly on the following: Pre-Court Interpreting: Any out-of-court hearings or interviews; Judicial Interpreting: In the courtroom with the judge present; Immigration: Translation of documents and interpretation of hearings etc.; Seminar Interpreting: Addresses and
discussions at meetings or small conferences; Escort Interpreting: Business lunches, real estate appointments, or any two-way communications; Business Interpreting: Contract negotiations, brochures, advertising, etc.; Community Interpreting: Hospitals, public meetings, social services, etc.; Tour Interpreting: Tours given to foreign tourists, businessmen, etc.

Seleskovitch solidifies the correlation between the cognitive processes involved in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting when she states, *simultaneous interpretation can be learned quite rapidly, assuming one has already learned the art of analysis in consecutive interpretation* (Seleskovitch, 30). Consecutive and simultaneous interpreting employ the same cognitive processing skills, with the only difference being the amount of time that elapses between the delivery of the source utterance and the delivery of the interpretation. In consecutive interpretation while the speaker delivers his speech, the interpreter takes notes and structures his interpretation by abbreviating it opportunely. It reproduces the original speech with an often superior clarity the interpreter do not hesitate much, do not use filler sentences, and non-intentional repetitions.

Consecutive interpretation requires additional execution time, which can go from one-tenth to three quarters of the original time. It may be rendered when the interpreter does not have a text in its entirety, that is, the person delivering the source utterance may have more to say, but the interpreter has enough information to deliver a message that could stand alone if need be. As Seleskovitch (1978) points out, *In consecutive interpretation the interpreter has*...
Simultaneous interpretation takes place during and even in the same time period as the original speech, the interpreter renders their interpretation while still receiving the source utterance, consecutive interpretation has distinct advantages in certain interpreting situations, not the least of which is that consecutive interpretations render more accurate, equivalent and complete target texts. Seleskovitch (1978) states that in the simultaneous mode the interpreter continues to receive and process new information while rendering, and monitoring the target for equivalence.

**Main language and communication problems**

Even memorizing a half dozen words would distract the interpreter, whose attention is already divided between listening to his own words, and those of the speaker... his memory *does not store the words* of the sentence delivered by the speaker, but *only the meaning* those words convey. (Seleskovitch, 1978, 30-31)

Many interpreters regard consecutive as the most difficult mode of interpreting because it is so hard to retain all of these aspects of the source language message, particularly when a question or answer is very lengthy or is not entirely coherent like an unfortunate fact of life in court interpreting. Memory is such an important language and oral communication problem in interpreting specially in consecutive. Some experts like Seleskovitch (1978) mention a sort of strategies which help improve memory skills before beginning to practice consecutive interpretation. Most of them have logical sequence so that the interpreter can work on the individual components of consecutive interpretation and gradually put them together to form a whole.

Six memory lessons are presented to improve or remediate language and oral communication problems.

Memory lesson 1, is related to listening activities often, errors in consecutive interpretation occur because the interpreter was not using good listening skills. For example, if one becomes bogged down in details and fail to grasp the overall meaning of a passage, that one will not be able to recall it correctly. If one is distracted by an unfamiliar word, or an emotional reaction to vulgar language or incorrect usage, that one may stop listening to the rest of the
passage and will not be able to recall it accurately. Memory Lesson 2, contains controversial passages that help become aware of how personal prejudices can impede retention and recall, and how identification with the speaker can enhance these skills. Memory Lesson 3, illustrates the value of focusing on key words as an aid to memory. Whether the interpreter writes down these words or make a mental note of them, they help organize the ideas into a meaningful structure that is easier to recall than a mere string of disjointed words. Memory Lesson 4, is designed to show how much the interpreter can remember without taking any notes, provided that the original message is clear and logical; it also helps if the content lends itself to visualization. The more coherent the original message, the more you can retain. If the interpreter is unfamiliar with the subject matter, he has more trouble remembering the message. In Memory Lesson 5, the interpreter has an opportunity to try note-taking again. Some interpreters take very few notes, writing down only names and numbers, while other interpreters take copious notes. The interpreter will find that with some speakers and some subject matter, he can make more notes than with others. Finally, Memory Lesson 6, contains questions and answers that are typical of the length and detail of the testimony the interpreter is expected to interpret in court.

Interpretation quality implies the fidelity of the target-language speech, the quality of the interpreter’s linguistic output, the quality of his or her voice, the prosodic characteristics of his or her delivery, (Bühler 1984 and 1986, Kurz 1989 and 1993, Gile 1990, Kopczyński 1994). Fidelity cannot be assessed with any degree of precision without referring to the source-language speech. This makes fidelity assessment difficult in simultaneous interpreting, (Carroll 1978, Lambert 1978, Varantola 1980, Cartellieri 1983). Due that it is practically impossible to monitor all of the original speech and all of its interpretation on site.

When conference participants or observers do evaluate fidelity in the simultaneous mode, they generally do so on the basis of two types of processes: Sampling, which means to listen to selected segments of the original, in particular to difficult segments containing lexical or grammatical difficulties, etc., whether these are found in the target-language speech.
Interpreters can do so by switching from the source-language channel to the target-language channel and back on their receiving equipment, or by taking the headphones off to listen to the original speech and then putting them on again to listen to the interpretation, or by using only one earphone and by focusing alternatively on input coming into the earphone ear, tuned in to the target-language speech, and the free ear, which receives the source-language speech. Accidental error detection: which takes place when sometimes a segment heard in the target-language speech does not seem plausible to the listener, hence the inference that the interpreter made an error.

Field work consisted in the design of a questionnaire to be answered by a sample of students in advanced courses of interpretation of the University of Quintana Roo, Campus Cozumel. The subject is registered under the name of Translation IV, but the program consists mainly on getting the strategies to learn interpretation from English to Spanish. The Likert’s scale was used to design the instrument to measure the reliability of the sample of students whom the questionnaire was given.

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<th>Universidad de Quintana Roo, Campus Cozumel.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Please mention the difficulties you have had related to the interpretation practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Memory skills</td>
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<td>Never</td>
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<td>2. Understanding of the Source Language (grammar structure, pronunciation)</td>
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<td>Never</td>
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<td>3. Fidelity</td>
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<td>4. Listening skills</td>
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<td>5. Excessive note-taking</td>
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<td>6. Unfamiliar topic</td>
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Tabla 1. Portillo-Zanier-Cordova 2009

1. Analysis

The information was compiled and analysed using the data collecting technique of the qualitative research. The information was organized as follows:

If a student answers Always and Frequently in four or more questions, it is assumed that the student has problems regarding to the interpreting process. Thus it could be said that the student has various opportunity areas to work on. If a student answers Algunas Veces in four or more questions, it is assumed...
that the student has to acquire and domain some strategies. Therefore, the
student has some areas of opportunity to work on. If a student has underlined
four times *Never* or *Almost Never*, and also if he/she has underlined twice either
*Always*/*frequently* or *Sometimes*, it could be assumed that the student does not
have problems regarding to his/her interpretation practice.

*The entries follow a logic sequence therefore by logic a student has to
have underlined Always, Sometimes, Almost never or Never, four, or more
times.*

The analysis states that regarding question number one, five students
out of six underlined *Always*, and only one underlined *Frequently*. As for the
second question four students out of six answered *Almost never* and two
underlined *Sometimes*. As far as *fidelity*, the premise of the third question, four
students out of six underlined *Frequently*, and two underlined *Always*. As for
question number four regarding *listening skills*, four students underlined *Always*,
and two underlined *Frequently*. In question five related to *excessive note-taking*,
five students out of six underlined *Always*, an only one underlined *Frequently*.
As far as question six related to *Unfamiliar topic*, three students out of six
answered *Frequently*, and three underlined *Sometimes*.

2. Findings and conclusions

A big amount of people confuse translation with interpretation. The main
difference is that translation is written, while interpretation is verbal. The
findings enumerated the difficulties encountered related to the practice of
interpretation. Consecutive and simultaneous interpreting employ the same
cognitive processing skills, with the only difference being the amount of time
that elapses between the delivery of the source utterance and the delivery of
the interpretation. Rather than being two separate skills, consecutive
interpretation is in fact a building block for successful simultaneous
interpretations.

According to the bibliographical investigation there are various language
and oral communication problems in interpreting, for instance one of these is
listening many people overlook listening as a component of memory. Often,
errors in consecutive interpretation occur because the interpreter was not using
good listening skills. For example, if one become bogged down in details and
fail to grasp the overall meaning of a passage, that one will not be able to recall it correctly. Memory is such an important language and oral communication problem in interpreting specially in consecutive. Note-taking, is another problem for interpreters either taking very few notes, writing down only names and numbers, or taking copious notes. The more coherent the original message, the more you can retain. A good domain of the language or vice versa determines the performance in interpretation. Fidelity is the only quality component which cannot be assessed with any degree of precision without referring constantly to the source-language speech. Also, if the interpreter is unfamiliar with the subject matter, he has more trouble remembering the message. Finally, interpretation quality implies the fidelity of the target-language speech and the quality of the interpreter’s linguistic output.

According to the data obtained from the analysis it can be concluded that the main language and oral communication difficulties face by advanced students of interpretation are: memory, note-taking and listening, followed in less proportion are fidelity and unfamiliar topic.

However, due to the time allowed for comprehension and analysis of the source text consecutive interpretations offer greater accuracy and equivalence than do simultaneous interpretations. Thus, the speaker who addresses an audience for which interpretation has been requested must have a speech as clearly structured as possible considering a good quality of the interpreted speech which should be independent from the semantic, lexical, and emotional quality of the interpretation. He or she should have a domain in memory, listening, and note-taking skills. Interpreter should also be familiar with the topic and transmit an accurate speech. This work might be useful for students, professional interpreters and translators, beginners in these fields and instructors.
References


Biodata

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