

AL-FARABI KAZAKH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
International Relations Department
Chair of Diplomatic Translation
Translation business in the field of international and legal relations
“Simultaneous Translation of Monologue and Dialogical Speech”
2022-2023 academic year fall semester

Lecture 10

Module 2: Communicative situation in monologue and dialogical speech

Lecture 10: Mechanisms in simultaneous interpretation

Plan of the lecture

1. Introduction
2. Description of the simultaneous interpreting situation
3. Conclusion
4. References

Aspects of the lecture

1. Complexity of the task and its heavy load on the interpreter
2. Notion of repairs applied to simultaneous interpreting
3. Psychological experiments

Goals of the lecture

1. Identify cognitive load of SI on interpreter's brain
2. Revise psychological aspects of SI
3. Analyze psychological experiments and identify types of repair mechanisms

Basic concepts

Cognitive load, repair mechanisms, conscious simultaneous interpretation, time tag and etc.

In the 1960s and 1970s, psychologists and psycholinguists found an interest in the study of simultaneous interpreting. They carried out experiments to find out more about this very complex and fascinating cognitive activity. Alongside Paneth (1957), who wrote the first academic thesis on simultaneous interpreting, researchers like Oleron and Nanpon (1964), Treisman (1965), Goldman-Eisler (1967,1968,1972a, 1972b) Barik (1971 a, 1971 b, 1973, 1975) and Gerver (1969,1974a, 1974b, 1976) conducted research on simultaneous

interpreting tasks. They were interested in various topics linked with interpreting, as divided attention, segmentation of input and time-lag (ear-voice-span or EVS) which concerns the time between the interpreter's reception of the original speaker's input and the interpreter's production of an output. It seems important at this juncture to elaborate slightly on these experiments as they had some influence on the work of researchers later on.

Although Paneth's (1957) first aim was to investigate the possibility of having some training for interpreters in England, she also studied the 'technical problems' associated with conference interpreting. She studied the time lag in simultaneous interpreting and found that it could be "between 2 and 4 seconds, involving 15-21 words" (Paneth, 1957: 5). She also looked at the way interpreters segment their speech, observing that they sometimes make use of the speaker's pauses in order to speed up their own delivery of the message. Her data were authentic but she did not give any details about which measurement or method she used to come to her results. In her thesis, she mentions the existence of some kind of repairing function: "A great many interpreters are only happy when their quick delivery ensures them a great deal of time in hand for corrections, amplification" (Paneth, 1957: B: 10). She (*ibid.*, B: 11,12) also gives further evidence when she states that the interpreter:

"seems to be more conscious of his speaking than of his listening, as in good and fluent performances corrections of clichés or slips (Bestätigungen/Bestätigungen) are frequently heard (...) It is a very usual trick one's mind plays in such an atmosphere of interpretation-suggesting alternatives for everything that anybody says".

She further quotes Kaminker, a renowned interpreter, who surprisingly claimed that the interpreter never understands what is being said and adds (*ibid.*, B: 13):

"That he is often, even in a good performance, conscious of what he himself says, we have seen proved by corrections simultaneous interpreters insert into their speech. A negative statement that he does not understand what he hears, is from its nature less amenable to proof".

Paneth refers here to interpreters who translate but claim not to know afterwards what the speaker said or even 'write letters' while interpreting, in other words do not need much concentration in order to perform the task or are able to divide their attention accordingly.

Paneth claims therefore that there are three types of simultaneous interpretation:

- 1) "a parallel commentary of what is being said (in the case of a technical text). The interpreter will work phrase by phrase.
- 2) a conscious simultaneous interpretation where the interpreter follows what is being said and interprets with a small time-lag. He can consider and criticise the translation.
- 3) an unconscious simultaneous interpretation where the interpreter can concentrate on

another task while his interpretation goes on" (adapted from Paneth, 1957: B: 15).

However, she seems to contradict herself when she explains the so-called "conscious simultaneous interpretation" and states (ibid.: B: 15) that:

"With his attention on the material supplied to him, the interpreter relaxes and lets it flow through him and come out in the language to which he has switched at the beginning. He does not give it any thought and could not reproduce it afterwards".

Yet, can an interpreter "criticize the translation" and at the same time "not give it any thought"? In a later article, Paneth also seems to contradict the existence of a monitoring process. She explains (1962: 102) how the simultaneous interpreting process takes place: "There is of course no time for a consideration of the version to be produced. The absolute automatism of the translation, the ability to produce an immediate French configuration of a thought taken in in English, is a precondition of the functioning of the interpreter".

She calls interpreting a "trance-like translation process"(Paneth, 1962: 102) but does not mention the possibility of any monitoring taking place during the process. In fact, she claims that the interpreter does not have the time for it: "Apart from the fact that his functioning may not leave him time for considering the contents, (...)" (ibid.: 104).

Follow-up questions

1. Describe Paneth's experiment
2. According to this experiment, explain how the simultaneous interpreting process takes place

References

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2. Демьянков В.З. Политический дискурс как предмет политологической филологии // *Политическая наука. Политический дискурс: История и современные исследования*. – 2002. – № 3. – 32-43 с.
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4. Newmark and Weaver W. *The mathematical theory of communication*. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1949.- p 241

