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 13

Module 3: Modern concepts of Translation Studies

Lecture 13: Speed considerations. Short cuts and issues of exhaustion in simultaneous interpreting

Plan of the lecture

1. Introduction
2. Performing Remote Interpreting Assignments from Home in extremis during the Covid-19 Pandemic
3. Conclusion
4. References

Aspects of the lecture

1. The health and well-being of interpreters and the protection of public health
2. Respect of ethics and confidentiality
3. Compliance with ISO standards
4. Respect for AIIC's Professional Standards

Goals of the lecture

1. Explain ethics and confidentiality in SI
2. Identify problems with ISO standards in RSI
3. Familiarize with AIIC's Professional Standards

Basic concepts

Simultaneous interpreting, delivery speed, coping strategies, summarization, termination of service and etc.

Fast speech is the arch enemy of simultaneous interpreters. Prior preparation may address deficiencies in knowledge and terminology, and to some extent, alleviate the pressure of fast

delivery. But if the speed is beyond a certain limit, no interpreter can transmit the message in full, even if the interpreter is an expert in the subject. This is even more so when the structures of the source and target languages differ substantially. The reason is simple. All interpreters have limited mental capacity. In simultaneous interpretation (SI), interpreters have to allocate attention among several tasks: listening and analysis, production, short-term memory and coordination (Gile 1995: 161). When a speaker's delivery is rapid, listening and analysis alone will consume almost all the interpreter's energy. Little energy will be left for production, especially when production involves complicated language restructuring.

The human brain is like a washing machine. The drum must never be overloaded with laundry, or there will be no room for spinning, and cleaning will not be thorough. Likewise, fast speeches overload the brain with too much information within a specific time span, leaving no room for proper processing of information to produce a coherent translation.

Delivering fast speeches in an international conference may lead to several problems: First, mistranslation and loss of information. There is a maximum output that an interpreter can produce within a given time interval; the greater the input, the greater the chance of error and omission. Secondly, fast delivery makes comprehension difficult even when the audience is listening to a native language. Thirdly, English is a non-native language to many, if not most, international conference participants. Participants lose information when either the speaker or the interpreter speaks too fast.

To ensure the proper functioning of the interpreter''s brain, the speaker must speak at an appropriate speed. Studies show that speech rate has a direct correlation with interpretation quality. Accuracy is reduced as the speech gets faster. Interpreters generally believe that, to ensure the quality of interpretation, a rate between 100 and 120 (English) words per minute (wpm) is optimal for speeches that are not read from a written text, although the figure may differ for different types of speech. Lederer suggested that for recited texts which are devoid of hesitation and redundancy that characterise official speeches, the maximum rate should be 100 wpm (Gerver 1969; Seleskovitch 1978; Lederer 1981; as cited in Chang 2005: 12).

The results of various studies concur with the general beliefs of simultaneous interpreters. The following is a comment taken from the message board of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC):

We all know that a speaker speaking at about 100 to 120 words per minute is perfectly acceptable. However, there are exceptions to this: dense originals without much redundancy. Such speeches may seem excessively fast even if presented at 120 words per minute. Normally, however, any original exceeding 140 words per minute is fast. I have clocked speakers at 180 words per minute (Communicate 1999)

Follow-up questions

1. Describe methods of coping fast speed speech in SI

2. Identify average speed speech of your SL and TL

3. Explain how to cope with exhaustion in SI

References

1. Gerver, David (1969). "The effects of source language presentation rate on the performance of simultaneous conference interpreters". Emerson Foulke (Ed), Proceedings of the 2nd Louisville Conference on Rate and/or Frequency Controlled Speech. Louisville, KY: University of Louisville. October 22-24, 1969. 162-184.

2. Gile, Daniel (1995). Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.