

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 5

Module 1: Tenets of Translation Studies

Lecture 5: Mechanisms of adequate understanding of source language text during simultaneous interpretation

Plan of the lecture

1. Introduction
2. Mechanisms of discourse comprehension
3. Conclusion
4. References

Aspects of the lecture

1. Understanding the source language text
2. SL text parameters relevant to its comprehension
3. Measuring the ease/difficulty of the SL text
4. The feeling of familiarity

Goals of the lecture

1. Explain different aspects of source language text
2. Introduce methods of measuring the ease/difficulty of the SL text
3. Identify aspects of feeling of familiarity in SL text

Basic concepts

Speaker, Addressee, discourse community, explicit and implicit meaning, short term memory and etc.

1.1. From amongst the issues raised under /a/ it seems that most important are the ones related to the nature of the SL text in terms of the following two major parameters: (i) the rate and clarity of its delivery, which has already been studied (e.g. Barik 1973, Shiryayev 1977) and (ii) the

amount of information crammed into it, i.e. its semantic density, a problem which, to my knowledge, has not as yet been thoroughly explored. Therefore the focus here will be on issues related to the semantic density of the SL text as a major factor determining the ease or difficulty with which it lends itself to processing in an SI event. My major claims here will be that

– The most powerful indicator of semantic density relevant to an SI situation is the text's implicitness characteristics expressed through the ratio between the explicit and implicit predications (or propositions, PNs) constituting its content structure, because understanding a text means building or constructing predications (see Varantola 1980; Alexieva 1989; 1992; 1994) linking them into a coherent whole; and that The explicit:implicit PN ratio can be employed for elaborating a more accurate procedure of measuring the comprehensibility, or listenability, of the SL text in SI, a procedure that may help us draw conclusions relevant to the theory, practice and didactics of SI (see Alexieva 1998).

1.2. Concerning the second series of questions arising around /b/ above, an attempt will be made to address only one of them and it is related to the SIr's ability to cope with the task, irrespective of the fact that, as a rule, s/he is not a member of the discourse community (in the sense used by Swales 1990: 23-28, that is, a community of specialists). The claims I shall venture to make here are firstly, that it is the cumulative nature of SI as a process that ensures an increase in the feeling of familiarity of the SIr with the conference topic, thus helping her/him build a communication community (Stolz 1997: 195) with the conference primary participants, that is a community for that specific act of communication, and secondly, that the introduction of the notion of familiarity and the attempt to quantify it by means of a familiarity coefficient can ensure a relatively high degree of objectivity in admission aptitude tests and quality assessment in general.

2. The SL Text Parameters Relevant to Its Comprehension

2.1. The Unidirectionality of the SL Text Delivery and the Multidirectionality of the Comprehension Process The delivery of the SL text flows in one direction along the temporal axis, therefore, on the surface, the activity may seem to look like a Markovian process. So the ideal text for the SIr would be one that can satisfy the basic unidirectionality requirement of Markovian processing, that is, a text with right branching, which can be handled by means of a single left-to-right search (Garvin 1972: 87).

Unfortunately, however, Markovian processes CANNOT provide a good account of what happens in text comprehension, as well as in text production, because in many cases in the processing of the linear sequence "A+B+C", for example, it is impossible to make a decision

about the meaning of "A" without having heard "B" or "C". In (1), for example, one can correctly interpret the attributive function of the substantival forms in front of the head-noun 'strategies' only after hearing the latter, with the exception of the cases in which a clearly marked prosody can help the SIr predict the specific syntactic position of the nouns and avoid a false start, at least.

Follow-up questions

1. Describe main linguistic features source language text
2. Speak about methods of measuring the ease/difficulty of the SL text
3. Describe pivotal role of STM in SI
5. What are the propositions in SL text?

References

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2. Garvin P.L. (1972): On Machine Translation, The Hague-Paris, Mouton.
3. Jacoby L.L. (1991): "A Process Dissociation Framework: Separating Automatic from Intentional Use of Memory", Journal of Memory and Language, 30, pp. 513-41.