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MEMORY AND NOTE-TAKING AS KEY ELEMENTS IN CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION

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Abstract: While the world is striding into a new age of not only technological advancement, but also international interaction, the increased necessity and demand for interpretation and professional interpreters make it a challanging specialty. Unlike in written translation, during oral interpretation the received information is not 'material.' The quality of the oral translation largely and mainly depends on the characteristic features of the speech and the translator's competence, as well as his personal and mental (psychological) aspects. It goes without saying that besides good knowledge of both source and target languages, good and trained memory and note-taking are the most crucial elements in interpretation, as they can be effective and practical for the interpreter's multifaceted work.

Key words: consecutive interpretation, long-term memory, short-term memory, mnemonics, note-taking

1. Introduction

In the process of oral interpretation and especially during consecutive interpretation, the roles of memory and note-taking techniques are immeasurable. These two elements are interdependent. In modern conditions, with the intensification of interdisciplinary research, the psychological direction of any study seems to be one of the most relevant and promising aspects and this is, beyond question, the basis for memory training.

In this current article we aim at establishing the mechanisms of memory, its types and its implementation in consecutive interpretation, as well as the utility of the cognitive process of note-taking. In this respect, our study is dedicated to understanding how to maximize the benefits of note-taking, its basic functions and how the benefits of note-taking vary with individual ability to carry out these processes.

2. Types of Memory: Memorization Techniques

It is known that language is the most important means of human communication. Language gives people an opportunity to establish economic, political and cultural bonds, correspondingly, for people who speak in different languages translation is a means to communicate and exchange thoughts in multilingual environment.

By the end of 1920s, i.e. before the invention of special equipments during international conferences, meetings consecutive interpretation was widely practiced. The search for a competent interpreter is of a crucial significance. Hence, it is not of a

less importance for interpreters to learn adequate and sufficient methods, techniques to be capable of doing acceptable interpretation.

Consecutive interpretation is a form of oral interpretation when the translator is able to do the interpretation only after listening to the speaker's speech. In other words the translator hears and perceives a certain chunk of the speech and after a while reproduces it in another language, namely in the target language. The translator deals with two languages and the purpose of his activity is to get the message in one language and transmit it in another. So, it must be noted that the translating process starts with the speaker's perception of the thought, then, after its transmission in another language, it ends.

Naturally, it is clear that this procedure rather overwhelms the memory and toughens the translator's job. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that a number of other processes also take place which ensure the acceptable and adequate outcome of the translation.

Verbal excerpts that have to be translated are uttered only once and, in his turn, the translator has only a single opportunity to vocalize the translated passage, accordingly it is impossible for the translator to change anything at all. Very often these verbal excerpts are excessively elongated; therefore the role of the memory is essential.

Psychological studies of human memory distinguish between two types of memory: short-term memory (STM) and long-term memory (LTM). Short-term memory allows retaining and recalling the information in mind only for a few seconds, it can last as long as the translator needs it, that is, mostly until the end of the translation, whereas long-term memory stores the information in mind from minutes to months or even years' span. Due to constant repetitions, the information passes from short-term memory to long-term memory. According to Carolyn Hopper, "In actuality long-term memory is the neural pathways and synaptic connections that have stabilized through repeated use" (Hopper 2010:102). However, it is often possible for a translator to decide what is necessary for himself to keep in long-term memory. Therefore, we can say that memory can be controlled.

It is an accepted viewpoint that information is stored in short-term memory in as much as we concentrate our attention on the speaker's words. There are visual, kinesthetic and auditory memories. Scientists believe that the encoding of information is mainly done through three modalities: acoustic, visual and semantic.

The first modality is based on the idea of listening without concentrating on the meaning of the ideas we hear. Alan Baddeley (1966) supposes that short-term memory depends primarily on acoustic coding, whereas long-term memory is based on semantic coding. The aforesaid can be explained by the fact that during oral interpretation the first step that the translator has to take is to focus his attention largely on listening to the words or sentences and only then to analyze the meaning of what he hears, thus, without the help of long-term memory, he wouldn't manage to translate the meaning of the message, as in order to deeply understand the overall meaning, he should turn to long-term memory. The translator recalls the meanings of the words form long-term memory and the successful result of the translation in some extent also depends on the translator's knowledge of the specific area he has to translate, hence, in this case the context is also of utmost importance.

As it is apparent from the term itself the bases of visual coding are pictures, images, charts, diagrams that can be shown with the help of presentations, or the translator himself can form the image in his mind. Visual coding is also known by the term 'photographic memory' which can function for one translator, but be useless for another.

Semantic coding is the actual meaning of words. Kellogg determined that semantic codes are mighty in short-term memory (Kellogg 2003:135). Texts are usually divided into semantic units and it is more effective to remember them through semantic units. This is called 'semantic memory' (Minyar-Beloruchev 2005). Memory is directly related to attention. If there is a need to remember a text or a passage, it is easier to remember when we focus on it. If we read a text in the presence of someone, asking them to remember it, and read the same text to someone else without warning them to remember it, the result is definitely obvious; the first person will be able to remember it more easily.

Different people may have developed different types of memories. It is known that any person can develop and improve his memory. It is obvious that for oral translation it is necessary to have an excellent auditory memory.

Scientists observe that if we are given a text written in our mother tongue and in another case the same text is just read to us, it will not be a complicated task for us to remember, perceive and understand both the written and oral texts. The reason is that the comprehension and memorization of 'written' and 'oral' texts in the mother tongue take place unconsciously, without focusing or mental analysis of the text, i.e. when dealing with text in our mother tongue, there is no need to think of denotational or connotational meanings of the words, about the grammar, syntax, etc. However, the same cannot be said of foreign language texts, as in this case the texts are analyzed and the translator is required to concentrate more. Moreover, in case of oral text, the role of memory is increased. Since some thoughts or words are often forgotten in a concentrated state, memory is one of the most important components of oral translation and the most complex psychological process.

It can be concluded from the aforementioned idea that oral translation is not a mechanical procedure and, hence, memorization is not mechanical, either. Each interpreter has to find for himself an appropriate and effeciant way to memorise.

Short-term memory must be regularly trained which will help the interpreter to excel in understanding the source language and its message. Wherefore, the quality of interpretation will enhance, and the outcome will be profoundly satisfying.

Scientists suggest some techniques and methods to improve the quality of memory. These memory aids are mnemonic techniques, note-taking and many other methods which can be helpful in keeping new information in mind.

Mnemonics are memory devices that help translators recall larger pieces of information. It is a tool with the help of which one can associate some word or phrase from source language with some other word or phrase from the target language. Its aim is to help the person learn some difficult word associating it to something easy. Interestingly, scientists think that in order to make your mnemonics easy to remember, you should apply positive, pleasant images, since our brain has the habit of blocking out unpleasant images.

Different types of mnemonics can include humour, music, names, symbols, signs, letters. A very simple example of mnemonics is to remember the sequence of rainbow colors by means of the imaginary name 'Roy G. Biv,' in which each letter stands for a colour; R stands for red, O-orange, Y-yellow, G- green, B-blue, I-indigo and V- violet. Similarly, in Armenian we have a key phrase to remember the rainbow colors: 'Կատուն նստած դռան կողքին, երազում է կերի մասին,' where the initials of the words making up the sentence stand for 'կարմիր' (red), 'նարնջագույն' (orange), 'դեղին' (yellow), 'կանաչ' (green), 'երկնագույն' (light blue), 'կապույտ' (blue) and 'մանուշակագույն' (purple), respectively: This is a very typical example of keeping something in the memory with the help of mnemonic association.

3. The Role of Note-Taking in Consecutive Interpretation

Unlike in simultaneous translation, where the translation is delivered simultaneously with the speech and the interpreter has no scope for making notes, in consecutive translation the interpreter listens to a piece of speech conveyed in source (or target) language, takes notes, restates it in target (or source) language maintaining the same idea of the speech. Otherwise stated, the consecutive translator has to undergo the following steps:
- to understand the main idea and the nuances of the source massage,
- to keep in mind its content, sequence of presentation and its peculiar features,
- to reproduce it adequately into another language (the target language) (Fomin 2006:4).

Evidently, one should have a profound knowledge not only of the source language and its nuances, but also of the subject that is being presented. Only in case of thorough understanding of the source text, one can focus on memorizing the content of the speech and its qualitative interpretation.

As we have already mentioned, the interpreter is required to have a powerful memory. The interpreter's memory, its improvement and training can determine the quality of the consecutive interpretation. But we should mention that a well-trained memory not always guarantees the proper and whole-length reproduction of the original speech as the lenght of the source speech can be rather extensive.

The complexity and the length of the speech should not be ignored. By complexity, we mean its abundance in scientific and less commonly used terms which are familiar to the specialist, but unknown to the interpreter. The lenght of the source speech is determined by the speaker whose speech the interpreter has to translate. Very often the speaker or the reporter gets so excited during their speech that they forget about the interpreter and that their speech is to be interpreted. And, it is obvious, that the possibilites of the working memory isn't unlimited. The concept 'working memory' and 'short-term memory' are often used interchangeably and the actual difference between them isn't thoroughly investigated. The psychologists usually debate about the real functions of these two memory types. But, all in all, working memory is defined as "a system for temporarily storing and managing the information required to carry out complex cognitive tasks such as learning, reasoning, and comprehension. Working

memory is involved in the selection, initiation, and termination of information-processing functions such as encoding, storing, and retrieving data" (Baddeley and Hitch 1974).

Studies have shown that, although it is very difficult to remember a large number of words, it is not so difficult to remember a series of ideas (Garretson 1981). Generally a well-trained brain can remember 2-3 cause-effect clauses, up to 3 sentences. If the speech is longer than 3 sentences, the brain requires some aids which are necessary to relieve its pressure. Consequently, a successful technique for consecutive interpretation is the method of reducing words to ideas and putting the ideas into symbols that can then be re-expressed in another language.When the interpreter faces such problems it is the note-taking skill that comes to save the situation. In the process of interpretation the notes help the interpreter to form the translation, whereas during the listening process note-taking is significant for memorizing.

Note-taking is one of the primary and essential skills to facilitate the process of interpretation. It allows the interpreter to fix a sufficient amount of semantic elements of speech on the paper and after a few seconds form the translation of the source text into the target language. Notes unload the short-term memory of the interpreters; free them from the eternal fear of forgetting the contents of the translated material letting them work with segments of text of considerable length and complexity.

It should be noted, that the interpreter is not expected to write down each word they hear like in a dictation. It can prevent the interpreter from conveying the main idea of the source speech and they will not have enough time to do it. The interpreter should remember that they don't have the right to omit any idea expressed by the reporter or speaker. Even if they don't translate each word into the target language, they have to interpret each idea.

There are different problems and complications concerning the process of note-taking and each interpreter firstly learns to overcome them. For every consecutive interpreter it is a need to establish an individual well-developed and effective system for note-taking.

According to Fomin, the process of note-taking is based on semantic analysis, abbreviations and contracted words, principle of vertical organization of notes and specific symbols (Fomin 2006:5).

Minyar-Beloruchev (2003) also suggests some methods to take the notes efficiently. These methods are as follows:

- 'Economization' of the wording of the thoughts expressed by the speaker due to semantic analysis, paying attention to each important element which is difficult to remember.
- Contraction of words, i.e. writing the word in fewer letters.
- By means of vertical organization of notes taking into account the conjunctions which helps to save time and catcg the eye.
- Wide application of symbols which have collective meaning and replace not just one word, but a whole group.

Semantic analysis of the text is the basis of its memorization, as it is more advantageous than just mechanical memorization. In his book "Memory, Its Psychology and Pedagogy" Ribnikov claims that "meaningful memorization is 22

times more productive than just mechanical memorization" (Ribnikov 1930). It serves to highlight the main thread of the content. The main semantic burden of the spoken speech is on the subject and the predicate. Thus, in the sentence the link between the theme and the rheme is the most important and in order to remember the spoken statement, it is of utmost importance for the interpreter to take down the rheme and the theme and the link between them. For example:

Thousands of workers protested across Europe and North America over unfair wage practices and working conditions on the occasion of the 48-hour Prime Day shopping festival. - Thousands against wages and conditions 48-hour Prime Day festival.

Ծրագրով նախատեսված արտադրանքի ընդհանուր ծավալը կկազմի 10 մլրդ դրամ, որից 500 մլն դրամի արտադրանքը կիրացվի ՀՀ տարածքում, 3.5 մլրդ դրամի արտադրանքը՝ ԵԱՏՄ այլ անդամ երկրների տարածքում, 6 մլրդ դրամի արտադրանքը՝ երրորդ երկրների տարածքում: - Ծավալը կլինի 10 մլրդ, 500 մլն՝ ՀՀ-ում, 3.5 մլրդ՝ ԵԱՏՄ-ում, 6 մլրդ՝ 3-րդ երկրներում:

The above-mentioned examples explicate the importance of the theme and the rheme in understanding and remembering a lengthy sentence or an idea. Moreover, their role in both English and Armenian and generally in any language is paramount.

Writing down the names and the numbers is essential as it is challenging to remember them. If the Geographical names are famous and well-known, the probability of remembering them is great, otherwise they can hardly be kept in mind without any notes.

While note-taking, the interpreters usually turn to the method of cotraction of the words or expressions. In the Armenian language, for example, consonant letters, not vowels bear the basic semantic meaning of the word. The most effective way to contract the long words is the omission of the vowels. And if the statement is written only in consonants, it can reduce the amount of letters up to 40-50%, but the sentence can still be easily read and understood.It is worth mentioning that there is no point in contracting the words that have 4-5 letters, as they can't be read afterwards and it is quite possible that the interpreter may forget what the contracted word was. For example: համապատասխան-հմքստսն, մեջբերում-մջբրմ, համալսարան-հմլսրն, background-bkgd, problem-prblm, etc.

It should be noted, that the first letter of the contracted word, even if it is a vowel, must be written by all means, otherwise it will be hard to understand its meaning (առաջնորդ-առջնրդ, ազգայնական-ազգնկն). If the word has double letters, one of the letters can be omitted (ուղղամիտ-ուղմտ, քննաշրջան-քնշրջն). Long expressions can also be contracted. For instance:

մեզ մեծ բավականություն պատճառեց-ուրախ ենք,

մենք մեծ ցավ ենք ապրում-ցավում ենք,

մենք օգնություն ենք ցուցաբերում-օգնում ենք:

Acronyms and abbreviations are also a very useful way of note-taking, e.g.:

as soon as possible-asap;

for your information-fyi;

I don't know-Idk,

as a matter of fact-aamof.

It is important to remember that in different languages the contraction of words can be done in different ways. In Armenian, for instance, the last letters of the word are very important, because Armenian is a synthetical language and we have cases, which have different endings, thus, it is crucial to keep them, whereas in English there is no case distinction. So, special attention must be paid to the contraction of words because sometimes they can be confusing.

Vertical organization of notes is the bases for the interpreter's visual memory. The notes should be organized the way that will let the interpreter see them immediately, semantically most important points must stand out and each member of the sentence should have its appropriate place on the vertical organization of the notes.

The usage of symbols is very personal. The same symbol can have quite different meanings by different people. Therefore, it is quite possible that it will be difficult to decode another person's symbols. Of course, there are widely recognized symbols which are generally Arithmetical or Geomatrical signs or images. The symbols which the interpreter uses should be efficient, e.i. they must refer to more than one word (e.g. '?' – question, problem, offer, suggestion, surprise, etc.), they should be perceived easier than the word that it refers to.

Generally, an experienced interpreter makes use of nearly 100-200 symbols.According to the purpose the symbols are used, they can be predicative, refer to temporal relationship, they can have modal meaning and denote degrees of quality.

→	To enter, to import, to deposit, to deliver, to guide, to direct, to lead, to supply, to arrive, to seek, to attack, etc.
←	To exit, to go out, to acquire, to leave, to retreat, to digress, to go back, to return, etc.
↑	To improve, to intensify, to strenghten, to increase, to accelerate, to grow, to rise, etc.
↓	To decrease, to fall, to weaken, to surrender, to yield, etc.
=	To equal, to equate, to be like, to assimilate, etc. (equals sign)
X	To liquidate, to disappear, to forbid, to delete, to cancel, etc. (times sign)
"	To speak, to state, to inform, to express, to pronounce, etc.

Table 1: Predicative symbols

↓	Now, at the moment, today, right now, etc.
' ↳	In the future, tomorrow, soon, etc.
↲ '	In the past, yesterday, ago, etc
<	Beginning of the action (strict inequality – greater than)
>	End of the action (strict inequality – greater than)
↔	Period of time

Table 2: Time symbols

Yes	To agree, to approve, to welcome, to accept, etc.
©	Can, be able to, manage, etc.
∞	Infinity, uncertainty, ambiguity, vagueness, etc. (infinity sign)
If	Condition, provision, etc.

Table 3: Modal symbols

<	Small, little (than) (strict inequality – less than)
>	Big, great, large (than) (strict inequality – greater than)
+	As well as, in addition, and, plus (plus sign)
-	Without, minus (minus sign)

Table 4: Quality and quantity symbols

Ø	Aspect, field, area, scope, domain, realm, etc.
?	Question, problem, task, etc.
8	Anything ending in 'ate'
∴	Hence, therefore, thus, so
✓	Approved, yes, correct
♀	Female, woman
♂	Male, man
#	Number
✳	Important, special, notable
1/12	Month
Ω	Agreement, contract
♎	To determine, to establish, to install
□	Earth, country, location

Table 5: Other symbols

Taking effective notes in consecutive translation is an essential skill for an interpreter, as proper and reliable note-taking implies a long-lasting record of the main information that one can later use in the interpretation. A successful note-taking technique for consecutive interpretation is an efficient method to reduce words to ideas and change them into symbols that can later on be re-expressed in another language.

4. Conclusion

All things considered, the aforementioned ideas come to prove that oral interpretation has its own unique features and basic markers. Strictly speaking, this is a profession, where the person, his abilities and psychology act the most influential part.

Our analysis revealed why working memory is decisive for note-taking. Unfortunately, there is currently a lack of unanimity regarding the nature of the relationship between memory and note-taking, note-taking modality, and individual differences in note-taking strategy. For this reason, we presented some methods of note-taking which can be practical for consecutive interpreters.

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