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PAŃSTWOWA WYŻSZA SZKOŁA ZAWODOWA IM. STANISŁAWA PIGONIA W KROŚNIE

Simultaneous Interpreting as a Demanding Strategic Operation – the Issue of the Interpreter’s Experience

1. Simultaneous interpreting as a complex and multi-faceted type of performance

To start the deliberations about the nature of strategies in simultaneous interpreting, it is necessary first to take into consideration the paradigms and features which make it such a specific kind of interlanguage performance.

Several decades ago Csikszentmihalyi (1991) stated that everything that happens in the brain of an interpreter bears resemblance to magic. Although the pool of research within the area of interpreting studies is still growing, this statement still seems to be veracious. The interpreter’s brain during the SI performance is like a black box (Prunč 2007:184) and it is possible to take a look at what happens only by a thorough examination of the product (in the case of this study the recorded performance of the interpreters).

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Differences between translating and interpreting were emphasised already by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who claimed that: ‘The interpreter works in the field of commerce, while the translator proper works in the fields of scholarship and art.’¹ (Wilss 1977:33). According to Schleiermacher, the fact that both modes are attributable to different spheres of life was a proof of their distinctive nature.

The most essential difference between written and oral translation is the notion discussed as early as 1984 by Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, the creators of the *Scopos* theory in translation, namely *Korrigierbarkeit* (corrigibility) which is the potential possibility of text correction which is performed by a translator after the actual translation. In simultaneous interpretation, the fact that it is hardly possible to introduce corrections at any time during the performance is perceived as an enormous and insurmountable constraint. Moreover, it is believed that ‘within an identical time span, an interpreter (not being in possession of supporting materials) works twenty four times more effectively than a translator who is equipped with various aids’ (Kautz 2000: 287). Therefore, in the case of simultaneous interpreting performance there is no option to correct any erroneous formulations once they have been uttered. It is frequently necessary to resort to numerous strategies, including face-saving strategies.

The specificity of simultaneous interpreting is defined by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in the following manner:

In simultaneous mode, the interpreter sits in a booth with a clear view of the meeting room and the speaker and listens to and simultaneously interprets the speech into a target language. Simultaneous interpreting requires a booth (fixed or mobile) that meets ISO standards of acoustic isolation, dimensions, air quality and accessibility as well as appropriate equipment (headphones, microphones). (<http://www.aiic.net/glossary>)

As defined by the International Association of Conference Interpreters,

A Conference Interpreter is a person who by profession acts as a responsible linguistic intermediary (alone or more often as a member of a team) in a formal or informal conference or conference-like situation, thanks to his or her ability to provide simultaneous or consecutive oral interpretation of participants’ speeches, regardless of their length and complexity. (AIIC 1984:21)

As far as the activities that this mode of interpreting entails, the Effort Model of simultaneous interpreting proposed by Gile (1995) constitutes a cognitive framework conceptualising SI as a set of multiple cognitive operations grouped into three basic ‘Efforts.’ The first one being the *Listening Effort* or *Listening and Analysis Effort* which encompasses all online operations activated to allow comprehension of the source

1 „Der Dolmetscher nämlich verwaltet sein Amt in dem Gebiete des Geschäftslebens, der eigentliche Übersetzer vornämlich in dem Gebiete der Wissenschaft und Kunst“.

speech by the interpreter. It includes ‘all the mental operations between perception of a discourse by auditory mechanisms and the moment at which the interpreter either assigns, or decides not to assign a meaning (or several potential meanings) to the segment which he has heard’ (Gile 1995: 93), that is: the analysis of sound waves, identification of words, final decisions about the meaning of a unit.

Secondly, there is the *Production Effort* (P) which encompasses all online operations concurring to produce a target speech, including self-monitoring and self-correction. It encompasses ‘all the mental operations related to storage in memory of heard segments of discourse until either their restitution in the target language, their loss if they vanish from memory, or a decision by the interpreter not to interpret them’ (Gile 1995:93).

Finally, Gile distinguished the *Memory Effort* (M), which encompasses all online operations which manage in the very short term (up to a few seconds) the storage and retrieval of information related to the source and target speech in short term memory. This Effort includes ‘all the mental operations between the moment at which the interpreter decides to convey a datum or an idea and the moment at which he articulates (overtly produces) the form he has prepared to articulate’ (1995:93), that is the initial mental representation, speech planning and implementation. The storage of information is claimed to be particularly demanding in SI, since both the volume of information and the pace of storage and retrieval are imposed by the speaker (1995:97-98).

Later on a fourth Effort was added to this model, namely the *Coordination Effort* (C), proposed by Eysenck & Keane (1990). This Effort is tantamount to managing the allocation of attention and shifts between the three other efforts. Gile (1995:169) notices certain parallel features of this Effort to what Baddeley and Hitch called the ‘Central Executive’ in their model of Working Memory (Baddeley & Hitch 1974). Hence, the whole model was as follows:

$$SI = L + M + P + C$$

where:

L – Listening

M – (Working) Memory

P – Production

C – Coordination (Gile 1995)

In addition, according to Gile (1995:169):

At each point in time, each Effort has specific processing capacity requirements that depend on the task(s) it is engaged in, namely the particular comprehension, short-term memory, or production operations being performed in speech segments. Due

to the high variability of requirements depending on the incoming speech segments, processing capacity requirements of individual Efforts can vary rapidly over time, in seconds or fractions of seconds.

At each point in time there is a certain processing capacity requirement for each effort' (Gile 1995:170). The general assumption is that the available capacity must be larger than the requirement for successful completion of a task. In order to meet this demand, the total available capacity must be at least equal to the capacity requirements. Thus, difficulties and failures can be accounted for not by the lack of knowledge but rather by cognitive overload which leads to situations in which the execution of a given task is delayed or not performed at all. Therefore, the application of strategies is a *sine qua non* condition of simultaneous interpreting.

2. *Novices vs. experts in simultaneous interpreting*

Cognitive psychologists have long been interested in the role of expertise in problem solving. The early research proved that the main difference between novices and experts was the organisation and use of their knowledge (de Groot 2000). Further research focused on the actual time spent by both groups on problem solving. Other differences between these two groups were analysed in verbal protocols (Lesgold 1988). Many scholars emphasise the superiority of experienced interpreters over novices in the profession, as the operation of the cognitive system is seen to change significantly over time. Danks asserts that:

[L]earning, training and experience over time can both create new representations and lead to the increased probability that certain associative networks will be evoked as a function of prior usage (biasing effect) upon receipt of the input. The signal source is integrated into a probabilistic neural network, the output of which is modulated by the saliency of cues (...). Saliency is a complex interaction between elements of the input (cues), the task, and the substrate. The implication is that to be effective and efficient at translation and interpreting, there are several preconditions. Certain cues used by experienced translators are available to them because of their previous training and/or experience. (Danks 1997:245)

As seen above, Danks points out that experienced interpreters are sensitive to a broader range of information cues in the input, which modulates the sensitivity of the filtering system and provides richer computational output.

He further lists essential differences between novices and professionals, known to cause substantial differences in their performance, such as: differential cue use, richer network of activation resulting from the alterations in filtering. Aware of the problems, professionals are able to use effortful processes (strategies and tactics) in the problem-solving task. Moreover, professionals develop a certain degree of auto-

maticity in the processing of input, whereas selective inhibition is thought to allow interpreters to decrease the processing time, improve accuracy and eliminate the effect of interference on the performance.

Sternberg (1999: 298) regards expertise in translation as a sub-category of translation competence and a prototype construct which encompasses factors such as: ‘quantity of knowledge, organisation of knowledge, superior analytical ability, superior creative ability, superior automatization of processing, and also a superior practical ability which allows experts to apply their more abstract, cognitive abilities within the constraints of the field where they work’ (Sternberg 1999: 298). Additionally, the knowledge of experts in their domain has been restructured, and therefore, they can access their long-term memory in a more efficient manner than novices. They conduct problem-solving in a more effective way due to *proceduralisation* (conversion of the declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge), *tactical learning* and *strategic learning*. Experts are reported to have developed rich patterns of declarative knowledge. They spend more time on creating the representation of a problem than on finding and applying a strategy to solve it. Their representations of problems are based on the structural similarities between these problems.

Moreover, experts start solving the problem concentrating on the given data towards the issues that are unknown. The patterns that they have developed include a lot of procedural knowledge on the problem-solving strategies. They are able to solve problems efficiently, even facing time constraints and are able to solve problems faster than novices. Besides, experts display high effectiveness in finding proper solutions. They are able to monitor their own strategies and the process of problem solving. When facing problems with untypical structure, they spend more time than novices on the representation of the problem, as well as on the retrieval of proper strategies. Finally, when they receive a new piece of information which is contradictory to the initial representation of the problem, they are able to adapt flexibly by applying more suitable strategies.

Novices on the other hand, demonstrate little declarative knowledge from a given field, their knowledge is poorly organised and diffuse. The time used for the application of proper strategies is longer than the time spent on creating the representation of a problem. Moreover, novices create relatively poor and primitive representations of problems which are based on superficial similarities between them. Novices concentrate on the gaps in their knowledge and on finding strategies which could be used in relation with the information they have. Novices often apply the method of intermediate goals when dealing with many problems. Their problem-solving strategies include few or no automatised sequences of steps. What is more, their efficiency is lower than in experts’ performance and they do not have a properly developed system of monitoring of their own problem-solving strategies. Finally, novices demonstrate inferior ability to adjust to new information which is contradictory with the initial representation of the problem and the applied strategy (Sternberg 1999: 300).

Observations from studies investigating the nature of cognitive performance differences between experts and novices (e.g. Sternberg, 1999) indicate significant distinctiveness. Their general findings are fairly uniform across various domains and may be summarised as follows: (1) experts tend to favour deeper processing (i.e. at the level of meaning), while novices tend to remain structure-focused (i.e. at the level of form); (2) in contrast to novices, experts tend to store knowledge representations based on associative links, which ultimately leads to relatively fast and error-free retrieval operations from LTM; and (3) experts are known to monitor and control their cognitive processes to succeed in performing a given task (cf. Feltovich et al. 2006). Translation and interpreting scholars have made similar observations of professional and trainee performance differences predicated on the claim that the progression to expertise involves changes in the nature of cognitive organisation and processing (e.g. Hoffman 1997; Liu 2008). To provide one example, in a dichotic listening task professional interpreters detected significantly more semantic errors while student interpreters significantly more syntactic ones (Fabbro et al. 1991). The most crucial declarative and procedural knowledge differences claimed to exist between experts and novices in translation and interpreting performance are as follows (Moser-Mercer 2000):

- *factual knowledge*: experts' factual knowledge is better organised than that of the novices: experts reveal more associative links among concepts and more domain connections, which leads to faster access to declarative knowledge;
- *semantic knowledge*: as opposed to novices, experts' semantic knowledge is deeper and almost always embedded in the context of a text or speech;
- *monitoring strategies*: professional interpreters constantly compare the input against the output at various levels, including the level of the lexicon and overall meaning;
- *workload management strategies*: experienced interpreters use their processing resources optimally, although they are not always conscious of the exact mechanisms they employ to ensure smooth delivery.

In addition, conference interpreting students are believed to undergo the following stages of skill acquisition (Moser-Mercer 2000, 2008):

- (a) a cognitive stage, also called the interpretive stage,
- (b) an associative stage, also called the compiled stage, and
- (c) an autonomous stage, also called the automatic or procedural stage.

In the first stage, performance is relatively slow and error-prone, it involves controlled processing and requires considerable allocation of attentional resources. The second stage entails a mixture of controlled and automatic processing as associations are formed and the strain on declarative memory and working memory is gradually lessened. Attentional resources are nonetheless still required for control. In the final stage, the processing of declaratively stored knowledge representations becomes more automatic and less dependent on attentional resources. It follows from the above that speed and accuracy are two essential aspects of lexical processing which may be trained during interpreting practice:

(...) increased practice can lead to improvement in performance as sub-skills become automated, but it is also possible for increased practice to create conditions for restructuring with attendant decrements in performance as learners reorganise their internal representational framework. In the second case, performance may follow a U-shaped curve, (...) declining as more complex internal representations replace less complex ones, and increasing again as skill becomes expertise (McLaughlin 1994: 115; cf. also Moser-Mercer et al. 2000: 110).

Moser-Mercer (2000) defines an expert as ‘someone who has attained a high level of performance in a given domain as a result of years of experience,’ and a novice as someone with ‘little or no experience in a particular domain,’ although she notes that both categories allow for some degree of variation. Indeed, there are scholars who have made more fine-grained distinctions along the expert-novice continuum (e.g. Hoffman 1997: 199).

In this view, ‘[t]ranslation graduates may exhibit varying levels of translation competence but not translation expertise’ while not all long-time translators in a given domain will exhibit superior performance (Shreve 2000). In other words, merely accumulating cognitive resources (...) is not sufficient to become an expert, and the difference between novices and experts or experienced non-experts and experts is not simply a matter of cognitive resources in the quality and composition of those resources, how they are cognitively arranged, represented, and stored in or retrieved from long-term memory (Shreve 2000: 161).

As pointed out by Liu (2008: 160),

[o]wing to the lack of clearly defined objectives and consistently reliable measuring devices for performance, research in Interpreting Studies has often opted to compare expert and novice performance in order to determine if there are observable differences in behaviours or abilities that can be attributed to different stages of expertise development (...). However, we have to note that expertise defined through this contrastive approach is rather relative (...). This relativity (...) is another factor underlying the difficulty in comparing the results of different studies on interpreting expertise and in making generalisations across studies. However, this relative approach can illuminate our understanding of how experts become the way they are (...).

Conference interpreters work under conditions which psychologists generally consider to involve objective stress factors: constant information load, the time factor, the tremendous amount of concentration required, fatigue, the confined environment of the booth, etc. Several empirical studies have confirmed that simultaneous interpreting is indeed a high-stress occupation (e.g. Kurz 2003). Studies within the area of interpretation have focused mostly on the interpretation process itself in order to better understand the intrinsic nature of the process. The interpreter is in a position where any decision is the consequence of what somebody else does or says. Strikingly,

almost no other profession undergoes a similar cognitive load: the sole power of the interpreter is within the interpreter's mind. The technical equipment is used to carry the acoustic signal directly to the ears of the recipients and not to help the interpreter in difficult circumstances.

When clients of an interpreting service were asked what they considered particularly difficult about the interpreting profession, the most frequent replies were 'high concentration' and 'stress' (Moser 1996). Also, there is general agreement among conference interpreters that their profession is a very demanding one. It requires a maximum of attention and concentration over prolonged periods of time. The need to cope with different (often highly specialised) subjects, different speakers and accents, the possibility of failure at all times, etc. are among the factors that are generally regarded as contributing to stress. And stress is held to be an important factor in interpreting (Kurz 2003).

At the beginning of a conference even the most experienced, efficient and skilled interpreters feel some tension, since they are aware of various unknown elements that may occur and will have to be coped with: new concepts or technical words, a difficult accent or pronunciation, technical defects, speaker not talking to the microphone, an unscheduled paper read at a speed impossible to keep up with. Such factors, expected in general but unexpected in particular, cannot be eliminated by the interpreter. Training and experience may help the interpreter adopt the right strategy immediately, sometimes automatically, however, there may be circumstances requiring additional effort and imposing more strain on the interpreter. The bigger number of unknown factors the interpreter is confronted with, the larger the stress involved in the task.

When interpreting conditions are very demanding from the cognitive point of view, even incidental factors like minor noise in the booth, a sneeze, a cough, a reduction in the sound volume or somebody talking behind the booth may induce a loss of concentration or attention. Thus, it constitutes an explanation why only few stress studies have been carried out so far on interpreters while performing their activities and why interpreters are not very keen to be observed and studied while at work.

In 1981-82, a large-scale survey on interpreting stress was conducted and a questionnaire was sent to 1400 AIIC members throughout the world. Completed questionnaires were returned (Cooper et al. 1982). The questionnaire consisted of several sections to gather information on demographic characteristics of interpreters (attitude toward work, stress at work, behavioural manifestations of such stress), job satisfaction, indications of present physical health, type A/B personality characteristics, perceived stress on the job and mechanisms for coping with stress. Results indicated that 'Conference interpreters are under a considerable amount of pressure in their job and there are a number of areas of concern [...] work could be organised to take many of them into account, although some are less amenable to change' (Cooper et al. 1982: 104).

Studies of several scholars (e.g. Riccardi 1998; Kurz 2003) emphasise that short-term or infrequent episodes of stress pose little risk, but when stressful situations go unresolved, the body is kept in a constant state of activation, which increases the

rate of wear and tear and may ultimately compromise the body’s ability to repair and defend itself. Many scholars, however, find that videoconferencing and interpreting live TV broadcasts generate much more stress than simultaneous interpreting in ordinary conditions: having a negative impact on performance in the case of 73% of the respondents having experienced it (Kurz 2009).

Simultaneous interpreting is a highly complex discourse performance [...] where language perception, comprehension, translation and production operations are carried out virtually in parallel and under severe time pressure. [...] the task [...] is likely to create a heavy processing load (Tommola 1995: 180).

Although the question of individual differences in personality and the ability to withstand the stress involved in the career of a simultaneous interpreter (e.g. the constant information load during interpretation, the confined environment of the interpreting booth, fatigue, and the effects of environmental noise) is often discussed by professional interpreters, virtually no research has been carried out in this area.

Ergopsychometric studies, i.e. psychological testing under stress as compared to neutral conditions, have confirmed that there are individuals who show an unchanged or even improved performance under load (‘consistent performers’), while others with an equally good performance in a stress-free atmosphere tend to fail in stressful situations (Guttmann and Etlinger 1991), regardless of their status as a novice interpreter or a professional one. Also, the factor of stress has been found to affect novices to a larger extent than it was in the case of professional, experienced interpreters.

Understanding the differences in the performance between novice and professional interpreters is of crucial importance to our study, since there are significant differences between these two groups in the application of conscious strategies, such as those which are analysed in our study (omissions, additions, and self-corrections).

Moreover, the issue of application of strategies is also related to the omnipresent notion of simultaneous interpreting quality. As asserted by Pym:

Quality in the broadest sense, must thus be a measure of the extent to which a communication act achieves its aims, and that is precisely the direction in which we would like to take our analysis. We do not accept, at least not a priori, that the use of omissions indicates a reduction in quality, since such an assumption would answer our questions before we look at any evidence. Our interest in this question derives from slightly different concerns. In our work on the ethics of translation (we have proposed that the collective effort put into any ethical communication act must be of less value than the mutual benefits derived from that communication act. This is so as to achieve cooperation between the participants. That approach has enabled us to describe translation as a relatively high-effort mode of cross-cultural communication, ideally restricted to high-reward communication acts (Pym 1997)

More details regarding quality in simultaneous interpreting can be found in the works of Bühler (1986), Kalina (2005), Kurz (1996, 1993/2002, 2001), Moser (1996), Niska (1999), Pöchhacker (1994, 2002), Shlesinger (1989), and Vuorikoski (1993).

3. *Strategies in simultaneous interpreting*

Shlesinger (2000: 4) observes that the basic rule in interpreting studies is to 'find the optimal balance between the intuitive and the scientific, the controllable and the ecologically valid, the definite and the viable, the task-specific and the psychologically universal.' According to Gile, interpreters should strive to achieve non-omission, based on the universal rules of performing simultaneous interpreting: providing maximum information, maximum effect on recipients, minimum effort, saving one's face in case of emergency, and maximum communication.

In the interpreting literature there are also numerous references to the 'norm of completeness' in simultaneous interpreting. This norm states that interpreters should attempt to render everything that is said. This idea is also supported by Jones who claims that 'The conference interpreter must be able to provide an exact and faithful reproduction of the original speech. Deviation from the letter of the original is permissible only if it enhances the audience's understanding of the speaker's meaning' (Jones, 2002).

According to numerous surveys conducted by Pöchhacker (2002), Shlesinger (1994), Niska (1999), and Kalina (2005), 'completeness' of interpretation is not the most important factor for the users of interpreting services. Surveys indicate that 'essential information' is enough and frequently a 'pleasant voice' compensates for certain flaws in the performance. This is in contradiction to the assumptions of cognitive models which assume striving for non-omission.

According to Moser-Mercer, a professional interpreters with a fair degree of expertise will apply different strategies than a novice or inexperienced interpreter (Moser-Mercer 1996).

However, there seems to be a certain ambiguity concerning the notion of strategy in simultaneous interpreting. For the purposes of this study, we shall adopt the definition of strategy presented by Zabalbeascoa (2000: 119-122), who defines a strategy as a specific pattern of behaviour aimed at solving a problem or achieving a goal, a consciously performed action with an objective to enhance performance of a given task.

The conference interpreting literature presents many different classifications of interpreting strategies. Kalina (1998) distinguishes general strategies: interference avoiding strategies, such as e.g. syntactic restructuring, anticipation strategy, monitoring strategies, approximation strategies. Whereas Bartłomiejczyk (2006) proposes a list of strategies which includes the following: adding, approximation, anticipation, shifts, compression, delaying response, inference, parallel formulation, deletion, paraphrase, correction, lack of correction, reproduction, transcoding, syntactic transformation, transfer, lack of transfer, visualization, personal association, personal involvement, and finally general knowledge.

The relation between strategies and the quality of the product of interpreting is stressed by Riccardi (2003: 257) who, on the other hand, stresses the relation between strategies and the quality of the interpreting product, regarding quality as a derivative of the adopted strategic behaviours at the stage of comprehension, planning, and production. Therefore, comprehension strategies include: anticipation, chunking, selection of information and stalling. Production strategies include compression, expansion, approximation, generalisation, morphosyntactic transformations and use of elements of prosody, e. g. pauses and intonation. As regards general strategies, these include *decalage* and monitoring of the produced communication, while emergency strategies are e.g. deletion, transcoding and parallel reformulation.

Out of the multitude of strategies that are taught to conference interpreting students, the ones adopted for this study include omission, addition, and self-correction, as these phenomena in interpreting can both be seen as a strategic operation and a proof of mismanagement of cognitive resources.

As far as omission is concerned, Pym (2008) even postulates that there is an effort of omission, which would indicate that omission is a conscious and deliberate strategy which is in opposition to what was claimed by Barik (1971) who regarded omission as a clear mistake to be avoided. Many researchers who deal with conference interpreting are of the opinion that omission constitutes one of the undeniable mistakes and it is never to be used by interpreters. Altman (1994), Barik (1994), Gile (1995; 1999), Moser-Mercer (1996) as well as Shreve and Diamond (1997) have treated omission as a technique that interpreters should resort to only if necessary and in extreme cases of processing capacity overload.

Moreover, Gile (1998) assessed ‘errors and omissions’ as one simple category which implies that they should be perceived equally, being indicators of lesser quality. However, as proved by the studies on interpreting quality mentioned above, this is not always the case. Omissions may however pose high level of risk, therefore, as indicated by Pym (2008), interpreters strive for non-omission only in the case of high-risk contextualization, and as a result, Pym distinguishes high-risk omissions and low-risk omissions. Viaggio 2002; Gumul and Łyda 2007 claim that consciously applied omissions increase the level of coherence, however they can also undermine the trust between the interpreter and the audience, being a signal of problems. For the purpose of this study, omissions will be treated as a conscious strategy (hypothesized to occur primarily in the performance of experts), and a signal of cognitive mismanagement (in the case of novices), however, without distinguishing particular types thereof.

The second strategy being the subject matter of the study is the notion of additions connected with the concept of explicitation developed in 1964 by Nida. The list of explicitations proposed in translation includes phenomena, ranging from the lexical to the discourse level of linguistic structure: adding connectives, categorical shifts of cohesive devices, shifts from referential cohesion to lexical cohesion, shifts from reiteration in the form of paraphrase to reiteration in the form of identical/

partial repetition, filling out elliptical constructions, lexical specification, addition of modifiers and qualifiers, addition of proper names to generic names, distributing the meaning of a source text unit over several units in the target text, replacing nominalisations with verb phrases, disambiguating metaphors with similes, including additional explanatory remarks (cf. Gumul 2006: 174).

Another feature of the interpreting performance which is going to be analysed in this study are self-corrections. The definition of self-correction for the purposes of this study is derived from the area of sociology, social organisation and social interaction. A distinction is made in these disciplines between 'self-correction,' i.e. correction by the speaker themselves vs. 'other-correction', i.e. correction by another person (Schegloff et al. 1977). The only type relevant for this study shall be the self-correction.

The strategy of self-correction involves self-monitoring, Gerver (2002) claims that self-monitoring in SI operates at two levels: pre-articulation and post-articulation. And according to Gerver, the procedure in interpreting is as follows: interpreters generate the target language response, test it, and if the response is approved, they utter it. After articulation, the uttered segment is tested again, and if it is unsuccessful, the interpreter creates a new response. As stated by Levelt (1983:78), self-corrections depend on how much of the original utterance needs to be repeated/corrected. If an error is detected via monitoring and its cause has been diagnosed, a conceptual fragment marked as the correction of some earlier fragment is inserted at the end of the stream. This correction fragment may include old concepts already implemented linguistically.

Simultaneous interpreting per se assumes that self-corrections are a strategy which should appear as rarely as possible, only in case of the detection of a grave error in the performance. In certain context they are also regarded as a face-saving strategy (for details see Jones 2002). However, the notion of self-corrections is rarely discussed in the SI research. And the objective of this empirical study with the participation of interpreters is to investigate the possible differences in the distribution of self-corrections by novices and professionals.

4. *Design of the study*

The study described in this paper focused on the performance of 10 professional interpreters, most of whom also work as academic teachers, and 10 novice interpreters (after 2 semesters of practicing simultaneous interpreting). All the interpreters participating in the study had the following language combination: A: Polish, B: English and C: German.

The study was conducted in two parts, therefore, the subjects were divided into 2 groups according to their experience in interpreting:

- Professional interpreters (Subjects 1-10)
- Novice interpreters (Subjects 11-20)

The speeches to be interpreted in the experiment were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- topic familiarity
- high degree of orality
- acceptable delivery rate
- the text cannot contain excessive amounts of specialised vocabulary due to the possibility of an adverse effect on the performance and increase in processing capacity requirements
- the text cannot be altered in any way, therefore, official versions of the speech shall be selected in order to guarantee the objectivity of the findings (Shlesinger 1989)

The procedure of the experiment involved a warmup (which was not recorded for the purposes of this study), then interpretation of the speech from Polish into English (17 minutes). After a short break, the interpreters interpreted the second task, which also lasted approximately 17 minutes. After the actual interpreting task the interpreters were asked several questions in an interview.

The following general hypotheses were proposed on the basis of the above literature analysis and the findings of the interpreting research. Firstly, in terms of omissions, more omissions are expected in the performance of novices, mostly due to mismanagement and competence-related problems. Judicious omissions are expected to be applied in a conscious and purposeful manner in order to decrease the processing capacity requirements, mostly by experts, but also by novices. Differences due to the direction of interpretation are expected. Perhaps more omissions will occur when interpreting into the mother tongue due to potential comprehension problems. Also, professionals in an interpreting task are aware of the problems which may occur, and are able to use effortful processes (strategies and tactics) in the problem-solving task. Therefore, professionals are expected to be able to manage local cognitive load well (on the level of particular sentences/clauses), hence, a small number of omissions is expected in general, since interpreters in general strive for non-omission, and omissions should be rare in their case.

As regards additions, they are expected to be more frequent in the performance of experienced interpreters who, as results from the reviewed literature, tend to speak a lot and add words or even segments to their performance. Additions are expected to be used as fillers while waiting for meaningful segments of the text, to formulate thoughts, which is also consistent with the experience of the author of this paper. Since novices are prone to omit words and segments of speeches rather than add anything to their performance, few additions are expected in their performance.

In terms of self-corrections, fewer self-corrections expected while interpreting into mother tongue – an assumption of a correlation between the directionality and the number of self-corrections. Fewer self-corrections are expected in the performance of experts, as a result of their competence.

5. Results of the study

The following tables present the results of the study in a breakdown into the two groups: experienced interpreters and novices.

Table 1. Overall scores for omissions – professionals

	PL-EN	EN-PL
Subject 1	33	39
Subject 2	29	11
Subject 3	35	34
Subject 4	35	24
Subject 5	32	20
Subject 6	34	27
Subject 7	39	26
Subject 8	38	24
Subject 9	32	22
Subject 10	31	34
Total	338	261

Table 2. Overall scores for omissions – novices

	PL-EN	EN-PL
Subject 1	22	23
Subject 2	29	21
Subject 3	40	27
Subject 4	38	25
Subject 5	26	26
Subject 6	33	15
Subject 7	28	35
Subject 8	32	20
Subject 9	41	25
Subject 10	23	21
Total	312	238

In relation to the hypotheses mentioned previously, novices were expected to apply more omissions due to mismanagement of cognitive resources. This hypothesis was not corroborated. Professionals applied more omissions, however, novices omitted more significant segments, especially when interpreting into Polish, which could have resulted from more limited understanding of the source speech. Whereas in the case of professionals omissions concerned single words or short phrases, which was conducive to achieving congruence. As far as the number of

omissions is concerned, it occurred that novices strived for non-omission more than the professionals, contrary to the initial expectations.

Table 3. Overall scores for additions – professionals

	PL-EN	EN-PL
Subject 1	11	14
Subject 2	10	12
Subject 3	3	4
Subject 4	6	12
Subject 5	6	4
Subject 6	7	5
Subject 7	10	6
Subject 8	8	9
Subject 9	4	6
Subject 10	7	9
Total	72	81

Table 4. Overall scores for additions – novices

	PL-EN	EN-PL
Subject 11	3	5
Subject 12	0	2
Subject 13	1	5
Subject 14	3	9
Subject 15	6	11
Subject 16	0	5
Subject 17	3	7
Subject 18	2	5
Subject 19	1	6
Subject 20	5	8
Total	24	63

In the case of additions, the subjects also made comments which would corroborate the assumptions of the experimenter concerning the existence of additions applied as a conscious strategy to gain some time to think about the upcoming difficult word or phrase. All of the above observations are consistent with the experience of the author concerning the strategies consciously applied in the performance of simultaneous interpreting. Fewer additions were indeed applied by the novices, especially when interpreting into English, as a result of more limited competence in this language.

Table 5. Overall scores for self-corrections – professionals

	PL-EN	EN-PL
Subject 1	16	12
Subject 2	12	5
Subject 3	7	12
Subject 4	22	8
Subject 5	5	5
Subject 6	9	6
Subject 7	5	5
Subject 8	3	5
Subject 9	5	3
Subject 10	4	3
Total	88	64

Table 6. Overall scores for self-corrections – novices

	PL-EN	EN-PL
Subject 11	32	15
Subject 12	20	19
Subject 13	20	18
Subject 14	33	17
Subject 15	28	15
Subject 16	35	17
Subject 17	19	10
Subject 18	26	19
Subject 19	29	21
Subject 20	27	12
Total	269	163

Few self-corrections were applied by experts, and at the same time many by novices. A surprisingly lower amount of self-corrections by novices when interpreting into Polish, which could be the result of better competences when interpreting into the mother tongue. Whereas no significant differences in the case of experts.

In the interviews, all of the subjects declared having applied omissions, additions and self-corrections as conscious strategies (in the case of professionals), mostly to free their processing capacity. 6 out of 10 novices indicate that the reason for the application of most omissions was the insufficient comprehension or the complete lack thereof. As a result, they were forced to resign from interpretation, even if they thought they were able to interpret but they resigned not to risk the loss of the available processing capacity.

In general, the obtained results have shown significant differences in the application of judicious strategies in the case of both groups, which is of significance to teaching simultaneous interpreting. A more detailed study with the participation of more experts and novices and a group-specific classification of omissions, additions, and self-corrections could shed a new light on the findings hereof. Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, interpreters, especially experts in the field, are reluctant to participate in experimental studies, even against remuneration, as simultaneous interpreting is a highly specialised and stress-prone activity.

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STRESZCZENIE

Tłumaczenie symultaniczne jako wymagające działanie strategiczne – kwestia doświadczenia tłumacza

Strategie, takie jak pominięcia (omissions), dodatkowe elementy tekstu (additions) i poprawki własne tłumacza (self-corrections) są uważane za warunek konieczny wykonywania tłumaczenia symultanicznego we wszystkich jego aspektach. Dlatego też opracowano projekt badania empirycznego, którego celem była analiza dystrybucji wspomnianych strategii w tłumaczeniu z języka polskiego na angielski i z języka angielskiego na polski, wykonanym przez 10 profesjonalnych tłumaczy i 10 studentów tłumaczenia ustnego studiujących w Państwowej Wyższej Szkole Zawodowej w Krośnie. Opisane badanie empiryczne jest próbą nowego spojrzenia na sposób, w jaki wyżej wymienione strategie są stosowane przez tłumaczy na różnych poziomach zaawansowania.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

tłumaczenie symultaniczne, doświadczenie, pominięcia, dodatkowe elementy tekstu, poprawki własne, jakość tłumaczenia

ABSTRACT

Simultaneous Interpreting as a Demanding Strategic Operation – the Issue of the Interpreter's Experience

Strategies such as omissions, additions, and self-corrections are regarded as a sine qua non condition of simultaneous interpreting in all its aspects. Therefore, an empirical study was devised in order to examine the distribution of the aforementioned strategies in the performance of 10 professional interpreters and 10 student interpreters from Krosno State College. The rendition of two selected speeches was analysed on the basis of an experiment involving bi-directional interpreting from Polish into English and from English into Polish. The study will shed a new light on the way the aforementioned strategies are applied by interpreters at a different level of advancement.

KEY WORDS

simultaneous interpreting, experience, omissions, additions, self-corrections, interpreting quality