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Bilateral Interpretation and Its Teaching Methods to Foreign Students

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Abstract:

Teaching a foreign language is a challenge. In such a case, teaching translation is more than a challenge, primarily if students are taught the bilateral interpretation (Russian and English language combinations), and each of the mentioned above languages is a foreign one for them (our students are from China, Turkey, Japan, Algeria, Egypt, South Korea, and other countries). What are the invariant unbiased difficulties for foreigners determined by the grammatical system of the language combination? Should teachers consider phonetics and peculiar phonetic properties, or is it just enough to familiarize students with them? What are the optimal teaching methods and exercises? What is more important in translation, equivalence, or accuracy? Are the methods of consecutive interpretation's teaching applicable in bilateral interpretation teaching? To answer these problematic questions, we dedicated our article to the specific features of teaching international students. The study is based on our practical experience of teaching international students. We also present our most productive teaching methods, exercises, and the use of available digital technologies of the 21st century.

Keywords: bilateral interpretation, equivalence, exercises, grammatical system, phonetic peculiar properties, teaching methods, accuracy

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1.0 Introduction

The Faculty of the Slavic Linguistics of Kyiv National Linguistic University provides a high-quality training in interpretation/translation and foreign languages teaching for foreign students. In terms of globalization teaching/learning foreign language and competent interpreters/translators' training is becoming more urgent. It is clear that nowadays, the translation/interpretation courses are compulsory curriculum subjects of the major-English educational establishments. And, of course, English is the main one in the language combination in the majority of cases. The translation is understood as rendering the meaning of a text in a source language (SL) into a complete version of the target language (TL) without causing any loss to the original message. There is a widespread false perspective among ordinary people that any bilingual person can perform translation/interpretation.

2.0 Literature review

The precise nature of bilateral interpretation sets the scope of competencies needed for a qualitative and successful interpretation. The analysis of the related literature sources (Aarup (1993), Bühler (1986), Kalina (1992), Kalina, (1994), Kurz (1989), Kurz (1992), Gureeva (2018), Bogush (2019), Korniyaka (2018), Scott (2016), Popova (2017), Arakin (2005) has given us an opportunity to define the most critical challenges for international students. Pham, (2016), is right to say that interpretation is difficult for both students and lecturers. As for students, they face problem with vocabulary, grammar, cultural background and in some cases, context. As regards lecturers, they face difficulty with the teaching methods, as the theory of translation provides important but basic knowledge of interpretation\translation techniques. Still it does not provide them with strategies for teaching it. Some scholars state that teaching interpretation is an integral part of translation teaching, which, to some extent, may coincide with the foreign language teaching, at least in the final objective, that is, to teach students render their thoughts in a foreign language. To be more precise, foreign language teaching and interpretation/translation teaching differ in teaching objectives, as well as in methodology and principles terms. It seems quite logical to define the following difficulties of the bilateral interpretation teaching in general: invariant unbiased problems (grammatical system of the Source and Target Languages, peculiar phonetic properties, equivalence) and variant ones (interpreter's psychological and physical state, context, operation environment, etc.). In the given article, we focus on the invariant unbiased difficulties and the ways of overcoming them.

3.0 Invariant unbiased problems

Our students deal with the Russian/English language combination. Considering the fact that both languages belong to different grammatical systems, it is necessary to increase the students' awareness of these differences. The grammatical structure of language is a system of means used to turn linguistic units into communicative ones; in other words – the units of language into the units of speech, that is, inflections, affixation, word order, function words, and phonological means.

3.1 Grammatical systems of the Russian-English language combination

Indo-European languages are divided into two structural types – synthetic and analytic. If to speak of synthetic languages, most of the grammatical meanings and grammatical relations of words are expressed with the help of inflections (languages like Latin, Russian, Ukrainian, etc.).

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As to analytical languages, most grammatical meanings and grammatical forms are expressed with the help of words and analytical forms of the verbs. It is essential to mention that as for English and Russian, one cannot speak of them as purely synthetic or analytic. Nevertheless, the system of cases in both languages is quite different (six Russian cases VS three English cases (subjective, objective, and possessive (to be more precise, nominative, accusative, and genitive). Also, the category of gender constitutes a problem, as there are three genders in Russian (masculine, feminine, and neutral), while, in English, we use either personal pronouns to refer to the noun's gender or use suffixes or other words (like, for instance, tiger—tigress, Mr, Ms/Mrs, policeman/policewoman (although, there is a tendency to avoid sexisms in English nowadays, thus, we use police officer, chairperson).

What is more, as for Russian, the noun agrees with the verb in number, case, and gender, which may contribute to the complexity of bilateral interpretation. The word order in English is the fixed one; that is, the sentence usually starts with the subject + predicate (except for inversion), while in the case of Russian, it is the free one. That is why it is sometimes difficult for our students to define the subject and the predicate in the Russian sentence to follow the English word order pattern.

As for our students, they have several Russian special theoretical courses within the first, second, and third years of study, such as Theoretical Grammar of Russian, Theoretical Phonetics of Russian, Theory of Translation, which increase their awareness of the grammatical system of Russian.

Unfortunately, our international students do not have any theoretical courses in English, which causes definite difficulties for the bilateral interpretation, and the lecturers have to rely on the students' English competences' background at first.

3.2 Peculiar phonetic properties

As for the peculiar phonetic properties of both languages, they are also quite different. It is known that English vowels are characterized, among other characteristics, by length, which may differ the meaning of the words (like, for instance, this/these, will/wheel). Word stress in English can also differntiate the part of speech (for example, import/import, present/present). Such phonetic processes as elision, assimilation, and reduction can also cause difficulties in bilateral interpretation. As for elision, the final consonants /t/ and /d/ disappear being followed by consonants of the same voicing other than /h/, as, for example, in the word combination iced tea. The situation becomes more complicated because of the alveolar stop regressive place assimilation of consonants in case /t d n/ are followed by /p b m / or alveolar fricative regressive place assimilation/s z/ followed by $\Sigma \sqrt{\Sigma}$ (Lecumberri, Maidment (2000). It is difficult for international students to restore and interpret such combinations as, for instance, it couldn't be so which may be pronounced as $/I\kappa Y\beta\mu\beta I \sigma \cong Y/$ or *cold cream* which may be presented in two variants: $/\kappa \cong Y\lambda$ $\kappa \rho \iota : \mu / \text{ or } / \kappa \cong Y \lambda \gamma \kappa \rho \iota : \mu / \text{ as the result of elision or assimilation.}$ The advantage of professional foreign language teaching for the future teachers/lecturers training is that these aspects are taken into account, and students are aware of them. It would be wonderful if future interpreters were also informed of these specific phonetic processes, but in our case, they are not.

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Also, it is essential to remember that foreign students tend to use their mother tongue articulatory basis while speaking Russian/English.

For example, there is no sound Δ in Turkish, that is why the sequences *the book* and *to book* sound the same, that is $\tau \cong \beta Y \kappa$. Of course, one may argue that it is the context which can differentiate the sequence, and it is true, but such phonetic difficulties may contribute to the interpreter's psychological state.

There is a belief that accent is not a problem unless the pronunciation mistakes lead to cases of misunderstanding, which, in terms of interpreters, is of great importance.

3.3 Equivalence

Equivalence can also cause difficulties for students. It has always been in the scope of the theory of translation's interest. Scholars are still discussing the nature of equivalence, pointing out its different aspects. Jakobson (1959) states that there are three kinds of translation, that is, "intralingual translation or rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language; interlingual translation or translation proper is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language; intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems" (p. 233). At the same time, he noted that sometimes there is no equivalence between words in the case of the interlingual translation. Nida (1964, 1969) introduces the idea of formal and dynamic equivalence. If to speak of the formal one, formal correspondence "focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content", whereas the dynamic one is based upon "the principle of equivalent effect" (p. 159). Translators and interpreters will not argue that in the case of official and technical texts' translation translators deal with this type of equivalence mainly due to the existing clichés and conventional documents structure. On the other hand, in the case of bilateral interpretation, interpreters mostly deal with the dynamic equivalence, which means that the Source Language message is to be rendered by means of the Target language as naturally as possible. That is why it seems logical that students are to be taught to choose the most appropriate Target Language means to provide a Baker (1992) is right in pointing out that equivalence in competent interpretation. translation/interpretation is a relative notion as it is influenced by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. That is why she offered grammatical, textual, and pragmatic levels of equivalence. Grammatical equivalence refers to the grammatical categories of the Source and Target Languages. As the result of this type of equivalence, the interpreter may apply a broad scope of translation transformations (omission, addition, transposition, and change of grammatical forms) due to the lack of the corresponding grammatical categories in both Source and Target languages (mainly, number, voice, person, gender, tense and aspect). Textual equivalence is essential for the text's comprehension and may be achieved by the translator/interpreter due to cohesion. But it largely depends on the following factors: target audience, the purpose of translation/interpretation, and the text type. That is why, it is necessary to teach students to "feel" the text. Finally, in the case of pragmatic equivalence, the interpreter deals with the source text author's intention, that is, with implicature (something which is meant but is not expressed verbally) contained in the text. Komissarov (1990), the representative of the Soviet School of translation, states that the source and target texts can be identical pragmatically, semantically, and structurally, which is close to the idea of Baker.

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He came up with the idea of five types of equivalence: pragmatic (preservation of the informative, expressive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic functions of the source text), situational ("identification of the situation"), lexical/semantic, grammatical and structural levels. At the same time, it is the pragmatic level of equivalence, which is the target for a translator/interpreter. It should be noted that Pym (2010) states that the perfect equivalence between the Source and the Target Languages is not possible; that is why the idea of assumed equivalence was put forward. Anyway, such an overview of different points of view on equivalence emphasizes the main aim of translation/interpretation, that is, to make the translated/interpreted text sound as natural in a Target Language as possible.

4.0 Teaching methods

All these invariant unbiased difficulties of translation shape the competences necessary for the competent translation/interpretation. The required competencies can be divided into linguistic (appropriate knowledge of the language combination, understanding of subject areas and corresponding terminology), extra-linguistic (cultural and social background and interpersonal skills), and genuine interpreting ones (active listening skills, good memory retention skills, notes taking skills, ability to convey the structures of the original by means of the corresponding means of the Target Language, and text processing skills).

A higher educational establishment can provide linguistic and interpreting competencies, which are the aim of bilateral interpreting teaching. In the case of our university, we deal with foreign students whose language combination is represented by two foreign languages. It constitutes definite difficulties in teaching as the misbalance in linguistic competence disables interpreting itself.

Nevertheless, there are specific methods and exercises to master the mentioned above competencies. No one doubts that short-term memory is of great importance for interpreters, and bilateral ones. Considering the stages of interpreting, that is, listening, utterance's processing, and searching for equivalent structures in the Target Language, and performing proper interpretation, the role of short-term memory cannot be overestimated. It facilitates the processing operations in the following cases: the speaker's accent may be hard to understand, the speech may not be clear, or the information presented may be dense. In cases when the Source and the Target Languages are syntactically different (as in our Russian/English language combination). Considering the fact that bilateral and consecutive types of interpretation are close, it is possible to use in the bilateral interpretation the majority of exercises designed for the consecutive interpretation teaching. We use exercises to develop listening comprehension, short-term memory, notes' taking and text processing skills. First of all, we apply the set of exercises for the short-memory training like these: a) *shadowing*. It involves repeating what the speaker (the lecturer or other student) says, word for word, in the same language.

It is close to the interpreter's environment as the interpreter is always a word or two behind the speaker as one repeats what has just been said. It is perfect for memory development since it forces the interpreter to store and recall small groups of sounds, words, and chunks of information in a relatively short period of time; b) *shadowing with a twist*. It also involves repeating the exact words of the speaker, but with a pause, the length of which equals approximate duration for

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interpretation, and the students rely on their memory only; c) attentive listening for key elements. This exercise has a lot of advantages, and different precision information elements may be used according to the practical aim.

Usually, we present a text (up to 10 sentences) and then ask students either to answers the questions (as in the case of the listening comprehension training in foreign languages teaching) or retell the text paying attention to the precision information. Moreover, the quality of the text's restoration can be checked by the students of the group that teaches them to be careful. It is odd to say that a lecturer can use various combinations of such exercises to train the students' short memory.

We mainly use role-playing at definite stages of training. It has the following advantages: our trainees are psychologically ready for speech communication through the language combination, they have to use active vocabulary and grammar structures, it teaches students to use the appropriate speech variant that increases their awareness of situational spontaneous speech, and the task set is close to the real conditions of the interpreters' activity. As our students have their English course, we try including the active thematic vocabulary into the bilateral interpretation training. The typical interpretation class starts with several exercises aimed at memory training. A lecturer is free to choose from a great variety of exercises existing. These may be putting down numbers read in English/Russian with their symbolic representation (depending on the lecturer's aim, students may put the numbers down in digits or words). It is recommended to use numbers at the initial stages of training. When this skill is quite formed, we add other precision information (months, days of the week, and names of cities, countries, or people). It is advisable to alternate Russian and English lexical units improving the trainees' ability to switch the language combination. According to our observations, depending on the students' motivation, some can put down the text of approximately ten sentences' lengths presented in the mix of language combinations and interpret it based on their notes.

This exercise provides the lecturer with the possibility of the role-playing application when the group is divided into three teams: interpreters, listeners, and experts. Listeners leave the classroom for several minutes while the text containing the precision information is being presented. Then they are invited to come back, and interpreters perform interpretation, while the experts assess the quality and the accuracy of interpretation. Moreover, it is possible to ask the listeners to interpret the text back into Russian/English, after which the group and the lecturer analyze the interpreters' performance. It seems that such an exercise is beneficial both for students and lecturers, as lecturers can notice difficulties and adjust their teaching strategy while students are in semi-natural working conditions. We also use the scope of other exercises, such as "oddone-out", adding a word to the sentence to make a meaningful utterance. "Odd-one-out" is a very productive exercise as it trains the short memory, on the one hand, and activates students' active vocabulary, on the other one. One can give the set of thematically related words (like, for instance, a table, a chair, a bookcase, a desk, a microwave presented in Russian/English, and ask students to point out the odd word (in our case, it is the word *microwave*, as other words may be related to the study) providing explanations for their choice. Adding missing words to make a meaningful utterance is also a beneficial exercise. We usually use the keys at the initial stages of our interpreters' training. One can give his/her students a short text with gaps in it. The students are to

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fill in the gaps using the keys, for example, Your Excellences, Heads of State and Government, Vice-Presidents, Ministers for Foreign Affairs and other It is a great honour for me to address you at the opening of The international situation now is far.... The trainees use the keys, for example, representatives of the 192 States Members of our Organization, the general debate of this sixty-third session of the General Assembly; from satisfactory. It is important that students do not see the text that is read by the lecturer in one of the languages with a slight pause before the gap (approximately up to 2-3 seconds) within which students are to fill in a gap. Surely, the use of keys is decreasing with the students' skill formation. It is also worth mentioning that a lecturer can ask the student to interpret the text. At the same time, it is not difficult to develop several such texts of different thematic belonging to practice active vocabulary, acquire fluency in interpretation, and form the skill of anticipation. We also use the exercise where our students have to repeat the exact previous sentences and continue the story: 1. The wheel was first used in the region of 3500 BC. 2. Potters in Mesopotamia or in Central or Eastern Europe first used the wheel in the region of 3500 BC. 3. Most scholars believe that potters in Mesopotamia or in Central or Eastern Europe first used the wheel in the region of 3500 BC. 4. Most scientists believe that potters in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) or in Central or Eastern Europe first used the wheel (or circle) in the region of 3500 BC. 5. Most scientists believe that potters in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) or in Central or Eastern Europe first used the wheel (or circle) in the region of 3500 BC. however, the first dated document on the use of wheels for transportation refers only to 3200 BC (Dmitrieva (2008). The added elements are given in bold, and the students' task is to repeat the previous sentence (as in classical snowball widely used in foreign language teaching), adding new elements offered by the lecturer. As we have already mentioned, we use role-play as well. It is usually performed when the group has covered the definite lexical topic in the Practical English/Russian Course and has practiced all the necessary conversational formulas. The role-play scenario is as close to the real one as possible. As an example, let us consider the conference interpretation scenario. The lecturer is usually the "chairperson". The trainees are "speakers", "audience", "interpreters" and "experts". The "chairperson" gives the floor to the "speakers" who deliver their speeches (they may be developed in advance or be based on the previous background knowledge), while "interpreters" interpret from English into Russian or from Russian into English. Our "experts" perform the most crucial role as they assess the accuracy of interpretation, note loss of precision information, and offer their variants after the end of the "conference". It is important to let all the students try themselves in all these parts in turn.

One more often productive exercise we use is the "echo interpretation". It means that one student utters a sentence in one of the languages (Russian/English), the other student interprets it into Target language, and the third student interprets it back into the Source language, and so on. The productivity of this exercise is provided by the fact that students use their variants and equivalents, preserving the meaning of the original sentence, on the one hand, and by a rather fast tempo of interpretation.

We also use the video clips and recordings' interpretation. Nowadays it is not a problem to get video clips from YouTube, the Internet or special foreign language teaching complexes, SpeakOut, for instance. However, we prefer official speeches that are in a free access, for instance, from Speech Repository. Moreover, these speeches can be used for consecutive and bilateral interpretation as a part of the role-play.

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5.0 Discussion

It seems reasonable to aim to discuss the problem of bilateral interpretation's teaching of international students in two main directions. Namely, in terms of the most critical skills our students should acquire and the most effective methods the lecturers/teachers should apply in the process of the desired skills development.

As for the skills desired, the latter are the following ones: the capacity for a quick switch between the language combination's constituents, students' sustainability (the concept of continuous self-education after graduation), fundamental psychological strength, the capability to define the crucial elements of the message and apply the means available for its competent interpretation, as well as the students' general cultural competence's improvement.

It is clear, that the capability for a quick switch between the languages is possible as the result of continuous training only, which is why the lecturers/teachers should always remember this.

As for the students' sustainability, students should realize the fact that their specialty requires continuous training and improvement, that they should always follow new dictionaries and be in trend with the latest technological developments.

If to speak of the fundamental psychological strength, the future interpreters' training should be as close to the real conditions of any kind of interpretation as possible. The most challenging problem is to teach our students to define the crucial components of the incoming message and convey it in a competent way. It should be kept in mind that not only the precision data (names, numbers, etc.) may be of crucial importance, but the speakers' intentions as well, that is why students should understand the context and consider the communicative situation.

As for the general cultural competence, students should know culturally biased notions of the countries (in our case, all the Russian and English speaking ones), know the latest political and economic trends as well.

The challenging and ambiguous thing is the choice of the most effective teaching methods. It is true to say that there are no universal ways to teach our students, as they are all different (in our case, they are the representatives of different cultural and language backgrounds). That is why the only way to define the most effective methods is to monitor their progress and apply other methods and techniques to achieve the desired aim.

6.0 Conclusion

Teaching bilateral interpretation is a challenge for both lecturers and students. The situation is even more difficult as we teach foreigners who have two foreign languages in their language combination. It becomes clear that teaching and practicing interpretation in general, and bilateral one, in particular, is impossible without the linguistic, extra-linguistic and genuine interpreting competencies formed. Educational establishments involved in the interpreters' training can provide linguistic and real interpreting competencies.

www.awej.org ISSN: 2229-9327 It is necessary to keep in mind that invariant biased difficulties of bilateral interpretation require the lecturers' awareness and readiness to help their trainees. The exercises we mention in the given paper are not a must, and lecturers are free to choose any activities to develop their students' interpretation skills. Coming back to activities, we have just mentioned the most frequently used in our practice. What is essential, it is necessary to train bilateral interpreters on different accents of English and increase their awareness of phonetic specific features. It is also necessary to enlarge students' background knowledge through country studies.

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