

ACQUIRING SPECIFIC INTERPRETING COMPETENCE

1 INTRODUCTION

Interpreter training is aimed at providing trainees with sufficient professional knowledge and skills, in order to ensure that they are autonomous and capable interpreters upon completing their training. Since training is usually organized as a one or two year postgraduate course (cf. MA in Interpreting at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana¹), time constraints play a significant role in determining the nature and content of the course. To progress efficiently through the study programme, trainees are expected to possess certain aptitudes before entering the course, which are usually assessed during entry exams.

Beside excellent linguistic and cultural competence related to all working languages, and a wide general knowledge as well as interest in current affairs, future trainees should also be able to demonstrate self-confidence “on stage” and display good stress management abilities. In recent years, several studies have also stressed the importance of other factors, especially personality traits, e.g. intra-/extraversion, cognitive style (Gile 2001; Johnson 2001) etc.

However, entry exams vary in nature according to the institution, although in general they do test all these criteria in some way or another. Schools participating in the EMCI programme (European Master in Conference Interpreting) are required to follow structured guidelines for admission tests.² The above-mentioned predispositions constitute a solid base on which trainees can build competence and develop skills. Generally, all schools require excellent linguistic and cultural knowledge; any additional work on linguistic competence is to be carried out individually and outside the classroom, since training focuses more on acquiring specific interpreting skills and strategies that cannot be acquired elsewhere “in the most efficient way within the prescribed time” (Riccardi 2005: 755).

The present article focuses on specific interpreting competence and, in particular, on the acquisition of various strategies (Nolan 2005), or coping tactics (Gile 1995), by presenting focused and targeted exercises that can be used in interpreter training, providing a few examples from a corpus of students’ interpretations.³ These exercises

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¹ <http://www.prevajalstvo.net/objectives-and-competences-inter>

² <http://www.emcinterpreting.org/admission.php>

³ Examples are taken from a corpus of students’ performance in SI practice classes from French into Slovenian, gathered from January to June 2012 for the author’s doctoral thesis (still in progress). For more clarity, English translations or explication are provided.

are not new and were already discussed by various interpreting researchers and theoreticians. However, the article aims at presenting them in a comprehensive way and in relation to the theoretical notions of strategies thus forming a starting point for trainers in designing the curriculum, and especially in preparing classes for simultaneous interpreting practices; moreover, such approach and the exercises presented are useful also to students, for their individual work and even further practice after completing the course.

Interpreting teachers usually come from the professional world, and are even required to be experienced practicing interpreters, but some might not have undergone specific interpreting training themselves (are self-trained) or have long since completed their training. In this respect, a short theoretical explanation of the necessary strategies and related targeted exercises as described in the article could prove useful, even for courses with limited contact hours. A survey has yet to be carried out regarding the assumption that specific exercises are indeed used in training and perceived as useful by students and teachers.

2 COMPETENCE AND INTERPRETER TRAINING

Interpreting competence comprises various skills and knowledge, organized hierarchically from general to specific, on the basis of which certain prototypical patterns of behaviour evolve with the view of solving problems (Kutz 1994). Nord (1996) developed a model distinguishing linguistic and cultural competence, expertise/professional knowledge, research competence, theoretical and methodological knowledge of interpreting history and practice, and translating/interpreting competence.

In an attempt to theoretically define the competence of professional conference interpreters, Sylvia Kalina states that it “refers to the ability to perform cognitive tasks of mediation within a bi/multilingual communication situation at an extremely high level of expectations and quality, often in a team of several interpreters” (Kalina 2000: 4). Moreover, it stretches to the behaviour before/after the actual interpreting assignment, as well as to the interpreter’s overall attitude, flexibility and ability to adapt to technical challenges and ethical norms.

A competent interpreter is thus able to process texts in light of interlinguistic mediation, and is capable of “acting and performing in a situation characterized by externally determined constraints, such as the pressure of time, lack of semantic autonomy and potential interference between closely connected processes of production and comprehension” (Kalina 2000: 5).

2.1 Specific SI Competence

When we think about speaking and listening, we are usually unaware of how complex these ordinary activities and their underlying mechanisms really are. The operations that lead to the construction or deconstruction of meaning become obvious “only when there is a disruption, when we misunderstand something or we miss a link in what we hear, or when we don’t find a suitable expression and we have to pause

before continuing to speak” (Riccardi 2005: 756). These processes are even more significant in simultaneous interpreting (SI) learning and training, because SI is an unnatural activity composed of listening in one language, processing (analysing), and speaking in another language, and all under severe time pressure.

In fact, Gile (1995) divides SI into four distinct processes (listening to the original speech, analysis, target speech production, output control), stressing that each one of them requires specific effort from the interpreter, who only has a limited overall capacity, so his/her efforts need to be distributed more or less evenly to prevent possible disruptions in the performance. This model is known as the “efforts model” and can also be presented and used with students in training, as it provides a clear and systematic approach with specific strategies and coping tactics applied to each one of the processes.

Several studies by Moser-Mercer (1997; 2000) and Riccardi (1996; 1998) compared professionals’ and students’ performance, concluding that the latter have not as fully internalized and automated these strategies and tactics as the former, which proves that SI competence evolves and strengthens progressively through practice.

Riccardi distinguished between knowledge-based and skill-based strategies, where the latter “may be defined as all those strategies governed by stored patterns of automatic responses whose application is triggered by the recognition of a well-known stimulus within the communicative event” (Riccardi 2005: 760). By using skill-based strategies, interpreters ensure a fluent, spontaneous and natural output; moreover, these strategies can be applied at all levels: pragmatic, semantic, textual or morphological. Their application is closely linked to the interpreters’ organization of knowledge and acquired experience in SI. Typical segments of speech where interpreters use their skill-based strategies and employ ready-made phrases are welcome words, greetings, thanks, and the introduction of points on an agenda.

The second group of strategies is knowledge-based strategies, which are activated as a “result of conscious analytical processes” and are used in a planned manner “because no automatic response is found or because something has caused a momentary memory overload” (Riccardi 2005: 762). This implies that the processing of source text and the production of the target text require constant attention and the ability to divide cognitive resources among the processes (Gile 1995).

In the continuation of the paper, a more detailed presentation will be given of the various strategies, this time categorized not so much by their nature but more by the stage of SI at which they are used. Later, specific exercises will be added for each of these strategies.

2.1.1 Global Strategies

One of the major global or overall strategies is the *décalage*, the lag between the original speaker and the interpreter, which is important throughout the text, but especially at the very beginning and end of the speech. Another global strategy is monitoring output in terms of coherence and cohesion as well as the overall logic of the interpreted text. It is also important to ensure fluency without unnecessary and prolonged pauses or disturbing sounds (i. e. *uhm*).

2.1.2 Comprehension Strategies

Basic comprehension strategies include anticipation, segmentation, and information selection, stalling or waiting. Anticipation means triggering existing knowledge of the topic or discourse type, and by understanding the overall line of the speaker's argument, trying to foresee what the next piece of information will be and how it will be presented, e.g., arguments are usually followed by counterarguments (macro level of the text); when the speaker touches upon viable alternative sources of energy, the interpreter should immediately think of the current trends in this field and the appropriate lexis (micro level of the text).

Segmentation involves dividing longer units into smaller and more manageable ones (Nolan 2005), reducing the cognitive load and the burden on memory. In a dense speech, some pieces of information may have to be omitted, and the interpreter should be able to distinguish between the main ideas and the supporting ones that can be omitted without compromising the speaker's message, or provide only a few items out of a longer list. On the other hand, if the interpreter does not have sufficient information to provide a coherent unit, he or she must learn to stall and wait for additional information or clarification to be able to interpret the message.

2.1.3 Production Strategies

In the production of interpreted text, the most commonly used strategies are paraphrasing, compression, expansion, approximation, generalization, use of linguistic open-end forms, morpho-syntactic transformations and the use of prosody elements, e.g., intonation and pauses. Sometimes additions may be used in the form of discourse markers, e.g., connectives, rhetorical phrases and fillers, which are typical of spoken language (Messner 2000) and also ensure the natural flow of interpreted text as well as easier comprehension by the audience. The use of connectives allows faster processing of elements, which is why they are often added even if not present in the original text. According to Schlamberger Brezar (2011), this demonstrates the interpreter's analysis and his/her efforts to reformulate the underlying idea in the target language.

2.1.4 Emergency strategies

These are all the strategies or "coping tactics", as Gile calls them (Gile 1995), which are used to overcome especially difficult passages of speech, be it due to information density, speed of delivery or the speaker's rapid reading of the text. They include omission of text segments, transcoding and parallel reformulation, e.g., using hyponyms or general terms instead of specific ones.

As with any categorization, these sets of strategies sometimes overlap and it is difficult to determine clear boundaries between a comprehension and production strategy.

3 ACQUIRING SKILLS THROUGH TARGETED EXERCISES

To reach the aim of transforming students' implicit linguistic competence into a new implicit procedural competence, in which the use of cognitive and linguistic

strategies would be as automated as possible, Laura Gran (1998) proposed a gradual approach, starting with exercises focused on one skill at a time. Among her suggestions for this first period are text analyses, abstracting and paraphrasing, moving slowly to performing the whole task of interpreting.

According to SCIC training principles,⁴ students should start with a simultaneous interpretation of a speech they already know and have worked on in consecutive mode, which lowers the necessary listening and comprehension effort, leaving more cognitive resources for the production aspect. In this first phase, speeches must be thoroughly presented (or known) to the students before entering the booth and should not contain too many transcodable elements, such as numbers, proper or geographical names; instead, they should be moderately informative (avoiding excessive detail), with one or more clear arguments to support a specific topic and contain as many oral traits of discourse as possible: natural pauses (*caesurae*), repetitions, paraphrasing and reformulating. In this way, students will be able to focus on the simultaneous technique and acquiring the right automatisms, rather than being excessively concerned about content.

Later in the training process, students should be exposed to more difficult passages and to speeches involving marked pronunciation, accelerated speed of speech, high density of information, technical terminology in various fields and rhetorical elements.

The length of the speeches in exercises is also an important factor. According to Seleskovitch (2002), even in initial exercises, the speeches should be complete (not only selected parts) and not too short. As the speeches increase in complexity, so does their length; students progress naturally towards their final goal, a speech of typical exam length (10 to 12 minutes). Near the end of the course, it is also suggested that students are exposed to “real-life” interpreting situations with longer oral presentations in which they learn how to work in pairs and take turns every 15 or 20 minutes.

However, although the basic practical exercise is the interpreting of entire speeches, there are also several more targeted exercises focusing on a particular aspect of interpreting or on exploring a particular interpreting strategy. These tasks can be employed as a complementary tool, making classroom work more dynamic and interesting. Moreover, such exercises help young interpreters to explore and develop specific strategies in the course of training, which establishes a solid base for further improvement and automatic use of strategies, resulting in less interference and smoother renditions, which is typical of professional interpreters (Kalina 1994).

3.1 Global Exercises

At an early stage in SI practice, the first challenge is to become used to listening and speaking at the same time and develop so-called split attention. This ability is strengthened with practice and experience, but some trainers also propose an exercise

⁴ SCIC (Service commun d'interprétation de conférence) is the European commission's interpreting service which cooperates with universities to ensure professionally focused training by, among other activities providing training for trainers. The author of this article participated in such training in July 2012.

in which the student listens to a speech in a foreign language but does not interpret it; instead, he/she is asked to count backwards in his/her mother tongue from 1000. After the speech is over and the students return from the booths, they are asked to summarize the speech and provide the basic ideas. The exercise focuses on carrying out two activities at the same time; however, some (Coughlin 1989; Kurz 1996; Gillies 2001) oppose this, as these activities are not content-related in the same way listening and speaking in simultaneous interpreting are. Yet, if conducted only once or twice at the beginning of SI training, for instance, as a break between interpreting two speeches, this exercise might still be useful in reinforcing the listening phase while doing something else, since students are expected to retain the basic ideas of the original speech and summarize it afterwards.

As already proposed, the first speeches in SI exercises should be familiar to students, in other words, speeches that they have already interpreted in consecutive mode or familiar texts, such as fairy tales or fables, so that students focus more on the production or speaking phase. However, to maintain the students' attention during the listening phase, the trainer can introduce some changes to the original text (SCIC training 2012) or minor ones throughout the text (e.g., little Red Riding Hood visits her grandfather, not grandmother; on her way, she decides to pick some blueberries, not flowers, etc.), or major changes that influence the overall message of the text (e.g., little Red Riding Hood is saved from the wolf's belly, while her grandmother suffers cardiac arrest or similar).

One of the crucial global strategies the students must learn to use is deciding on an appropriate lag (*décalage*) from the speaker. At the beginning, students tend to have a very short lag out of fear of forgetting something; however, by doing so, they "concentrate too much on words and are in danger of losing on overall view over the text which prevents them from using their anticipation abilities" (Skarlovnik Zihel 2004).

Therefore, a useful exercise is to first interpret a short speech with a very long lag (to start interpreting after the speaker has already said more than 10 words) and then a second one with a very short lag (start interpreting right after the speaker, one or two words behind). By doing so, students should realize that it is easier to interpret using a longer lag, which enables them to understand the message and the speaker's line of argumentation, rather than using a shorter lag with which they can concentrate only on words and perhaps miss the speaker's point (Skarlovnik Zihel 2004). According to Kurz (1996), this exercise should be carried out on actual texts and not on a list of words or unrelated sentences. Only in this way can trainees learn to discard specific words and focus instead on the message, the "images and concepts evoked by context" (Coughlin 1989).

Another possible exercise is to make students wait with the interpretation so long that they can start differently to the speaker by giving the second meaningful unit first and then the first one. Example:

- 1) *Original: Nous ne sommes jamais satisfaits de ce que nous avons (unit 1), nous voulons toujours plus (unit 2).*

Interpration into Slovenian: Nikoli nismo zadovoljni s tem, kar imamo (unit 1), vedno si želimo več (unit 2).

Desired interpretation into Slovenian: Vedno si želimo več (unit 2), nikoli nismo zadovoljni s tem, kar imamo (unit 1).

English Translation: We are never satisfied with what we have (unit), we always want more (unit 2).

Such exercises help students practise concentration, forcing them to actively listen and analyse the given speech, the side-effect of which is that the trainees become accustomed to a variable lag, rather long than short. When the speeches become more complex and carry more transcodable units (i. e. numbers, names), trainees should learn to anticipate them from the context and quickly move closer to the speaker, in order to obtain such information correctly and in time.

3.2 Comprehension Exercises

Among the most important comprehension strategies that students must develop from the onset of training is anticipation. Even without practical experience in the field, students can learn to anticipate a speaker's line of discourse or even specific linguistic expressions or phrases.

3.2.1 Types of speeches and set phrases

At first students need to be presented with various types of speeches, using smaller representative extracts: welcome speech, thank you speech, argumentative, pro and contra, and others, with the view of learning to recognize them as quickly as possible and anticipating possible elements in the overall speech or a particular segment. The speeches can be authentic or created, but must resemble authentic speeches in their structure and lexis.

Students should be encouraged to produce their own glossaries in all their working languages with various set phrases or platitudes speakers usually use at the beginning of a speech, formal address, presentation of a topic or a specific question, logical connectors, change of topic, giving thanks to organizers or previous speakers, closing an argument, etc.

Examples of platitudes to which students should have automated solutions (French original/English translation):

- 2) *Mesdames et messieurs, chers amis. **Mes premiers mots sont pour vous remercier, Madame la présidente, de nous accueillir aujourd'hui dans votre magnifique pays ... En accueillant à Montreux la famille francophone, vous avez relevé un défi difficile, et comme mes prédécesseurs à cette tribune, je voudrais vous en remercier** très chaleureusement./Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends. **First of all I would like to express my gratitude to Madam Chair, for welcoming us today in your beautiful country ... By gathering the francophone family here in Montreux, you have accepted a difficult challenge, and like my predecessors I would also like to extend my deepest thanks to you.***

- 3) *Voilà, comme je vous l'ai dit, je vais parler de multilinguisme./So as I have already announced, my topic today is multilingualism.*
- 4) *Et je voudrais rendre hommage ici à son action humanitaire, comme je veux saluer son engagement croissant dans le règlement des crises politiques et l'observation des élections./ At this point, I would like to **pay tribute to** its humanitarian activities **and also acknowledge** its growing engagement in tackling political crises and monitoring elections.*
- 5) *Pour terminer, permettez-moi de citer une journaliste Suisse, Joëlle Kuntz./To wrap up my discussion, let me quote a Swiss journalist Joëlle Kuntz.*

By having a variety of set phrases at hand, interpreters ease the production effort and are able to concentrate on the more relevant pieces of information that normally follow, usually transcodable elements such as names, dates, numbers, and on possible terminology issues.

Regarding the discussed text types, students can regularly perform an exercise in which they must produce a short impromptu speech (2 to 3 minutes) in their working language on the basis of a selected text type and given subject, paying specific attention to set phrases and the structure of the speech (Gillies 2001). This exercise is a good way to warm up and start classroom work or prepare students for a specific topic.

3.2.2 Developing anticipation strategies

Cloze tests can be useful activities at a later, but still early, stage of SI practice. A variation of this exercise that focuses on the macro-level of speech consists of presenting students with the first part of a speech on a recurrent or familiar subject (e.g., multilingualism, discrimination, emigration, natural disaster, nuclear energy, etc.) and then stopping and allowing the students to finish the speech with a conclusion they consider appropriate to the argumentation provided in the first section. The exercise can be followed by a short discussion among students on their conclusion and the reasons they opted for it.

Example of a speech extract on multilingualism in the EU:

- 6) *Il n'existe pas de langues parfaites, il n'existe pas de langues pures, comme il n'existe pas de race pure. Il faut juste essayer d'utiliser sa langue au mieux et essayer de diffuser les connaissances linguistiques. Il est impossible que tous les Européens apprennent toutes les langues officielles de l'Union, évidemment, mais ...*

English explication: There are no perfect or pure languages. We just need to use our language in the best possible way and at the same time encourage the spread of language knowledge. Of course we cannot expect all Europeans to learn all the official languages of the Union but ...

Possible conclusion could be that European citizens are encouraged to learn at least one or two other European languages; this is the multilingualism policy, advocated by the EU.

The second variation of the exercise focuses more on the micro-level of speech, i. e. phrases or units of meaning. The trainer gives a speech and every now and then, leaves the unit unfinished for the students to find (anticipate or predict) the appropriate piece of meaning with the help of lexical redundancies, lexical or general knowledge and coherence. Besides unfinished phrases, trainers can intentionally mispronounce or mumble certain words and let students deduce the correct form from the context. Example:

7) *Les autorités suisses ne participent pas au processus décisionnel de l'Union*
 _____ (1). Et elles se retrouvent donc dans l'impossibilité d'influer sur l'élabora-
 tion des décisions. Elles n'ont pas de com _____ (2) européennes, elles n'influent
 pas sur les propositions _____ (3). Elles n'ont pas de parlementaires euro-
 péennes directement _____ (4), elles n'ont pas de ministres représentés au
 _____ (5). Donc, elles ne participent pas à la décision sur les propositions législa-
 tives. Elles ne font que- qu'appliquer les décisions que des autres ont prises.

*English explication: The missing words are well known terms related to the EU: (1) Euro-
 pean Union, (2) commissioners, (3) legislative, (4) elected, (5) Council.*

These exercises force students to detach from words and focus more on immediate context analysis, searching for the meaning and message that the speaker wishes to convey. They also enable trainers to assess students' comprehension, memory capacities, linguistic competence, general knowledge, the ability to recognize relations within a text and deduce the overall meaning, while at the same time allowing students to practice working under pressure and strengthen their level of concentration (Skarlovnik Zihelr 2004; Setton 1994).

3.2.3 Segmentation exercises

Although the segmentation technique (or “salami technique” as it is widely known among interpreters) refers to the production phase, it is also inherently linked to the comprehension phase. By reducing the message into smaller, finished units, the interpreter eases the strain on working memory, which leaves more mental capacity for other activities, specifically listening and production. Smaller units are also easier to process, an aspect valid for interpreters as well as the audience.

Example:

8) Original: *Prenons l'exemple des caissiers dans les grands supermarchés, et pour citer un exemple précis, citons un exemple, un supermarché classique slovène, par exemple du type Merkator. Et bien, quand vous allez à la caisse, et bien vous pouvez remarquer qu'il y a certes des caissières comme autrefois comme toujours, mais on a également un certain nombre de caisses qui ont été introduites et qui sont plus ou moins gérés par les machines. Il y a normalement une personne qui contrôle comme ça des machines. Cela mène bien évidemment à utiliser un certain nombre de machines et à restreindre, à limiter les postes des caissières, puisque le paiement maintenant s'effectue de plus en plus souvent sans aide des caissiers. Donc petit à petit ces postes disparaissent.*

Interpretation: *Vzemimo primer velikih trgovin. Poglejmo na primer tipičen slovenski primer supermarketa, Merkator. Verjetno ste opazili, da tam dela nekaj blagajničark in blagajničarjev, ampak imajo tudi blagajne, ki so avtomatske. Med njimi se sprehaja ena oseba, ki kontrolira delovanje teh blagajn. Na ta način se zmanjšuje število blagajničarjev. Postopoma torej ta delovna mesta izginjajo.*

(English explication: The message is divided into smaller clear units that ease the comprehension of this part, where the speaker addresses the issue of automated checkout points, where machines are replacing traditional cashiers, thus lowering the number of people employed for this job at big supermarkets.)

Even if students fear that breaking a long phrase into several shorter and simpler ones might sound too simple or even childish, it is vital to learn this technique from the very beginning; not only is it extremely helpful from the processing point of view, it is also useful for events in a professional interpreter's career where the speaker uses complex phrases with heavy informational load.

An exercise that can be proposed to students is to work on a speech segment with particularly long and complex phrases and to try and break them into as many small meaningful units as possible. Such segmentation exercises can also be performed using a written speech and performing sight translation, where it is important to underline and explain to the students that they should move away from specific words (literal translation) and focus purely on the message.

3.3 Production Exercises

3.3.1 Paraphrasing exercises

There are a range of exercises related to the production phase of SI. Since paraphrasing is in a way the essence of SI, students should spend much of their time carrying out paraphrasing exercises. The "aim of such exercises is to cognitively transform texts by using automated operations to change the original structures" (Skarlovnik Ziherl 2004: 235).

At first students should be paraphrasing texts in the same language, without linguistic transfer, usually their mother tongue. This activity differs from actual interpreting as the transfer from one language into another is missing. Despite this, it serves as a valuable tool for enhancing vocabulary and learning that there are always several ways of expressing the same idea. In fact, students can work on one and the same speech or speech segment and try to express the ideas each time in a different way.

Afterwards, they can start doing proper interpretations and repeat the exercise twice or three times, each time trying to use different words (synonyms, hypernyms, general terms) and different morpho-syntactic structures.

Example of a speech extract to work on, regarding bilateral treaties between the EU and Switzerland, which have become outdated and do not allow the Swiss to ex-

plore all the potential of the common market, so a new position is to be adopted in line with the sovereignty of the Swiss:

- 9) *Mais une chose paraît certaine du côté européenne : l'époque des traités bilatéraux sur mesure, **touche à sa fin**. Comme le président de la Commission européenne l'a dit récemment, d'ailleurs ici, en Suisse, si la Suisse veut bénéficier de tous les potentiels du marché intérieur, **ce modèle est pratiquement épuisé**. En décembre l'Union européenne adoptera une position sur l'avenir de ces relations avec la Suisse. Cette nouvelle position **pourrait déboucher sur un réajustement** de la situation actuelle. Evidemment **toute discussion devra se faire dans le respect de la souveraineté** du peuple suisse. Mais aucune option ne devrait être **considéré comme tabou**.*

(Marked in bold are the parts where students need to find a different way of expressing the idea, each time they interpret the passage. They can work on the passage up to four or five times, changing the wording and the syntactic structures.)

According to Kalina (1998), such exercises, even in the same language, are efficient because they help establish automated responses for recurrent syntactic operations, which lower the energy and cognitive effort needed for the activity. Some oppose this line of argument, claiming that looking for synonyms or different syntactic structures puts the focus on form rather than content (Coughlin 1989), which should be the primary aim in interpreter training. Nevertheless, this exercise can be a valid tool for enriching vocabulary and training students in ease of expression.

3.3.2 Abstracting and compressing

These two strategies are useful when the given speech is very informative and rich in detail, or presented (even read) at an accelerated speed, especially when the speakers' interventions are limited. The interpreter should be able to distinguish between essential and additional information, abstract the main ideas, and follow the speaker's line of thought.

In the first variation of the exercise, students listen to separate phrases outside the booths without taking notes and then resume the main idea after each phrase in as few words as possible (focusing on the essential structure subject-verb-object). Later, students perform the same activity in the booths, with shorter pauses between phrases, progressing to continuous speech without intentional pauses. The last phase involves continuous speech, dense with information, where students are compelled to summarize only the main idea (Skarlovnik Zihelr 2004).

Example of a dense speech extract containing date references, list of countries, numbers:

- 10) *La francophonie, c'est donc une solidarité au service de cette diversité. **En février dernier**, elle s'est exprimée auprès du **peuple d'Haïti** qui était confronté à la pire catastrophe de son histoire. Notre organisation a su se mobiliser. Et je voudrais rendre hommage ici à son action humanitaire, comme je veux saluer son engagement croissant dans le règlement des*

crises politiques et l'observation des élections. Hier en **Mauritanie**, aujourd'hui en **Guinée**, demain, je l'espère, au **Niger**, au **Cote d'Ivoire**, où il doit y avoir des élections comme partout dans le monde, et aussi à **Madagascar**. Depuis **la première réunion des pères fondateurs** de notre organisation **il y a quarante ans**, la Francophonie n'a cessé d'étendre, d'étendre le champ de son action. Aujourd'hui, avec **soixante-dix états membres ou observateurs** de notre organisation, nous représentons **plus d'un tiers des membres de Nations unies**. Et parfois je me demande si nous sommes conscients de la force que nous représentons.

Main ideas of this segment: La Francophonie is an organisation based on solidarity between different nations. In February last year this was clearly shown with its fast mobilisation after the Haiti earthquake. The organisation's main activities I want to pay tribute today are the humanitarian actions, assistance during political crises and election monitoring. It has already been active in Mauritania, Guinea, and hopefully it will be able to assist in elections in Niger, the Ivory Coast, and also Madagascar. For 40 years already, the organisation has been active in a growing number of areas. Today it gathers 70 member countries and observers, which represents more than 1/3 of UN members.

Another possible exercise is the use of hypernyms or general expressions for a string of adjectives or nouns, or later for entire sentences.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERPRETER TRAINING

Interpreter training focuses on practical exercises, but these clearly need to follow a structured and well considered plan, which enables continuous improvement in students' abilities and their transformation into interpreting competence. In SI practice, each interpreting exercise needs to focus on achieving clear objectives, which should be general at first (i. e. finishing sentences with a closing intonation, avoiding prolonged pauses) when students are still struggling with simultaneous technique, but progressing slowly to more specific objectives and the use of specific strategies. By the end of their training, students are expected to provide a complete interpretation and demonstrate the ability to use various strategies in an appropriate manner.

Generally, SI practice is carried out by interpreting complete speeches, which helps students in acquiring experience and stamina. However, exercises based on short segments or paragraphs in which students focus on specific strategies are useful in several respects: mastering the simultaneous technique, making classroom work more dynamic and enabling students to experiment and learn by trying. It is especially important to include them at the beginning of practice, and explain the aim of each exercise and the interpretation rationale underpinning it to students. In this way, students begin acquiring specific strategies they will later reinforce with practice in the professional sphere.

The present paper aimed at presenting an overview of the most important strategies for simultaneous interpreting and related training exercises that might be helpful for interpreter trainers from the professional sphere with little or no theoretical and pedagogical background. According to some (Ilg/Lambert, referred to in Skarlovnik Zihelr 2004), such exercises should account for one third of practice, which would allow students to develop a solid base of interpreting skills and strategies. However,

due to lack of time and small number of contact hours, some trainers explain that they rather propose more speeches on various subjects, which to their opinion helps students to build on the necessary stamina and cover different topics. Therefore further research has yet to be carried out regarding the actual use of targeted exercises in simultaneous interpreting training and the perceived usefulness of them.

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Abstract
ACQUIRING SPECIFIC INTERPRETING COMPETENCE

In postgraduate interpreter training, the main objective of the course is to help trainees develop various competences, from linguistic, textual and cultural competence, to professional and specific interpreting competence. For simultaneous interpreting (SI), the main focus is on mastering the SI technique and strategies as well as on developing and strengthening communicative skills, which is discussed and illustrated with examples in the present paper.

First, a brief overview is given of all the necessary competences of a professional interpreter with greater emphasis on specific interpreting competence for SI. In the second part of the paper, various approaches are described in terms of acquiring specific skills and strategies, specifically through a range of exercises. Besides interpreting entire speeches, practical courses should also consist of targeted exercises, which help trainees develop suitable coping strategies and mechanisms (later on almost automatisms), while at the same time “force” them to reflect on their individual learning process and interpreting performance. This provides a solid base on which trained interpreters can progress and develop their skills also after joining the professional sphere.

Keywords: interpreter training, competence, strategies, skills, exercises.

Povzetek
PRIDOBIVANJE POSEBNE TOLMAŠKE KOMPETENCE

Glavni cilj podiplomskega študija tolmačenja je omogočiti študentom, da razvijejo različne vrste kompetenc, od jezikovne, besedilne in kulturne kompetence, do poklicne in posebne tolmaške kompetence. Pri pouku simultane tolmačenja je glavni poudarek na usvajanju tehnike simultane tolmačenja in strategij pa tudi na razvijanju in krepitvi komunikativnih spretnosti, kar je predstavljeno in s primeri ponazorjeno v pričujočem članku.

V prvem delu članka na kratko predstavimo potrebne kompetence poklicnih tolmačev, z večjim poudarkom na posebni tolmaški kompetenci in strategijah za simultano tolmačenje. V drugem delu opišemo različne postopke usvajanja posebnih spretnosti in strategij prek usmerjenih tolmaških vaj. Poleg tolmačenja celotnih govorov bi morali študentje pri praktičnem usposabljanju spoznati tudi usmerjene vaje, ki pomagajo pri razvoju ustreznih strategij in mehanizmov, hkrati pa jih silijo k premisleku o svojem napredku in usvojenih tolmaških spretnostih. Tak pristop predstavlja dobro podlago, na osnovi katere lahko tolmači napredujejo in nadalje razvijajo svoje spretnosti tudi po vstopu v poklicni svet.

Ključne besede: študij tolmačenja, kompetenca, strategije, spretnosti, vaje.