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THE TIME CONSTRAINT IN CONFERENCE INTERPRETING: SIMULTANEOUS VS. CONSECUTIVE

Abstract:

The present paper focuses on the concept of time constraint in interpreting. The main aim of the study is to compare the two modes of interpreting, i.e. consecutive and simultaneous in terms of the temporal load imposed by the operations constituting each of them. The discussion centres on the issues of external pacing and processing capacity management, the two focal points of The Time Constraint. The paper also examines a range of strategies interpreters resort to in order to minimise the impact of time pressure in both CI and SI, such as EVS regulation, economy of expression, text-editing strategies, and notation techniques.

Keywords: time constraint, simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, external pacing, processing capacity, interpreting strategies, EVS regulation, economy of expression, text-editing strategies, note taking.

1. Introduction

The activity of interpretation is inextricably linked to and dependent on time. Unlike written translation, both traditionally identified modes of interpreting, simultaneous and consecutive, are heavily marked by the temporal load. Whereas translators have ample time at their hands to search for the most accurate terms and to express themselves in the best possible style, the ultimate deadline being set by the publisher, interpreters' choices are severely restricted in the process of instantaneous converting oral messages at a speed which is about thirty times faster than that of the translator (Seleskovitch 1978: 2). However, such a simple juxtaposition of translation and interpreting would definitely present a false picture of the relations

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between the interpreting modes. Although both the modes are affected by heavy temporal load, consecutive and simultaneous interpreting differ markedly in terms of the time pressure involved.

It is one of the aims of the following paper to compare CI and SI as regards the temporal load imposed by the operations constituting each of them. The discussion begins with the issue of external pacing, which is generally considered to impede the interpreting process, being virtually beyond the interpreter's control. Having considered the external factor of SL input, we shall proceed to another factor imposing an additional temporal load, which is processing capacity management. The remaining part of the present article is devoted to the presentation of a range of strategies employed to counteract different aspects of The Time Constraint, such as EVS regulation, economy of expression, text-editing strategies, and notation techniques in CI.

2. External Pacing

Any discussion of the temporal aspect of interpreting requires a consideration of the issue of external pacing, which conditions the processing capacity management in both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. Unlike translators, interpreters are forced to work at speech delivery speed. But although both CI and SI are governed by The Time Constraint to some extent, the problem acquires a different dimension in simultaneous interpreting. As observed by Kirchhoff (1976), the presentation rate, over which the interpreter has no control, has an evident impact on all operations of the SI process. The most visible outcome of the increased presentation rate is an accompanying increase in simultaneous interpreters' omissions reported by Gerver (1969) as early as in 1969. Moreover, an interpreter working in this mode has to overcome the acoustic difficulty of listening and speaking at the same time. The task is in fact even more complex since the interpreter is required to listen to two parallel lines of discourse. S/he should hear clearly not only the speaker, but also his or her own output, which has to be monitored closely all the time (Hatim and Mason 1997)¹, still being dependent on the speaker-paced input. Thus, the ability to cultivate distributed attention between input comprehension and output production is an important prerequisite for successful performance in SI (Gerver 1969; Wei 2002).

¹ The problem of multiple task performance is also addressed in Kirchhoff's (1976) study.

Sharing attentional capacity is also to some extent required in the consecutive mode, especially that due to its division into two distinct phases, it is sometimes viewed as “double simultaneous” (Van Hoof 1962). During the first phase the interpreter’s attention is divided between simultaneous listening, analysis and note-taking, while in the second phase s/he must be able to reproduce the source-language text by deciphering the notes. Obviously, the two lines of audio signals do not overlap in CI since speech comprehension and speech production phases are separated in time. Thus the load of split attention is considerably lower in this mode.

Apart from the distinct phases division present in CI, another feature reducing the load of sharing attentional capacity is that in this mode only the first phase of listening and note-taking is externally paced by the speaker. During the later phase of reformulation, the interpreter is free to perform at his or her own pace.

However, it has to be emphasised that despite its apparent similarity with SI in terms of external pacing, the first phase of CI is in fact marked by The Time Constraint to a lesser extent. Although it is generally acknowledged that the process of taking notes does require more time than speaking, due to its mechanical nature, note-taking in interpreting should not be as time-consuming as taking them in other circumstances (Rozan 2002). Yet as Agrifoglio (2004) observes in her experiment note-taking failures are relatively common since with SI rather than CI being the predominant mode of interpreting today, note-taking techniques can be expected to have degraded.

The fundamental difference lies in the fact that in CI the bulk of information about input is committed to the interpreter’s memory. Since the time span elapsing between note-taking and speech reconstruction is a matter of no more than several minutes, there is no need for the notes to cover all the information contained in a source-language text. As Herbert (1952) puts it, notes are “[...] to serve as mile-stones in a speech which is still quite fresh to the mind” (Herbert 1952: 34).

Moreover, note-taking is not subject to the same rules of linguistic acceptability as speech production, i.e. lexical, syntactic and stylistic appropriateness, since its aim is not to reproduce speech, but merely to provide some indication to help the interpreter reconstruct the source-language text (Gile 1995). Consequently the precision in note-taking is not an aspect of the interpreter’s performance that is subsequently evaluated by the clients/audience.

This does not mean obviously that the process of note-taking does not place any temporal requirements on the interpreter, but merely that the time factor has a different dimension in CI. Coping with the time pressure imposed by this mode requires demonstrating to a large extent the purely technical skill of note-taking (Gile 1997), and the deployment of a previously acquired system incorporating abbreviations and symbols.

3. Processing Capacity Management in Simultaneous Interpreting

The concept of cultivating split attention referred to in the previous section is closely linked to the problem of processing capacity management, since it emphasises the simultaneity of the operations involved in SI.

Gile's Effort Model for SI emphasises the need to allocate processing capacity resources to three competing concurrent operations: the Listening and Analysis Effort, the Production Effort, and a short-term Memory Effort (Gile 2001). In an ideal interpreting situation, each effort is working on a separate subsequent speech segment (Gile 1995). However, given the intrinsic nature of discourse, the pattern is not always predictable. Two or even three of the Efforts might have to be active simultaneously.

Because of the time pressure inherent in SI, the way one segment is processed affects the availability of processing capacity for handling further incoming segments. This makes an interpreter working in this mode prone to temporary overload or saturation, which might result in erroneous performance. To account for such errors and omissions Gile introduced the idea of failure sequences (Gile 1995; Gile 1997). However, the idea is a tentative one, as Gile (1997: 212) himself stresses:

the failure scenarios built around the Effort Models are intuitive, and rely on many cognitive hypotheses: the idea that the efforts are highly competitive; that because of this competition, their individual processing capacity requirements can be added against total available capacity; that interpreters have substantial control over the allocation of processing capacity to the efforts; and so on. Close inspection of these hypotheses by cognitive scientists is required.

Yet in spite of all these reservations, numerous instances of failure sequences predicted by Gile's model, have been reported for various language combinations. One of the most common problem triggers leading to a failure sequence is, for instance, high density, either in terms of dense information content (see Example 1) or fast delivery rate (cf. Gumul 2004; Gumul forthcoming b). For sentences of equal length, processing time required depends on the number of propositions in the texts rather than on the actual length of these sentences (Le Ny 1978). Dealing with such discourse segments taxes both the Listening and Analysis Effort and the Production Effort, as more information units have to be processed within the same span of time. The failure sequence resulting from high propositional density of the input is illustrated in the following example:²

² All examples used in the present article (with the exception of Example 6 and 9) are extracts from MA interpreting students' outputs analysed in the research conducted by Gumul (2004). The recordings were made at the final stage of their training (twenty-seventh month of training in both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting). Examples 6 and 9 are extracts from the output by a postdiploma student of interpreting in 2005.

(1)

Source text:

now / by way of introduction / I'd like to try and give some indication of how London itself originated // of what developmental trends were built into it / as it were from the very outset / and of how / these trends have affected its growth / it started of course not as one but as two cities / the Romans built a bridge across the Thames / at a point / where the Estuary / was narrow enough / to make this a practical proposition / and the encampment / associated with this bridge / grew up on the north bank of the river / the principal fort of this encampment / was on the site now occupied by the Tower / further to the west / at a point where the river was fordable / an abbey / the Abbey of Westminster / was founded / and two towns grew up side by side / one centred on the Roman camp / and the other on the Abbey

Target text:

w ramach wstępu / chciałbym / pokazać początki Londynu / to jakie trendy rozwojowe nast / już na samym początku się zarysowywały / i jaki miały one wpływ na rozwój miasta / oczywiście London został zapoczątkowany nie jako jedno ale jako dwa miasta / Rzymianie zbudowali na Tamizie most w miejscu gdzie jej ujście było wystarczająco wąskie aby było to praktyczne przedsięwzięcie / związany z tym mostem obóz znajdował się po północnej stronie / Tamizy // bardziej na zachód / w miejscu gdzie można było przejść przez rzekę / założono Opactwo Westminsterskie / te te Westminsterskie / i te dwa miasta / jednocześnie / ze sobą wzrastały równocześnie

An interpreter faced with an incoming speech segment requiring additional capacity resources for production, may be forced to delay producing the target-language version until more processing capacity is available for the production effort. Obtaining extra processing capacity is possible after the interpreter has been freed from the listening effort, that is working on the incoming speech segment. This, however, may impose excessive strain on the short-term memory effort because of the backlog of incoming input segments that has accumulated in the meantime. If the interpreter tries to deal with the problem by directing more processing capacity to the memory effort, this may lead to losses in the capacity aimed for the listening and analysis effort, jeopardising comprehension of another incoming segment (Gile 1997: 200).

It can be inferred from the above simulation that failure sequences do not necessarily affect the problematic segment that triggered them, but may occur at a distance, influencing the rendition of those segments that pose no

particular difficulty (Gile 1995). Identifying the exact source of failure is therefore not always possible by analysing the corresponding input segment. It may be more productive to attempt to trace the sources of failure by looking globally at larger portions of discourse.

Processing capacity problems in SI might give rise to two different kinds of failure. The target-language version may deteriorate in terms of content, resulting in errors and omissions, or in terms of delivery influencing linguistic output, voice and intonation.

The following extract from the source text contains a few potential problem triggers: the low-frequency verb *flinch* and two compound adjectives (*panic-stricken* and *stop-gap*). The target-language version shows that the occurrence of the first problem trigger resulted in the omission of the segment containing the verb in question. That was also the case with the other problem trigger. However, closer analysis of the interpreting output reveals additional consequences: a considerably long intrasentential pause (marked by a double slash in the transcript) and failure to render the prepositional content of the segment following the phrase containing the two compound adjectives:

(2)

Source text:

*but within a very short time of coming back into power / the present government had taken steps / to stabilise the position / no doubt you will remember some of those steps / many of them were painful at the time / but they were necessary if international confidence was to be restored / and we did not **flinch** from taking them*

*first of all / we applied ourselves to identifying the root causes of our national ailments / examining contemporary evidence / and refusing to be slaves to outmoded doctrinaire beliefs / secondly / we embarked on a reasoned policy to ensure steady economic growth / the modernisation of industry / and a proper balance between public and private expenditure / thirdly / by refusing to take refuge / as the previous government had continually done in the preceding years / in **panic-stricken stop-gap** measures / we stimulated the return of international confidence*

Target text:

niemniej jednak w bardzo krótkim czasie po otrzymaniu władzy / rząd podjął kroki aby ustabilizować tą sytuację / bez wątplenia pamiętacie niektóre z tych kroków które podjął rząd / niektóre z nich przysporzyły wam wielu problemów w swoim czasie ale były one konieczne aby podnieść znowu / poczucie bezpieczeństwa

po pierwsze / udało nam się / sprawdzić i / poznać przyczyny naszego / złego stanu / nie chcieliśmy się również stać niewolnikami niemodnych i przestarzałych doktryn / poza tym / udało nam się stworzyć nowe ustawy aby zapewnić stały wzrost gospodarczy / modernację modernizację przemysłu / oraz odpowiedni balans pomiędzy publicznym a prywatnym sektorem / po trzecie / nie chcąc // mścić się tak jak robił to poprzedni rząd // udało nam się znowu odzyskać poczucie bezpieczeństwa społeczeństwa

It has to be emphasised that the very presence of problem triggers does not necessarily engender problems with processing capacity. They can only be treated as potential sources of errors or omissions; whether such failures occur or not depends on the context. For instance, an informationally dense segment may come at the end of the sentence and additionally be followed by a pause. At this point, the Listening and Analysis Effort is no longer active, and the whole processing capacity can be directed to the Memory and Production components (Gile 1995: 174).

4. Processing Capacity Management in Consecutive Interpreting

Given the discrepancies between the two modes, processing capacity management in CI imposes different demands than in SI. As can be inferred from what has already been said about the external pacing, in CI only the first phase is jeopardised by saturation. In the second phase of reformulation, “there is no risk of overloading due to a high density of the speech over time” (Gile 1997: 203). This is simply because of the fact that while the source-language text is undergoing reformulation, there are no further input segments coming during that time. Thus, should the need arise to delay the execution of one of the tasks, there is no risk of information loss (Gile 1997). Consequently, the interpreter is relieved from attention-sharing and can concentrate on the processing of a given speech segment.

By contrast, the listening and analysis phase in CI might pose considerable processing management difficulties. The comprehension of input speech coincides with note-taking, making the three Efforts³ involved in this phase compete for resources.

Note-taking is an especially important processing capacity-consuming component. Thus, as has already been pointed out in the section on external pacing, successful processing capacity and time management in this mode depend to a large extent on note-taking skills developed by interpreters.

³ The three Efforts engaged in the first phase are: the Listening and Analysis Effort, the Production Effort (production of notes), and the Short-Term Memory Effort.

Depending on the mastery of this skill, these can either facilitate or impede coordination of the Efforts, as reported by Mead (2000), whose CI subjects' production was inferior due to the difficulties they experienced in rereading their own notes.

5. Strategies for Coping with the Time Pressure in Simultaneous Interpreting

To minimise the impact of time pressure in SI, interpreters can resort to various strategies. The following section attempts to present those strategies that are employed in cases of time management problems. However, a clear-cut division of the interpreting strategies according to the individual constraints⁴ is not always viable, as the needs to adopt a particular tactic might overlap. For instance, naturalisation or approximate repetition, necessary at times because of The (Un)shared Knowledge Constraint, are favoured over explanation or paraphrasing due to excessive time pressure. Thus the choice of a particular tactic is not random, but follows certain guidelines. The one applied in the above example is the rule of minimising recovery interference. It follows from the basic principle of processing capacity management that "the way one segment is processed affects the availability of processing capacity for the processing of other segments" (Gile 1995: 202).

Apart from the cognitive interdependencies, there remains also the aspect of textual organisation of the output, this one including elements of style, coherence, cohesion etc. As observed by Kohn and Kalina (1996) in their account of interpreting as strategic discourse processing, "any one single strategic decision will have consequences for numerous others to be taken" since "[...] in practice, strategies of very different types and levels interact to a large extent" (Kohn and Kalina 1996: 132).

5.1. EVS Regulation

Probably the most frequently employed strategy in SI is that of ear-voice span (EVS) regulation, as without keeping even the minimum time lag between reception of input and output production, simultaneous interpreting would be virtually impossible (Gumul 2004, 2005). EVS is an inherent aspect of SI performance, the duration of which depends on a number of variables, such as language combination, discourse type, speech delivery rate, information

⁴ The other constraints impeding the interpreting process are The Linearity Constraint, The (Un)shared Knowledge Constraint and The Memory Load Constraint, cf. Shlesinger (1995), Łyda & Gumul (2002), Gumul (2004), Gumul (forthcoming).

density, redundancy, word order, syntactic characteristics, or idiosyncratic preferences (Yagi 2000: 524).

The discussion of the strategy of EVS regulation would be incomplete without indicating the distinction between a characteristic lag and a maximum lag (Anderson 1994:102). The former refers to the EVS inherent in the task of interpreting, while the latter, employed in cases of difficulty, is supposed to reflect the limits of human short-term memory. Under some circumstances the maximum time lag might prove to be excessive, and as such impose severe strain on short-term memory, leading to breakdown (Hatim & Mason 1997: 62). Daro and Fabbro (1994) citing Baddeley, Lewis and Vallar (1984) claim that oral verbal information can be retained in the phonological store for a maximum of 2 seconds and with the help of subvocal rehearsal the maximum time is up to 10 seconds. However, a simultaneous reception and production of two audio lines has been demonstrated to reduce the capacity of working memory and the memory span. These figures are then indicative of the time limits that cannot be exceeded for a successful performance of the SI interpreters. However, EVS regulation within the limits is possible and adjusting the length of EVS often enables interpreters to control to a certain extent the processing-capacity requirements. Nevertheless, the strategy of ear-voice span regulation has to be adopted with caution, as both reducing and increasing the time lag entail potential risk. Shortening the EVS is beneficial in terms of decreasing short-term memory requirements, but may produce an adverse effect, resulting in misunderstanding of the propositional content or in the interpreter's embarking on a sentence which would be difficult to complete, as can be seen in Example 3:

(3)

Source text:

these new projects / have enabled us / to lay a firm foundation for better things / it is at this stage that we may confidently begin to examine the route which we wish to follow in the future

Target text:

(EVS=0,882s) *te nowe projekty / umożliwiły nam / umożliwiły nam zbudowanie fundamentów dla dużo / dla wielu dobrych rzeczy / co powinno stać się podstawą naszej / naszej drogi jaką mamy zamiar obrać w przyszłości*

On the other hand, lagging too far behind the speaker does increase comprehension potential, but may impose an excessive strain on short-term memory (Gile 1995: 195). This is well demonstrated in Example 4 below, where the

second EVS lasts almost 7 seconds, approaching the maximum retention limits referred to above as well as the average delay reported in other studies (Lederer (1978) estimated the lag at about 3–6 seconds while Oléron and Nanpon (1964) found spans of 2–4 seconds most common):

(4)

Source text:

first of all / we applied ourselves to identifying the root causes of our national ailments / examining contemporary evidence / and refusing to be slaves to outmoded doctrinaire beliefs / secondly / we embarked on a reasoned policy to ensure steady economic growth / the modernisation of industry / and a proper balance between public and private expenditure / thirdly / by refusing to take refuge / as the previous government had continually done in the preceding years / in panic-stricken stop-gap measures / we stimulated the return of inte international confidence

Target text:

(EVS=3,1s) *po pierwsze // (EVS=6,838 s) postanowiliśmy obróć drogę // naszego działania i / i odrzucić doktryny które nam narzucono / po drugie / post / postanowiliśmy prowadzić sensowną politykę / powolnego wzrostu ekonomicznego / oraz równowagi pomiędzy publicznymi i prywatnymi wydatkami / po trzecie / przez / przez odmowę przyjmowania / uchodźców / które / co zostało podejmowane przez ostatnie rządy / pozwoliło nam to przywrócić waszą wiarę / w rząd*

According to Kirchhoff (1976: 115) „the interpreter’s optimum starting point would have to lie where a maximum amount of certainty and a minimum load on capacity are insured [...] and would have to correspond to the respective limits of the smallest recoding unit”. Nevertheless, no precise figures can be proposed here considering syntactic dissimilarities between languages, which may compel the interpreter to lengthen the EVS whenever a full understanding of the speaker’s message is required, (cf. Gumul 2005).

5.2. Economy of Expression

Another common way of coping with the time pressure inherent in SI is by maximising the efficiency of expression. One of the time-saving techniques recommended by Jones (1998) is removing filler words such as *really*, *actually*, *well* (unless they are used in their primary sense) (Jones 1998). The following example, in which the continuative *well* is omitted, illustrates this strategy:

(5)

Source text:

well / the first consequence I suppose / is that the importance of the river itself / was increased // [...]

Target text:

pierwszą konsekwencją wydaje mi się jest / że waga rzeki jako takiej / wzrosła / [...]

Jones (1998) also advocates avoiding unnecessary repetition. This specific point reflects the specificity of the English-Polish language pair, since English speakers tend to use sequences of (semi-)synonymous lexical elements: adjectives, nouns or verbs (Jones 1998) which might have only single equivalents in Polish:

(6)

Source text:

any act or thing / which may be or grow to/ the nuisance annoyance danger or damage / of the Lessors or of other tenants or occupiers of the adjoining flats/ [...]

Target text:

wszystko / co może stanowić / zakłócenie niebezpieczeństwo lub powodować szkodę / Wynajmującego lub innych użytkowników przyległych lokali [...]

Economy of expression also refers to the creation of the target-language speech. Choosing the shortest possible form is often a must in the simultaneous mode. By trying to be particularly eloquent, the interpreter runs the risk of allocating too much processing capacity to the Production Effort, thereby depriving himself or herself of sufficient processing capacity for the Listening and Analysis Effort (Gile 1995).

The operations described by Jones correspond roughly to the two strategies aiming at economising expression identified by Al-Khanji et al (2000), which are skipping and filtering. The former can only be considered as a conscious strategy of the interpreter to seek a more economic way of expression when it is a matter of leaving out semantically redundant lexical items, since the broad term “skipping” encompasses also omissions which are attributable to problems with comprehension or to processing capacity saturation. Filtering is defined as a conscious attempt “to compress the length of an utterance in order to find an economic way of expression” (Al-Khanji et al 2000: 554).

In the following example, the parenthetical clause *wherever they existed* seems to be only a rhetorical device, which from a purely semantic point of view is redundant. Thus, leaving out this source-language segment does not entail a significant information loss, and might be considered accordingly as an instance of filtering:

(7)

Source text:

[...] *we attacked / we attacked restrictive practices / **wherever they existed** / [...]*

Target text:

[...] *sprzeciwialiśmy się wszelkim praktykom ograniczającym / [...]*

A possible negative consequence of adopting economy of expression measures is failing to render the attitudinal meaning of the source-language text (Hatim & Mason 1997). It might happen that resorting to a particular stylistics as an implicit form of language expression is a conscious effort on the part of the speaker, and as such should be recognised by the interpreter and rendered accordingly.

5.3. Text-editing Strategies

The idea of editing the interpreted text seems to violate one of the basic norms of interpreting, which require a complete rendition of the source-language text. However, the irresolvable conflict between the requirements of completeness, accuracy and equivalent intended effect more often than not requires of the interpreter far-reaching editing decisions. As pointed out by Garzone (2002), employing this strategy may, under certain circumstances, be the only way to ensure the best possible quality of interpretation.

Given the time management difficulties in the simultaneous mode, the interpreter might have to employ as a last resort some text-editing techniques. Among these most common include generalisation and omission (Jones 1998).

Generalisation may sometimes prove to be an effective time-saving strategy when handling a segment including a number of items falling into the same category. Unless every single element is significant for the speaker's purpose, the list might be condensed into one generic term (Jones 1998) (see Example 6 above). Generalisation has also been observed to function as an effective strategy of handling pragmatically-ambiguous connectives both in CI and SI (Łyda 2004).

One of the most frequent reasons why interpreters resort to omission is the inability to cope with the time pressure imposed by the speaker. In his study of omissions, additions and errors, Barik (1994: 122) specifies the nature of omission:

Omissions are determined on the basis of the final content of the original message, so that it is not considered an omission if the T⁵ does not translate a lexically irrelevant repetition or 'false start' on the part of the S⁶.

Omissions in Barik's study are not analysed in terms of conscious strategy on the part of the interpreter, but rather as types of failure. His definition may nevertheless be of service in distinguishing the tactic of omission from that of economy of expression. Out of the four types of omission Barik distinguishes in his study, only the skipping omission can possibly also be considered in terms of the interpreter's deliberate action⁷.

This type of omission usually involves leaving out, for instance, a qualifying adverb. Barik (1994: 122) gives the example of the French input segment [...] *un instrument assez difficile* [...] rendered into English as [...] *a difficult instrument* [...]. This type of omission apparently results in a minimal loss of meaning acceptable in the context of simultaneous interpreting (Barik 1994). It does, however, reduce the temporal load to some extent.

In the following example, the occurrence of the additive item *moreover* coincides with the coordinative *and*. Therefore, faced with the constraint of external pacing imposed by the speaker, interpreters working in this mode may choose to eliminate redundant cohesive markers to save on processing capacity resources:

(8)

Source text:

*now in my lecture / I hope to / demonstrate in detail / that this state of affairs / this double focus as we might call it / was of crucial importance / for the subsequent growth of London as a city / and that it had **moreover** / a decisive influence / on the architecture / associated with the city // [...]*

⁵ Barik refers to the interpreter by the abbreviation „T for *translator*, since it cannot conveniently be abbreviated as 'I' (Barik 1994: 121)

⁶ S stands for the speaker in Barik's study.

⁷ The other three types of omission listed by Barik are: comprehension omission, delay omission and compounding omission, all of which are indications of the interpreter's failure to render the propositional content of the original message and are not deliberate. For a detailed account of each type see Barik (1975; 1994).

Target text:

teraz w moim wykładzie chciałbym / zademonstrować państwu / szczegółowo // to to podwójne skupienie się rozwoju i które miało podstawowe znaczenie dla / późniejszego rozwoju Londynu jako miasta // i miało ogromny wpływ na architekturę która jest związana z tym miastem / [...]

As observed at the beginning of this section, resorting to omissions raises the contentious issue of violating the norm regarding completeness of rendition. It is worth noting, however, that numerous studies on interpreting quality (e.g. Kalina 2002; Kurz 1993; Moser 1996; Pöchhacker 2002; Riccardi 2002) indicate that completeness of interpretation is not an absolute priority for conference participants. Those criteria that are rated higher in the surveys include: sense consistency, logical cohesion, and use of correct terminology (Kurz 1993).

Another approach testifying to the widespread rejection of the dogma of rendition completeness is that of Viaggio (2002). In his study, judicious deployment of omissions is advocated as a relevance-enhancing strategy. Obviously, given the nature of the simultaneous mode, in which the output is immediately comparable to the input in terms of length, this strategy must be employed sparingly even in cases of extensive redundancy in the source-language text (Viaggio 2002: 244). However, as there is no such constraint in the other mode of interpreting, the strategy of omission enjoys a different status in CI. We shall return to Viaggio's ideas in the subsequent section dealing with strategies for coping with the time pressure in this mode.

6. Strategies for Coping with the Time Pressure in Consecutive Interpreting

Since The Time Constraint is much weaker in the consecutive mode and only one of the phases is affected by it, the number of available strategies is naturally considerably smaller.

In cases of overloading processing capacity, when close to saturation in the listening and analysis phase, the interpreter can stop taking notes and rely solely on his or her memory for the relevant speech segment (Gile 1995: 205).

Other time-saving strategies specific to the consecutive mode are part of note-taking skills. Those recommended by Herbert (1952) range from using signs, symbols from the alphabet, phonetic symbols, monograms, mathematical symbols and abbreviations to drawing arrows and reference lines. Using many

symbols in note-taking is also advocated by Matysek (1989) with the aim of reducing the time required to note ideas.

Obviously it has to be stressed that if these strategies are to assist in minimising the time pressure, the interpreter should limit himself or herself to a previously acquired and practised set of symbols to avoid running the risk of not being able to decipher them. Difficulties with retrieving them from memory or recognising their meaning may make them counterproductive, so that they become more time- and processing capacity-consuming than writing the words they signify. As Agrifoglio observes insufficient notes with only isolated items taken by the interpreter can lead to the failure in establishing “an exact relationship among them” (Agrifoglio 2004: 60), which produces an adverse effect. In the sample below figure “10” is wrongly reconstructed by the interpreter as “when he was ten” instead of the original phrasing “for the last ten years”, which clearly demonstrates inconsistency in note-taking:

(9)

Source text:

pierwsze publiczne wzmianki o Marku Dochnalu pochodzą co prawda już z tysiąc dziewięćset dziewięćdziesiątego pierwszego roku ale nie mają charakteru salonowego / jako trzydziestolatek założył on spółkę Proxy / która przy okazji restrukturyzacji zakładów Mesko / a także przemysłu zbrojeniowego / naraziła się NIK do tego stopnia że prywatyzacja ta zyskała nazwę afery Proxy / pogłoski o dobrych stosunkach ze służbami specjalnymi ciągnęły się za Markiem D. od dziesięciu lat / ale nie był to szczególnie specjalnie wadzący w medialnej karierze [...]

Notes:

Target text:

*Marek Dochnal was first publicly mentioned in nineteen ninety one / however not in a respectable setting / when he was thirty he set up Proxy limited to privatize arms producer Mesko / however the State Chamber of Control raised such strong objections to this privatization / that the whole affair was even called Proxy / it was whispered that Marek Dochnal had contacts with the intelligence service **since he was ten** / but it was not very important [...]*

As indicated in the previous section, one of the strategies employed to offset the time pressure in the simultaneous mode is omission. Omission as a strategy has to be clearly distinguished from omission as a failure, the latter instance being exemplified in Sample 9 above (*it was not very important (for his career in the media)*). Although the time constraint is much weaker in consecutive interpreting, eliminating semantically redundant information at the stage of taking notes may help to eliminate some of the time pressure inherent in this phase of the process. This strategy, advocated by Viaggio (2002), which aims to enhance the relevance of the interpreted message, is much more feasible in this mode of interpreting as the two lines of discourse do not overlap, making the omissions unnoticeable. Moreover, as emphasised by Viaggio (2002: 243), it is generally agreed that a good consecutive interpretation ought to be shorter and more concise than the source-language text. The target-language version presented below clearly shows a certain degree of compactness compared with the source-text. Yet the overall propositional content is retained:

(10)

Source text:

they are intended / they are intended to stand as separate self-contained units / indeed / I would go as far as to say that anyone / who tried to deal entirely separately / with the past / the present / and the course of development in the future / would be mis misrepresenting the way / in which urban growth / takes place

Target text:

w zamierzeniu są one oddzielnymi jednostkami / powiedziałbym jednak że każdy kto traktuje jako oddzielne jednostki przeszłość teraźniejszość i przyszłość / nie rozumie do końca sposobu w jaki rozwijają się miasta

7. Concluding remarks

This survey of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting reveals that both modes are seriously affected, albeit to different degrees, by The Time Constraint. Since both processes are externally paced, the time pressure proves to be an inherent feature in both cases. The discrepancies observed between the two modes serve to emphasize that the most significant difference between CI and SI is not so much the amount of the temporal load, in which respect simultaneous interpreting seems to be adversely affected to a larger extent, as the different dimension the time pressure acquires in each of the modes.

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