

THE FUTURE OF PROJECTED INTERPRETATION

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New Possibilities

Projected interpretation could play a much larger part as a service and as a teaching strategy if we move from the OHP projector to the word processor.

Overhead Translation

The Overhead Projector could have been much more active than it was allowed to be in the past, both as a servant at multilingual conferences and as an aid in the training of professional linguists.

A trainee or professional linguist who produces on the Fresnel Disc and, projected from it, on a screen, a guide in another language to what he hears the original speaker saying, helps members of the audience unfamiliar with the original language to follow the train of thought of the speaker and develops his own ability to concentrate on its essentials.

Whether the projected text takes the form of key words (Stichwörter), short notes or an abbreviated précis is immaterial for our discussion here. It will depend on the audience (who may be partly familiar with the original language), the topic and the format of the meeting, on whether a summary or elucidation for questions and answers in a discussion is required, etc. All these types of translation can also provide useful exercises in language competence (and have done so) (1) for students of language and translation who do not necessarily want to become interpreters.

Some variations are especially helpful when adapted to small gatherings of experts which will often include among their number a colleague who could render this service in - carefully selected - writing and be both more helpful and less expensive than a person who has the freak ability to listen to one language and *speak* the translation in the other.

There is no sharp divide between the service to conferences and the aid to teaching (nor need they be separate stages) but for the moment the uses in the class/seminar-room should be stressed to widen the circle of those aware of the possibilities. What is projected as it occurs in the

discussion will of course fit into a larger ensemble (of printed material, students' work given in, etc.) which could include longer prepared passages in SL or TL that the tutor presents on the screen as the occasion arises, partly with gaps into which suggestions made in the discussion can be inserted (on superimposed acetate sheets). Both for preparation and correction (2) more material can be effectively dealt with and when desired the complete set of the instances discussed can of course be duplicated from the acetate sheets for suitable homework/follow-up by the students. If different styles of rendering have been discussed in one part of a context without arriving at a preferred solution, the students can take the variants home in the hope that they will bring to mind the main criteria when the whole passage is tackled in preparation for the next session. Continuous projected translation with its emphasis on the content rather than the linguistic form of the message is of benefit both to students as one aspect of their training and to small gatherings of experts.

Using the Word Processor

Typing on the word processor will make it easier both for students in seminars and for intermediaries in conferences to produce legible texts at a greater speed with less strain. The coupling of a larger monitor with the normal VDU display unit presents no technical problems (in seminars it could be simply a second screen). Strategical placing should make watching convenient for larger audiences (too many schools and others assemble too big groups round one too small display). A further advantage is that the texts discussed can be taken away by students and 'conferees' as print-outs.

The Next Step

What will have been happening in seminars is that quite often the segment of the text being discussed will have been in front of the students in one language and have appeared on the screen in another. This can be developed into tasks which

demand the continuous translation of a text, interrupted or not by fellow students and their suggestions. Active experimenters will have started from both spoken and written SL. We can trust our young people to find themselves the way to proceeding to project in L1 what they hear in L2. This way round is likely to be more successful as probably few of them have experience in typing in L2.

Operators

Secretarial agencies and institutions of further academic education between them should make the possible developments known to their *young* people. Students working towards language degrees should in their own narrowest interests be made to present any written work in typescript or from the word processor. Even if they intend to become teachers the three years' practice in presentation is preferable to a superimposed intensive course (when they have to change their intentions) that often is not followed by any practice because of the job situation. Typescript is a required mode in many European and American universities, and will be more so for any educated person in future.

On the other hand, employees in secretarial agencies should have the openings for bi-lingual workers pointed out to them. Practice courses could be run for united groups.

For further experimentation it is necessary to co-operate with operators who type automatically from somebody else's speech without having to pay any attention to the manipulation. Students have to see it done and to be motivated to obtain this skill if they are to fulfil one of the preconditions of simultaneous projected interpretation. Young people working at secretarial agencies should be invited to join them if they have a perhaps so far unexploited second language. The hypothesis is that, as was the case with simultaneous oral interpretation, there are many more people with the ability to do it than was suspected before the opportunity was offered. Even now there are probably many more children who are capable of doing it than we know, because they have never tried to activate this particular freakish trait, which is still not explored sufficiently, but - just like being able to put a leg behind your ear - independent of other abilities: either you have got it or you haven't.

To *type* while you listen to another speaker is easier than to *speak* yourself at the same time and in fact quite a common facility among typists working from dictation. It was at one time exploited more widely by Palantype machines which simplified the keyboard. The word

processor can complicate it, but machines could easily be constructed that simplify the manipulation too by disregarding factors of presentation and making line shifts automatic as Palantype did long ago.

The fact that you type in another language would be irrelevant if the hypothesis is correct that many of us can render what we have heard as easily in the language of the original as in the one we have been told to switch to as the message is sent into a non-verbal depth from which it emerges on whichever language channel has been selected. (3)

People who can do oral simultaneous translation should, if they have sufficient processor-typing skill, find it, if anything, easier to do projected simultaneous translation, and many others should be able to do it as well.

Practice

Dictation into the operator's strongest language would come at the beginning. When we proceed to asking for translation the text would have to be well within the operator's understanding and normal usage. It should be delivered clearly at a speed which does not distort the meaning. There should be no emphasis on the switch between languages, but it should be stressed that what should appear on the screen is the message (possibly mixing the languages) while accuracy, spelling, deviations do not matter. Individual students will develop different styles and should be allowed to do so, e.g. students who change the formulation even when taking dictation will be very worth watching (see Experiments) as being possibly the most promising future interpreters. It will also be for the operators to decide whether to watch the screen or not.

Proper briefing (as in professional service) will ensure familiarity with the background, glossary, style. Only topics well within the operator's range should be tackled at first to make sure of the technique. This particular switching ability has been tested for intending interpreters by texts on baby-sitting if they had been mainly housewives so far; what has to show is the freak switching mechanism, apart from any background knowledge.

As studies at, for instance, degree work proceed, packages of political, historical and other studies can of course include exercises in translating speeches that fit into their framework, or technical discussions as part of specialist courses.

Long Distance

When we move on to professional services, there will be no difficulty in linking a bigger

screen to the VDU display produced by the operator to improve the legibility of the text for a wider audience. There is also no reason why the original text should not be linked to a screen in a different room, locality, country, continent. There have been discussions of pay demands for unsociable hours when an interpreter receiving the SL from a different continent by earphones had to translate it at what were for him unsociable hours. With the direct televising of the original translation the problem does not arise - it can of course be watched at the time of the transmission or stored for later use.

Experimentation

In the early stages individual operators should be encouraged to find their own best way of writing by trying out any that occur to them. Only thus can one find modes of training in a new skill. Approaches will, in any case, have to differ as much as any other guidance to students who will be as different from each other as any other group. The sharing of the accidental characteristic switch need not make them alike in anything else.

When it is not a matter of experimenting with approaches and using the projection for auxiliary purposes in seminars as described, but to test the method, conditions such as the following have to be fulfilled:

- a) The operators must be able to type automatically at reasonable speed while carrying out a concurrent independent visual task.
- b) They must be compound bilinguals able to switch from L1 to L2 and vice versa in authentic texts, e.g. in liaison interpreting.
- c) They must have competent command of the context.

Observation of, and remarks by, the operators on the practical experience might contribute to the investigation of questions such as:

- 1) Which individuals work more readily via a concurrent translation and which prefer giving a précis?
- 2) Which of Mr R. Towell's models (4) is more frequently found in the material produced, model 1, i.e. translation via an interlanguage or model 2, a token by token sequential rendering in a non-authentic language?

For both investigations the word processor, by providing print-outs when required, saves the researcher's time compared to investigations on parallel lines that require transcription of audio tapes. All material produced should therefore be printed out and kept for the benefit of investigators even if the text as such is not required.

Application

The field for practice, experimentation and development (probably on lines not yet envisaged in this article) should be thrown wide open to all young people by publicising the possibilities to them. Personally I could well imagine games such as the ones suggested here being very welcome to some youngsters in school, parallel to oral translation as a teaching strategy (5). The processor does render a service to schools if it encourages differentiated personalised possibilities for study and practice. Language pupils working at projected interpretation may be very different characters from those clowning in the L2 play.

It is also very important for educational publicity to be early in the field, so that before vested interests can introduce restrictive practices or guidelines there is such a multiplicity of applications that it cannot be restrained - only expanded.

References

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- (3) "Training in Notetaking", Paneth, E., in *Theorie des Übersetzens*, ed. Wills, A. Narr, Tübingen, 1984.
- (4) "Liaison Interpreting", Towell, R., in *Interpreting as a Language Teaching Technique*, University of Salford, 1985 and CILT 1986.
- (5) *Dolmetschen als Unterrichtsstrategie*, Paneth, E., I.D.V., Bern, 1986.