FUNDAMENTALS OF COURT INTERPRETATION

THEORY, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

SECOND EDITION

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Chapter 34

Simultaneous Interpretation

This chapter focuses primarily on the simultaneous mode of interpreting as it is applied in the judicial setting, although research involving conference interpreters is also cited. The chapter begins with a definition of simultaneous interpretation (SI), followed by a detailed description of the circumstances under which SI is employed by court interpreters, with specific emphasis on the rigorous demands of interpreting proceedings for criminal defendants. Next, the process of SI is explicated in terms of the individual skills involved, and the research on SI is discussed as it relates to court interpreting. Finally, training issues in SI are discussed, and exercises to improve interpreting skills are suggested.

1. Definition

Simultaneous interpretation (SI) refers to the technique whereby the interpreter speaks at the same time as the source language (SL) speaker. Historically, interpreting was performed consecutively, with the interpreter waiting until the speaker had finished his or her utterance so that only one person would be talking at a time. After World War II, technological developments and the faster pace of life made SI both possible and necessary. The development of electronic equipment enabled one audience to hear an original speaker while another audience listened to the interpretation on a closed-circuit system. As cooperation within the international community increased, efficient communication became a priority. Although conference interpreters now enjoy great prestige for their artful mastery of SI at meetings sponsored by organizations such as the United Nations, the technique was originally introduced by court interpreters during the Nuremberg trials conducted after World War II (Ramler, 1988).

SI is widely recognized as a very difficult, complex mental task. Van Dam (1986) describes SI as follows:

> While a speaker is delivering (orally) a message in a source language, the simultaneous interpreter transmits that message in a target language ... Unlike the translator, however, the interpreter does not have time to consult dictionaries or other sources: an acceptable solution must be found immediately; for the speaker, unaware that he may be creating problems for the interpreter, continues speaking. And thus the interpreter must continue interpreting. The interpreter listens for the message of the source language. While he concentrates on understanding the source language message, he conveys the message of the preceding passage in the target language. And while he concentrates on conveying the message stylistically and grammatically, he continues to listen for the next message of the source language. (pp. 443–444)

The term "simultaneous" implies that the interpreter is uttering the same message at the same time as the SL speaker, but the word is misleading. In fact, though the interpreter is speaking at the same time as the source, she is lagging behind the speaker at least one unit of thought while interpreting; in other words, the interpreter is hearing one idea while stating another. This time lag is known as *décalage* or **ear-voice span** (EVS) among interpreting experts. The length of the delay between the delivery of the SL message and that of the target language (TL) message depends on a number of variables, as explained in **Section 4**. Regardless of the degree of *décalage*, interpreters must concentrate very intensely on both the SL message and their TL output. This concentration requirement places a great deal of pressure on interpreters.

Another source of pressure on the interpreter is the fact that she must produce the TL message just as quickly as the SL speaker, without the benefit of knowing what is to be said. Thus, she must keep up a steady pace while maintaining accuracy at all times. The stress inherent in this highly demanding and complex operation has been commented upon many times, most specifically in Parsons (1978), as well as other scholars (Gerver, 1976; Gile, 1995; Moser, 1978; Moser-Mercer, 1985, 2000a; Moser-Mercer et al., 1998; Seleskovitch, 1978a; Tommola & Hyönä, 1990).

2. Simultaneous Interpreting in the Courtroom

Many people are familiar with the conference interpreters at the United Nations, who sit high above the General Assembly at the back of the hall in their booths, listening to the speeches through headphones and speaking into microphones that transmit to the delegates' earphones. The SI practiced by conference interpreters differs from the SI used by court interpreters, for while the conference interpreter has some license to improve the SL message stylistically when converting it to the TL, the court interpreter cannot take such liberties (Jones, 2002). The conference interpreter, for example, may omit redundancies or pare down verbosity, but the court interpreter must retain every element of meaning, regardless of whether it is stylistically or grammatically correct, logical, or beneficial to the SL speaker's case. (See the discussion of the terms "conservation" and "legal equivalence" in **Chapter 1, Section 2.1**.)

In most jurisdictions limited- and non-English-speaking (LEP) defendants are deemed to have a constitutional right to an interpreter any time they appear in court for any type of proceeding. Thus, SI is often used for jury selection, motions and objections by counsel, rulings by the court on such motions and objections, sidebar conferences between the attorney and the judge, arguments before the jury, and jury instructions. (For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see **Unit 3**.)

SI is performed primarily from English to other languages, rather than vice versa. Occasionally, SI will be used in proceedings in which the interpreting goes in both directions such as statements by the defendant from counsel table. Although SI may be used by some interpreters in some courts to render testimony by witnesses, it is not advisable because of the potential for lack of accuracy (see **Chapter 19, Section 1**).

3. Process of Simultaneous Interpretation

Noting the paucity of research conducted on SI, Gerver (1976) describes the complexity of the SI process from the standpoint of cognitive psychology:

> The task is extremely complex: though simultaneous listening and speaking rarely occurs in everyday verbal behavior, simultaneous interpreters manage not only to listen and speak simultaneously for reasonable lengths of time, but also to carry out complex transformations on the source-language message while uttering their translation in the target language. From the point of view of cognitive psychologists the task is a complex form of human information processing involving the perception, storage, retrieval transformation, and transmission of verbal information. Furthermore, linguistic, motivational, situational, and a host of other factors cannot be ignored. (pp. 166-167)

Drawing on the models of interpreting and human information processing presented in Chapter 33 of this unit, the SI task can be summed up as follows: The SL input is perceived and triggers a physiological response. Once the stimulus, the SL message, is perceived, all information processing operations begin at the same time. All of the relevant, appropriate information modules associated with the stimulus are excited, and the irrelevant, inappropriate modules are inhibited. Both conscious and unconscious operations are involved in this process (as in the example of *glace* cited in Chapter 32 of this unit, the interpreter is aware of selecting among certain alternatives, and is completely unaware of rejecting other alternatives that are totally inappropriate to the present situation). The more the interpreter practices SI, the more unconscious and automatic the process becomes. Because the processing operations are recursive and interactive, the message continuously circulates through all the components: The interpreter, consciously or unconsciously, draws on schemata developed as a result of prior linguistic, cultural, and social experiences, as well as familiarity with the immediate context and setting. The end result is comprehension, which is the abstraction of the SL message into an alingual form.

As explained in Chapter 33, the schema for the SL message includes all of the languages in which the interpreter has had that particular experience. The operation is nonlinear; the interpreter does not first grasp the meaning of the SL message and retrieve the TL equivalent elsewhere in the brain. Rather, the TL equivalent is automatically called up with the schema. The preparation of the TL version, then, occurs more or less simultaneously with the comprehension of the SL message.

Once interpreters have formulated the proposed TL version of the message, they compare it with the original version of the SL message retained intact in memory. At this point, interpreters decide whether the two versions are identical in meaning, and if so, they proceed to utter the TL version, adding the pauses, self-corrections, and other paralinguistic elements from the SL message.

This complex process takes mere seconds to complete. In SI, of course, the speaker does not stop and wait for the interpreter, but moves on immediately to the next idea she wishes to express. Moser (1978) cites research showing that interpreters performing SI are both listening and speaking 60% to 75% of the time. As depicted in Figure 34.1, the interpreter is not only engaging in the extremely complicated linguistic operations of processing the speaker's first statement (a) in the SL and converting it to the TL but also attending to the speaker's next utterance and (b) processing it for comprehension, while

simultaneously uttering the TL version (a'). **Figure 34.1** is a graphic depiction of the SI process devised by van Hoof (1962), based on the ground-breaking work of Paneth (1957). In this figure, the horizontal lines represent the passage of time, the top line being the SL message and the bottom line the TL message.

Figure 34.1. Depiction of Simultaneous Interpretation:
Graphic Depiction of Time Lag between SL and TL Utterances
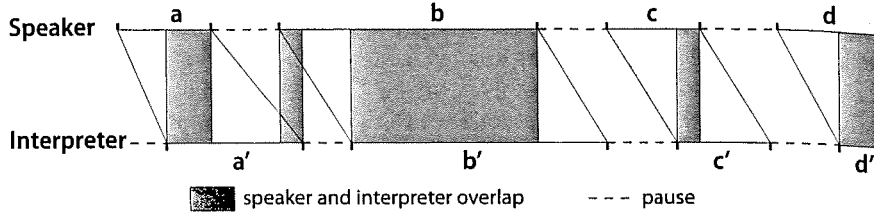
Note. From Van Hoof, 1962.

The diagonal lines connecting the top and bottom lines delineate the units of meaning (a, b, c, and so forth, in the SL and a', b', c', and so forth, in the TL), and the shaded portions represent overlapping speech (where no shading appears, only one person is speaking at a time). The dotted lines indicate pauses.

If the two versions are not identical at the end of the initial processing, the interpreter must repeat these cognitive operations until satisfied that the SL and TL versions match. This accounts for the false starts and delays that occasionally occur in SI. If the interpreter begins processing the SL message before receiving enough contextual information, the interpreter may misunderstand the meaning (call up the wrong schema). Then the interpreter must waste time backtracking to begin again, falling further and further behind the speaker. The experienced interpreter is able to lag behind the speaker just enough to obtain sufficient information for accurate processing without falling so far behind that retaining the SL message in memory is impossible.

Moser-Mercer (2000a) describes SI as a "delicate cognitive balancing act," and emphasizes the coping skills that successful interpreters develop to ensure high-level performance (p. 90). Indeed, Seeber (2011) has proposed a Cognitive Load Model of SI precisely to account for this balancing act as concurrent tasks are juggled. As noted by Gile (1995), the more efficiently the interpreter is able to process the information, that is, the less time spent searching for equivalents, making false starts with insufficient information or unsatisfactory solutions, the more capacity the interpreter has available for attending new SL input and generating the appropriate TL version. Inexperienced interpreters who have not yet routinized the act of SI, or interpreters who have deficiencies in their linguistic knowledge, must devote more conscious effort to processing the SL message and formulating the TL version.

4. Strategies of SI

Experienced interpreters employ certain strategies to make efficient use of their processing capacity. A number of conference interpreters and researchers, whose findings

are presented here, have identified and elucidated strategies for the benefit of student interpreters.

4.1 Analysis

Foremost among these strategies is analysis, so essential to SI that it can be considered an intrinsic part of the process rather than an ancillary tactic (as reflected in Gile's (1995) Effort Model); yet many novices fail to include this fundamental element in their attempts to render an SI of a message. They focus on finding word-for-word equivalents rather than penetrating the message to find the underlying meaning. The end result is the false starts and backtracking described above, or worse yet, an unknowing misinterpretation that is never corrected. As Le Ny (1978) points out, "the good simultaneous interpreter seems to be one who directly transforms the *organization* of information, simultaneously with comprehension" (p. 294). Seleskovitch (1978a) likens an interpreter performing SI to a sportscaster giving a running commentary on a soccer game: The sportscaster must analyze what is going on and convey it rapidly to the listeners, who cannot see the action. Like the interpreter, the sports announcer converts concepts from one medium to another, in this case from action to words. Although the court interpreter does not just provide a narrative to the defendant, but rather interprets every single unit of meaning that is uttered in the courtroom, the analogy is valuable in that it emphasizes the key role played by analysis in the interpreting process.

In her discussion of units of meaning, Lederer (1978) emphasizes that until the speaker has completed a thought, the interpreter is unable to process the words for comprehension. Only after "synthesizing" the meaning of a string of words can the interpreter associate them with previous cognitive experiences or recollections, leading to a "merging into sense" (p. 330). However, Lederer stresses that "Units of meaning are not a grammatical segmentation of language into syntactic units" (p. 330). This notion explains why sometimes it takes more words to express the same idea in one language than in another. Units of meaning have little to do with words per se; they are abstract ideas into which the interpreter reduces the SL message. As interpreters gain experience, they become more adept at analyzing the SL message and recognizing units of meaning.

Gerver (1976) reports on his own and others' research to demonstrate that interpreters use certain elements of the SL message to aid them in their analysis. One hypothesis tested was that "source-language pauses might delineate units of meaning for the interpreter, and thus assist with the segmentation of the almost continuous stream of source-language input." Gerver concludes that "Source-language pauses do assist simultaneous interpreters in segmenting, decoding, and encoding of source-language messages" (pp. 179–180). It should be noted, however, that not all researchers agree that interpreters take advantage of pauses to reduce the burden of listening and talking simultaneously (Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, 2002).

4.2 Prediction or Anticipation

Prediction, also known as syntactic **anticipation**, is another important strategy used by court interpreters in SI. Identified by both Lederer (1978) and Moser (1978), prediction is a phenomenon that has also been described by researchers in connection with

schemata (Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977), and foreign language comprehension (Abbott, Greenwood, McKeating, & Wingard, 1981), particularly with regard to reading comprehension in any language (Goodman, 1982). In the specific context of interpreting, prediction refers to the interpreter's ability to grasp the intent of a message before all of the words that comprise it have been uttered. Predictions are "guesstimates," or informed speculations about what is to occur, based on knowledge of the world, of the language and culture, and of the subject matter. The efficiency of information processing increases as a function of the interpreter's ability to predict the outcome of partially stated messages. Moser (1978) explains how this is possible:

> The question remains how the interpreter "knows" what will come in. The phenomenon must clearly be explained from the nature of the organization of semantic information in an interpreter [sic]. Extensive exposure to a particular language, or two or more languages, relevant syntactic knowledge, contextual knowledge (knowledge of the subject matter under discussion in a conference, as well as knowledge of the ongoing discussion in a conference) appear to be the prime candidates responsible for prediction. Within the context of this model I propose that predictability is a function of how fast and how many conceptual relations can be activated. To put it bluntly, the more the interpreter knows, the more he can predict, and the better his knowledge is of anything (i.e., the more relations have been established between concepts to form conceptual clusters or ideas), the faster he can predict. (pp. 359–360)

Similarly, Le Ny (1978) notes that the less new information is contained in the message, the less time it takes the interpreter to process it:

> The determining factor is not so much the formal rate of the speech, the loquaciousness of the speaker, but rather the rate at which *new* [emphasis in original] semantic information arrives, formal rate merely being an annoyance factor. The professional training of the interpreter undoubtedly helps greatly to progressively reduce the extent of this rate by decreasing the novelty of that which is heard. (p. 287)

The implications for training interpreters are clear. Because predicting relies on the interpreter's knowledge of the SL culture and language, including the typical syntactical and rhetorical arrangements and styles of sentences, paragraphs, and larger pieces of discourse, individuals wishing to improve their SI skills should use texts that represent major syntactical and rhetorical styles in their working languages. For example, understanding that English has basic expository patterns that include comparison, contrast, exemplification, generalization, description, analysis, classification, and formal argumentation will help the learner conduct the analysis necessary for the performance of the SI. Familiarity with these patterns will increase the interpreter's ability to predict the outcome of oral messages.

Karmiloff-Smith (1978) draws on cognitive psychologists' research into schemata and frameworks in her schematic representation of the interpreter's understanding process. She posits that:

> The interpreter, while listening to a speaker, is constantly updating his mini-theory of the speaker's semantic intentions. Each speech act is not only the communication of new information, but the intricate interplay of new information and presuppositions based on the knowledge accumulated from the present discourse and on general extralinguistic knowledge. Thus, the content of each message unit enables the interpreter to form a temporary "knowledge framework"

for the particular subject under discussion and to filter each new message through that framework. (p. 379)

Lederer (1978) identifies two types of prediction: (1) "language prediction," which is based on the interpreter's knowledge of the syntax and style of the SL and the TL, including word affinities, and (2) "sense expectation," which is based on the interpreter's familiarity with the speaker and the speaker's objectives, as well as the general situational context. The "sense expectation" aspect is highly dependent on the interpreter's general understanding and knowledge of the subject area. If the interpreter is well read and has broad general knowledge — a knowledge base engendered by formal education — the interpreter's prediction of the outcome of sentences and larger pieces of discourse will be more reliable, and SI will be smoother, more efficient, and more accurate.

Gile (1995) uses the terms "linguistic" and "extralinguistic anticipation" to draw a similar distinction in the kinds of prediction required for interpreting (pp. 176–178). With reference to interpreting from Japanese to English, Gile (1995) notes that "Japanese speeches offer many *predictable sentence endings*" and suggests that the more predictable the sentence ending in a given source message, the less processing capacity is required on the part of the interpreter (p. 177).

The court interpreter's familiarity with the languages involved, the subject matter of the testimony or argument, and the speaker's patterns of discourse contributes to the interpreter's ability to analyze the message and draw conclusions about its likely outcome. Of course, this strategy should be employed with great care, given the court interpreter's obligation to conserve all elements of the SL message with the utmost precision. However, the experienced interpreter can safely predict the noun that will follow the adjectives in this example: "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, this is the most heinous, atrocious, grisly, and barbarous of all the crimes I have ever prosecuted." Knowledge of collocations in English enables the interpreter to understand that the terms "heinous" and "grisly" are almost always accompanied by the word "crime." Indeed, often the interpreter is forced to engage in prediction because of the syntactical demands of the TL; nouns must precede adjectives in Spanish, for example, and the verb usually comes at the end of the sentence in German.

4.3 Numerical Information

In connection with prediction, Moser-Mercer (1985) points out that **numerical information** poses a particular problem to interpreters:

> From a language information processing point of view, the processing of numbers differs from that of continuous text in that the numbers are largely unpredictable, i.e., one has to devote full attention to the incoming message, whereas ... continuous text allows and even requires hypothesizing on the input. Thus, when numbers appear in a continuous text, the interpreter has to switch his processing procedures. (p. 97)

Numbers are of particular import to court interpreters, who must accurately convey penal code sections, serial numbers, court appearance dates, amounts of fines, years in prison, and other numerical information. When the text contains many facts and figures, interpreters tend to allow less *décalage* between the SL and TL messages. Many conference interpreters write down all the numbers that they encounter in SI, but for the court interpreter, who is often standing next to the defendant, such a strategy is not practical. One strategy is for court interpreters to become familiar with the most frequently men-

tioned penal code sections and the prevailing fines and sentences for common offenses, so that these figures will pose less of a problem to them.

4.4 Décalage

As mentioned earlier, one of the most important strategies employed by interpreters performing SI is *décalage*—that is, lagging behind the speaker to a greater or lesser extent in order to gather sufficient information to comprehend the SL message and begin formulating the TL message. This time lag is also referred to as the "ear-voice span (EVS)" (Davidson, 1992; Setton, 1998, 1999). Indeed, like analysis, *décalage* is an integral aspect of the SI process. Wilss (1978) points out that the amount of lag time depends on a number of objective factors (the nature of the SL text and the relations of equivalence between the SL and the TL) and subjective factors (the interpreter's knowledge and familiarity with the situation and speaker, fatigue, and simply individual preference). He also notes that "syntactic anticipation" (prediction) plays a key role in determining the amount of *décalage*. Wilss focuses on German-English SI, which, because of the nature of German syntax, relies heavily on *décalage* and prediction. He states that the interpreter must "postpone the interpreting act" (i.e., lag behind the speaker) until hearing the verb, which comes at the end of the German sentence. This places a heavy burden on the interpreter's memory, and there is a danger that part of the message will decay in memory before the interpreter is able to formulate the corresponding TL message. Indeed, Davidson (1992) found in his research on Japanese-to-English SI that more experienced interpreters "showed considerable skill at segmenting the incoming message into larger syntactic chunks" than novice interpreters, who were more likely to worry that they will forget earlier segments and therefore interpreted in shorter segments (p. 9). In a more recent study on German-to-English SI, Seeber (2011) identifies similar tactics: "waiting," "stalling" (with the addition of phrases that amount to "neutral padding"), and "text chunking," as well as "anticipation" (pp. 193, 195). He points out that the first three tactics are much "safer" than anticipation (p. 197).

Interpreters must obviously increase their concentration ability and retention capacity to be able to retain large amounts of information, but they also have other tactics available to them. One such tactic is to reorganize the clauses in the message so that the partial information can be converted to the TL while the interpreter waits for more critical SL information. For example, if the speaker says, "I ask you, Ladies and Gentleman of the jury, on this extremely important issue, to use your common sense," the interpreter translating into Spanish does not know whether to choose *pedir* or *preguntar* as the appropriate equivalent for "ask" until hearing the rest of sentence: "to use your common sense." When rendering the message in Spanish, therefore, the interpreter begins with *Damas y Caballeros del jurado, con respecto a este asunto tan importante*, before inserting the verb. Sometimes the interpreter may fall into the habit of using "neutral" or "noncommittal" phrases to stall for time while waiting for the speaker to provide the needed information (Setton, 1998). Thus, when the speaker begins by saying, "Was there ever actually participation on the part of my client in this case? I submit to you that there was not," the interpreter may begin with a neutral phrase in Spanish, *Hay que preguntarse si es que en realidad* (literally, "one must ask oneself whether in reality") before interpreting the rest of the sentence, *mi cliente tomó alguna parte en este caso, y yo les sugiero que no*. While this technique may be acceptable in conference interpreting, the court interpreter must be very cautious about inserting such phrases in order to avoid adding to the message or altering the register.

In addition to the restructuring described above, which he calls "delaying the response," Gile (1995) also recommends changing the order of elements in enumerations or lists, hypothesizing that "by reformulating the last elements first, it is possible to pick them up before they have been processed in depth and integrated fully into the semantic network, thus saving processing capacity" (p. 196).

4.5 Queuing

Gerver (1976) focuses on the techniques employed by interpreters for coping with excessive speed of delivery of the SL message. He notes that 100 to 120 words per minute is a comfortable rate for interpretation, and that any deviation from that norm—either faster or slower—causes stress for the interpreter (an assertion corroborated by Moser-Mercer, 2000a). Gerver identifies a number of strategies used by conference interpreters, but the only one that is appropriate for court interpreters is known as queuing. This term refers to the technique of lagging behind in the processing of information during heavy load periods (messages densely packed with information and delivered at a rapid speed) and catching up during periods when the rate of delivery is slower and the content message is not as dense. Gerver discusses the hypothesis that interpreters take advantage of pauses in the speaker's delivery to catch up, thus compensating for the so-called heavy load periods. He points out the limitations of this notion, citing evidence that the pauses are not nearly long or frequent enough to be useful to the interpreter. However, Richards (1983) asserts that 30% to 50% of speaking time consists of pauses and hesitation, and the idea that interpreters may be able to utilize this time to their advantage bears further investigation (p. 255).

4.6 Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring is another fundamental strategy utilized by experienced interpreters in order to produce accurate and comprehensive simultaneous renditions. From the standpoint of conservation of meaning, it can be said that the SL message must "run a gauntlet," with each phase of human information processing being a potential obstacle to understanding. After the interpreter has correctly comprehended the SL message and formulated an accurate TL equivalent message, one more hurdle remains: the delivery of that message. As indicated earlier, the interpreter is listening to one SL message while uttering her TL version of a previously stated SL message. If she does not also listen to her own speech, there is a great potential for "slip-of-the-tongue" errors, particularly as a result of interference from the incoming SL message. Moser (1978) notes that the interpreter's processing of her own output should be "a function of the amount of capacity already taken up by the first (primarily attended) message" (p. 361). In other words, if interpreters have had difficulty processing the SL message, they will have little capacity available to monitor their own output, and they may mispronounce words, stumble over their delivery, or mistakenly use the wrong word (especially if a word they intend to use is very similar to one in the SL message they are attending). If interpreters hear themselves commit the error, they will correct it, but this, in turn, detracts from their capacity to process the SL input. When observing conference interpreters, Moser found that some errors in interpreter output were simply unnoticed and never corrected.

Gerver (1976) discusses the research that has been done on interpreter self-monitoring, and describes it as a testing process. Interpreters have stored the SL message for com-

parison with their proposed TL output and when they are ready to utter the TL version, they run one final test, or match, to be sure their version is correct. Even after they have begun uttering the TL message, the testing process continues. If they are not satisfied, they may interrupt themselves and "loop through the routine again," or they may decide that "too much input will be lost if they attempt to correct their recent output or that the error is not critical" (p. 199). Gerver concludes that:

> Whether or not and to what extent testing and correction take place depend on the interpreter's criteria for adequate performance. When there is time, and when a high value is placed on accuracy, the criteria will be relatively high, but under stress, or when an interpreter does not value accuracy so highly (as is perhaps the case with minor slips), the criteria will be lower. (pp. 199–200)

In court interpreting, of course, the standard of accuracy is extremely high, and interpreter self-monitoring and self-correction are very important tasks. As Gerver indicates, "monitoring and possible revision and correction are an integral part of the process of simultaneous interpretation" (p. 202).

4.7 Graphic Depiction of SI Strategies

To demonstrate more clearly how the aforementioned SI strategies are implemented by interpreters, the diagrams developed by Paneth (1957, 2002) and van Hoof (1962) are particularly useful. Illustrated here are four examples of interpreting problems and their practical solutions. The horizontal lines represent the passage of time (from left to right) with each segment depicting a unit of meaning. The top line is the SL speaker and the bottom line is the interpreter's TL version. The shaded portions indicate times when the speaker and the interpreter are talking at the same time, and the dotted lines indicate pauses.

Example 1: Normal

                                    a
Speaker: /LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY, /WHAT WE
Interpreter: *Damas y*

            b   c
INTEND TO SHOW HERE / IS THAT OUR CLIENT IS NOT
        a'   b'
Caballeros del Jurado, / lo que pensamos

                    d
GUILTY / OF THESE MURDER CHARGES. /
                    c'
demostrar aquí / es que nuestro cliente
                    d'
no es culpable / de estos cargos de asesinato.

Figure 34.2. Normal Décalage and Order of Units: Depiction of Time Lag between
SL Utterance and TL Utterance of Each Unit of Thought

speaker and interpreter overlap   - - - pause

Note. From van Hoof, 1962.

Figure 34.2 and Example 1 show how the interpreter waits until hearing a meaningful
unit (a) from the SL speaker, and then begins interpreting it (a'). As the interpreter is ut-
tering the TL version of (a), the speaker is going on to state (b), so the interpreter is ut-
tering (a'), while listening to (b). Then the interpreter goes on to interpret (b) while the
speaker proceeds to idea (c). The interpreter utters (b') while processing (c), and so on.

Example 2: Units of Meaning: Variation in Length of Utterance

                              a
Speaker: THE DEFENDANT WAS ARRAIGNED ON KIDNAPPING

                    b   c
    CHARGES/ THREE MONTHS AGO,/ BUT IT WAS NOT

                                                    b'
Interpreter: *Hace tres meses/*

        c
UNTIL THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY/ THAT HE SAW

                a'
    que al acusado le informaron de los cargos

                d
HIS ATTORNEY FOR THE FIRST TIME.

                    c'
    de secuestro,/ pero fue hasta anteayer/ que

                d'
    vio a su abogado por primera vez.

Figure 34.3. Fluctuating Décalage: Illustration of Variation in Lag between Speaker
and Interpreter, as Dictated by Length of TL Utterance

speaker and interpreter overlap   - - - pause

Note. From van Hoof, 1962.

Figure 34.3 and **Example 2** show what happens when the number of words in a given unit of meaning varies from the SL to the TL. The interpreter may take less time to state the TL version than the original speaker did, or may require more time. The décalage between the interpreter and the speaker will fluctuate throughout the interpreting event.

Example 3: Prediction

<div style="text-align:center">a</div>

Speaker: THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES / HAVE

                Interpreter: *Las*

<div style="text-align:center">b</div>

PLAYED AN UNEXPECTEDLY IMPORTANT — INDEED, I

<div style="text-align:center">a'</div>

Agencias de Desarrollo Comunitario/ han

WOULD EVEN SAY CRUCIAL — ROLE/ IN HELPING

<div style="text-align:center">b'</div>

desempeñado un <u>papel</u> de inesperada importancia

        c   d

FORMER PRISON INMATES/ BECOME REINTEGRATED INTO SOCIETY.

<div style="text-align:center">b'</div>

— efectivamente, de vital importancia, diría

        c'   d'

yo — / al contribuir a que los ex-presos/ se reintegren a la sociedad.

Figure 34.4. Prediction: The Interpreter Anticipates The Word "Role"

Figure 34.4. Prediction: The Interpreter Anticipates The Word "Role"
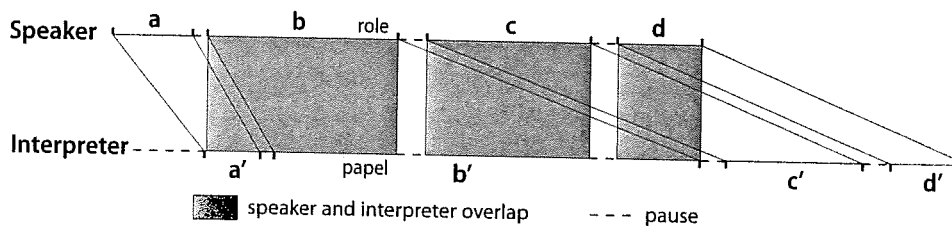
Note. From van Hoof, 1962.

Figure 34.4 and **Example 3** show that on occasion the interpreter must actually anticipate the speaker, starting part of the message before the speaker has actually said it. Here the interpreter begins to say the word *papel* seconds before the speaker says, "role"; the interpreter was able to predict that the word "role" was coming, based on knowledge of the context and of collocations in English. If she had waited until the word "role" was uttered, the interpreter might have fallen too far behind to keep up with the speaker. As noted in the discussion of prediction earlier in this chapter, sometimes interpreters will make the decision to anticipate based on their knowledge of and experience with collocations in the SL, while at other times this decision will be based on their familiarity with the context, the subject matter, and the speakers' styles. It should be pointed out that though prediction is a natural and unavoidable aspect of human communication, it entails certain risks when used as an interpreting technique. The more experienced and linguistically competent interpreters are, the less likely it is

that they will jump to the wrong conclusion about what the speaker is saying. Clearly, though, this technique entails some risks, and should be used only when it is absolutely unavoidable.

Example 4: Split Units of Meaning

                            a   b
Speaker: *EL INGENIERO SÁNCHEZ,/ PRESIDENTE DE LA*

                                                        a'
Interpreter: Mr. Sanchez,/ the

                          c
COMPAÑÍA,/ INFORMÓ AL PERSONAL/ QUE SERÍA
         b'   a'
president of the company,/ who is an engineer,/
                          d
NECESARIO DESOCUPAR A 50 DE ELLOS.
     c'   d'
informed the staff/ that 50 of them would have to be laid off.

Sometimes, a unit of meaning must be distributed differently in the TL version than it was in the SL version, as shown in **Figure 34.5.** Interpreters will render as much as they can of a given unit of meaning in one utterance and will have to fill in the rest of it later on.

Figure 34.5. Split Units of Meaning: Change in Distribution of Units of Meaning, as Dictated by Syntax and Style
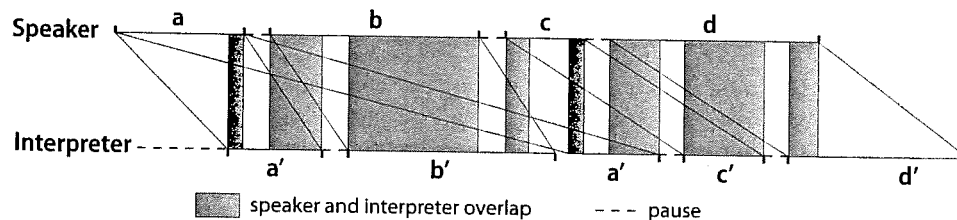
Note. From van Hoof, 1962.

Lederer (1978) reports on the results of a study she conducted at Paris University, in which she compared recorded speeches and their interpretation to determine exactly what the interpreter was hearing while speaking. Looking at the interpreting task this way provides some insight into the mental processes of the interpreter. Here is an excerpt from the Lederer study:

APART FROM CERTAIN NECESSARY DEFENSIVE
Je crois que   le problème est   extrêmement
WORK FROM SUCROSE MANUFACTURERS
important.   A part certains travaux
AND   SUCROSE   USERS
nécessairement défensifs

THERE   IS A REAL   NEED TO   IDENTIFY

de la part des fabricants et des industries utilisatrices de saccha-

WHERE,   WITHIN   THE NORMAL SOCIETY

rose,   il faut préciser

SUCROSE   AND   SIMILAR SUGARS   ARE

                le

PLAYING IMPORTANT   POSITIVE ROLES.

             rôle positif et important du saccharose et autres sucres

DR. KINGSBURY'S   COMMENTS

chez les bien-portants.

WITH REGARD   TO   THE SPORTSMEN

Ce que Monsieur Kings-

ARE   PERTINENT.   HE   IS   RIGHT   ALSO

bury vient de nous dire à propos des sportifs est

TO IDENTIFY   THE POSSIBILITY

extrêmement pertinent.   Il a aussi

OF OTHER   NEEDS   AT   OTHER   TIMES.

raison   de   dire qu'il y a

I DON'T THINK   THE   TOPIC   IS   A   SIMPLE ONE

d'autres besoins à certains moments au plutôt chez d'autres

WHEN   IT GETS   DOWN   TO   IT.   I….

personnes. (pp. 325–326)

When the passage begins, the interpreter is still finishing the TL rendition of the speaker's previous utterance. At one point, the interpreter deems it necessary to practice the technique of "explicitation" (see **Chapter 32** in this unit): for the English "users," the interpreter states *industries utilisatrices*, because French style and usage dictate that more information be included. This is another illustration of how interpreters use their knowledge of the context and the languages involved to make decisions. The prevailing criterion here is what a speaker of the SL would understand if hearing the same words.

In another part of this passage, as the speaker is saying, "where, within the normal society,…" (Lederer, 1978), the interpreter slows down and then pauses, obviously confused about what "normal society" refers to. More information is needed before that particular idea can be rendered into the TL, so the interpreter "buys time" by changing the order of the sentence, skipping over "normal society" for the time being and working on "sucrose and similar sugars are playing important positive roles" (p. 326) (note the prediction of "roles": the interpreter's familiarity with collocations in English clued the interpreter that "role" was likely to follow "playing important positive"). Then the interpreter suddenly realizes what "normal" referred to, and becomes aware that the French cognate *normale* does not convey the same information, and thus chooses the term *chez les bien-portants* (among people who enjoy good health). The interpreter speeds up slightly at this point to catch up with the speaker. Although the interpreter strives to maintain a

steady pace so that the delivery will be pleasant to listen to, occasional pauses followed by bursts of speed are unavoidable.

These examples illustrate once again the importance of focusing on units of meaning rather than words. Before a unit of meaning or thought has been completed by the speaker, the interpreter has a mere string of words that makes no sense. These words are stored in the interpreter's memory until enough information has been gathered to be meaningful. Then, "the words present in short-term memory seem to pull together and merge with the recollection of knowledge acquired [earlier]..., all of a sudden making sense" (Lederer, 1978, p. 330).

English legal discourse is full of examples of very long units of meaning which force the interpreter to wait before beginning to render them into the TL. Consider this question: "Are you now, or have you ever been at any time in the past, lawfully admitted to the U.S. for permanent residence?" Until the speaker says "admitted," the interpreter has little to work with. A skillful interpreter can engage in some mental gymnastics, changing the order of clauses in order to begin with a noncommittal adverbial clause like "now or at any time in the past" before launching into the core of the message (assuming, of course, that the TL style and grammar permit this). At all times, however, the interpreter must take care not to alter the meaning of the original message when changing the order of the clauses.

5. Implications for Training in SI

Moser (1978), Moser-Mercer (1985, 2000a), van Dam (1986), Lambert (1992), and Gile (1995) have reported on methods for training students in SI based on the considerations discussed in this chapter. The basic principle governing the application of these methods is that isolating the individual tasks that comprise a skill creates controlled conditions for better problem solving, and thereby accelerates learning. Moser-Mercer (2000a) also emphasizes the importance of collaboration between interpreter trainers and trainees to identify the latter's cognitive strengths and weaknesses so that interpreting strategies can be tailored to maximize strengths and compensate for weaknesses. She goes on to point out that expert interpreters are distinguished from novices by the techniques they have developed over years of deliberate practice, suggesting that interpreting ability is based more on carefully honed skills than on innate talent.

In the training methodology discussed here, only one new exercise is presented at a time. Students practice the exercise repeatedly until they have reached the highest possible level of performance—that is, until the task has become routinized—and then move on to the next level of exercises. Moser (1978) divides the exercises into six categories: (1) abstraction of ideas (which develops analytical and listening skills), (2) paraphrasing (to further enhance analytical abilities), (3) probabilistic prognosis (in preparation for the prediction strategy discussed in this chapter), (4) decreasing reaction time (in preparation for the task of listening and speaking at the same time), (5) dual-task training (further enhancing the ability to deal with two different messages at once, one oral and the other written), and (6) shadowing (listening and speaking at the same time, within the same language).

The exercises described by Moser (1978), Moser-Mercer (1985), van Dam (1986), Lambert (1992), and Gile (1995) were developed for the training of conference inter-

preters, but they can be adapted to meet the special needs of court interpreters. Since the various modes of interpretation involve many of the same mental tasks, the exercises recommended in the sight translation and consecutive interpretation chapters will contribute to the development of SI skills as well. The exercises in the sight translation chapter that are designed to develop analytical techniques are particularly applicable to SI, as are the memory-building exercises outlined in the consecutive chapter.

The following exercises, designed specifically to build the skills involved in SI, are divided into those that emphasize dual-tasking and those that emphasize input analysis. These exercises should be done in all of the interpreter's working languages, beginning with the native, or more dominant, language. They should be practiced daily, for about a half-hour at a time, as SI skills must be acquired over time to allow for maximum routinization.

5.1 Dual-Tasking Exercises

(1) Have someone read passages from magazines or newspapers into a recorder, or record radio or television talk shows or interview programs (news broadcasts are not suitable for these exercises because the pace is too fast and the content is too dense). The subject matter of these passages is irrelevant, but it should not be too technical or contain too many statistics and proper names. Essays and opinion columns are good sources of texts for recording. As you play back the recording, "shadow" the speaker: repeat everything the speaker says, verbatim. Try to stay further and further behind the speaker, until you are lagging at least one unit of meaning behind.

(2) Once you feel comfortable talking and listening at the same time, and are not leaving out too much, begin performing other tasks while shadowing. First, write the numerals from 1 to 100 on a piece of paper as you are repeating what the speaker says (make sure you are writing and speaking at the same time, not just writing during pauses). When you are able to do that successfully, write the numerals in reverse order, from 100 to 1. Then write them counting by 5's, by 3's, and so forth. Note what happens whenever numbers appear in the text you are shadowing.

(3) When you are able to do the exercise with minimal errors, begin writing out the words while shadowing. Begin with your name and address, written repeatedly. Then move on to a favorite poem or passage, such as the preamble to the U.S. Constitution (always choose a passage in the same language as that which you are shadowing). When writing this text, you should copy from a piece of paper placed in front of you; do not try to write the passage from memory while shadowing the recording.

(4) While shadowing the recording as in the previous exercises, write down all the numbers and proper names you hear. Then play the recording again and check to see if you wrote them correctly.

The purpose of the above exercises is to accustom your mind to working on two "channels" at once, and to force you to lag behind the speaker. If you find yourself able to perform this exercise with no problem, move on to the next one; you should be taxing your mental capacities to the fullest at all times. On the other hand, if you are having difficulty keeping up with the speaker and are barely able to mumble a few words at a time, move back to the previous exercise until you are comfortable doing it. These exercises should be repeated as many times as necessary over a long period of time.

5.2 Analysis Exercises

(1) Using the same recordings you prepared for the above exercises (or with new ones, if you have grown tired of those), rephrase what the speaker says rather than simply repeating it (see the example of the rephrasing exercise in **Chapter 36**). Stating the same message in different words forces you to lag behind the speaker, waiting until the person has said something meaningful for you to work with. In order to change the wording of the message without altering the meaning, you must thoroughly analyze and understand the original message. This exercise also develops your vocabulary because you are constantly searching for synonyms and alternative ways of phrasing things. It is perfectly acceptable, and even advisable, for you to look up words and phrases in a dictionary or thesaurus before attempting to rephrase the passage on the recording. It does not matter how many times you go over the recording again; even if you have memorized the passages, you are still deriving benefit from the exercise. Rephrasing simulates mental processes required in SI, in that you must abandon the original wording and put the message into a different external form, while retaining all of its meaning.

(2) To develop your ability to predict the outcome of a message based on your knowledge of the SL's syntax and style and on your common sense and experience, do the following exercises with written passages from a magazine or newspaper:

(a) Cover up the latter half of a sentence, and try to predict the ending of it. Did certain key words provide important clues?

(b) Read the title of an entire article or essay, and try to predict the content. Confirm or reject your conclusion as you read the article.

(c) Read the article, paragraph by paragraph, predicting what will come next. Again, pick out key words that contain hints about the direction in which the author is heading.

(d) Repeat exercises (a) and (b) with oral input, having someone read the passages to you.

(e) Just as you increase your awareness of key words, learn to look for pitfalls that can lead you astray, such as embedded clauses and dangling participles. Develop your ability to skip over those distractions and get to the heart of a sentence or passage.

(3) Using all the techniques you have developed in the preceding exercises, begin interpreting from the SL to the TL. At first, use the recordings you have already prepared and worked on in the other exercises. Then make new recordings specifically for interpreting practice. You may want to choose texts related to law and the courts for this purpose, but do not make them too technical at first. When you feel you are ready, record some actual court proceedings for practice. These can be found on the Internet by conducting a video search with keywords such as "court," "trial," "judge," or "testimony." You can also find transcripts of court proceedings online and make your own recordings of them.

6. Running Summary

In the legal setting, because an LEP individual has the right to fully participate, simultaneous interpretation of all courtroom events for the benefit of the defendant is

called for. For most language pairs, simultaneous is possible, but there are some language pairs that are so linguistically and culturally different that simultaneous interpretation even by experienced, qualified, and certified interpreters may not be possible. In an effort to validly test and select competent Navajo/English interpreters, the University of Arizona developed the running summary mode as a substitute for simultaneous interpretation. This mode approximates the simultaneous mode as closely as possible, but takes into account the amount of scaffolding, paraphrasing, explanations, and circumlocutions required to adequately convert legal English courtroom discourse into the Navajo language. The running summary mode takes into consideration the lack of equivalency an interpreter faces transferring messages from English into Navajo because of the lack of linguistic equivalents and cultural legal conceptual parallels. For example, a fundamental concept like "jury" has to be defined as "a group of twelve people who will judge you" because there is not only a lack of a linguistically equivalent term but there is also a lack of a cultural analog in the Navajo approach to dispute resolution. Because of the number of definitions and other scaffolding processes—such as what would be required for interpreting the term "Grand Jury" or in explaining "plea offer" or any other legal term—the ability to keep pace with the SL input is made impossible. One sentence in English may require four or five in Navajo because of the explanatory language required in many instances to convey the SL meaning. After conducting empirical studies and consulting with an expert panel of Navajo linguists and interpreters, González, director of the Navajo Federal Court Interpreter Certification project for the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, devised a testing methodology that would detect Navajo/English interpreters' capability to approximate simultaneous interpretation through a series of sentence summaries that accounted for major propositions of the SL input (González & Vásquez, 1990).

The running summary mode is a specialized mode for which interpreters can be trained and objectively tested. It is a challenging mode that expects the interpreter to capture primary propositions and some subordinate ideas in the target language rendition, producing a continuous summary of the discourse as it occurs, thus the descriptor, "running summary." The Haitian Creole Federal Court Interpreter Federal Certification test was developed and piloted at approximately the same time period; however, after investigation and consultation with Haitian Creole experts, it was concluded that Haitian Creole-English interpreters could perform simultaneous interpretation in the legal setting. The running summary mode is recommended for use by novice interpreters of languages of limited diffusion and those languages that differ significantly from English and may impede performance of SI (see **Chapter 21, Section 6.1**).