"ASPECTS OF BEST PRACTICE IN INTERPRETER TRAINING": ЗАМЕТКИ НА ПОЛЯХ

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Статья представляет собой заметки и впечатления автора по итогам семинара для преподавателей перевода "Aspects of best practice in interpreter training", посвящённого наиболее эффективным методикам обучения устному переводу (конференц-переводу). Семинар был организован Международной ассоциацией переводчиков-синхронистов (AIIC) на базе Каспийской высшей школы перевода в июне 2014 года. Ведущий семинара – Дик Флеминг (Dick Fleming). В статье освещаются некоторые проблемы, затронутые в ходе семинара: требования, предъявляемые к поступающим на магистерскую программу по конференц-переводу и выпускникам такой программы, общие принципы и проблемы обучения устному переводу, упражнения для отработки навыков. На семинаре отдельно были затронуты вопросы обучения записи в последовательном переводе и переход от обучения последовательному переводу к обучению синхронному переводу; этим темам в статье посвящены отдельные разделы. Автор делится приобретенными знаниями и впечатлениями, предпринимает попытку обобщить предложенные практические приемы и дополнить их некоторыми упражнениями из собственного опыта обучения устному переводу.

Ключевые слова: обучение устному переводу, синхронный перевод, последовательный перевод, записи в последовательном переводе, конференц-перевод

"ASPECTS OF BEST PRACTICE IN INTERPRETER TRAINING": NOTES IN THE MARGIN

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This article is a collection of notes taken at the AIIC Training of Trainers seminar "Aspects of best practice in interpreter training" led by Dick Fleming and held at the Caspian Higher School of Interpreting and Translation in June 2014. The article covers some of the issues discussed at the seminar, including a conference interpreting course candidate and graduate profiles and skills, general principles of interpreter training and ways to tackle various interpreter training issues. The seminar specifically addressed note-taking and transition to simultaneous interpreting that are hence referred to in separate sections. I would like to share what I learnt during this highly practical seminar, sum up some of the hands-on techniques suggested by Dick Fleming and add a few exercises from my own training sessions in the hope that the readers can put them to use as well.

Keywords: interpreter training, simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, note-taking, conference interpreting

INTRODUCTION

The AIIC Training of Trainers (ToT) seminar "Aspects of best practice in interpreter training" was held at the Caspian Higher School of Interpreting and Translation (Astrakhan State University) from June 1 to June 3, 2014. The seminar was led by **Dick Fleming**, formerly organiser of the EU Commission interpreter training course and subsequently Trainer of Trainers both in-house and for various universities, and addressed general principles of training, training progression and skills sequencing, running training sessions, and trouble-

shooting [1]. In fact, there were so many great things in this power-packed seminar that it would hardly be possible to cover everything. I would like to focus on the main ideas that were new, on the things I have relearnt, and on some brilliant clear-cut solutions that came up in abundance during the course thanks to Dick Fleming and all the participants.

1. PROFILES AND SKILLS

The seminar brought together trainers of different backgrounds and with a variety of working languages, and this was, too, one of the greatest things about the course. Day one started with an introductory session with some presentations actually in other languages. During the seminar, we shared a lot of tips and useful information in group work sessions facilitated by Dick Fleming in a very effective way that can certainly be used as a great technique for any class work: it feels as if the ideas are there all along, but it takes some brainstorming and a highly rewarding group effort to bring them out and turn them in a pool of useful solutions.

Our initial setting for skills sequencing and the seminar overall was designing and / or teaching an MA one-year or two-year course in conference interpreting. We started off with the PROFILES of interpreting candidates and graduates, which, obvious as it is, is an amazingly useful thing to do. I realized it would actually be very functional to come back to these profiles now and then. We learnt that AIIC prefers courses to have selection. Our local situations were in many cases somewhat different, but it actually made the discussion very fruitful and unbiased, and we were also free to design an ideal MA course in conference interpreting, and then take those ideal settings and adapt them to our routine work. Our first discussions were roughly centered on knowledge, skills, and attitude.

KNOWLEDGE: for the beginner, we thought language proficiency in languages A and B could be upper-intermediate to advanced; it is a common practice to require a stay abroad before a candidate is enrolled in a program. The background knowledge should be both general and country-specific. For a graduate, we thought the category could include professional ethics, interpreting theory and the "mechanics" of interpreting, as well as domain-specific knowledge (specialization) and interpreting techniques.

SKILLS listed for a beginner (a course candidate) were as follows: speaking and public speaking, research and information retrieval skills, listening, short-term memory, concentration and the ability to stay focused, communication, and anticipation (which could probably be a little early to expect). For a graduate, we listed advanced listening and advanced speaking, specific simultaneous interpreting features like intonation, delivery, tempo, reaction and multi-tasking (split attention), as well as memory techniques and note-taking, general consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting skills, and team work.

We thought that the ATTITUDE a beginner could have covers communicative skills, curiosity, motivation, human relations, friendliness and conflict management, self-education (self-training), tolerance, love for language, responsibility, stamina and being prepared to work hard, as well as service mentality and resilience to criticism. I would say that the last two seem to be of particular importance, as we often tend to forget about them in training or our students tend to forget about them when working. A graduate was supposed to show the following attitude: responsibility, professional awareness, stress management, team work, advanced self-training, ethics, and cultural knowledge.

I am including the group work results here with a purpose: there were no "wrong answers" or "unwise suggestions," and in fact, this was a very useful brainstorming exercise that helped us take the points a step further when we were discussing them afterwards. You could, as I see it, also use the profiles for students' self-assessment or individual focus on their particular professional issues.

2. "TEACHING IS NOT TESTING"

We then moved on to the five most important skills we have to teach. Mine were, a bit obviously, interpreting skills for both consecutive and simultaneous; self-education and self-preparation; professional awareness and professional ethics; concentration and focus; and memory techniques. Ranged from top to bottom, the "five most important skills" that each of us listed gave quite an interesting overall picture. A lot of us put stress reduction and control at the top of the list, which, as we learnt, was unusual in our trainer's ToT experience. Further down the list we then had professional ethics and professional awareness, communication and speaking skills, specialized and general knowledge, memory, interpretation skills (consecutive and simultaneous), note-taking, listening skills, language proficiency, quick reaction, background knowledge, self-education and self-preparation, motivation, research skills, focusing and concentration, knowledge extraction, theory of interpretation, multitasking, responsibility, split attention in simultaneous interpreting, emotional control, language intuition, pair-work or team-work, analyzing and understanding, anticipation, and tolerance.

One useful thing to be reminded of is that whatever skill you include in your profile you have to be able to test, and this puts the list in a slightly different perspective. Another interesting fact is that we felt we had to teach most of the skills during the course, even if we had expected the candidates to have them already when they enrolled, making interpreter training (and self-training, which was quite high on the list) a truly lifelong learning experience.

Here are a few classroom tips that the trainer gave us at this stage. Language is obviously important, and students do have to master different types of language and vocabulary. It is easier to learn skills that apply both to consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, and it is easier to teach basic skills with consecutive interpreting (e.g., to teach the students not to interpret words, but ideas). Teacher authority is important, and you have to be capable of doing the job you are training the students in and be capable of teaching it, but then the teacher is also a captain of a team, and the students "need to pull their weight, too" (Dick Fleming).

To reduce stress, specifically for simultaneous interpreting, it is a good idea to introduce some relaxation techniques, e.g., for proper breathing. Reduce negative (sic!) stress and make the following two important things clear to the students: "You are not competing against one another, but against a certain standard," and "I am not testing you, I'm training you." Feedback is not about being positive or negative, it is about being objective. Avoid negative competition among students, e.g., when someone's feedback is personal and is therefore negative.

We also worked in groups on some SPECIFIC SKILLS – public speaking, memory, and stress reduction – that are listed below and illustrated with some exercises we learnt.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

"Every student should buy a book on public speaking in their active working languages" – that was a great suggestion, originally by Andy Gillies, that Dick Fleming referred to. We found out that learning public speaking at the simultaneous interpreting training stage is probably too late, though I think we should still be able to practise it in class before we take some of the further steps. A very useful reminder: public speaking is about getting the message across, and as an interpreter you have to sell your product to the audience. Below are some great exercises suggested by Dick Fleming, and another idea I'm taking from the seminar at this point is to play as much as possible in your training sessions, though bearing in mind that role-playing is done mostly at the beginning of the course.

1. *Just a Minute*: speak about a subject for a minute without hesitations, repetitions or irrelevances. Originally a panel *game* in which players must speak for one *minute* on any subject asked of them [2].

2. *Taboo*, a word game aimed at explaining the subject without using particular words and having the group guess the word. The original game is a card party game [5], and while writing this article I found some online versions of the game and mobile apps that one could probably try to use in class, too.

3. Have the students talk about themselves in public during the first class.

4. Have them improvise a two-minute speech in class, or go to a booth and improvise to a listener.

6. Have a student learn a real 1-2 min speech by heart and mimic the speaker, practising being someone else. This can be a great exercise for a B language, getting the intonation and register and other speech characteristics right.

7. Have the students give two speeches on the same subject by very different speakers with completely opposite views.

8. Mock conferences or debates are also the one comprehensive tool to practise interpreting proper and public speaking in a variety of situations.

MEMORY

When interpreting, students often do not know how to take notes and spend too much time on note-taking, allowing it to take up too much of their mental capacity. The most important concepts I learnt at this stage are "interpreters are not memory men" (so it is not really about memorizing Pi or the likes), and "it is not so much about memory as it is about active listening." Note-taking is a visual representation of the way you understood something. "It is easier to remember what we understand, what we can visualize, what we are interested in, or the very unusual" (Dick Fleming). As a trainer, only give speeches that the students understand, and if they download them from the web, make them adapt the speeches to their level. Visualize the speeches, but also remember that students have different kinds of memory, auditory or visual, for instance.

Here are some very useful exercises suggested by Dick Fleming.
1. Before the speech, draw a picture and give a speech from it.
2. Brain-storm on the speech subjects.
4. Try *rucksacking*, a game known to the Russian-speaking trainers as «снежный ком».
3. Have a 5-10 min news round-up in class. Assign a student to listen to the news, A or B languages, make them put down the key words, 5 or 6 points, and then in class they are the news reader, rendering what they remember and relying on keywords only. (A very useful tip: if it is a B language, do not mind the register.) As a side note, if students have to work on the register, have them deliver a text like a newsreader would or somebody else would. (An exercise I have tried before, as many colleagues may have, is to make students think of different ways a short folk tale or any other story can be told, a tale proper, a news cast, etc., and then have them tell the story in these different ways in their A language.)

STRESS

One important concept to bear in mind and share with the students is "Don't hide your mistakes, if I can see them, I can help you fix them." Another one is an answer to "the glass is half full – the glass is half empty" metaphor in interpreter training: "the glass is getting fuller" (Dick Fleming). Here is also the greatest exercise I am taking from this seminar, my personal favorite: the "genuine customer." Send one person out of the room so that they do not hear the input speech, and then have them come back and listen to the interpretation, just like a delegate who does not understand the source language would. (Brilliant, simple, and can be applied in a variety of ways.)

A very useful issue to discuss and share experience on was a "remit for trainers WELCOMING STUDENTS TO THE COURSE." We did a bit of role-play and discussed the main points that I'm now reiterating. Make the students feel welcome. Explain briefly what the course consists of; we were talking about referring to the course brochure the students had already received, and for a Russia-based university course this could be a syllabus, a trainer's website, or any other relevant materials available to the students. Let the students know what is expected of them. Explain briefly what their teachers will be doing plus anything else you consider relevant for an initial 5-10 min "pep talk." Answer any questions they have, either now or later, and if later, tell them when (you have up to 10 min to deal with questions). You should try to be as clear, informative, honest, and encouraging as possible.

One of the most important things to relearn was to remember what an objective of a particular exercise is. Obvious as it is, in training, in my experience at least, we still sometimes take it to the extremes. Some of us concentrate on all sorts of exercises, setting various objectives and sticking to them, but forgetting about the overall professional picture and interpreting proper, while others draw up an "ideal interpreter" in their mind and compare each student's performance to it in every aspect, even if the students are only working on some very basic memory skills or doing public speaking exercises. "Feedback should be a function of a particular objective set for the task" (Dick Fleming). It is important to tell the students that they are not judged on what was missing, but on what was said and understood. Repeat a particular task if needed, make the student take the speech home, redo it, record it, and put down a few points on what went better this time. There should be feedback coming from the trainer, but the students can also do a fair amount of self-analysis when they know what to do and what to look for.

I would like to summarize the paragraph with another brilliant example given by Dick Fleming: if somebody falls off a horse, you do not just say 'OK, do not fall off the horse next time'. No, you tell them to get back on the horse and try again."

3. INTERPRETER TRAINING: CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES
We talked a little about using theory and generalization in context on the second day of the seminar, and agreed that you can have a separate theoretical course in interpreting as long as it is linked to practice.

Book tip: Daniel Gile (2009) Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training. John Benjamins Publishing Company. 283 pp.

General and specific classroom techniques that we were discussing were lavishly and most effectively spread across the course. I would try to summarize the ones I noted down, going through them as they emerged. You may also find it useful to read about particular techniques that were suggested for note-taking and transition to simultaneous interpreting in separate paragraphs below.

We worked with FLASHCARDS in groups, dealing with particular training cases. (Flashcards in itself is a task I would very much like to incorporate into my teaching, maybe to cover some professional ethics cases or a few theoretical issues now and then to make them fun and get the students involved). The flashcard for consecutive interpreting without notes my partner and I worked on was "Student forgets the conclusion." We were asked to figure out why it was happening and what could be done about it. Here is what we came up with.

Why is this happening?
The student does not have a clear understanding of the genre and structure of the speech. The student is focused on smaller bits and words and does not see the bigger pic-

ture. The student got distracted. The speaker is unclear, and the student has nothing to rely on to restore the message.

What can you do about it?
Use key words and logic to come to the conclusion (though there is the danger of making up stories) or use the last segment you remember to wrap up. Ask the speaker to repeat. Next time you interpret, try to memorize the key words, look out for the logical structure of the source text, and try to anticipate.

Here are some tips for the case from Dick Fleming and the discussion that followed. Students can get fidgety towards the end, so make them listen right through the end. Make sure your input speeches are well put together and actually have a conclusion. Put the key words on the board and see what kind of conclusion can come of them, making sure the speaker has been going in this direction. Tell the students they will be able to take notes later when you start with note-taking, and this should also make things easier.

A useful idea Dick Fleming suggested for tackling various individual issues a student interpreter may have is to get the trainees to make up a table with "things I'm good at" and "things I'm not so good at" and list solutions for the second category. Another great universal tip for dealing with particular issues is to put a large card in front of an interpreter with a reminder of what to work on specifically: "Remember to be interesting!" or "Do not hesitate!" or "Make eye contact!" Below are a few more exercises suggested by Dick Fleming for particular issues a trainer may want to address.

For LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, have students prepare a list of set phrases used in meetings or when delivering speeches to practise both inside and outside the booth. (As a side note, I particularly like the book by Lynn Visson [7] featuring a good list of these phrases for English and Russian, and a conference dictionary [6] that I think many Russian-speaking trainers use, too.) Have the students do some gap-filling to help with their language skills: use a text with words missing and a recorded speech to come with it.

To help students with their BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE, make them play games, adding to the list above: e.g., an "acronym soup," throwing acronyms at each other in their A or B language, or a set of general knowledge questions requiring a quick answer, e.g., "who works in Scotland Yard?" (I often use a slight variation of this last game with the added difficulty of switching between languages. Have the students come up with a quiz of ten questions and answers for each class, both in English and in Russian, alternating languages. Students throw questions at each other and are supposed to answer them quickly *and* in the language the question is asked in.)

For SPLIT ATTENTION in simultaneous interpreting, have the students improvise a speech in the B language and hold up cards with words they should incorporate into the speech right away. Or ask a question and have the student think of an answer, but make them answer that first question aloud while they are being asked the next question, then answer that second question while listening to the third question, and so on. These are two great exercises, very simple, and students can do them in a booth or without any, in class or in their self-training sessions.

As a side note, I should say we referred to the students' SELF-TRAINING SESSIONS more than once during the seminar. Interpreting schools additionally provide students with access to the facilities for collective self-training sessions to get more "flying hours" in interpreting. Students would normally be asked to complete a certain number of self-training hours. Students would be made responsible for the facilities when they are practising and work on their own after the trainer had given them some basic self-training session guidelines at the beginning of the course. You can use your own in-class training

session as a model, make a student run it, come and watch, and then give comments on the structure of the session. You would not (sic!) comment on the interpreting proper that you heard during the session. After that you would occasionally check self-training sessions and ask the students to report back on them now and then. They do not have to report on every session they have held, but may find it useful to make a one-page report on things done during a particular session and suggestions they are taking from peer- and self-assessment. Having discussed various examples of group work that we already use in class, it still seems essential to try and make the actual student self-training sessions a reality, challenging as it might be in a traditional Russian university setting.

For CLASSROOM DYNAMICS, Dick Fleming shared another very useful technique: turn your class into an "interpreting laboratory," assigning different roles to students and therefore involving everyone. Make students interpret everything you say or ask a particular student to be your personal interpreter: let them do consecutive interpreting and give feedback in the middle of the session.

I will include a few notes on ASSESSMENT and FEEDBACK that we discussed at various points during the seminar here for a few more important training principles and guidelines. Build on students' feedback and make sure you use it in class. Assign specific feedback tasks to students in advance, e.g., "I want you to look for incomplete sentences," or "I want you to look for missing links." Setting slightly different assignments or slightly different requirements is a simple but very productive idea that I am certainly taking to my classes.

When giving feedback in class, have the student who has just interpreted go first and share what they may need to share, to take the emotions out of the way if they look uncomfortable or think they have failed. Then have the customer give feedback, a real one or your "genuine customer" who is another student. Have peer assessment and come back to the student who's done the job. At the very end, you may also ask the source language speaker for feedback, though you would not normally ask the real speaker to comment. Use feedback checklists (protocols), give examples rather than generalizations, and be specific rather than superficial. It may also be useful to change the feedback pattern now and then.

Ask the students what they have learnt, have them RECAP the solutions at the end of the training session or reformulate what you have said (i.e., do not recap yourself, but get them to recap). Have students keep their personal LOGBOOKS, which is "like talking to yourself about what you have to do" (Dick Fleming). Let them note down their progress, what they have covered and what they have learnt, useful tips and things they personally need to tackle, solutions found in class and in self-training, etc. This should be an effective way to track progress and fun to try, too.

For HOMEWORK, have the students prepare on a subject, read the newspapers, watch the news and give a summary next time, etc. Give specific tasks for specific issues a student may have: "work on your tempo," "work on your time lag," etc.

To summarize the paragraph, a few more things to relearn in INTERPRETER TRAINING COURSE DESIGN that we discussed towards the end of the seminar. Think of progression in your course and do not make your students do things that are too difficult or too early to try. Make sure you have appropriate and graded material for your training sessions. Use your time in class to get some basic profession-related messages across to your students, for instance, let them learn that interpreting is a service. Have a detailed curriculum and timetable so that you have a clear understanding which skills to work on when. Remember that you are working with adults, and adult training is different. Schoolchildren do not ask why they are doing something as they may just think it is a game, whereas adult students should understand why they are doing things.