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DEVELOPING SIGHT TRANSLATION COMPETENCE: INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES AND BEST PRACTICES

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Traditionally, the focus of scholars in translation studies has been either on interpreting or translation. However, there has been little discussion on the role of sight translation, “a hybrid of these two activities” [2, p. 601]. Our paper is an attempt to bridge this gap.

Some experts in the field have seen sight translation as a preparatory method for simultaneous interpreting [7, p. 84]. In contrast, others have attempted to define sight translation as a sole interpretation method [3] used by professional interpreters who sight translate in different settings: courtrooms, hospitals, educational institutions, conferences, business meetings, etc. X. Li writes about two scenarios where sight translation is described as both a professional practice and a pedagogical tool [6, p. 179]. Regardless of definitions, scholars agree that sight translation is a powerful tool for training would-be interpreters [8, p. 218].

This paper is an overview of the teaching methods used in Sight Translation module within the grant project “Conference Interpreting Course for MA students – Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University – 1st and 2nd semester 2024-2025” funded by the

European Parliament. Our technique was based on the methods developed by L. Chernovaty [1], R. D. Gonzalez et al. [4], E. Ersozlu [3], X. Li [6], and V. Mykhailenko [8]. During our classes, we used the following activities in different combinations to develop the skills needed to sight translate:

1. ***Anticipation exercises***, e.g., an instructor announces the title of the text and asks students about their expectations of it; students are asked to fill in the gaps with the missing words in the text extracts.

2. ***Learning the professional terminology***. To sight translate, students must have a good command of the source and target languages. To assess trainees' background knowledge, they are asked to produce keywords in both working languages by brainstorming on the subject. Sometimes, the meaning of unfamiliar words can be inferred from the context. However, if an instructor assumes that some terms can create challenges for trainees, they may introduce some activities to boost the vocabulary, e.g., to match the words and their definitions, to match the words to make collocations, to name synonyms or antonyms, etc. At this stage, the students also work with proper nouns, abbreviations, set expressions, slang, and culture-loaded elements.

3. ***Speed reading exercises***. In addition to scanning and skimming, students can be asked to count the number of times a particular letter is used in a given string of text to develop fast reading skills.

4. ***Memory training techniques***. When the original sentences are long and complex, the source and target languages are syntactically different, there arises the need to rely more on short-term memory [6, p. 174]. As preparation for simultaneous interpreting, the instructor displays extracts from the text. Then, as soon as a trainee starts translating, the sentence will disappear.

5. ***Reading comprehension tasks***. Students have 20-30 seconds to scan the text, which is about 250-300 words long, to be able to answer general questions. After that, they spend 10-15 seconds skimming the original to prepare for discussion of more specific information [3]. At the initial stage of training, the instructor may highlight the keywords to enhance the comprehension of the text. Chunking is another effective activity for teaching sight translation that involves dividing a text into manageable units of meaning. Students are instructed to select a passage and identify segments that convey complete thoughts or key ideas – these

segments are known as “chunks”. The focus is on isolating logical and meaningful portions of the text rather than translating word-for-word.

6. ***Linguistic agility exercises.*** Students render the content, paraphrasing, condensing, and expanding the source text, and/or manipulating the register. Images, graphics, tables must be interpreted as well.

7. ***Public speaking techniques.*** The students have 4 minutes to sight translate the text of about 250-300 words long. Good sight translation performance should sound as if the text was written in the target language. It involves voice projection, clear enunciation, and smooth pacing. Hence, it is recommended to record the rendering for further evaluation of the translator’s decisions, analysis of errors and speaking rate.

In addition to these exercises, we regularly used ***triad practice*** [5]. In this activity, students are divided into groups of three, rotating through the roles of 1) the interpreter, who delivers the sight translation, 2) the consumer, who listens to the translation without access to the source text, evaluating it based on clarity and comprehensibility, and 3) the observer, who has both the original text and the interpreter’s version to assess the translation’s accuracy and quality.

Each interpreter and observer is provided with a copy of the source text, while the consumer is not. The observer is also given a sight translation performance evaluation chart highlighting specific criteria in two main categories: linguistic accuracy (faithfulness to the original text, terminological precision, grammatical correctness, and stylistic appropriateness) and delivery and communication (fluency and cohesion, pronunciation and intonation, pacing and timing, and audience engagement).

After the interpreter completes their translation, the observer provides feedback based on the chart, emphasizing both strengths and areas for improvement. The consumer offers insights regarding how clear and understandable the translation was from the listener’s perspective. Following the feedback, the interpreter reflects on the challenges they faced, the strategies they applied, and the changes they would consider if given another chance. If time permits, the interpreter has the opportunity to perform the translation again, incorporating the feedback they received. The roles are then rotated, ensuring that each participant can experience the activity from each of the three perspectives. A new source text is

introduced with every rotation to expose interpreters to a variety of material.

On the whole, the activities for teaching sight translation are intended to sharpen mental agility, enhance linguistic flexibility, boost analytical skills and foster awareness of language use. Triad practice provides an interactive, multidimensional learning environment that cultivates translation, communication, and cognitive skills. By rotating through the roles of interpreter, consumer, and observer, students engage in active listening, critical evaluation, and delivering constructive feedback, which deepens their understanding of the sight translation process. This collaborative approach encourages peer learning, and fosters self-reflection, both of which contribute to the growth of skilled interpreters.

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