

Chapter 8

Facing and coping with online problems in interpreting

1. Introduction

In spite of good preparation and extensive experience in many fields, gaps in one's Knowledge Base are inevitable, and interpreters do find themselves in situations where they do not understand a term or a sentence in the source speech or do not know an appropriate term to express a concept in the target language. More fundamentally, even when such knowledge is not lacking, as explained in Chapter 7, cognitive load-related factors made critical by the Tightrope situation lead to numerous errors, omissions and otherwise sub-optimal rendering of the source speech through either total saturation or individual processing-capacity deficits in one or several Efforts. Such phenomena seem to be so common that they can be considered part and parcel of interpreting. Interpreting has been referred to by some professionals as (permanent) "crisis management," and in the light of the interpreters' daily experience, this may be a (painfully) appropriate expression to describe an aspect of interpreting which is unknown to the public at large.

Difficulties affect both comprehension and production, often through *failure sequences* as explained in Chapter 7. When interpreters are aware of actual or potential comprehension and/or reformulation problems, they tend to use a rather small set of 'coping tactics' to limit their impact.

Coping tactics are a fundamental practical skill in interpreting. Basically, they are taught within the framework of practical exercises. In most training programmes, this is done by *trial and correction*, with trial on the student's part and corrections from the instructor. Such corrections are generally prescriptive; instructors sometimes refer to the communication impact of the tactics in order to explain their preferences, but are not necessarily aware of other factors which influence them.

This chapter first looks at various factors and circumstances under which cognitive saturation is likely to occur. It then offers instructors illustrative lists of basic coping tactics for a general view of the issues (no claim of comprehensiveness is made, and other authors have discussed different sets of tactics). It also presents a conceptual framework which spells out the advantages and drawbacks of each tactic, and discusses a few norms and 'laws' which may help explain what makes interpreters prefer one tactic over the other beyond their individual merits.

2. When do online problems arise?

2.1 Cognitive saturation and failure

2.1.1 *Chronic reasons*

The term ‘chronic’ is used here deliberately to refer to situations where an interpreter’s cognitive skills and declarative knowledge (extralinguistic knowledge, knowledge of words and rules of grammar, etc.) are not sufficient to allow him/her to deal successfully with the competing Efforts. This may reflect the particular cognitive potential of an individual, but also a provisional status of students or beginning interpreters who have not yet acquired the necessary cognitive skills (procedural knowledge). These include language skills, but also other skills, including rapid shifts in allocation of processing capacity (Liu 2001) and appropriate implementation of coping tactics (see later in this chapter). They are assumed to improve over time with practice and guidance from instructors. Practice will help automate whatever component processes can be automated (see de Groot 2000) and reduce processing capacity requirements with increasing expertise, and guidance from instructors will direct students towards the best decisions.

2.1.2 *Occasional reasons*

The term ‘occasional’ is used here for cognitive saturation triggers which may be encountered under specific circumstances in interpreters who have acquired operational-level expertise, as opposed to chronic weaknesses as referred to above.

Occasional reasons for cognitive saturation can be associated with objective factors which have to do with linguistic, semantic and physical features of the source speech (problem triggers) as well as with the particular communication environment at hand (high stress, noisy environment, lack of specific background knowledge), or with subjective reasons such as an interpreter’s momentary attention lapse or errors in processing capacity management.

2.2 Cognitive problem triggers

2.2.1 *Problems arising from an increase in processing capacity requirements*

- a. *High density of the source speech* increases processing capacity requirements, because more information must be processed per unit of time. This affects both the Listening and Analysis Effort and the Production Effort (speech production in simultaneous and note production in consecutive), as the interpreter’s speech and note-taking are paced by the speaker. High speech density is probably the most frequent source of interpreting problems.

High speech density can be associated with:

- A *high rate of delivery* of the source speech. Note that some speakers produce rapid speech but provide little information, in which case speech density remains low.

- *High density of the information content* of the speech or of particular speech segments, even in rather slow speeches. In particular, *enumerations* are dense, as they consist of information elements put next to each other without grammatical or other words or word groups of low information density in-between. Prepared speeches that are *read* by the speaker are generally devoid of the hesitations, filled or unfilled, which characterize ad-libbed speech and lower density. Generally, they are also more densely formulated than spontaneous speech (see Halliday 1985 and Déjean Le Féal 1978).
- b. *External factors* such as deterioration of the *quality of the sound* coming through the interpreter's earphones, a noisy channel, or other sources of sound interference also raise the Listening and Analysis Effort's processing capacity requirements (see Gerver 1974b for a study on the influence of 'white noise' in the interpreter's headset). *Strong accents* and *incorrect grammar* and *lexical usage* also increase the Listening and Analysis Effort's processing capacity requirements. So do *unusual linguistic style* and *reasoning style*.
- c. *Unknown names* composed of several words increase capacity requirements for the *Memory Effort* unless they are very familiar to the interpreter in the target language. For example, the English name 'International Association of Conference Interpreters' translates in French into *Association internationale des interprètes de conférence*. If the interpreter does not know the French name, in order to translate the English name, s/he has to scan it mentally, decide that its second term should be translated first, then scan mentally the name again while keeping in (working) memory the information that the second term has already been translated, decide that the first term of the English name comes next, scan the name again and decide that 'of' is translated into *de*, scan the name a fourth and a fifth time and decide that the fourth term, and then the fifth term should be added to the French version, while keeping the decisions and their results in (working) memory. Such names are indeed very difficult to interpret, as illustrated by an experiment described in Gile 1984b (see below).
- d. As explained in Section 3, *saturation* can occur through an increase in processing capacity requirements in the Short-term Memory Effort when the source language and target language are syntactically very different and force the interpreter to store a large amount of information for some time before being able to reformulate it in the target language. This is often the case in interpreting between German and English (see Wilss 1978; Kurz 1983) or Chinese and English or French (Dawrant 1996; Li 2001) to take just two examples – but there are many.
- e. More generally, low anticipability of the source speech, which can be due to the speaker's personal style rather than to linguistic or cultural features or to flaws in his/her rationale, can have the same effect (see also Section 4).

2.2.2 Problems associated with signal vulnerability

Some speech segments do not necessarily require much processing capacity but are more vulnerable than others to a momentary processing capacity shortage because of their short duration and low redundancy and because consonants, vowels and syllables may sound very much alike. Such is the case of *numbers* and of short *names*, including *acronyms*. The briefest lapse of attention may cause information to be lost. In an experiment conducted with 15 professional interpreters who were asked to interpret a recorded speech containing 8 names, the ratio of correct rendering was very low even for very simple names such as “Jim Joseph” (Gile 1984b). This is the second type of problem-generation pattern referred to in Section 5 of Chapter 7, which results not from saturation, but from insufficient availability of processing capacity for one of the Efforts.

3. Language-specificity related problems

Some theoreticians consider that interpreting is an intellectual task which, when working languages are well mastered, transcends them (Seleskovitch 1975). Some even claim that practitioners only rarely notice specific differences between languages while interpreting, since “ideas which are expressed clearly pose no comprehension or reformulation problems” (Seleskovitch 1977). Other authors hold a different opinion, when referring to the specificity of interpreting between German and French (Ilg 1978; Le Ny 1978), German and English (Will 1978) or Japanese and English (Fukuui & Asano 1961; Kunihiro, Nishiyama, & Kanayama 1969). Authors who deny that interpreting is language-specific are not always consistent in their assertions. For instance, Seleskovitch does advocate structuring the notes in consecutive as a function of the target language, which amounts to an acknowledgment of some language specificity of interpreting (Seleskovitch 1981: 40).

3.1 Possible language-specific differences in speech perception

Those who oppose the idea that interpreting is language-specific say that speech comprehension is the same in interpreting as it is in everyday conditions, and that it is the same in all languages (Lederer 1981; Seleskovitch 1981). While the fundamental mechanisms underlying speech comprehension in everyday life and in interpreting may be similar, the high cognitive pressure to which interpreters at work are submitted could make them sensitive and vulnerable to small language-specific differences that may not have significant implications under usual speech-comprehension conditions.

In studies of differences in reading performance between college-student readers of different working memory capacities, Just and Carpenter found small and often negligible differences when the comprehension task was easy, but large and systematic differences when it was demanding. They explain that limitations could affect

performance only when the resource demands of the task exceed the available supply (Just & Carpenter 1992: 124). This could be the case in interpreting, as already explained in the context of the Tightrope Hypothesis in Chapter 7.

3.1.1 *Differences in the perception of words*

Content words, that is, mostly nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, are important carriers of information in language. In terms of length and phonetic diversity, their distribution in different languages may differ statistically, and they may be on the whole more or less redundant morphologically and phonologically and more or less vulnerable to momentary lapses of attention.

Japanese *kango* (words written with Chinese characters) are probably more vulnerable than content words in most European languages, as they combine shortness with limited phonological variety (with a total of 50 syllables) as well as a high rate of homophony (a large percentage of words in Japanese vocabulary are pronounced identically). The findings of a study by Gile (1986a), in addition to the interpreters' own statements (see for instance Ito-Bergerot 2006: 227), seem to corroborate the idea that Japanese *kango* do pose at least occasional problems in speech comprehension which are far less frequent in languages such as English, French, German, or Spanish.

3.1.2 *Grammatical redundancies*

Grammatical redundancies decrease the information density of language and may offer a second, third, or fourth chance to recover information lost during its initial oral presentation.

For example, in 'Five dogs', the ending 's' provides a second time the information that there is more than one dog, and in '*La nouvelle directrice*', the information that the 'director' is a woman is provided three times: through '*la*' (as opposed to '*le*'), through the ending '*-elle*' in '*nouvelle*' (as opposed to '*nouveau*'), and in the ending '*-trice*' in '*directrice*' as opposed to '*directeur*'.

Grammatical redundancies are more numerous and frequent in some languages than in others. Again, in both Chinese and Japanese, they are much less frequent than in most European languages; as to the latter, some like Finnish, German, Greek, Slavic languages have kept them in complex declension systems, while in others (English, French, Spanish, Italian, Swedish etc.) they have practically disappeared.

3.1.3 *Syntactic structures*

It is a common view among psycholinguists that some syntactic structures facilitate comprehension and others make it more difficult by reducing the comprehender's ability to anticipate or by increasing processing capacity requirements, especially with respect to short-term memory (see for instance Richaudeau 1973, 1981; MacDonald 1997). Embedded structures, in particular, seem to impose increased pressure on the

comprehender (“The man whose dog was chewing the bone that I had dropped a minute ago was reading a newspaper in German”). In some languages where determining elements tend to precede words and word groups that they determine, such as German and Japanese, there are many embedded sequences, which may make their comprehension more difficult under the high cognitive pressure of interpreting. The comprehension process of such sentences may even be qualitatively different from comprehension in languages where such sequences are few if analysis and short-term storage tactics differ in speech comprehenders. The issue is complex and I am not aware of studies that have tackled the problem in a comparative perspective, but there is no reason to rule out the possibility that such differences have significant implications in interpreting.

3.1.4 Sociolinguistic aspects

Besides each speaker’s individual style, cultural factors also determine – to a varying extent – the way information is expressed in each language. In this respect, differences between the allegedly Cartesian style of the French; the formal, punctilious style of the Germans; and the more informal style of the Americans are sometimes mentioned in exchanges between interpreters. The alleged sociolinguistic characteristics of the Japanese seem to correspond more clearly to actual phenomena in the field. Some relevant principles of human communication between the Japanese are well known and have been documented extensively (see for instance Condon & Saito 1974, Mizutani 1981), and the analyses of two conference interpreters, Hara (1988) and Kondo (1988)). These include a certain unwillingness to take responsibility and to express personal opinions clearly; the Japanese also tend not to make very explicit statements about ‘objective’ information, and mutual understanding achieved without words is valued highly. All these are manifest in elliptic sentences, unfinished sentences, linguistically ambiguous structures. Lexical usage in Japanese also seems rather flexible (see for instance Gile 1984a). These features can produce comprehension difficulties, possibly more often than in French, English, or German, although no quantitative comparison seems to have been attempted to date (but see Ito-Bergerot 2006 and Kondo 2008).

Finally, a particularly interesting example of language specificity is that of predictable sentence endings, which, as explained in Section 5.4.1 of Chapter 7, may lower processing capacity load when interpreting sentence endings and could have further relief-affording effects on the beginning of sentences following them (Gile 2008). Sentence endings may be predictable in any language for semantic reasons, but at least as regards linguistic anticipation in conference speeches, they are more frequent in Japanese than in German, and more frequent in German than in English or French (Gile 1992a).

3.2 Possible language-specific differences in speech production

Possible language-specific differences in production are more difficult to pinpoint than possible difficulties in comprehension: production depends on the individual

interpreter's selection of linguistic 'tools' (essentially lexical units and grammatical structures) most available to him/her, and less on the selection of linguistic components *by the speaker* being interpreted as in the case of comprehension – though the speaker's choice of lexical units and grammatical structures probably 'primes' cognate units and structures in the target language and therefore does influence the interpreter's production to a certain extent.

Besides speech-producer dependent factors, selecting lexical items and grammatical decision-making may be more difficult in some languages than in others because of differences in the variety of possible choices and in the flexibility of linguistic rules: a wide set of lexical items to choose from as opposed to a more restricted one, flexible or rigid lexical usage, the strength of collocations, the number of possible escape routes in sentence structuring in case the source language statement goes in an unexpected direction and forces one to reconsider one's options. The subjective impression of many interpreters is that English is more flexible than French and that Japanese is more flexible than English, with convenient escape routes up to the end of the sentence, but I am not aware of research which has demonstrated that such differences have practical implications. Nevertheless, the possibility that they matter cannot be ruled out at this time. There may also be differences in working memory load depending on grammatical agreement and other dependencies between various parts of the sentence which may require speakers to store grammatical information (such as gender or singular and plural or a particular verb tense) for a shorter or longer time when constructing sentences.

Another language-specific factor is the *similarity* or lack thereof between the source language and the target language in lexical, syntactic, and general informational terms. With respect to lexical units, phonetic or morphological similarity between the source-language word and a target-language word may accelerate the retrieval of an appropriate target-language word from long-term memory – even if it needs to be checked for interference (see Chapter 9). Syntactic similarity also means there may be less risk involved in anticipating and in shadowing the syntactic structures of the source speech. Such shadowing is associated with the risk of linguistic interference, but in critical cases such as very high delivery speed or informational density, it may become the best alternative. As for informational dissimilarity, as explained in Chapter 3, it is problematic *inter alia* when differences in Linguistically/Culturally Induced Information between the source language and the target language force the interpreter to:

- find roundabout ways to construct a meaningful, faithful and acceptable utterance in the target language when it requires information not provided in the source speech (for example, how do you express in Japanese an English utterance referring to one's brother without knowing whether he is younger or older than the speaker?),
- spend time and processing capacity deciding that it is acceptable to leave out some of the source-language information, or weigh the risks and make a decision based

on an educated guess (for instance, if a gender-bearing reference such as Mr/Mrs/Ms or s/he is required for a reference to a person and it is not known whether that person is male or female).

Another point regarding syntactic and informational similarities has to do with the *order of presentation of information* in the two languages involved. If it is different, this may involve higher workload for the short-term memory Effort, as information has to be stored for a while before it can be reformulated in the target language (see Section 2.2.1d above). Again, I am not aware of studies which have measured statistically the extent to which such factors change cognitive load during interpreting, but the existence and potential importance of these effects cannot be ruled out.

3.3 Culture-specific difficulties

Beyond linguistic parameters in the strict sense and linguistic/cultural parameters (such as differences in LCII), cultural differences associated with language communities may also be the source of online difficulties for interpreters. One example which is often cited in the literature on Japanese interpreting is that of deliberate ambiguity which characterizes Japanese speakers (see for example Ito-Bergerot 2006 and Kondo 2008). For cultural reasons, such speakers may tend to avoid clear answers, and in particular those which make commitments or express rejection of another person's ideas or requests. While such an attitude is acceptable and even favoured in some cultures, it may not be in other cultures, and the users of interpreting services may expect interpreters to provide them with 'clear' statements. Taking decisions related to such difficulties entails additional cognitive load and increases risk of saturation.

Note that the influence of such parameters can vary greatly across types of interpreted meetings. Typically, it may be insignificant in the utterances of speakers in specialized meetings where the relevant scientific or technical culture may be virtually uniform whatever the national background of the speakers, while its importance can be paramount in business and political negotiations.

3.4 Implications for training

While the relevance of language-specificity in interpreting has not been demonstrated empirically, arguments in favour of the hypothesis are strong, especially with respect to the implications of syntactic differences between the source language and the target language in simultaneous interpreting. For many practitioners and teachers of interpreting, language specificity has always been taken for granted in spite of counter-claims from a minority, albeit a vocal one, which were dominant in the literature from the early 1970s to the mid 1980s.

The non-specificity thesis has helped refocus the attention of interpreting teachers on issues such as attention, analysis, memory and communication variables rather than on linguistic issues, and can therefore be considered to have had some positive

impact. However, I believe, as does Ilg (1980), that its proponents have gone too far and denied linguistic aspects of interpreting their rightful role.

The issue is by no means purely academic. Underestimating the importance of linguistic aspects of interpreting may lead to inappropriate strategies such as training students in part of their linguistic combination only under the assumption that the acquired skills will be transferred to their other language(s). Experience suggests that this is possible for the basics. It is possible to learn the basic mechanisms of consecutive interpreting even in monolingual programmes – that is, with exercises in which students interpret from one language *into the same language* (Feldweg 1980, 1989; Gile 1983a). The question remains whether teaching the basic mechanisms is enough to train *fully operational interpreters* in their specific language combinations. On the basis of conversations with interpreting instructors from numerous countries, I feel that most teachers believe that such basic mechanisms need to be fine-tuned in a language-specific context before they can be implemented effectively. When confronted with actual interpreting in their working languages, interpreters who have been trained in other language combinations often regress because of linguistic difficulties. A striking example is given in a paper by Karla Déjean Le Féal, who, after several decades of work as a conference interpreter with German, French and English, added Swedish to her language combination and found herself working as a beginner in many ways (Déjean Le Féal 2002). Such a situation forces one to retune processes in order to overcome new difficulties and take full advantage of new possibilities arising from the new linguistic combination. New language-specific tactics may have to be learned, as well as anti-interference strategies.

When considered from the gain-loss viewpoint, it seems that language-specific training is associated with much potential gain and little potential loss. The gain resides in the possibility of fine-tuning the implementation of principles and gaining *practical* experience during initial training. Beyond the implementation of methodological principles, language-specific training provides students with an opportunity to widen their vocabulary and increase availability of words and rules of languages they will need most often in professional practice (the issue of availability is discussed in detail in Chapter 9). The potential drawback lies in a possible loss of perspective, causing the student to focus on linguistic rather than methodological issues and to mistake the latter for the former. This risk is probably low if a solid consecutive interpreting foundation precedes training in simultaneous, as consecutive interpreting naturally promotes sound interpreting methods, away from excessive focusing on linguistic aspects. This is a strong argument in favour of having interpreter training start with consecutive.

Two further points should be made regarding these language-related and culture-related difficulties. Firstly, those mentioned in this section are examples which are often noticed in professional practice in the field. They are mentioned here because they have been under discussion in interpreting circles, but it is not claimed that the list is comprehensive. Secondly, the effect of these factors is presented as ‘possible’;

there is not enough empirical research to measure its actual magnitude in interpreting, and other factors, in particular the overall structure of the speech and its delivery (see below) may reduce their effective weight to a considerable extent.

4. The speaker factor

While features of language and culture are frequent sources of difficulties, a much stronger determinant of interpreting difficulty is the speaker factor, i.e. the way a particular speaker constructs and delivers his/her speech. Speeches are easier to interpret if constructed in a didactic, logically linear, coherent way, if the speaker has a good voice and clear pronunciation. Good prosody also helps. Relatively slow delivery of speeches can be said to reduce cognitive pressure on listening and production, but if it is too slow, information elements have to be kept longer in short-term memory before they can be integrated into target speech sentences, which may cause cognitive saturation. Perhaps more important than articulation rate is the relative length of inter-sentence pauses. Such pauses provide cognitive relief during which processing of the previous speech segments can be completed so that processing of the next segments is not hampered by imported load carried over from the previous sentence (see Gile 2008). The speaker factor can make all the difference in terms of interpreting difficulty.



All in all, besides the interpreter's knowledge and skills, numerous linguistic factors, cultural factors, environmental factors (such as the availability of documents, visual aids, overall redundancy of information in the meeting, quality of the sound etc.) and delivery-related factors interact in determining interpreting difficulty. This interaction is so complex that it is generally not easy to predict the overall difficulty of a given speech to a particular interpreter, though specific problems such as mentioned in Chapter 7 and earlier in this chapter can be anticipated.

5. Tactics in simultaneous interpreting

Many of the problems mentioned in this first part of the chapter are recurrent. Over time, interpreters have developed ways to deal with them. Scrutiny of the literature and discussions with conference interpreters from many countries, as well as visits to interpreting classrooms in various parts of the world, show that they are widely shared (language-specific tactics will not be dealt with here). In the second part of this chapter, the most frequent 'tactics' will be presented, explained and discussed. While in the

TS literature, such online decisions and actions are often called ‘strategies’, I prefer to reserve that term for planned action with specific objectives (for instance conference preparation strategies) and to opt for ‘tactics’ when referring to online decisions and actions. Also note that in contrast to usage in some other texts in the TS literature, my use of the terms ‘tactics’ and ‘strategies’ is restricted to *deliberate* decisions and actions aimed at preventing or solving problems, as opposed to spontaneous, perhaps unconscious reactions.

5.1 Comprehension tactics

The following are the main tactics used when comprehension problems arise or are perceived as threatening to arise under time-related or processing capacity-related pressure.

a. Delaying the response

When a comprehension difficulty arises in connection with a word or a sentence, interpreters may respond immediately with one of the other tactics presented below. However, they may also delay their response for a while (up to a few seconds), so as to have some time for thought while they receive more information from the source-language speech. After a while, they may have solved the problem entirely. If not, they may decide to resort to another tactic. Note that as explained in Chapter 7, some delay between the arrival of information into working memory and its integration into a target speech utterance is generally unavoidable. The delaying tactic referred to here is a deliberate decision arising in conjunction with a perceived difficulty.

Because of its very nature, the delaying tactic involves an accumulation of information in short-term memory, and is associated with the risk of losing speech segments in a failure sequence as outlined in Chapter 7.

b. Reconstructing the segment with the help of the context

When interpreters have not properly heard or understood a technical term, name, number, or other types of speech segment, they can try to reconstruct them in their mind using their knowledge of the language, the subject, and the situation (their *extra-linguistic knowledge*).

This reconstruction process is also an integral part of speech comprehension in everyday situations. It is defined as a tactic in the present context when it becomes a *conscious endeavour*, as opposed to an ordinary, subconscious process.

If successful, reconstruction can result in full recovery of the information. It may also entail some waiting until more information is available and therefore require time and additional processing capacity. Like the delaying tactic, it can therefore lead to saturation and/or individual deficits.

c. *Using the boothmate's help*

In simultaneous interpreting, there are theoretically at least two interpreters in the booth at all times. One is *active* (producing a target-language speech), while the other is *passive* (listening, but not speaking). The passive colleague, who can devote his/her full attention to listening, has a better chance of understanding difficult speech segments than the active interpreter, whose processing capacity is shared by several efforts most of the time. Moreover, on the production side, the passive interpreter can consult a glossary or another document, which takes up much time and processing capacity, and then give the information to the active colleague, generally in writing. The presence of a passive interpreter in the booth can therefore be a major asset for the active interpreter.

The active interpreter can ask for the passive colleague's help with a glance or a movement of the head. In teams that work well, the passive interpreter will sense a hesitation in the active colleague's speech and understand there is a problem. S/he can also anticipate problems and write down for his/her boothmate names, numbers, technical terms, etc. without even being asked for help.

When the problem is terminological, the boothmate may indicate to the active interpreter the *target-language term*, so that it can be used for reformulation. Alternatively, when the problem lies with a single word, name or number, the passive boothmate may write it down in the source language for the benefit of the active interpreter who did not hear it correctly. It is more difficult to explain *ideas* efficiently, because the active interpreter does not have time to read a long explanation, but body language sometimes does the job.

This tactic is a good one because it does not cost much in time and processing capacity, and pooling together the knowledge and intelligence of two persons, one of whom does not have to divide his/her attention under high cognitive pressure, provides a better chance of finding the information than using the resources of one person only.

In order for the tactic to work, the passive interpreter must be not only physically present in the booth, but also available and willing to make the effort to listen with attention and help the active colleague. This situation does not always occur:

- Because of the intense effort involved in interpreting, interpreters feel strongly the need for rest. In teams composed of two members per target language, when conditions are difficult, interpreters may leave the booth when they have finished their active turn and only return shortly before they are on again, or else they may stay in the booth but shut themselves out and rest.
- In conferences in which papers are to be read, documents are often given to the interpreters at the very last moment, and presentations are allocated individually

to each member of the team. In such a case, all interpreters are busy reading their paper or interpreting, and no help is available to the active interpreter from other team members.

- For psychological and sociological reasons, including the awareness of one's weaknesses and some associated frustration, some interpreters do not like other colleagues to sit with them and listen while they are working.

It is important for instructors to point out the practical value of cooperation between interpreters as well as its importance in the framework of professional ethics aiming at offering clients better service. Practical aspects of such cooperation, involving in particular large and legible handwriting, should also be stressed.

d. Consulting resources in the booth

When there is no passive colleague in the booth, interpreters can look for solutions in documents they have before them.

The efficiency of this tactic varies greatly: looking for a term in a commercial dictionary may require much time and processing capacity, but finding an important word in a document which was read and marked before the conference can be fast. This is why it is important to pay attention to both the preparation of documents and their management in the booth. Instructors should show students how to make important names and terms stand out for quick reference, using highlighters or other means. Writing important technical terms and names on a sheet of paper in front of the interpreter (beside the glossary prepared for the conference) is another way of making them readily available. Documents should be laid out in the booth, sorted and marked in such a way as to minimize the time needed to access them and to recognize their identification numbers or titles, possibly with different stacks for each language, sorted by numerical sequence, type of document, etc.

Over the past decade or so, the use of light portable computers in the booth has spread greatly. Such devices are a good alternative to paper documents: for a small volume and little weight they can carry the equivalent of numerous dictionaries, encyclopaedias and other reference books and documents. Moreover, with the spreading availability of Wireless connection to the Internet in conference centres, they often offer access to all internet resources. Finding information can be as simple as entering a word or part of a word in a 'search function menu', or a key word, perhaps with one or two more words to frame it, into the relevant box of an internet browser interface, thus requiring less time and attention than searching through multi-page paper documents. Nevertheless, consulting resources in the booth other than a one or two-page document containing just a few pieces of information remains a costly operation in terms of time and attention and should best be left to moments when the interpreter is not interpreting actively.

5.2 Preventive tactics

The following tactics are used when time or processing capacity pressure is such that the interpreter believes a problem may arise or is about to occur. The idea is to limit the risks of saturation or individual deficit (Chapter 7).

a. Taking notes

When the speech contains figures and names that interpreters feel they may forget and that they cannot reformulate right away for syntactic reasons, they may take them down in notes rather than keep them in memory. While affording greater security as regards the items which are taken down, this tactic entails a cost in time because writing is slow. This increases the risk of losing other items of information that come before or after those written down (see Chapter 7). Again, this risk is reduced significantly when it is the passive colleague who writes down the information for the active colleague.

Interestingly, when translating in simultaneous from and into Japanese, some Japanese interpreters take down not only numbers and names, but also other information which ‘Westerners’ generally do not write (in this case, it is often the passive interpreter who takes down the information for the active colleague). The reason given by them is that syntactic structures differ greatly between Japanese and other (mostly Western) languages, which leads to much waiting before the reformulation of any specific part of a sentence, hence a possible overload of short-term memory and an increased risk of losing information. One is tempted to challenge the wisdom of this tactic because writing may increase lag and therefore working memory load as well, but the advantages may outweigh the disadvantages (the active interpreter does not *have* to read the notes taken for him/her by the passive colleague), something which only specific quantitative studies could determine if at all.

b. Lengthening or shortening the Ear-Voice Span

By changing the Ear-Voice Span (EVS), that is, the time lag between the moment a speech segment is heard and its reformulation in the target language, interpreters can control to a certain extent processing capacity requirements for individual Efforts. By shortening the lag, they decrease short-term memory requirements; on the other hand, this deprives them of anticipation potential and increases the risk of misunderstanding an unfolding sentence and driving themselves into target-language sentences which will be difficult to complete if it turns out their anticipation was incorrect. By increasing the lag, interpreters improve comprehension potential, but may overload short-term memory.

Teachers sometimes advise students to try to lengthen or shorten their EVS in specific cases (for instance when encountering numbers), but I am not aware of a clear-cut,

consistent theory or set of operational rules on the subject. It seems that EVS regulation is learned essentially through experience; I believe that this is one major benefit derived from *practice* in simultaneous interpreting during initial training, in addition to increased availability of relevant target-language elements (see Chapter 9) and automation of useful Translinguistic Equivalences (see Chapter 9).

c. Segmentation and unloading of short-term memory

When faced with potential overload of memory, as with a source language and a target language that are syntactically very different, with embedded structures in the source language or with unclear sentence structures, interpreters may choose to reformulate speech segments earlier than they would normally, sometimes before they have a full picture of what the speaker wants to say. In such cases, they may resort to neutral sentence beginnings or segments in the target language that do not commit them one way or another (see Ilg 1978; Zhong 1984 quoted in Setton 1999). For instance, in a source-language sentence expressing a causal relationship such as:

“Because of the complex character of equation (2) as shown above, compounded by the difficulty of finding a unique solution to equations (3) and (4) which correspond to a steady state system ...”

the interpreter can say in the target-language something like:

“Equation (2) as shown above is complex
Equations (3) and (4) describe a steady system
It is difficult to find a unique solution to them
...”

While interpreting these segments, the interpreter will keep in mind the causal nature of the relationship, which will eventually be expressed by “Therefore”, “As a result...” etc.

Segmentation can save short-term memory capacity requirements by providing earlier relief to short-term memory. On the other hand, the very formulation of several grammatically complete short sentences instead of one may involve higher processing capacity requirements in the Production Effort. Recommendations can be given on a case-by-case basis.

d. Changing the order of elements in an enumeration

Enumerations are high-density speech segments and impose a high load on short-term memory. One tactic often observed, related to the previous tactic, consists in reformulating the last elements first so as to free memory from the information, and then to move on to other elements. To my knowledge, no extensive analysis has yet been performed as to why this should reduce Memory Effort load. One possible explanation is 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. This tactic may work best with names, which can be reproduced from *echoic* memory (memory of the sound), or with terms which are easily transcoded; it may not be very effective if they cannot be transcoded or reproduced phonetically and require more processing capacity anyway.

5.3 Reformulation tactics

The following are tactics used frequently in reformulation. The first three are the same as those presented in Section 5.1 for comprehension.

a. *Delaying the response*

This is the same tactic as used in comprehension, the idea being that the waiting period is used for a subconscious (or conscious) search for a missing term or sentence structure the interpreter cannot retrieve immediately from long-term memory, or for a socially/culturally appropriate way of rendering the message if rendering it as it was formulated initially is likely to cause problems. As was the case with comprehension, waiting entails a risk of short-term memory overload, as well as a possible increase in processing capacity requirements in the Production Effort when the information is eventually reformulated – because of the backlog that has accumulated in the meantime.

b. *Using the boothmate's help*

As can be inferred from the descriptions in Section 5.1, the boothmate's help is more often given in the form of indications for *reformulation* than as explanations of what was said, which is reasonable in view of the strict time constraints involved.

c. *Consulting documents in the booth*

Documents are often used in the booth for reformulation, in particular glossaries and dictionaries, with associated risks because looking for entries takes up time and processing capacity.

d. *Replacing a segment with a superordinate term or a more general speech segment*

When interpreters find themselves momentarily incapable of understanding a speech segment or reformulating it in the target language, one possible solution is to reformulate the message in a less accurate manner by using a superordinate in the case of a single word, or by constructing a more general segment in the case of a whole clause or sentence: “*la streptokinase*” may be reformulated as ‘the enzyme’, “*Monsieur Stephen Wedgeworth*” as ‘the speaker’, “*deux cent trente trois millions*” as ‘about two hundred and thirty million’, “*DEC, IBM, Hewlett Packard et Texas Instruments*” as ‘a number of computer vendors’, etc.

This tactic, which requires little time, leads to loss of information in the target-language speech. This does not necessarily mean that the information is lost for the delegates; it may be repeated in another sentence in the speech, or be already known to them.

e. Explaining or paraphrasing

Interpreters may understand a term but not have available the appropriate equivalent in the target language, in which case they can *explain* it rather than translate it. In one conference in the early days of microcomputing, in the 1980s, the data processing term *tableur* (spreadsheet) was interpreted as “the programme which defines rows and columns and allows calculations to be made.”

This tactic can be efficient informationally but has two drawbacks: one is the amount of time and processing capacity it requires, and the other is the fact that it may draw the delegates’ attention to the fact that the interpreter does not know the appropriate term in the target language, possibly lowering his/her credibility and reducing the impact of the speech accordingly.

f. Reproducing the sound heard in the source-language speech

When encountering a name or technical term which s/he does not know or recognize, the interpreter may try to reproduce the *sound* as heard. This is not an ‘intelligent’ tactic insofar as it does not call for complex cognitive operations, but it can be efficient: if they know the name or term, delegates may ‘hear’ it as it *should* have been pronounced without even noticing that the interpreter has a problem. The approximation may also be detected and perceived as a distortion of the information, which may discredit the interpreter, especially if the name or term is well-known to the audience.

g. ‘Instant naturalization’

When interpreters do not know the appropriate term in the target language, they may *naturalize* the source-language term, adapting it to the morphological and/or phonological rules of the target language. For instance, at a conference, the term *téledétection* (remote sensing) was rendered in English as “teledetection”. At another conference, the English computer term ‘driver’, as applied to a software programme that helps operate a device such as a printer from a computer, was translated into French as “*driver*” (pronounced “dreevair”).

This tactic may prove effective when the source-language and target-language lexicons are morphologically similar, as is the case of English and French medical terminology, and when there is much borrowing of terms into the target language in that particular field, for instance in information technology, where English is a loan language for most non-English speaking countries.

In these first two cases, the tactic often results in the interpreter ‘inventing’ terms that actually exist in the target language, as such naturalization may have been conducted previously by experts who needed the terms for their daily activity – the ‘instantly naturalized’ French versions of ‘driver’ cited above actually exist in the technolect of computer experts – there is also a French equivalent, the word *pilote*, which uses a slightly different metaphor. Also note that in some languages such as Japanese and Hebrew, borrowing lexical units (and even idioms in the case of Hebrew) from foreign languages, and in particular from English, is very frequent in daily life, and the interpreter’s use of this tactic may not strike listeners as special in any way.

The instant naturalization tactic may also prove very effective when in their daily life, delegates read much written material in the source language. In such a case, they often recognize the ‘naturalized’ terms, which are likely to sound similar to the way they pronounce the words in the source language when reading.

h. Transcoding

Transcoding consists in translating a source-language term or speech segment into the target language word for word. At a conference on accounting, the English term ‘maturity date’, the standard equivalent of which in the relevant context was *date d’échéance*, was interpreted as “*date de maturité*”.

For lexical problems, this tactic can be very efficient in the same cases as ‘instant naturalization’. Like naturalization, it can also lead to existing target-language terms; in various fields, many terms have been created by such transcoding by experts, just as many terms have been created by phonetic naturalization. Even when transcoding does not lead to an existing target-language term, it may facilitate comprehension for the delegates because of the semantic indications the newly created term carries. At a dentists’ conference, the English term ‘mandibular block’ (a type of anaesthesia) was interpreted as “*bloc mandibulaire*”, whereas the appropriate term was *tronculaire*. Delegates said afterward they had no trouble understanding “*bloc mandibulaire*”, even though it bore no similarity at all to the appropriate French term.

i. Form-based interpreting

With respect to the transcoding tactic, it may be worth recalling that overall, for the reasons explained in Chapter 5 for translation, there seems to be agreement in the conference interpreting community that in order to optimize quality, interpreting should be done on the basis of meaning, not form: going through meaning instead of seeking direct linguistic correspondences allows better comprehension of the speaker’s intentions and better reformulation in the target language with less linguistic interference and more idiomatic expression. Ideally, the transcoding tactic is only

an occasional option when specific difficulties arise around a term or a small group of words. However, in case of fatigue or very fast speeches, when working in a cognate language pair, interpreters may give preference to what has been called in the literature ‘form-based interpreting’ (see for instance Dam 2001), relying essentially on source-speech words and syntax to guide them in producing the target speech. This mode of interpreting can lead to marked losses, especially in terms of idiomaticity and clarity, but some interpreters believe that at times it may salvage more information from the source speech than meaning-based interpreting. In a recent doctoral dissertation, Alonso Bacigalupe (2006) claims that form-based interpreting is perhaps more frequent than is suggested in the literature.

j. Informing listeners of a problem

When interpreters believe they have missed an important piece of information, they may decide to inform the delegates of the loss by stepping out of their role as the speaker’s *alter ego* and saying for instance “... and an author whose name the interpreter did not catch,” or “... the interpreter is sorry, s/he missed the last number.” When this happens, delegates may fail to react, but they can also ask the speaker to clarify or repeat the information, either on the spot or during a break.

This tactic is not used very often. It takes up time and processing capacity, and may therefore jeopardize the reformulation of other speech segments. Moreover, it draws the delegates’ attention to the *interpreter’s* problems. This has two drawbacks: first, delegates are interested in the speech, not in the interpreters and their problems; second, by drawing the delegates’ attention to his/her problems, the interpreter may lose credibility, and therefore also indirectly weaken the impact of the speaker’s message.

If important information is missed, conscientious interpreters consider it their ethical duty to inform delegates rather than gloss over it, but if the information is insignificant, or if informing the delegates may do more harm than good, they may decide to choose another tactic.

k. Referring delegates to another information source

In specialized conferences, much of the information is given not only through the speakers’ spoken words and body language, but also in written handouts and on screen, via slides, overhead transparencies and PowerPoint presentations. When encountering comprehension or reformulation difficulties, interpreters can refer delegates to “the figures/names/equation etc. on the screen/in your handout,” etc.

This tactic is convenient and entails little loss and little cost in time and processing capacity.

l. Omitting the content of a speech segment

Interpreters may miss information without even noticing it because they did not have enough processing capacity available for the Listening and Analysis Effort when the speech segment carrying it was being uttered. They may also omit it because it disappears from short-term memory. The omission tactic discussed here refers to the case where an interpreter decides deliberately not to render in his/her target speech information present in the source speech. This can happen when a piece of information appears to have little value and other information with more value requires the interpreter's attention and may be lost if the unimportant part is rendered, for instance when the interpreter detects a high risk of saturation. In interpreted TV interviews, where synchronicity is essential, omitting the last part of a statement may be the best choice if the interpreter is a bit behind the speaker, especially when such a lag leads to some overlapping between the last part of an interpreter's rendering of a statement and the beginning of the next statement by another speaker.

Omission can also be the interpreter's choice if something grossly inappropriate was said and the interpreter feels strongly that if reproduced, it will cause major harm to the speaker's interests and/or jeopardize seriously the intended outcome of the meeting. An alternative to omission in this second case is attenuation of the offending words or ideas.

When information is omitted, it is not necessarily lost as far as the delegates are concerned – it may appear elsewhere or be already known to the delegates. This does not mean that the omission tactic can be selected lightly. It is unethical to omit deliberately important information without informing the listeners of the loss, and some interpreters (and clients) may challenge the legitimacy of the tactic in all cases and question the interpreter's ability to judge what is important and what isn't. However, situations of cognitive saturation where the only possibility of keeping interpreting and serving best the interests of the participants requires forced choices are rife in daily practice, especially with read speeches with dense passages, as are most speeches of important political personalities being interpreted live on TV.

When the decision to omit the content of a speech segment is taken by the interpreter because of its culturally or inter-personally inappropriate nature, the associated ethical problem is even more salient: what right does the interpreter have to play the gatekeeper? In court interpreting, such a decision is definitely unethical because of the particular norms involved. In personal and professional encounters between people from different cultural backgrounds where the stakes are diplomatic and/or inter-personal, the case for omission as a tactic is less difficult to defend, and many interpreters will admit that they have occasionally omitted or attenuated an inappropriate comment or joke in order to avoid a serious diplomatic incident (anecdotes can be found *inter alia* in Magalhaes 2007; Torikai 2009).

m. 'Parallel' reformulation

When working conditions are particularly bad and interpreters feel it is imperative to continue speaking despite their inability to understand and reformulate the source speech properly, they may *invent* a speech segment which is compatible with the rest of the speaker's statement.

This tactic is an extreme one, to be used exceptionally and with the uttermost caution, in cases where the content of the source speech is far less important than continuity in speech for the listeners' benefit (which may occur in some TV shows). I believe it should not be taught at the same time as other tactics. It is probably best left to the very end of training, when it is introduced very carefully, with explicit examples and strong emphasis on ethical considerations.

n. Switching off the microphone

This is another extreme tactic. In the 1960s and early 1970s, some purists advocated its use when working conditions are poor and interpreters feel they cannot do a decent job, perhaps in the hope that the resulting pressure would prompt organizers to provide interpreters with more documents. It is no longer taught in most training programmes and has become a rare choice in the field because it is now unacceptable to clients. It is probably safe to say that this tactic is only implemented when working conditions are so bad that interpreters believe they can do no useful work at all, meaning that *continuing to interpret would be worse than providing no interpreting* – and when they believe they can get away with it. Otherwise, they just continue interpreting, doing their best, perhaps after warning delegates that conditions are such that they cannot maintain good-quality interpreting.

6. 'Laws' in the selection of tactics in simultaneous interpreting

Interpreters do not choose tactics at random. They seem to follow 'laws' (the term is used here to name trends found in their behaviour, not in the sense of prescriptive rules), sometimes consciously, often unconsciously. Two of them correspond to norms which are corollaries of the fundamental Sender-loyalty norm (see Chapter 3), others do not.

Law 1: Maximizing information recovery (norm 1)

Interpreters generally consider it their duty to attempt to reformulate *all* of the speaker's Message in the target language (the Message being the intended information, as opposed to Secondary Information – see Chapters 2 and 3). Tactics leading to maximum information recovery such as reconstruction from the context, using the booth-mate's help and consulting documents are favoured over replacing specific terms with

superordinates, which entails a higher risk of immediate information loss in the target-language speech; this in turn is favoured over omission.

As stated earlier several times, the absence of information in the target-language speech segment does not necessarily imply that the information is lost to the delegates. The interpreter may decide to take the responsibility of deciding whether the information is already known to them or whether it may in fact be redundant, having been presented in another part of the speech or in an image on screen. Also note that information is not always at the centre of communication in exchanges interpreted simultaneously, a noteworthy example being TV shows (see below).

Law 2: Minimizing interference in information recovery

As explained in the framework of the Effort models in Chapter 7, because of time pressure, the way one segment is processed affects the availability of processing capacity for other segments. For that reason, maximizing the recovery of information in one segment may have a detrimental effect on the processing and transmission to the delegates of other information. The second law for the selection of tactics is based on this awareness by interpreters and on a view of information that rises above purely 'local' considerations: interpreters seek to recover as much information as possible on each segment without jeopardizing the recovery of other segments. On this basis, they favour tactics that require little time and processing capacity such as omission, naturalization and approximate repetition (tactic f) – over explanation, paraphrasing, and informing delegates of the problem.

Precedence is given to Law 1 or Law 2 depending on the importance of the relevant segments. When segment A is more important than its neighbouring segments B and C, the information-recovery maximization Law will prevail for segment A in spite of a high risk of interference. This is consistent with the idea, explained in Chapter 2, that the interpreter serves *communication* and keeps in mind the interests of the *participants in communication*, which implies prioritization of information carried by speeches. Again, doubts may arise as to the interpreter's ability and/or right to determine such priorities, but in the daily practice of interpreting, such decisions are numerous.

Law 3: Maximizing the communication impact of the speech (norm 2)

An act of communication, including interpreting, has an aim (or several – see Chapter 2), and the interpreter attempts to serve it according to certain loyalty principles. In specialized speeches in conference interpreting, maximizing the communication impact is often tantamount to maximizing information recovery. When interpreting interviews for TV shows, the communication impact sometimes depends more on the atmosphere and continuity of the flow of exchanges as well as on synchronicity (the interpreter is expected not to lag behind and make the interviewer and TV viewers

wait) than on information – incidentally, synchronicity of simultaneous interpreting seems to rate rather high for delegates in general conferences as well, at least judging by a study by Moser (1997). This puts high on the priority list tactics which save time, perhaps at the detriment of information recovery.

As explained in Chapter 2, the communication impact of a statement or utterance depends not only on its information content, but also on its *packaging*. This general rule also applies to the interpreter's target-language speech, the impact of which depends on technical parameters such as fidelity to the source-language speech and delivery, but also on the interpreter's credibility. This is one of the factors that lead interpreters to favour or avoid particular tactics, beyond the informational aspect of their speech. For instance, if they feel they have not heard a name well enough and have reason to believe that pronouncing it inaccurately may generate adverse reactions in listeners, they may avoid trying to approximate the sound as heard. They may also feel that informing delegates of problems, especially when they are numerous, would take up too much time, dilute the speech, reduce their own credibility and weaken the impact of the speaker's statement more than the loss of information associated with the comprehension and production difficulties they encounter. In such a case, they may find it is better to cut the losses by refraining from informing the delegates (they may also take the same decision for less ethical reasons, if they think they can get away with it – see Law 5 below).

Law 4: The Law of least effort

This fourth law is not specifically related to interpreting tactics – it seems to prevail in all fields of human activity (Zipf 1949), including language (Miller 1962). This law tends to reinforce Law 2 on minimizing interference, as it favours tactics that require less time and processing capacity; but its rationale is different, and it tends to lead to tactics involving less effort even when processing capacity is available. Because of the intensity of interpreting in terms of nervous expenditure, it could be argued that it protects the interpreter from exhaustion, and therefore that in some contexts it can be justified. However, in the simultaneous mode, interpreters take turns in the booth and rest between them, so that they do not really need to save on energy while they are active. This law can therefore be considered an unwelcome intruder, which may generate loss of information and loss of impact without good reason.

Law 5: Self-protection

It is a fact of life that interpreters often fail to understand or reformulate speech segments in a way which *they* consider satisfactory. Thinking of the possible reactions of their listeners to what they regard as mediocre or poor performance, they may be tempted to give precedence to tactics that do not give away or highlight such problems. For example, they may avoid informing delegates of a problem, not with the legitimate

aim of maximizing the impact of the speech (Law 3), but for the purpose of protecting themselves, sometimes running against Laws 1 and 3. It is difficult to establish in the field that any single tactic has been selected in the booth for the purpose of self-protection, but over time, interpreters do detect the presence of a self-protection trend in some colleagues.

The relative strength of these five laws depends on a number of personal and professional factors, and in particular on:

- Professional and personal ethics: If interpreters are conscientious, they will endeavour to maximize information recovery by giving priority to Laws 1 and 2 and by weighting them according to the relative importance of the relevant speech segments. If they are less conscientious, they may let themselves succumb to the law of least effort and the law of self-protection.
- Working conditions: When they are bad, with long working hours, insufficient manning strength in the booth, bad visibility of the conference room and the screen, lack of interest in the presentations on the part of the delegates, etc., the Law of least effort may gain more weight to the detriment of Laws 1 and 3. The potential effect of working conditions on the interpreters' motivation is one point to which the attention of conference organizers might be drawn (see Gile 1991b). This, however, is a double-edged sword, and could generate doubts regarding professional ethics in the interpreting community. Caution is of the essence.

7. Tactics in consecutive interpreting, sight translation and simultaneous with text

Most of the tactics listed above can also be used in consecutive interpreting, but there are a few differences.

- In consecutive, during the comprehension phase, the delaying tactic means leaving a blank space on paper, to be filled later – or not. In the reformulation phase, it may mean constructing the target speech or part of it without the information which the interpreter cannot remember and recover from the notes, in the hope of being able to recover it later.
- Generally, no passive colleagues ('boothmates' in simultaneous) are sitting beside the active interpreter in consecutive. Enlisting the colleague's help is obviously possible only in the rare cases when they are.
- In consecutive, the speaker and interpreter do not speak at the same time, and it may be possible for the interpreter to ask the speaker for clarification on an information element that has been missed. In most cases (the interpreter does not always have the possibility of talking directly to the speaker), informing the

delegates of the problem is not a relevant tactic. Note that asking the speaker for clarification once is all right, but doing so several times damages the interpreter's credibility – and results in loss of impact because the delivery of the statement is slowed down and becomes less smooth.

- Since in consecutive there is no immediate reformulation of the speech, changing the order of elements in an enumeration to alleviate memory load (Section 5.2 d) does not apply to the reformulation stage. It does apply to note-taking during the listening phase, where short-term memory load problems can be more severe locally than in simultaneous due to the relative slowness of note-taking as opposed to articulation rate in speech production.
- In consecutive, the segmentation tactic has a use in the *reformulation phase*. When threads of logic have escaped interpreters during the comprehension phase and when interpreters find it difficult to remember the logical links between information segments that appear in their notes, they can reformulate them in isolation one after the other, with the hope that the logic will come back to them while they speak, or that the delegates will be able to reconstruct the logical links themselves.
- Last but not least, as pointed out in Chapter 7, when processing capacity requirements become too high, the interpreter can stop taking notes and rely on memory for the relevant segment. This tactic is specific to consecutive interpreting.
- Other tactics for consecutive are part of note-taking skills. They are taught by instructors as practical techniques and are not discussed here as *coping tactics*. They include such actions as the use of abbreviations and/or drawings to save time, using pauses in the source-language speech to reread notes, noting in some detail the beginning and ending of speeches, etc. There are many publications on note-taking in the literature beyond the classic Rozan (1956) – see among many early examples Kade 1963, Henderson 1976, Ilg 1988, Allioni 1989, Garzone, Santulli and Damiani 1990, Lung 1999, Monacelli 1999. More recent references, including research reports, theses and even doctoral dissertations, can be found in the various issues of the *CIRIN Bulletin* posted online at www.cirinandgile.com.

In *sight translation*, most coping tactics requirements arise from non-comprehension of the source-language text, from problems in finding appropriate target-language terms and from processing capacity requirements associated with syntactic differences between the source language and the target language and with the need to fight linguistic interference between them. Several tactics listed above (using the boothmate's help, referring the delegates to another source, taking notes, changing the EVS, reformulating a parallel speech, and switching off the microphone) are irrelevant. Regarding the last two, while working conditions in the booth when no text is available can be so poor that no useful work can be done, with a written text it is exceedingly rare that the sight translator cannot extract *any* useful information from the text.

In simultaneous with text, as explained in Chapter 7, the fact that interpreters have the text of the speech before them has both positive and negative aspects. Specific tactics could perhaps be identified with respect to the allocation of more or less attention to the spoken speech versus the written text when encountering certain problems, but I am not aware of systematic reflection or rules on the subject.

8. Handling speaker errors

When faced with an error made by the speaker, interpreters can react in one of three ways:

- They can reformulate the speech segment as it is, leaving the error uncorrected;
- They can correct the error in the target-language speech;
- They can draw the listeners' attention to the speaker's error.

Leaving the error uncorrected is in line with the Law of least effort, but may be detrimental to the impact of the speech. Error correction is in harmony with the aim of maximum information recovery and maximum impact, but entails three types of risk: one is that the speaker is right and the interpreter is wrong; secondly, a delegate listening to the source-language speech may pick up the speaker's error and make a comment on it, which will then force the interpreter to explain that s/he has already corrected it; thirdly, delegates may object to the interpreter's correcting the speaker (see Kopczynski 1994), which is understandable not only in courtroom situations where the actual words of witnesses and the accused can be just as important or more important than their Message (see Morris 1989), but also in other situations, in particular in debates when there are marked oppositions between participants. Informing the delegates of the speaker's error is in line with the Law of self-protection, but can reduce the impact of the speech by damaging the speaker's credibility.

9. Coping tactics in translation

Of the tactics presented above for the case of interpreting, many also apply, at least in some related form, to written translation. In particular, reconstruction using the context, resorting to superordinate terms or more general text segments, informing the readers of a translation problem (generally by way of a footnote), explaining or paraphrasing, simplifying a text segment, instant naturalization, and transcoding yield similar results in translation and in interpreting.

The basic difference is that most often, coping tactics in interpreting are associated with recurrent problems resulting from processing capacity- and time constraints whose order of magnitude is measured in seconds or fractions of a second; in

translation, they may result from the translator being unable to acquire all the required information over a longer period of time – that is, minutes in the case of extremely urgent translations and hours, days or weeks in most other cases. I believe that resorting to coping tactics, that is, performing crisis management in interpreting situations, is very much a part of the skills *interpreters* have to acquire in order to become operational. In translation, their use should be much less frequent. When training high-level translators, such tactics should perhaps not be introduced until the very last part of the syllabus, lest students succumb to the Law of least effort.

10. Teaching suggestions

Tactics are a practical component of interpreting skills and require no specific theoretical framework – though theoretical concepts and models can help grasp more fully their effects in terms of processing capacity and risks of local and more distant saturation and individual deficits as outlined in Chapter 7. They are essentially introduced during practical exercises, but I believe it is important that an explicit analysis of their advantages and drawbacks be made for the benefit of the students, lest the rationale underlying decisions be misunderstood as a flippant attitude toward the speaker, the delegates, or the very principle of fidelity.

In line with the process-oriented approach (see Chapter 1), during practical exercises, students should be encouraged to *explain* tactics they have chosen. However, since in this particular case, instructors wish not only to *explain* translation procedures, but also to establish certain ethical priorities, they cannot afford not to criticize tactics that follow the ‘wrong’ ‘laws’ (the Law of least effort and the Law of self-protection).

Last, when presenting tactics and ‘Laws’, instructors should stress the fact that these involve decisions, that is, personal choices with associated risks, for which the interpreter has to take responsibility as a participant in communication (see Chapter 2), albeit one with a subordinate role. In this respect, the interpreter’s work converges with that of the translator, as described in the Sequential Model of translation explained in Chapter 5.

11. What students need to remember

1. In spite of their preparation and skills, interpreters do encounter difficulties online in both comprehension and reformulation.
2. The basic role of coping tactics is to prevent or limit damage resulting from interpreting difficulties.

3. Tactics are generally selected so as to:
 - Maximize information recovery for the delegates (a conference interpreting norm);
 - Minimize interference between recovery of the affected speech segment and the rendering of neighbouring segments;
 - Maximize the communication impact of the speech (another conference interpreting norm).
4. In reality, two interfering phenomena are also active:
 - The Law of least effort;
 - Self-protection.

Both should be avoided.