

4. Simultaneous Interpreting

In one sense simultaneous interpretation is the same thing as consecutive interpretation. They are the same in that both mean listening, understanding, analyzing and re-expressing. In both cases the interpreter is indulging in the same basic intellectual activities. Moreover, in both cases the interpreter is fulfilling the same function as a conduit for communication. It is easy for the interpreter in simultaneous, physically cut-off from the meeting in a sound-proofed booth behind double-glazing, to forget that they are part of the meeting, that they are carrying out this essential communication function. It is important to avoid this trap, to try to sense the atmosphere of a meeting through the panes of glass, watching the body language of delegates and picking up any non-verbal information they can, using the appropriate intonation in their interpretation, rather than slipping into a monotonous drawl. Simultaneous interpreters should maintain eye contact as much as possible with delegates and even use gestures in the booth, even though nobody may be watching those gestures.

This, incidentally, is why proper design of conference rooms involving interpreting is of such importance and why proper visibility must be guaranteed for interpreters. Meeting organizers who feel they can put interpreters in booths with inadequate vision of the meeting room or even 'blind booths' have a recipe for poor interpretation. This is also a consideration to be borne in mind when envisaging video-conferences involving interpreting. It is too early to make any pronouncements on the feasibility or desirability of video-conferences where interpreters would not be in the same place as their delegates and would be watching them on television monitors. But there is at the least a risk of interpreters feeling alienated from the meeting in such circumstances and finding it difficult or impossible to provide high quality interpretation. As video-conferencing becomes ever more frequent both interpreters and meeting organizers should give the matter very serious thought.

Thus, to resume our argument, we stress the unchanged nature of the basic interpreting function and the intellectual processes involved. Much of what has already been said about consecutive therefore also applies to simultaneous.

At the same time it is obvious that simultaneous and consecutive are quite different. Essentially, there are two fundamental differences, which create two added difficulties in simultaneous, an acoustic one and an intellectual one.

The acoustic difficulty is that in consecutive the interpreter listens first, then speaks. In simultaneous, the interpreter has to speak and listen at the same time, which is an unnatural activity and has to be cultivated.

The intellectual difficulty is that in consecutive, when the interpreter opens their mouth they have heard the whole speech and should know where they are going. Sometimes points that were unclear or even words that were unknown at

the moment at which they were pronounced by the speaker become clear to the interpreter in the overall context of the speech. The interpreter has no such luxury in simultaneous. You do not know where the speaker is going, even as you speak. And this is true both at the macro level of the speech and at the micro level. That is, at macro level you do not know where the speech as a whole is headed; at micro level, you do not know how an individual sentence will continue, perhaps even something as basic as whether it will be in the positive or the negative form.

Assuming one can cope in consecutive with the basic elements of interpreting – listening, understanding, analyzing and re-expressing – techniques have to be developed in simultaneous to cope with these two types of difficulty.

The Acoustic Difficulties of Simultaneous Interpreting

Use of equipment

First, you should stack all the cards in your favour by making the best possible use of the equipment available. Despite various possible refinements a simultaneous interpreter's equipment is basically a set of headphones and a microphone. To deal with the headphones first, interpreters need to be able to hear both the speaker and themselves. One should not think that the speaking side of simultaneous interpreting takes place automatically and that you do not need to monitor yourself, or even that the interpreter will necessarily hear their own voice in their head. Therefore, the interpreter must wear the headphones in such a way as to be able to hear the speaker clearly but also hear their own output and monitor it all the time. To do this there are essentially two options. The first is for the interpreter to wear both ear-pieces of a pair of headphones half on and half off each ear, slightly to the front of the ear. This enables one to hear the speaker clearly, the sound coming through the headphones quite satisfactorily into the interpreter's ears while leaving the ears sufficiently uncovered for you to hear your own voice. The second option is simply to wear one earphone fully on one ear and to leave the other ear totally uncovered. This leaves each ear to perform a different task. Neurolinguistic research over the last decade has tended to show that, because of the cerebral lateralization of language functions, there may be an advantage in privileging one ear for the earphone. For a *right*-handed interpreter, there appears to be an advantage in covering the *left* ear with the earphone, using that ear to listen to the source language. The right ear is left free to listen to the interpreter's own output in the target language. This rule applies both when you are working into your mother tongue and out of it into a return language. Readers interested in pursuing this question can refer in particular to Lambert (1990) and more generally to the work of Fabbro and Gran (see Further Reading at the end of this book). Without in any way calling into

question the value and interest of this research, we should nevertheless encourage students and young interpreters to try out different positions to see which one suits them best.

The interpreter controls the volume at which they listen to the original. It is important to keep this volume as low as feasibly possible. Both the original and the interpreter's own voice have to be listened to, but they should not become like rivals trying to shout one another. If you put up the volume high, then in order to listen to yourself you have to raise your voice; but this drowns out the original, so you put up the volume even higher; and you end up in a vicious circle. This is very bad for your hearing in the long run. Straining your voice for three or more hours a day can only be bad. It is unpleasant for delegates to have an interpreter shouting at them for hours on end. And it is unbearable for the other interpreters who are working in the same booth. Therefore, the interpreter should have the volume low, at a comfortable hearing level *if they are not speaking*. Then, if you interpret in a normal conversational voice you should be able to hear both the original and yourself adequately.

As to the microphone, for the comfort of the delegates listening to the interpreter you must try to make sure that the sound output level is as regular as possible. The level of the interpreter's voice should remain fairly constant, a normal conversational one as just mentioned, and the interpreter should sit directly in front of the microphone at a constant distance from it, avoiding major movements either side to side or forwards and backwards. For most equipment currently on the market, speaking at a distance of thirty centimetres from the microphone is about right.

There are occasions, as mentioned in chapter one, when simultaneous is 'chuchotage', done without technical equipment. In such circumstances the interpreter must similarly ensure the working conditions are optimal. This means sitting (or standing) where you are sure you can hear the speaker, and being in a position to speak sufficiently softly so as not to hinder their listening or upset other participants in the meeting who are listening to the original. As a general rule this means you are entitled to disregard protocol and may even ask to change places with a delegate.

In no circumstances should interpreters attempt to interpret what they have not heard. If the working conditions are so bad that they absolutely cannot perform their function correctly they should inform the meeting organizers and either cease work, offer consecutive interpreting as an alternative, or wait for the necessary arrangements to be made.

Cultivating Split Attention

In normal circumstances people concentrate on one thing at a time, and in speech in particular they listen to one line of discourse at a time. The interpreter has to

listen to two lines of discourse. How does one deal with this?

First, one has to recognize the need to listen consciously to oneself when interpreting. This is another difference from 'normal' speech where one talks automatically: you know what you want to say, the words come tumbling out of their own accord, and you do not need to pay attention to grammar, pronunciation, etc. But for the interpreter, working under stress, anything can happen. If the interpreter is not monitoring their own output they can be ungrammatical, pronounce words incorrectly, forget words, such that they may even flatly contradict themselves in two successive sentences by forgetting to say the word *not* in one of them. Thus, you have to be aware of the need to monitor yourself and to make a conscious effort to do so. Just as the consecutive interpreter has learned to listen in a different, active, analytical way, now the simultaneous interpreter, while not ceasing to listen actively to the speaker, must learn to listen carefully and critically to themselves.

Second, you have to accept that if you try to concentrate on more than one thing at a time you increase the risk of error in at least one of those areas. To minimize the chances of error when listening to two related but distinct discourses, the interpreter's total level of concentration must be kept at its maximum. The interpreter must be focused totally on what the speaker and they themselves are saying, and cannot let their mind stray to extraneous matters such as the speaker's accent, linguistic or other idiosyncracies, still less to visual details in the room, the weather outside or any other thing unrelated to the meeting.

But we can go further than merely telling you to concentrate as hard as you can. The simultaneous interpreter's concentration can be disturbed more insidiously than in the ways just mentioned. The interpreter may come across a word in the original they do not know at all, or perhaps a word they do know but are not sure how best to render in the target language. If a word is not known, except in the very rare cases where such ignorance makes it impossible to render an idea correctly, the interpreter must ignore the word in question and get on with the job of interpreting the sense of the speaker's sentence. If a word or expression is known but the interpreter has a number of options as to how to render it, they must make a split-second decision and go clearly for one option, even if in retrospect that is not the option the interpreter would have preferred. For example, a delegate may say, *To make such a fine distinction is to use a captious argument*. Now, *captious* is hardly a word that one uses every day and that will necessarily spring to mind. All kinds of things could shoot through the interpreter's mind: sophistry, quibbling, splitting hairs, and so on. The interpreter is well-advised, in context, assuming the speaker is responding to another delegate, to say, *That's just splitting hairs*, even if they may afterwards feel this is the wrong linguistic register, and even if it does not do full justice to the two notions of 'fine distinction' and 'captious argument'. That is better than trying to render every word and ending up saying, *Such a fine*

distinction, splitting hairs like that, is really... um... this is really sophistry, your argument is a... fallacy, that is, I feel this is captious reasoning. Victory! The interpreter has found the 'right word'! Not at all. The interpreter, by proceeding in this way, has wasted a lot of time and energy, may have missed another important idea in the original, and will probably have irritated the delegates with all this prevarication.

This should not be understood as pleading in favour of sloppy, approximate interpreting, saying the first vaguely appropriate thing that springs to mind. The interpreter must get it right, but they must get it right first time round. Hedging round ideas and piling up synonyms is usually counterproductive. Whether in the case of unknown words or in the case of words where the interpreter is spoiled for choice, *the simultaneous interpreter must not get 'hung up' on the words.*

Another distraction for the interpreter comes from the feeling or maybe even the knowledge that they have missed something out or interpreted a passage less well than they might have. There is no point thinking back over what has already happened and worrying about it. That will only reduce the interpreter's level of concentration on the job in hand. It is rather like a chess player who missed an opportunity to capture the opponent's queen and realizes only afterwards. If they continue to worry about it there is every chance they will lose; if they concentrate on the present situation on the chessboard they still have every chance of winning.

To sum up, cultivating split attention is an unnatural activity. Significantly, it is often the element of conference interpreting which most mystifies non-interpreters. The way to cope with it is to maintain a maximum level of concentration and very deliberately and consciously address your attention to the two discourses in question. In one way simultaneous can be compared to playing the piano, which is also an unnatural form of behaviour. The pianist has to learn the right hand, then the left, then learns to coordinate both, in much the same way as the interpreter learns to listen to two speeches at the same time.

Listening to Oneself in Simultaneous Interpreting

The critical listening to oneself mentioned above concerns both content and form. In terms of content you must be constantly checking that the interpretation is a correct and, insofar as is necessary, a complete rendering of the original. In terms of form you must check that you are being grammatical and making sense (as opposed to talking literally nonsense). Here, again, the battle is half won if you can make life easy for yourself, and that can be done by applying just a few basic rules.

The first rule is to speak, as far as is possible, in short, simple sentences. This approach is to be adopted however long and complex the sentences of the

speaker may be. It is obvious that if you launch into long, complicated sentences with subordinate and relative clauses, the risk of losing the thread of your own sentence, and therefore making a mistake or forgetting what you want to say, is much greater. Conversely, with a simple sentence structure it is much easier to check up on yourself, and if ever you do make a slip of the tongue to correct it quickly and easily.

When we say 'short, simple sentences', we mean sentences composed of only one principal clause. This may seem a rather extreme approach to take, and some interpreters might be worried that their work may end up sounding too childish. We feel, however, that it is difficult to go too far in expressing yourself in simple sentences, and that this has the dual advantage of making it easier for the interpreter to listen critically to their own output and providing ease of listening for the delegates. Delegates are usually delighted to have everything chopped up into small, pre-digested units for them, provided the ideas are expressed clearly.

Second, you should make sure, in listening to yourself, that each individual sentence has sense, grammatically and logically. If you can force yourself into the habit of *never* saying anything that is nonsense or meaningless, then you have automatically eliminated a large number of potential sources of error. Moreover, once the interpreter has made sure they are making sense at the level of each sentence, then it is that much easier to monitor the overall coherence and logic of their own interpretation.

Third, although one might argue that this is just a specific case of the previous rule, the interpreter must always finish their sentences. An unfinished sentence means by definition that the interpreter has stopped making sense. The most annoying and unsettling thing for a delegate is to be left hanging in the air by their interpreter because of a sentence such as: *The increase in sales tax on these products over the last five years has meant that [silence]*. Delegates may fail to notice omissions and errors, and even if they do notice them they may forgive the interpreter, but knowing that the interpreter can just give up on them like that undermines their confidence in the interpreter totally.

These three points have been presented as an aid to the interpreter in that they facilitate the task of critical listening to oneself in simultaneous. However, they are clearly also important for dealing with what we called the intellectual difficulties of simultaneous, and will be taken up in more detail below.

The 'Golden Rules' of Simultaneous Interpreting

Before moving on to more detailed questions of simultaneous interpreting technique it is useful to take stock at this stage on a number of very basic ideas presented so far. Some might feel it pretentious to present these as 'golden rules', but if all of them are followed, the interpreter will be in a much better position

to apply the techniques we are about to discuss.

The simultaneous interpreter must :

- remember they are communicating;
- make the best possible use of the technical facilities;
- ensure they can hear both the speaker and themselves clearly;
- never attempt to interpret something they have not heard or acoustically understood;
- maximize concentration;
- not be distracted by focussing attention on individual problematic words;
- cultivate split attention, with active, analytical listening to the speaker and critical monitoring of their own output;
- use, where possible, short, simple sentences;
- be grammatical;
- make sense in every single sentence;
- always finish their sentences.

The Technique of Simultaneous Interpreting

When to Start Speaking?

The first question that arises for an interpreter in simultaneous, 'first' in a literal, chronological sense, is when to start speaking, and thereafter what distance to keep from the speaker. On the one hand it is necessary to give the speaker a certain headstart, because otherwise the interpreter will not have sufficient material to work with in order to say something meaningful; on the other hand the interpreter cannot afford to be too far behind, otherwise they spend the entire speech trying to catch up with the speaker and run the risk of missing out important things.

The first part of the answer to this all-important question has little to do with interpreting technique and is rather more a point of practical psychology. The interpreter should say *something* almost immediately, in order to reassure the participants listening to them. If a speaker begins and the interpreter says absolutely nothing, be it only for a few seconds, because they are waiting for the right moment to begin their interpretation, the participants listening to the interpreter may become very nervous, turn round and make signs at the interpreters' booth, or even interrupt proceedings to complain there is no interpretation. The interpreter must therefore make at least some sound. One of the safest things one can say is *Thank you, chairman*, (or, if one is interpreting the chairperson, to say simply 'thank you' to the previous speaker), even if the speaker has not taken the trouble to be so polite.

Having dealt with this minor point of psychology, however, the interpreter is still faced with the difficult question of when to start interpreting what the

speaker is actually saying. It is important to recognize that the answer to the question cannot be given in terms of time: 'Stay x seconds behind the speaker' (we could add that, even if we wished to pin things down in terms of seconds, everything moves so fast in simultaneous that the time-lag would sometimes be less than a second and would practically never exceed a few seconds: five seconds is an eternity in simultaneous). Rather, the answer depends on the grammar and syntax used by the speaker, the speed of the speaker, and the source and target languages. This means the answer will vary for practically every speech: there is no single rule for when one begins speaking.

However, we must try and give some guidance on this question, and the best way to begin is to be pragmatic and go back to first principles. The first basic principle is that the interpreter should try to begin speaking 'as soon as possible' (a notion that we shall qualify). The interpreter cannot wait for the speaker to finish one sentence before they say something, doing a kind of mini-consecutive of that sentence while waiting for the next one. The chances are that the interpreter will end up rendering only one sentence out of two. Because they think in terms of sentences, their attention will be focused on, say, the first sentence, listening first, then speaking, but while they are saying the first sentence the speaker has moved on to the second one, which the interpreter – still focusing on the first sentence – will have difficulty concentrating on. The interpreter will then pick up the third sentence but may miss the fourth, and so on. Second, the interpreter who works in this way will have a tendency to rush through the sentence when they are speaking, blurring things out to the detriment of clarity and elegance, precisely because they are in a hurry to stop speaking to try and listen to the next sentence. Third, the sentence is a completely arbitrary and unmanageable unit to work with: *I agree* is a sentence. At the other extreme there are delegates whose sentences have the length and complexity of those in Kafka or Proust, sentences that it is impossible to use as units in a simultaneous.

We must thus reject simultaneous being done as a kind of sequence of accelerated mini-consecutives. However, having said the interpreter must begin speaking 'as soon as possible', what is it that makes it possible for the interpreter to speak? Here we find our second basic principle: the interpreter must be able to express something meaningful if they are to open their mouth. This means in turn that they must have understood in the source language some meaningful notion that they can put into the target language. The speaker must have enunciated some 'slice' or 'chunk' of speech that forms a meaningful whole and which the interpreter can therefore use as raw material for their own output.

This notion of a meaningful section of speech brings us on to the notion of a 'unit of meaning'. The unit of meaning is a notion identified and developed by Marianne Lederer and Danica Seleskovitch, two eminent teachers of interpreting and researchers in translation studies, in the framework of their activities at

the *École Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs* in Paris. The notion is used to provide a descriptive model of the way a simultaneous interpreter proceeds.

We understand a unit of meaning to be a cognitive representation in the mind of the listener (for our purposes the interpreter) of the intended meaning of the speaker. This cognitive representation is formed from the words just spoken by the speaker and the application to those words of other cognitive information available to the interpreter. The other cognitive information may come from the interpreter's background knowledge; it may come from the general context of a meeting (a speaker refers to comments made by other participants or to a document used in the meeting, etc.); or it may come from the immediate context of the speech, such as the previous sentence or other parts of the same sentence. The cognitive representation in the mind of the listener is therefore not the same thing as the words spoken by the speaker: it is a product of them and other elements available to the interpreter.

What is the link between a unit of meaning, as a notion, and the decision as to when to start a simultaneous? The unit of meaning is a *micro-component* of the meaning of a speech. It is the succession of units of meaning, relating to one another and merging into one another, that forms the overall meaning of a speech. The minimum length of a unit of meaning is determined by the shortest possible passage that may engender a clear cognitive representation in the mind of the listener. This means that a unit of meaning can be one word. *Death, water, France, libraries*, may all generate cognitive representations in the mind of the listener. The maximum length of a unit of meaning is determined by the length of an oral passage that can remain present to the ear at any one given moment. This means that a unit of meaning will be the product of a sequence of words lasting at most a few seconds (seven or eight words, according to Lederer and Seleskovitch), and in any case not more than a sentence. The unit of meaning can therefore be taken as being the smallest usable unit for the interpreter, who may thus begin speaking once a unit of meaning is given.

It is clear from this that a unit of meaning is of variable length and cannot be systematically related to grammatical categories. As mentioned, a unit of meaning may be formed from one word. Take the sentence: *Britain, despite the ruling of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, has decided to maintain its position on the treatment of prison inmates*. Here the word *Britain* may generate a clear cognitive representation in the mind of the interpreter, particularly if in context they are aware that it means the British government, and the interpreter might choose to start interpreting (although the risk of starting so soon will be seen shortly below). A unit of meaning may come from just a little more than one word. For example: *The Minister of the Interior does not intend to propose any change to the rules governing treatment of prison inmates*. Here, the first unit of meaning will probably be *the Minister of the Interior*.

But these are nice easy sentences that begin with the grammatical subject.

The first unit of meaning may be significantly longer. For example, if we rearrange our first example we could have: *Despite the ruling of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, the British prison authorities have decided to maintain their position on the treatment of inmates.* The interpreter has to wait at least until *Human Rights* to have a unit of meaning; they can hardly be expected to say anything before then. Further on, we no longer have *Britain*, but *the British prison authorities*, which has to be taken as a unit of meaning.

The length of a unit of meaning has so far been seen to vary depending essentially on linguistic considerations such as syntax. But the variation in length may also come from the other cognitive information available to the interpreter. Let's assume the speaker says exactly the same thing as in the previous example – *Despite the ruling...* – but that the ruling in question has been the object of discussion for the last half hour. The interpreter will not need the extra information supplied by the speaker to know which ruling is meant, and can form a unit of meaning just from the words *Despite the ruling*.

One could therefore try to establish a basic rule on the timing of simultaneous work: begin speaking when you have understood a unit of meaning, and remain one unit behind the speaker, proceeding from unit to unit. The great advantage of this approach is that in this way you should never be too far behind the speaker, will always have something meaningful to say, and, because of the flexibility of the notion of unit of meaning, will be able to structure your own interpretation in a flexible way, making yourself more master of the situation.

However, despite the undoubted value of the concept of unit of meaning, there is another way of setting about the question as to when to start interpreting in simultaneous and how far to remain behind the speaker. Such an alternative method is necessary in that it is more practical, and there are circumstances when working with units of meaning is insufficient.

First, the notion of a unit of meaning is not a very handy one for an interpreter to use consciously in the heat of the action of a simultaneous interpretation. And to be fair to Lederer and Seleskovitch, as mentioned above, the origin and prime use of the concept lie in the ex-post analysis of how interpreters work and more generally of how people understand discourse, rather than in a pedagogical context; its value is essentially descriptive, not prescriptive.

Second, when interpreting from certain source languages, working systematically from units of meaning may mean waiting an awful long time. For example, a speaker of a Germanic language may begin a sentence with:

On the by the Canadian delegation proposed and by the American delegation supported highly important, fully understandable, but perhaps, in the current by considerable monetary turbulence marked circumstances, a little premature textual amendments...

(In real English this is: 'On the textual amendments proposed by the Canadian delegation and supported by the American delegation, which are highly important, fully understandable, but perhaps a little premature in these times of considerable monetary instability...'.)

With a sentence like this, which we admit is problematic whatever method an interpreter adopts, more analysis than the identification of the first unit of meaning is necessary if the interpreter does not want to wait until 'textual amendments'.

Third, working from units of meaning may also force the interpreter to make long, artificial pauses in the middle of sentences, rather than deliberately making the pauses between sentences, which would increase the ease of listening for delegates. For example, there may be a clear unit of meaning provided at the beginning of a sentence, followed by a lengthy digression such that it is difficult to say anything at all:

Britain, following the ruling of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which I am sure you are all aware of, at least in the broad outline if not in all of its details, seeing as it has had a lot of publicity in the European press, has decided...

It is of course possible to interpret this in simultaneous by proceeding from one unit of meaning to another. But if the interpreter begins in a split second by saying *Britain*, they may find themselves waiting unnaturally long for the next unit of meaning which links up with the subject before they say something else.

For all these reasons, I feel an alternative method has to be sought. It must be stressed, however, that this does not call into question the validity of the unit of meaning analysis of how interpreters work. A good interpreter *does* proceed by operating with units of meaning. But they may do so quite unconsciously, and in order to take conscious decisions about what to say when, which an interpreter does practically every second of their professional life, a more pragmatic approach is needed. This approach, I would argue, should be less abstract and intellectual, and more linguistic.

To provide an alternative, practical rule as to when to start speaking in simultaneous, again we must return to first principles. As in the discussion of units of meaning we can assume that the interpreter must start speaking as soon as possible, and that "as soon as possible" means that they must have understood something meaningful in order to have something meaningful to say. However, we can now add the basic principle that the interpreter must always speak coherently and grammatically, and in particular that they must always finish their sentences. With all this in mind, we can now say that the interpreter can start speaking *once they have enough material from the speaker to finish their own (interpreted) sentence*. The interpreter may of course begin a sen-

tence with one idea in mind as to how to finish it and then choose to change tack, but as long as they are coherent and faithful to the speaker that is not a problem in itself.

This approach has a number of advantages. First, provided the interpreter does not launch into a sentence without having at least one way of finishing it, they should never commit the cardinal sin of leaving a sentence unfinished. This will remain true even when the speaker is a poor orator who uses long, complicated sentences which they themselves are ultimately incapable of finishing. The interpreter will express those ideas that have been grammatically formulated by the speaker, and can just drop odd ends of sentences or clauses that are never completed, for example subjects without verbs, or transitive verbs without an object.

Second, if the interpreter is sure of being able to finish a sentence when they start saying something, this makes it much easier for them to pause between sentences rather than in the middle of sentences as they seek a way of expressing themselves. This will make their delivery that much more natural and easier to follow.

Third, if the end of a sentence is 'in sight' as soon as it begins, this will help the interpreter to think and speak in short, simple sentences, the desirability of which has already been mentioned.

The way to use this approach can best be explained by using a number of examples, which for convenience will be variations on those already provided in this section.

A clear case where the interpreter is sure to be able to finish their sentence is when the speaker provides a subject, a verb and a direct object, such as:

Britain has decided to maintain its position on the treatment of prison inmates, despite the ruling of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Once the speaker has said *its position*, the interpreter may start. Even if the speaker were to break off into a digression after that, the interpreter is safe. Let's now assume the text is:

Britain has decided to maintain its position – and I know that this is not totally uncontroversial, following the debate in the working parties and in the plenary session – on the treatment...

Here the interpreter can simply say, 'Britain has decided to maintain its position'. Then they deal with the digression as a *different sentence*, or even a number of sentences. Last, they return to the main clause of the sentence, perhaps with a reminder of how it fits in with the speaker's argument, using something like 'This position concerns the treatment...'

Of course, the moment at which the interpreter starts speaking will also depend on the speed of the speaker. If the above speaker starts like a racehorse, the interpreter should certainly get going as soon as they hear *position*. If the pace is much slower, an interpreter, particularly an experienced one, may choose to wait for a few more words.

Let's now go back to the original form of the quotation in question, used when discussing units of meaning:

Britain, despite the ruling of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, has decided to maintain its position on the treatment of prison inmates.

This shows clearly that it is dangerous for the interpreter to leap in with *Britain* as soon as they hear it. By saying *Britain* and then having to work out how to deal with the incidental clause ('despite the ruling...'), the interpreter may be forced into a long, unnatural pause in the middle of the sentence. Worse, the incidental clause may become long and unwieldy, and it may be difficult for both the interpreter and the delegates listening to them to link *Britain* up with the relevant verb. In a worst-case scenario the speaker may actually forget that they started with *Britain*, not finishing the sentence at all and leaving the interpreter hanging in the air.

The way for the interpreter to deal with this is to apply the rule of waiting until they have enough material to complete a sentence. This moment, I would contend, is after *Human Rights*. The interpreter begins with the idea of saying, 'The Court of Human Rights has made a ruling'. By the time they have said *Human Rights* the speaker will already have added *in Strasbourg*, which information can then be included by the interpreter. The speaker in the meantime continues with *has decided to maintain...*, enabling the interpreter to deal with the main clause, the subject of which is *Britain*. The final output of the interpreter can now be smoothly delivered as:

The Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has made a ruling. Despite this, Britain has decided to maintain its position on the treatment of prison inmates.

We should note, though, that there may be good grammatical reasons for not starting a sentence as soon as you hear what appear to be the subject. This tends to depend on the source language. If English or a Romance language is being spoken, then a sentence beginning with, say, 'The necessary information' will have *information* as the subject. But in other languages, such as German and Slavic languages, the subject-object relationship may be shown more by case endings than by word order, but the case endings may also be ambiguous, with nominative and accusative sometimes taking the same form.

Thus we may have the sentence: 'The necessary information [possible nominative or accusative] receives in any case my ministry regularly'. When we get to the end of the sentence it is obvious that the subject is *my ministry*, not *information*, and if the interpreter begins a sentence with *information* as the subject they may find themselves in an awkward situation. The situation need not be impossible to resolve. If the interpreter is working into English, for this example, they may fall back on a passive form like *This information is received...*, and other target languages may find it even easier to accommodate such structures. However, a preventative strategy – beginning your sentence only when you know the form it should take – will still leave you more in control of the situation. In the long run it will also be less tiring than a corrective strategy, where the interpreter rushes in and then has to adjust their aim, so to speak, as grammatical and semantic surprises appear.

Note that in certain circumstances the first word that sounds like a subject may even turn out to be an indirect object. Thus the interpreter could hear in a given source language: 'Britain, following the ruling of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, must we say that...'. It is only on hearing *must we say* that the interpreter knows that in the speaker's mouth *Britain* actually meant 'to Britain'. Using the approach already described, if the interpreter begins speaking after *Human Rights*, they can say with no error or unnatural pause: 'The Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has made its ruling. Following this we must say to Britain that...'.

This approach basically means waiting until there is enough material to finish a sentence and beginning the sentence in such a way as to be sure to finish it. An automatic consequence of this is that the interpreter should avoid beginning their sentences with relative or subordinate clauses. If we return to our basic example, we can produce the following:

Despite the ruling of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, Britain has decided to maintain...

In these circumstances the interpreter definitely has enough material to provide a complete sentence after *Human Rights*, but they should not fall into the trap of beginning their own sentence in the same way as the speaker, namely with *Despite*. Again, if they do follow the speaker too closely the risk is that the speaker's sentence will evolve from this first, subordinate clause in such a way that it is very difficult or even impossible for the interpreter to insert a main clause. The interpreter must, as always, proceed by providing a first, complete sentence: 'The Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has made a ruling'. Then the notion 'despite' can be brought into the second sentence: 'Despite this, Britain has decided...'.

It is very common for speakers to begin sentences with words or phrases

such as *despite, thanks to, given that, on the assumption that, on the understanding that or provided that*. Interpreters should develop a kind of second nature that enables them to avoid following speakers down such roads.

Having now established the conditions under which an interpreter may start speaking in simultaneous, we might ask how they continue: what distance should they keep from the speaker?

Essentially, three things may be said on this point. First, the interpreter should continue as they have begun. The distance from the speaker should remain more or less constant, and in any case the interpreter must always have some way of ending correctly any sentence they begin, not just the first one in a speech.

Second, the interpreter must be flexible. On the one hand, the distance from the speaker should be more or less constant, as we have just said. But on the other, some variation will always be necessary, depending on the speaker's rhythm, style, content, and also depending on specific syntactic difficulties. We shall see later that there are cases, for example when numbers are being quoted, where a different approach has to be adopted to the time-lag between speaker and interpreter.

Third, the interpreter should try to end a speech as close as possible to the speaker. This means that the interpreter, in listening to the speaker, must sense when a speech is drawing to a close. This may be indicated by the content – for example, the speaker arrives at conclusions or summarizes their previous argument – or from the tone of voice. As soon as the interpreter senses the end is in sight they should accelerate their own output a little in order to finish as soon as possible after the speaker. This is very important for an individual interpreter who needs to move on to interpreting the next speaker, who may take the floor very quickly. But it is, if anything, even more important for a pair or trio of interpreters working together in one booth with different passive languages. Let's assume that two interpreters are working together into French from Russian and English, each covering only one language. An English speaker has the floor, comes to the end of their comments, and a Russian delegate, who perhaps is not even listening to interpretation for English, intervenes very quickly. If the interpreter working from English into French takes too long winding up their interpretation, the interpreter working from Russian into French may be seriously handicapped in interpreting the opening remarks of the Russian delegate.

In conclusion on this question, the method chosen for deciding when to begin speaking, and thereafter determining how far one remains behind the speaker, means that the interpreter has to reword the input provided by the speaker. This brings us to the technique discussed in our next point, a technique that lies at the heart of simultaneous interpreting: *reformulation*.

Reformulation

As we have just seen, the need to maintain the right distance from a speaker

means that the interpreter has to reformulate the wording of the original. Long, complicated sentences are to be broken down into a series of easier, shorter ones; relative and subordinate clauses can be shifted around within a sentence; active clauses changed into passive or deponent ones (or vice versa); and so on.

This should be seen as an opportunity, not as an unwelcome constraint. The interpreter's job is to convey the speaker's meaning as faithfully as possible. But any translation, written or oral, necessarily changes the form of the original. The most faithful interpretation will merely be the transformation that comes closest to respecting the speaker's intended meaning. And to respect the meaning, one does not necessarily have to copy the exact words of the speaker, nor the order in which the speaker says them. On the contrary, I would defend the paradox that in order to be faithful to the speaker, the interpreter must betray them. The interpreter is rather like a film director adapting a novel for the cinema. The director might want to create an aesthetic effect that is equivalent to the one the novel creates for the reader of the written word. But a film is clearly a different medium. To achieve the desired effect in a different medium the director will have to change many things, thus 'betraying' the novelist. Although the effect sought by the interpreter is not primarily aesthetic, something similar holds for them: the interpreter, rather than attempting to provide a slavish copy of the original, must create in a new medium – the target language – the discourse that will have the same effect on their audience as the speaker's words have on those who understand the source language.

The interpreter must therefore seize upon reformulation as the tool that will enable them to deal with all kinds of difficulties while remaining as true as possible to the speaker. It is difficult to underestimate the importance of this technique, which should really become an inbuilt second nature for the simultaneous interpreter.

A fundamental difficulty that can be dealt with through reformulation is the case where the source language has a word or concept that does not exist in the target language. This problem is not related solely to very specific cultural or institutional notions that are particularly characteristic of a country or a language. Nor do we have to look for complicated philosophical or technical notions to find examples. The simple word 'shallow' does not exist in French in the physical sense of water not being deep, whereas the word 'deep' does. Thus the sentence, 'Barges cannot use the river in summer because it is too shallow', would necessarily have to be reformulated by an interpreter working into French. They could, for example, say, 'Barges cannot use the river in summer because it is not deep enough'.

Such a case is fairly easy to deal with. But there are other cases of words or notions, even very commonly used and fashionable ones, that cannot be directly translated into the target language and which require more judgement on the part of the interpreter. Take the term *cost-effective*. An English-speaking delegate

could say, 'We require cost-effective hospital management if our health-care system is to survive'. In some languages there is no direct translation for *cost-effective* but there is for *cost-effectiveness* (or *cost-efficiency*). An interpreter for such a language could try to use the term 'cost-efficiency'. They would then at least have to reformulate the sentence as 'We require [a good level of] cost-efficiency of hospital management if...'. However, the interpreter may also decide that this is a very unnatural, stilted way of expressing things, and look for a different way of conveying the same idea. Alternatively, it may be that not even 'cost-efficiency' exists in the target language and the interpreter is forced into a different form of expression. In both of these latter cases, the interpreter is faced with an unlimited range of possibilities as to how to express the idea. In some languages *cost-effective* may be expressed by the notion 'a good ratio between quality and price'; some may opt for a more casual, less technocratic 'value for money'. In many cases the specific notion 'cost-effective' may disappear as an explicit reference but the idea may be brought out in the sentence as a whole. For example, one might say, 'The [financial] resources of our hospitals must be managed efficiently if...'; or, 'We must make the best possible use of resources in managing our hospitals if...'. And so on. In the last example given, not only has *cost-effective* itself disappeared, but even the components 'cost' and 'efficiency' have as well. And yet the idea expressed is the same.

Sometimes, as we have just seen, words simply do not exist in the target language. On other occasions the words exist but things have to be rephrased because they will sound just too strange if translated literally into the target language. Take the well-known example of the simple sentence, 'He swam across the river' (first used by Vinay and Darbelnet in their *Stylistique comparée* of 1958). The verb 'to swim' exists in French, as does the preposition 'across'. But no French speaker would say 'He swam across the river'. They would say 'He crossed the river by swimming' (*à la nage*). The English preposition is re-expressed via a verb, while the English verb becomes, in French, an adverbial phrase of manner. In such a sentence, for the language pair English-French, reformulation is not merely desirable but is actually necessary. It is not a question of taste, of personal style, as to how one expresses that sentence in French: a literal translation will appear wrong (i.e. bad French) to the listener.

The interpreter, however, should not feel limited to such reformulation only when they feel that not reformulating will produce something in the target language that actually sounds wrong. From our perspective here, the constant objective of the interpreter is to provide a correct translation of the original in a form that sounds as natural and as authentic as possible in the target language: the audience should not feel they are listening to a translation. This means that reformulation should also be used by the interpreter for stylistic reasons. Even though the interpreter is not trying to produce a literary, aesthetically pleasing text for its own sake, they need to make value judgements as to the most

appropriate way of saying things in the target language. The fact that such judgements are being made throughout a speech and in real time, in other words continuously and in a pressure situation, illustrates again the importance of the interpreter's mastery of the target language.

This reformulation might be called 'stylistic', without that word having any pejorative or subordinating connotation. It is particularly important because of the cumulative impact of simultaneous interpreting on an audience. If a delegate hears one sentence, or even a two-minute speech, interpreted in a way that makes the interpretation sound like a translation, they probably will not mind too much. But a typical real situation is for a meeting to last for, say, six hours. If delegates are subjected to calque, to French sounding like it should be English, or German sounding like it should be Russian, for several hours, then they will have much more difficulty following a meeting. Indeed, I would contend that in such cases, merely because of the form of the interpretation, there will be a communication gap between speakers and listeners, and the longer the meeting goes on, the wider that gap will grow.

For example, in English a speaker may use subsidiary clauses where the idea is expressed essentially through the use of a verb: 'When the president came to power...', 'After the military junta seized power...', 'Before the president in exile was assassinated...'. It is quite possible to translate all these clauses pretty well word-for-word into French without doing any violence to the French language. But if a French person were speaking freely, without referring to an English original, they would probably choose to express the same ideas through nouns instead of the verbs we find in English, giving literally, 'On the arrival in power of the president...', 'After the taking of power by the military junta...', or 'Before the assassination of the president in exile...'.

Each interpreter should have a feeling for the structures used in their target language and be able to use them naturally irrespective of the source language input. As we have just seen, some languages may prefer more noun-based structures, others more verb-based. Some languages may use passive constructions freely, others nearly never use them. The same thing applies to phrases with deponent verbs. Or we could take the example of the vague term *one*: 'one should do this', 'one has decided that...', etc. In some languages there is no problem using it; in others it sounds too vague or pompous; while in still further languages it is considered too familiar!

By respecting the structures of the target language the interpreter will provide a translation that is convincing and easy to listen to, increasing the audience's comfort of listening and probably maximizing communication. But interpreters may also achieve two other aims. First, they may well make life easier for themselves by avoiding complicated grammar and syntax. For example, there are languages where expressions such as, 'It would be important that we...' or 'It would be necessary that we...' must be followed by subjunctives in the next

clause, and these subjunctives may be in tenses and forms that are rare or difficult for the interpreter to use, particularly under the stress of simultaneous. In such cases, a reformulation may be used to simplify the verbal forms. You could reword as 'It would be important/necessary for us to...', thus making it possible to continue the sentence with a verb in the infinitive. Similarly, interpreters can avoid being tied in knots when there are a number of interrelationships, such as 'If you look at the 1996 figures, in column 2, and compare with those of 1995, the net balance of which is given at the foot of column 1, in relation to the difference between which the percentage is given in column 3, you will see that...'. Interpreters must not be drawn into this kind of gobbledygook, even if it is what their delegates say. They will have the greatest difficulty getting it right, and even if they do succeed there is a fair chance their audience will still not understand. The audience will be much better served with something as simple as 'The 1996 figures are in column 2, the 1995 ones in column 1, with the net balance at the bottom. Column 3 shows the percentage difference between the two. Comparing these, you will see that...'. A last example of making life easier for oneself, as well as for the audience, is if a speaker uses double or even triple negatives. If a speaker says, 'There has never been a period in history when people have not asked themselves the question...', the interpreter can reformulate as 'Throughout history people have always asked themselves the question...'. The same rule applies to cases where there is not strictly speaking a double negative but where there are two ideas that may be merged logically into one. For example, 'The duty suspension cannot be granted unless there is a proven need for the product on the national market' can become 'The duty suspension can only be granted if there is a proven need...'.

Second, a reformulation that respects the distinctive character of a language can give an interpretation that renders meaning through syntax. There are languages, including English, where syntax has little or no effect on meaning and you have to use stress or intonation to indicate what is important in a sentence. 'He painted *the door* blue' may imply I wanted the window frames doing instead; 'He painted the door *blue*' tells us rather that the door should have been green, or some other colour. But there are other languages, particularly Slavic languages, where the syntax alone could give us that information. When working into such languages it is particularly important to use reformulation in order to let the syntax do its work. Moreover, in languages where syntax plays a greater role, it not only provides meaning within an individual sentence but also structures a whole speech. One could take the example of Czech, where the 'theme', the reference back to elements already mentioned or known to the listener, tends to be put at the beginning of a sentence, and the 'rheme', the new information for the listener, which is also generally the point the speaker is insisting upon, tends to be put at the end of a sentence. Thus, let us suppose a source language gives:

Strange behaviour on the part of whales in the southern Atlantic has been observed over a number of years now. A team of marine scientists has come up with a new theory to explain this behaviour. But considerable controversy has arisen in Argentina about the theory.

In syntactic terms (but not as a literal word-for-word translation) this could be reformulated by a Czech interpreter as:

Whales in the southern Atlantic over a number of years now have been observed behaving strangely. To explain this behaviour [theme] a team of marine scientists has come up with a new theory [rheme]. But about the theory [theme] has arisen in Argentina considerable controversy [rheme].

Reformulating in this way can not only sound better style to a Czech audience but may actually make more sense, thus enhancing the audience's understanding.

We have so far seen that reformulation is important for interpreters in that it enables them to render the ideas of a speaker while respecting the form of expression in the target language. The form of the interpretation is improved. And, as form is content, the content is also improved. But there is another way in which reformulation contributes to the best possible content: it makes word-for-word translation impossible.

As we have stressed repeatedly, the interpreter does not so much ask 'What did the speaker say?' as 'What did the speaker mean?'. When working in consecutive, the interpreter can take a certain intellectual distance from the text of the speaker and will naturally reformulate things in a way appropriate to the target language. But when they are working in simultaneous, the speaker's words will still be ringing in their ears as they interpret, the sentence being interpreted has not even been finished by the speaker, and so the interpreter is much more dependent on the speaker's form of expression. If the syntax of the source language and the target language are compatible, the great temptation is to translate word by word. Sometimes such an approach will work. For example, the English sentence, 'The results that we have observed in our tests must be submitted to the board of directors by December' can be translated into a number of languages without the slightest reformulation. If the vocabulary of the two languages is close as well, as for example between two Romance languages, the temptation is even greater.

The problem is that the word by word approach will work only some of the time. One will inevitably come up against words and expressions that cannot be directly transposed into the target language. And if the interpreter has been following the speaker on a word-for-word basis they will find themselves in an inextricable situation, with a sentence they have begun but do not know how to

finish. Worse, the interpreter may slip into loose translations that are merely calque; the interpreter believes they are speaking in the target language but what they are saying is either nonsense or – perhaps worse – a mistranslation. For example, an English-language interpreter might talk about ‘the advice taken by the commission’ when they mean ‘the opinion adopted by the committee’. This is a word-for-word translation from another language which, unfortunately in a way, actually means something, but the meaning is quite different from what the speaker said. It would, if anything, have been better for the interpreter to provide a bad translation that was nonsense, since their delegate would then have been alerted to the problem and could at least have tried to find out what the speaker was saying. It is all too easy with certain language pairs for the interpreter to switch on to a kind of ‘automatic pilot’ and rattle on quite happily about ‘propositions in the ambit of the political orientations established by the conference at the level of ministers’ (when they mean ‘proposals based on the political guidelines fixed by the ministerial conference’). The problem is aggravated by the fact that some delegates, used to international meetings, adulterate their own use of language. English speakers may litter their speech with Gallicisms, and everyone else tends to use Anglicisms and Americanisms. It is up to the interpreter to resist the temptation to sink into the quagmire of *internationalese* where meanings become increasingly blurred, even if delegates do not resist that temptation.

A subsidiary advantage of not working in a word-for-word way is that one can obviate the difficulty of what we might call ‘multi-translations’. An interpreter may be working from a number of passive languages, say three. The meeting is about cooperation between Mediterranean riparian states. If the interpreter is too dependent on the form of expression in the source languages, following slavishly the exact turns of phrase, then from one language they may say, ‘the Mediterranean shore countries’, from another ‘the Mediterranean basin countries’, and from the third ‘the countries neighbouring the Mediterranean’. In all cases they mean the same thing, but they put it differently each time because of the influence of the source language. That is what we term the problem of ‘multi-translation’.

There is nothing wrong with an interpreter having a rich and varied vocabulary. On the contrary. But the interpreter should be able to use that vocabulary as they see fit, and also remain consistent when appropriate. If the interpreter’s terminology varies all the time, or perhaps if it suddenly changes after an hour’s debate, their audience may be misled into thinking the interpreter is genuinely talking about something different. The audience cannot be expected to understand that the interpreter’s form of expression has changed because it is following the vagaries of the source languages, and that one term is used because it comes from a Romance language and a different one because it comes from a Germanic language. Taking more intellectual distance from the text and

reformulating should make it possible to avoid this problem.

A further advantage of reformulation is that it enables the interpreter to deal with words they do not know. A word unknown to an interpreter may mean a word they recognize and know the meaning of in the source language but do not know how to express in the target language. It may also mean a word that is unknown to the interpreter in the source language. If someone were to say to the interpreter, out of context, 'What does X mean?' the interpreter would have to admit that they had never heard the word before and could therefore not answer.

It is this latter case that is usually meant when non-interpreters ask interpreters the inevitable question: 'What do you do when you come up against a word you don't know?'. This question has to be dealt with head-on somewhere in this book, and it is the technique of reformulation that makes it possible to give the fullest reply.

When we discussed consecutive interpreting, the eventuality of the unknown word was mentioned but commented on only briefly. In consecutive the interpreter hears the whole speech before being called upon to interpret; they thus have a number of possibilities open to them. They may grasp the exact meaning of the word in question from the context of the speech. They may grasp the general meaning of the word and be in a position to give a reasonable rendering of it, even if the translation they give is not the exact dictionary translation, or perhaps provide a generic term rather than the specific one used by the speaker. They may be able to express the idea used by the speaker without having recourse to the unknown word. They may ask the speaker for a clarification at the end of the speech before they start their interpretation. If they are lucky, particularly in a technical meeting, there may even be a delegate who knows the technical vocabulary in two or more languages and who can provide the right term for the interpreter. In the interactive context of a consecutive interpretation such problems can usually be sorted out.

Yet the question often put by non-interpreters in relation to simultaneous is quite understandable and justified. In the middle of simultaneous, you do not have the whole speech to provide context, you cannot interrupt a speaker or wait until the end to put a question; above all, if you are in mid-sentence and have to translate a word in that sentence you have never heard before, how do you cope?

First, although the simultaneous interpreter does not have the whole context, they do have some context. They have the overall context of the meeting, and of course the specific context of a speaker's comments up to the point at which the unknown word occurs. The worst thing that can happen from this point of view is that a speaker begins by saying, 'I should now like to talk about hops', and the interpreter does not know the word *hops*. With no context to work from, how does one react? To be frank, this kind of occurrence in an interpreter's real working life is so rare as to be not worth worrying about. In

the artificial context of an interpreting exam, at a school or with an international organization, such a problem may arise: a speech may be given on any topic, without warning to the candidate, who might then be caught out. But in a meeting, you normally know what the subject of the meeting is; the interpreter arrives shortly before the beginning of the meeting and may look over the agenda, consult documents or revise the documentation provided in advance. Later the same day they may find themselves facing terminological problems relating, say, to the processes hops are subjected to for making beer. But the chances that they will be faced with lexical problems at the beginning of proceedings with no context at all are minimal.

Thus the simultaneous interpreter, like the consecutive interpreter, does have context, even if it is rather less. A precondition if one wishes to benefit from such context is rather obviously that the interpreter must follow the meeting, even when they are not interpreting; listening to the delegations speaking your target language can be particularly useful, as they may provide the target-language terminology you may be lacking at the beginning of the meeting. Second, the interpreter is not really following 'just behind' the speaker. If the interpreter *were* just behind the speaker, then at the least obstacle they would stumble over. But if, as we have seen above, the interpreter has taken a short 'distance' from the speaker, they will have time to react to any unknown word that crops up. Third, and most important, the interpreter is reformulating. If one tackles interpreting as a sequence of lexical correspondences to be established, then once a correspondence is unavailable the whole system will break down.

For example, let's assume the text to be interpreted is:

To diagnose such a throat disorder a general practitioner is not enough.
The patient should be referred to an otorhinolaryngologist.

If the interpreter is doing this by finding lexical equivalents in the target language and does not know the last word, then disaster threatens. If, however, the interpreter works from context, has sufficient distance from the speaker and uses reformulation, then the possibilities open to them are little different from those in consecutive. The interpreter can work out, for the example above, what kind of a doctor is being referred to. They may know what is meant and use a less technical term such as *ear, nose and throat specialist*. They may have only a vague sense of what is meant but from the beginning of the sentence deduce that the patient needs a 'throat specialist'. They could even fall back on a generic term and simply say the patient needs to see a 'specialist'.

Above all, with reformulation you can express ideas without ever having to use an unknown word, provided, of course, you understand the speaker's meaning. Let's assume that government funding to universities is being discussed. A delegate asks:

Is the new funding for research to be considered as counterpart funding? If so, what is the share of the co-funding expected from the universities? Are they expected to match government funding exactly? And do they have to provide their counterpart from their own funds, or can industry contributions to research projects at a university be used for matching funds?

The interpreter does not know the term ‘counterpart funding’ (which in this context means funding from one body, here the government, provided on the condition that an other body also provides funding, usually to the same amount as the first body). They therefore begin with a non-committal ‘How is the new funding for research to be considered?’. Then as the penny drops and they gradually see what the speaker is driving at, they might continue:

What share of co-funding is expected of universities? Do they have to provide exactly the same amount as the government, *if there must be co-funding? Must universities co-finance*, and if so must they use their own funds, or can industry contributions to their research work also be used?

The words in italics here show the stage at which the interpreter grasps the idea fully and retrieves their initial omission – due to the non-committal beginning – by building the relative question back in. At no stage has the interpreter talked of ‘counterpart funds’, but the questions put are essentially the same as those put by the speaker, and the interpreter’s delegate will now be in a position to give answers to those questions.

A last word is necessary on the question of words interpreters do not know. There are many resources available to an interpreter to deal with the problem. Besides those mentioned above, you should remember that in simultaneous an interpreter should not be alone in the booth. Their colleague may be able to help out: they may know the word or can look it up in a glossary, or if they cannot help directly they might be able to slip into another booth to ask for assistance. With modern technology it is also increasingly possible for interpreters to call up terminology from data bases in the booth. But when all is said and done, there will still be occasions when an interpreter is confronted with a word they do not know. It may be that there is no way of getting round the problem, however much technique the interpreter has, without betraying the speaker, and the interpreter judges that the word is too important for it to be omitted. In such a case, as a matter of professional ethics, the same rule applies as for consecutive interpretation: the simultaneous interpreter should be honest and inform their audience that there is a word or expression that they cannot translate. The audience can then decide whether they feel it is important. They may not care less, in which case there is no harm done, particularly as this will happen very rarely, provided the interpreter has the right technique. If, however, delegates decide

that they wish to seek clarification from the speaker, they will be grateful to the interpreter for their honesty and for having contributed to mutual understanding.

Thus far we have stated the various advantages, both stylistic and in terms of enhancing content, arising from use of reformulation. But there is a more fundamental point that should be made about the interpreter's overall intellectual approach. The fact that an interpreter is using reformulation is a sign that they are doing their work properly. The interpreter has to understand, but then also to analyze and process the information they have understood. If translation is done systematically in a word-for-word way, the interpreter cannot be analyzing the ideas enough. Such a method will induce intellectual laziness, words becoming a convenient prop for the interpreter who can then continue their way without trying to get at the ideas behind the words. At best, the interpreter is analyzing the language of the speaker, not the ideas.

The natural product of discourse analysis must be that when a speech is re-expressed, particularly if it is re-expressed in a different language, it will be formulated differently. An interpreter who analyzes properly must, by definition, use reformulation.

Now that the need for reformulation has been established and some examples of its advantages have been given, we can ask how the interpreter actually sets about reformulating.

First, reformulation should come about as a matter of course if the interpreter adopts the approach we described above concerning the moment at which to start speaking. If the interpreter is lagging slightly behind the speaker and concentrates on starting their own sentence in a way which will enable them to finish it, there is already a fair chance that their text will diverge, in its form, from that of the speaker.

Second, even if the speaker begins a sentence in an unproblematic way from the point of view of the interpreter, the interpreter should still be cautious about just rushing in and following the speaker's line. 'Unproblematic' here means that the speaker's sentence makes it possible for the interpreter to finish their own sentences, even if they follow the syntax of the speaker, and that there are no particular lexical, conceptual or translative difficulties for the interpreter. Even though the beginning of a speaker's comments may be unproblematic, they might become more difficult to cope with, and the interpreter could regret having simply followed the speaker down their road. One way of developing autonomy is to see whether you can start a sentence in a different way from the speaker. If the beginning of the sentence is different, even if strictly speaking it did not need to be, then the sentence as a whole will enjoy greater freedom in relation to the original.

This technique in particular can be practised by students of interpretation: in simultaneous they can try to force themselves to begin all of their sentences differently from the speaker. This can be good practice, particularly as students

tend to seek the other extreme, that is, following the speaker too closely. The exercise should get them into the good habit of not following the speaker automatically. However, I must stress that this is not what we recommend professional interpreters to do. Students should certainly be cautious about following a speaker too closely and must thus be aware of the possibilities of expressing the speaker's ideas differently. But on the other hand, interpreters should not force themselves into a straitjacket by not allowing themselves ever to follow the speaker's structure. There are times when the only sensible translation is one that follows the speaker very closely, when any attempt to put the idea differently would involve torturing the target language. Systematic reformulation, pursued as an end in itself, would be very tiring, is far from necessary, and would sometimes be counterproductive. Reformulation, in its various forms, is one of the most useful tools the simultaneous interpreter has. But it is still only a tool, a means to an end.

Third, reformulation becomes a kind of second nature to interpreters as they listen to ideas and express them freely in their own words. Yet this is only possible if the interpreter is able to use their target language(s) in a rich and varied way. The interpreter must therefore keep fully in touch with their target language(s), in particular through reading widely. This means reading the press, to keep abreast of both current affairs and topical terminology; publications for the popularization of technical subjects such as medical research, information technology, and so on; and well written general literature (history books, novels, etc.), to broaden vocabulary and improve style. An interpreter who is cut off from their target language, perhaps living in a country of another language and not reading widely, will be stunted in their work, and in particular will be less able to take stylistic liberties in reformulation.

Finally, there are a number of specific examples of reformulation that can be given but which merit mention as techniques for simultaneous interpreting in their own right. The subsequent points of this section will therefore present various techniques, although you will soon see that many of them are variations on the theme of reformulation.

The Salami Technique

In simultaneous interpreters need to be able to express themselves in short, simple sentences, for the reasons explained above. Speakers, however, may – indeed, usually do – use long, complicated sentences. The logical conclusion is that the interpreter must divide up the speaker's sentences into a number of short, self-contained ones and then link them as appropriate. Take the following sentence, which is reasonably typical of much that interpreters hear in meetings:

Japan, in the light of the ruling of the international panel, and following the non-payment of the compensation by the American steel exporters,

which the US authorities have not forced them to pay, despite their legal obligations and the assurances they have given, has decided to act unilaterally, which they are perfectly entitled to in the case of non-compliance with an international panel ruling – and that is the case here – by imposing punitive duties on the import of certain flat products, although long ones should remain unaffected, at least for the immediate future.

This is the kind of spoken language that comes quite naturally to delegates. Other delegates listening directly, not through interpretation, understand perfectly well in context, despite the difficulties of the text. There is a grammatical error; the subject of the main clause is separated from the main verb by four lines; and there is at least technically an ambiguity in the third and fourth lines: 'which the US authorities have not forced them to pay, despite their legal obligations and the assurances they have given'. It is clear that *them* refers to the steel exporters, but who, after that, do '*their* legal obligations' and '*assurances they* have given' refer to? Grammatically, it could be the steel exporters. But in fact, it means the US authorities. This is all well and good for the delegate, who knows the context and who merely has to soak up the information. But the interpreter has the acoustic difficulty of speaking at the same time and the intellectual difficulty of sorting out the sentence, in all probability with a less perfect understanding of the background.

So what should the interpreter do? The answer is to divide the one long sentence up into a number of shorter ones. As this is 'slicing up' a sentence, rather as one might cut slices of a salami, the process is generally referred to, somewhat inelegantly, as the 'salami technique'.

Applying the approach discussed above for deciding when to begin speaking, the interpreter can begin when the speaker has reached *international panel*. They should not begin with a reference to Japan, as they have no idea as to how Japan is to fit into the sentence. They will therefore begin with something like, 'The international panel has made its ruling'. This way, they may arrive at something like the following:

The international panel has made its ruling. Compensation has not been paid by the American steel exporters. The US authorities have not obliged them to pay, although they have legal obligations and have given assurances in this respect. So Japan has decided to react unilaterally. It is quite entitled to do so, as the ruling of the international panel has not been respected. It will impose punitive duties on imports of some flat products. Long products should not be immediately affected.

The interpreter has made seven sentences out of one. Five of those sentences have only one clause. The two other sentences are barely more complicated.

The interpreter's overall text is slightly shorter than the original, and the way the different sentences or clauses have been related to one another has generally been simplified and streamlined. That is the kind of interpretation that interpreters themselves can cope with, and which the audience will find easy to follow. Of course, I do not pretend that this 'interpretation' cannot be improved upon: it is merely one illustration of a technique, and, like other illustrations in this book, is limited by the fact that it 'interprets' from English into English.

You might notice that Japan is mentioned by the interpreter only about half-way through the passage. In this particular example it may be easy to remember *Japan*, especially in the context of a real meeting. However, a notion that has to be held back when interpreting and mentioned only two or three sentences later might not always be so easy to recall, particularly as the interpreter has to continue directing their attention to whatever comes next in the speech. A simple thing to do, if the need should arise, is to jot down the word (for the example above the interpreter need not even write down *Japan* in full; the letter J would probably suffice). Then when the interpreter reaches the main verb they can, if necessary, look at their note-pad to remind themselves of the subject of that verb. It should not be forgotten, particularly by conference organizers and those responsible for catering for interpreters' practical needs, that conference interpreters, even in simultaneous, should always have writing materials available in the booth.

The salami technique is particularly useful when working from languages that have a natural tendency to long, complicated sentences, particularly those that can have Russian doll-like structures, with one subordinate clause fitting in another one, which in turn fits into a main clause (such as the so-called *Schachtelsätze* in German). For example, the English sentence:

We have tried to get into contact with the photographer who had identified the man seen bringing assistance to the injured on the scene of this serious accident.

With German word order this could be:

We have tried with the photographer, who the man [accusative case], who on the scene of this serious accident was seen, as he to the injured assistance brought, had identified, to get into contact.

If the interpreter's job is to put this into English, how on earth do they set about it? One cannot wait until the end of the entire sentence to say something, but it is difficult to know how to finish a sentence at all for a long time. One can hardly make something out of the first six words, and thereafter the speaker starts two separate subordinate clauses, the second one being subordinate not to

the main clause, but to the first subordinate. This is a circumstance where the interpreter has to weigh up the pros and cons of waiting until they are totally sure they can finish their sentence. If they have the courage to wait until *was seen* and have time to fit all the rest in afterwards, all the better. That is the ideal solution. But we do not live in an ideal world, and others may prefer to run the risk of starting after *the man, who...* At this stage, the interpreter will have recognized the beginning of the doubly subordinate clause, knows from the grammar that *the man* in question is the subject of that clause, and has good enough hopes of making something coherent of the sentence to warrant starting speaking. A particular reason for starting to speak at that moment is that the speaker, however perverse, is unlikely to build in a triply subordinate clause, that is, one that is subordinate to the clause beginning 'the man, who...'

Whichever of these two options the interpreter takes, their first words are likely to be 'A man was seen at this serious accident'. Using the salami technique, the interpreter's output can now become:

A man was seen at this serious accident. He was helping the injured. He has been identified by a photographer. We have tried to get into contact with the photographer.

Once the interpreter gets going, they are able to take in and interpret the extra information the speaker is giving. At the same time they can catch up on the elements from the beginning of the sentence initially left out, building them back into the interpretation. They are able to do this in a form that is easy for them to produce as it creates no intrinsic grammatical difficulties.

Not only can the salami technique help with such Russian doll-like sentences with subordinate clauses, but it can be of assistance when an entire subordinate clause is placed before the noun it refers to and is used in an adjectival function. For example, in English one would say, 'the man who(m) the photographer identified'. To take the example of German again, it is possible, in that language, to translate the English word-for-word. But it is also possible to say, 'the by the photographer identified man'.

Thus, if we change the above example slightly, and it is no longer the photographer but the man in question that we wish to contact, a German sentence might run:

We have tried, with the by the photographer identified man, who at this serious accident was seen, as he to the injured provided assistance, to get into contact.

This is an easier sentence to interpret than the previous one. By *identified man*, the interpreter can already start, having enough material to provide a complete

sentence of their own. Then they can divide the speaker's sentence up into:

The photographer has identified a man, who was seen at this serious accident. He was helping the injured. We have tried to contact him.

Efficiency in Reformulation

One of the main formal objectives of the simultaneous interpreter is efficiency of expression: The interpreter is constantly under time pressure, having to produce their interpretation at the same speed as the speaker, but with the added burden of having to translate and not knowing where they are going. Provided speakers know what they want to say and are not deliberately slow speakers, the interpreter will always have to work out techniques for keeping up. Every second can count, and it is important to express oneself as succinctly as possible. This is so much the case that sometimes an interpreter's choice will go to one form of expression because it is the form that contains the least syllables.

The need to be able to reformulate so as to express oneself efficiently exists for all languages, but it should be noted that for some languages it is more acute than for others. English is by nature a dense, succinct language. English-language interpreters are lucky in that this often gives them an inbuilt advantage, which makes them the envy of colleagues working into other languages. Interpreters working into Romance languages often have an uphill struggle in that their language forces them to use, say, fifty percent more words than a given source language to say the same thing.

One way of being succinct is to make use of a speaker's reference to previous comments in the meeting. Let's assume that in a meeting on international civil law with a number of national delegations, one of them, say the Belgian delegation, has asked a question about the legal means open to a landlord to sue a former tenant who is of a different nationality and has returned to their home country. It is clear that all the delegations present know that this is the Belgian question. Then, another delegation takes the floor and begins, 'On the Belgian question concerning...' and proceeds to repeat the entire Belgian question. The interpreter may then, if they feel it is necessary to save time, simply say, 'I should like to say something about the Belgian question'. Alternatively, they may feel this would leave an excessively long silence and give their audience the impression that the interpretation is woefully incomplete. In that case, they could choose to summarize the Belgian question very simply. The only case in which the interpreter is really obliged to interpret the entire repetition of the Belgian question is if they deduce that the speaker from the other delegation, who is not speaking the same language as the Belgian delegate, is repeating the question in order to check that they have understood it correctly, and will take silence from the Belgian delegation as meaning that they have.

Of course, this kind of technique works only if the reference to the Belgian delegation enlightens the audience. If in a large gathering a speaker says, 'On the question of the gentleman at the back with a beard, concerning...', few people in the room will identify the gentleman in question, and even fewer will be able to relate him to his question. There, the interpreter must be complete, and if anything is to be omitted at all, it is rather the reference to the person who put the question than the question itself.

Examples where one can make reference back crop up all the time in an interpreter's work. They may be much smaller than the one above and concern just a few words. For example, an international trade tribunal is part of the object of a discussion. Some delegations keep repeating scrupulously, 'the international trade tribunal'. Provided this is the only tribunal in the debate and there is no risk of confusion, it is legitimate for the interpreter to say, 'the tribunal'. Such tactics can save precious seconds, and if used as part of a consistent strategy can make all the difference between keeping up with a speaker and not keeping up.

The tactic just described is based on the principle of exploiting cognitive knowledge shared by the interpreter and their audience. The interpreter knows the knowledge is shared because of what has happened during the meeting (which, incidentally, is another good reason for following a meeting even if one is not 'on mike'). But an interpreter may also exploit shared cognitive knowledge coming from outside the meeting. Let's imagine, for example, that the President of the United States has made an extremely important speech in Montreal on the future of pan-American relations. It has been in the news everywhere and is highly topical; everyone should know about it. If a delegate chooses to say 'the American President's speech in Montreal on the future of pan-American relations', the interpreter can express that satisfactorily as 'the American President's Montreal speech'. If they are lucky, in context they may even be able to pare this down to 'the Montreal speech'; why not?

The interpreter can also save a lot of time by referring to documents, organizations, etc. in an abbreviated or simplified form, provided this form is clear for the audience and is accepted usage. Thus the speaker's 'International Atomic Energy Agency' can become the 'Vienna Agency', the 'Treaty establishing the European Economic Community' can become the 'EEC Treaty' or the 'Treaty of Rome'.

The interpreter should seek economy of expression everywhere. This means, first, removing all useless filler words such as *really*, *actually*, *well*, etc. (unless these words are being used in their strict, primary sense). These are words to be kept in store for desperately slow speakers where one needs to fill in the silence a bit, and even then they should be used only with parsimony.

Second, it means not taking rhetorical precautions with one's audience by adding phrases such as *so to speak/say*, *if you like*, *if you see what I mean*. Such

phrases are a waste of time and will only give the impression that the interpreter is not totally sure about their own interpretation (which is usually the case when they use such expressions).

Third, unnecessary repetitions are banned. Speakers may deliberately repeat notions, with synonyms or near-synonyms, to make a point particularly forcefully. If that is the case, the interpreter has to repeat with the speaker (as mentioned on consecutive). But most repetition on the part of delegates is gratuitous. In particular, in some languages and for a certain kind of delegate a triptych of adjectives or verbs seems to be considered the acme of good style. This gives sentences such as, 'This proposal needs to be carefully studied, examined and analyzed'. Other speakers are tautologous, talking of 'innovating with a new initiative' and so on. Interpreters should tidy up such language. And of course, if such things are not in the original, the interpreter should not introduce them into their own version.

Fourth, interpreters must be generally vigilant about their own form of expression and choose the shortest form, where possible. *As far as ... is concerned* can usually be replaced by *On ...*. Or again, *We must do this in conjunction/cooperation with one another* can as a general rule be simply, *We must do this together*. The list of examples is endless, whatever the target language, and so are the consequent time savings. Interpreters should also have an eye for a shortcut. For example, a delegate may talk about 'the coordination meeting to exchange our impressions after the Helsinki conference'. That may seem natural to the speaker, and there is no earthly reason why the interpreter should not translate the phrase more or less literally. But if the interpreter is alert and grasps what is being referred to, they may interpret the whole phrase as 'the debriefing on Helsinki'.

Fifth, interpreters should be prepared to provide a 'no frills' interpretation where this is appropriate. This means an interpretation where the speaker's verbosity is ironed out. Here we take verbosity to be a different problem from repetition and tautology, but the interpreter's response remains the same. If an announcement is made to the press corps to the effect that 'you will have the opportunity or putting direct oral questions to the Minister with a view to his informing you about the situation currently prevailing in the negotiations', the interpreter could inform the press corps that 'you will be able to ask the Minister questions about the state of the negotiations'. The ultimate pruning of verbosity would be if a chairperson asks a delegate, 'Can you agree?' and the delegate answers, 'I have to inform you that my position on this question means that my answer is in the negative'. The interpretation of the answer may well be 'No'.

This last technique is one that can help interpreters make considerable time savings. However, a word of warning is necessary. It may be that a delegate wishes to adopt a literary or rhetorical style with certain oratorical effects. If that is the case the interpreter should make an effort to respect the style. Second,

it may be that a speaker is trying to be particularly diplomatic. Then, the interpreter must make sure that no nuance is lost. To return to the previous example, let us assume the answer is, 'Unfortunately, Mr Chairman, I have to inform you that for the moment my instructions are that my delegation's position remains negative'. This can most definitely not be interpreted as 'no'. There is the idea 'unfortunately', which expresses regret about the refusal. Then the speaker says the all-important words 'for the moment'. This holds out hope that in future the position will change. Third, the speaker refers to their instructions and says 'my delegation', thus personally distancing themselves somewhat from the official position. The first answer we cited really meant 'no'. This answer means, 'not now, but I think I can get my authorities to change their minds'. The subtlety of the latter answer has to be recognized by the interpreter, reading between the lines, and then it has to be brought out in the interpretation by following the speaker more closely, although even there it will not be necessary to repeat every word they use.

Simplification

Most interpreters at some time in their career find themselves faced with the task of interpreting highly technical material. For such speeches it may be desirable, or even necessary, to simplify a speech, and that for two reasons. First, it may be that the speech is so technical that the interpreter, despite their best efforts to prepare a meeting and despite documentation made available to them, just cannot render all of the technical details. In such a case, they must at least try to save the essentials by simplification. Second, the speaker may be talking over the heads of their audience. The interpreter may very well be able to cope with the speech, but a faithful rendering would just leave the audience confused. Let's begin with this second type of case.

I am aware that this point is controversial and may shock colleagues who feel it is the interpreter's first duty to be as faithful as possible to the speaker. Such colleagues may argue it is the speaker's fault if they speak in a way that cannot be understood by their audience, and it is not up to the interpreter to palliate the problem. Moreover, for an interpreter to judge an audience unfit to listen to an unsimplified version of a speech may seem at the very least patronizing, not to say arrogant.

These points are valid, which is why deliberate simplification on the part of the interpreter is a technique to be used sparingly and carefully. But I would argue that an interpreter's first duty is not so much to be faithful to the speaker's words come what may, but to maximize communication.

If, for example, a group of teenagers is being provided information on the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Community, they need to understand the explanations they receive. 'If the CIF price of produce at the Community

border is below the guideline price as determined under the Common Market Organization, then a levy, which is not a tariff duty, is imposed', is the kind of thing layman youngsters will find impenetrable, unless most of the terms are explained by the speaker. The interpreter may find it better to say to the audience, 'If farm produce comes into the Community at a price below the official Community market price, a special agricultural levy is imposed' (which could be seen as a particular form of simplification: interpreting unfamiliar jargon into everyday language).

Such communication gaps may be bridged not just in the case of young people. Simplification can apply to any case of an expert talking in the wrong register to laymen. Take a nuclear scientist explaining to political decision makers the safety characteristics of different kinds of reactors. On high temperature reactors they explain:

The core is made of a graphite matrix entrapping the refractory fuel particles, which are 1mm spheres with a nucleus of uranium or plutonium oxide or carbide, coated with polycarbon or silicon carbide to separate the fissile matter of the particles.

Assuming the interpreter has some kind of training on nuclear reactors, or at least has been well briefed and is therefore in a position to cope with this, they can explain to their delegates in a simpler way. They could say:

The core is made of graphite. This entraps the fuel particles. The particles, with a core of uranium or plutonium, are in turn coated with polycarbon or silicon carbide [or even, if the interpreter feels this detail is meaningless to their delegates, 'with another substance'], to separate the fissile matter.

It is not that the delegates are so stupid or ignorant that they cannot cope with notions such as 'uranium oxide', but their overall understanding of what the expert is driving at will probably gain from a streamlined presentation: if they are not themselves scientists the full text may leave them 'blinded by science', and they may miss the main point.

Simplification is also a technique to help the interpreter when the going gets too tough for them. It may sound like a logical impossibility, in that it can be argued that simplification is possible only if in the first place one has understood; how can you simplify if you do not know what you are simplifying? However, I feel that an interpreter can identify the essence of a statement or a question, and convey it, without understanding all of the details expressed by a speaker; or, they may have understood but do not necessarily have all the target-language vocabulary at their fingertips to express everything quickly enough.

For example, if a chemist talks about the usefulness of metal leaching for different metals, they may explain the following:

Trace elements may be silicious or extrasilicious. Silicious elements, such as titanium or chromium, are linked to the silicate network as primary constituents of the crystal mesh or by diadochic replacement, and so have low chemical mobility. Extrasilicious elements, such as copper and lead, lie outside the network in simple compounds, such as oxides, and are therefore much more mobile.

Here the audience is composed of chemists, so if there were not the language barrier they would understand everything. The problem is that the poor interpreter does not understand and does not have all the vocabulary in their target language. In such a case, the interpreter must ask, again, what the speaker is driving at, and in particular must ask themselves that question in context. Here, the discussion is about the metals for which leaching is worthwhile. Mobile elements will be easier to leach than immobile ones. And the interpreter learns from the speaker that silicious means 'immobile' and extrasilicious means 'mobile'. That must therefore figure in the interpretation. One would not necessarily have to *prune back the interpretation so drastically*, but one could convey the essential message by saying:

Trace elements may be found in silicates or outside them. Those in silicates, like titanium and chromium, are bound into the silicate. So they are not very mobile. Those outside it, like copper and lead, are found elsewhere in simple compounds [such as oxides], and so are much more mobile.

Sadly, a fair amount of information has been lost, and the interpreter does not use the correct technical terms. But assuming the speaker is developing an argument to the effect that we should concentrate on extrasilicious metals for leaching, then the other delegates will have followed and the interpreter will essentially have done their job.

Such simplification can be particularly important if there is a direct dialogue between two participants in a meeting, with the one asking questions of the other. For example, in a meeting on product liability for consumer protection, one legal expert asks another:

If the commercial guarantee is no longer applicable and no legal remedy is available for the buyer in relation to the producer under the legal guarantee, because of problems of burden of proof and the statute of limitation in the producer's country, can a product liability legal guarantee be invoked against the seller in the seller's country if it is a different country?

Let's assume the interpreter has difficulties understanding and/or expressing both 'burden of proof' and 'statute of limitations'. The interpreter can still identify the main notions in the question: the commercial guarantee does not apply; the legal guarantee will not work in relation to the producer; can the legal guarantee then be invoked in relation to the seller? To provide an answer to the question the interpreter's client must understand at least that. The interpreter could thus provide sufficient interpretation even if the words *because of problems of burden of proof and the statute of limitation in the producer's country* are interpreted as *because of technical legal problems in the producer's country*. The whole, simplified interpretation could become:

Let us assume the commercial guarantee no longer applies. The buyer can take no legal action against the producer under the legal guarantee, because of technical legal problems in the producer's country. Can they use the product liability legal guarantee against the seller, if the seller is in a different country?

Again, the interpreter has definitely lost something in the interpretation, but at least now their delegate can give a useful answer to the question put to them.

With examples such as this we should not forget that interpreting is also a percentages game. A perfectionist would make a supreme effort to interpret even the problematic passage. But in practice the upshot would probably be that they would spend so much time and effort on it that the more important element, the question at the end, would be less satisfactorily interpreted. The interpreter must know how to sacrifice the less important to the more important (which also implies they are carrying out a sufficient analysis of the speech to identify what is important, and what is less important).

Generalization

It may also be that an interpreter does not feel technical simplification is necessary for either of the reasons mentioned above, but that to save time, perhaps with a very fast speaker, a number of specific items mentioned can be expressed in one generic term.

A speaker could say, 'People take it for granted now to have a fridge and a freezer, the dishwasher and the washing machine with a spin dryer, a cooker and a vacuum cleaner'. If the speaker is going at a rate of knots and the detail of this list is irrelevant, the interpreter can generalize (in the sense of using a generic term) and interpret, 'People take it for granted now to have all household electrical appliances'.

Again, this technique should be used only where appropriate. If a speaker gives a list where each element is significant, then the interpreter must do their

best to reproduce the list. One does not want to be in the situation of the interpreter who gave up on a list of chemicals only to hear the chairperson of the meeting say (with a smile), 'Yes, but I must inform the interpreter that "various other chemicals" is not quite enough'.

Omission (Under Duress) and Fast Speakers

Sometimes an interpreter will be under duress because of the technicity of a subject, because of the mode of expression of a speaker, because the speaker is too fast, or a mixture of these factors. The interpreter finds that neither simplification nor generalization help. The only way to keep afloat is to omit things.

In such circumstances there are two comments that can be made. First, the interpreter must carry on making their analysis of the speech so that they keep in the essential elements and miss out only what is illustrative or in some other way accessory (such as asides, digressions, etc.). This analysis is based on exactly the same principles as described for consecutive interpretation.

The second comment is that in order to make this analysis interpreters must give themselves a bit of time and have sufficient intellectual distance from the original. If the problem is the technicity of the subject or an abstruse or complex mode of expression on the part of the speaker, the interpreter will automatically be devoting a large share of their energy to understanding and analyzing. But even if the problem is the sheer speed of the speaker, then the interpreter must proceed in the same way. The last thing the interpreter should do is enter into a race with the speaker. The interpreter will get caught in a vicious circle: racing behind the speaker, they will have less time to analyse meaning and less time to decide how to express it. As they have less time to analyze they will be more and more dependent on the words the speaker uses. Having less time to decide how to express themselves, their own mode of expression will become increasingly sloppy. The overall result will be an interpretation which progressively becomes a poorly expressed word-for-word translation.

On the contrary, with a fast speaker, the interpreter should take some distance, analyze fully, and see how they can use every technique – the salami technique, simplifying, generalizing, general economy of expression, and where necessary omission – to convey as much as possible of the speaker's meaning in as few syllables as possible. There are few things more impressive for an interpreter's audience than to be aware that another delegate is going at their speech hammer and tongues and to hear their interpreter stating things calmly, clearly and collectedly.

Here we must comment more generally on the problem of fast speakers and professional ethics. Different scenarios are possible. In a meeting where participants speak freely, one or more speakers may just happen to be fast. They are unlikely to be so fast as to be impossible for an interpreter, but if they are

really problematic the interpreter may speak through the microphone to request that their delegates ask the speakers in question to go a little slower. Usually this has an impact on the speaker for about thirty seconds, and then they reaccelerate to their normal pace. If that is the case the interpreter should not keep on insisting to their delegates; they must just make the best of a bad job.

Things are quite different when it comes to a speaker who is reading a text at speed. Ideally, the text should be made available to the interpreters before the meeting so that they can prepare it. If that is not the case, however, the speech should be made available at least during the meeting so the interpreters can refer to it at the relevant moment. If an interpreter finds themselves with a text they received about two minutes before the speaker begins, such that they had no time to prepare it, they should use it particularly to identify specific references to proper names, technical terms, and numbers in whatever form they come (dates, statistics, reference documents, etc.). It is these elements that create the most difficulty when a speaker is very fast. It is not necessarily useful to read the speech in the written text word-for-word as the speaker pronounces it. Trying to read in this way can distract the interpreter's concentration from the oral text and can create confusion if the speaker diverges from their written text (which is often the case), such that the interpreter expends mental effort on trying to reconcile the written and spoken versions. However, if the interpreter concentrates hard on listening to the speaker, using the written text to follow approximately where the speaker is and to pick out specific problematic elements such as those mentioned above, then they have a good chance of providing the best interpretation.

The worst situation is when the interpreter has no text at all. A speaker who then reads a text at speed can be quite impossible to interpret, particularly as written texts tend to be more dense and more succinctly expressed than the comments of people speaking freely. The interpreter will have little margin for using techniques such as simplification, generalization or omission of non-essential items. They should of course do their best to interpret whatever is thrown at them, but it is a good thing to warn the audience that the interpreter does not have the written version of the text being presented. It may make a delegate interrupt the speaker and persuade the organizers to give the interpreters a copy. Even if they do not, at least the audience is forewarned that the interpreter is working in circumstances that do not allow an optimal level of interpreting. Then, if the interpreter can cope, all the better. But if the speech is really downright impossible without any supporting documentation – for example the presentation of epidemiological research with mention of little known geographical regions where the research took place, technical, medical terminology, and a detailed statistical analysis of all the data gathered – then the interpreter is not just entitled, but honour-bound, to tell their audience that it is impossible and to stop interpreting. An interpreter should never be forced into a

situation where, because of bad organisation, it is materially impossible for them to provide even a semblance of a decent service.

Summarizing and Recapitulation

Having looked at a number of ways the interpreter edits the original in order to improve the interpretation, or in some cases to make an interpretation possible, we should also be aware that there are times when, in order to ensure full understanding on the part of the audience, the interpreter should not edit, but on the contrary add things.

First, an interpreter may wish to summarize or recapitulate what a speaker has already said, and what they themselves have already interpreted, if they feel the audience may have failed to grasp the point. It should be noted that 'summarize' is not being used here in the sense of providing a summary that replaces the full text. It is a summary that is added to the full text, recapitulating the main idea. Nor should it be felt that such a technique has to be used to cover up for the interpreter's own shortcomings. It is quite possible to use this technique, if one has time, to clarify what is unclear because of the speaker.

For example, a chairperson may say:

The question is whether a legal instrument, and by legal I mean of course also something that could be administrative or just a rule, but anyway something which we would consider legal, although you'd have to think about how to enforce it afterwards, and who would enforce it? There we'd have to look at the question of competence. Or should we just leave it up to industry to exercise voluntary restraint, which is what they want, although they want it, perhaps, precisely because they don't want to be policed, but then again we must bear in mind what our international competitors are doing in this field. I don't know what you think. I'd be interested in hearing your ideas.

That, despite its incoherence, is a question that can be understood by a delegate listening in the same language; they would have an idea of what to comment upon. But much of the chair's reasoning is expressed only implicitly in their words, and an interpreter could justifiably feel that through the filter of translation their audience would not be able to see the wood for the trees. At the end they could thus sum up by asking clearly: 'Are you in favour of a binding legal instrument or a system of voluntary restraint?'. Then the delegates would be sure to know what to comment upon.

Explanation

Second, as in consecutive, interpreters may be faced with notions, cultural and

institutional references, and so on, that have no direct equivalent in the target language and which ideally should therefore be explained to the audience. The problem is that this takes time, and the interpreter may not feel that they have that time available. Clearly, if an interpreter cannot fit in an explanation, they should not force themselves to provide the explanation to the detriment of the speaker's other comments. But paradoxically, a brief explanation can actually save time in the long run. This is the case if a notion is used repeatedly in a speech. Then, the interpreter can explain its meaning the first time it is mentioned and thereafter refer to it in an abbreviated form, thus saving time.

For example, the French are (rightfully) very proud of their high speed trains, and when they say '*the TGV*' [= train à grande vitesse = high-speed train], they mean pretty well by definition *their* high-speed train, the French one. One could interpret a speech about the TGV by saying, each time it is mentioned, 'the French high-speed train'. But you would save time if you slipped in the first time, 'the TGV, that is, the French high speed train', and thereafter just repeated the French initials, which the delegate would then understand.

As in consecutive, this use of explanation must be made to the appropriate audience. One should not insult a gathering of European railway experts by telling them what the TGV is. It should also be done in the most scrupulous, objective and economical way possible, not expressing any personal view of the interpreter.

Anticipation

Even with the precautions mentioned above concerning the moment to begin speaking in simultaneous interpretation, the distance to maintain from the speaker and the need to avoid launching into sentences one cannot finish, it is clear that the interpreter must often begin a sentence without knowing exactly where that sentence is going. To alleviate this difficulty the simultaneous interpreter must learn to anticipate.

First, it is possible to anticipate the broad structure and sometimes the general thrust of a speech. This anticipation can be possible from the context of a meeting. If there is a discussion or a negotiation delegations' positions or arguments will become known, they will return to points they have already made, or react to points made by other participants. A delegate who has expressed severe criticism of a point of view may attenuate their position or compromise, but they will not turn around and suddenly wholeheartedly endorse that point of view. Such anticipation will be enhanced if the interpreter can also bring to bear other cognitive knowledge available to them. If you are interpreting a politician with notoriously liberal views on all things economic, that politician is not going to declare their opposition to deregulation and liberalisation of postal services, for example.

Second, interpreters should learn to recognize speech patterns and rhetorical structures, particularly in the languages they have to interpret from. Those working from English should know that an Englishman or woman who begins with, 'This is an interesting idea/ingenious argument/tempting proposition' and so on is very liable to continue, 'but...'. Interpreters working from German should be aware that a German speech structure is often ternary: 1) Here is my position; 2) This is why this is my position; 3) Let me sum up my position. A French speaker will tend to use the classical thesis-antithesis-synthesis structure. An Italian, contrary to others (such as the French) who may gradually work their way to a conclusion, may well state their conclusion to begin with, and then argue to explain that conclusion. And so on.

One should not exaggerate such national stereotypes, nor their importance, but they can help an interpreter to anticipate. Above all, if the interpreter is given tips by the speaker as to what is coming next, they should use that information. It may seem too obvious to be worthwhile stating, but if a speaker uses, for example, the thesis-antithesis-synthesis approach and presents the thesis then continues, 'but on the other hand...', the interpreter has to be alert to this; they have to anticipate (in their mind, not in their spoken word) the general thrust, if not the detail, of the counter-argument.

Third, interpreters can anticipate specific words or phrases in individual sentences because it is simply so obvious how the sentence is going to end. This is particularly important when working from a source language that has quite different syntax from the target language. To deal with this problem, the interpreter uses reformulation in any case, but there are occasions when waiting for a key word, which would allow the interpreter to formulate their own sentence, would take so long that it is better to anticipate. There are also instances where either technique is possible, but it is just much easier to anticipate.

Non-interpreters with a knowledge of foreign languages often ask interpreters who work from German how they cope, 'because you often have to wait for the verb at the end of the sentence'. This is a classic example of where anticipation can be used. One could just as well ask how two German speakers in conversation with one another cope. Does the one listening have to wait for the verb to be spoken by the other before they suddenly understand? Surely they understand the sentence as it is being spoken.

Thus, for example, the French delegation has presented a document. Various delegations are thanking them for it, and the German delegation says (with German word order), 'We too should like the French delegation for its very useful document to thank'. The interpreter should know practically as soon as the German delegate pronounces the first words that the verb at the end will be *to thank*. There may even be other clues along the way. The German delegate may add the adverb *warmly*: 'We too should like warmly the French delegation...'. This can only confirm the interpreter's intuition.

If the interpreter's intuition tells them a sentence must end in a particular way, even before the words are spoken, then the interpreter can actually anticipate, not just in their mind but in their interpretation, saying the words before the speaker does. This may make formulation easier for them. It can give them a breathing space and extra time to work in for subsequent sentences. Nasty surprises cannot be totally ruled out, but the interpreter who uses anticipation intelligently will find that the advantages accruing from the ninety-nine times they get it right will outweigh the drawbacks of the one time in a hundred that they anticipate wrongly and have to correct their interpretation.

This form of anticipation is a technique that lends itself particularly well to interpreting from Germanic languages (not just German), in particular because of the need to anticipate verbs. But it can be used for all source languages. In all languages interpreters will identify verbs that, in context, necessarily require a particular subject or object (which may come much later in the speaker's sentence), a modal verb that calls for a particular main verb, etc. Particularly useful will be the ability to make the crucial anticipation of a negative concept expressed at the end of a sentence (e.g. 'This is an idea which will please nobody').

We must conclude with a caveat. Anticipation can be a precious tool. Used in conjunction with reformulation it can help improve significantly the interpreter's expression and provide time savings. But its proper use presupposes that the interpreter is always working in context, continues to listen attentively to the speaker, and does not prejudge the issue so much that they end up making their own speech, saying what they feel should be logical, rather than following the speaker.

What if I Make a Clear Mistake?

As mentioned, anticipation can go wrong. What should you do if this happens? The answer to this question applies to all cases where the simultaneous interpreter makes a clear, objective mistake and then realizes what they have done. Such errors can occur for reasons other than a mistake in anticipation. You can mishear a word, not hear a word at all (which can have dramatic consequences if that word is 'not'), misunderstand a word or phrase, misconstrue a speaker's logic, interpret incorrectly a reference by the speaker that was merely implicit in the original, make a slip of the tongue and say incorrectly something that you have understood perfectly, etc.

If a mistake is made there are a number of possible scenarios. First, it is possible for the interpreter to make a mistake on a point that has little or no bearing on the way the meeting proceeds, perhaps an aside by the speaker, and nobody has noticed. The interpreter, out of professional pride, may feel it is desirable to correct themselves and give the right version to their audience. However, I feel that if the error makes no material difference it is a waste of

time, both for the interpreter and for their delegates, to make the correction, and the interpreter should just pass it over in silence.

Second, the interpreter might make a mistake on a point that is more significant, but it then becomes obvious from the behaviour of their audience that they have mentally rectified in any case. Perhaps the interpreter has given a wrong page reference and from context the delegates know what the page is, or the interpreter has said something that is logically inconsistent or technically impossible and the delegates can work out what the truth must be. In such a case it is not necessary for the interpreter to make a correction for the good order of the meeting. But if they can slip in a correction quickly it is a good idea, as it will improve (or restore) the delegates' confidence in their interpreter and generally establish a better personal relationship between interpreter and audience. It is preferable to make the correction in a matter-of-fact way, with an apology, as if you were merely correcting a slip of the tongue in a normal conversation: 'Sorry, the speaker is referring to page 24, not 42'.

Finally, the interpreter might make a clear material mistake that is important, and their audience does not realize it. As soon as the interpreter sees this has happened, they must swallow their pride and correct the point as quickly and as clearly as possible. It is totally unethical for an interpreter to try to 'cover up' for a mistake just to avoid the embarrassment of admitting it.

Such scenarios are to be clearly distinguished from those cases where the interpreter has essentially translated correctly but feels they could express themselves still better, more elegantly, more idiomatically or more exactly. In this latter case the interpreter should not backtrack to correct themselves. Such corrections are not only unnecessary, as the only purpose they serve is to satisfy the interpreter's own desire to provide a 'perfect' translation, but they are also inefficient, as they will prevent the audience from concentrating on the message they are supposed to be hearing, and the interpreter from concentrating on the speaker's subsequent words.

What if the Speaker Makes a Mistake?

The very first thing to say about speakers' mistakes is that they happen less frequently than interpreters think. It is rare for an interpreter to be in a position where they can judge the content of a speaker's comments and identify mistakes just on the basis of the knowledge the interpreter brings with them to the meeting. How often has an interpreter sat there, finding the speaker's comments strange, saying to themselves 'This *can't* be true!' only to find that after all it was true? Extreme caution is to be exercised by any interpreter ascribing an error to a speaker.

However, there are occasions when the interpreter can be sure they have spotted a mistake made by a delegate. The delegate may make a slip of the

tongue, for example situating a famous event in the wrong century. They may make a reference to something said in the course of a meeting, for example if the Italian delegation has spent five minutes arguing in favour of stricter environmental limits and the German delegation says, 'Italy is in favour of less strict environmental limits'. A delegate might misquote the number of a document. And so on. In this kind of objective situation, where the interpreter is at least ninety-nine percent sure that a mistake has been made, they can react.

As with one's own mistakes, there are a number of possible scenarios. First, it may be that the speaker really has just made a slip of the tongue. The discussion is whether five hundred thousand or five hundred and fifty thousand dollars should be allocated to a project, and one delegate pleads for 'five hundred million' (perhaps having already talked of 'half a million'). This is obviously a slip of the tongue; it would be a waste of time to repeat the speaker's words and then offer a putative correction to the audience. It is better simply to interpret this as 'five hundred thousand'.

Second, the speaker might be saying something quite wrong and the interpreter feels they know what the right version should be, but are not totally sure. For example, a scientist says, 'Given the fire hazard, we need to look for an inert, light gas, such as hydrogen'. The gas in question cannot be hydrogen. Given the context of the meeting, the interpreter deduces it is helium, but cannot be totally sure. The interpreter should therefore interpret the speaker's sentence faithfully, and then add as quickly as possible, '...says the speaker, but I think he means helium'. This shows no disrespect for the speaker and will give the audience all the information they require. At the same time it does not commit the interpreter to the term 'helium'. If the gas turns out to be a third one, the interpreter cannot be blamed for mistranslating and misleading the audience, as they have merely put forward a plausible hypothesis.

Third, the speaker might say something clearly wrong but the interpreter has no clear idea what the correct text would be. Then, the interpreter should proceed as in the second scenario but not give any alternative, thus just adding to the speaker's words, '...says the speaker'. This same technique is to be used if the speaker's mistake is based on a misconception that it is necessary to highlight in order to restore clarity to the meeting. Let's return to the example above, where the Italian delegation argues clearly and at length for stricter environmental limits, and the German delegation says, 'As the Italian delegation wants less strict environmental limits...'. This could be a slip of the tongue. But it could also be that the German delegation has misunderstood, was unattentive, or was out of the room when the Italian delegation was making its comments and is unaware that the Italian position has changed. It might just be, also, that the German delegation wants *still more stringent* limits than Italy, and is being sarcastic! Prudence is therefore necessary on the side of the interpreter, but to avoid a continuation of misunderstanding in the room they should add to the

German delegate's words, '...says the speaker'. This should function as a kind of warning signal for the interpreter's audience, and if the German delegation really has misunderstood, the situation can be straightened out.

Two concluding comments are in order on possible mistakes made by speakers. There is the situation where a delegate, for organizational reasons, is unable to speak their mother tongue and does not fully master the language they use in the meeting. If such a delegate gets tangled up in their comments, saying odd things, contradicting themselves, using double negatives when one negative is sufficient to express their meaning, the interpreter should show sensitivity and express to the best of their ability the ideas they understand the speaker wishes to express. There is no point repeatedly saying 'says the speaker'. If the speaker's message is really unclear, the interpreter may, at the end of a speech, make one overall remark to the effect that they are not totally sure of the speaker's meaning as the speaker has to speak a foreign language.

Generally, again, corrections or expressions of doubt as to whether a speaker has made a mistake should be kept to the strict minimum. Better to intervene in this way too rarely than too often. If such remarks from the interpreter are too frequent this will only irritate their delegates. If, once in a while, a speaker makes a mistake, the interpreter translates it faithfully and correctly and then afterwards the delegates, in bad faith, claim it was the fault of the interpreter who has made a translation error, then that's just too bad. It will not happen too often, and the interpreter should just put up with it phlegmatically.

Avoiding Committing Yourself

When using anticipation the interpreter will note all the signs given by a speaker as to what will come next, and make use of those signs. However, they will not reveal to their audience that they have received these signs: they will not announce to the audience what should follow.

This may seem a strange comment in the light of what was said above about consecutive. In consecutive you should definitely interpret such useful structuring elements as, 'I should like to make three comments on this proposal', and then proceed to enumerate the three points. We even said that if the speaker does not provide such elements, and if the structures helps to improve the audience's understanding, the interpreter may add them of their own accord. Why then should the simultaneous interpreter go to the other extreme?

The answer, quite simply, is that one can never trust a speaker to provide what they have announced in advance. In consecutive, you have heard the whole speech and can interpret accordingly. If the speaker announced three points and then enunciated only two, or four, the consecutive interpreter can choose to skip the announcement, or correct it to bring it into line with reality. But in simultaneous, no such possibility exists. Again, one could argue that if the speaker

gets it wrong, that's their problem, and it is not up to the interpreter to cover for them. But if one adopts a client-oriented approach, saying that the interpreter will convey the speaker's message with greatest faithfulness to the original but also greatest clarity and ease of comfort for the listener, then there is no point sending your audience signals that will either have to be countermanded or will actually contradict what follows.

It must also be admitted that a speaker may announce, say, a certain number of points and respect that structure, but it is then the interpreter who fails in simultaneous to pick out all of the elements to match that structure. However, it is more often the speaker, not the interpreter, who is the weak link in the chain and who causes difficulties.

Thus, if a speaker announces, 'I should like to make three comments on this proposal', the interpreter should note the fact but not announce it to their audience, either saying nothing at all, or something rather vaguer, such as, 'I should like to make some comments on this proposal'.

The same thing applies, for example, to a speaker who announces a joke. Even in normal conversation it is dangerous to announce a joke. The listeners' expectations are raised, and if the joke is only mediocre, the whole thing is liable to fall flat. In interpretation, things are much worse. To make a comic effect, the interpreter is not dependent only on themselves but also on the speaker, who may be quite unfunny. And even if the speaker is funny in the source language, jokes are notoriously difficult to translate; the joke may depend on an untranslatable pun, or may just not seem funny to someone of a different language and culture from the speaker. Thus a joke should not be announced. If it is really funny, and everyone laughs, then the interpreter need say no more. If the humour is not necessarily conveyed, and the interpreter is afraid that a humorous remark might be taken too seriously, or even offend somebody because of a misunderstanding, then the interpreter should provide a word of explanation. They can say something like, 'But that is not a comment to be taken seriously', or 'But I'm only joking'.

As a parenthesis here, we might mention some rules for dealing with jokes in simultaneous. If the joke is translatable, then the interpreter should obviously do their best to render it. As the speaker will be hoping for comic effect and some response from their audience, and as those who listen to the speaker directly will react as soon as the speaker has told their joke, this is a case where the interpreter should try to be very close in time to the speaker, so that the audience reaction is simultaneous, or nearly, throughout the room.

If the joke is not translatable, for example if it is a pun, the interpreter can try providing some other light, humorous treatment of the text, to achieve a similar result. If that is not possible – and I admit it is extremely difficult to do off the cuff – then the interpreter must fall back on informing their audience that the speaker is making an untranslatable joke or pun. If they have time, they can

even explain the essence of the joke. Some interpreters, when they see that a speaker is determined to raise a laugh, use the tactic of saying something like, 'The speaker is telling an untranslatable joke now, which he thinks is very funny, and will expect everyone to laugh. To oblige him and the interpreters, would you be so kind as to laugh... now!' This trick, if not overused, can usually have sufficient comic effect on its own to make the audience laugh at just the right moment, and everyone can feel satisfied.

To return to the topic of not committing oneself, literary allusions ('as it says in the Bible...', 'in the words of Shakespeare...', etc.), historical quotations ('let me say in the words of Sir Winston Churchill...') and all other such clauses with annunciatory effect are to be shunned, as you can never be sure you will be able to render correctly the passage that has been announced. It is far better to concentrate on interpreting the passage as well as you can. Later, if appropriate, the interpreter can add, 'as Shakespeare wrote', or conceivably, if they feel their interpretation is not up to the high literary standard of the original, something like 'to paraphrase Shakespeare'.

In the case of literary and historical quotations, this caution is particularly important if the original quotation was written or said in the interpreter's target language but the speaker in the meeting is now quoting it in a different language. For example, if an English speaker says, 'I feel I could say, in the words of Goethe...' and a German interpreter has to interpret. A German interpreter can get away with paraphrasing Shakespeare or Dante, but the German delegate will expect to hear the right quotation from Goethe and much of the speaker's effect will be lost (and the German delegate disappointed) if the interpreter misquotes. The interpreter's own translation of the English speaker's version of Goethe, and then the words, 'to paraphrase Goethe' is a much safer bet.

Metaphors and Sayings

The same rule should be used for not announcing metaphors and sayings when a speaker tells their audience that they are about to use one. On the one hand there is the risk that the interpreter will not understand the saying. If the speaker says something like, 'As we say in Bohemia, that would be turning the billy-goat into a gardener', the interpreter cannot do very much with this (if they do not know the exact saying). If they have announced the saying, they are obliged to come up with something.

On the other hand, the interpreter may understand the saying or metaphor but then find that exactly the same thing exists in the target language. If the interpreter says, 'As we say in western Moravia...', then comes out with a really typical English saying such as 'Don't count your chickens before they're hatched', the English-speaking delegates listening to the interpretation are going to find the English interpreter extremely strange.

The same argument applies even if the saying in the source language does not exist word-for-word in the target language but has an exact equivalent in meaning. 'Don't count your chickens...' in French is literally, 'One mustn't sell the bearskin before killing the bear'. If a French-speaking delegate says this and the target language is English, the interpreter should not translate it literally and explain 'as the saying goes in French'. The delegates are not in the meeting to appreciate the curiosities of foreign languages; the interpreter should give the English equivalent of the French saying, with no qualification.

Thus, sayings and metaphors should not be announced. They should be interpreted into the corresponding form in the target language, where possible, without further explanation. If the meaning of the saying is clear to the interpreter but the saying does not have an equivalent in the target language, the interpreter should express the sense to the best of their ability without being put off by the form used by the speaker. If the interpreter cannot even understand the meaning of the saying, they should ask themselves whether it is important enough for them to do something about. It is conceivable that they could just miss it out. If, however, they do not understand and the saying is important – for example it is used to express the speaker's conclusion at the end of a complicated line of argument and is thus crucial to understanding the speaker's position – the interpreter can only translate the saying as literally as possible and announce to their audience that this is, for example, a traditional Moravian saying. The hope is that the audience will either work out from the interpreter's translation what is meant, or, if they cannot understand, will ask for a clarification from the speaker.

Another important rule is that interpreters should avoid creating their own metaphors and images in a meeting. Let's say one delegate says in language A, 'The current proposal is imbalanced. It really needs to cover all four areas, but only three are covered'. An interpreter has a 'brainwave' and the notion of 'three out of four' conjures up the image for them of a chair with one leg missing, having only three to stand upon. They interpret into language B: 'The current proposal is imbalanced. It's like a chair that should have four legs but only has three, as only three of the four areas have been covered'. That interpreter's delegate feels this is a useful image and uses it in their own reply. The interpreter working into language A, who has heard no mention of a chair, will be mystified. If, however, the interpreter working into A manages to interpret it correctly, it will then be the turn of their delegates to be totally confused.

The problem is bad enough if the meeting is taking place in only two languages. But if something similar happens in a meeting with, say, ten languages, there will be havoc. The bald statement is made by a delegate in language A. It is interpreted as an image about a chair into B, but not into the eight other languages. Delegate B re-uses the image. What now? There may be interpreters who realize this is the invention of a colleague and choose to ignore it. Others

may feel it is safer to follow the speaker. Soon you are in a situation where half the room is not using the metaphor while the other half is. Further, as delegates are wont to do, those that use the metaphor start modifying it: 'No,' says one of them, 'if we add another point, it will be a five-legged stool'. The mind boggles at the potential for misunderstanding.

Therefore, while it is a good thing for an interpreter to have a rich vocabulary and a wide range of expressions at their disposal, and while it can be useful for some interpreters to visualize vividly the speeches they hear, in order to enhance their understanding, such artificial creation of images for the audience's consumption is to be avoided.

Using 'Pat Phrases'

'Pat', in this sense, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means 'known thoroughly and ready for any occasion'. There are many formulations that occur frequently in international meetings. Any given interpreter may also find that in their own professional life, depending on their employer or clients, certain turns of phrase crop up particularly often, not to say practically all the time. For such circumstances all interpreters should have a battery of pat phrases that they can use without having to make any intellectual effort. This will help them economize their energies, allowing them to concentrate more on genuinely problematic things. It will also provide them with yet one more technique for saving time, as such pat phrases can be produced extremely quickly.

What kind of circumstance can these phrases be prepared for? For example, delegates often say they 'agree' or 'disagree', that they 'support', 'endorse', 'back' ideas; that they 'call into question', 'wonder about', 'have doubts about' them; that they 'understand' or 'don't understand', as the case may be, that they have 'grasped' an idea, 'require clarification', 'want something specified'. If an interpreter is involved in work that involves a lot of discussion about documents and drafting, they should have turns of phrase for deleting and adding, for strengthening or attenuating a text; all technical editing terms should be known by heart – paragraphs, sub-paragraphs, points, indents, etc.; and all typical drafting jargon should become second nature – 'in particular', 'inter alia', 'as appropriate', and so on. Those dealing with regulatory texts should be aware of how they function and have the relevant turns of phrase available: waivers, exceptions, exemptions, opt-outs, time limits, expiry dates, field of competence, scope, etc.

The list of examples is endless, and it is up to each interpreter to see where such preparation is necessary and build up the appropriate body of pat phrases. I insist that this is not just a case of knowing *vocabulary* which is relevant to subject areas or the type of work that an interpreter typically does. It is a question of having the right *formulations* ready to hand.

For example, let's assume a delegate says (word-for-word) in the source language: 'The time period for this regulation runs until the end of the year, and we need a decision on its prolongation before the year is over if we are not to be faced with a legal vacuum.'

The interpreter should, as far as possible, have ready solutions for every element in such a sentence. The first clause can become, in English, 'The regulation expires at the end of the year'. The notion of expiry must come immediately to the interpreter. Similarly, they should know (in this hypothetical case, and assuming that that is the jargon used) that the regulation is 'extended' in time, and be able to say, 'We must, therefore, decide on its extension by then'. Even a phrase as innocent as 'by then', or 'by the end of the year', is the kind of thing that can cause unnecessary waste of time and effort for an interpreter. If it does not fit into their repertory of pat phrases interpreters may find themselves, from certain source languages, saying something as complicated (and superfluous) as 'between now and the end of the year'. Moreover, they will have made a deliberate, and again unnecessary, mental effort to decide how they wish to express the idea.

Intonation, Stress and Pauses

When people communicate they express what they want to say not just through the words they use but also by intonation, by stressing certain words, and by pauses between words. A simultaneous interpreter should be no exception to this rule (cf. 're-expression' in the chapter on consecutive).

Unfortunately, simultaneous interpreters are subject to a number of constraints and temptations that may prevent them from using intonation, stress and pauses correctly. The first problem is that the simultaneous interpreter is in a sound-proof booth, behind double-glazing, sometimes a long way from their delegates (for example in large conference rooms where the booths are installed high up like a film projectionist's room in a cinema). All of this can lead to the interpreter feeling cut off from the proceedings and thus rather indifferent to them. The upshot of this is that the interpreter is liable to interpret like an automaton, without using the potential of their voice to enhance meaning. There are no technical means for overcoming this problem. The only thing we can do is encourage interpreters to take an active interest in their meetings, to try to feel involved, in the ways we mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter.

Second, there is the risk that interpreters may feel under pressure to keep up a continuous flow of sound in the booth. They are worried that if they do not keep talking, their delegates will become impatient and lose confidence in the interpreter because they are frightened they are missing something. Sadly, there are some delegates who encourage interpreters in this belief, who *do* turn round and frown or make gestures indicating they feel their headphones are no longer

working if they do not hear something for a few seconds. Interpreters should have the courage to stand up to such pressure from delegates and ignore their reactions. On the contrary, the interpreter should know that appropriate pauses do add to the meaning of a speech and give them the time to gather their thoughts in order to provide a better interpretation.

A third error not to fall into is an overreaction to being under pressure, which manifests itself by an exaggerated attempt to sound cool and calm. This can lead interpreters to sound totally bored, if not supercilious (which is very irritating for the audience), and to provide a monotonous interpretation that, having no relief, will probably fail to communicate as much as it should, having a soporific effect on the delegates.

Fourth, some go to the other extreme, providing too much stress, emphasizing words that do not deserve it, and generally hamming it up. This risk is greater if the text is uninteresting, not to say vacuous, and the interpreter feels obliged to compensate for the lack of real content by livening up the presentation. Sadly, this will only highlight the actual emptiness of the text and make the interpreters poor public speakers. One arrives at a presentation such as the following, where the interpreter stresses all of the words we have put in italics: 'What we *really* want to do is *come forward* with some *concrete, practical* proposals in the *social* sphere, so that the *social* as well as the *economic* aspects are addressed....'

The fifth difficulty is of a more technical nature, in that it is related to the fact that the simultaneous interpreter does not know how a speaker is going to proceed. The interpreter's intonation may indicate that they are always in a state of expectation, waiting for what comes next. When you are in an expectant, questioning frame of mind, your voice tends to go up at the end of a sentence. In many languages a rising intonation at the end of a phrase indicates either a question or surprise, or that one has not finished a sentence and another clause is to follow. If the interpreter systematically goes up at the end of their sentences it becomes very difficult for their audience to listen and understand where sentences begin and end, or to distinguish what is affirmative and what is interrogative.

The answer to this difficulty lies in having the right general approach to speaking in simultaneous, as described above. When the interpreter begins a sentence, they should be able to finish it, even if they do not know exactly *how* they will finish it. As the speaker's sentence proceeds, it should become clear to the interpreter how to finish their own (interpreted) sentence. And once the interpreter knows how they can finish their sentence they must make a conscious decision to do so, and to signal the end clearly to their audience by a falling intonation. If the interpreter does not wish to finish a sentence, adding another main clause or a subordinate or relative clause, then they should likewise signal to their audience that the sentence is continuing by using the right intonation.

Provided the interpreter is in control of their own output in this way, they should be able to use intonation as suggested in the chapter on consecutive. They should not make artificial pauses in the middle of a sentence because they are thinking of what to say next or are waiting for extra input from the speaker. Of course, if a speaker suddenly pauses for a long time because they themselves have lost the thread or are wondering how to continue, there is nothing the simultaneous interpreter can do.

Sentences should be clearly separated by the appropriate intonation and, if necessary, a brief pause. Sentences should not be strung out endlessly with 'and... and... and...'. Paragraphs and sections in a speech should be clearly denoted by slightly longer pauses in the interpretation. Insofar as an interpreter uses rhetorical devices – including rhetorical questions – or is expressing surprise, emotion, etc., they should accompany the words with the right intonation.

Numbers

Numbers can be very difficult for simultaneous interpreters and can be absolutely crucial pieces of information where no error is permissible. In particular, numbers have an objective meaning and are in no way open to linguistic interpretation. For these reasons, it is important to work out a tactic for coping with them.

First, one must realize that numbers, as used in meetings, are much more complex than they at first seem. When an interpreter is confronted with a number, they have to deal not just with the bare arithmetical value but with as many as five elements. The first element is the arithmetic value. The second element is part of that arithmetic value, but should be identified as a specific element by the interpreter, namely the order of magnitude. It is important to give the right order of magnitude in interpretation. If you are talking about the temperature in thermonuclear fusion and talk of thousands of degrees, rather than millions, this will be no use to the audience. Even if the other elements in the number quoted are correct, the audience will not be able to make any sense at all of the number, or if they can will probably not trust the interpreter anyway and will ask the speaker for a clarification. The third element is the unit. It can make all the difference in the world if prices are quoted in dollars but are then interpreted as deutschmarks, pounds sterling or euros, or if in textile negotiations one party gives figures that relate to 'thousand pieces' and these are interpreted as tons. The fourth element is what the numbers refer to. Is it cane sugar or beet sugar, raw sugar or refined sugar? And the fifth element is the relative value of a number. Is it being quoted in isolation as a fixed value, or is it being quoted as an increase or a decrease, and if so in relation to what, and by how much or in what proportion? In dealing with this last point the interpreter must be very

vigilant, since relative values can sometimes be stated, through no fault of the speaker, in a very ambiguous way. For example, it is possible to say in some languages, 'The spot price has increased by/from \$2.1 to \$252.3 per ton', where 'by' and 'from' can be expressed by the same word. In the example given, it is obvious which of the two it must be, given the figures: this shows the importance of working from context and identifying the order of magnitude, so as to avoid talking nonsense. Even so, there will be occasions when it is much less clear what is meant. The first thing, then, is to be aware of these five elements and to deal with as many of them as are present in the original.

When it comes to dealing with a number as an arithmetical value, an interpreter will be able to deal with one number easily, even retaining a fairly complex number in their short-term memory for a number of seconds as they interpret other elements in the sentence. However, once two or more numbers are quoted, the interpreter will need some assistance other than pure memory. The second technique, therefore, is that, if at all possible, the interpreter should unload their memory and say numbers as soon as possible after the speaker has said them. This means modulating the distance they keep from the speaker. Just as in consecutive you note numbers immediately, even if that means leaving some other element in your notes and coming back to it later, so in simultaneous the interpreter should be as close as possible to the speaker in order to repeat numbers immediately. This can cause difficulties if in preceding sentences the interpreter was some distance behind the speaker for all of the reasons described above. Therefore, if the interpreter senses that numbers are going to be given, they should accelerate their own speech so as to catch up with the speaker. If a speaker announces numbers with a phrase such as 'Let me provide you with some statistics', the interpreter may do well to skip that sentence altogether, as it will make it easier for them to catch up totally on the speaker. If the interpreter cannot catch up with the speaker, they must finish the sentence preceding the numbers as quickly as possible and then move on to the sentence including the numbers *by saying the numbers first*. This is another application of reformulation as discussed above. If the speaker says, 'Imports of jeans from China have increased by 9.3%, from the Philippines by 6.5%...', the interpreter can interpret '9.3% is the increase in jeans imports from China, 6.5% from the Philippines...', so as to say the numbers instantaneously.

If the numbers are coming thick and fast, however, this technique alone will probably not solve all of the interpreter's problems. A further thing you can do is *note down the numbers as they hear them*. This means unburdening your memory immediately so you can concentrate on interpreting the rest of the sentence, fitting the numbers in as appropriate. A further advantage in writing down numbers is that it should reduce the risk of misinterpretation for difficult numbers and make fast interpretation easier. If someone hears a number, in whatever language, they can usually write it down in Arabic numerals without any effort.

The same goes for the interpreter: when hearing a number they do not need to think in terms of its translation into another language. Then, if the number is written down, by looking at the Arabic numerals the interpreter should be able to read off, with no effort, the number in the target language. The interpreter will thus have transposed a number from one language to another without having mentally gone through a translation process.

For example, for numbers between twenty and one hundred there are some languages that express them 'twenty-two, twenty-three', etc. and other languages that express them 'two-and-twenty, three-and-twenty', etc. Between such languages it is only too easy to misinterpret, for example, 'forty-eight [eight-and-forty]' as 'eighty-four'. If, however, you write down '48' on hearing it, then you should have no difficulty in saying it correctly. The interpreter alert to the danger can even make things safer by writing down the '8' first and then the '4' afterwards, to the left of the first digit, thus writing from right to left but arriving at the right number.

Other than this, writing down numbers can be helpful for coping with a whole range of 'complicated' numbers in various languages. There are the famous examples in French of the numbers in the 70s – 'sixty-ten to sixty-nineteen' – and the 80s and 90s – 'four-score to four-score-nineteen'. Converting these through numerals, rather than translating them, can be quicker and easier. Not to mention Danish numbers, particularly ordinal numbers, between fifty and one hundred. Actually *translating* 'five-and-half-three-score-th' into 'fifty-fifth' may not come so easily, but if the interpreter understands the number and writes down '55th', then there should be no real problem.

Writing down numbers is an area where there can, and should, be real team work in the booth. A colleague who shares a source language with an interpreter who is interpreting should write down the numbers for their colleague. They can concentrate exclusively on the numbers. They need not, indeed should not, bother about other elements in the speech. We say 'should not', as they should write down *solely* the relevant numbers, possibly with the units. If they try to write down more they are likely just to confuse their colleague. The whole point is to ease the burden of dealing with the numbers for the interpreter who is 'on mike', such that they can get on and deal with all the other elements in the original. It goes without saying that if you write down numbers for a colleague you should make sure they are very readable, preferably writing extremely large.

There are occasions when numbers have to be interpreted absolutely accurately, with every digit correct. An example would be customs tariff codes, where the ninth and tenth digits can be crucial, as they determine a tariff classification. However, there are also occasions where it is possible to be more approximate. Let's assume that a speaker says, 'The tariff quota is 300 tons, and use up to 19th August has been 295.6 tons, so the quota has been almost totally exhausted, with four months of the year to run'. Here the key element expressed by the

second number is that the use is very nearly 300 tons. If the interpreter is not totally sure of the detail of the second figure, they could interpret by making an intelligent approximation, saying, '...and use up to 19th August is two hundred and ninety-odd tons, so...'. Of course, it is better not to make such approximations, but interpreters should be aware of when an approximation is possible, and be able to fall back on it if necessary. Examples here would be situations where there is a sequence of numbers where it is well nigh impossible to interpret them all, or where there are other very difficult elements in a speech that the interpreter needs to be able to concentrate upon.

Finally, interpreters can choose to express numbers in the way they find most convenient. For example, a speaker may say, 'We have allocated six million five hundred and forty-three thousand dollars to the project'. The way this is expressed in different languages will of course depend on certain rules that cannot be infringed. But there might also be options open to the interpreter. One interpreter into English could choose to express this number exactly as in the original. But another may find it easier and quicker to say 'six point five four three million dollars'. This is very much a question of personal taste and convenience, but even when interpreting numbers, interpreters should be on the look-out for formulations that make life easier for them and save time without sacrificing information.

'Retour'

If a professional conference interpreter works into a language other than their mother tongue and is thus engaged in 'retour' interpreting, they should be able to interpret accurately, clearly and with correct grammar. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, an interpreter may choose to limit their retour to working from their mother tongue. Even so, the difficulties in retour can be different from those experienced when working into your mother tongue.

When listening to a foreign language and interpreting it into your mother tongue, the main linguistic and intellectual problem you will have will be understanding the ideas expressed in the original. As a general rule, the interpreter should have the active linguistic means in their mother tongue to cope with re-expressing those ideas once they have been understood. On the other hand, in retour the interpreter may sometimes find they have more difficulty in finding the best way to convey the ideas they have understood. This is particularly the case when the retour is from the mother tongue. The interpreter understands their mother tongue so intimately and intuitively that it is easy to have the feeling that they are not doing justice to the original, that there are nuances not being conveyed. If the interpreter develops such a feeling, they can find the experience very frustrating.

In retour, then, a certain number of things have to be borne in mind. First,

the interpreter should accept that there are certain nuances, shades of meaning or stylistic niceties that they will not be able to express, particularly from their mother tongue. They must remember that the interpreter is there to make communication possible. They must thus concentrate on conveying the speakers' ideas, and not fall into the trap of trying to provide a perfectionist translation, which in any case is impossible.

Imagine, for example, an interpreter is doing a retour from English, and their speaker says:

It is a rather wry irony of fate that the country which gave the world *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* should now be held up by the monetarist groupies of the Chicago School as a model for neo-liberal practice.

The sentence begins with a typically English turn of phrase that is difficult to render exactly in many other languages, particularly the notoriously difficult notion 'wry'. The interpreter may have to give up on trying to render every nuance of this and begin with [literally] 'It is an irony of history that...'. Then, perhaps the interpreter does not know the exact title of *The General Theory* in their retour language and would prefer to avoid misquoting. They could continue, 'the country which gave the world Keynes'. This is a handy shortcut, and conveys the idea just as well. Third, the connotations of 'groupies' are difficult to convey if one does not have to hand the exact same word in the target language (as this is modern jargon, it is possible that no such word actually exists in the target language). The interpreter might have to fall back on calling them simply 'fans', 'supporters', 'partisans', or something like that, even though the rather deprecating tone of 'groupies' is thereby lost. And so on. Interpreting like this, some of the flavour of the original may be lost, which is regrettable, but the interpreter will have succeeded in their main task of making communication possible.

Second, the interpreter doing a retour should be modest in the style they adopt. As is often advised for sportsmen and women, they must 'play within themselves'. That is, they should not try to do things that are really beyond them stylistically, using a very literary style, or a lot of images, metaphors and similes, cultural references, etc. If the interpreter is confident and in control of the situation they can of course use the stylistic effects they master. But they must not overreach themselves. In particular, the interpreter must be aware of what linguistic register they should be using. You do not speak in the same way if you are an ambassador addressing a diplomatic conference, a scientist in a small technical working party, or a trades unionist discussing strategy with colleagues. This is something that applies to all interpreters, not just in the case of a retour. But it is all the more important for the interpreter doing a retour. They

must on the one hand avoid being over-pompous; and on the other, they must avoid being too familiar. There are few things more excruciating than listening to a foreigner speaking one's language and striking the wrong tone by trying to use a colloquial style when this is quite inappropriate.

It is difficult to provide any advice on how to strike the right linguistic register, except to say that interpreters should be aware of two things. The first is that they must be aware of what kind of meeting they are in. The second is that they should be aware that the problem exists, and of the discrepancies between the use of linguistic register in their mother tongue and in their retour language. For example, in English one can often use a simple, rather familiar mode of expression that in certain formal circumstances would be unthinkable in French. The French-language interpreter doing a retour into English should know this and be able to exploit it, as a casual mode of expression can be rather easier to produce than a more formal one. The English-language interpreter doing a retour into French, *on the other hand, must make an effort to respect the stiffer, more formal mode used in French.*

Third, retour interpreters should make life as easy as possible for themselves by avoiding highly complex grammatical forms. In other words, in retour you should make maximum use of all the techniques for dealing with simultaneous described in this section. In retour, the linguistic difficulties of expression will be marginally greater than when working into the mother tongue. This added difficulty must be compensated for by pure interpreting technique. In particular, the salami technique should be used to a maximum. The point of the salami technique is to provide the interpreter with short, simple, self-contained sentences where they are less likely to make grammatical mistakes, to forget how they began a sentence, or otherwise to have difficulties of expression. It is obviously a technique that is most pertinent to a situation where the interpreter's difficulties may lie rather more on the expression side than on the understanding side, namely retour. Similarly, in retour you should have the appropriate stock of 'pat phrases' available, to avoid having to make the extra effort of thinking, quite unnecessarily, about turns of phrase that come up repeatedly.

Relay

When an interpreter serves as a relay they are working under special circumstances that have to be taken into account. Not only are they working for an audience directly but their interpretation also has to serve as a source text for one or more colleagues. Some interpreters argue that an interpreter should not change their working method when they are being taken on relay. Their interpretation should in any case be good enough to serve as a source text; colleagues should know their passive languages well enough to cope with anything their relay can throw at them.

That argument would be valid in an ideal world, but I feel a more pragmatic approach is needed to working as relay. First, the relay should give absolute priority to clarity in their interpretation. The content the relay provides for colleagues must be absolutely limpid. An interpreter may be able to interpret quite satisfactorily for their delegates by leaving things implicit, or using a casual, even conversational style that delegates can understand instinctively. But when they are working for colleagues too they must leave no shadow of doubt as to what is meant. Then, clarity is to be provided not just in the content, but also in the form. 'Form' here means the grammatical form, but it also means the relay should articulate particularly clearly, to make sure colleagues can distinguish every syllable they say.

Second, the relay should be closer in time to the original than would other modes of simultaneous. There is a natural time-lag in simultaneous interpreting, and this is necessarily magnified if there are interpreters working on relay. To enable colleagues to be able to finish as closely in time as possible to the speaker, the relay should make sure their time-lag is kept to a minimum, and above all that they are capable of finishing practically simultaneously with the speaker.

Third, you should bear in mind the psychology of the colleagues on relay. To begin with, as is the case for your own delegates, it is necessary to say something almost as soon as you know you are being taken on relay, be it only 'Thank you, Chairman', in order to reassure colleagues and let them know you are there. Thereafter, you should interpret in a calm, smooth way so as to inspire confidence in the colleagues on relay.

Fourth, the relay should remember that the colleagues listening to them may have an imperfect knowledge of the relay language, particularly as far as idiomatic usage and specific cultural references are concerned. The relay, without slipping into an over-simplistic style, should therefore avoid a style that is either abstruse or highly idiomatic. For example, an English-language relay would be well-advised not to interpret along the lines: 'If we add a further demand, not only will our whole negotiating position be thrown out of kilter but we risk being hoist with our own petard'.

Incidentally, this last point is a consideration to be borne in mind generally when working for an audience that is partly or wholly composed of people not listening to their mother tongue. It is a problem that will affect different languages differently. It will be extremely rare for, say, non-Hungarians to listen to a Hungarian interpretation. But at the other end of the scale it will happen very frequently for English-language interpreters, quite often for French-language ones, and it could easily happen to German-language interpreters. If an interpreter is aware that they have a non-mother-tongue audience, they should adapt their style accordingly.

Lastly on relay, one technical point has to be taken into consideration. The

relay must make it clear to their colleagues when the language of the original changes. This could involve a change in speaker. Through the relay this may be difficult to identify just from the relay's tone of voice or the content. The relay should therefore announce over the microphone 'the French delegation', or whoever the new speaker is, so that the colleagues know they no longer need be on relay.

But also, a speaker may change languages in the middle of their comments. This is particularly likely if a document that is not available in all of the languages spoken at a meeting is under discussion. Let's say the document is available in English only. The Dutch delegate begins to make certain comments in Dutch. The French interpreters can interpret from Dutch, the Italians cannot. The Italians therefore take the French colleague on relay. Now the Dutch delegate starts quoting in English. The French interpreter should now warn 'in English', such that the Italian colleague, if they desire, can interpret directly from the English spoken by the Dutch delegate. The Italians are all the more likely to want to do this if they have a copy of the text in question in the booth and can refer directly back to it.

There is another circumstance in which it would be even more important for the French interpreter to announce the speaker's change of language. Let's assume the scenario is the same as immediately above, except that the interpreter taking relay from the French booth is in the English booth. When the Dutch delegate starts quoting directly in English, it is important for the English booth to switch off their microphone so that their delegates can listen directly to the English. Otherwise, there will be the absurd situation where the English-speaking delegates will be listening to a translation of a translation of a speech which they could listen to directly. Not only can such a situation be absurd, it can also be very embarrassing. If the English-speaking delegates know the text is in English and that other delegates are liable to quote from it directly, then they may keep one ear on the original. When the Dutch delegate quotes, the English-speaking delegate may hear the original in English and get from the interpreter a version, also in English, but which may be slightly modified. This could hardly inspire the English-speaking delegate to have confidence in their interpreters. A proper warning from the French relay (in this example) could help avoid any such problem.

Concluding Remarks on Simultaneous Technique

Having looked at the range of techniques that can be applied to simultaneous, it is probably useful to identify a common thread running through them all.

The reader might be struck by the number of techniques that involve omitting elements of the original one way or the other. Here we must differentiate between two different forms of omission. There are cases when the interpreter