

Chapter 3

Complex Syntax/Compression

When speakers use short, declarative sentences and speak at moderate speed, the interpreter's task is made easier. More complex sentences can also be interpreted without too much difficulty if spoken at moderate speed. However, when speakers use long, complex structures and deliver them at high speed, the interpreter's task is greatly complicated. A lag of a single sentence or phrase can lead to an omission and inability to catch up. This chapter presents several strategies interpreters use to help cope with the combined difficulty of complexity and speed.

Exercises

1 *Complex syntax* In interpreting a speech, especially a fast speech, it is usually a good strategy to "simplify the syntax as you go along", breaking up any long and convoluted sentences into shorter ones, identifying whole ideas or units of meaning, clarifying the relationship between the sentences (for yourself as well as for the audience), deleting superfluous and/or ambivalent conjunctions, and organizing lists of items by means of parallel constructions. This is particularly true when interpreting into English, because clarity, concision, and parallelism are positive stylistic values in English. There is nothing "elegant" about a complicated run-on sentence in English, especially if the meaning gets muddled because the speaker or the interpreter has lost track of the syntax. It is better to get the meaning – or at least most of it – across even if some "elegant flourishes" are lost in the process.

For example, this sentence appeared in a speech given by a Latin-American speaker:

(Spanish original): La intensa y permanente actividad desarrollada por el Embajador X durante el ejercicio de su mandato, ha reflejado

la importancia del grupo de los 77 como ente coordinador de las posiciones de los países en desarrollo, en la vasta complejidad de temas económicos, sociales, ambientales, **de la** cooperación y asistencia para el desarrollo, así como en el proceso de reforma de las Naciones Unidas en el campo económico y social, que por **su** índole global **son** centro de interés y prioridad de la comunidad mundial y, consecuentemente, objeto de examen permanente en los esfuerzos para mejorar las relaciones económicas de los estados orientándolos hacia el establecimiento de un nuevo orden económico internacional.

(French version): L'activité intense déployée par l'Ambassadeur X pendant la durée de son mandat, reflète l'importance du Groupe des 77 en tant qu'entité coordinatrice des positions des pays en voie de développement, dans le vaste ensemble de questions économiques, sociales, écologiques, de la coopération et de l'assistance au développement, ainsi que dans le processus de réforme des Nations Unies dans le domaine économique et social, qui par sa nature globale constitue le centre d'intérêt et de priorité de la communauté mondiale et, par conséquent, l'objet d'examen constant dans les efforts visant à améliorer les relations économiques des états en les dirigeant vers l'établissement d'un nouvel ordre économique international.

The main problem in interpreting this passage is that some of the key syntactic words (marked in bold) are ambiguous. For example, does the word "son" refer back to "las Naciones Unidas" or to "cooperación y asistencia"? The answer is not clear even when one reads the passage at leisure, much less when one hears it at high speed. Consequently, if we try to interpret this into English as a single sentence, tracking the structure of the original, we are liable to get lost halfway through the sentence and become tongue-tied, end up with a hopelessly confused run-on sentence, or miss whatever comes next while we are struggling to sort out this sentence.

On the other hand, if we tackle this long sentence piece by piece, taking each complete unit of meaning as it comes, we are more likely to get at least some of it right. Notice that, although the sentence as a whole is very complex, each of the different ideas it contains is fairly simple and the connections are fairly obvious. In other words, those troublesome ambiguous links are not essential and need not necessarily be translated. If each idea is stated in a separate sentence one at a time, it is fairly clear how they all fit together. (It may also be clear to listeners familiar with the subject even if it is unclear to the interpreter.) Moreover, once you have gotten one idea out of the way, your mind is then free to focus the next idea.

Reduced to its bare essentials, the sentence above contains the following ideas:

- (a) Ambassador X has been very busy.
- (b) He has been very busy co-ordinating the work of the G-77.
- (c) The Group of 77 plays an important role.
- (d) The Group of 77 has positions on many issues.
- (e) Those issues are very important to the international community.
- (f) Those issues are being continuously discussed as part of an effort to establish a new international economic order.
- (g) Those issues include: economic, social, environmental, aid, development, and institutional reform issues.

If, due to the speaker's speed, you managed to interpret all of these ideas except (c), that would be a minor omission, because (c) so obviously flows from the rest that it is almost a superfluous statement of the obvious. The same applies to idea (d). On the other hand, if the entire sentence and *all* of the ideas got lost or garbled because you were struggling to make sense of the ambiguous syntactic links, that would be a more serious error.

Try to translate the above sentence as a single unit. Next, try to translate it using the "piece by piece" strategy. Then, compare the two translations and ask yourself: (a) Which approach yielded the better result? (b) Which took longer? (c) Which is more complete? (d) Which is more accurate? (e) Which is stylistically superior?

2 In order to improve your skill at using the "piece by piece" strategy with complex structures, try to decide which syntactic cues in the original statement are *logically necessary* and which are not. For example, in "I fell down the stairs and **therefore** have a broken leg" is the word **therefore** logically necessary? Isn't the causal link just as obvious if I say "I fell down the stairs and have a broken leg"? When the logical links between the parts of a complex structure are self-evident from the meaning of the parts, you are only slowing yourself down and running the risk of muddling the message if you try to translate all of them.

In this regard, it is important to remember what assumptions you can safely make about the knowledge of your audience and what actually needs to be spelled out for them. If I am interpreting a speech to an audience of professional physicists and I hear "the theory of relativity, **which**

was formulated by Einstein", do I need to treat the words **which was formulated by** as a logically necessary syntactic cue? "Einstein's theory of relativity" will do just as well, will save time, and will actually sound less patronizing. On the other hand, I might want to spell it out if the audience consisted of schoolchildren.

Once you have mastered the "piece by piece" strategy, you will sometimes find it easier to interpret complex structures all in one piece, because you will be more accustomed to deciphering the parts of the whole puzzle and how they are supposed to fit together, and better able to supply the necessary syntactic cues in the target language.

3 The following sentences appeared in a statement by a Latin-American speaker. Identify the main idea and the secondary or qualifying ideas in each sentence; then, try to translate them by forming one sentence containing the main idea and separate, short sentences containing the secondary, supporting, or qualifying ideas:

Las restricciones unilaterales y arbitrarias impuestas recientemente a mi país por distintos Estados industrializados, sobre sus exportaciones de banano, flores y productos del mar, son clara muestra de que los esfuerzos nacionales que llevan adelante los países en desarrollo por diversificar sus exportaciones y fortalecer los sectores más competitivos de sus economías, son insuficientes si se mantiene el actual entorno económico internacional, en especial si no se llevan acciones en favor de un reordenamiento de los mercados internacionales.

Un reordenamiento de la acción de los organismos de Bretton Woods en la provisión de recursos adicionales y estables para los proyectos de desarrollo llevados adelante por los Estados y las agencias especializadas, sobre la base de directrices y políticas acordadas por la comunidad internacional en el ECOSOC, tras las consultas del caso, es una iniciativa que permitiría hacer frente a las exigencias de la magnitud que el momento requiere.

4 (a) The following sentence appeared in a statement by an African delegate:

Si, en ce qui concerne le premier aspect des engagements pris dans le cadre de cet important accord, la responsabilité du gouvernement est quasi-exclusive, il n'en va pas de même en ce qui concerne le deuxième aspect.

First, translate the sentence following the original order of phrases. Then, divide it into two sentences, the first beginning with “En ce qui concerne . . .” and the second beginning with “Il n’en va pas de même . . .” Which version is clearer? Was it necessary to translate the word “Si . . .”?

(b) The following sentence is from the same speech:

La situation au Libéria vient de connaître, après une série d’initiatives ayant abouti à la mise en place du nouveau conseil d’état, une évolution positive réelle.

First, translate the sentence following the original order of phrases. Then, translate it again starting with “Après une série . . .” (the longest phrase). Which version is clearer?

Notice that, even if the syntactic link “après” is not translated at all, the causal relationship is still quite clear: “A series of initiatives has led to the creation of a new council of state. The situation in Liberia has really changed for the better.”

(c) The following sentence is from the same speech:

Mon pays, qui avait favorablement accueilli la pression militaire exercée sur les Serbes par notre organisation et l’OTAN au mois de Septembre dernier, salue chaleureusement les dernières initiatives de paix, conduites par les Etats Unis d’Amérique, qui tendent vers le retour de la paix dans cette région.

First, translate the sentence following the original order of phrases. Then, translate it again as follows: Delete “qui” (the third word); start a new sentence with “salue” by repeating the subject (“Le Niger” or “Nous”). Are the two translations the same in meaning? Which is clearer?

5 The following passage is from a statement by a Latin-American delegate:

Reiteramos la necesidad de establecer al desarrollo alternativo como elemento prioritario de cualquier enfoque. Dicha estrategia, orientada a prevenir y solucionar los problemas generados por los cultivos ilícitos, propone, no solo la sustitución de cultivos sino que, en esencia, busca la plena incorporación de los grupos sociales involucrados en esta actividad a una economía lícita, a través de planes y programas que pongan en marcha un sistema de desarrollo socio-económico de naturaleza integral, que tenga especialmente en cuenta a los actores

centrales del problema, en un marco ambientalmente sustentable y con el apoyo de mercados mundiales, transparentes y menos restrictivos.

(English version): We reiterate the need to establish alternative development as a priority component of any approach. That strategy, geared to preventing and solving the problems created by illicit crops, comprises not only crop substitution but, essentially, pursues the full involvement of the social groups devoted to that activity into a legal economy, through plans and programs that set in motion a system of socio-economic development that is comprehensive in character, which especially takes into account the central actors in the problem, in an environmentally sustainable framework and with the support of transparent and less restrictive world markets.

- (a) In one sentence, state the central theme of the passage.
 - (b) Isolate and list separately the distinct ideas in the passage, stating each as concisely as possible.
 - (c) Break up the passage into as many simple sentences as possible, making a separate sentence out of any general adverbial clause that can stand alone. (See Chapter 5.)
 - (d) Recombine those simple sentences which logically fit together.
 - (e) Using the above structural approach, translate the passage into each of your languages.
- 6 Repeat the previous exercise with the following passages:

Han variado sustancialmente de naturaleza las condiciones que sostienen el difícil tejido de la seguridad internacional. En este escenario de grandes transformaciones es indispensable que la Organización de las Naciones Unidas, si quiere mantenerse fiel a los postulados y principios que le dieron vida, y, en consecuencia constituir un instrumento útil para la paz y el desarrollo armónico del planeta, y no una institución meramente figurativa, emprenda una renovación profunda de sus estructuras a fin de lograr la eficiencia que todos los países del mundo, obviamente, reclaman.

(English version): There has been a substantive change in the nature of the conditions that determine the complex fabric of international security. In this scenario of great changes, if the United Nations wishes to remain faithful to the purposes and principles that presided

over its birth and thus constitute a useful instrument of peace and harmonious development for the planet, rather than a merely symbolic institution, the Organization will undertake a profound renewal of its structures in order to achieve the efficiency that all countries of the world are clearly calling for. (Statement by the President of Peru; translation by James Nolan)

Igualmente, y siendo consciente de la necesidad de que nuestros Gobiernos, y también nuestras opiniones públicas, dispongan de la necesaria información sobre los trabajos que se desarrollan en las Naciones Unidas, mi Delegación considera que tanto los servicios de archivo y biblioteca como los bancos de datos de la Organización deben poder ser consultados en todos los idiomas oficiales. (Statement by representative of Spain)

(English version): Also aware of the need for our governments as well as public opinion in our countries to have the necessary information about the work of the United Nations, my delegation believes that archive and library services as well as data banks in our Organization should be available for use in all official languages.

Pido respetuosamente a todas las estimables delegaciones que consideren esta iniciativa que compartimos varios estados miembros y que transmitan a sus respectivas capitales ese deseo de transformar el año 1996 en un año decisivo y trascendental en la lucha contra la pobreza extrema, dando un paso hacia adelante en el cumplimiento de este primer Compromiso de la Cumbre Social y estableciendo, a la vez, según los propios mecanismos de decisión interna, las bases operativas para avanzar, en forma integral y como expresión de un esfuerzo compartido por todas las fuerzas y sectores que integran las respectivas realidades nacionales, hacia el cumplimiento efectivo de los 10 Compromisos de la Cumbre Social.

(English version): I respectfully request distinguished delegations to consider this initiative that several member states share and transmit to their capitals this wish to make 1996 a banner year in the fight against extreme poverty, taking a step forward in the fulfillment of this first Commitment of the Social Summit and, at the same time, in keeping with internal decision-making mechanisms, establishing the operational foundations needed to move ahead, in an integrated fashion and through the joint efforts of all forces and sectors making up the reality of our respective nations, toward the effective fulfillment of the 10 Commitments of the Social Summit.

7 *Ambivalent conjunctions* Ambivalent conjunctions placed at the beginning of a sentence can create problems in interpretation. If the interpreter ascribes the wrong meaning to the conjunction, the interpretation of the rest of the sentence will turn out wrong, and there will usually be no way to correct it because there will not be time.

For example, the word “since” may mean (a) from the time when, or (b) due to the fact that. How is a Spanish interpreter to know whether to begin his sentence with “Desde que . . .” or “Puesto que . . .”? Rather than take a 50% chance of being wrong, it is better to delete the initial conjunction and insert the needed concept at a later point in the sentence:

- **Since** my government began making contributions to this program 20 years ago, we will not stop supporting it now. = Mi gobierno comenzó a contribuir a este programa hace 20 años; **por consiguiente**, no cesaremos de hacerlo hoy.
- **Since** my government began making contributions to this program 20 years ago, it has scored many successes. = Mi gobierno comenzó a contribuir a este programa hace 20 años; **desde entonces** el programa ha registrado muchos logros.

(a) Translate the following sentences without translating the initial “since”, and dividing them into more than one sentence if it seems desirable for ease or clarity:

- **Since** the Middle East peace process was set in motion by the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, the Republic of Korea has consistently held the view that peace cannot be whole without reconciliation between Israel and Syria, and between Israel and Lebanon.
- **Since** the Thai Government has long supported the Middle East peace process, the termination of the state of war between Jordan and Israel, announced in Washington in July this year, following last year’s historic agreement between Israel and the PLO, gives all of us reason to rejoice.
- **Since** the success of this first meeting, the ASEAN Regional Forum has become a viable forum for the promotion of trust as well as political and security cooperation within the Asia-Pacific region.

(b) In the example given above (“Since my government began making contributions . . .”), is the word “since” a *logically necessary* syntactic cue? Would the meaning be sufficiently clear if the

ambivalent conjunction were omitted altogether, or replaced by a simple “and”? Consider the following:

- My government began making contributions to this program 20 years ago. We will not stop supporting it now.
- My government began making contributions to this program 20 years ago, and we will not stop supporting it now.
- My government began making contributions to this program 20 years ago. It has scored many successes.
- My government began making contributions to this program 20 years ago, and it has scored many successes.

(c) Is the “since” in the three sentences given in (a) above logically necessary in each case?

(d) The French word “si”, which can mean either “if” or “although”, presents a similar problem, which can be tackled by the same strategy. What other ambivalent conjunctions can you think of in each of your working languages?

8 *Enumerations* A structure that can pose problems in both translation and interpretation is the “shopping list”. The problem arises because the speaker may or may not use parallel construction in rattling off a long list of items, or because not all of the items may be translatable in the same parallel grammatical form, e.g. with verbs, nouns, or gerunds, in the target language. The interpreter struggling to maintain the grammatical parallelism of an enumeration delivered at high speed can easily be thrown off.

It is important to recall that parallelism is only a stylistic requirement and does not necessarily affect meaning. But the fact remains that, at least in English, failure to observe parallelism produces a very awkward-sounding result. An item in a list that is not grammatically parallel to the others “sticks out like a sore thumb”, for example:

Our agricultural plan includes several new projects:

- building dams
- increasing arable land area
- to build more grain storage silos
- producing more irrigation equipment.

There are several ways to handle shopping lists. Although the main concern is to make sure you translate all of the items, the translator or

interpreter should, ideally, try to preserve parallelism in the target language even if it is missing from the original. This can often be done, especially when the speaker announces in advance that he is about to give a list of items, e.g. “In the next five years my company will shoot for the following seven goals” or “During the Decade to Combat Desertification, my government will introduce the following five programs.”

The introductory sentence or “chapeau” should make it clear that what follows is a list of items. Then, the interpreter will have some freedom to maneuver, and can, if possible, maintain parallelism, or, if it is not possible, rephrase the list as necessary. If the parallelism breaks down half-way through the list, the interpreter can (if time permits) repeat the introductory construction or resort to using a new sentence or phrase for each item.

In the following example, notice that there is no dramatic difference in meaning between the various ways of handling a list, so that any of these ways which permits you to keep up with the speaker and cover all of the items mentioned would be acceptable:

Mi gobierno tiene planificadas varias iniciativas para lograr nuestras metas en la esfera de la educación: la formación de más efectivos docentes, la construcción de más escuelas, el suministro de becas adicionales, la ayuda a familias de zonas rurales que carecen de escuelas, la edición de libros escolares económicos, y el mejoramiento de la programación educativa en los canales de televisión.

- My government’s plans for education include: training more teachers, building more schools, providing more scholarships, helping families in rural areas lacking schools, publishing affordable textbooks, and improving educational television programs.
- To improve education, my government plans: to train more teachers, to build more schools, to provide more scholarships, to help families in rural areas lacking schools, to publish affordable textbooks, and to improve educational programs.
- My government’s plans for education include training of more teachers, building of more schools, provision of more scholarships, help to families in rural areas lacking schools, publication of affordable textbooks, and improvement of educational television programs.
- To improve education my government will train more teachers, build more schools, provide more scholarships, help families in

rural areas lacking schools, publish affordable textbooks, and improve educational television programs.

- My government's education plans include more teacher training, more schools construction, more scholarships, helping rural families far from schools, publication of affordable textbooks, and educational television improvement.
- More teacher training, more school construction, more scholarships, help to rural families far from schools, publication of affordable textbooks, better educational television: these are some of the ways in which my government is meeting its educational goals.
- My government's educational goals include more teacher training, school construction and scholarships, as well as help to rural families far from schools, publication of affordable textbooks, and better educational TV programs.

(a) From the options suggested above, choose the one which most fully respects parallelism. Choose the one which is clearest. Choose the one which is shortest. Which one would you use if the speaker's delivery was very slow? Which one would you use if his delivery was extremely fast?

(b) Consider the following paragraph, which contains a "surprise" (un-announced) shopping-list of seven items:

En base a esos principios todos los países seremos sujetos activos de la comunidad mundial, capaces de hacer posible el desarrollo sustentable; capitalizar y crear empresas para responder a los desafíos de nuestra época; erradicar el consumo y el tráfico de sustancias nocivas; liberar la humanidad del armamentismo y el peligro atómico; consolidar la estabilidad política y la democracia participativa; respetar la pluralidad cultural y étnica; y crear condiciones reales para que los hombres y las mujeres, ancianos, jóvenes y niños, vivan mejor en un mundo verdaderamente solidario. (Statement by representative of Bolivia)

The English interpreter, who was asked to translate this speech in advance, rendered the shopping list as follows:

Based upon those principles all countries will be active members of the world community, capable of making sustainable development possible, of capitalizing and creating enterprises to respond to the challenges of the day, of eradicating consumption and

trafficking of harmful substances, of releasing mankind from the arms spiral and nuclear peril, of consolidating political stability and participatory democracy, of respecting cultural and ethnic diversity, and of creating real conditions for all men and women, the elderly, youth, and children, to live in a better world of true solidarity.

However, the list could also be handled by repeating the phrase “we can” for each item, or by starting with “we will be able to . . .” and then repeating the word “to . . .” for each item.

(c) Translate the above passage in each of these two ways, and then compare the result, for clarity and brevity, with the translation above.

(d) Translate the following passage into English or French, or another working language, preserving parallelism, first by means of gerunds, then by means of infinitives:

La acción del estado supone esfuerzos simultáneos en varios frentes a fin de consolidar la nueva imagen social de la mujer, revirtiendo prejuicios subsistentes; incorporándola en la toma de decisiones y promoviendo su participación en los espacios de poder; propiciando la igualdad; brindándoles mayores oportunidades para una mejor calificación educativa destinada a una adecuada y justa inserción en el mercado laboral; eliminando todas las formas de violencia y discriminación contra la mujer; e incorporando los temas que condicionan la situación de la mujer en las políticas públicas a fin de superar su postergación. (Statement by representative of Peru)

(e) Translate the following passage into Spanish or French, or other working languages, preserving parallelism, first by means of gerunds, then by means of infinitives:

The activities of the state imply making efforts on several fronts in order to consolidate the new social image of women, rolling back the remaining prejudices; involving women in decision-making and promoting their participation in positions of power; supporting equality; offering greater opportunities for improved educational training designed for an appropriate and just entry to the labor market; eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women; and encompassing topics affecting the status of women under public policies with a view to overcoming their disadvantaged position.

(f) Translate the following shopping list into English or French, or other working languages, by starting with a general statement and then making each and every item into an independent sentence with its own verb:

Los diferentes seguros sociales pueden diferir en algún punto, pero sus elementos principales son:

- financiación mediante cotizaciones, por lo común tanto de los trabajadores como de los empleadores, y a menudo con participación del Estado;
- afiliación obligatoria;
- ingreso de cotizaciones en cajas especiales con cargo a las cuales se satisfacen las prestaciones;
- inversión de los excedentes para obtener mayores ingresos;
- garantía de las prestaciones sobre la base del historial contributivo personal, independientemente de los recursos económicos (por ejemplo, los ingresos y el patrimonio);
- cotizaciones y prestaciones muy a menudo proporcionales a los ingresos del afiliado;
- en general, la financiación de las prestaciones de accidentes del trabajo y enfermedades laborales suele estar únicamente a cargo de los empleadores. (ILO, *Seguridad Social*, ILO, Geneva, 1995, p. 7)

(g) Translate the following passage into English, Spanish, or other working languages, preserving parallelism to the extent possible:

Notification du transit de missiles à portée intermédiaire ou à plus courte portée ou de lanceurs de tels missiles, ou du déplacement de missiles d'entraînement ou de lanceurs d'entraînement pour missiles à portée intermédiaire ou à plus courte portée, au plus tard 48 heures après son achèvement, notamment:

- (i) Le nombre de missiles ou de lanceurs;
- (ii) Le point, la date et l'heure de départ et d'arrivée;
- (iii) Le mode de transport utilisé;
- (iv) L'emplacement et l'heure à cet emplacement au moins une fois tous les quatre jours durant la période de transit. (Treaty on intermediate-range missiles between the US and the USSR of 8 December 1987, *Désarmement*, Vol XI, No. 1, Winter 1987–1988, p. 209 (excerpt))

(h) Translate the following passage into French, Spanish, or other working languages, preserving parallelism to the extent possible:

The ozone layer, a fragile shield which protects the Earth from the harmful portion of the rays of the sun (namely, excess solar UV-B radiations) is being damaged by man-made chemicals released on Earth. The main danger from the weakening of this shield is that it could lead to a rising intensity of the ground level UV-B radiation. This in turn could lead to increased rates of skin cancer and eye cataracts, to stunted agricultural production, and to the possible disappearance of phytoplankton – organisms which form the base of the marine food chain. The main chemicals involved are CFCs (used in refrigeration, aerosols and as cleaners in many industries), halons (used in fire extinguishers), methyl bromide (used mainly for soil fumigation in agriculture) and some industrial solvents. Because CFCs and other chemicals remain in the atmosphere for decades, the ozone layer will be at its most vulnerable over the next decade. The most important and effective measure included in the Montreal Protocol is the commitment to limit the use of, and to gradually phase out, all of these man-made chemicals (known as ozone depleting substances, or ODSs) . . . Activities expected to take place in countries all over the world as part of the celebration of the second International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer include:

- Honouring industries which are phasing out ODSs, and sharing their experience with others;
- Honouring individual scientists, technologists, media persons and administrators who are assisting in the phase-out of ODSs;
- Broadcasting television and radio programmes related to the protection of the ozone layers;
- Publication of articles on the International Ozone Day in the printed media;
- Organization of scientific and technological conferences, meetings and workshops to discuss the ozone layer . . . ;
- Organization of competitions for schools on the awareness of the ozone problem; and
- Involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in these activities. (UNEP News Release 1996/49 (excerpt))

9 *De-verbalization* The first step in good interpreting is to “get beyond the words”. The words are nothing more than a container for the ideas. The interpreter must pour those ideas into a new container: the target language. A useful term coined by Spanish interpreters to refer to this mental process is *desverbalización*, which might be translated as “de-verbalizing” or “de-wording” the speech.

Another way of describing this mental process is to say that interpreting a speech involves two translations: first, the words of the original are translated into a mental image; then, the mental image is translated into the words of the target language. So, the accuracy of the translation depends on how accurate a mental image one can form from the original meaning. As Boileau observed:

Ce que l'on conçoit bien s'énonce clairement,
Et les mots pour le dire arrivent aisément.

The second step in this three-step process is, in a sense, non-verbal. One way to practice de-verbalizing is to practice going from a verbal mode of communication to a non-verbal mode, or vice versa.

(a) Close your eyes and form a mental image of what you did this morning. Write out a few brief sentences describing what you did. Then, translate each sentence into a rough sketch on a separate sheet of paper. Then, translate each picture back into the sentence that inspired it, but in a different language.

(b) From a photo album choose some photos that portray group gatherings or interaction. Try to remember what the people actually did and said to each other on that occasion. Write out a brief narrative, with dialogue, for each photo, on a separate sheet of paper. Then, repeat the exercise, but in a different language.

(c) Watch a television program in which you know the characters. Wait for a dialogue. Turn off the sound during the dialogue, and try to preserve the image of the situation in your mind's eye. Finish the dialogue in your mind as you think the characters would have finished it.

(d) The next time you overhear a group of people talking in a public place, try to remember the scene and the dialogue you heard. Later on, write out a narrative of the scene and the dialogue in a different language.

(e) Choose an interesting news story from a newspaper. Read it carefully and form a mental picture of the people and events reported.

Without referring to the original story, recreate a report of your own from your mental picture, in another language, trying to preserve as many details as possible. Later, check your story's completeness and accuracy against the original.

10 *Compression* Human speech can attain speeds of 200 or 300 words per minute and remains comprehensible even at 500 words per minute. Generally, only excited sportscasters or auctioneers reach such a rate of delivery, but many normal speakers do tend to speak very fast in certain situations, e.g. when they have several important points to make and are up against a strict time-limit. At these inordinate speeds, it is important for an interpreter to do everything possible to reduce the number of words and syllables the vocal apparatus must produce. Otherwise, one will fall prey not only to errors of language and meaning but also to errors of articulation or enunciation e.g. confusing two similarly pronounced words, such as "statesmen" and "statements".

When high speed of delivery makes it necessary for an interpreter to resort to short cuts or to "edit" the speech in order to get across the essential elements of the message, certain non-essential items can be deleted, abridged, or treated by short references to what has already been said at full length. The most obvious candidates for "compression" are the redundant and the obvious. If a speaker repeats the same point several times in the same passage of his speech, the redundant repetitions can be deleted or abridged once the point has been made clear. (However, a **final** repetition at the conclusion of the speech should not be deleted, since it is meant to "round out" or "wrap up" the speech.) Redundant adjectives can also sometimes be compressed with no loss of meaning, e.g. "justo y equitativo" = just. Similarly, an item in a statement which is a matter of common knowledge or which the interpreter knows is already familiar to the audience may sometimes be sacrificed when the speaker's speed is such that "something has to go" and there are other ideas in the statement which are more important or relevant.

Second, resorting to abbreviations or acronyms can reduce the number of syllables one has to pronounce at high speed. For example, "The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development" can be reduced to "OECD" (four syllables instead of 20) once the organization has been identified in the speech. In a speech to physicians about the work of General Practitioners, it would be acceptable, once that theme has been made clear, to reduce subsequent references to "doctors" (two syllables instead of seven). Or, in a presentation to an audience of specialists in Obstetrics and Gynecology, once that nine-syllable theme has been

mentioned, shortening subsequent references to “Ob-Gyn” (two syllables) would be acceptable. One should make an effort to be familiar with common abbreviations that are widely recognized and save syllables, e.g. SUV (three syllables) for Sports Utility Vehicle (eight syllables).

Where French is concerned, it should be remembered that French tends to use more nouns than English (e.g. “voyageurs à **destination** de Paris” = “travelers to Paris”) and that such recurring “noms d’étoffement” which add nothing to the meaning in English should usually be deleted if they prevent you from keeping up with the speaker.

Elegant variations “Elegant variations” and over-abundant illustrations can also be dealt with briefly. When an idea has once been made clear, subsequent (and often wordier) renamings of that idea that are done purely for the sake of variety need not be translated literally, as the style may be sacrificed for the meaning if one or the other must go. For example, once a speaker’s reference to “los próceres fundadores de la República” has been translated, any subsequent repetitions of “the founding fathers of the republic” could be dealt with as “the founders” (three syllables instead of 14). Similarly, when a speaker, out of mere wordiness, gives a lengthy list of items that are purely illustrative of his main point, some of those items can be safely deleted without distorting his meaning. For example, the phrase “farm livestock, such as cows, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, and so forth . . .” could be safely boiled down to fewer items.

Anaphoric markers Anaphoric markers (expressions that point back to what has been said) are another concise way of avoiding repetition. The two most common anaphoric markers to keep in mind in English are (a) **that** and (b) **the foregoing**, for example: (a) “Depletion of the ozone layer is permitting unusually high levels of ultraviolet light to overheat the atmosphere, melting the icecaps and raising the sea-level. **That** is why small-island states are calling this conference. **That** is why urgent measures are needed. **That** is what I would like to talk about today.” (The anaphoric marker **that** sums up the content of the entire previous sentence and could do so in several subsequent sentences.) (b) “Failure of the import-substitution strategy to spark industrial growth is leading developing countries to lower barriers to foreign direct investment especially in infrastructure. But that alternative strategy could, over the longer term, lead to a problematic loss of control over national resources. **The foregoing** is at the core of the current debate in Mexico. **The foregoing** is also our main concern at this conference.” (The anaphoric marker **the foregoing** can sum up the contents of several previous sentences, and can be used to do so in several subsequent sentences.) Can you think of other

words and expressions, in English or in your other languages, which can serve to sum up or recapitulate what has been said? Are the French words “Ainsi, . . .”, “Donc, . . .”, and “Or, . . .” anaphoric markers? Are the Spanish expressions “Ahora bien, . . .”, “Así pues, . . .”, and “Por ello, . . .” anaphoric markers? These and others are often translatable into English by the word **Accordingly**, . . . How many others can you think of, in each of your working languages?

Personification Finally, when interpreting into English, personification of documents or gatherings is another helpful device to save precious syllables and seconds. For example, once the speaker has made it clear that he or she is quoting from or referring to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, wordy phrases such as “Il est prévu dans le Pacte sur les Droits Civils et Politiques que . . .” can be shortened to “The Covenant provides that . . .”; “Le rapport fait figurer dans son annexe . . .” can be shortened to “The report annexes . . .”. Obviously, it is not the document itself that “provides” or “annexes” but this is a natural and often-used form of personification in everyday spoken English (e.g. “today’s paper said that . . .”, “the record shows that . . .” etc.) which rarely causes any confusion. (Personification can also be used with inanimate objects and with meetings or organizations, e.g. “The hospital triage desk stopped each arriving stretcher to check the patient’s identity”; “The chamber of commerce cleaned the streets during the city’s budget crisis.”)

Note that another form of personification, “changing the subject”, is also a useful device for interpreting into English the abstract passive constructions that are so often used in French and Spanish. For example, “Queda prohibido en las leyes de mi país, México, enajenar propiedades conteniendo yacimientos de hidrocarburos sin efectuar previamente las solicitudes del caso ante la autoridad competente” can be more easily and quickly interpreted if the passive construction is turned into an active construction, and one way of doing this is to change the subject (without changing the meaning): “We in Mexico prohibit assignment of lands containing hydrocarbon deposits without first obtaining the required authorizations.”

- (a) In each of the following sentences you will find a phrase in brackets containing two highlighted words. Without changing the meaning of the sentences, translate them into English by eliminating one of those two words.

Example: A la fin de l’élection, (le **décompte** des **voix**) se fera en séance publique. = At the end of the election, the **tally** will take place at a public meeting.

- (El último **año transcurrido**) ha sido crucial para el futuro del Oriente Medio.
- (La **celebración** de las **elecciones**) palestinas deberá conducir al establecimiento de un gobierno democrático.
- La Unión Europea quisiera rendir tributo a (los **esfuerzos emprendidos**) por las partes.
- El Presidente del Consejo de la Unión (**realizó una gira**) por la región.
- Acogimos con satisfacción (la **reanudación de** negociaciones) entre Israel y Siria.
- Para que el proceso de paz (**se salde con éxito**), es imprescindible que la negociación política esté acompañada de progreso económico.
- Le programme doit être réalisé (dans un **délai** d'une **année**).
- Tout (**projet envisagé**) sera discuté en détail.
- Le monde reconnaît les (**sacrifices consentis**) par ces soldats courageux.
- Le groupe de travail se fera un devoir (d'**effectuer** immédiatement le **démarrage**) de ce programme d'études.
- Tôt ou tard, ce processus (**aboutira** à une **conclusion heureuse**).
- Nous vous prions, Monsieur le Président, de faire connaître à l'assemblée la (**conclusion** à laquelle nous sommes **arrivés**).

(b) Translate the following sentences into English. Where a document is mentioned, attribute the statement to the document itself, e.g. "The Declaration says . . .".

- Il est prévu dans la constitution de mon pays que l'égalité entre les sexes doit être respectée dans la fonction publique.
- Dans la déclaration que nous avons adoptée l'an dernier, nous avons annoncé le début de la décennie de l'enfance.
- Les peines prévues au code pénal pour ce genre de délit ne sont pas très sévères.
- Queda constancia en las actas de la conferencia que no hubo acuerdo alguno sobre esta cuestión.
- Se ha previsto en la ley laboral que todo trabajador industrial tendrá por lo menos un día de descanso semanal.
- En los libros de historia se ha dicho mil veces que los actos de agresión siempre se castigan.

Parenthetical phrases Like general adverbial clauses (see Chapter 5), parenthetical phrases or clauses can usually be moved to another position in the sentence and can often stand on their own. It is therefore important for an interpreter to be alert to them, since the ability to move part of a sentence to a later position in the sentence helps the interpreter to cope with complexity and speed. In the following example, notice that there are two ways to simplify the syntax of the sentence: first, by deleting a superfluous noun; second, by rephrasing and/or moving the parenthetical phrase in bold type.

We welcome this conference, **the convening of which has long been called for by developing countries**, as a sign of hope for the future.

- *Drop superfluous noun:* We welcome this conference, which has long been called for by developing countries, as a sign of hope for the future.
- *Reword parenthetical phrase:* We welcome this conference (the developing countries have long called for it) as a sign of hope for the future. / We welcome this conference as a sign of hope for the future. The developing countries have long called for it.

(c) Reformulate the following sentences using this approach:

- We cannot tell our farmers, whose hard work on their crops has been destroyed by the drought, that the irrigation project must now be canceled.
- The operation, whose modest beginnings did not foreshadow such success, has achieved all of its goals in record time.
- Les quelques soldats restants, qui croyaient les conflits de la crise surmontés, furent surpris de voir les forces opposantes ouvrir le feu encore une fois.
- L'économie nationale, dont les vicissitudes avaient longuement inquiété la Banque Mondiale, a commencé à donner quelques signes de vie.
- La especie marina estudiada, que parecía estar en mayor peligro de desaparecer, ha recuperado paulatinamente y repoblado las aguas costeras.
- Al llegar a la montaña, desde cuya cumbre se pueden ver todos los campos de nuestros agricultores, el equipo debe evaluar las perspectivas de expansión de este cultivo.

(d) Using the same approach, translate the sentences into another working language.