

# The Missing Concepts in Simultaneous Interpreting: A Case Study in Performance and Interpreting

**Latif H. Ali, Ph.D.**

Al – Ahliyya Amman University

## **ABSTRACT**

*Most of the studies on general simultaneous interpretation ignored completely one of the essential aspects of semantics in natural communication and interpreting; that is facial communication, in particular eye-contact in face to face communication. Some studies tackle some aspects of the "supra-segmental features" and leave aside the other features, like the patterns of the primary stress, terminal junctures, tone of voice, and the music scale. This paper tries to capture the essence of physical elements of human nonlinguistic structures mentioned above, other than most of the cognitive factors involved in interpreting target utterances by specialized interpreters. The conclusion recommends some instructions to follow, including cancelling booths and ear-phones while involved in interpreting to have the interpreter near the target speaker.*

**Key words:** Simultaneous, Interpreting, Terminal junctures, Tone of voice

## **Introduction**

It appears that the skillful interpreters have been struggling to mingle certain features of body language and some adapted cultural behaviors of LANGUAGE in general, into the specific structures of language faculty used in simultaneous interpreting. The main aspects of facial expressions and face to face communication, in particular eye – to - eye contact, or eye to face observations within the cognitive environment, have been put aside for some reasons that need to be resolved. This paper tries to capture the essence of the importance of such factors involved in communicative interpretation leading to accurate processes of interpreting as a skillful and profitable career manipulated in conferences, in particular UN meetings, putting aside all technical channels, terminologies, and approaches.

### **The Role of Non-linguistic Knowledge in Interpreting Process**

Most cognitive theories investigated the role of the complexity of environments known as "cognitive competence" (cf. Hulst and Howard PP.57-219) , played in real world communication, besides tackling the essential components of the linguistic competence . Yet, they did not even touch the knowledge we obtain from facial expressions, tones of voice and intonation patterns, when speaking; besides other factors involved in the process of natural oral communication.

This kind of confusion could be tracked back to the communicative approach adopted in interpreting process rather than including the semantic interpreting approach. All of the problem resides in the factual truth that translation in general does not belong to any scientific theory of investigations adopted by modern studies we actually find in linguistic theories in general, (cf. Newmark PP..111-189).

We are badly in need of some serious reconsideration of our stands towards all forms of "interpreting" assumptions / theories to be switched to the empirical fields of experimental studies where actual steps could be taken to change the whole process of interpreting to be labeled under" skills", which do not need an academic diploma but to be liable under a trained skillful interpreter who should have the capability to fully dominate the target and the interpreter languages and the cultural background of both languages.

To start with, we have to keep in mind that language develops from early infancy through several stages starting with crying and moving on up to preschool time where direct language learning officially begin, preceded by the natural language acquisition mechanism processes. It is amazing that children start perceiving the suprasegmental features, facial expressions, in particular eye to eye contact with the tone of voice of, specifically, the mother`s, before starting controlling sequences of segmentations to produce simple monosyllabic semi-words moving to real simple monosyllabic words.

If this is the case, one may ask: "Why don't we start giving priority to the above essential language knowledge to produce real skillful interpreters ?" This should be part of a program essentially emphasized if we label the assumed interpreting process under applied linguistic studies to form a kind of theories to fulfill the claim traditional interpreters think they already have.

### **The Interpreting Craft and The Interpreter**

One of the graceful gift thought of to be awarded to this kind of skills is the "booth", which we consider one of the main obstacles that face the interpreter to do his job properly. Separating the source of language information transmitted to the interpreter from getting the nonlinguistic information needed by the interpreter means cutting the main required information needed by him at that specific time of presenting the intended message. The interpreter should have wit to swiftly grasp all information presented by the speaker of the target language, through the linguistic and nonlinguistic channels while giving his speech.

One of the gestures used in most conferences is hand gestures. Very recently, I was watching Euro News on TV, I noticed a speaker at the podium in the French parliament shouting and raising his hand with a tight fist moving up and down threatening the MP members facing him(April 17,2016).If we depend solely on the structure of the four components of the French language while doing the interpreting job, the result will definitely sound vague without respect to all the meaningful chaos around the noisy speaker. Therefore, we need a proper way of working on the problem to let the interpreter be capable trotting into the situation combining the cognitive information with the passionate rude behavior and the needed linguistic knowledge

at that particular situation. The problem is not that easy to control; it needs a lot of efforts, time and patience to keep on practicing on situations like the above.

Sometimes we notice the problem of controlling the adequate way of pronouncing names of some well known political figures in the recent time. For the last 12 years the name of the president of the UN was articulated improperly, which should be controlled by the interpreter prior to starting his job. This is a fact that we can't skip, if we want to produce a real skillful career in interpreting jobs. What makes translation theories "far away from truth value" is, semantically speaking, the lack of all real life world features we apply when face to face oral communication is needed for specific reason, time, and people to be involved in this essential human activity.

### **Some Approaches to Interpreting Skills**

Some slogans of meaningful tone of voice used in some occasions may illustrate what I am talking about, like: "Your tone of voice provoked nasty discourse", and "It is not what he said but the way he said it!" This means that the tone of voice and the other supra-segmentals should be counted for by the interpreters with the help of all facial expressions including eye to eye looks while talking. How one can utilize this information and on how much efforts one can put to exhaust his nonlinguistic knowledge with all cognitive adopted behaviors, besides the cultural factors involved in communication. As we notice, the situation is too complicated to be clarified to help any interpreter to be, to trot practicing hard as mentioned earlier in this paper. The process doesn't need a scientific theory, but some pedagogical instructions to follow while working empirically on intensive programmed practicing as instructed. Also, we should notice the differences between the cultural background of both the speaker and the interpreter play a drastic function in this kind of interpretation. The interpreter should have sharp knowledge of the speaker's cultural background to reinforce his transmitted information addressed to the listeners.

One way could be of interest to skillful interpreters is to give a very precise and brief description of the actual nonlinguistic events accompany the utterances of the interpreter (cf. Hurford and Heasley, PP. 1- 41). This can be done in a similar way we find in plays when performed on stages. The problem needs well studied strategies planned ahead of any active involvement in interpreting process, by the interpreter who should be adequately knowledgeable in natural universal language knowledge, or at least in linguistic and nonlinguistic components of language faculty utilized orally in normal communication.

The eye opening, the space between the eye lids narrowed to show that the speaker is in a state of being disgusted; with some help of shrinking the facial muscles or pulling these muscles up in a dissatisfactory way when speaking. Different patterns of eye-brow movements may be interpreted in variant ways of interpreting the "sense" of utterances which should be notice by the interpreter. The situation is not that easy to grasp when being away from the speaker sitting in a booth listening and interpreting the utterances of the intended speaker, at the same time. The interpreter's position should have a clear excess to watch the speaker directly while doing his job in interpreting. Language is not composed of the four component systems with the cognitive competence only, to be utilized in complicated situations in normal communication like conference meetings or the UN's

It is assumed that the interpreter should fulfill the following try-dimension skill requirements that work simultaneously:

- Listening efforts
- Watching efforts
- Speech perception and interpreting task

To control the above skills as a component depends on the interpreter's will, because the whole procedure is biologically oriented where the neurological system and the brain, with the vision power, need a lot of consistent concentration on pragmatic practicing to control combining the above three skills used in interpreting processes.

Simultaneous interpreting is exposed to vulnerable constraints violating the total process of actual language knowledge transmitted to varieties of participant listeners in that particular cognitive gathering. This means that the knowledgeable and skillful interpreter should acquire and control all language knowledge of both, the speaker and the interpreter's, which is a difficult task that needs exhaustive efforts for the interpreter to be an expert in this field as a qualified person to occupy this position.

We also notice that the interpreter may commit in the processing capacity management, for lacking attention between different types of efforts (see above ( p. 3 ) as shown below:

- a loss of linguistic delivery in the target speech.
- mind distraction and loss of attention accompanied by idle memory efforts .
- as a result, there will be a loss of the quality of interpreting result .

After all, what do we expect from an interpreter who has the above negative qualities?

Definitely the response will be vague and insubstantial, leading to disqualify the translator to be promoted to a position of any type of interpreter.

### **Conclusion**

An interpreter must not depend solely on his own stored linguistic and cognitive knowledge of his native and the target language, whatever expert he could be .He must be well equipped with some biological control of certain capabilities of significant changes of facial expressions, different types of tone of voice, and varieties of sound patterns; plus gestures, postures, and related culture. Therefore, he should have a close position/ place to the speaker to be able to get the real and normal impression in grasping the related interpretation of each signal transmitted to him .Besides that, the linguistic information he perceives while observing visually any possible changed signals on the speaker's face , and gestures he may adapt while speaking source. So, the interpreter should keep in mind the well known slogan, "It is not what he said, but the way he said it !".

### **References**

- Gile, Daniël (2009). Local Cognitive Load in Simultaneous Interpreting and its Implication for Empirical Research. *Forum* 6: 2 . 59-77 .
- Hulst, Lloyd M. and Merle R. Howard. (2006 ) . *Born to Talk*. Pearson.

Hurford , James and Brendan Heasley. ( 1996). *Semantics* . Cambridge University Press .

Newmark , Peter.(1988). *Approaches to Translation*. Prentice Hall.