

TRAINING TECHNIQUES FOR SIMULTANEOUS

The aim of this document is to list some ideas for different exercises that can be used at various stages in the simultaneous interpreting learning process. Some of these can be done using written material, which make them particularly suitable for self-training.

Anticipation

One of the main difficulties students face in simultaneous, which they face much less in consecutive, is the need to anticipate what the speaker is likely to say. Exercises can be done based on written texts, moving onto aural/oral exercises later. Below are some examples:

- cloze exercises – texts with stock phrases, typical collocations or verbs at the end of sentences blanked out
- collocations ‘games’ e.g. fill in the missing word ‘deploy.....’, ‘broker.....’
- give them the beginning of an article/speech and get them to supply the rest
- give them a graphic example of a speech and ask them to fill in the missing parts (e.g. provide the thesis and synthesis, and ask them to imagine the antithesis/ or provide a missing conclusion etc)
- go round the class with each student providing the next three sentences of a speech (having been told the topic, the kind of speech it should be etc)
- debate tasks – setting things in context (e.g. ‘imagine you are a butcher/from Greenpeace and we are having a debate on animal rights’)

Reformulation

Getting away from the structure of the original speech is one of the biggest challenges facing students once they start simultaneous. There are drills and exercises that can help with this – again these can be done using both written and aural material:

- start the sentence in a different way to the speaker
- turn nouns into verbs and vice-versa
- make lists of synonyms, and collocations
- paraphrasing exercises
- record them, then go through the recording with them, asking how they could have said things differently

Salami tactics

Keeping sentences short and simple (KISS) is essential in the booth, and especially into a B language. This will inevitably necessitate chopping up the original sentences into several shorter ones. This can be practised on the basis of written texts and with aural material.

Pat phrases

Students can develop and learn lists of pat phrases and collocations, so that they come more readily to them in the booth. It also helps to broaden and enrich their vocabulary, and expand their registers. A lot of this work can be done in self-training:

- ways of opening and closing a meeting
- procedural jargon
- collocations and synonyms (e.g. go round the class asking for 10 different ways to agree/oppose or to say for example that prices have gone up or down etc.)

Sight translation

This is used in some schools as a stepping stone into simultaneous, once students have mastered consecutive and have understood that the focus should always be on ideas and not words. The usefulness of sight translation as an *interpreting* exercise might be questioned precisely because the words, in print, become too important. Even the name suggests translation rather than interpretation, and it is up to trainers to ensure that this does not happen. It should not become a stressful exercise of speed-reading and ‘translating’ as quickly as possible. The tendency will be to focus on the words on the page, but you need to make sure they do not. A good way of doing this is to read out the sentence/paragraph to be sight-translated first, and have students use the text as a crutch (rather like notes). The fact that students have more time to reproduce something in the target language takes away some of the stress associated with speaking and listening at the same time in simultaneous. It also helps develop some further skills they will need once they get into the booth, for example:

- avoiding contamination/interference from the source language
- dividing mental attention between two different tasks
- anticipation
- rapidity and agility of mind
- flexibility and resourcefulness