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THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE IN NOTE-TAKING

Note-taking for consecutive interpreting has been the topic of numerous investigations and analyses, including the foundational works of Rozan (2002), Seleskovitch (1975), and Gillies (2005). Some of these studies have focused on both the descriptive and prescriptive components of note-taking and note-writing instruction. The choice of language for note-taking has also been discussed, with the focus being primarily on the relation source language/target language or A language/B language; however, some studies have also mentioned the potential application of a third language for note-taking, citing Jones (1998) or Damon (1998) as examples. In this post, we will offer some initial thoughts on the employment of a third language in a particular combination of languages. The issue has been analysed from the standpoint of two Polish-native speakers with English as their second language. One of the authors' third language is Swedish, while the other's is Finnish. The inspiration for such a conversation came from the personal experience of one of us, who unexpectedly discovered that he had begun using Swedish terms in note-taking during Polish-English/English-Polish sequential interpreting assignments. This led to considerations about whether the third language may be used for note-taking and how this would rely on the language combination in question. We would want to propose some fundamental ideas on this topic, which may lead to additional research and applications in interpretation training programmes.

As "in consecutive interpreting, it is appropriate (or even necessary) to condense the information", it is evident that creating notes for consecutive interpretation necessitates a large amount of text summarization in order to transmit just its most essential components. This is why the required approaches are so particular" (Alcandre 1998: 88). In this work, we will just discuss the written material, neglecting other important parts of note-taking, such as anticipation. We split these techniques into three fundamental categories of data compression: the use of symbols, abbreviations, and foreign language expressions. In note-taking and note-taking instruction, symbols and abbreviations have a long history. They have typically been used to denote phrases that are frequently repeated in speeches on diverse topics. Gillies (2007: 125) notes that symbols are advantageous because "they may be written faster and easier than words, they are easier to read than words, they represent concepts, not exact words, so it is sim-



pler to avoid target language interference". Almost any graphic sign can be used as a symbol for note-taking, with the meaning depending on the context in which it is used, e.g. > representing a relation of one object to another ($A > B$, i.e. "A is bigger/stronger/better etc. than B"), standing for either "church" and "clergy" in general or "deceased person", etc.

As regards abbreviations, Rozan (2002: 16) said in his seminal book, "the rule of thumb is that unless the word is short (4–5 letters), the interpreter should note it in an abbreviated form", citing "specialized" condensed to sped or spec as an illustration. Various phonetic simplifications, such as U for "you", b4 for "before", and oa for "other", may also be encountered. As is the case with symbols, everything depends on the interpreter's imagination. Both of these techniques (using symbols and abbreviations) are efficient and time-saving methods for taking notes on various subjects. The third type, often characterised here as "using expressions in other languages", refers to the usage of single words from a language other than the one in which the notes are written, regardless of whether they are prepared in source or target language. Clearly, this strategy is tied to broader judgements regarding note-taking language and various approaches to the subject.

One set of researchers in this discipline suggests utilising the target language, while the other recommends using the source language. Dam (2004: 4) provides a concise summary of the reasons presented by both groups: Those who advocate using the target language do so primarily for two reasons: first, the target-language option logically forces the interpreter to move away from the surface form of the incoming

speech, which should result in improved speech processing; second, writing in the target language is believed to facilitate production of the target speech. The relatively small group of authors who question the TL recommendation typically do so on the grounds that writing notes in the target language necessitates language conversion during note-taking, thereby increasing the number of tasks the interpreter must perform during the listening phase. Rozan (2002: 16) appears to be among those who recommend taking notes in the target language, but he does not emphasise this position very strongly: “preferably in the target language, though this is not required”. Gile (1995) may support the other alternative, but there is no definitive comment regarding whether option is superior. Due to the processing capacity required for conversion, he asserts that utilising the target language may be “an unwise choice”, but adds that “until empirical evidence is available, it is difficult to determine which of the equally valid theoretical positions has greater practical value” (Gile 1995: 182–183).

All of these perspectives appear to focus on two languages – the source language and the target language – and pertain to the general choice of language (i.e. the choice of language for the entire cited text). The choice of language for certain concepts or expressions would depend on the linguistic characteristics of those expressions in the given language, or even on the linguistic characteristics of the language itself. In other words, it would be determined by the convenience of a given answer at the time of note-taking. In actual settings, it often appears that professional interpreters and students prepare their speeches in different languages. Another element is the potential presence of a third language, which consists of non-symbolic expressions from neither the source language nor the target language. Introducing a third language into note-taking may be condemned for increasing the risk of confusion, yet it appears to be employed in some circumstances; the question of whether it can be of use is dependent on its application. Jones (1998: 60) states, for instance, that interpreters may choose to note things in any way they want for convenience’s sake, and may even wish to use words from a third language, possibly because those words are very short and easy to note in that language, or because the interpreter has lived in the culture of that third language for a long time [...].

In prior note-taking research that explicitly addressed the problem of language choice, Dam (2004: 5) notes that instances of terms from a third language occurred. In Dam’s own research, the third language was present in certain situations and made up 16% of the entire text in one instance (2004: 6).

Although it is difficult to draw conclusions from this, it appears that notes for consecutive interpretation include a third language in at least some instances. This may be extremely distinctive, depending on the number of languages the interpreter is fluent in, his or her

interpretation training and professional experience, or arbitrary criteria such as personal preference.

The sample language combination presented here is examined from the perspective of a native Polish speaker who works in both directions with English, and who has at least rudimentary proficiency in Swedish. Clearly, this combination consists of two Germanic languages that are substantially related in many grammatical and lexical elements, while the third language belongs to a distinct group and bears little linguistic similarity to the other two. Moreover, complicated inflection and generally long words may make Polish a challenging language for note-taking in an environment where brevity is essential. Due to the nature of the Polish language, an interpreter taking notes in Polish must frequently resort to excessive abbreviation and/or avoidance of grammatical norms, which may hinder the presentation of source information more than in the case of other languages. (i.e. Polish conjugation vs English conjugation). In such a circumstance, moving to another language may be a viable option, given the relevance of word length noted previously. Interpreters frequently utilise English terms such as I, OK, and go, regardless of the language pair with which they are working. This is likely due to the form and universality of these expressions, which make them ideal for note-taking. In this regard, it appears that the Swedish language has similar traits that in some instances even surpass the English solutions. Below is a sample table of phrases that are highly probable to arise in speeches on diverse topics. They may give interpreters working in the presented language combination with effective note-taking options. Verbs are in infinitive, Polish noun gender is masculine; during the selection the main focus was placed on Swedish words:

Polish	English	Swedish
niezadowolony	angry	arg
część	part	del
kosztowny / drogi	expensive	dyr
następnie / wtedy	then	då
może	may	Få
dać	give	ge
posiadać / mieć	have	ha
na miejscu / w kraju	home	hem
ponownie / znowu	again	igen
kryzys	crisis	kris
spotkanie	meeting	möte

możliwy	possible	möjlig
obecnie / teraz / dziś	now	nu
nowy	new	ny
zobaczyć / widzieć	see	se
trudny	difficult / hard	svår
przyjmować / brać	take	Ta
uważać / wierzyć	believe	tro
młody	young	ung
przyjaciół / partner	friend	vän
rok / lata	year	år
wyspa	island	Ö

The difference in length is quite remarkable, with the Swedish o representing the concept of “island” being the most notable. This does not imply that this is a universal rule; it is easy to discover an example where Swedish is not the optimal (i.e. shortest) choice, such as Polish *robi* versus Swedish *gora* versus English *do*. Nonetheless, the table presents several alternatives to symbols and abbreviations that may be useful for note-taking, particularly when combined with the finest options from other languages. Research based on the notes of interpreters/interpretation students working with such a language combination and having different mother tongues (a study similar to the one conducted by Dam 2004) could provide additional interesting information - it would provide information on the statistical proportions of language choice. If it was supplemented by performing interpretation and receiving interpreter

comments on their own notes, it may also provide insight into the potential confusion generated by functioning in three languages simultaneously. This could lead to the development of new hypotheses concerning the selection of language.

The pedagogical implications of this research could be included into interpretation training curricula. The difficulty that still exists in Poland is an insufficient number of interpreter students with this particular language combination (Polish-English-Swedish). Nonetheless, the concepts must be given in the current context as generic guidelines for note-taking, regardless of the languages used by the programme’s pupils. Obviously, the same is true for the Finnish instances, where the word-endings may be a novel alternative to conventional symbols such as arrows for signalling movement. This is merely a list of potential additions to the inventory of symbols, which in some way robs these words of their meaning; if they were utilized, they would be more of a symbol than an actual presence of a third language. The incorporation of a third language is another component of potential future research pertaining to language selection and switching in note-taking for sequential interpretation. This work gave some suggestions for exploiting the qualities of Swedish and Finnish, but it is evident that there may be additional – some similar, some completely different – features of other languages, comparable to the solutions derived from French stated previously. There is a chance that every language contains either extremely useful, brief terms or other characteristics that facilitate note-taking. Studies may also focus on (the good or negative repercussions) of the mere inclusion of the third language in interpretation training programmes - this article should serve as a springboard for academics working with the mentioned language combination and other world languages. The prospective findings of future studies are contingent upon the imagination of researchers.

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