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MULTIMODALITY IN CONFERENCE INTERPRETING:

**A CASE STUDY INTO ADDITIONAL WAYS OF IMPROVING OVERALL
PROSPECTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETERS' PERFORMANCE**

ABSTRACT. Interpreting, as a complex inter-linguistic activity, relies on the use of several tools and approaches aimed at accomplishing its main task: make communication between people from different backgrounds possible. Starting from this, the essay seeks to show how conference interpreting (CI) has changed in its intrinsic nature. Ever since Daniel Gile (*The Effort Models* 1995), Danica Seleskovitch (*La Théorie du Sens* 1975) and Marianne Lederer (*La Traduction Simultanée* 1981) conducted their studies back in the Eighties on technical approaches, collaboration among experts and professionals stood out as a pillar and has increasingly acquired relevance. Prior knowledge (PK), collaboration (K) and multimodality (MM) appear to constitute the three main pillars that support this professional activity. Furthermore, the use of the Internet during simultaneous interpreting (SI), along with the making and exchange of language corpora, is proving to be fundamental. This in turn is having a strong impact on teaching, where learners are increasingly invited to rely on researches and tools made available. This study will submit cases involving PK, K and MM among both professionals and prospective interpreters receiving CI training and will try to sketch out how

interpreting can be enhanced by instruments such as databases, videos and audio-files as well as records and transcripts of speeches containing criticalities, mistakes and/or misunderstandings tracked during the rendition phase. Finally, this contribution will add to the view that interpreting is more than the mere sum of listening and analysis (LA), memory (mostly SM) and production of target speech (PR) processes.

Key words: Prior knowledge, Collaboration, Multimodality, Language corpora, Effort Models.

1. Introduction: Literature Review on Interpreting Skills.

The idea of investing in a tool like *Smart Box Interpreting 1.0* starts from the attempt to raise awareness about how energy-demanding, (sometimes) inconsistent and complex the task of interpreting is. Translating longer sessions can be highly *energy-demanding* when skilled professionals cannot count on enough preliminary information, PP presentation or any files to consult; *inconsistent* because of the lack of a strict methodology interpreters can stick to and *complex*, being a successful interpretation the result of at least three factors: prior knowledge (PK), collaboration (K) and multi-modality (MM). In an essay entitled *Interpreting competences as a basis and a goal for teaching*, Sylvia Kalina admits that interpreting goes well beyond what «people generally think of as necessary for good interpreting skills:

language skills meant as the knowledge of as many languages as possible».¹ She, thus, defends the thesis that «of course, the linguistic skills of interpreters have to be excellent»² but this can't be enough. Interpreters must be able to choose the appropriate strategies for both text comprehension and text production. This means that every interpreter automatically needs to set up a wide range of personal strategies as well as models for storing and retrieving information when needed. In adjusting the psycholinguistic approach to monolingual communication, Färch and Kasper had defined strategies as «potentially conscious plans for [...] solving a problem in reaching a [...] communicative goal».³

Each strategy relies on a set of competences well beyond 'receptive' and 'production skills'. In fact, these competences are constantly renewed and updated thanks to the transfer of knowledge which adds to previously acquired and stored chunks of general notions and specialized items. This, in time, contributes to make interpreters' rendition and speech flow sound less conventional or stereotyped and L2-oriented. When a translation task is rich in technicalities, interpreters are called on to retrieve their PK – this applies to translation tasks, too (Gafiyatova & Pomortseva

¹ S. Kalina, *Interpreting competences as a basis and a goal for teaching*, "The Interpreters' Newsletter 10", 2000, p. 3.

² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

³ C. Färch, G. Kasper, *Two ways of defining communication strategies*, "Language Learning", 34, 1984, pp. 45-63.

2016).⁴ At the same time, the richer the production effort is in culture-bound items, the more it can be put at risk by the lack of equivalence. Because of this, sharing information has become so common among professional interpreters.

Collaboration is meant as a way of steadily improving one's competences and ultimately the overall interpreting performance. Among the pioneers of the collaborative approach is Franz Pöchhacker, who invited the scientific community to examine both translation and interpreting from another perspective: the 'integrative' one.⁵ Pöchhacker intends to build on the results that text theory and analysis can offer to both translators and interpreters. In doing so, the researcher tries to overcome Reiss & Vermeer (1984). In their *Skopos Theory*, they maintain that the «end justifies the means and thus the translation». This theory, as Pöchhacker puts it (1995), «holds that the target text must first and foremost conform to the standard of *intratextual coherence*», thus excluding both the equivalence to the source text – or fidelity to the source text, as Christiane Nord (1991) puts it⁶ – and the function it should perform in the target language culture. Both researchers state that the theory, exclusively embedded in such circumstances, can strongly impinge on the “degree of

⁴ E.V Gafiyatova, N.P. Pomortseva, *The Role of Background Knowledge in Building the Translating/Interpreting Competence of the Linguist*, “Indian Journal of Science and Technology”, IX, 16, 2016.

⁵ F. Pöchhacker, *Simultaneous Interpreting: A Functionalist Perspective*, “Hermes, Journal of Linguistics”, VIII, 14, 1995, pp. 31-53.

⁶ C. Nord, *Scopos, Loyalty, and Translational Conventions*, “Target”, III, 1, 1991, pp. 91-109.

equivalence” a target text (TT) must keep to ST, and it also rules out what Nord defines as *intertextual* coherence. From a theoretical perspective, Pöchhacker seems to have achieved his goal. Many factors need taking into account in interpreting, from culture-bound to humour and textual references, which the researcher sums up as a «complex framework centered on text-in-situation & culture».⁷

On a parallel track to the text and strategic processing text analysis (Kalina)⁸ runs a practice-oriented perspective which suggests that collaboration among interpreters, translators and interpreters, as well as interpreters and experts in specific domains (such as science, economics, politics, etc.) has attained very high status in both professional and scientific communities.

Smart Box Interpreting 1.0 seeks to demonstrate how collaboration (K) can add value to any performative event – be it SI or CI in highly technical domains – and how, in the digital era, it can be fostered by a tool. The fact that the K factor plays a key role for both translators and interpreters comes as no surprise. Before the digital revolution, most researchers and interpreters stressed out how the collaborative approach – meant as two colleagues supporting each other in a booth – would enrich the overall interpreting quality, making it the most reliable non instrumental tool based on knowledge- and content-sharing. While Kalina considers “team strength and composition” to be a peri-process factor affecting the quality of conference

⁷ F. Pöchhacker, *Simultaneous Interpreting: A Functionalist Perspective*, cit., p. 50.

⁸ S. Kalina, *Interpreting competences as a basis and a goal for teaching*, cit., p. 17.

interpreting,⁹ Gile claims that «the presence of a passive interpreter in the booth» can add value to the whole interpreting process.¹⁰

Before the digital revolution offered interpreters software, CAT and other tools, most researchers (Chmiel 2008)¹¹ could envisage only interaction and on the spot collaboration with fellow-interpreters as the most efficient and reliable tool. In this framework Chmiel conducts a survey in 2008, according to whose results 75% respondents (conference interpreters) enjoy collaboration with interpreters in a booth;¹² Taylor-Bouladon (2007) claims that during their assignment interpreters become as close to each other as “family members”;¹³ and Jensen points out how “team spirit” and “negotiation” can play their part in nearly all of the interpreting tasks.¹⁴

The digital revolution marks a turning point. Ever since the introduction of the first electronic tools, websites and CAT tools, linguists changed their view on

⁹ S. Kalina, *Quality Requirements in Conference Interpreting*, in *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Translation and Interpretation Studies*, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul 2001, pp. 19-31.

¹⁰ D. Gile, *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 1995.

¹¹ A. Chmiel, *Boothmates Forever? – On Teamwork in a Simultaneous Interpreting Booth*, “Across Languages and Cultures”, IX, 2, 2008, pp. 261-276.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 266.

¹³ V. Taylor-Bouladon, *Conference Interpreting. Principles and Practice*, BookSurge Publishing, Charleston 2007.

¹⁴ J.B. Jensen, *The Strategic Partnership in the Conference Interpreting Booth*, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Translators Association, 2006.

collaboration. From *Interplex Lite*, an app allowing users to view databases and look words up on different devices to Be On Air designed to broadcast a stream, from Voice-O-Meter to vBookz Voice Readers, the digital revolution has introduced a wide range of tools. Nonetheless, a quite low percentage of interpreters can use them. This adds to the fact that interpreters have received these tools very late or at least some years later than CAT tools for translators. Besides, most of these apps are not specifically developed for interpreters.

As Alexander Drechsel puts it, interpreters still need to “find the right balance” between scepticism and enthusiasm.¹⁵ Some innovations have made their way with ease and speed. From Smart Pens to Remote Interpreting, some symbols of this profession have become almost commonplace. Yet, there is still much to be done.

2. Multimodality in Conference Interpreting

Although the complexity of conference interpreting has been often confined to the lack of time and the need for a real-time performance, so far practitioners and researchers know that the strict relationship between verbal and non-verbal information, linguistic and non-linguistic signs can somehow affect interpreters' rendition. Kilian Seeber defends the view that the complexity of the interpreting task

¹⁵ A. Drechsel, *Interpreters versus Technology: Reflections on a Difficult Relationship: Parts 1 and 2*, aiic.net, 2013.

derives from «the necessity of processing different types of information conveyed in different modalities and on different channels».¹⁶ Several studies have been conducted into the effects of visual inputs on the interpreters' output showing how exogenous factors (context, quality of booth and audio-visual systems to name but a few) can seriously impact the interpreting task. Seeber maintains that specific gestures, manners or slides can restrict the “area of interest” or attract the interpreters' attention. Whatever sign enters the sphere of attention or the visual channel, it is a fact that multimodality dictates rules in interpreting, too. Chandler defines *modality* as each system of meaning-making resources from which communicators must choose in order to realize their communicative intentions through textual practices.¹⁷

The approach of users and practitioners toward multimodality has changed a lot. From Chernov's theory on cognitive efforts – according to which inferences and anticipation can help during SI sessions¹⁸ – to the Cognitive Load Models (CLM),¹⁹ the recent studies have had to fine-tune interpreting strategies and to reckon how

¹⁶ K.G. Seeber, *Multimodal Processing in Simultaneous Interpreting*, in J.W. Schwieter & A. Ferreira, edited by, *The Handbook of Translation and Cognition*, John Wiley & Sons Inc, Hoboken 2017, pp. 461-475.

¹⁷ D. Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, Routledge, London 2002.

¹⁸ G.V. Chernov, *Message Redundancy and Message Anticipation*, in S. Lambert & B. Moser-Mercer, *Bridging the Gap: Empirical Research in Simultaneous Interpretation*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 139-153.

¹⁹ K.G. Seeber, *Cognitive Load in Simultaneous Interpreting: Existing Theories – New Models*, “Interpreting”, XIII, 2, 2011, pp. 176-204.

influential the use of on-line tools can be in the rendition process. If stalling, waiting, chunking or anticipating can be overall adopted as general strategies in SOV-SVO interpreting sessions, the use of dedicated language corpora or on-line tools can prove to be equally beneficial in helping interpreters cope with stress and not to lag behind the speaker. For instance, if interpreters hired for a specific session can rely in advance on a vast array of information about the speaker – his accent, his speech flow, eventual flaws in terms of pronunciation or speech delivery – they will resort to processing strategies comprising not only relevant special knowledge (PK) of the topic but also a thorough analysis of the speeches held by the same panellist on previous meetings, as a result. In addition to this, the use of language corpora regularly drafted and exchanged by fellow-interpreters in similar meetings can help interpreters speed up the training phase ahead of the conference. For this reason, tools like *Smart Box Interpreting 1.0*, an one-line collection of speeches followed by translation tips and remarks about one or more specific speakers, can contribute to ease the burden placed on cognitive load (CL) and fine-tune the CL models.

3. Interpreters and creativity: discussion.

Carl Rogers, a humanistic psychologist, in his essay *Towards a Theory of Creativity* (1954) defines creativity as «the tendency to consider several approaches» to the same problem, to leave a solution in favour of another, if the newer solution is

more convincing and can bring closer to the target. Last but not least, hardly ever can we think of a definitive solution or a target.²⁰ Roger maintains that every person can achieve his goals and “self-actualization” is all the more important. People make decisions inspired by the context and the need to unlock and fulfil their own potential. For achieving her/his goals, a “fully functioning person” shall comprise five characteristics:

1. Openness to experience, be it positive or negative
2. Existential living, thus avoiding skipping prejudices or bad feelings
3. Trust feelings, starting from one’s feelings
4. Creativity and risk-taking, meant as peculiar of humans’ life
5. Fulfilled life, meant as being satisfied with one’s own life

Rogers’ *theory of creativity* indirectly offers similarities between the way interpreters work – they are constantly called upon to make decisions and to select information to discard and information to retrieve from their working memory (WM) – and those individuals who aspire to become fully functioning people. Rogers develops his theory in connection with cognitive psychology, as a response to theories centred around psychoanalysis and behaviourism. Rogers did not think of interpreters when he developed such theories. If their application to the interpreting studies may seem absurd, it is worth saying that interpreters rely on a well-defined trinomial: 1) openness to experience; 2) an internal locus of evaluation; 3) the ability

²⁰ C. Rogers, *Towards a Theory of Creativity*, “ETC: A Review of General Semantics”, XI, 4, 1954, pp. 249-260.

to toy with elements and concepts. Furthermore, interpreters put in place those strategies enabling to obtain concrete and original results in quite a short time (choosing and discarding words, paraphrasing, using synonyms, not to mention the application of Seeber's processing strategies). Secondly, interpreters need to dig into their WM in order to brainstorm and collect ideas. Retrieving information sometimes goes well beyond the search for equivalents. One might think of those cases in which interpreters need to recreate humour or ST culture-bound items. Thirdly, interpreters keep in their mind opposite sides of reality, in an effort to recreate or upgrade it, by swiftly turning from a concept to another or putting up well-structured paragraphs or chunks of sentence. The ultimate goal is to recreate a context or, as Nord (1991) puts it, an "intratextual" context able to bind ST and TT.

The American psychologist Leon Festinger (1919-1989), mostly known for his *Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and behaviour in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance).²¹ This is known as the principle of *cognitive consistency*. That said, when something 'inconsistent' occurs between attitudes and behaviours, something must change in order to eliminate the dissonance. In Festinger's theory life is assumed to be filled with decisions and they may arouse dissonance.²² Festinger develops this theory to

²¹ L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1957.

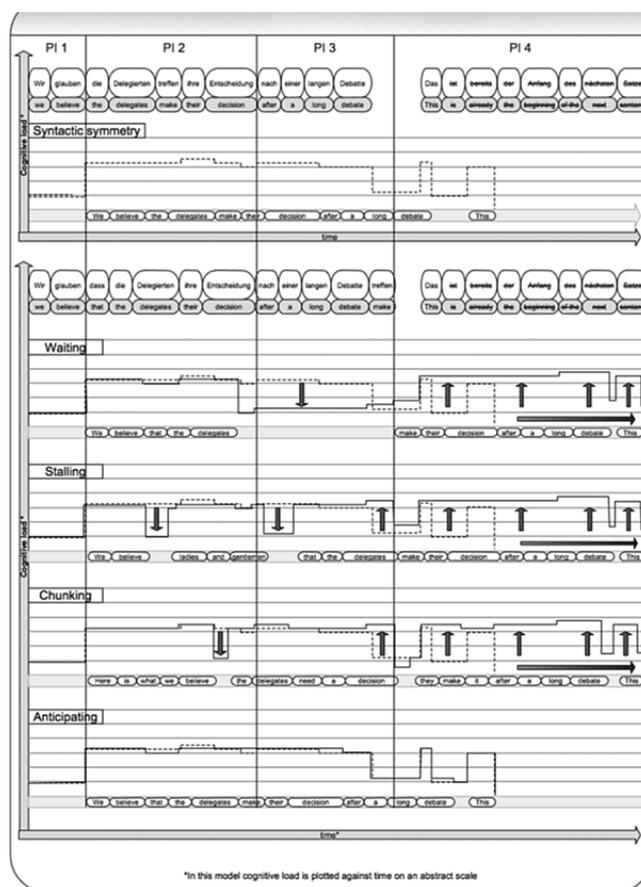
²² L. Festinger, *Conflict, decision, and dissonance*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1964.

demonstrate how all human beings are subject to risks, choices and most of all to decision-making. This theory is totally validated by interpreters, whose tasks consists of making choices in order to reduce the risk of committing mistakes or errors, and ultimately to save her/himself or her/his professional status. In doing so, all interpreters seek to avoid errors and try to assure coherence. Because interpreters are endlessly subject to decision-making, this can have a strong impact on their cognitive load. Thus, they also try to reduce dissonance. When they acknowledge one or more mistakes, their solution might be to frankly admit mistakes and correct them without playing havoc with their reliability before the audience; alternatively, interpreters can slightly change contents and make adjustments in what they are reporting. If they do not act accordingly, their rendition is seriously threatened and the risk of failing to be reliable becomes too high. This distortion can be resolved before it gets too risky and too serious, as long as interpreters desire to restore the initial balance and to keep translation as adequate as possible. It may be easy to infer that applying this model to the CLM presented by Seeber or Kintsch & van Dijk (1978)²³ – who anticipated the Cognitive Load Model – opens the debate on interpreters’ processing strategies to more general remarks: following Festinger’s Theory, interpreters mark some options down and end up with discarding them. Distortion arises when interpreters are unskilled or act immoral, as to allegedly preserve/defend their position; alternatively,

²³ W. Kintsch & T.A. Van Dijk, *Toward a model of text comprehension and production*, “Psychological Review 85”, 1978, pp. 363–394.

they do not admit any mistakes, refusing to remain neutral and to have acted immoral and with no respect for standards of professional conduct.

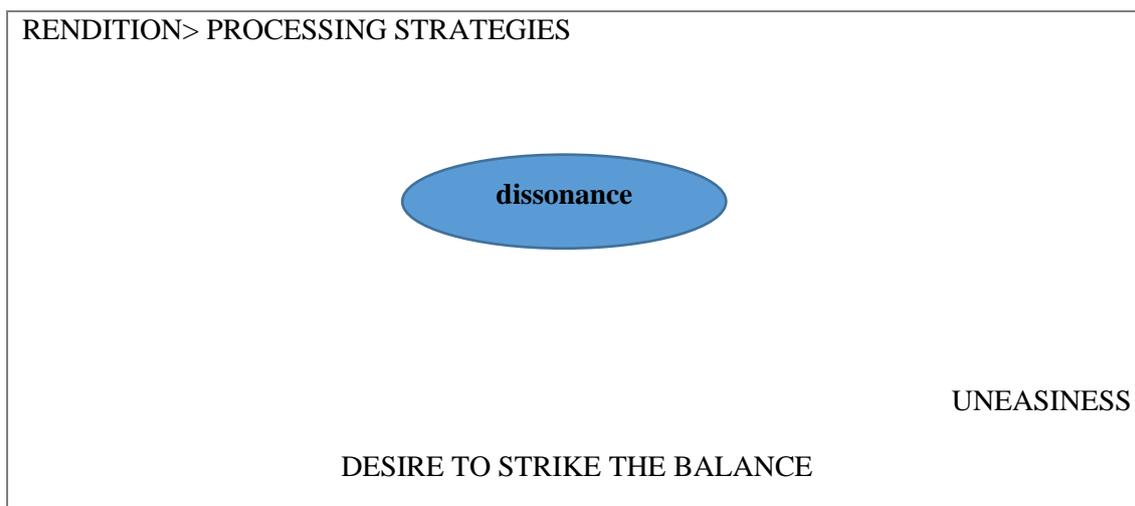
Yet, the CLM needs accounting for other processing strategies than stalling, chunking, anticipating and waiting, irrespective of which language direction interpreters need to translate.



Cognitive Load Models for Simultaneous Interpreting

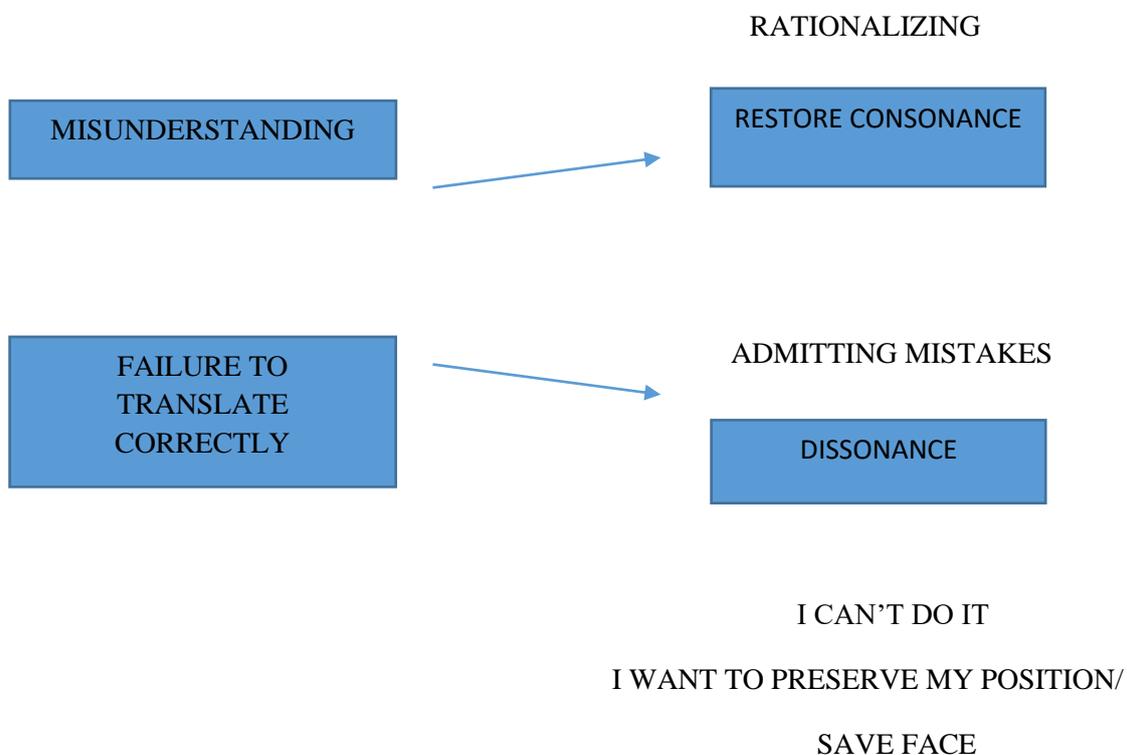
Starting from Festinger and Rogers theory, if interpreters need to keep faithful to the ST, their rendition shall be inspired by the following strategies, too.

CLM in simultaneous/consecutive interpreting



CLM and dissonance

In a time when no e-tools are available to interpreters, they can only rely on their own resources. For this reason, when they realize they have failed to translate correctly they may act as follows:



CLM and Dissonance: possible consequences

These theories and the resulting models can be further enriched thanks to the contribution provided by two scholars of the creative thinking: Rothenberg (1979)²⁴ and Sternberg (1986)²⁵. The theories of the American psychiatrist Rothenberg are inspired by the need in every human being to make opposite sides of reality coincide. He suggests following a synectical approach, according to which creativity may be at hand and in our control. The theories are quite complex and can be only partially adjusted to interpreting modes. In particular, when Rothenberg claims that information can be extracted and integrated in a superior hierarchical order, there are hints that the speech flow can be updated including newer information and data thanks to which interpreters review and enrich their overall delivery. Here is a short example of how this strategy can help reduce the burden on interpreters' cognitive load.

Wir loben den Einsatzbereitschaft

we appreciate the readiness

(updating 1: the employment)

(updating 2: the readiness to employ)

Translation:

we appreciate the operational commitment

²⁴ A. Rothenberg, *The Emerging Goddess: The Creative Process in Art, Science and Other Fields*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1979.

²⁵ R.J. Sternberg, *Intelligence as Developing Expertise*, "Contemporary Educational Psychology", XXIV, 4, 1999, pp. 359-375.

According to Sternberg's Information Processing Theory of Intelligence, the information production is meant to be a finite product deriving from a complex set of rules and laws. From this perspective, those who process data and information need to rely on:

1. a system processing data which combines and accounts for them through a sequential order;
2. a context where every information is embedded in space and time, in order to know where a natural event starts and where it ends;
3. a framework offering the opportunity to find all information and rebuild, if necessary, all stages of a given process.

If we transfer these hints to the interpreting process, we have a decision-making process mostly based on:

1. Metacomponents
(assessment and evaluation of ideas, data collection)
2. Performance-components
(from inference-making to operational strategies)
3. Knowledge components
(new information acquired, planning new strategies)

Last but not least, Lipman (1980)²⁶ updates the debate on problem-solving drawing up a programme aimed at improving the abilities to solve problems resorting to innovative and creative thinking which is skilful, relies upon criteria, is self-correcting and sensitive to context. In particular, he invites to consider not only an idea, a perception or an assumption but also its contrary. Recalling items which make up everyday life, every individual can start searching for equivalents, data or solutions. Transferring briefly this theory into interpreting, every A implies non-A, just like each solution can be followed by n-solutions. Lipman resorts to self-correction as a critical, active and persistent endeavour towards improvement. Critical thinking is not only a natural ability but also a disposition that people can come closer over time. In interpreting, Lipman's theory can help interpreters collect information resorting to non-traditional deposits of knowledge. In other words, interpreters can adjust processing strategies to as many empirical data they can recall from their memory or extract from life experiences.

4. Translators and tools VS Interpreters and tools.

The models described draw on researches conducted into creative thinking over the last 30 years and do not take into account how digital tools can speed up processing

²⁶ M. Lipman, A.M. Sharp, F.S. Oscanyan, *Philosophy in the Classroom*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1980.

strategies and reduce the cognitive burden. Generally speaking, skilled translators can rely on their employers and often receive preliminary information, briefing material and a set of tools – from language corpora to ad hoc vocabulary lists (glossaries) – highly beneficial to the overall translating performance. When it comes to relevant translation assignments signed with renowned companies, Project Managers strive hard to obtain targeted information to help translators.

Besides, they find it important to provide translators with information about rules for good writing, criteria to be followed when it comes to capital letters, punctuation rules and so forth.

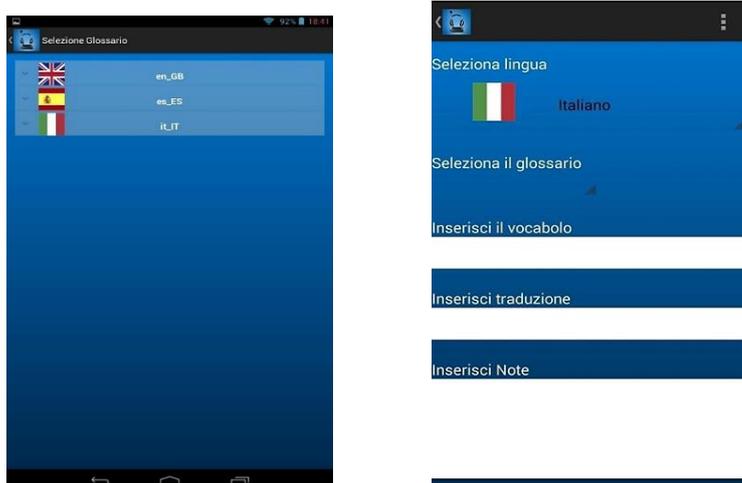
PMs often make samples of good translations available, asking translators to keep that style and that register. Putting this into practice, translators can benefit a lot from this constant peer-to-peer collaboration with both PMs and fellow-translators. In the interpreting practice, such collaboration sometimes constitutes an exception. Though interpreters are equally prone to collaboration, they do not receive preliminary information ahead of time and sometimes they find it hard to obtain PP presentations, glossaries or any kind of written or on-line material. This means that if interpreters are not highly-skilled, they might easily fail to correctly translate specific words, concepts or paragraphs in a contract, figures in a balance-sheet.

Smart Box Interpreting 1.0 is a tool designed to help interpreters find specific information about given product and services (useful before a liaison interpreting task) or about a speaker (before a conference). Its first aim is to collect speeches from

a specific domain (military/politics/economics). Its overall framework is very similar to the Speech Repository Portal by the European Commission, containing a list of languages and speeches that members can up- and download. Though the extent of its usefulness and its efficacy are currently being tested, in a questionnaire administered to about 50 respondents (mainly freelance conference interpreters), interviewees report the importance of having a tool allowing to share documents and speeches ahead of a conference. The questionnaire comprises section no.1 with general questions about how they can benefit from the tool and section no.2 with questions related to their personal experiences in highly articulated conferences.

Almost 100% of respondents report that they would use this tool to download any kind of materials such as glossaries to enrich their training phase ahead of the performative event. Most respondents confirm the importance of being well-trained and well-prepared ahead of a conference. 50% of respondents state that, without a robust knowledge of the subject, interpreters run the risk of underperforming. As a general result, professionals would like to receive as many data as possible, not only with the aim of relieving the psychological burden on their cognitive load but also in order to take into account some aspects as diverse as register, degree of formal language required in specific contexts and finally to receive suggestions – in dedicated forums – on how to behave and to act in peculiar contexts such as barracks, TV or radio. To this end, two cases are reported, in order to show how difficulties arising from both vocabulary and context can be solved using *Smart Box Interpreting*

1.0. In case no.1, interpreters exchange data regarding the speakers of a conference about Motorways of the Sea. Those interpreters who have already worked for the client (the Italian *Ministero dei Trasporti*) share their glossaries and inform about several difficulties in interpreting the CEO of RAM (*Rete Autostrade per il Mare*). In particular, information is supplied about his speech flow – count of words uttered in a minute – and the delivery rich in figures, data and some culture-bound references.



Window containing information about vocabulary and translation

In a dedicated session – called *Speeches* – users can find information about the speakers involved in an event. In this case, interpreters highlight that the CEO will deliver the introductory remarks and will introduce the first of a round of speeches. After interpreters upload one of his speeches and add information about his profile as a speaker (speech flow, delivery rate, overall register), they provide comments on interpreting strategies and ways of improving overall delivery.

Turning to another context – the military domain –, interpreters stressed out the need to retain the position and the rank held by officers. The case described in this paper concerns the Italian Financial Police. In this specific domain, interpreters working to feed *Smart Box Interpreting* stress out how in this military Organization twofold activities are needed. On the one hand, reference is made to the operational activities of the agents which have to do with tax assessments and investigations. On the other hand, some suggestions concern the conduct to take on in meetings, the rules to stick to and some practical advice on how to cope with the military hierarchy. In the end, prospective interpreters and trainees can learn how interpreting is more than the mere sum of Listening, Production and Memory, the three efforts originally envisaged by Gile in his theory.

Depending on the sector, interpreters face up to different challenges pertaining to both the professional side and the relationship with speakers at different levels (prosody, social distance and register to adopt in the rendition). In this case, contributors revealed how the CLM can be influenced by other factors than the speech flow, the delivery rate. In particular, the failure to get into the details of the operational activities (tax assessment and the legal framework which show how and which taxpayer is subject to controls) can jeopardize the whole interpreting performance.

Third Department operations

*Top management, planning tasks as well
as guidance and control of Corps' activity*

Information provided by Smart Box Interpreting

Top management: gerarchia/Ufficiali superiori

Planning tasks: pianificazione

Units and enforcement bodies

Training centers

Smart Box: unità e sezioni operative

Centri di addestramento militare

Companies with a fictitious location abroad

Smart Box: Esterovestizione

Permanent establishment

Smart Box: stabile organizzazione

Sector surveys

Studi di settore

Finally, it is worth reminding how useful this tool can be for both practitioners and students or trainees. In conference interpreting training, trainers can invite students to make searches related to specific topics, checking out word lists and watching videos uploaded by interpreters. Likewise, practitioners can face the training phase with more speed and ease. The possibility of interacting with people that have allegedly worked in a given sector and exchange data or views via the Forum should not be underestimated. In the end, if interpreters add information and witness their own experience in a professional field, Smart Box Interpreting can turn into a rich corpus-based tool.

5. Conclusions

Multimodality plays a key role in modern conference interpreting. It is not only one of the three factors (along with prior knowledge and collaboration) affecting each interpreting task and the overall quality of the performative event. It is also meant as the combination of textual, visual, sign and non-sign based systems. All of them can equally have a significant impact on the interpreters' rendition. For this reason, interpreters need to rely on several tools and cannot rule out the importance of sight translation, language corpora and audio-visual information collected by fellow-interpreters. *Smart Box Interpreting 1.0* starts from the idea of creating a tool targeted to conference and liaison interpreters and to swiftly exchange data ahead of a

conference event. Although it is still in its initial phase and its design needs improving a lot, it starts from the assumption that, because interpreting is a real-time task and interpreters can be hired from different corners of the globe, this tool can fill the gap given by remote mode and distance. Several initiatives have already been put in place, the most important of which is the Speech Repository Portal set up by the European Commission, a valid tool for trainees, teaching how to use and adjust TTs to different registers, and to acquire a specialization in specific sectors. The limits of *Smart Box* are the costs that a tool like this implies. In fact, it comprises a section for speeches, one for wordlists and one forum dedicated to single topics. Furthermore, this tool cannot be managed by one only interpreter guided by IT professionals. It should be constantly updated and enriched by inputs.

In a final version, after assessing its local usefulness and efficiency – for instance, through a pilot project involving those EU capital cities where most interpreters are hired –, it could be extended to EU institutions and adjusted to their specific needs. In order for this to happen, the pilot project will take at least one-year time, after which it will be possible to assess whether further adjustments are needed and their overall extent. Finally, its design should also be improved and made more appealing with basic colours that spot professional sectors, areas (glossary VS speeches) and a dedicated forum page for users to share information.

This may be an ambitious project but it sets out the clear objective of adding knowledge and making collaboration easier.

Legend

CI (consecutive interpreting)

CL (cognitive load)

CLM (cognitive load model)

K (collaboration factor)

MM (multimodality)

PK (prior knowledge)

PP (PowerPoint)

SI (simultaneous interpreting)

ST (source text)

TT (target text)

WM (working memory)

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