

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL QUALITIES IN OVERCOMING THE DIFFICULTIES OF SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING

K.A. Chernik, year 3
Polessky State University

Among the various branches of interpreting, simultaneous interpreting is the most preferred in a prevailing number of situations. It can be argued that the profession of a simultaneous interpreter will remain in demand despite the global mechanization of translation. This is precisely why research on the subject of simultaneous interpreting is significant. A simultaneous interpreter represents the highest «qualification» within the translation profession due to its inherent complexity. Many authors, such as A.F. Shiryaev, B.O. Shtayer, and N.A. Dudareva, touching upon the aspects and mechanisms of simultaneous interpreting, describe in detail its high-level difficulties, overcoming which requires a multitude of skills, both acquired and seemingly impossible to «develop». This article examines the personality traits necessary for a person to effectively overcome the challenges of simultaneous interpreting.

Drawing upon the works of the aforementioned authors, particularly N.A. Dudareva and A.F. Shiryaev, we will examine the most prominent complexities of simultaneous interpreting, while simultaneously identifying the personality characteristics that enable interpreters to cope with them. N.A. Dudareva, in her article «On Some Difficulties of Simultaneous Interpreting» [1], highlights the following significant obstacles for simultaneous interpreters:

1. «A situation of divided attention arises, caused by the need to constantly compare two languages and switch from one code to another. [...] fatigue of the articulatory apparatus appears, self-control decreases, and [...] serious errors occur, even in the native language.» Therefore, a simultaneous interpreter must be stress-resistant, imperturbable, and calm in any situation. The specialist must possess continuous concentration in stressful environments.

2. «The second difficulty of simultaneous interpreting is related to the speed of the interpreter's reaction [...]. Therefore, a slow person, even one who is fluent in a foreign language, is unlikely to become a good simultaneous interpreter...» This excerpt clearly indicates the importance of innate characteristics. A simultaneous interpreter operates within a range of two to seven words «behind» the speaker's original language, which absolutely excludes slowness. This confirms the extreme exclusivity of the activity under consideration. The interpreter must possess a high degree of rapid reaction. In this case, even «lags» can be compensated for by paraphrasing through equivalents: «...An indispensable condition for success is the presence of a large stock of equivalent pairs of lexical units connected by a symbolic connection, allowing translation [...] through conditioned reflexes, i.e., at the stimulus-response level.»

3. As the next difficulty, the author considers language compression. Grammatical constructions in the Russian language are more verbose than in the languages of the Germanic-Romance group, and Russian words are 7-8% longer [2]. Thus, the interpreter must possess an excellent ability to shorten speech without distorting its meaning, which means the need for speech competence and oratory art.

4. «A great difficulty is represented by the mental stress associated with the 'irreversibility' of what has been said [...]» A simultaneous interpreter must possess internal emotional restraint and, again, stress resistance. One noticed mistake by a psychologically unstable person will inevitably lead to a series of new errors.

5. No less significant, the author notes the possible presence of an extraordinary speaker: when translating from a foreign language into the native one, translating puns and jokes is already difficult, but the reverse situation is even more challenging: when translating from Russian into English, the interpreter will spend enough time explaining, for example, the essence of the expression «privatization» while preserving the intended pun, which will negatively affect the stability of the translation process. Following this, we note: the simultaneous interpreter must have a sense of humor and wit in order to make a quality translation of such non-equivalent vocabulary in a few seconds.

6. «The specialist must possess free and full mastery, approaching perfection, of both the native and foreign language. [...] Translation can be inaccurate or false in the absence of complete and profound knowledge of the subtleties of the languages of translation.»

A false translation is the greatest threat, not only to the quality of the translation but also to the translator themselves. Therefore, a simultaneous interpreter's knowledge of languages and translation mechanisms should ideally be perfect as a minimum.

Now, let's focus more closely on the necessary innate qualities: a simultaneous interpreter must possess excellent long-term and short-term memory, the ability to concentrate, the ability to improvise, the ability to capture the tone and nuances of speech and adapt to the speaker's style, and should not have speech impediments – all of these are psychophysical characteristics. Even the required neutrality, punctuality, and the ability to keep information that is not to be disclosed confidential are primarily related to habits and character, and not to «skills.»

Innate abilities are an undeniably important element on the path to becoming a quality specialist. We do not diminish the need to acquire certain skills, such as knowledge of languages, and the art of translation (refer to the book «Simultaneous Interpreting. The Activity of a Simultaneous Interpreter and Methods of Teaching Simultaneous Interpreting» by A.F. Shiryayev [3]: the author investigated three groups of people regarding their ability to combine the simultaneous perception of someone else's speech and their own speaking: the first group was simultaneous interpreters, the average arithmetic percentage ratio of the duration of the speaker's and translator's simultaneous speaking to the total duration of the text was 79.1%; the second group was students who had been studying simultaneous interpreting for six months – 48.6-60.5%; the third group was students who had not been trained in simultaneous interpreting, who completely distorted the meaning of the source text and made many mistakes; therefore, A.F. Shiryayev argues that the ability to simultaneously carry out perception and speaking is acquired through special training), however, even after receiving quality training in all possible aspects of the profession, the suitable personality qualities discussed in this article are fundamental in determining the successful activity of a simultaneous interpreter.

The analysis of the complexities of simultaneous interpreting proves that the successful implementation of this activity is determined not only by the level of a person's linguistic competencies but also by a set of personality qualities, as evidenced by the analysis of existing research.

This article is scientifically significant due to the systematization of information from the aspect of the personality qualities of simultaneous interpreters carried out in it. The article emphasizes the primary role of personality characteristics in ensuring the effectiveness of professional activity in the field of simultaneous interpreting.

Literature cited

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