

## **Introducing simultaneous interpreting (Roderick Jones, DG SCIC)**

The following lines do not intend to add in any way to the body of interpreting theory or, still less, to theoretical translation studies. They do not claim to be the only approach to the question of how best to start training simultaneous interpreting. They are merely a modest attempt to put into words an approach which I have gradually come to adopt and which may be found useful by some trainer colleagues who ask themselves how to start students off in simultaneous.

In introduction it should also be added that the approach and ideas expressed are my own and in no way reflect a position of the Directorate General for Interpretation of the European Commission, for which I work, of the Commission itself or indeed of any EU body.

### ***The first contact – the psychological dimension***

The introduction to simultaneous is a crucial and fascinating part of interpreter training. For students it is a highly charged moment emotionally. When most youngsters imagine conference interpreting it is simultaneous they think of, so now the students will have the feeling that they are moving on to “the real thing”. They will be excited, eager and nervous all at the same time. Teaching simultaneous is, however, also highly technical. How does one set students on the right road to coping with split attention, chunking (transforming long, complex sentences in the original into a series of shorter, simpler sentences in one's output as interpreter – also known as the "salami technique"), anticipation, developing the right time lag, and a host of other things? There are therefore both psychological and technical challenges for the trainers in the introduction to simultaneous. But it is essential to get it right from the beginning. If students get off to a good start in simultaneous, more than half the battle is won; if they do not, it will often be difficult to correct bad habits acquired early and make up for lost time.

Imagine that you are faced by a group of students on their first day of simultaneous. They should, by now, have taken on board the basic mechanism of interpreting and apply it reasonably competently to consecutive. What are you going to do next?

Many colleagues tend to suggest, reasonably enough, easing the students in gradually: giving them easy speeches, slow speeches, speeches on known material, even ones the students have heard before. All of this is sensible enough, but it is really jumping the gun. One cannot begin by sending students into the booth, even with appropriately adapted material, and expect them to take it from there.

The first thing I should recommend is to have a discussion with the students. Whereas, for example, in introducing notes to students earlier in the course one may choose to use either a discussion format or an ex cathedra presentation, or a mix of the two, here I feel it is definitely desirable to use the discussion format. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, the students will probably be able to provide all the input that is required themselves; they just need prompting with the right questions. (We shall turn to the content of that input in a moment.) Secondly, the discussion format enables the trainers to exploit the psychological and emotional dimension of the moment: it enables the students to express their excitement and trepidation mentioned above.

That is precisely why the first question to put to the students is: "How do you feel?" This is a big day for them, doing the first simultaneous ever in their life, and they should be able to make the most of it and express their feelings. They will probably not say anything very original or surprising for the trainers. Answers are likely to be to the effect that the students are curious, want to know what it's like, but at the same time some will say they are nervous, do not know how they will cope, and so on. The fact of expressing those feelings is an end in

itself. It will help to temper nerves and make it easier to enjoy the experience of trying simultaneous. Enjoyment is crucial. If students are traumatised by their first confrontation with simultaneous, this can have a negative effect on their development through the entire course, although it is not necessarily the end of the world. If they discover simultaneous is fun, that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their career.

One can then use this emotional aspect to move on naturally to more technical aspects. The trainer can pick up the subjective comments students are likely to make – to the effect that they are nervous, are perhaps not sure whether they will cope – as a springboard for further discussion which will gradually become more technical. You are nervous, yes, but why? Most often students will start saying things such as: how can they listen and speak at the same time? They will have to react very fast in simultaneous and might not keep up. What if I don't know a word? These are the usual, normal reactions of someone about to start simultaneous and who thinks about the difficulties of the task.

In other words, by starting with a more personal question likely to bring an (at least partially) emotive response, the trainer can guide the discussion towards the issues which he or she wishes to concentrate on. Those issues are as follows. What are the differences between consecutive and simultaneous? What are the similarities between simultaneous and consecutive? And what are the implications of the answers to those two questions.

### ***Introducing technical issues***

The first part of the more technical discussion can thus focus on the question: simultaneous presents new challenges, it's something different, why and how is it different from consecutive? It is at this stage that students will start providing more objective input into the discussion, and in most groups which have been well prepared in consecutive the trainers will have to provide little or none of the input themselves. The students will of course respond that there is a difference in that the interpreter has to speak and listen at the same time. The trainers should make it clear that they have registered that point, as it is one difficulty the students will expect the trainers to help them cope with when they go into the booth. As we shall see below, the trainers will in fact not explicitly tackle that as a separate issue in the first exercises students are expected to do in simultaneous. Secondly, the students will no doubt remark that the interpreter is under greater stress, as they have to react immediately, they have less time to reflect and analyse, and if necessary to think of the right words and expressions in the target language. Again it is important for the trainers to mark that they have registered this point. Without going into technical explanations, premature at this stage, the trainers can mention that there are techniques which can help the interpreter analyse in real time. They should certainly stress that the analysis must continue to be done and that simultaneous cannot descend into "parroting", just repeating the speaker's words as they come.

If the students have mentioned the second point – the need to analyse very quickly – they will probably then mention the third point of difference, namely that it is harder to analyse in simultaneous because you don't know where the speaker is going. In consecutive the interpreter has heard the whole speech before they start interpreting and knows where they are going and what the structure of the speech is. In simultaneous this is obviously not the case. This point of difference is crucial and should be highlighted by the trainers, as it is the main thing they shall be concentrating on in early simultaneous exercises (cf. below). Further, the trainers should point out - if the students, as is likely, don't mention it explicitly - that this uncertainty in the interpreter's mind exists at two levels. It exists at what can be called the macro level: the overall sense of the speech. Is the speaker going to be for or against, are they a liberal or an interventionist, an advocate of the chemical industry or an environmentalist? And then it exists at the micro level, the level of the individual sentence. Is the sentence going

to be an affirmative or a negative, is the main verb going to be in the future or the past tense, what perhaps crucial adverb of time, place or manner will be used to define proposed action? And so on.

Now, having identified the main and mostly obvious differences between consecutive and simultaneous, the trainers can turn to something equally important and ask the students what are the *common* characteristics of the two modes of interpretation. With a little prompting the students should now be able to state the two key things. Firstly, interpreting, be it consecutive or simultaneous, is communication. This fundamental truth takes us back to day one of the course, but has to be recalled and consequences drawn from it. One of the risks of simultaneous for beginners, arising in no small part from the material environment in which they work, i.e. a booth where they sit behind sound-proofed panes of glass, is to feel cut off, to start to work in a solipsistic way and to cease to communicate effectively. Once the issue of communication has been identified – one hopes by the students themselves – the trainers should stress the point, mention already the need to look alternately at the speaker and at the interpreter's audience, to have correct posture and to use gestures if one feels like it and they come naturally, even if there is no-one to watch those gestures.

Moving on from the general point of communication the second main point in common between consecutive and simultaneous is that, rather obviously, both are interpreting. That is, the same basic tenets apply and the same mechanism can be used, namely listening, understanding, analysing and reformulating. Again, students who have been properly prepared in the consecutive training phase will tend to volunteer the information themselves, given a little bit of time and a few carefully put questions by the trainers. All that remains is for the trainer to stress this point, which is probably the most important point in the introduction to simultaneous: students must understand the need to continue using the good reflexes they have acquired in consecutive, applying the same basic mechanism, and provide coherent, digestible, user-friendly output for their audience.

The discussion with the students will now have served its purpose. Firstly, students will have got some of their emotions off their chest and will probably feel the better for it. Secondly, both the differences and the points in common between consecutive and simultaneous have been identified. The trainers can now use the points in common as a springboard to make some basic recommendations to the students. If the students can always respect these in the booth, they will make life much easier for themselves. They can be summed up broadly as follows:

- Do not try to interpret what you have not heard or understood
- Always make sense and speak coherently
- Speak grammatically
- Always finish your sentences
- Use, wherever possible, short, simple sentences.

There is of course any number of other recommendations one could make, but these points put together form a kind of bottom line, and should suffice at this stage.

Rather than just stating them baldly, the trainers should explain them and indeed inter-relate them. It is important that students accept the first point. In early simultaneous exercises there will almost certainly be things they quite literally do not hear, given the novelty of speaking and listening at the same time. Just making up plausible things which might be what the speaker could have said can be disastrous, as all conference interpreters know. Similarly, just saying something for the sake of saying something when one has not understood the original is the best way to produce gobbledegook. Students should therefore be persuaded that silence is better than rubbish or nonsense. They will instinctively feel uneasy with this – just sitting in

the booth remaining silent for an entire sentence is counter-intuitive – and should therefore be reassured that this is the right approach to adopt in their first steps in simultaneous, and that with time the problem will arise less and less, and that further, also with time, they can learn techniques to mask the silences. These techniques could involve such things as briefly restating, summarising or clarifying the previously interpreted idea, whilst listening carefully to the speaker so as to identify how to link up with the next part of the speech, but it is premature to mention that to the students now. They need to be persuaded about the virtues of the basic principles enunciated above as a starting point for novice simultaneous interpreters and have to take on trust that some of the difficulties they raise will be dealt with through techniques to be learned later.

On this same point students may well object that the interpreter cannot always understand everything they hear, but cannot just fall silent every time that happens. They are of course right. Interpreters often interpret the gory details of the workings of nuclear power stations without being engineers or physicists, or the intricacies of international public law without being lawyers. Therefore, it is necessary to explain what one means by not interpreting something "one doesn't understand".

Firstly, students should be reminded that they are novice simultaneous interpreters. There will therefore obviously be more things they do not understand, and probably literally do not hear, in their early days of simultaneous, but that as they develop their technique the problem, though never disappearing totally, will become less acute and occur less frequently. That is only common sense, but it is worth reminding students if they raise this worry.

Secondly, students can be reassured that initially they will of course not be expected to deal with technical terminology and concepts. As practising interpreters after their studies they will work in professional contexts where they will be able to prepare meetings and draw on meeting documents, terminology bases and glossaries. Part of the reassurance trainers can give students can also be to state the fact that part of the course later on will involve learning about meeting preparation.

Thirdly, and for our immediate pedagogical purposes very significantly, understanding does not necessarily imply understanding everything thoroughly as an expert would. Indeed, for conference interpreters it rarely does. For an interpreter "understanding" means identifying a coherent, structured, rational set of ideas or points of information presented in context. These ideas or facts can then be analysed and re-expressed in another language even if the interpreter does not have a genuine, deep understanding of what one is saying. One could even give a simple example. Most of us drive a car nowadays. We are probably quite capable of explaining to a non-driver, "to change gear you need to let the clutch in, change gear with the gear lever and then let the clutch out again". And if we were asked to interpret an explanation like that in our C language into our A language we should probably have no problems. But how many of us realise what is really going on, how the gear-box functions, and so on?

Fourthly, on the lexical front, if the students return to the issue of "not knowing a word" trainers can refer back usefully to the work already done in consecutive. Students will definitely already have interpreted speeches where they did not understand all the words. They can be reminded of this and that understanding a speech does not mean understanding every single word in that speech. Of course, students will argue that in consecutive they have time to reconstruct meaning based on a hearing of an entire speech and that in simultaneous that is impossible. Trainers have to be honest and recognise the difficulty, but at the same time they can say that simultaneous training necessarily involves learning techniques to deal with this problem. Various techniques such as generalisation, paraphrase, reformulation to avoid using a specific term, and so on, spring to mind, but again, as mentioned above, it would be deleterious to go into detail about such notions now when students are about to start

their first simultaneous ever: they must take on trust that the techniques necessary will be offered to them and trained.

It may not be necessary to present all of the points just mentioned in response to students' objections, but it is important to have these arguments to hand. On the one hand students must be warned against trying to interpret things they haven't heard or understood, but on the other hand students may well have common sense objections to this, as mentioned above, and all ambiguity about the word "understanding" should be cleared up.

The remaining key recommendations to students all hang together very logically and can be presented as a sequence.

The first point – always make sense and speak coherently – is a logical consequence of the premise that interpreting is communication and that the interpreter is there to provide a usable service to a client. As long as the interpreter is not making sense they are no use whatsoever to their audience. In consecutive there is a fairly reduced risk of interpreters' being incoherent. In simultaneous as the interpreter is under more time pressure and has the problem of listening both to the source speech and to their own output, there is a significant risk of speaking incoherently. Students therefore must be made aware of that risk and have it impressed upon them from the beginning that, whatever happens, their output must remain coherent.

Following on from that one can justify the second point – speak grammatically – as being a specific form of, and a sine qua non for, speaking coherently.

The third point – always finish your sentences – is a particular case of speaking grammatically. It is worth taking just a moment to stress to students just how important this is, and that if there is one thing delegates hate above all, it is the unfinished sentence.

Lastly, the final point – use short, simple sentences – is a tip to help students achieve the objectives contained in the three preceding points. The shorter and simpler their sentences, the less the risk of finding they cannot finish a sentence, the less the risk of, for example, failing to respect gender rules or agreement in number between the subject and the verb, or of generally becoming confused and incoherent.

At the beginning of this section we said that the students would be excited and eager to begin simultaneous, but now we have spent some considerable time on a discussion with the students and then recommendations to them. Is not this going to frustrate the students, and thus perhaps be counterproductive? If the discussion were to take too long, the answer would be yes. Although the discussion with the students has been dealt with at some length here, it should be possible to get through it quickly and efficiently. Essentially, after the introductory, subjective part mentioned at the beginning, the discussion can be summed up easily as: identifying the differences between consecutive and simultaneous; identifying the common points between the two; using the latter as a springboard to recall the basic mechanism of interpreting – a revision of fundamental principles to be carried out at each new stage in the pedagogical progression of any interpreter training course – and to give some very basic recommendations for the students' early work in simultaneous. All in all, depending on how prolix the students are, it should be possible to get through that in at most half an hour.

### ***Becoming acquainted with the working environment***

Having completed the introductory discussion, the trainers can now move on to more practical things. Before doing any exercises at all they should take the students into the booths and show them the equipment. There are some obvious things to be shown – the on-off button, the cough button, the microphone, the headphones, the volume control(s). Students should preferably be taken into the booth in small groups, so that everyone can see clearly and understand, and ask questions if they want. A dozen or so students all trying to look over one another's shoulder is not a good idea. At this stage it is probably too early to go into much

detail or to talk about booth etiquette, given that the students will be raring to go. But a few comments still need to be made on top of the bare necessities of showing the equipment.

First, good posture should be recalled – for ergonomic reasons and also to enhance students' concentration. Here the trainers can usefully recall the need to maintain eye-contact with both speaker and audience in order to maintain psychological contact with proceedings in the meeting room. Further, students should be told about the distance to speak from the microphone and the need to talk directly into it from a stable distance and speaking at a constant volume.

Secondly, they should be told about the right level to put the volume control and at which to pitch their voice, this again to protect their hearing and vocal chords during a potentially long career, and also to ensure comfort of listening for delegates in the future and good booth cohabitation with colleagues: all conference interpreters know how infuriating it is to work with colleagues who speak too loud or even shout in the booth. What are the right levels to recommend? It is probably easier to start by addressing the volume at which the interpreter speaks. Basically, one can say: use a normal, conversational tone, as if you were chatting to your colleagues in the confined space that the booth is. Any louder is unnecessary. The trainers can easily demonstrate this as they talk to the students in the booth. Basing oneself on the speaking level, one can then recommend that the volume control for the headphones be kept as low as possible whilst making it possible to hear the original. The trainers should warn the students about the pointlessness of bumping up the volume: a loud input into their ears will make it harder for them to monitor their own output, they will instinctively speak louder, and that will drown out the original, thus making it necessary to turn the volume up more. They will get into a vicious circle which will only damage their hearing, ruin their voice and irritate both colleagues and delegates. Moreover it will not improve the quality of their interpreting.

Thirdly, students should be told to switch on their microphones only when they want to begin interpreting and to switch them off immediately after finishing. They should not get into the sloppy habit of switching on microphones the moment they are in the booth or leaving them switched on after they have finished working.

Fourthly, the trainers can mention the question of how to wear earphones. Here, rather than being directive it is much better to mention the options open to the students – for example both ears half covered by an earpiece; one ear totally covered with the other completely open; the question of right ear/left ear – and to encourage them to experiment and find what suits them best. Conference interpreters know from experience that there are various schools of thought, but that at the end of the day it is a very personal, subjective matter as to how one wears headphones. In dealing with this point the main thing is to recall that it is the end that counts, not the means, rather as with note taking. The end is to be able to hear the original clearly while being able to monitor one's own output adequately as well. The method of wearing headphones is merely a means to achieve that end.

Lastly whilst dealing with the equipment the trainers may like to warn students about the need to avoid parasitic noises in the booth. Tapping the table, or - heaven forbid! - the microphone, pouring water near a microphone that is on, rustling papers, etc., are to be avoided like the plague. One of the best ways of bringing this point home to the students is to ask them, at the end of the explanation of the equipment, to return into the main training room and put on their headphones and tune in to a booth occupied by a trainer. The trainer can then switch on the microphone, talk to the students a little and intersperse their comments with various background noises. The students will very soon get the idea.

### *The first exercises in simultaneous*

Simultaneous interpretation is a highly technical activity. Therefore, it requires a high degree of technical input from trainers. At the same time, the technical input cannot be provided by explanations, information or even demonstrations by the trainers. A trainer can talk themselves blue in the face explaining how to interpret and that will not help the students if they are not able to practise the techniques. The technical input has to come through the usual routine of setting objectives, using practice speeches and providing constructive feedback. In order to be successful, the trainers must therefore select carefully the right objectives, then adapt the practice speeches to those objectives, and provide feedback accordingly.

That, however, is easier said than done. In order to decide on the objectives, one has to see the difficulties faced by students in simultaneous and try to develop methods for overcoming those difficulties. But the difficulties are manifold. There is the purely acoustic difficulty of speaking and listening at the same time, a difficulty compounded by the fact that the interpreter actually has to listen actively to two lines of discourse: the input speech and their own production. Then there is the cognitive problem of split attention activities. Thirdly there is the intellectual problem of analysis of the speech while it is being delivered and the need to develop some kind of mechanism for anticipation.

Those are the three main novelties for the students beginning simultaneous interpretation. Accordingly, interpreter trainers have developed and use various exercises to try to address them. Below we shall look at some of them. However, I believe that the real and specific difficulty of simultaneous interpretation is the third one mentioned above, what we have termed the “intellectual” problem, namely, not knowing where the speaker is going, both at macro and micro level, and having to develop skills to cope with this uncertainty, including anticipation.

It is true that speaking and listening at the same time – the first difficulty identified above - is an idiosyncratic activity perhaps specific to interpreters, but it is a purely mechanical problem that can be solved usually simply through practice and habit. Trainers do not necessarily have to design or use exercises to overcome it. It can be dealt with by sheer practice. That is my own intuition based on experience of interpreter training. It also appears to be backed up by research done by Ingrid Pinter in Vienna for her dissertation on the influence of practice and concentration on simultaneous speaking and listening. Pinter, a trained psychologist as well as interpreter, carried out her scientific research using inter alia EEG techniques. Franz Pöchhacker describes her research as follows: “Pinter wies in einem psychologischen Experiment mit Anfängern und weit Fortgeschrittenen in der Dolmetscherausbildung sowie Berufsdolmetschern nach, daß das gleichzeitige Sprechen und Hören kein wesentliches Problem darstellt und durch Übung durchaus lernbar ist.” “In a psychological experiment with beginners and advanced students in interpreter training as well as with professional interpreters, Pinter demonstrated that simultaneous speaking and listening does not present a substantial problem and can definitely be learned through practice.” [My translation.] (Pöchhacker, Franz (1994) *Simultandolmetschen als komplexes Handeln* Tübingen: Gunter Narr.) This research was developed further by the same author and published under her married name (Kurz, Ingrid (1996) *Simultandolmetschen als Gegenstand der interdisziplinären Forschung* Vienna: Wiener Universitätsverlag).

Further, split attention activities – the second issue - are not unique to interpreting and do not need to be trained specifically at this stage. Anyone who has played music while following a score knows what split attention is. So does anyone who has driven a motor vehicle. And, perhaps regrettably, modern television viewers are probably well primed for multi-tasking as they listen to the news presenter talk about politics, follow the sports news scrolling at the bottom of the screen and cast an eye over the weather forecast displayed in another window of

the screen. But, more important for our purposes and much more relevant, the trainees on the course should already be used to using split attention and multi-tasking. For after all what does one do when interpreting consecutively? The interpreter must listen to a speech, understand and analyse it while noting down certain things which will help them reformulate in another language in a few minutes. While listening they have to sort information and decide what is to be noted and how. This is one of the joys of teaching consecutive before simultaneous: the students will already have taken on board multi-tasking, perhaps without realising it, even before they start simultaneous.

Our conclusion is: the “intellectual” problem lies at the core of simultaneous interpreting, it is inextricably bound up with the basic mechanism of interpreting in general, and is therefore the one specific area which should be addressed from the first day of simultaneous in exercises designed to that end.

Therefore, I recommend an approach which concentrates on the third issue, the need for anticipation. Moreover, in order to deal with this issue, rather than just using at the beginning easy speeches or ones heard previously on some occasion by the trainees, a progressive series of specific exercises can be devised and used.

How do we set about this? Given that the main new and specific problem to be faced by students is that they do not know where a speech, or sentence, is headed, the trainers’ task is to minimise that problem, so as to enable students to interpret simultaneously. They do this by making sure the students know in advance what is going to be said in the first simultaneous they do. Following this, the trainers can gradually reduce the assistance given to the students and give them progressively less advance information about the content of the speeches to be interpreted, until the students find they can cope with a speech with an introduction as minimal as: “I intend to talk about the pandemic of the new flu virus and the recommendations issued by the WHO last week.”

This can be done by using the following sequence of exercises or something comparable.

### **Exercise 1.**

Announce to the students that before starting with simultaneous there will be a warm-up by doing a consecutive. Have a speaker make a five or six minute speech which is fairly banal, clear, well structured, without major terminological or intellectual difficulties. In other words, the speech should be pretty easy for the students as a consecutive, but it can still be more demanding than speeches from the beginning of the course or even than speeches made soon after the introduction of notes. Ask all students who have the language of the speech as a B or C language to take notes and to be prepared to interpret into their A language in consecutive. Ask any students who have the language as their A language to take notes too, but they can be informed that they will not be interpreting. When the speech is over, invite one student to interpret in consecutive into their A language.

So far this has been a perfectly normal consecutive exercise. However, at the feedback phase the trainers will not provide the normal, full feedback. They will merely check that the speech has been reasonably rendered in consecutive with no major errors of meaning and has been understood by *all* students who have the language in their combination. They will also check that there are no terminological problems outstanding and that all the students with the source language as a B or C language have the correct terminology to hand in their A language.

Then the students will be invited to go into the booth. One should ensure that every student has somebody who can listen to them. Unless one has enormous trainer resources that means that some students will not be able to interpret and will remain in the main exercise room to listen to their fellow students. In selecting those to be invited to go into the booth, one should



choose the student who interpreted in consecutive and as far as possible other students with the same A language. This is because the next phase of the exercise is to make a nearly identical speech to the first one and ask the students in the booth to interpret it simultaneously. The students will not only have heard the speech, but they will already have heard an interpreted, and therefore analysed, version of it. Insofar as they share the same A language as the student who has interpreted in consecutive they will also have the vocabulary and turns of phrase still ringing in their ears, which should as a rule help them with reformulation.

At this juncture it is important to set the right objectives for students. The objective is to speak coherently and clearly and to complete all sentences. The students can be reassured that they do not need to be complete in their interpretation, provided their overall output remains cogent (we shall return to this below on feedback for this first exercise); indeed, they can be told that if they provide fifty percent of the information provided by the speaker, that is sufficient. Here it is crucial to stress to the students that *quality* of output comes before quantity. The reason for this is that students need to get into the good habit of listening and analysing correctly the source speech and then re-expressing it coherently and correctly. Even if they miss things out in their first simultaneous exercises, with time they can continue to use their good listening and analysis technique while gradually increasing the amount of information they convey in their interpretations. Thus they will gradually become able to reduce the gaps in content and provide more and more information without the form of their interpretations suffering. If one tries to do it the other way round, saying that the students should get as much of the speech as possible and that questions of form can be dealt with over time, it will be much harder for the students to make progress. They will have a greater tendency to parrot, to provide unanalysed sentences, which may be formally quite unacceptable in the target language, and indeed may be generally incoherent. Trying to correct such output is not just a question of "improving the formal aspects". It would mean getting the trainees to start analysing again, in other words to go back to applying the basic mechanism of interpretation. Rather than let trainees get into the bad habit of not analysing and then having to get them back on the straight and narrow, I believe it is far better to insist on everything in their output in simultaneous being analysed and properly expressed from the beginning, even if the price of that in the early days of simultaneous interpreting is (forced) filtering and editing.

The objectives mentioned at the beginning of the previous paragraph have implications for the way in which trainers and above all fellow students are to listen to those interpreting in this exercise. They should be invited to listen only to the interpretation. Firstly, it is quite difficult for someone without experience to listen to two lines of discourse and compare them. It would be a very difficult task for the students who are just as much novices as their colleagues interpreting in the booths. Secondly, as completeness of content in relation to the original is not, for the moment, an important criterion in assessing the trainees' performance, there is little point trying to listen to the original at the same time and compare. That will come after the introductory phase of simultaneous.

Before starting the simultaneous – one doesn't want the first ever simultaneous of trainees to be spoiled by technical problems – a quick sound check is in order: can the trainees in the booths hear the speaker properly and can they be heard by at least one trainer or fellow student? Further, one of the first practical difficulties the trainees will have is setting the volume of their headphones correctly. The speaker should talk at some length – what they say is irrelevant, "I hope you're sitting comfortably and that everything is all right, etc. etc." – to give the students time to get accustomed to their voice and adjust the volume accordingly.

The speaker can then make their speech to be interpreted simultaneously. This time the speech should be quasi-identical to the first time round, but not absolutely identical. The students should be warned of this in advance. The reason is that they should be forced really to listen

attentively to the speaker, not just to rely on their memory and base themselves on the consecutive they heard. The point of the whole exercise, including the preparatory phase in consecutive, is to give maximum assistance to the students such that they will know where sentences are heading and what the overall sense of the speech is, but if they were doing just a kind of delayed consecutive from memory that would obviate the whole point of the exercise. If anything, having an absolutely identical speech would deter trainees from active listening and would certainly do nothing to help them develop anticipation as a skill to be used in simultaneous interpretation. An obvious corollary of this is that students should not take into the booth the notes they made when the speech was delivered for the first time. If they try to use them during the simultaneous that will destroy any semblance of active listening, and moreover the notes will no doubt distract the students so much that they will interpret much worse, rather than better.

The speech should be delivered at a normal speaking pace. It should certainly not be delivered as a fast, read speech, but the speaker must be careful not to speak artificially slowly, thinking this will help the trainees. Slowly delivered speeches can be paradoxically difficult to interpret, as the interpreter using chunking and reformulation generally may be left waiting for important grammatical or semantic elements which would enable them to say anything at all. Trainees beginning simultaneous will be made even more nervous, will not want to leave long silences in their interpretation and will have a tendency to be redundant, fill in with their own material or at least make parasitic noises in such circumstances. These are all things to be avoided. It is preferable to use an average, normal speaking pace and leave the trainees to edit out things they do not have time to cope with.

Once the speech is over the trainees who have been in the booths should be invited back into the main room for a debriefing. The first to be given the floor in this phase should be the trainees who have interpreted. They have just done the first simultaneous of their life, a thing they have perhaps dreamed of for years, and should have the possibility of savouring the moment. We can say "savour" here because, with all the help given to them – they knew the speech essentially even before they got into the booth – they have probably performed very well. Almost certainly they will have their worst fears about simultaneous, about "speaking and listening at the same time" dispelled. They will therefore probably be on a high.

Given this emotional dimension the trainers' initial approach should not be technical, but subjective. The first question, echoing the beginning of the session, even before the technical discussion of simultaneous, should be something like: "How do you feel?", or even "How did you enjoy it?" The trainees' answers, again like the answers right at the beginning of the session, will probably not be very original or useful for the trainers, but, as mentioned, it is an end in itself for the trainees to express their feelings. If, unfortunately and contrary to expectations, the experience was not a good one, it is still good to allow the students to express themselves and let off some steam. If necessary, the trainers can console, reassure and encourage the trainees, reminding them that as it is a first attempt everything need not go right immediately and that things will no doubt be better next time.

Following this phase the trainers can move on to more technical feedback. First, they should again address the trainees who interpreted, asking them whether they felt they were able to provide a coherent, clear message and whether they were aware of finishing all of their sentences. Lastly they can ask whether the trainees encountered any particular difficulties and if so how they attempted to deal with them. This set of questions has two objectives. Firstly, it corresponds specifically to the objectives set. The aim is to assess specifically whether the students are achieving the basic things prescribed in the exercise, and not to lose focus by asking only vaguely how they managed. Secondly it helps make the students aware of what they are doing in the booth. In simultaneous the students need to be self-critical and aware of themselves, they need to monitor their own performance consciously. They will cope much

better with difficulties if they themselves are able to identify them than if they are told about them by somebody else.

Then the trainer chairing the session can turn to the other trainers and students who have been listening to the interpretations. Again, particularly for the students, the questions should be very clear, leading questions relating to the objectives set and not a request for a general assessment. Without such questions the student assessors are likely to go off track and start mentioning things which are not relevant or premature, notably omissions in the interpretation, whereas the trainers will have made it clear that completeness of content is not a criterion at this stage.

Here we need for a moment to return to the concept of coherence and cogency of the trainee interpreter's output. When setting the objectives for the exercise it was said that clarity and coherence were of the essence, but that as much as half the content may be left out. Now, when asking the assessors their view of the performance, one must ask whether the speech *as a whole* made sense and was coherent. Not only must the individual sentences be clear, but put together they must form coherent discourse. The following example can show how content can be left out in an interpretation, but the interpretation may or may not make sense, depending on what is left out.

The original is: "Following the Second World War and the terrible suffering it caused, France and Germany, inspired by Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, strove for reconciliation. They decided to pool sovereignty in strategic areas of industry crucial for a war economy, in order to make war between those two countries impossible in future. That is why the first European Community was the Coal and Steel Community."

A novice interpreter may say: "Following the Second World War France and Germany wanted reconciliation. They wanted to work together in industries which were important if they wanted to wage war, in order to prevent another war between them, so they set up the European Coal and Steel Community."

Factually, quite a lot is missing, and the form of expression is a little vague, but it is clear and coherent.

Another interpretation by a beginner may be: "After the Second World War and all it involved, all of the deaths and suffering, Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, that is, French and German politicians, inspired their countries to work together and avoid wars in future and therefore chose, for example, the strategic coal and steel industries for the first European Community."

This actually contains more "information" than the first interpretation, but it is not really very coherent. Not only are there strange collocations such as "inspired their countries [...] to avoid wars in future" and "the strategic coal and steel industries" (were there non-strategic coal and steel industries?), but above all a naïve listener is not going to understand why coal and steel were chosen. Something crucial has been left out of the argument.

This is the kind of overall coherence of interpretations which should be assessed when the initial simultaneous interpretation exercises are done. The overall line of argument – or the overall sequence of events in a narrative speech – needs to remain clear to the listener despite omissions. At this stage in the course, that is in early simultaneous, we can say "omissions": students will be missing things out under duress because they do not have the time to hear everything, process it and reformulate it. Later on in the training and in the context of professional interpreting one can equally say that a line of argument or a narrative must be

coherently reproduced, but in this case despite "editing", as the more experienced interpreter filters out elements from their interpretation deliberately, if that is necessary.

As always when feedback is provided, if problems are identified, a diagnosis should be sought and trainers should propose remedial action. The causes of problems and the remedies will of course be very varied, but at this stage in the training there will be a few typical problems. One is having the wrong balance in listening. The student listens too much to the original, perhaps almost exclusively, and fails to monitor their own output. This can then be manifested by poor grammar, unfinished sentences, pauses in the wrong places. Or they listen too much to themselves and miss things in the original. Another typical problem for beginners is having the wrong time lag from the speaker. Some students may wait too long and get so far behind they have to miss a lot out. Others may be too close and find they have started sentences they cannot finish grammatically correctly or are suffering from heavy lexical and/or syntactical interference from the original. At this early stage these and similar obvious problems – for example over-perfectionism and a tendency to correct oneself, or excessively long and complicated sentences – are most likely to be the ones encountered and the remedial action to be proposed can be quite straightforward.

Once the first group of trainees has done exercise 1, the remaining trainees should do it with a second speech, but with exactly the same sequencing. This exercise has been described at some considerable length as it is a particularly important one. Further, it serves as a model, in terms of the structure and sequence, for all the exercises which follow in the introductory phase to simultaneous, and which can therefore be described much more briefly. These are the next exercises which can be moved on to progressively, in the following order (with some possible variation as will be mentioned below).

### **Exercise 2.**

The trainers begin by announcing that the group is to continue with the same kind of exercise as under point 1 immediately above. However, when the speech has been delivered for a consecutive interpretation, with the students taking notes, there is no consecutive interpretation. The trainers should merely check that everyone has understood and that there are no particular terminological problems. Once that point has been cleared up, students are invited to go into the booth to interpret a speech which is quasi-identical to the one just delivered. In this case the students will have heard the argument/story, know the structure of the speech and should not have problems of understanding or vocabulary but, compared with exercise number one, have not heard an analysed and reformulated version of the first version of the speech. Thus they have still been very much assisted in anticipation but have a little less help in relation to reformulation and thus their own output.

All other parameters of the exercise remain the same. The objective is the same (clear and coherent, grammatically correct output), as is the number of students who can work at a time given the need to have a listener for each student, and the structure for providing feedback.

### **Exercise 3.**

This third exercise now provides still slightly less assistance to the students. The speaker, with the students still in the room, begins by giving a résumé of the speech they intend to deliver. This should be a substantial and detailed summary, not just two or three descriptive sentences. For example, if the speech lasts six minutes, the preceding summary should last about three minutes. Again, before the students are invited to go into the booth they should be given the opportunity of asking a question if anything seems unclear to them in terms of meaning, and should also be able to enquire about terminology. After such clarifications, if any, have been given, the students are invited into the booth and the full-blown speech is made. Thus, in this

exercise, the students will be interpreting a speech which they have not heard, but where they have a pretty good idea of the contents in advance thanks to the résumé.

#### **Exercise 4.**

For this a "reference speech", one to which the exercise will explicitly refer, must be known to the students and fresh in their minds. This means that either a speaker must make an entire speech, which is not to be interpreted, as preparation before they invite the students to go into the booth, or to save time one can draw upon a speech made very recently and fresh in the memory of the students. If one goes for the second option it is a good idea to have planned exercise 4 well in advance and include the speech which is to be the reference speech in exercises 1, 2 or 3.

The idea is as follows. A speech is made (or has been made very recently) and the students can remember it, know the topic, the arguments advanced, and the terminology. The speaker announces that they want to make another speech on the same topic, but from a different point of view. The students are given a few moments to recall the previous speech, discuss it in the group, and are then invited to go into the booths. The speaker then makes a speech which is intimately linked with the first one and which as far as possible has a similar structure – for example treats given arguments in the same order – but which is totally different in substance from the first one, perhaps arguing exactly the opposite.

For example, in exercise 3 above a speech could address the American intervention in Iraq in 2003. The speech could argue that the United States took exactly the right action, that Saddam Hussein was a dangerous tyrant and it was appropriate to achieve what the Americans termed "regime change", and finally that George Bush should be considered as a war hero. When the time comes to try an exercise of the type 4, the speaker can say to the students, "You remember the speech we had [yesterday] about the American intervention in Iraq? I'd like to address that again today, but from a different angle." There can be a brief discussion as the main line of argument is recalled by the students. Then, when the students are in the booths, the speaker makes a speech arguing that the United States behaved unjustifiably and immorally, in contradiction of human rights and breaking international law, and that George Bush is a war criminal. The students are interpreting for the first time in their life a speech which is new to them, they have not even heard a summary of it as in exercise 3. However, they will soon understand what is going on, that this is an *a contrario* version of something they have already heard, and the arguments will be so cut-and-dried that they should be able to follow them – and above all anticipate them – without any great difficulty.

#### **Exercise 5.**

For this exercise the students are sent directly into the booth without any great preparation. It is sufficient for the speaker to announce their subject, describe their intention in the speech, e.g. "I shall be explaining why a new reform of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy is necessary." and to deal with any unknown proper names or potential terminological problems. Then the students are invited to go into the booths. However, at the beginning of the speech the speaker tells the students *not* to interpret, and that they will be told when to start interpreting. The first part of the speech is then a general introduction, sketching out the structure and arguments to be developed in the speech. After this introductory phase, which lasts about two minutes, the speaker will then invite the students to start interpreting. This is even more demanding than previous exercises. Students are interpreting something which is new ground for them. However, the advantage they are given is that they start interpreting when they have been following the speaker's drift for a couple of minutes and can already see where the speaker is heading. Again, an assistance to anticipation, albeit a limited one, as we are now getting towards the end of the introductory phase of simultaneous training.

### **Exercise 6.**

This is the last introductory exercise and brings the students very close to a real situation where a professional interpreter interprets at a meeting or conference. The speaker announces the topic of their speech, no more. Then, everyone in the room, co-trainers and students, is invited to brainstorm. They are asked to throw out words and expressions which might plausibly occur in the speech. They should do this in both the source language and in the target language. If there is a number of A languages among the students, each can mention things in their own target language. They should also mention proper names which are relevant, pieces of information which are likely to be mentioned, arguments likely to be put forward by the speaker. The fact that some of these elements will not be used at all by the speaker is not important. The students will have mobilised all their background and linguistic knowledge and intellectual capacities in relation to the topic announced. That is what we, as conference interpreters, do when we go to work in a meeting or conference. We prepare explicitly by drawing on written materials available for the event, but we also prepare mentally – perhaps sometimes even subconsciously – by making ourselves aware of the context in which we are to work. This context – now given to the students through the brainstorming – helps tremendously in anticipation when interpreting simultaneously.

We have thus come to the end of a sequence of introductory exercises which progressively give less and less help to students to enable them anticipate what they are going to hear – and thus to cope with what we termed the “intellectual” problem of not knowing where the speaker is going, both at macro and micro level – and have done so through an exercise which, albeit in an artificial, manipulated way, brings them close to a mental state comparable to that of the professional conference interpreter in a real interpreting situation.

We have just seen a series of six introductory exercises which we recommend students go through. Clearly, however, this is not set in stone and one does not have to follow this sequence slavishly. Other trainers can certainly come up with other, similar exercises, and one could work with the same basic approach while adding different exercises or replacing some of those described above. What is important is that the students have the opportunity to accustom themselves to working in simultaneous while having to work progressively harder on anticipation. Depending on how intensive the programming of classes, how many students there are in a group and how heterogeneous their language combinations, this phase should last one to two weeks. Experience shows that it sets students on the right track in simultaneous and is an investment well worth making, even for two weeks, if one thinks that then students will have sufficient time – at least one semester and perhaps more, depending on the course structure - to perfect their simultaneous technique. During this week or two trainees will also become used, through habit and thanks to the initial assistance they get in the introductory exercises, to coping with the acoustic difficulty of speaking and listening at the same time. Indeed, many students will be surprised to discover that the problem seems to have disappeared almost without their noticing it.

### ***Comments on the method described***

A number of final comments are in order before turning to other techniques for the introduction to simultaneous.

First, the basic objectives of the early days of simultaneous – speaking coherently and correctly, which includes speaking grammatically, and providing a clear, digestible message with finished sentences - should be repeated *ad nauseam* to the students. As students develop, nuances can be added and particular personal objectives can be built in to cater for the strong and weak points of individual trainees, but this basic objective, which has absolute priority,

should be repeated every time students go into the booth to do simultaneous during this introductory period.

Secondly, the natural corollary of these basic objectives is that the feedback should concentrate on them. There may be further elements of course, for example questions of prosody and intonation may begin to play a role as early as the first week of simultaneous, but the main effort is to be concentrated on getting the fundamental technique right.

Thirdly, it is important for every student in every simultaneous they do in this early stage to have a dedicated listener, and to know that they have one. This should eliminate the risk of their feeling that they are talking into a vacuum and becoming more susceptible to an unanalysed output. This point is particularly crucial when students are beginning to do simultaneous. If they feel they are not being listened to they may easily fall into a sloppy style rather in the spirit: "I didn't hear that, oh well, doesn't matter".

Fourthly, certain students will be talented, will cope very quickly and may want, and even express the request, to move on earlier from the introductory exercises. Such requests should be resisted. It is better for the whole group to move forward at a regular pace. Further, it is better even for those more talented students to progress slowly but steadily and to give a firm foundation to their technique from the very outset. Their understandable need to avoid boredom and to have more of a challenge can be met by being more demanding in relation to their performance, asking them to be more complete in their interpretation or more polished in the form of their output. Explicit objectives can be set for them to cover such demands.

Fifthly, the progression in the introductory phase is achieved through the form of the exercise itself, not through increasing the difficulty of the training speeches delivered. Therefore, throughout the whole phase the speeches can be broadly of the same type as described above for the very first exercise in simultaneous: on known topics, clear, well structured, without major intellectual or terminological difficulties. There is no need to increase the difficulty of speeches gradually through the introductory phase with the argument that the students should be gradually faced by a higher degree of difficulty. A higher degree of difficulty will automatically be felt by students as the assistance provided to them to help cope with anticipation decreases. Further, given the specific type of speech required for these exercises, it is better not to use "thematic weeks", if they are used on the course at all, during this week or these two weeks. Trying to provide fairly banal, terminologically non-challenging speeches on, say, climate change for an entire week would be likely to produce very superficial, repetitious speeches and a high degree of boredom among trainers and trainees alike. On the other hand, going into the issue in greater depth and moving into more specialised areas of vocabulary would interfere with the apprenticeship of the simultaneous technique. So more "general purpose" speeches will serve our purposes better.

Sixthly, during the introductory phase, given the highly structured nature of the sequence of exercises, students should be advised not to practice simultaneous in self-training exercises. If after a few days they feel they are getting the hang of simultaneous and want to go off to practice together, without the special anticipation exercises, their practice sessions are likely to be at best fruitless, as they are trying to run before they can walk, and at worst could actually be damaging as they start to use the wrong techniques, or rather, and more likely, start to interpret simultaneously without a real technique and slip into the bad habit of word for word transposition of the original. Self-training can continue, of course, but students should be told to stick to consecutive for the moment.

Seventhly, once the introductory phase is over, the difficulty of speeches can, indeed must, be increased, but this should happen only progressively. The need to work progressively in this way, once the students have ceased to benefit from the props granted them during the introductory phase, is common sense. One of the most painful memories of my teaching career was getting a group of students through the introduction to simultaneous, and then to

witness another trainer come in to the first training session the following week when the students were no longer labelled as “novices” and deliver a highly technical speech about financial issues that would have taxed many an experienced professional. The devastating effect on the students can be imagined. Trainer-speakers must be briefed to take this into account. Advice must also be given to the trainees to ensure they provide reasonable input speeches in self-training sessions, which can start to cover simultaneous once the introductory phase is over.

Eighthly, and lastly, the brainstorming in exercise 6 can be used later in the course as well, although at less length. It seems perfectly normal, when students have a new topic announced to them for a practice speech, to give them a few moments to mobilise their linguistic and background knowledge, *inter alia* through a brief discussion of the context and key concepts and terms that may occur in the speech. As mentioned above, that is the kind of mental mobilisation that any conference interpreter benefits from in a real life situation.

### ***Other methods of introducing simultaneous?***

Above we mentioned that there are three major novelties for the beginner in simultaneous: the purely acoustic difficulty of speaking and listening at the same time, the cognitive problem of split attention activities and the intellectual problem of not knowing where the speaker is going. It has become clear that my preferred approach is to concentrate on the last of these three. However, there are other options and some trainers may wish to address directly also the first two difficulties. One can even devise a coherent, progressive construct for attempting to do so.

For example, certain exercises, such as shadowing – interpreting where the source language and the target language are the same, e.g. interpreting from English into English, either repeating faithfully word for word or paraphrasing – can be used to deal with the acoustic problem. Then other exercises, such as asking students to perform simple intellectual tasks, for example simple arithmetic operations, while listening to a speech, and then providing a résumé of the speech, can be used to train split attention activities. The students have, in such exercises, to be able to devote sufficient attention to the other task, for example the arithmetic, in order to get it right, while being able to understand, analyse and remember the speech. These two elements, the acoustic training exercise and the split attention exercise, can then be combined, for example, by the “count-down” exercise: students are sent into the booth and hear a speech; during it they are required to count down aloud, say from a thousand, while listening to the speech, and then have to provide a resume of it. In this case there is a second, perturbing activity (counting down), but that is also an oral activity, bringing the student closer to a simultaneous interpreting situation where they have to speak and listen at the same time. Lastly, the intellectual problem of speech analysis in real time and anticipation is dealt with variously by using very easy speeches, speeches on known subjects, speeches which have already been delivered during consecutive training, and so on.

These all sound reasonable exercises to use, but I should like to address them now critically. Firstly, is it useful to use shadowing? If anything, I should argue that shadowing can actually be counterproductive when starting simultaneous. When trainees start interpreting simultaneously the one thing to be avoided is word for word interpretation, unanalysed parroting of the original. If shadowing is to be taken, as it is by some trainers, in the sense that the student is to repeat exactly the same words as the speaker, in order to get used to speaking and listening at the same time, then this is dangerous. It will automatically encourage students to get used to parroting. When they are then faced with a source language different from the target language, they may find it difficult to break the habit they have formed, with the negative consequences we all know. If however, shadowing is taken as meaning that the



student has to paraphrase but render the same meaning, this then becomes an extremely difficult exercise. It is extremely difficult to say exactly the same thing differently in the same language. One can use synonyms, but runs then the risk of only striking on near-synonyms. If the speaker says “consultation”, then “coordination” or “cooperation” may distort the meaning. One can change the syntax and grammar, use the passive voice instead of the active one and so on, but this can then lead to stilted and unnatural style. If the speaker has said something in a perfectly normal, straightforward way, do we want to encourage our students to look for a complicated, contorted way of saying the same thing? Paradoxically, doing shadowing in this second sense of the word can be rather harder than doing interpretation from B or C into A, and amongst beginners it is likely to be only the most talented students who will cope successfully. Therefore, shadowing is not something I recommend as a particularly promising exercise for introducing simultaneous.

The countdown exercise described above probably cannot really do any harm. However, it does not seem to be particularly necessary or useful and we should recommend ignoring it simply because there are more important things to do. All it does is accustom the student to listen to a speech while making a disturbing noise. The student doesn't have to cope with listening to one line of discourse while monitoring carefully another one, namely their own output. That is the task they have to come to terms with when interpreting, and this kind of artificial activity does not really help them to cope with “speaking and listening” at the same time. Moreover, as mentioned above, experience, and Ingrid Kurz' work, tend to show that as students learn to do simultaneous through other exercises this particularly acoustic difficulty disappears pretty well of its own accord.

Another technique which is harmless but not very useful in my opinion is using very easy speeches to begin with. It is true that if one makes very easy speeches, such as “what I did on my last holiday”, there are practically no intellectual or terminological problems in following the speech. This is a way of reducing the difficulties of understanding, analysing and reformulation for the students, but it still does not really help them with the problem of not knowing where the speaker is going. In itself it is unlikely to do any harm. But even such a speech would need to be structured carefully and have some inner logic with more important and less important elements. Otherwise the students would have little to work on, merely a sequence of loosely connected sentences which leaves the door open to omissions on an arbitrary basis, as it would not matter much which points are included in the interpretation and which not. It would not really involve any analysis and anticipation is very difficult in a speech of such a personal and anecdotal nature. But even if one accepts that these are not major problems and that this kind of speech at least gives the students an idea of what it is to interpret simultaneously, what it is like to speak and listen at the same time, such a speech may be all right in isolation, but it begs the question as to how to proceed afterwards. If one starts with the “my last holiday” type of speech, what does one then move on to in a second exercise? All of the typical current affairs, political, economic, social, popular science, etc. speeches that one would do throughout the course except when doing special exercises for beginners would seem to be excluded. A gradual progression to harder speeches is not going to be impossible, but it will be extremely difficult to gauge and effect.

A particular case of the very easy speech used to give students a first feel of simultaneous is the fairy story. This is often recommended by trainers on the grounds that these are known by all, so they can be used as speeches the content of which is known by the students in advance. This is in line with the approach we recommend above in the series of introductory exercises. Another advantage is that we learned them in our childhood and the words to express them should be entrenched in our consciousness and should spring to mind when needed. This has the particular advantage that the trainee interpreter will use the particular typical phrases known to them from their childhood – the authentic version – which will often diverge

significantly from the authentic version in the source language. This means that the students will automatically tend to get away from the original in formal terms and express themselves in their own words. In other words, the risk of slavishly following the original and doing word-for-word interpretation is minimised.

This is a good theory, but unfortunately the premises on which it is based are not true. Firstly, fairy tales are much less international than we are led to believe. Even between western European cultures which are fairly close, such as Britain, France and Germany, children grow up knowing quite different fairy tales. There is only a small hard core of tales which are common to all three, and even then the versions tend to vary. Turn to the Slav countries, and the traditions are totally different. And this is without even referring to Arabic or Asian traditions. Secondly, fairy tales – at least in their original, non-Disney versions – are less and less well known by children and thus by our current day students. Therefore, using a fairy tale as a “known speech” is going to be much harder to do than one might imagine. Thirdly, and perhaps most important, fairy tales tend to mobilise very specific vocabulary and expressions which are not easy for trainee interpreters - under pressure in their very first simultaneous interpretations - to produce. Lastly on fairy stories, using the easy speech approach again begs the question of how one wishes to proceed once the students have done their fairy tale interpretation. What will the next speech be? How does one gradually increase the difficulty of speeches so as to arrive at speeches comparable to one which could occur in a real international conference?

A further method favoured by some as an introduction to simultaneous interpretation is sight translation. Some trainers argue that it is useful specifically as preparation for simultaneous. It is "simultaneous" without the acoustic problem of listening and speaking at the same time and so can be a way of easing students into simultaneous. Again, we should beg to differ. Doing sight translation is a specific skill in itself. It deserves to be trained as such, and not just taken as a bridge to something else. It is a very difficult skill to master. Because it involves working from a written text the language of the source is usually denser and more complex to deal with than most oral (non-read) source speeches. Further, as one can do sight translation at one's own speed a major challenge is learning how to pace one's own output, neither being too slow as one struggles with the text nor too fast as one races ahead through the easy parts, and this challenge is quite different from the challenges created by a constant flow of oral input from a source speech.

A further question to be discussed is whether a trainer should do a demonstration simultaneous for students. Here too one wonders if this is really useful. Students will hear an input speech and its interpretation. They will probably not be in much of a position to compare the original and the interpretation. Therefore, they will not be able to recognise and appreciate the work of analysis and reformulation that has been done. If the interpretation is a good one, the students will probably only be able to react by thinking how wonderful their trainer is, and perhaps by doubting whether they can ever achieve such a standard. This can give students something to aim for, but can also be demotivating. Curiously, even if the interpretation is not very good the trainees are unlikely to spot it. In other words, the demonstration does not serve much purpose because whatever the trainer does, the students are likely to have only a vague idea of what has gone on and will feel almost as if they have been shown a conjuring trick: it looks very good, but how does he/she do it?

Demonstrations can be very useful at other stages in the course. It can, for example, be very useful for a trainer to sit in the same booth as a trainee and work together with them. The trainee can pick up many useful tips just by observing their senior colleague. But overall a demonstration exercise does not seem particularly useful for beginners.

### *Conclusion on introducing simultaneous*

Suggestions have been made above as to how to set about introducing simultaneous to trainees. A series of exercises have been proposed and others discarded. In most cases exercises have been discarded essentially because they are just not very useful. The one exception to this is shadowing, which, I believe, can actually be counterproductive.

A number of basic things are, in my opinion, crucial for the introduction to simultaneous. First, students must understand what they are being called upon to do. They need to understand the similarities and differences between consecutive and simultaneous and the implications these similarities and differences have.

Secondly, the right objectives must be set. Students must realise they have to speak clearly and coherently and finish their sentences. That has priority over any other objective. Feedback must be provided as a function of this objective.

Thirdly, in order to get students used to working for an audience all the time, and to avoid their working aimlessly into a void, in the early exercises there should be a one-on-one relation between students interpreting and others, trainers and fellow students, listening to them and providing feedback.

Fourthly, students should learn progressively and as a priority how to cope with the “intellectual” difficulty of simultaneous and develop anticipation progressively. To this end, some kind of introductory mechanism must be found to ease students into simultaneous and the difficulty of exercises must be increased only gradually. That is the idea underlying the sequence of exercises proposed above. This is certainly not the only way of proceeding but it is one which seems coherent to me and which, from experience, seems to have proven its worth.

Roderick Jones