

Analysing Misunderstanding in Consecutive Interpreting in Sensitive Settings and Interpreter Training*

Hassas Ortamlarda Yapılan Ardıl Çeviride Yanlış Anlama ve Sözlü Çeviri Eğitimi

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Abstract

Misunderstanding has been deeply investigated in literature up to date. However, not much has been analyzed in the context of consecutive interpreting. Drawing on the experience as a practitioner in consecutive interpreting and as an instructor, this study revisits the initially intralingual model on triggers of misunderstanding, at interlingual level, in the sensitive setting of political and defense related bilateral talks. It is known that cognitive/ non-cognitive loads become higher in such contexts, which would affect the occurrences of misunderstanding. The main aims of the study are twofold: i. to expand the analysis for the consecutive interpreting process. ii. to use this practical data accompanied by cases to discuss them during the consecutive interpreting classes as part of situated learning. Firstly, triggers of misunderstanding are noted, then cases, where possible, are given, followed by suggestions as to how would-be consecutive interpreters can cope with such misunderstanding. These are complemented by reactions to cases from class versus real settings about the mentioned types of misunderstanding. Thus, this descriptive paper proposes a tested constructivist approach to grow awareness and better cope with misunderstanding in sensitive settings for consecutive interpreting classes.

Keywords: Misunderstanding, triggers of misunderstanding, consecutive interpreting

Öz

Literatürde yanlış anlama konusu geniş yer bulmuş olsa da ardıl çeviri bağlamında pek irdelenmemiştir. Yazarın ardıl çeviride uygulayıcı ve eğitmen olarak edindiği tecrübeler temelinde gelişen bu çalışma öncelikle diliçi yanlış anlama tetikleyicilerini, bilişsel olan ve olmayan yüklerin arttığı bilinen, hassas bir ortam olan siyasi ve savunmaya yönelik görüşmeler özelinde diller arası bağlamda yeniden incelemektir. Araştırmanın belli başlı iki amacı bulunmaktadır: mevcut analizi ardıl çeviri bağlamında genişletmek ve bağlam içinde öğrenmenin bir parçası olarak ardıl çeviri derslerinde tartışmak üzere gerçek vakalar üzerinde bu bilgiyi kullanmaktır. Öncelikle yanlış anlama tetikleyicileri sunulmakta, ardından mümkün olduğu ölçüde vaka verilmekte ve bunlar ders ortamı ve gerçek hayata ait ilgili tepkilerle bütünlenmektedir. Böylelikle, bu betimleyici çalışma ardıl çeviri derslerine yönelik olarak hassas ortamlarda yanlış anlama konusundaki farkındalığın artırılması ve daha iyi yönetilebilmesi için deneyimlenmiş, yapılandırıcı bir yaklaşım önermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Yanlış anlama, yanlış anlama tetikleyicileri, ardıl çeviri

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Introduction

Scientific evidence suggests that certain working conditions are stressful for many people independent from trait (Kurz, 2003). In this respect, interpreting as a profession is known to be stressful by nature, and considered by some professionals as crisis management (Gile, 2009). Furthermore, the highly sensitive meetings make the interpreting even more stressful, in which the mental processing in intra- and interlingual interpretation is intensive and quick, compelling the interpreters to give instant reaction. The reason why some meetings are sensitive is that they deal with sensitive texts. Political texts, in this sense, are highly sensitive as their function may be changed and be interpreted for specific political or ideological aims (Schäffner, 1997).

As far as highly sensitive bilateral political and defense talks delivered by high ranking statesmen are concerned, each party is supposed to speak in their mother tongue as an indicator of national prestige (Roland, 1999) as well as for tactical reasons (Baranyai, 2011). This necessitates the mode of consecutive interpreting. Putting aside the courtesy calls, the bilateral talks on defense or politics are conducted either to make a deal or settle a matter in which national or commercial interests are at stake. So, such meetings are inherently contentious in which the interpreters are expected to convey the finest details to achieve certain goals in the short and long term. In this respect, they “are far more than simple relayers of speech” (Roland, 1999).

This paper takes a closer look at triggers of misunderstanding in interpreting in such setting and intends to employ it for discussion in the training of consecutive interpreting through some cases.

The main reasons for including the triggers of misunderstanding in the training of consecutive interpreting were, i. to encourage critical attitudes in class by introducing a model grounded in real examples ii. to grow awareness on misunderstanding in such settings and take measures for their prevention, minimization or repair.

The research questions are: i. What are the possible triggers of misunderstanding during consecutive interpreting in highly sensitive settings like defense/politics? How can they be coped with by consecutive interpreters in such settings? ii. What are the possible reactions shown by the speakers versus students in case of a misunderstanding?

In what follows, a general overview on linguistic and translation studies perspectives in literature will be given on misunderstanding and comprehension.

Literature Review

Linguistic Perspective to Misunderstanding

What is important to note first of all is that misunderstanding should not be considered as a negative end-product of problematic interaction (Nakane, 2005, p.137) but as a normal part of it (Verdonik, 2010, p.1367). Such understanding may be partially or totally deviant from the intended meaning of the speaker (Weigand, 1999, p.769) and must be regarded as a continuum, not a polar process concerning absence/presence of comprehension (Bazzanella & Damiano, 1999, p.817). Misunderstanding in the standard case triggers the process of “coming to an understanding”, using the term of Weigand (1999, p.769), after having been recognized by the participants themselves and/or bystanders. Metaphorically, recognizing misunderstanding is like a diagnosis, with utterances being symptoms and misunderstandings being

faults (McRoy & Hirst, 1993, p. 278). The notion of misunderstanding has been found insufficient over time, as a result of which borderline cases were analyzed under “reduced understanding” (Verdonik, 2010, p.1365). It would be appropriate to mention at this point that various causes leading to any misunderstanding either reinforce or cancel one another in constant interaction (Dascal, 1999, p. 755). In the following paragraphs, various causes of misunderstanding will be summarized.

Schegloff (1987) states that not all misunderstandings are attributable to exogenous factors such as cultural, linguistic and social differences, for, she has identified endogenous sources of misunderstanding as a byproduct of studies like problematic references and problematic sequential implicativeness. Linnell (1995) divides them into overt, latent and covert misunderstanding, underlying Hinnenkamp’s (2003) seven types of misunderstanding based upon the interactional structure. Weigand (1999) prefers to call causes of misunderstanding “means” and analyzed them under linguistic, perceptual and cognitive means and recognized that the combination of means could also be observed. Kreuz and Roberts (1993) underline the pragmatic aspect, and label the breakdown in communication as pragmatic errors, which have been echoed by Beldad (2006).

Bazzanella and Damiano’s (1999) model on Triggers of Misunderstanding, which was intended for intralingual analysis, extends the above and offers a systematic view. In this model (1999), the factors for misunderstanding are considered as triggers, not reasons of misunderstanding, to avoid from claiming a deterministic role played by them in a failed communication. The resultant classification mainly consists of four parts, namely, structural triggers comprised of disturbances along the communicative channel, similarities between elements of linguistic code, troubles caused by the use of a foreign language and structural ambiguities; Triggers related to the speakers, comprised of local and global factors; Triggers related to the interlocutor, comprised of knowledge problems and cognitive processes, and Triggers related to the interaction between the participants, comprised of non-shared knowledge, topic organization and focusing problems. Tsutsui (2009) added to these triggers, the institutional discourse and groupthink and highlighted that the intercultural differences do not play a vital role in such situations.

Translation Studies Perspective to Comprehension during Interpreting

The basic comprehension equation according to Gile (2009) is as follows: $C=KL+ELK+A$. This means comprehension requires three components, namely, linguistic knowledge, extralinguistic knowledge and deliberate analysis. He also notes that the subjective feeling of comprehension should not be considered as a reliable indicator of the actual comprehension level and that it is closely related to the Receiver’s (any text receiver, be it an interpreter or a participant in any gathering) familiarity with the linguistic and technical aspects as well as the receiver’s functional requirements from the text.

Normally, a participant would be satisfied with what he calls “comfort threshold”, yet, this does not apply to the interpreters who have to process every information they hear for disambiguation and reformulation, which gets harder with deteriorating processing capacity with time. This situation is well summarized under the “Tightrope Hypothesis”. To the best knowledge of the author, there is no such classification focused on misunderstanding in interpreting studies, in particular, instead there are studies with rather broader terms to analyze non-cognitive constraints in political settings, arising from the asymmetric power relations between the interpreter and the interlocutors for whom s/he is interpreting (Baker, 2007) as well as cognitive saturation-related online problems in interpreting (Gile, 2009), among the others.

Method

For research question 1, The intralingual triggers of misunderstanding, which were developed by Bazzanella and Damiano (1999) with the additions of Tsutsui (2009) were revisited for interlingual analysis to adapt and expand them, where necessary, for the consecutive interpreting process in the sensitive setting.

For research question 2, the constructivist approach was adopted, by attempting to include them in the consecutive interpreting curriculum, as it was believed that it would transform the student from being a passive recipient of information to an active participant involved in the learning process (Thirteen Ed Online, 2004). This followed the perspective of situated learning which tends to erase the dichotomy between school-based learning and real-world learning and by which the students are able to exhibit meta-cognitive behavior according to Lunce (2006), and also of critical pedagogy, which aims to “foster a critical consciousness, educating students to become empowered and critical agents” (Koskinen, 2012, p.8). The exemplary cases for each intralingual trigger of misunderstanding given here dwell on the scenario-based learning activities which are believed to be particularly suitable for interpreting practice to prepare students for situations which demand quick decisions (Baker & Maier, 2011, p.6) and to enable the students to construct and scrutinize their own pre-theoretical beliefs (Drugan & Megone, 2011). They are intended to be discussed during the consecutive interpreting classes and formerly noted during defense-related talks among high level executives, ranging from ministers to attachés from different countries through the observations/ experiences of the author obtained in three years as a professional consecutive interpreter, and an instructor of the consecutive interpreting classes for seven years as an instructor at a university. The persons in the cases are mentioned on condition of anonymity. After each exemplary case, some coping suggestions are given. These theoretical components, i.e. all interlingual triggers of misunderstanding in interpreting, strive to follow Gile’s design rules, which require directness for student needs and easiness to grasp, and implementation rules which require that they be taught following “student sensitization” and repetition “throughout the course, when discussing the students’ achievements and weaknesses”(2009, p.18-19).

For research question 3, interpretations/ reactions to such misunderstanding are listed from both the classroom and real settings, which were in no way meant to be exhaustive.

Discussion

Triggers of misunderstanding during consecutive interpreting in highly sensitive settings

1- Structural triggers

a) Disturbances along the communicative channel

Among the others, such disturbances include mainly external noise like cough, sneeze etc. as well as gaps in terms of power relations.

Case one: “A newly-graduated young female interpreter is assigned for a very sensitive meeting for a high level bilateral talk, the interlocutors of which are at least doubling her age, and advanced in their career. During the interpreting process, she feels very nervous and tends to misunderstand the utterances during interpreting”.

Coping suggestions for class: As for external noise, the interpreter may decide to make an inference about what she has not heard properly, which may prove to be wrong at times. It would be more appropriate, if applicable, to ask the interlocutor to repeat the missing part. And as for gaps in terms of power relations, it may be emphasized by the instructor while discussing this in class that this is a case where the power relations are at the extremes. The age difference combined with an instance of misunderstanding by the interpreter may leave an impression on the interlocutors that she is inexperienced. Furthermore, given that matters on defense and international relations are male-dominated, the interlocutors may initially be suspicious about the female interpreter's (as in this case) command on the issue. In cases where one feels that there is such impression, they should remind herself of the fact that they are a linguistic expert and that all in the meeting actually talk on an equitable footing. This certainly would remove/ reduce the level of misunderstanding based on perception of power relations.

b) Similarities between elements of the linguistic code

This item can be called audio/visual misunderstanding based on similarity between things like objects, words, concepts etc. One sometimes feels s/he heard/saw something but in fact likens it to another thing, at the levels of word/phrase/clause. This may result from lack of knowledge as well as for no apparent reason. The mind may fill the gap reasonably, which actually has nothing to do with the actual utterance, as below:

Case two: Before a meeting, the interpreter happens to meet the high level executive as well as his assistant in the waiting room and makes a small talk, during which s/he learns that the passport of the person for whom s/he is interpreting is required. During the meeting, the interpreter hears the visiting executive say "We kindly request your passport". Actually the utterance was "we kindly request your support".

Case three: During a talk, the interpreter mishears the name of a top level executive, İlhan for İlham.

Case four: The interpreter misunderstands the sign on the general's shoulder and utters, say, brigadier general, instead of major general.

The cases two and three are due to audial misunderstanding, whereas the case four visual misunderstanding. The second one is surely attributable to the effect of the small talk. The top-down processing must have connected the text with the short scene before the meeting and reconstructed a meaningful whole. The third one stems from the fact that the consonant -n at word-end is inaudible. The fourth one is based on inadequate knowledge on ranks or carelessness. In case study two, the message is shifted from doing a favor to a request, which is unacceptable for an interlocutor and in the case three, the references change, both of which need to be corrected immediately.

Coping suggestions for class: It should be emphasized by the instructor that audial/visual misunderstanding is inevitable in life. However, the key point here is not to confuse or misunderstand the names/symbols which are considered crucial for the meeting. As a preventive measure, the interpreter must prepare/ practice a checklist of proper names and visual symbols beforehand.

c) Troubles caused by the use of a foreign language and sociocultural knowledge

As the focus here is on interpreting, a foreign language is surely used, therefore, this title initially intended for intralingual misunderstanding can be renamed as troubles caused by the use of more than one language during the interpreting process at a time. There may be misunderstanding due to cognitive difficulties stated by Albl-Mikasa (2010) as unorthodox grammatico-syntactic structures, elliptical structures, unusual ways of putting things, imprecision, unclear wording and phrases, wrong intonation and generally reduced languages faced by interpreter and/or interlocutors. The patterning of non-native intonation may also cause a misunderstanding in terms of certainty. As Kelm (1995 as cited in Ramirez Verdugo, 2005) observes, any slight, apparently insignificant change in intonation, may cause changes in the perception of the interlocutors. An illustrated case would be to misunderstand a question as a rhetorical question or a declarative sentence due to such change in intonation. The perlocutionary effect may be negatively affected from this misunderstanding. Besides, differences in sociocultural knowledge might also cause disturbance.

Case five: One of the interlocutors says, “Moonlight is good in summer nights” during an informal talk after an official one. The interpreter takes it literally, and translates it accordingly, though the speaker has meant a drink called Moonlight, which is not to be translated as it is a proper name.

The misunderstanding in the case above is attributable to the lack of sociocultural knowledge on a drink named Moonlight and the reasoning by the interpreter that moonlight can possibly be good in summer nights.

Coping suggestions for class: It should be emphasized by the instructor that foreign-language-based misunderstanding must be reduced, if not eliminated by the interpreter. As for sociocultural-based misunderstanding, one must continuously improve his/her knowledge in time through experience.

d) Structural ambiguities

These ambiguities comprise word boundaries due to juncture and agglutinative nature of Turkish, spelling/ pronunciation due to homonyms, word meaning due to polysemous words, pronouns due to the “o” to refer to both sexes as well as successive use of pronouns, spelling, word stress due to the use of foreign language, and sentence structure as in case study six. For examples in English, see Smith and Kossyln (2007, p.495).

Case six: During the talk, when hearing the utterance, “etkinliğin ölçülmesi”, the interpreter primes one of the following two interpretations: a. measurement of an activity, b. measurement of efficiency. Here, the interpretation varies due to the ambiguity created by polysemous nature of the word “etkinlik”.

Coping suggestions for class: The students should be reminded that the sentences are not isolated and embedded in a context so, the polysemous meaning does not mislead an interpreter who commands both the linguistic knowledge and the context. Such misunderstanding may be eliminated by full concentration and reformulated when the right interpretation is figured out by the interpreter through context.

2- Triggers related to interlocutor

These comprise local factors, such as slip of tongue, misconception, etc., and global factors which concern the structuring of information on the pragmatic level. The impoliteness shown to the interpreter (i.e. improper address forms), indeterminate expressions (hedging for evasive purposes) may affect the interpreter badly.

Such factors also involve the structuring of information on the syntactic level. Due to discursive reasons, the speakers, high level officials/officers, in our case, may produce wrong or ambiguous utterances which may give the consecutive interpreter a hard time in comprehension and interpretation. Furthermore, as Bavelas et al. (1990) stated, “politicians describe their own communication as ‘ambiguous’, ‘vague’ and wishy-washy and are not apologetic about such responses” (Blum-Kulka & Weizman, 2003, p. 112), i.e. the political discourse, by nature, tends to be open to misunderstanding, compared to many others.

Case seven: During the talk, the interlocutor utters, “Askeri bir anlaşma yapmak sözkonusu”. Turkish allows one to make two interpretations, which could be interpreted into English as follows: a. We are talking about making a military agreement, b. We are going to make a military agreement. The interpreter primes the second sense, but it turns out that the interlocutor meant the first one.

Coping suggestions for class: The students should also be warned that this vague utterance may be strategic. As for local factors, not much can be improved beforehand, utmost care will be paid during the talk, possible slips of tongue, misconceptions etc. may be tried to be comprehended and edited during the interpreting. This may be difficult when the cognitive load becomes heavier. As for global factors, such ambiguous uses are often employed. What can be done here if consulting the interlocutor is impossible then is to reflect this ambiguity to the interpretation or prime the meaning which is less ambitious as a cautious move.

2.1 Strategic misunderstanding:

Undoubtedly, the picture is not complete if one supposes that all misunderstanding based failures during the interpreting occur out of an inability to perceive or produce an utterance properly. Grimshaw (1980) highlighted the fact that the speaker’s utterances may be misunderstood also due to hearer’s not-so-innocent intentions. This type also finds its expression in Coupland, Giles and Wiemann (1991) Level 4 of the analysis of miscommunication, which specifies that misunderstanding is strategically used in order to achieve certain communication roles. It is known that sometimes the speakers by themselves or by groupthink pretend that there is a misunderstanding in interpreting or s/he has misunderstood the interpreting, both of which would prove to be troublesome for the interpreter. Such misunderstanding is not anticipated, but rather spontaneous. The strategic misunderstanding used at the cost of the interlocutor is called parasitic (Hinnenkamp, 2003).

The interlocutor while declaring something to be misunderstanding resulting from the consecutive interpreting, implies that s/he has not interpreted, heard or understood the other party in the intended or ‘correct’ way due to the above triggers to achieve the following: to regain the floor and can thus use the opportunity to rephrase or revise (Hinnenkamp, 2003); to observe and analyze the nonverbal communication elements displayed by the other party to gain information (Hidasi, 2004, as cited in Baranyai, 2011); to hide a possible/ actual misunderstanding (Banffy, 2000 as cited in

Baranyai, 2011). Actually the items above are only for ease of analysis. They are not mutually exclusive. The following is to be added by the author:

To repair a former utterance which would work to his/her detriment: An interlocutor may feel that s/he uttered something beyond its intended aim. This may be seen in the form of an exaggerated and assertive wording. S/he regrets that the reaction by the other party may be harsher than the s/he had initially thought. As a disclaimer, s/he strategically may say “there is a misunderstanding” “I did not say/mean that, which refers to an implicit accusation to the interpreter or s/he may say “there is a misunderstanding in the interpretation”, which is more direct than the first, but still a decent wording as it concentrates on the practice, not the person. The most direct and distressful accusation would be to point at the interpreter in words, and imply that only s/he is responsible for the content of the said statement. See case study eleven.

Coping suggestions for class: The students must be warned that they should get prepared to face such situations due to the nature of such sensitive meetings. Where they feel necessary, they can make a brief explanation to the relevant party that they are not to be held responsible for the utterance which has been pretended to be a misunderstanding. Sometimes there is no need for such a verbal move because nonverbal communication between the interlocutor and the interpreter is clear enough to get the message across. The importance of the strategic misunderstanding and the impression it gives about the interpreter on the interlocutors, is crucial for the interpreter to decide whether or not to ignore the happening completely.

3-Triggers related to the interpreter

a) Knowledge problems, such as false beliefs, lexical incompetence, etc.

Case eight: Upon hearing the word orthodox in a sentence like “The parties must not take an orthodox view in this matter”, the interpreter who only knows the religion-related sense of the word which reads as “Adhering to the Christian faith as expressed in the early Christian ecumenical creeds.” is confused as s/he cannot relate the religion to the matter and remains silent for a couple of minutes. Actually, another sense of the word is “Adhering to what is commonly accepted, customary, or traditional” (Free Dictionary, 2013).

Coping suggestions for class: First, the students should be reminded of the polysemous nature of words and be encouraged to be immersed in language. Besides, it must be underlined that the source utterance is not normally addressed to the interpreter primarily (Kohn & Kalina, 1996), that is why s/he may have difficulties in understanding a specific matter, however, s/he is supposed to have a general command on it.

b) Cognitive processes such as wrong inferences and the cognitive load and its effect on the interlocutor's production

The deep structural differences among languages do not actually pose a dramatic difficulty for interpreters in themselves, since ideas which are clearly expressed do not prove to be challenging for comprehension or reformulation (Seleskovitch, 1977). However, the longer the bilateral talk, the heavier the cognitive workload. Saturation may occur due to an increase in processing capacity

requirements (Gile, 2009). As the timing rather than content matters here, the discussion of a hypothetical case study may be futile.

Coping suggestions for class: This is inevitable if the meeting lasts for a long time and the stressful content of the talk. The students may be requested to ask the following questions to themselves before starting their interpreting career: Can I imagine myself in a setting where ambiguous utterances are always imminent as well as part and parcel of the meetings?

4- Triggers related to the interaction between the participants

As Mason (2006, p. 360) stated, the notion of source text is problematic in such interactions as the text is jointly negotiated and made by participants. Triggers related to the interaction between the participants are submitted below.

a) Knowledge

Not only non-shared knowledge but also shared knowledge may cause a misunderstanding (Wilson, 2004). No matter how highly competent and qualified the persons involved in the process are in their respective fields, a possible misunderstanding is lurking. Besides, even if the interlocutors have shared knowledge, this does not guarantee that a misunderstanding will not pop up during the conversation because the interlocutors may well be conditioned to understand something in light of a past knowledge, which may be misleading at times. See case one.

Coping suggestions for class: The students are reminded of the requirement for the interpreters to have a command on the key concepts and content of the meeting.

b) Topic organization

Ideally, as the setting is highly sensitive, the topic organization is supposed to be well-prepared before the meeting and revised by counsellors. However, there is always the human factor, and the disorganized speakers may make it difficult for the interpreter to understand the message properly. Due to the confidentiality of the talks and persons themselves, this cannot be discussed through case studies as the structure of the text is what matters here. Instead, the students may be asked to give actual examples to share a common knowledge from the celebrities who are notorious for topic organization.

Coping suggestions for class: To alleviate the stress, interpreters could give some time to themselves before starting to interpret to check if there is any misunderstanding. The interlocutor may be asked to paraphrase/repeat the recent utterance, but this move must be employed a last resort. Because recurring questions by the interpreter for such confirmation/clarification may disrupt credibility, as stated by Gile (2009, p.215).

c) Focusing problems

Most of the time, if the issue is controversial, the meeting is extended, which puts an extra burden on the speakers and interpreter. Doubtlessly, the more the load, the harder the accuracy in consecutive

interpreting. As time goes by, letting alone the cognitive loads, physical distraction comprising physical needs like hunger, thirst, sleepiness as well as psychological distraction signifying any free association stemming from a person/object/sound/subject/word involved in the process may distract the attention of the interpreter.

Again, as this section is about timing, physical/psychological distraction rather than the content, the discussion of a case may be futile, for, the students need to experience it themselves to understand the interpreter's position and to feel the cognitive load, however, during the course, when the students complain about how hard it is to interpret for hours after the end of weekly sessions, the instructor may remind them that each of them does the interpreting for a few minutes in class, whereas the professional consecutive interpreter is supposed to do it during the whole meeting on his/her own for the assigned hours.

Competing irrelevant thoughts in the head may also cause difficulties for focusing during the interpreting as they do in daily life.

Case nine: The interpreter looks at his/her watch. To his/her amazement, two hours are over and the meeting is expected to last for more than an hour which means s/he will not be able to have lunch for which s/he made a prior engagement with friends not seen for a long time. Like the above case, an instant thought like the passing of time, personal plans, projections, disappointments, etc. which has nothing to do with the interpreting process may cross the interpreter's mind at the time when s/he is doing the interpreting as a human factor.

The gap between the expectations of the interlocutors and the interpreter is another worth noting. The bottom-up and top-bottom processing may not be of any use if the schemes in the minds of those involved in the process do not match.

See case study seven. The structural ambiguity in the utterance may be understood by the interpreter psychologically in a certain way, especially when he serves as the permanent interpreter of a specific interlocutor involved in the talk.

Coping suggestions for class: Students must be reminded that in many professions the experts are busy doing something. They may be requested to use their imagination to see how difficult it could be if they were on their own doing consecutive interpreting for long hours. The basic needs like sleeping, eating, drinking something must be fulfilled for a healthy consecutive interpreting. Furthermore, students must be warned to make sure that they checked what they understood before interpreting. Besides, they should be reminded that though all these and more may cross his/her mind, an experienced interpreter may be able to perform the interpreting without being distracted.

d) Institutional discourse

This trigger was identified by Tsutsui (2009) and revolves around the context of institution. The meeting is held in an official institution like ministry, undersecretary, embassy or commercial one like company. The organizational actors, in our case, ministers, undersecretaries, managers etc. are responsible from preserving and enhancing the interests of the institution they are affiliated to.

Case ten: The interpreter asks certain documents relevant to the meeting beforehand but is refused to be delivered them due to their strictly confidential nature.

Coping suggestions for class: Such breakdown in information flow is sure to increase the

possibility of misunderstanding in hearing and reproducing utterances. Therefore, as interpreters, they must inform the relevant authorities about it, otherwise they may have some comprehension difficulties.

e) Groupthink

Named by Janis (1972), this concept was also added as a trigger to misunderstanding by Tsutsui (2009). It is well applicable to the interpreting context as it is believed to emerge where distress is high on the party members to achieve group goals. It might develop symptoms like self-censorship, direct pressure on dissenters to conform and mindguards among many others (Janis, 1982, as cited in Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2004, p. 317). In our context, a group might refer to those taking sides with either of the speaking parties. They may misunderstand or pretend to misunderstand the interpreter for having collective benefits.

Case eleven: A contentious stake is at issue and one of the interlocutors says, “we are very upset” with a facial expression showing anger. So, the interpreter interprets it accordingly. However, the interlocutor and his party present in the meeting strongly deny that and say that they used the word in the sense of “sorry” which changes the whole mood in the atmosphere. So, the interlocutor and his group strongly remark that the interpreter has totally misunderstood what s/he said.

Coping suggestions for class: It must be underlined by the instructor that this harsh reaction must not be taken personally. The interpreter must go on interpreting by accepting his/her wrong interpretation if s/he feels that the party concerned intends to make an agreement with the other party. So, that utterance may have been uttered in a reactionary way and then hedging may have been preferred for a peaceful solution.

f) Repetitive interruption

Besides the above, one more section, (f) was added by the author, in addition to the above.

Case twelve: The speakers or participants/bystanders in the setting for some reason frequently interrupt the interpreter’s utterance at some point for no apparently good reason. The interpreter is badly affected from it for fear that his/her image deteriorate in the eyes of the interlocutors. To avoid any misperception, the interpreter may decide to make some kind of preemptive strike, i.e. choose to change the mode of interpreting, from consecutive to simultaneous interpreting. Since the participants who are eager/ready/tend to intervene in the talk are not equipped with the techniques the interpreter possesses and devices like headphones are absent in the consecutive interpreting setting which prevents efficient monitoring of the concurrent hearing and reproduction process, the interrupting interlocutors get confused and cannot keep interrupting the interpretation any more.

Coping suggestions for class: The students must be reminded that the interruption is not necessarily due to the fact that they do not rely on the performance of the interpreter. They should be warned that this strategic move by the interpreter can be used for a brief period as there will be a lot of noise around as more than one interlocutor will be talking at one time. Besides, it may backfire if the very act of abrupt simultaneous interpreting may result in a misunderstanding by the interpreter in case that due time is not taken to do the proper parsing because of higher distress or the lack of technical equipment available.

Reactions to Misunderstandings in Real Settings versus classroom

This part compares the reactions of students versus interlocutors to misunderstanding occurring in such sensitive settings. In real settings, the reactions of the interlocutors to misunderstanding during the consecutive interpreting process, may vary depending on the importance of the failed utterance. Of course, the tolerance is relatively higher for items like disturbance in the communication channel, similarities between the elements of a linguistic code, local factors like slips of tongue, misconceptions etc., as anyone reasonable would think that it is humane to experience them. But the interpreter may find it difficult or avoid to explain or defend any failure due to the rest of the items mentioned before. Actually, hardly anyone raises a question about the reason of failed points. The possible reactions by the interlocutors, in order of growing severity noted by the author were given below:

- i. ignore the misunderstood utterance if they are negligible,
- ii. silently feel uneasy about the misunderstood utterance, show the discontent in gestures involuntarily/intentionally,
- iii. show a harsh reaction if the misunderstood utterance is important, and ask for its repair,
- iv. stop the interpreter and continue the process with another interpreter, if available.

The students' first reaction to majority of the above cases is milder when compared to interlocutors in real settings. The common reactions of the students noted during the classroom discussions through case studies, were as follows:

- i. anxiety: due to the sensitive setting as well as the relevant language used,
- ii. laughter: due to misunderstandings involving structural ambiguities or lack of sociocultural or lexical knowledge.
- iii. amazement and resentment: due to harsh reaction shown to their prospective colleagues,
- iv. anger: due to interruption as in case twelve,
- v. willingness for reconciliation: due to the nature of their profession, they stated they would be cooperative no matter what the misunderstanding was or how it occurred.

Conclusion

This study was intended to take an initial descriptive step to enlist possible triggers of misunderstanding within the framework of consecutive interpreting and to grow awareness as well as to manage them effectively by prospective consecutive interpreters as well as interpreting instructors. It focused on triggers of misunderstanding in consecutive interpreting in a highly sensitive setting. Here the consecutive interpreting were examined and classified on the basis of possible, actual and strategic misunderstanding. Methodologically, the model of triggers of misunderstanding developed by Bazzanella and Damiano (1999) incorporated with Tsutsui's (2009) findings, was revisited, as a result of which it was seen to be applicable to consecutive interpreting processes in highly sensitive defense settings. The model was further expanded by the author with the addition of two items of triggers to misunderstanding to the current model. As Bazzanella and Damiano (1999) put, seeing misunderstanding as a form of understanding internal to the process of comprehension, which has to be monitored and negotiated interactionally, rather than a polar process (absence/presence of comprehension) makes the analyst's work harder but nearer to reality. In addition, as Humboldt (1999)

stated, “Nobody means by a word precisely and exactly what his neighbour does, and the difference, be it ever so small, vibrates, like a ripple in water, throughout the entire language”. Therefore, the modified list of triggers of misunderstanding offered in this study is hardly exhaustive. It was integrated in the consecutive interpreting curriculum of the author as part of situated learning through case studies mentioned above and discussed with the consecutive interpreter trainees to enable them to manage misunderstanding of any and all kinds in such sensitive settings.

Following Gile’s design and implementation rules for integrating theoretical components (2009), due attention was paid that the issues be kept simple and directly relevant for student needs and that they were discussed after some experiences the students have been through for ensuring student sensitization and sound discussion and repeated, where necessary throughout the course. It was seen that the discussion for cases of each trigger worked and resulted in faster learning.

The student reactions versus the interlocutors in real settings to misunderstanding as well as the reactions of students to such situated learning through case studies were noted for food for thought to link the academia with the real world. It was seen that the students were pleased to discuss the issue for better management of the matter in real settings and to compare their observation-based views with an instructor who has been involved in interpreting task in the relevant field. They reached a better understanding for the interpreting situations with the instructor as a colleague who is ready to help them with handling such demanding settings. It is hoped that the very model is used for such training purposes in general as it is thought that it is time-saving than trial-and-error method for such cases.

A similar study can be made for exploring possible triggers of misunderstanding within the framework of simultaneous interpreting to see if or to what extent the results of this study apply to them.

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