

Wordplay in Simultaneous Interpreting

Andrejs Veisbergs*

Latvia

Corresponding Author: Andrejs Veisbergs, Latvia.

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Abstract

Wordplay is any adaptation or use of words to achieve a humorous, ironic, satirical, dramatic, critical, or other effect. Many cognitive aspects of wordplay are still unclear, confounded by the variety of wordplay types and language peculiarities. Interpreting wordplay frequently creates insurmountable difficulties, which can be a traumatising experience (especially for novices without experience and knowledge of interpretation strategies). Occurrence of wordplay by way of over-focusing may also lead to serious spill-over problems and possible failure in the following interpretation.

Success in interpreting wordplay depends on the textual situation, broad linguistic and extralinguistic background knowledge, experience, knowledge of wordplay interpreting techniques, specific language-pair peculiarities, the “right turn of mind” for wordplay interpretation. Interpreters have to consider the different frames of reference of the language carriers. In contrast to translation the interpreter often faces an as yet unknown sequential development, sometimes it is unclear whether the wordplay is intentional or accidental or interpreter’s fancy. There are tight limits for understanding/processing/reformulation. The interpreter can overlook the wordplay (under-read it) and also over-read (see wordplay when it in fact does not exist). There may occasionally be an unintentional wordplay in the interpreter’s output.

What has to be decided fast is whether wordplay is deliberate or a fruit of interpreter’s fancy, if it can be retained, whether it is important for the message, how much time and effort can be given to the problem, choosing between alternative variants (if one’s brain generates them), how much of what might come later can be anticipated, e.g. wordplay could roll on and by making an early and limiting choice, further possibilities can be eliminated. The strategies practised in rendering wordplay include use of equivalent/analogue, calque, extension, substitution, omission, metalinguistic comment, omission. Within these fixed delimitations and interpretation constraints the interpreter has some freedom. The interpreter should consider and assess the overall effect and importance of wordplay in context as well as the possible cognitive effect and perception scope of his/her customers and the cultural dimension of wordplay. Optimum relevance in recreating the cognitive effect intended by the speaker should be sought with the lowest processing effort. The multitude of variables faced within a limited time space exacts full concentration and split second decisions.

Keywords

Wordplay, Simultaneous Interpreting, Cognitive Processes, Interpretation Strategies, Relevance Theory

Introduction

Interpreting is a complex cognitive activity in terms of bilingual information processing involving information reception and production as well as complex coordination tasks. “Simultaneous interpreting is a cognitively unique form of translational activity” [1].

Humor has so far been little investigated in empirical interpretation research. This is because it is so many-faceted and various, because the pragmatic aims and situations may be so different, because the interpreters are so different and in limited time situations react differently. While wordplay translation has in the last decades received some attention [2-8], interpreting issues have so far been little discussed [9-11].

Wordplay

Wordplay is a broad and somewhat diffuse notion, sometimes wordplay is used as synonym for pun in the generic meaning. However, wordplay is broad. "Any adaptation or use of words to achieve a humorous, ironic, satirical, dramatic, critical, or other effect". Wordplay is the general name for various textual phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a "communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings" [3]. It is often described as being "based somehow on a confrontation or clash of two meanings" [12]. Wordplay is any adaptation or use of words to achieve a humorous, ironic, satirical, dramatic, critical, or other effect. It includes various types and subtypes (See further). Pun, which is another often used term (sometimes used interchangeably with wordplay), actually is only one subtype of wordplay. Ambiguity is a central concept in wordplay.

Evaluation of wordplay and its linguistic, narrative and expressive effects is also far from unanimous and sometimes quite extreme. Freud referred to wordplay as "the lowest form of verbal joke, probably because they are the cheapest" [13]. W.D. Redfern had similar 'approach' describing puns as "bastards, immigrants, barbarians, extraterrestrials: they intrude, they infiltrate. In effect, they are inferior, accidental and need to be apologized for." [14]. However, there are linguists who take the opposite view: "We take punning for a tawdry and facetious thing, one of the less profound forms of humour, but that is the prejudice of our time; a pun may be profoundly serious, or charged with pathos. We also take it for a simple thing, which it is not." [15]. Such generalizations of the artistic value and potential, however, are not very important in the face of the fact that wordplay is frequently used and accordingly interpreters must deal with it.

What is characteristic of all types of wordplay is in fact the effect (humorous, stylistic, semantic); wordplay functions as "attention grabber" [14], -- attracting the attention of the reader/listener to a specific point in the narrative. Raskin postulates that in each joke there should be two opposing semantic scripts present. A script is defined as a "chunk of semantic information evoked by a word, the semantic information that can be common to the whole community or that can constitute idiosyncratic information." [16]. Decoding the scripts is a cognitive task that provides the added pleasure of solving the puzzle.

Wordplay Types

There are many wordplay types and subtypes and a multitude of classifications, types and subvariants, that researchers have identified and classified [17-19]. These classifications, however, usually tend to reflect the specific aspect that is researched, rather than systematize this broad and varied phenomenon. As W. Redfern has pointed out "Classifications... produced more confusion than enlightenment" [14]. Delabstita also points out that most of the classifications and subvarieties lack "taxonomical precision" [20].

1. Wordplay is often based on phonological structure, paronymy, 'soundplay' (alliteration, consonance, and assonance).
 - Love at First Bite: love at First Sight.
 - At the end of my speech, I would just like to say "Do your teeth a flavour". (Speech on the good effects of toothpaste with play on the phrase "do somebody a favour")

Wordplay based on 'anagrammatic' readings (i.e., based on spelling) is characteristic of written texts and is not relevant to our subject.

2. Wordplay can be based on lexical polysemy, homonymy, and homophony (here the linguistic differences of the notions do not matter) when two words are pronounced identically or the two meanings of a word are actualized simultaneously:
 - A seven-day conference without a pun makes one weak. [week: weak].
 - Surfers do it standing up [surfing: having sex].

Homography, however, is more of a translation, not interpretation, issue.

3. Wordplay may be based on idiom transformations or extensions, evoking two meanings:
 - To those who want Britain to go metric I will say: give them an inch and they'll take our mile. [Give somebody an inch and they'll take a mile.]
 - They say, as you make your bed, so you must lie on it. But fortunately I never make my bed, my wife does it...
 - Permit me a small joke, but where there is a will there is a fraud [where there is a will there is a way].
4. Wordplay may be based on ambiguity on who is the doer, agent, patient:
 - I do not usually draw pictures in the nude; I usually wear a jacket.
5. Wordplay may evolve from jocular definitions:
 - We have called the new bras zebras, th/ze cloth covering th/ze breasts.
6. Spoonerisms, switching of sounds between two words, constitutes another subtypes of wordplay:
 - Allow me to introduce my French professional sin twister [twin sister].
7. There is a multitude of other wordplay subtypes: limericks, fresh portmanteaux words, anagrams, antanacsis, paronomasia, morphological and syntactical puns, etc.

One can differentiate between horizontal and vertical word play which may affect interpretation choices and strategies. One speaks of horizontal wordplay [3], when wordplay structures occur one after another in the text/speech. This is close to misunderstanding of the sense of the words, usually called in interpreting theory contresense:

- Women get stoned, you know. But there is a difference. In some countries it is done by stones, in other it is alcohol. In the first it is after extramarital sex; in the latter it is usually before.
 - Splendid woman, Mrs. Wainwright. Upright, downright, forthright.
8. Vertical wordplay occurs in one reference, the context suggests ambiguity:
 - Our girls sell well [they sell: they are sold].
 - Come to us for a faith lift [face lift, when advertising spiritual lessons].

According to philosopher Henri Bergson 1899 [21], wordplay ("the comic created by language") is untranslatable, as opposed to the comic expressed by language. However, in practice wordplay is frequently well translated. Thus, solutions exist and are

found. When dealing with wordplay both translators and interpreters naturally strive for an equivalent (symmetrical) solution the two languages – much more so because of the two planes and scripts. However, it is frequently impossible. Besides equivalence (however defined – as dictionary items, formal, dynamic, etc.) in general is not something that can be found somewhere and then transferred to the current text or situation. Equivalence appears (not always) or is aimed at in translation. It is state/relationship that is always established ad hoc and can only be viewed within the holistic framework of linguistic, emotive, expressive and cognitive effects that arise. In absence of a symmetrical solution translation/interpretation usually takes the form of recreation.

Wordplay in Interpreting

Wordplay is not a frequent phenomenon in standard conference interpreting. But it is rife in specific interpreting situations, for example, in after-dinner speeches, lectures, toasts, confrontational dialogues. It is a particularly common trait in English-speaking cultures: “you are supposed to tell a joke in the beginning” [22]. Coming very often totally unexpected and sometimes creating insurmountable difficulties, it can become a traumatising experience for interpreters, especially for novices without experience and knowledge of interpretation strategies. Occurrence of wordplay usually leads to over-focusing on it and may also lead to serious spill-over problems and possible failure in the following interpretation. Rendering of wordplay usually involves various shifts in structures and linguistic make-up. It often affects also content (when formal linguistic structure is considered more important), in rarer cases of compensation it can change also the narrative setting.

There are various types/modes of interpreting: simultaneous, consecutive, chuchotage, contact/liason, media [23, 24], etc. Accordingly wordplay can cross one’s way in various modes and various situations:

1. having the text of the speech long before the actual interpretation, the interpreter can elaborate and act, in fact, like a translator;
2. getting the text shortly before the speech and having little time to think. The time constraints grow, but one can still devote some thought to the issue, even consult somebody who might suggest an idea and at least make a decision on how to treat the particular case;
3. meeting wordplay in consecutive means having a small-time margin for making decisions at least whether to tackle the wordplay or omit it. It also allows insight into the wordplay in a wider context;
4. meeting wordplay in simultaneous interpreting without prior knowledge, without knowing whether/how it might expand or develop and being under extreme time constraints. We will deal with simultaneous as it is the most typical of what I would call “the interpreter situation” and presents most complex cognitive tasks in limited time space.

Henrik Gottlieb enumerating the causes that can lead to the loss of wordplay in translation apart from language-specific constraints mentions the presence of ‘untranslatable’ elements in the original which fail to have linguistic counterparts in the target language. He also refers to “human constraints: lack of talent, interest, or experience in the translator, time pressure, lack of incentives, etc.” [25]. The human constraints are even more formidable in interpreting, especially the talent.

We can proceed from the basic assumptions that wordplay, like humour in general [26], is a universal phenomenon in languages, that it is stylistically and semantically relevant, that its interpretability exists, and there is a range of possible techniques. Wordplay in the source text is always deliberate, with some purpose and function. It would be unethical for the interpreter to discard it simply because it causes problems. As accuracy, clarity and fidelity are general principle of interpretation on which most researchers and practitioners agree [27], one should try to retain wordplay in interpreting.

Interpretation of wordplay can be generally characterized as an artistic and singular activity that could be best described as the transfer of source language stylistic effect and/or meaning. Quite often the source and target language speech containing wordplay might go beyond formal similarity. Scholars seem to take two extreme positions about translation/interpretation of wordplay: some try to prescribe ways how wordplay should be translated, putting it into a strict framework, while the others dwell at length on the untranslatable character of the phenomenon: “being practically untranslatable ... puns effectively scotch the myth of universality” [28]. Puns are viewed as untranslatable at least when compared with other forms of wit and rhetoric [29]. “No formulae nor systems can be of any help, as translation of wordplay is a birth of a new wordplay in the other language. Everything depends on sudden inspiration” (translated by A.V.) [30]. This would actually nullify the sense of any research and training, for we cannot plan or train inspiration. However, stating that “what may sometimes seem uncanny virtuosity or obsessive hair-splitting at the moment will have to become commonplace practice with all interpreters, young and old” [9], seems over-optimistic as well. I suppose the truth is somewhere in the middle. However different and idiosyncratic the individual interpretations may be, one can elucidate the main techniques that the interpreters use, as well as explore the cognitive decisions taken and accordingly use this knowledge for training and further study. This would not lead to a routinized and automatized interpretation techniques, but nor is interpreting wordplay an embodiment of total and unrestricted freedom. The techniques in a way channel and foster creativity, they allow negotiating the technical nature of wordplay without losing sight of the contextual artistic input and the global framework of the interpreting situation.

Linguistic/Textual Reproduction Techniques

These techniques depend on the existence/non-existence of identical or similar scripts in the target language that can be used.

Equivalent and Close Analogue

This is the lucky case that often renders transfer of wordplay relatively easy. If the interpreter immediately sees a possible equivalent rendering he/ she should not bypass the case, as this usually carries over the wordplay effect of the SL into TL. This ideal possibility when the target language has semantic, formal, and stylistic equivalent to the source text is more frequent in closely related language pairs or in the rather considerable stock of international lexis and phraseology (based on classical elements common to most of European languages).

In many cases there are similar or analogue linguistic units (formally different but semantically and stylistically close to the SL units). As wordplay is usually of primary importance, if an analogue can yield to wordplay transfer well, it can serve as good means of interpretation:

- They call him the king of the dentists because he specializes in crowns.

In the presence of similar king – crown - tooth crown equivalence/analogy in the target language, reproduction is relatively easy. Our perception of equivalence here is that of natural equivalence (which can to a large extent be proved by back-translation test). Equivalent effect can be often achieved by various means, not necessarily by using natural equivalents.

Calque/Loan Translation

Loan translation also offers a relatively simple solution. However, target audience comprehension is to be carefully weighed as calques may be less easy to perceive to non-linguists than to language professionals, interpreters are supposed to be. Calques actually are equivalents formally and often semantically and stylistically (while lacking the language stability factor, being new). Loan translation is successful in the cases when the phrasing (idiom, phrase, compound, lexeme) has a generally logical and perceptible character which ensures its comprehension in the target language. Wordplay connected with a fresh metaphor in the target language will always be rather sophisticated and slightly artificial and it will often be evident to the listener that the interpreter has painstakingly preserved the SL structures. Some extension or metalinguistic comment (quick explanation) is a possible solution strategy, which though reduces the pleasure of deciphering the wordplay for the listener, but keeps some wordplay elements.

- They tell me when you see a spade you call it a spade. I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

The rendering could be accompanied by metalinguistic comment... as they say in England... to continue the met aphor...

The interpretation techniques viewed so far tend to retain both wordplay, and to a large extent, the input contents. However, often interpreters have to go further

Substitution

Lexical, idiomatic, phonetic, total substitution is a creative technique. Substitution [31], of the unit by a different one that lends itself to change can be practiced. Substitution as different from use of an analogue involves a change of semantics and image in order to preserve the (humorous) wordplay effect:

- She stopped believing in ghosts and became quite dispirited
>> When she stopped taking interest in spiritism she turned to spirits (alcohol).

This technique demands more boldness and ingenuity on the part of interpreter, also weighing the importance of contents versus style. As with any creative task time constraints might render its use impossible. Also one should be careful with this technique in horizontal wordplay.

Recreation

Recreation or compensation is sometimes possible in longer speeches with the wordplay inserted in a more suitable place (for the interpreter) in order to preserve the overall tonality and meaning of the speaker's message. This actually means that the interpreter freely changes the content and deviates strongly from

the original. This technique puts great emphasis on memory, on feeling what can be manipulated, on empathy. This could be done in longer consecutive speeches where the unit of interpretation is not a comment or replica containing wordplay but the whole speech, yet under the pressures of simultaneous interpreting it can hardly be considered a viable option.

Omission

Omission of wordplay (loss, zero interpretation) can take two forms;

1. the chunk containing wordplay is omitted altogether as untranslatable.
2. only one script is retained (usually the primary/surface meaning), wordplay effect is lost. The choice of which script to retain give some leeway/ leaves some room for manoeuvre for the interpreter. This technique can be applied if the wordplay element is not very important (which is not usual) or if there is an overabundance of wordplay, successful retention of which is nearly impossible and might create a slightly artificial and strained effect. And, of course, this technique is resorted to when the interpreter has no other alternative.

Metalinguistic Comment

This presumes the interpreter's comment on the linguistic peculiarities, e.g. this was a pun; with the explanation of the linguistic tricks, mentioning of both meanings, or announcing the untranslatable wordplay. This generally takes some time, but this technique can also be coupled with calque or others and might be considered preferable to the omission.

Stylistic Compensation

This presumes moving away from wordplay to some other related rhetorical device -- irony, paradox, vagueness, rhyme, a joke, alliteration, intonation, voice modulation, laugh, some other types of noises etc. that might preserve something of the effect of the ST.

Summing up one should underscore that linguistically there is no direct link between wordplay types and wordplay interpretation possibilities and ease. Interpreted wordplay, contrary to general interpreting tendencies, tends to be longer in the TL than the ST as metalinguistic comment and explanations may be used. Wordplay interpretation tends to produce longer pauses and breaks, also spillover effect. Finally, the closer the languages, the higher the possibility of a successful rendering, this is true even on the level of separate linguistic entities/units.

It is worth pointing out that the techniques viewed above are used in various languages, thus they bear a general character. As wordplay in most of the cases can be seen as a purposeful means of conveying some semantic or pragmatic goal, not just stylistic frills, its retention is usually more important than the retention of the exact wording. The use of playful language often makes the interpreter "subordinate semantic resemblance to other kinds of resemblance" [32], i.e. resemblance of stylistic effect. On the other hand it seems practically impossible to evaluate the adequacy of the techniques taken out of context in general, as each individual case of wordplay presents us with a particular linguistic case and its transfer solution has its own semantic and structural justification, its limits and constraints. While the first techniques aim at retaining the wordplay, it does not follow that

the latter ones are necessarily to be considered as an admission of failure or to imply a “wrong” assessment of the priorities. Also the use of other creative forms, stylistic and rhetorical figures can compensate for the losses on the macro-structural level. However, the reluctance of evaluation for adequacy, does not mean that the knowledge of the techniques is useless. On the contrary, the knowledge of the range of techniques provides a choice, however constrained it might be and can raise the interpreter’s confidence.

Apart from purely linguistic differences between languages (language specificity) the interpreter also has to take into account the difference of language codes and the absence of reference in those cases when the SL wordplay contains information unknown to the target recipient. In terms of relevance theory, the greater the processing effort the hearer needs in order to arrive at the effect, the lower the relevance [33]. Thus maybe an ingenious transfer of a wordplay, which is, too sophisticated, might in fact demand too much of a cognitive effort, and the listener might just switch off. It might not be worth the interpreter’s effort. As Poehacker [34], has noted quality in simultaneous interpreting can never be absolute; rather it is ‘quality under the circumstances’

Target orientation in interpretation also presupposes considering the sociolinguistic aspects of the language: the relative character of the wordplay, its great popularity in some languages and its less usual character (acceptability) in others, for instance, English favours wordplay more than German [20]. This may be to a considerable extent determined by language type (flective or analytical), lexical and morphological peculiarities, spread of homonymy, polysemy. These can also leave an impact on the production stage. One can in addition consider interpretation conventions of the particular language, for example, preference for a literal or free interpretation.

Cultural replacement takes place in the text system and the system of culture and the ignoring of these extratextual as well as pragmatic considerations may lead to a break in the perceptual expectancy norm which in case of wordplay has already been broken. Thus an interpretation reducing the overabundant use of wordplay or substituting them by other stylistic means cannot always be considered as a bad interpretation. And an interpretation oversaturated with wordplay that has been painstakingly retained, but making the utterance unnatural, too complicated and dense, is not a good interpretation. The interpreter recreates the original balancing between the old-fashioned literariness, fidelity or modern loyalty principle on the one hand, and the language, cultural, textual and situational possibilities on the other. The enumerated techniques and the constraints behind them discussed in this paper are not meant to prescribe ways wordplay should be interpreted, but to show that apart from sudden inspiration [30], (which can also be extremely useful), there are strategies that interpreters can use in order to tackle the challenging task of interpretation in a situation of extreme time constraints. As concerns trainees it should be stated that no teaching can guarantee an excellent rendering of the wordplay, yet the understanding of the phenomenon and an awareness of the possible solutions can reduce mental blocks and breakdowns in interpreting, even if the only solution is to be aware that a wordplay has come up, which cannot be interpreted.

Cognitive Processes in Simultaneous Interpreting

A multitude of cognitive processes, cognitive capabilities and conflicting constraints are involved in simultaneous interpreting, apart from language transfer management: memory, information processing, paying attention to several sources of information simultaneously (hearing, seeing), dividing attention, etc. It includes many cognitive-evaluative processes as well, like deciding on relevance and accordingly cutting out redundancy, perceiving pragmatic meaning and its types: locutionary meaning (semantic, logical meaning), illocutionary force (function as a speech act), perlocutionary effect (effect on the receiver). And all of this under time constraints and stress.

The traditional and early models of interpretation suggested a relatively simple model of interpreting: auditory source language input, understanding, finding and equivalent target language item and verbal output [35]. Of course it involved skills, good memory, good knowledge of the two languages and some long term memory elements: linguistic, conceptual and contextual. But in general the process was viewed as sequential and linear. However, it is an oversimplified model, in which the interpreter is not much more than a “speaking dictionary” [36], or an advanced machine translation programme in the modern sense.

More modern and more profound understanding of the process [37], suggests that some sub-processes are occasionally skipped, some done simultaneously, there is some overlap and multi-modality of input and output and task control.

This involves cognitive abilities, such as reasoning, concentration, attention sharing, processing, task switching and cognitive control of it. Some processes can be automated but as the situations evolve (occasionally unpredictably) flexibility is essential, change of strategies is needed. A good interpreter in general goes more for meaning, not surface structures an equivalents. Often the narrative may contain “pragmatic meaning”, e.g. meaning that is deduced. One transfers the sense and the message, not the words even in wordplay cases. This has a profound bearing on wordplay interpretation, as often word equivalent seeking is a blind alley. And there is a varying degree of anticipation or prediction which completely violates the linear model. Situational and even visual input should be also reckoned with. Situational appraisal may suggest omitting wordplay in some cases, or preference to a widely different solution.

Interpreting wordplay starts with spotting and identification. Wordplay may be missed due to incompetence, inattention [20], or some other reasons. One should also mention the cases when certain ambiguities occur, which the interpreter may perceive as a wordplay. Situational aspects and broader context normally helps perceive the difference, but occasionally it is difficult:

- The audience is totally unpredictable. There may even be boos/booze.
- Mountain gorillas/guerillas have again attacked two villages.
- This is close to misunderstanding of the sense of the words, usually called in interpreting theory contresense:
- I will talk about condom method. It is very popular in Japan. (Condo method)

Wordplay often focusses on proper names which may be totally unknown to the interpreter or the target audience. Their correct

perception may be difficult because no capitalization exists in spoken speech:

- Ladies and gentlemen, I think when we talk of epidemics and earthquakes, it is well worth remembering the causes, like what would it have been like if baby doc had not been there...

In fact the speaker refers to Jean-Claude Duvalier, president of Haiti, nicknamed "Bébé Doc" or "Baby Doc".

- The audience is totally unpredictable. There may even be boos/booze.
- Mountain gorillas/guerillas have again attacked two villages.

This is close to misunderstanding of the sense of the words, usually called in interpreting theory *contresense*:

- I will talk about condom method. It is very popular in Japan. (Condo method)

Thus, the interpreter can overlook the wordplay (under-read it)

a) all of it, or b) its beginning and accordingly the moment when something could be done is missed. This is a general problem affecting even translators who generally have time to dwell on text. "[a] translator can choose among a wide range of translation methods when translating wordplay. But in order to select one of these methods, or even to start contemplating what might be at stake in a given choice, he or she will have to identify the instances of source-text wordplay in the first place" [38]. Under-reading often occurs in cases of homonymy, which go unnoticed as the interpreter perceives only the most likely meaning and accordingly goes for the corresponding meaning in the target language:

- I think the world has entered a new war – a code/cold war...
- You can buy this sort of thing in the porn/pawn shop... which one I will not say.

An interpreter can also over-read: see wordplay when it is not there: "perversely ingenious punhunting" [3], should be avoided. This is one of the points to be born in mind when setting up novice training schemes. Too much of wordplay interpretation training might in fact lead to over-reading tendencies in students. Finally there may occasionally be an unintentional wordplay in the interpreter's output, e.g. Gay in Gay Prichard, can be interpreted and understood as gay (homosexual) in some languages that have borrowed the word from English. But this issue is outside the present topic.

Wordplay rendition success generally depends on several parameters

- spotting it
- comprehending it,
- textual situation, speed, style,
- broad linguistic and extralinguistic background knowledge,
- experience,
- knowledge of wordplay interpreting techniques,
- specific language pair peculiarities. Wordplay rendering tends to be easier in languages that are typologically closer (similar structures, similar lexis, metaphors etc.),
- human factor: the "right turn of mind" for wordplay interpretation. There are people and interpreters who are natural punsters and/or rhymers. For them recreating wordplay often takes less effort than for the non-talented ones. It has been noted that people with a sense of humour switch easiest to fun, but also "have more scripts available for oppositeness relations between scripts" [16].

- cognitive skills of managing simultaneous dual activity: linguistic and organizational.

Background knowledge is most important in several aspects. First, linguistic background knowledge is essential in recognizing wordplay, general background knowledge helps detect the purpose for the speaker's use of wordplay. Background knowledge also plays its role within the framework of relevance theory. Sperber and Wilson have pointed out that human attention and thought are automatically geared toward the information that seems personally relevant, it connects with the background information one has [39]. One should, of course, take into account the overall interpreting situation and the above mentioned parameters might have different importance ranking in each individual case. Also the function of wordplay has to be considered: an unconnected time filler which suddenly occurs to a jocular speaker, or well thought, functionally relevant wordplay, semantically linked to the topic.

Compared to translation simultaneous interpretation involves many elements which aggravate the solutions. There are time limits for understanding/ processing/ reformulation. There is the organizational function – deciding what to do takes much effort and some valuable time. Sometimes it is unclear whether the wordplay is intentional or chance or interpreter's fancy. Retrieving the original is important for interpreter, but the interpreter often also has to help the listener. And one should also give some consideration to the listeners' knowledge and understanding abilities – a sophisticated rendition may be beyond their comprehension and the wonderful effort by the interpreter may be futile. "Grasping the structure of a linear speech while articulating one's own is, perhaps, the most difficult part of SI" [40]. There is an "unknown ending" – the interpreter does not know what is going to follow, will the wordplay end or will it continue/evolve.

The cognitive decisions to be taken in a second are daunting:

- is the linguistic structure deliberately ambiguous (wordplay) or chance element - fruit of interpreter's fancy?
- can it be interpreted neatly?
- is it relevant or not worth the effort? Attention must be allocated according to the particular demands of the situation. Some tasks require more of the attentional "budget" or capacity, leaving less attention for the performance of other tasks [41]: Gile
- choosing between alternative variants (if one's brain generates them, i.e. if they are available),
- how much of what might come later can be anticipated: the wordplay could roll on and by making an early and limiting choice, further possibilities can be eliminated. In sequential development you cannot know where it leads.
- The processing capacity of the audience could also be considered. Rendition of sophisticated wordplay may cause loss of other information, especially with fast speech. This is to be viewed in the choice situation as well. An additional problem when omitting wordplay lies in a fair chance that the reaction of the native speakers, or other language speakers in the hall might give away the presence of something exciting in the speech which will be missed in the interpreter's TL.
- Controlling/coordination. Managing the choices and efforts, among them, how much time and effort can be given to the problem,

Coordination effort was suggested in Gile's Effort Model theory [42, 43]. According to Gile there are three main efforts competing for the limited capabilities of interpreter (processing capacity limits are individual, of course) during the process of interpretation: Listening and analysis, Speech production, Short term memory effort and the fourth: Coordination. In fact one could find more efforts: monitoring output, controlling body language etc., but it does not change the general validity of the idea. Once interpretation gets difficult the interpreter starts economizing on some effort and some loss becomes inevitable. Difficulties can be various – accent, speed, written text, dense text, unknown terminology, proper names, numbers, wordplay, technical interference, noise, all of it together. These are “problem triggers” [42], demanding more effort and the result is in the best-case compression and some loss of contents, or in the worst-case errors, fragmentary, jerky, incoherent, ungrammatical translation, jerky body language, etc. The interpreter has to put in more effort for dealing with the situation holistically, taking into account the background knowledge of participants, interpreter's own resources, capacities and limitations. This in case of wordplay is an overburden.

Cognitive Flexibility Theory

Coping with the variety of cognitive tasks demands flexibility – adapting one's behavior to the context and situation. Cognitive Flexibility Theory [44], postulates that a cognitively flexible operator (learner) is one who can readily re-organize and apply knowledge in response to varying situational demands. This calls for understanding the full complexity of the issue, seeing how shifts in variables and goals alter the space. Success depends on the way knowledge is represented and the process organization. Experience and studies show that in dealing with novel situations experts more than novices have this flexibility, problem solving experience and ability/skills. These include dividing attention, task switching, restructuring, omitting irrelevant information, as well as meta-cognitive tasks – monitoring output. Some of these overlap and some are performed simultaneously. As things develop and change, you have to modify the cognitive strategies, which also involves flexibility. The cognitive flexibility can be developed and it can be enhanced in students. Knowing strategies can help, general survival/management know-how allows avoiding spill-over effects and mental blockages. Some training helps advancing flexibility in decision making processes [45].

Conclusion

Interpreting wordplay is a complex cognitive task. The more one knows about the issue, the clearer the options that the interpreter can choose from. The more experience the interpreter possesses, the better the decision making process seems to be. The better the background and linguistic knowledge, the more choices are on offer. All of this can alleviate the cognitive effort. The limitations to the capacities are individual, situational, effort model determined. Interpreters should seek optimum relevance in recreating the effect intended by the speaker with the lowest processing effort. The multitude of variables faced within a limited time space exacts full concentration and split second decisions. It is a real cognitive challenge that calls for cognitive flexibility. Cognitive flexibility can be developed and it can be enhanced in students. This allows novices to overcome mental blockages and supports creative solutions.

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