“DEAF INTERPRETER” – SCENARIO FOR TEACHING RUSSIAN-ENGLISH CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION IN A GAME WAY

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Abstract

This article renders on the issue of interpretation teaching for not professional interpreters. In this paper, I discuss a game “Deaf Interpreter” adapted to teach oral translation in a Russian-English language combination. “Deaf Interpreter” is based on the principles of a well-known in Russia children game called “Deaf Phone”. In this game, children stand in a chain way, the first in the chain makes a phrase and whispers it to the second person; the second person does the same, and it goes until the end of the chain. Repeating the phrase is prohibited. If someone cannot catch a word, the one should get it from the context or imagine, what can replace the original word and transfer them to the next person. Usually, in the result, the final phrase looks very different and funny in comparison to the original one. I adapted this children game to teaching Russian-English consecutive interpretation, and this article is to describe how “Deaf Interpreter” works in class, and how the class should be prepared for the game.

Keywords: Teaching game, language game, interpretation training, Russian, English.

1 INTRODUCTION

An interpreter is an on-fire profession nowadays as is evidenced by the numerous educational programs, language and interpretation/translation training, where everyone can improve his/her language proficiency. In Russia, such supplementary education training gives an opportunity to get a qualification of a translator or of an interpreter with a different from linguistic basic education. Such translators/interpreters are specialists in a particular sphere of knowledge (medicine, law, economy, mechanic engineering, etc.) and, consequently, become more proficient interpreters in a subject area.

Sometimes to perform interpretation, specific knowledge is needed [1-3]; and purely linguistic education is not enough. In interpretation, this necessity is more urgent than in translation. When interpreting, there is no opportunity to consult with an encyclopedia or a dictionary that is why a specialist in a particular sphere with an interpreting qualification is more likely to be hired for a targeted project or specific interpretation tasks.

In Russia, there are two main ways to become a specialized interpreter. First, you get a basic linguistic education in translation and interpretation studies and then you improve your translation skills to be majoring in a particular subject area (business, technology, science, fiction, etc.). Second, you get a basic education in a different from translation and interpretation studies area and get a second diploma in translation in the subject area you are already majoring in. Both ways of starting a career as a translator are possible in Russia and abroad [4-7].

In this article, I would like to discuss the second way of getting an interpreter’s career as I have an experience of teaching at Russian-English translation/interpretation training. As a rule, such training in Russia is quite short in terms of in-class work. Normally, to undergo the training, it takes from two to four years (depends on your entry level of language proficiency and needs) with two hours per week, which is not enough to develop professional language skills to perform interpretation and translation on a high level.

A specialized interpreter training is time-consuming and implies the formation of a specialist's key qualities such as extensive vocabulary of at least two languages, listening skills, good memory and mnemonics, knowledge of translation transformations, ability to switch languages fast, and stress and self-control when facing difficult translation cases [8]. These competencies are important to each interpreter regardless his way of starting the career in interpretation.

There are many exercises practiced in the preparation of translators and interpreters. According to A.V. Puzakov [9], in Russia, the most widely spread training practices for translators training are as follows.
1 **Role-playing games.** Imitation of a real interpreting situation (conference, symposium, round-table discussions, etc.).

2 **Retelling of a short audio-video recording** in the language of translation followed by a discussion of the performed work quality.

3 **Shadowing.** A type of consecutive translation when an interpreter translates a speech whispering the translation to the client.

4 **Simultaneous translation** of one text by the whole group (each student in his/her simultaneous interpreting booth) with preliminary reading and discussion of complicated translation cases.

5 **A home-prepared report** on a given topic, followed by consecutive and simultaneous translations in class.

For the formation of each skill, there are special exercises. For example, to develop a language code change, assignments to write or translate a series of numbers are often used; some of the numbers are to be written in the students’ native language, and some in a foreign language (1). The same task can be performed with words (2), collocations (3), or even sentences in a text when each sentence is written in the opposite language of the working language pair.

1 Russian-English example: тысяча девятьсот двадцать пятый (1925), forty-nine (49), two thousand and thirty eight (2038), девяносто шесть (96), etc.

2 French-English example: fleur (Eng. flower), ботаника (Eng. botany), культивирование (Eng. cultivation), photosynthèse (Eng. photosynthesis), légumes (Eng. vegetables), etc.

3 German-English example: zum Essen einladen (Eng. to invite someone for dinner), fried potatoes, das Essen machen (Eng. to cook), pepper box, etc.

Obviously, in the framework of interpretation and translation studies, students have much more time to master their interpretation skills, such as quick switch between languages, cursive writing, and prompt memorizing. However, specialists of a different from the linguistics field have an advantage of a specific knowledge, which is valuable in a subject area interpretation. Taking into consideration this advantage and a lack of time in preparing non-linguist interpreters, we need to elaborate new teaching techniques that can give us the maximum in preparing students for an interpreter’s career.

One of the training methods mentioned by A.V. Puzakov [9] gives an opportunity to develop all enumerated skills. This method is an imitation of a real translation process or the role-playing games. As a rule, such games imitate real interpretation in the format of conferences or negotiations, when each speaker has his own interpreter. The obvious disadvantage of this method is its’ time consumption and the small number of active participants. Usually, two or four people are involved in the game: a speaker + interpreter or two interlocutors with their interpreters. The rest of the students can only listen and ask questions if the format of the imitating event implies this.

This method, along with the mentioned above, is widely spread in teaching professional interpretation in the framework of basic education. However, it requires adaptation to the supplementary education for a subject area interpretation training to meet the goal of covering as many skills development as possible with the involvement of all students of the group and little time consumption.

### 2 METHODOLOGY

In this paper, I suggest my scenario for teaching consecutive interpretation in a Russian-English language combination in the way of a game that involves all students in active participation. This game is based on a well-known in Russia children game titled “Deaf Phone”.

According to the game rules, children stay in a chain like way and the first whispers a phrase to the second for the others not to be able to catch it. The second whispers this phase to the third and in this way the phrase goes until the last one in the chain. The last one says the phrase loudly for the others to hear it and to compare with the phrase he got from the one before them in the chain. As usual, the last variant of the phrase differs a lot from its original variant and becomes funny, because no one in the chain is allowed to repeat his or her phase twice for the next person to understand it better. Therefore, if someone did not catch some words from the phrase on the first try, he/she should reconstruct it from the context.
The game described in the article and adapted for interpretation training is called “Deaf Interpreter”. At the core, “Deaf Interpreter” follows its children predecessor’s rules with the main change of the language used. Two languages are obligatory in the interpretation game.

The game performance requires preparation. The preparatory stage includes lexis of a topic and translation/interpretation training (see 3.1.1). For my class, I chose the topic of medicine. What is different from “Deaf Phone”, in “Deaf Interpreter” students do not make phrases themselves. The teacher should prepare the text for interpretation in advance. I made the text in a form of dialogue because it is easier to divide it into phrases (see 3.1.2).

3 RESULTS

The game “Deaf Interpreter” consists of three stages: preparation, practice, and check.

3.1 Preparation

3.1.1 Students’ preparation

Students’ preparation for the game includes two components.

Written translation training. As the game topic is medicine, I have chosen a relevant text titled “Being Ill” from a student book “A Graded English Course: second year” [10]. An extract from the text is drawn below.

Being Ill

When I got home I went straight to bed and my wife gave me a hot water bottle. I certainly felt better lying down.

“I’ll bring you some lunch in a minute,” said my wife.

“No, thank you,” I said. “I couldn’t eat a thing. All I want is a glass of water. Then I think I’ll sleep for a bit.”

“Don’t you think I’d better call the doctor?” she said. “I shouldn’t be surprised if you’ve got this flu, like Mrs. Higgins.”

Mrs. Higgins was our was our daily help, and she’s been off work for the last few days.

Then I must have dosed off, for I woke up, sweating all over, to hear the doctor coming up the stairs. “Quite an epidemic of it,” I heard him say to my wife. I sat up feeling stiff and uncomfortable: my pajamas were sticking to me.

“Now then,” said the doctor, sitting on the edge of the bed. “Let’s have a good look at you.” [10].

This text was used for a home task translation to be discussed and corrected in class. After in-class discussion, students hand in their homework for the teacher to check the translations and give back comments to each student.

Videos interpretation training from English into Russian and from Russian into English on the topic of medicine. Five videos were used in my class: three videos on a doctor’s appointment (“Learn Medical Vocabulary in English” [11], “Scheduling a Doctor’s Appointment” [12]), “Spoken English – Talking to a Doctor” [12], and two videos on a more narrow topic – “HIV and AIDS – explained in a simple way” [13], All-Russian Action “Stop HIV-AIDS” [14].

The medical vocabulary from the enumerated translation and interpretation training were included in the game “Deaf Interpreter”.

3.1.2 Teacher’s preparation

Before proceeding to the practical part, a teacher should prepare the game package, which includes two components.

The first component is a text in Russian made by the teacher with inclusion of the learned medical vocabulary. I decided to prepare a dialogue in a hospital because a text in a conversation form is easier to be divided into parts for interpretation than a narrative text; and a dialog better corresponds
to a real interpretation situation. A fragment of this text is given in Table 1. Every phrase to be interpreted is given in a separate cell. If a phrase is long, it was divided into two parts.

The second component is an empty table for each student – an Interpreter’s Table. This is exactly the same table as the teacher holds but an empty one. It shows the actors names and the lines for their phrases. Before the table, there is a personal information form for the students to fill in: name, course, student’s number in the chain of “deaf interpreters”, date (important if you perform the same game with different groups on different days).

Table 1. Dialogue example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Russian Phrases</th>
<th>English Transliteration</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Мама, я не хочу в больницу. Забери меня домой!</td>
<td>Mammy, I don’t want to stay in the hospital. Take me back to home.</td>
<td>Mama, ya ne khochu v bol'nitsu. Zaberi menya domoj!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Доктор, а больница обязательно? Может быть, Вы можете прописать постельный режим на недельу или несколько дней, чтобы он оставался дома?</td>
<td>Doctor, is it necessarily for him to stay in the hospital? Could you keep him in bed for a week or for several days for him to stay at home?</td>
<td>Doktor, a bol'nitsa obyazatel'na? Mozhet byt', Vy mozhete propisat' postel'nyj rezhim na nedel'ku ili neskol'ko dnej, chtoby on ostavalsya doma?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Да, конечно, так мы тоже можем сделать. Я буду регулярно зглядывать к вам, чтобы проверять, как Том идёт на поправку.</td>
<td>Yes, sure, we can do it as well. I will drop in regularly to check how Tom is getting on.</td>
<td>Da, konechno, tak my tozhe mozhem sdelat'. Ya budu regul'arno zaglyadyvat' k vam, chtoby proveryat', kak Tom idiot na popravku.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Нет, грелки нет. Но мы попросим гувернантку, чтобы она купила. Нужно купить что-то ещё?</td>
<td>No, I don’t have any, but I will ask our daily help to buy it. Should we buy something else?</td>
<td>Net, grelki net. No my poprosim guvernantku, chtoby ona kupila. Nuzhno kupit' chto-to esh'yo?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Я вам выпишу рецепт, и Вы купите ещё несколько лекарств. Следуйте моим рекомендациям, и скоро Ваш сын будет совершенно здоров.</td>
<td>I will write out a prescription for you to buy some pills. Follow my recommendation and soon your son will get back to normal.</td>
<td>Ya vam vypishu retsept, i Vy kupite esh'yo neskol'ko lekarstv. Sledujte moim rekomendatsiyam, i skoro Vash syn budet sovershenno zdorov.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Том, выбирай. Или ты меришь температуру, и мы идём домой, или ты не меришь температуру и остаёшься в больнице на неделю.</td>
<td>Tom, take a choice. Either you take your temperature and we go back home, or you don’t take your temperature and stay in the hospital for a week.</td>
<td>Tom, vybiraj. Ili ty merish’ temperature, i my idom domoj, ili ty ne merish temperature i ostayosh’sya v bol’nits’ na nedelyu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Хорошо. Я измерю. А мне будут делать операцию? Мне нужно подписывать согласие на лечение?</td>
<td>Ok, I’ll take my temperature. Do I need to have the surgery? Should I give my consent to treatment?</td>
<td>Khoroosh’o. Ya izmerju. A mne budut delat’ operatsiyu? Mne nuzhno podpisivat’ soglasie na lechenie?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Practice

The game is organized in the following way.

1. Students stand in a chain way according to their English proficiency: from the most frequent speaker to the less one. This criterion is important because the better language speaker can longer keep the original phrase in the “deaf interpreting chain”, so more students have a chance to get it unchanged. Every student in the chain gets an Interpreter’s Table – a paper with a blank table to put down the phrase a student receives from the previous person in the chain.

2. The teacher whispers the first phrase in Russian to the first student in the chain. The other chain participants should not hear the phrase. The student translates the phrase into English, whispers it to the next chain student, and puts the received phrase down to the Interpreter’s Table.

3. The second student translates the received English phrase into Russian, whispers the translation to the next person in the chain, and puts down the heard English phrase into the Interpreter’s Table.

4. Each next student translates a phrase into the opposite language in the Russian-English language pair and puts down the received variant of the phrase.

5. In the result, each student has a full Interpreter’s Table either in English or in Russian in the received version.

Fig. 1 below illustrates the game process.

3.3 Check

To check the quality of translation and interpretation, the Interpreters’ Tables with the students’ texts can be used. To check the work, the following techniques can be used.

1. Students’ handwritings comparison for their equivalence to the original text.

2. Role-playing in English basing on the handwriting with consecutive interpretation in Russian.

3. Self-check of a group mate’s handwriting following by the teacher’s check.

I believe, such tasks give students an opportunity to study in depth one and the same material on the topic by using different techniques. This approach contributes to good material memorizing by means of multiple repetition and appliance of various skills and knowledge in practice.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The “Deaf Interpreter” game can be adapted to different languages, various topics or students’ language proficiency. Besides, the advantage of this game is an opportunity to develop professional interpreter’s skills such as:
listening comprehension, quick memorizing and the key idea understanding;
interpretation and shadowing;
interpreter’s note-taking skill in the native or a foreign language;
correction of stylistic and grammatical mistakes.

Unlike other traditional methods of interpretation training, “Deaf Interpreter” allows involving all students in active participation in the class-work and does not require technical equipment for the game organization. After the game, every student has an opportunity to reflect on their results and the teacher can check everyone’s work using the Interpreters’ Tables.

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