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THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORY TRAINING IN INTERPRETATION

Psychological studies of human memory make a distinction between Short-Term Memory (STM) and Long-Term Memory (LTM). The idea of short-term memory simply means that you are retaining information for a short period of time without creating the neural mechanisms for later recall. Long-Term Memory occurs when you have created neural pathways for storing ideas and information which can then be recalled weeks, months, or even years later. To create these pathways, you must make a deliberate attempt to encode the information in the way you intend to recall it later. Long-term memory is a learning process. And it is essentially an important part of the interpreter's acquisition of knowledge, because information stored in LTM may last for minutes to weeks, months, or even an entire life. The duration of STM is very short. It is up to 30 seconds. Memory in interpreting only lasts for a short time. Once the interpreting assignment is over, the interpreter moves on to another one, often with different context, subject and speakers. Therefore, the memory skills which need to be imparted to trainee interpreters are STM skills.

As mentioned in the previous section, the capacity of STM is limited and small. Scholars propose that it is seven items of information (give or take two).

There are three main theories as to why we forget from our STM:

1) Displacement - existing information is replaced by newly received information when the storage capacity is full.
2) Decay - information decays over time.
3) Interference - other information present in the storage at the same time distorts the original information.

There are some modes of retrieval of information from STM:

1) Serial search—items in STM are examined one at a time until the desired information is retrieved.
2) Activation—dependence on activation of the particular item reaching a critical point.

The purpose of memory (STM) training in interpreting is to achieve a better understanding of the source language, which will lead to adequate interpreting.
Memory in consecutive interpreting consists of nothing more than understanding the meaning, which is conveyed by the words. Understanding is the first step in successful interpreting; therefore, memory training is to be provided at the early stage of the interpreter’s training. Memory functions differ in consecutive (CI) and simultaneous (SI) interpreting, because the duration of memory is longer in CI than in SI. There are different methods of training STM for CI and SI respectively. Interpreting starts with the encoding of the information from the original speaker. According to Gile, interpreting is an STM-centered activity; the process of interpreting could be re-postulated into: Encoding of information from the Source Language + Storing Information + Retrieval of Information + Decoding Information into the Target language.

In Consecutive Interpreting, there is probably up to 15 minutes (depending on the speaker's segments) for the interpreter to encode and then store the information. This is the first phase of Gile's Effort Model for CI. In the second phase of Gile's Model, the interpreter starts to retrieve information and decode it into the target language. In Simultaneous Interpretation, encoding and decoding of information happen almost at the same time. The duration for storing the information is very limited. Therefore, in the first step of interpreting, encoding (understanding) information uttered in the SL is the key to memory training.

According to the previous description, there are three main possibilities of storing information in STM: 1) Acoustic Coding, 2) Visual Coding and 3) Semantic Coding. Visual coding may be used by interpreters in conference situations with multimedia. Notes in interpreting are to assist in such visual coding of information. But in most interpreting contexts, interpreters will depend on acoustic and semantic coding. Therefore, exercises should be designed for this purpose. The following methods are recommended:

Retelling in the Source Language: The instructor either reads or plays a recording of a text of about 200 words for the trainees to retell in the same language. The trainees should not be allowed to take any notes. In the first instance, trainees should be encouraged to retell the text in the same words of the original to the largest possible extent. The following tactics should be used by the trainees after a certain time of training on retelling: 1. Categorization - grouping items of the same properties; 2. Generalization - drawing general conclusions from particular examples or message from the provided text; 3. Comparison - noticing the differences and similarities between different things, facts and events; 4. Description - describing a scene, a shape, or size of an object, etc. Trainees are encouraged to describe, summarize, and abstract the original to a large extent in their own words in exercises (2) to (5).
There is another tool which is effective in memory training: Mnemonic to Memory. Mnemonic is a device, such as a formula or rhyme, used as an aid in remembering. Mnemonics are methods for remembering information that is otherwise quite difficult to recall. The basic principle of Mnemonics is to use as many of the best functions of the human brain as possible to encode information.

There are also some exercises widely used for memory training:

**Shadowing:** repeating what the speaker says, word for word, in the same language. This exercise will enable the trainee to become accustomed to speaking and listening at the same time. The exercise should be repeated as many times as necessary, until one can shadow everything the speaker says without omitting any words. It is important to practice shadowing in the second language. These can be recordings of foreign-language broadcasts, etc.

**Dual task:** while shadowing, the trainee should write something totally unrelated on a piece of paper, e.g. writing the numerals from 1 to 100, and then backwards from 100 to 1. The point of this exercise is to increase the interpreter’s concentration and accustom him to working on two different tasks at once, in preparation for simultaneous interpreting.

**Paraphrase:** the trainee begins shadowing the speaker. As he goes along, he changes the wording of the message wherever he can, without altering the meaning. This is a very difficult exercise (harder than interpreting, in fact) that serves several purposes: 1) it builds the interpreter’s vocabulary; 2) it increases his mental agility and problem-solving ability as he constantly thinks of different ways of saying the same thing; 3) it enhances his analytical skills as he becomes more adept at ferreting out the underlying meaning of the message. It would be a good idea to look up alternative words and phrases in a synonym dictionary.

It is also advisable that exercises with interference (e.g. noises) be provided in order to prevent information loss in the Short-Term Memory, since the environment and other information present in the storage may reduce the information encoded.

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techniques”, Dollerup and Loddegard