

Exercises for Improving the Effectiveness of Future Interpreters

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Abstract: This article examines various exercises and methodological techniques aimed at improving translators' effectiveness. In particular, it highlights exercises that develop memory, the "shadowing" technique, training in simultaneous interpretation, and other cognitive, linguistic, and practical methods.

Key words: professionalism, competency-based, approach, professional-communicative competence, terminology of the specialty, professional terminology, interacting factors.

Introduction

Translation is a complex activity in which language proficiency, cultural understanding, memory, and mental flexibility all play an important role. A translator must be able to quickly perceive spoken information and convey it to the audience accurately and in a culturally appropriate manner. This requires well-developed short-term memory, strong concentration, and the ability to take notes quickly.

This article presents exercises and techniques that help develop these skills. With regular practice and by choosing suitable exercises, every translator can significantly improve their professional competence.

Methodology

A translator must be able to remember a large amount of information in a short period of time and reproduce it when necessary. This information includes not only the content of the text but also cultural details, idiomatic expressions, and other nuances. The skills and abilities required for performing various types of oral translation are developed during training through special exercises, as well as through practice in carrying out a particular type of translation.

Exercises are the main means of developing the necessary skills.

Depending on the goals and tasks set by the student or teacher, many types of exercises can be performed in translation classes. In accordance with the practical focus of translator training, the following groups of exercises can be distinguished:

Exercises aimed at developing skills and abilities necessary for any type of translation activity (e.g., skills of deverbalization and transformation; the ability to analyze and synthesize, identify the style and genre of a text, etc.);

Exercises that develop skills and abilities required for a specific type of translation

(for written translation from a foreign language into the native language – reading techniques, including linguistic and philological reading, text segmentation, editing, using dictionaries and other reference materials, etc.;

for oral translation from a foreign language into the native language – listening skills, speech technique, switching, identifying the speaker's communicative intent, condensing the text without losing essential information, encoding and decoding text, performing several actions simultaneously, etc.);

Exercises aimed at expanding and consolidating knowledge;

Language exercises (lexical, phraseological, grammatical, stylistic);

Speech exercises;

Exercises focused on practicing a single phenomenon or difficulty, as well as **complex exercises**, which require mastery of several or many types of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

A special role in translator training is played by exercises aimed at developing such absolutely essential skills as **deverbalization**, **transformation**, and **switching**, as well as at forming the overall mechanism of **bilingualism**.

Exercises for Developing Deverbalization Skills

1. Reading a text while counting.

Students are asked to read a text silently while counting aloud, after which they must retell its content. One should begin with texts in the native language and then move to foreign-language texts. The counting task should also become more complex – first counting in the native language, then in the foreign one. The choice of retelling language depends on the students' proficiency level. This exercise also develops working memory and attention control.

2. Micro-summarizing.

Students are given a written text of 800–1000 characters, from which they must extract key words carrying the main information. They have two minutes for this task (the time is gradually reduced). Then the text is taken away, and students give an oral summary based on the chosen words. It is recommended to start with texts in the native language and later move to foreign-language texts followed by translation. This exercise also helps develop skills in semantic analysis and identifying key information.

3. Recording information without words.

While listening to an oral text, students record its content using signs, symbols, or drawings instead of words. They invent the symbols themselves but may be reminded that a question mark can stand for concepts like question, problem, issue, debate, etc., and a small circle may symbolize a round table, meeting, negotiations, etc. After listening, students reconstruct the text based on their notes. Begin with native-language texts, then proceed to foreign-language ones. This exercise prepares students for mastering note-taking techniques in consecutive interpreting.

Exercises for Developing Transformation Skills

1. Transforming lexical units.

Students are given a list of words and expressions for which they must provide synonyms. For example, instead of “capital,” “businesspeople,” “president of the country,” “national assembly,” they may propose “the main city of the country,” “entrepreneurs,” “head of state,” “parliament,” etc. Students should respond as quickly as possible. Start with the native language and gradually move to the foreign language. This exercise not only builds transformation skills but also enriches vocabulary.

2. Reconstructing a sentence.

Choose a sentence of at least 10–12 words. Students, one by one, reproduce the sentence beginning with each subsequent word. These exercises develop transformation skills and improve oral speech technique in both native and foreign languages.

3. Global transformation of speech.

Students are given newspaper texts of 500–800 characters and are asked to convey them in their native language **without using any words from the original**. At an advanced stage, foreign-language texts can be used. Good results include smooth, correct interpretation from the page without pauses. This exercise is highly effective for improving oral speech skills.

Exercises for Developing Switching Skills

1. Exercise with numerals.

The teacher dictates numerals in the foreign language, and students write them down using Arabic numerals. The pace of dictation gradually increases. The numerals also become more complex: from two-digit to three-digit, from forms similar to the native language to forms that differ (e.g., French numbers 70–99), from whole numbers to fractions and time expressions. The series ends with arithmetic expressions and even solving problems. Students then read their notes in either the native or foreign language. This forces them to switch mentally between languages, forming the switching skill. It also promotes deverbilization, as students must strip away the foreign-language form to focus on meaning.

2. Recording precise words.

This involves writing down month names, days of the week, proper names, etc., dictated in the foreign language, using special methods:

representing months and days by ordinal numbers (Monday = 1, Tuesday = 2, etc.; months numbered 1–12);

pointing to locations on a map when hearing place names;

naming professions, positions, countries of residence, or artworks when hearing names of public figures.

3. Synchronized translation of word combinations.

The teacher reads common collocations in random order, sometimes in the foreign language, sometimes in the native one. They are read first slowly, then at normal speed, regardless of whether students manage to translate them in time. The exercise is repeated until the group achieves satisfactory performance. The set of collocations changes each lesson with occasional repetition. This exercise also works well with conversational clichés, which are acquired faster this way than through other exercises.

Developing the mechanism of bilingualism is also supported by speech-technique training: tongue twisters in the foreign language, selecting epithets for nouns, delivering short speeches on various topics, etc. In parallel, translation exercises are introduced: written translation is assigned for homework, while in class students mainly practice sight translation and paragraph-phrase translation.

During translation from a foreign language into the native language (and vice versa), students learn to perform pre-translation analysis, develop translation strategies, analyze the content and form of the text, and choose translation methods and techniques appropriate to the specifics of the text. They learn to use standard translation solutions and to find original ones.

Translation work can also be carried out collectively. This allows direct discussion of translation options and teacher commentary on common and text-specific translation difficulties.

Thus, translation training involves multiple goals, the main one being the development of the skills and abilities necessary for any type of translation. Throughout the learning process, students gradually master the skills of deverbilization, transformation, and switching. Specially selected exercises play an important role in the development of these translation skills.

Results

Memory-development exercises for translators and interpreters serve as an effective means of enhancing the cognitive processes involved in real-time translation. Regular use of techniques such as visualization, association, chunking, and concise note-taking significantly improves the ability to memorize and reproduce information.

These methods also contribute to deeper comprehension of the source text, greater confidence during performance, and reduced cognitive load in stressful interpreting situations. As a result, the interpreter is able to provide accurate, fluent, and culturally appropriate translation, thereby supporting effective cross-linguistic communication.

Moreover, consistent engagement with these exercises fosters professional growth and increases job satisfaction. By strengthening memory and cognitive agility, interpreters are better equipped to perform their role as linguistic mediators with precision and confidence.

Conclusion

Memory-training exercises and cognitive development techniques play a crucial role in ensuring the accuracy, speed, and reliability of translation and interpreting. Practices such as visualization, associative thinking, chunking, and structured note-taking contribute significantly to the professional growth of interpreters. These methods not only improve the quality of translation but also enhance the overall efficiency of international communication.

Through systematic training, interpreters develop stronger cognitive resilience, improved concentration, and greater confidence. Ultimately, the mastery of these skills enables them to perform their demanding tasks more effectively and to facilitate meaningful communication across languages and cultures.

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