

**PRAXEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO CONSECUTIVE
INTERPRETING IN THE ACADEMIC
ENVIRONMENT. MULTILINGUAL PERSPECTIVES**

**ABORDĂRI PRAXEOLOGICE ALE INTERPRETĂRII
CONSECUTIVE ÎN MEDIUL ACADEMIC.
PERSPECTIVE MULTILINGVE**

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Abstract. *The article presents an overview on the practices of consecutive interpreting in the higher-education institutions. It emphasises teaching and learning approaches from a multilingual perspective with an aim to compare the realities in different academic environments and namely Department of Translation, Interpretation and Applied Linguistics from Moldova State University (Republic of Moldova), Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures from “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi (Romania), Institute of Translation Studies (IT) from Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic) and Department of Translation Studies (DT) from “Constantin the Philosopher” University of Nitra (Slovakia), where I carried out research stays for my PhD studies from 2017 to 2019. This is a case-study based on personal reflections and conclusions regarding the educational process. The training practices of future interpreters at the mentioned institutions are described with regard to the curricular contents and teaching strategies used in the organisation of the teaching-learning activity: materials, methods, means, timeline distribution of the stages of the lesson, monitoring of students’ activity, degree of student involvement during the lessons and other resources aimed at achieving the set objectives.*

Key words: consecutive interpreting, multilingualism, praxeological approach.

JEL CLASSIFICATIUN: I2, J2, Z1

INTRODUCTION. SCOPE AND AIM OF THE STUDY

Multilingual language professionals, including translators and interpreters, are an important asset in the development of our society, and consecutive interpreting (CI) is one type of such a multilingual communicative activity which has become increasingly necessary in contexts that require international and intercultural communication in order to carry across messages and, therefore, to strengthen relations among people and societies. Therefore, multilingualism in society is driven by political, historical, economic and social factors [2, p.2]. Academic and scientific activities carried out through student exchange programmes, mobilities for the teaching staff, researchers and doctoral students for teaching, lectures, seminars, supervision and examinations, etc. are proof that there is need for closeness that transcends time and space, unity, sustainability, diversity, evolution and growth.

The present paper offers a comparative perspective on praxeological approaches to the subject of „Consecutive Interpreting” taught at four Eastern European and Central European higher-education institutions where I carried out research stays for my PhD studies from February 2017 to July 2019. The comparative overview is from the perspective of teaching activities at the Department of Translation, Interpretation and Applied Linguistics (Moldova State University), and had classroom observations at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi), at the Institute of Translation Studies (Charles University in Prague) and at the Department of Translation Studies (“Constantin the Philosopher” University of Nitra). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to present the educational practices at the above-mentioned institutions from a comparative point of view. The educational dimension of multilingualism in this paper is defined and explained through its social and individual dimensions [3, pp. 87-88] with emphasis on the description of different educational systems, teachers’

and learners' perceptions and roles in teaching and learning, teacher reflections on their roles in participating in the act of education. The practices oriented towards future interpreters' training and skills acquisition are described in the light of syllabi contents and teaching strategies used in the organisation of the teaching-learning process. Thus, the key-points that were reflected in the description of the didactic activities and the conclusions that were reached address the following aspects: didactic materials, methods, means, timeline distribution of the stages of the lesson, monitorisation of students' activity, and other resources aimed at achieving the set objectives.

DIVERSITY IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS. THE CASE OF CENTRAL EUROPE AND EASTERN EUROPE HIGHER-EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

At the Department of Translation, Interpretation and Applied Linguistics (Department TIAL), theoretical and practical training in CI begins in the second year of studies (4th semester) with the subject “Consecutive interpreting from English into Romanian/Russian of legal/economic texts” for which an excerpt of the syllabus provisions is presented in Annex 1, and continues in the third year (5th semester) with “Oral translation techniques. Consecutive interpreting from Romanian/Russian into English”. In the first semester of CI, students should acquire attention and concentration skills, active listening skills, mnemonic skills, and comprehension and speech analysis skills, through practical exercises, fluent expression, intralinguistic and interlinguistic reformulation of information. Consecutive interpreting is carried out on short and medium segments of meaning, initially without notes, by coordinating efforts in listening, comprehension, speech analysis and target-language rephrasing of the meaning. Towards the end of the 4th semester and the beginning with the 5th semester students are introduced to the note-taking system and techniques. Also, in the 5th semester students attend the theoretical-practical course “Oral Translation Techniques” that introduces them into the basics of practical aspects and training resources for interpreters, the linguistic corpus (interpreting different types of speeches), identifying and overcoming

problems and difficulties in interpretation, translation techniques, the importance of pre- and post-interpreting analysis.

The structure of a teaching activity in CI from English into Romanian at the Department TIAL is presented below, and is illustrated through a personal experience.

Teaching activity to train mnemonic skills in consecutive interpreting

Stage 1. Organisation moment. The teacher prepares the materials for the lesson (narrative-descriptive text for the “Shadowing” exercise with pauses, narrative-descriptive speeches with contents easily to mentally visualize) and takes attendance.

Stage 2. Engagement activity. The teacher uses the exercise “Shadowing with a twist” which involves repeating the information exactly in the language in which it was conveyed (here, English). The teacher segments the text into 5-second units of meaning and reads each segment pausing to allow students to repeat it. The exercise becomes a kind of CI and has the advantage of developing short-term memory. Frontal activity is used as form of class organisation.

Stage 3. Presentation. The teacher summarises the topic taught in the previous lesson “Role of Memory in consecutive interpreting. Types and characteristics of memory” through a question-and-answer session. The teacher announces the topic of the lesson “Active listening and speech analysis”.

Stage 4. Study. The teacher announces the title of the speech; announces the key words, including words and phrases that might cause difficulties in interpreting. Students listen to the speech and, while doing so, they take notes to answer the following questions related to the speech: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?* to demonstrate their understanding of the speech. The teacher applies the frontal activity and engages students in a simple “question-answer” dialogue. The teacher repeats the exercise based on another speech. The lesson continues with an exercise in gradually extending the recall. Students listen repeatedly to a narrative speech with descriptive elements. As a result of the first listening, students identify the main information in the speech. Students fill in the information with details after listening to the speech. The aim is

for students to be able to reproduce all the main ideas and as many details of the speech as possible. Students work in pairs to share information about speech content.

Stage 5. *Ensuring retention and transfer* is achieved through the method of conversation between teacher and students on what was learned during the lesson.

Stage 6. *Teacher announces homework.*

Personal reflections and concluding remarks. The teaching-learning methods used in class are, for the most part, interactive and active-participatory. Verbal communication is mostly employed, face-to-face activities and pair work are practised. All students are involved during the lesson. Narrative-descriptive speeches are used for the CI exercises, which are selected according to students' general level of linguistic skills. The teacher tries to develop students' analytical skills through active and attentive listening. Lesson stages are completed at a moderate pace, according to the students' learning abilities. Explanations and clarifications are mostly in English. Language interference with Russian is quite frequent in the process of interpreting due to the fact that some students are bilingual and they use Russian a lot. Hence, language mistakes occur more often among Moldovan students compared to the Romanian ones (based on a contrastive analysis during an empirical research with the participation of Romanian and Moldova students that we carried out in 2017). Nevertheless, from our observations, we could not conclude that the quality of the target-speech is superior among students from the department of Foreign Languages and Literatures compared to those at Department TIAL. Another peculiarity of Moldovan students is that some of them tend to use translanguaging as the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages [1, p. 288], in an attempt to fulfil the transfer of the message in interpreting from English into Romanian. This linguistic phenomenon can also be noticed in students' think-aloud protocol [4] in CI when they resort to Russian in order to recall the appropriate translation equivalent in Romanian.

At the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures (“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi), students that specialise in “Translation and Interpreting” are trained in the subjects “Communication skills in foreign language A (translation from the press, specialised translation: economic field, consecutive interpreting)” (3rd semester) and “Communication skills in a Foreign Language A (consecutive interpreting, specialised translation: legal field, specialised translation: medical field)” (4th semester). The general framework for the subject “Communicative competence in foreign languages” taught in the 3rd semester is included in the excerpt from the syllabus (Annex 2) according to which the objectives of the subject are: - to develop communicative skills in the foreign language and in the mother tongue with a focus on translation, - to improve linguistic, textual, intercultural, thematic and technological competence, - to develop consecutive interpreting skills (CIC). Contents comprise translation of newspaper articles, specialised translation of business texts, and CI between language A or language B and the mother tongue (Romanian). Interactive teaching-learning methods are applied. The scenario of a lesson on “*Communication Skills in a Foreign Language*” is presented below.

Teaching activity to train consecutive interpreting with note-taking

Stage 1. Organisation moment. The teacher takes attendance and prepares the materials.

Stage 2. Homework check.

Stage 3. Study/ Learning activities. The teacher announces the title of the speech and gives a brief description of its contents. The speech was selected from the *Speech Repository* website. The teacher segments the speech into 1-minute units of meaning. While listening to the speech segments, all students take notes. After listening to each segment, the teacher and the students clarify the meaning of some linguistic structures that students might have difficulties with. The teacher nominates a student to interpret each segment of speech in English. If the nominated student is unable to interpret, another one takes over the task. Consecutive interpreting is followed by analysing the linguistic and non-verbal quality of each segment. Interpreting

students self-assess their interpreting and receive feedback from their peers and teacher.

Stage 4. Homework announcement.

Personal reflections and concluding remarks. Frontal work prevailed in the didactic activity. The conversational method was mainly used. Some students found it difficult to recall information from the source-speech which, as suggested by them, was attributed to the following aspects: lengthy speech segments, interpreting from the mother tongue into English was quite difficult, some terms which had not been previously discussed also posed certain difficulties. Consequently, the lesson proceeded at a moderate to slow pace. Not all the students were actively involved in the class.

At the Institute of Translation Studies (Charles University in Prague), CIC training of students in “English for Intercultural Communication” is through the subjects “Interpreting I” (4th semester), “Interpreting II” (5th semester) and “Interpreting III” (6th semester). Admission to the First Cycle of studies is based on entrance examinations. The syllabus requirements for Interpreting II are presented in Annex 3. The aims of the subject are two-way CIC training, CI with note-taking and sight-translation. The content units cover speeches that relate to current topics of general interest. The teacher uses interactive teaching-learning methods. A teaching activity for students in the subject Interpreting II has the following course:

**Teaching-learning activity for training sight-translation
competence**

Stage 1. Organisation moment. The teacher takes attendance and prepares the didactic materials: transcribed text of the speech, audio-video files, whiteboard, computer, projector.

Stage 2. Engagement activity. Students listen to a 3-minute speech and take notes. One of the students interprets the speech consecutively. Self-assessment followed by peer and teacher’s review of the quality of the target-speech are applied through correcting semantic errors and commenting on non-verbal language.

The teacher introduces the new topic “The peculiarities of sight translation”.

Stage 3. Study through demonstration. The teacher explains the specificities of sight translation (ST) and describes the steps to perform it. Students watch a demo video explaining and exemplifying the steps of the sight translation process.

Stage 4. Knowledge fixation. Students perform a ST exercise. The teacher presents the title of the text and the specialised field it belongs to and distributes handouts with different excerpts from the text to each student. For 5 minutes students process their own fragment according to ST stages. Then students translate their excerpt. The students and the teacher comment on the quality of the ST by noting the correctness of linguistic, semantic, non-verbal language, paralinguistic aspects that accompanied the translation.

The teacher continues the lesson with the CI of a speech. She gives a brief information about the contents of the speech and presents the key words. Students listen to the whole speech (4 minutes) and take notes. The meaning of unknown words and word-combinations are clarified. The speech is interpreted by 2 students. One of the interpreting students leaves the classroom. In the meantime, the remaining student presents his/her own version of the target-speech. The student who left the class is then invited to return to provide his/her version of the interpretation. This is to avoid discussion between students and, therefore, the fact of being influenced by others.

The students and the teacher assess the quality of the CI, commenting on linguistic and non-linguistic aspects, correcting errors and suggesting alternative versions.

Stage 5. Homework announcement.

Personal reflections and concluding remarks. All students were engaged in class activities, mainly through face-to-face and independent work. The tempo of the lesson was moderate to accommodate all students. The teaching-learning methods used included verbal communication method, exposition and demonstration with technical means, and exercise. Discussions and clarifications are made in students’

mother tongue, i.e., Czech. All the students were involved during the lesson.

At the Department of Translation Studies, “Constantine the Philosopher” University of Nitra, students enrolled in the study programme “Translation and Interpreting: English language and culture in combination with another language” have CI lessons during the third year: “Interpreting I” (5th semester) and “Interpreting II” (6th semester). According to the syllabus (Annex 4) the main aims are: - to develop mechanical and logical memory, - to acquire public speaking skills, - to develop verbal expression skills, mastering different types of interpreting (ST, CI with note-taking and CI without note-taking), - to enrich the vocabulary with terms from different fields, - to acquire bidirectional interpreting skills. The outline of a lesson in the subject “Interpreting II” in the is presented below.

Mnemonic skills training activity

Stage 1. Organisation moment. The teacher takes attendance.

Stage 2. Homework check. A student presents a speech prepared at home in his mother tongue. The student segments the speech based on short units of meaning (sentences). The teacher nominates several students to interpret consecutively in English. The speaker and the interpreting student stand in front of the class, facing the audience. After each interpreted segment the teacher intervenes with corrections and comments.

Stage 3. Engagement activity. The teacher asks for students’ attention through visual and auditory memory development exercises.

For visual memory, the teacher writes down 10 words on a piece of paper and shows it to the students. Students visualise the words for 30 seconds, memorise them without writing them down and enumerate them afterwards.

For auditory memory, the teacher verbalises 10 words and the students memorise as many as possible without writing them down. After the teacher says the last word, the students need to write down the memorised words. The teacher and the students check the number of memorised words.

The exercise is repeated, then the teacher asks a follow-up question about alternative ways the students can improve their memory.

Stage 4. Directed learning. Exercise for training comprehension and summarisation skills and memory development.

The teacher presents narrative-descriptive speeches, each of about 5 utterances in English. The speeches contain descriptive information that can be “visualised”, numerical information, place names, personal names. Students listen to the information without taking notes. Then, they need to retell the contents of each speech in detail in English. After each speech interpretation students summarise the speech in English.

Stage 5. The fixation of knowledge takes place through CI of a speech from English into Slovak from the *Speech Repository* website. The teacher introduces the topic of the speech, and the key words that the students should translate. The teacher segments the speech into short units of meaning of 8-10 seconds each. Students listen to each segment and interpret it. The teacher assesses the quality of the interpretation.

Stage 6. Homework announcement.

Personal reflections and concluding remarks. All the students were actively involved in the learning process. They were motivated and encouraged to learn both individually and as a group. The stages of the lesson were logical, the activities were mostly interactive and the teacher applied active-participatory methods which captured students’ attention. The speeches were segmented in order to accommodate students’ learning styles and needs, and were presented with a moderate verbal flow. Therefore, while the teacher’s role was to coordinate students’ learning activities, students were at the centre of the educational process. One student encountered difficulties in interpreting into Slovak due to the fact that his mother-tongue was Hungarian and his knowledge of Slovak was unsatisfactory. The teacher alerted the student to the necessity of improving his Slovak.

Concluding remarks on the case-study. Judging by the degree of students’ participation in the lessons, students’ linguistic skills and

the fact that the selection of candidates is on the basis of examination for admission to the First Cycle only at the Institute of Translation Studies in Prague, one can determine that the classes are quite heterogeneous. We believe that a judicious selection of prospective students prior to admission would contribute to higher education performance, although teachers have an important role in achieving it.

Another difference is the number of students per group which can impact, to some extent, the quality of the educational process. At the Department of TIAL, Chisinau and the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Iasi the maximum number of students per group is 25 and 22, respectively, while at the Institute of Translation Studies (Prague) and the Department of Translation Studies, Nitra the maximum number of students is 16. The smaller the number of students, the more intensive is the skills training.

The way studies are organised at the respective institutions, the approaches to the form of study and class organisation, the use of teaching-learning methods, the degree of students' participation during the lesson, practices of teaching CI, etc., differ more or less from one educational system to another.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The similarities and the differences that derive from the praxeological approaches in teaching CI in higher-education institutions have been drawn on account of the aspects mentioned in the paper. Therefore, based on active and passive observations (teacher's reflections), following discussions with the teachers and having access to syllabi provisions, we can conclude that the educational process is oriented towards the acquisition and development of CIC skills, although in different ways. An important common feature refers to the student being at the centre of the educational process, the teacher's role, on the other hand, being to guide, coordinate and ensure collaboration between students in order to satisfy societal requirements regardless of the language combination, directionality or interference with other languages spoken by students. In our opinion, the dimension of multilingualism

reflected at individual level (through language interference and translanguaging as identified among students at Department TIAL in Chisinau and, to a lesser extent, at the department of Translation Studies in Nitra), and at a more general inter-societal level, raises awareness about ensuing language phenomena and ensures access to different educational tools and practices which can help in understanding, tackling them (if needed) and used to the society's best interests.

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ANNEXES Course syllabus

Annex 1. Course syllabus on „Consecutive interpreting from English into Romanian/Russian of legal/economic texts”. Department TILA, Chisinau (2018)

Moldova State University
Faculty of Foreign Language and Literatures (currently Faculty of
Letters)
Department of Translation, Interpretation and Applied Linguistics
Syllabus (excerpt)

Subject: Consecutive interpreting and editing from language A into the mother tongue of the economic/ legal text

Author: Rodica Caragia

Form of education: full-time.

Semester: 4th,

Number of ECTS: 5.

Contents:

- Introduction to consecutive interpreting. Economic relations of the Republic of Moldova in the geo-political space.
- Importance of memory in consecutive interpreting. Banking and financial institutions.
- Active listening and speech analysis. Receiving the message. Trade and commercial relations.
- Semantic segmentation of speech. Globalisation.
- Rephrasing speech segments. International law.
- Summarising the speech. Human rights.
- Simulating a round table on consecutive interpreting. Migration.

Generic competences

- Defining the basic concepts of the subject;
- Identifying the features of consecutive interpreting;
- Knowledge of the stages in consecutive interpreting;
- Determining the importance of pre and post interpreting analysis;
- Identifying interpreting problems and finding solutions to them;
- Knowledge of the linguistic features of different types of speech;
- Determining the peculiarities of consecutive interpreting of different types of speech;

- Knowledge of thematic vocabulary.

Specific competences

- Strengthening listening, speaking, reading and consecutive interpreting competences;
- Developing and consolidating the specialised lexis;
- Determining different interpreting problems and identifying solutions to them;
- Applying the acquired economic/legal lexis in the speech interpreting process;
- Using resources available to interpreters: dictionaries, software, online resources;
- Applying interpreting techniques in the interpreting process;
- Assessing the role of linguistic and paralinguistic elements in consecutive interpreting;
- Using appropriate linguistic structures in various communication situations.

Annex 2. Course syllabus on „Communicative Competence in Foreign Languages”. Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Iasi (2017)

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Faculty of Letters
Study Guide (excerpt)

Specialisation: TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING

Course title: Communicative Competence in Foreign Languages

Type of course: compulsory

Level of course: BA, *Year of study:* 2nd, *Semester:* 3rd

Number of ECTS allocated: 5+5

Course objective: The six practicals (three in foreign language A-5 credits, and three in foreign language B-5 credits) that are part of this course have as a major objective the development of the students' communicative competence in the foreign languages they study as well as in their native language, laying particular emphasis on the communicative translation of source texts; at the same time, other important competences for the professional translators' activities are held in view. Thus, the course also aims to improve the students' linguistic, textual, intercultural, thematic as well as technological competences. Two of the practicals will be devoted to developing the students' skills in consecutive interpreting. *Course contents:* The practicals include translations of newspaper articles, specialised translations of business texts as well as activities of consecutive interpreting between the two foreign languages under study and the Romanian language.

Teaching methods: interactive methods, team work

Assessment methods: ongoing evaluation, mid-term test, written paper at the end of the semester

Language of instruction: one of the foreign languages under study (English, French or German) and Romanian.

Annex 3. Course syllabus on „Interpreting II”. Institute of Translation Studies, Prague (2017)

INTERPRETING II (Spanish)

Units of contents

- note taking + consecutive interpretation with notes (SP-CZ, CZ-SP)
- sight translation (SP-CZ)
- Wednesday 8:20-9:50, room 104
- Petra Mračková Vavroušová, Ph.D.

Requirements for admitting students to the examination:

- active participation in seminars, 3 absences max.
- presentation of notes + audio recordings
- presentation of bilingual terminology glossaries (30 terms)
- presentation of the interpreter’s diary (individual work)

Examination tasks:

- consecutive interpreting with note SP-CZ (cca 4 min)
- consecutive interpreting with notes CZ-SP (cca 4 min)
- sight translation SP-CZ (cca 10-12 lines)

Contents:

1. Current and general topics.
2. Sight translation.
3. Public health.
4. Education.
5. Transportation.
6. Environment.
7. European Union.
8. Current topics.

Annex 4. Course syllabus on „Interpreting 2”, Department of translation studies, Nitra (2019)

Faculty of Arts “Constantin the Philosopher” University of Nitra,
Slovakia

Course syllabus: Interpreting 2

Author: Beáta Ďuračková, PhD.

1. Introduction to interpreting. Types of interpreting.
2. Exercises for short-term memory and long-term memory development.
3. Reproduction of information based on listening to short and long speeches on general topics.
4. Short consecutive interpreting without notes, dialogue interpreting at business meetings, lectures and presentations.
5. Preparing speeches in Slovak and English (different types of speeches) and interpreting into the target language.
6. Basics of interpreting with notes.
7. Sight translation, consecutive interpreting with notes, fundamentals of simultaneous interpreting.

Conditions for obtaining sufficient ECTS:

- Absences* – A maximum of 2 absences per semester are allowed.
- Participation in seminars* – Active participation in seminars. Students’ performance shall be assessed throughout the semester on the basis of class activity and participation.
- Speech* – Students will prepare a 5-7 min. speech on any topic in English or Slovak, which shall be presented together with the related vocabulary to their classmates and teacher one week before the speech presentation. The student will not read the speech (but may use the text or notes for it). If the speech presentation is unsatisfactory, the student shall prepare another speech.
- Glossary compilation* – At the end of the semester, students shall submit a written glossary of terms used in class, in their own speeches, and in the speeches of classmates. The vocabulary shall be structured thematically according to the subject field.