

Current Approaches to Teaching Interpretation

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Abstract

Introduction and aim

The article discusses current approaches to teaching interpretation together with some activities in a classroom atmosphere using semi-authentic and authentic teaching materials in order to bring students close to both English and Georgian real-life environments and get them exposed to different discourse genres, different English dialects and accents.

Research methodology: To solve the problems raised in the paper the following methods were used:

- Descriptive - linguistic method of direct observation and description,
- Qualitative analysis
- Discourse and context analysis
- The case study approach

Results and implications

Teaching current approaches to interpretation and using the described activities will enable students to be skillful prospective interpreters after graduation.

Conclusion

The six most interesting types of activities described below can be used to teach and practice interpretation in order to develop and sharpen the interpreting skills, to get used to using modern technology in the process of teaching, to gain expertise, proficiency and experience in interpreting and to provide the best foundation for future studies and research in the theory of translation..

Keywords: Interpreting, discourse genre, assessment on students' performance, assessment sheet, students' presentation, grading system, assessed items.

1 Introduction

The course 'Translating from English into Georgian' has been introduced into the curriculum of the specialty of English Language and Literature of A. Tsereteli State University as a compulsory subject taught in the eighth semester. The course involves both the theory and practice of translation and also gives the students the opportunity to practice interpreting.

As it is well known, *interpreting*, basically, is a process of transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language in a verbal way. This process may only occur when someone acts as an interpreter to transfer the meaning of a message directly from the mouth of a speaker, from a tape player, from a radio, from a CD/VCD player, from a television, or from other sources of verbal messages in a source language to a listener or an audience of a receptor language.

In order to perform such a challenging job professionally and responsibly, a person has to have an adequate understanding of the source language and an adequate command of the receptor language in their linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Such skills can be acquired consciously and unconsciously through a process of learning, training, and experiencing in a formal learning-teaching classroom, in a set-up situation, and in a real-life situation.

1.1 Discourse Genres

One of the first things the students have to know while taking the course of interpretation is how to identify the discourse genre of the talk to be interpreted. There are seven basic contrasting genres that should be discussed: *narrative, procedural, expository, hortatory, descriptive, repartee, and dialogue*. The differences

between these genres can be best seen by thinking of the purpose of the speaker. The following descriptions are quoted and adapted from *'Meaning-Based Translation'* pp. 365-381 by Mildred L. Larson.

- A. The purpose of a narrative discourse is to *recount events*, usually in the *past*. The backbone of the narrative is a series of events which are usually *actions*. The agent of the events is usually *Third Person* or *First Person*, that is, the speaker tells about the things which happened to someone else or to himself.
- B. The purpose of a procedural discourse is to *prescribe*, to give the steps on how to do something. It consists of a sequentially related series of steps within each procedure. The *agent* is not usually specified, and it is characteristic of procedural discourse that most of the *actions* will have an *affected result*.
- C. The purpose of an expository discourse is to *explain* or to *argue*. The non-chronological communication relations (orientation, clarification, logic) are typical of expository discourse. It consists of information logically related to a theme.
- D. The purpose of a descriptive discourse is to *describe*. It is not basically chronological; instead, a *topic* is developed.
- E. The purpose of a hortatory discourse is to *propose*, *suggest*, or *command*. The backbone of the structure is a series of *actions* which are *commands*. The second person agent throughout is characteristic of this genre. Like the expository discourse, the non-chronological communication relations are also typical of this genre.
- F. The purpose of a repartee discourse is to *recount speech exchanges*. The structure is that of a series of speech exchanges. Each speech is a small discourse; however, these small discourses are related to one another. The content of the exchanges may be narrative, expository, hortatory, procedural, or even dialogue if the speaker is recounting another set of speech exchanges.
- G. Dialogue discourse is a combination of *narrative* and *repartee*. The purpose is to *recount events*, usually in the past like in narrative. The difference is that many of those events are *speech events*; that is, there is a *repartee* structure too.

1.2 A Short Description of Activities in Interpretation

In order to teach interpreting there are many activities which are worth to use. However, I would like to introduce and describe six, in my opinion, most interesting and important activities, which will contribute immensely to practicing interpretation skills for the students taking the course of the theory and practice of translation. Each activity involves *teacher's or students' preparation outside the classroom*. Either the teacher or the student must prepare written texts and verbal scripts for presentation as well as supporting electronic devices such as a laptop computer, a projector (LCD) set, a tape/cassette player, a CD/VCD player, an OHP, a radio, a television set, and a tape/cassette recorder in advance. After the stage of preparation outside the classroom there is *the stage of preparation in the classroom before the presentation* when the teacher or the student has to make sure that everything is in place and in good condition to start. During the next stage of *interpreting practice*, which is a learning, training, and experiencing part, each student must fully participate. One of the students acts as a speaker and a selected student as an interpreter. There are two activities: (a) interpreting a talk from a set-up formal table; and (b) interpreting a speech from a podium. Materials are selected from descriptive and expository discourses.

Some activities may also involve recording the interpreted text on a tape/cassette or in a CD for further replaying, evaluation and assessment. Materials may be selected from narrative, repartee, and dialogue discourses. Apart from the main English dialects and accents spoken in Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, and Canada, other English accents are taken into account when selecting the materials.

While doing some activities, students will have to take turns to interpret a message directly from a speaker in a VCD viewed through a TV monitor or through a projector (LCD) larger screen. Hortatory and procedural discourses may be selected for interpreting purposes at this stage.

As for the activity which involves interpreting direct broadcastings, all discourse genres can be practiced. Each student has to interpret directly from radio and TV announcers by making a note of the main points. Each broadcast is recorded for replay later for further discussion and feedback purposes. Radio and TV broadcastings are selected from different available TV channels.

2 Six Activities to Teach Interpreting

In order to help students gain expertise, knowledge, experience and develop their practical skills, the six activities discussed below are strongly recommended. These activities from the easiest to the most challenging ones have been designed to offer the students more intensive practice.

Activity # 1: The Teacher - Students acting as Speaker — Interpreter:

Procedure:

- a. A teacher prepares texts on various topics in different genre of discourse.
- b. One student is chosen from a group to do the interpretation of the prepared text.
- c. Students are told to give comments and raise questions after the task is completed. This practice is conducted in the form of Presentation-Discussion.
- d. An assessment sheet is distributed to each student to assess the performance of their peer.

Interpreting Practice:

- a) A teacher speaks on a particular topic in *English*
- b) A student interprets into Georgian.
- c) The rest of the students listen, fill in the assessment sheet, and note down things to give comments and questions in *English/Georgian*.
- d) A teacher and the students give comments on the student's performance regarding the strategies and the language use.

Activity # two (A): Student — Student acting as Speaker — Interpreter (giving a presentation from a formally set up table)

Student's preparation outside the classroom

- a. Students are assigned to prepare two topics of discussion one in English and the other in Georgian. Both are expository (argumentative) discourses.

Preparation in the classroom before the presentation

- a. A table with two chairs are well arranged in front of the class
- b. The students are told to form pairs. Each pair spends 5-10 minutes to practice including the teacher's and peers' comments.
- c. The students are told to give comments and raise questions after the talk. This practice is conducted in the form of Presentation-Discussion.
- d. The students are told to follow the process of interpreting in this practice such as *Speaking*: presentation (by the student speaker), *Interpreting* (by the student interpreter), *Speaking*: comments and questions (by the students audience), *Interpreting* (by the student interpreter), *Speaking*: responses to the comments and questions from the audience (by the student speaker), *Interpreting* (by the student interpreter).
- e. An assessment sheet is distributed to each student to assess the performance of their peer.

Interpreting Practice

A student speaker speaks on a particular topic in *English/Georgian*

- a. Student interpreter interprets into *Georgian/English*
- b. The rest of the students listen, fill in the assessment sheet, note down things to give comments and questions in *Georgian / English*
- c. Teacher and the students give comments on the student interpreter's performance regarding strategies and language use.

Activity # 2 (B): Student — Student acting as Speaker — Interpreter (standing on a podium and delivering a speech)

Student's preparation outside the classroom

- a. Students are assigned to prepare two speeches one is in English and the other is in Georgian. Both are expository (argumentative) discourses.

Preparation in the classroom before the speech delivery

- a. A podium is well arranged in front of the class if available.
- b. The students are told to form pairs. Each pair spends 5-10 minutes to practice including the teacher's and peers' comments.
- c. The students are told to give comments on their peers' performance after the speech. This practice is conducted in the form of 'Lecturing' (one-way communication)
- d. The students are told to follow the process of interpreting in this practice such as *Speaking*: speech delivering (by the student speaker) and *interpreting* (by the student interpreter).
- e. An assessment sheet is distributed to each student to assess the performance of their peer.

Interpreting Practice (the first speech is in English and the second in Georgian)

- a. A student speaker gives a speech on a particular topic in *English / Georgian*
- b. A student interpreter interprets into Georgian / *English*
- c. The rest of the students listen, fill in the assessment sheet, and note down particular things to comment on.
- d. A teacher and students give comments on the student interpreter performance regarding strategies and language use.

Activity # 3: Tape Player / CD player — Student acting as Speaker — Interpreter

Teacher's preparation outside the classroom

- a. A Teacher selects particular short talks both in English and in Georgian from various recordings. All are narrative, repartee, and dialogue discourses.
- b. A Teacher plays the tapes / CDs to ensure they are in good condition.
- c. A Teacher copies or records the selected topics from different tapes / CDs into a new tape / CD.
- d. A Teacher checks and tests the tape player / the CD player.

Preparation in the classroom before the presentation

- a. A table with a chair is well arranged in front of the class.
- b. A tape player / CD player is put on the table and it is reachable for the teacher to operate.
- c. The students are told to give comments on their peers' performance after the talk. This practice is conducted in the form of 'Talk' or 'Lecturing' (one way communication)
- d. The students are told to follow the process of interpreting in this practice such as *Speaking*: presentation (through the tape player / the CD player) *interpreting* (by the student).
- e. An assessment sheet is distributed to each student to assess the performance of their peer.

Interpreting Practice (the first part is from English into Georgian and the second part is in the opposite direction).

- a. A Teacher plays the tape / the CD of an *English /Georgian* short talk with a pause each time to give the student a chance to interpret.
- b. A student interprets into *Georgian / English*
- c. The rest of the students listen, fill in the assessment sheet, and note down particular things to comment on.
- d. A teacher and the students give comments on the student interpreter performance regarding strategies and language use.
- e. A teacher replays the tape / the CD to check the language used for a discussion and correction purpose.

Activity # 4: VCD player — Student acting as Speaker — Interpreter

Teacher's preparation outside the classroom

- a. A Teacher selects particular short talks both in English and in Georgian from the VCDs stored in the library / resource center or if permitted records from / through any websites. All are hortatory and procedural discourses.
- b. A Teacher plays the VCDs to ensure they are in good condition.
- c. A Teacher makes a copy of the selected topics from different VCDs into a new VCD.
- d. A Teacher checks and tests the VCD player set or built-in VCD player in the portable computer.
- e. A Teacher tests the TV monitor or the projector (LCD) set and a screen.

Preparation in the classroom before the presentation

- a. A table with two chairs is well arranged in front of the class.
- b. A VCD player and a TV monitor or a projector is well-arranged and they are reachable for the teacher to operate.
- c. The students are told to form pairs. Each pair (one interprets the interviewer's talk and the other one interprets the interviewee's) spends 5-10 minutes to practice.
- d. The students are told to give comments on their peers' performance after the talk. This is conducted in the form of 'Interactive Talk'
- e. The students are told to follow the process of interpreting in this practice such as *Speaking*: presentation (through VCD player) and *Interpreting* (by a pair of students).
- f. An assessment sheet is distributed to each student to assess the performance of their peer.

Interpreting Practice (the first part is from English into Georgian)

- a. A teacher plays the VCD on an *English /Georgian* talk with a pause each time to give chance to the student to interpret.
- b. A student interprets into *Georgian / English*.
- c. The rest of the students listen, fill in the assessment sheet, and note down particular things to comment on.
- d. A Teacher and the students give comments on the student performance regarding strategies and language use.
- e. A Teacher replays the VCD to check the language used for a discussion and correction purposes.

Activity # 5: Radio — Student acting as Speaker — Interpreter

Teacher's preparation outside the classroom

- a. A teacher checks the condition of the radio and tests its sound quality.
- b. A teacher prepares a blank tape to record the news and other programs broadcasted during the class for a discussion and feedback purpose.

Preparation in the classroom before the radio broadcasting

- a. A table with a chair is well arranged in front of the class.
- b. A radio and a tape recorder with a blank tape in it to record the news and other programs are well arranged and are reachable for the teacher to operate.
- c. All students are told make notes of the main points of the news or talks from the radio programs and do the interpreting afterwards. Each student spends 5-10 minutes to do the job. The teacher and the peers also provide comments and questions.
- d. The students are told to follow the process of interpreting in this practice such as *Speaking*: presentation (through radio) and *Interpreting* (by each student in the way of noting down the

main points or making a summary) *conveying* (by the student) the message based on the points or a summary made.

- e. An assessment sheet is distributed to each student to assess the performance of their peer.

Interpreting Practice (first part is from English into Georgian)

- a. A Teacher switches on the radio on an *English / Georgian* news or talk show and presses the recording button at the same time.
- b. Each student interprets into *Georgian / English* by making a note of the main points or making a summary on a piece of paper.
- c. Each student is randomly selected to speak to the class by elaborating on the main points written down.
- d. The rest of the students listen, fill in the assessment sheet, and make notes of particular things to comment on.
- e. A Teacher and the students give comments on the student interpreter performance regarding strategies and language use.
- f. A Teacher plays the recording to check the language used for a discussion and correction purpose.

Activity # 6: TV News Broadcasting — Student acting as Speaker — Interpreter

Teacher's preparation outside the classroom

- a. A teacher checks the condition of the TV set.
- b. A teacher prepares a blank VCD to record the news or other programs for a discussion and feedback purpose.

Preparation in the classroom before the broadcasting

- a. A table with a chair is well arranged in front of the class
- b. A ready-to-switch-on TV set and a blank VCD in the player to record the news program are well arranged and are reachable for the teacher to operate.
- c. All students are asked to make note of the main points of the news or talks from the TV programs. Each student spends 3-5 minutes to retell, from his notes, the points in the receptor language.
- d. The students are told to follow the process of interpreting in this practice such as *Speaking*: presentation (through TV), *Interpreting* (by each student in the way of making note of the main points or making a summary), *Conveying* (by the student) the message based on the points or a summary made.
- e. An assessment sheet is distributed to each student to assess the performance of their peer.

Interpreting Practice (the first part is from English into Georgian)

- a. A teacher switches on TV on *English / Georgian* news and other intended programs, then presses the recording button on the VCD player at the same time.
- b. A student interprets into *Georgian / English* by making notes of the main points or making a summary on a piece of paper.
- c. Each student is randomly selected to speak to the class by elaborating on the main points written down with a support of a replay recording.
- d. The rest of the students listen, fill in the assessment sheet, and note down particular things to comment on.
- e. A teacher gives comments on the student interpreter performance regarding strategies and language use.

2.1 Assessment on Students' Performance

Each student is assessed during his/her performance in the classroom throughout the semester. It is a continuous assessment. Each time a student performs a task, s/he is assessed by both a teacher and his/her peers using a designed assessment format as shown below.

Interpretation Assessment Sheet

Date: _____

Name of the Student Assessed: _____

Topic/Title/Theme: _____

Text-Type: _____

No	Items	Scores
1	Accuracy	1 2 3 4
2	Clarity	1 2 3 4
3	Fluency	1 2 3 4
4	Eye Contact	1 2 3 4
5	Self-Confidence	1 2 3 4
	Total	

This format is distributed to the students before an interpretation is done and, after the class, the filled-in assessment sheets are collected so that the teacher can summarize the results and make a copy for the students who perform a task in order to keep in their own portfolio as a performance record. The teacher also keeps the same assessment format in each student's file for his/her final assessment at the end of the semester.

Each student is told on how to assess a peer's performance in the classroom. The following are the descriptions of assessed items and a grading system used:

Assessed Items

1. **Accuracy**: - pronounces each word correctly using right stress and intonation;

A. uses good grammatical structures with correct tenses;

B. chooses appropriate words relevant to the topic;

2. **Clarity**: - talks loudly with a clear voice;

A. conveys a meaning in a clear and natural way;

B. uses an appropriate communicative body language to make the meaning clear and understandable;

C. improvises a message correctly

3. **Fluency**: - expresses the meaning easily with a normal speed, without hesitation or excessively long pauses;

A. conveys the message smoothly using familiar concepts, examples, and other matters relevant to the topic;

4. **Eye-Contact:** - maintains eye-contact with the audience by looking across the whole class;

5. **Self-Confidence:** - conveys the correct meaning with full confidence and no hesitation;

A. talks confidently even when a mistake was made taking into consideration the meaning, grammatical structures, tenses, and word choices.

Grading System

Excellent	A	80 - 100
Good	B	70 - 79
Fair	C	60 - 69
Poor	D	50 - 59
Fail	E	< 50

3 Conclusion

After introducing current approaches to interpretation and doing the activities described below, students (a) will get familiar with different English dialects and accents; (b) will be exposed to different genres both in English and in Georgian; (c) will get familiar with human voices and the normal speed of speakers from a tape/cassette player, a CD/VCD player, a radio, and a television; (d) will be able to make quick decisions on what to omit and what to add while interpreting;(e) will be trained to be quick and skillful writers in writing a summary of the main points from both radio and television broadcastings; (f) will be trained to improvise and speak from the main points written down; (g) will be trained to keep the Short-Term Memory system in their brain working properly; (h) will be trained to keep their self-confidence in front of the audience; (i) will be trained to keep their eye-contact with the audience; and (j) will be trained to judge and give comments on an interpreting performance.

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