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THE FOUNDATIONS OF PREPARING NOVICE LEARNERS FOR SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING: COMPETENCIES, STAGES, AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

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Abstract. Learning to perform simultaneous interpreting is one of the most challenging language activities because it requires listening, understanding, and speaking at the same time. For beginners, it is important to build basic skills gradually before attempting full interpreting. This article explores how novice learners can be prepared for simultaneous interpreting by developing essential skills, following a step-by-step training process, and using effective teaching methods. Key skills include listening carefully, remembering information, anticipating what the speaker will say, dividing speech into smaller parts, and practicing paraphrasing. The paper also discusses how a staged training approach, which moves from simple exercises to guided practice and simulation, helps learners gradually build confidence and competence. The role of teachers in guiding, giving feedback, and encouraging reflection is emphasized. This study shows that a careful, gradual, and supportive approach is crucial for preparing beginners for the demanding task of simultaneous interpreting.

Keywords: simultaneous interpreting, beginner training, basic skills, listening, memory, anticipation, paraphrasing, teaching methods, step-by-step learning.

Simultaneous interpreting is a process where a person listens to someone speaking in one language and almost immediately repeats the message in another language. It is very different from regular translation because the interpreter must work in real time, without pausing to think or look up words. For beginners, this can be very difficult, as it requires managing attention, memory, and language all at once. Many studies show that learning to interpret successfully takes practice, careful guidance, and the development of basic skills before attempting full interpreting tasks (Gile, 2009; Pöchhacker, 2016).

Beginners need to be trained in ways that reduce cognitive overload. This means breaking down the process into small steps, focusing on foundational abilities, and gradually increasing difficulty. At this stage, the goal is not to produce perfect interpretations but to develop skills that will support later, more complex interpreting. These skills involve listening carefully, remembering what was said, predicting what comes next, dividing information into manageable parts, and being able to restate ideas in different words (Setton & Dawrant, 2016).

Before learners can interpret full speeches, they need to master several basic skills. First, active listening is essential. Learners must be able to focus on what the speaker is saying, notice important details, and ignore distractions. Activities like summarizing a short text or identifying keywords can help beginners develop this skill (Jones, 2002).

Second, memory is very important. Simultaneous interpreting requires remembering what was just said while speaking in another language. Exercises like repeating sentences, remembering

numbers or words, and practicing short-term recall help strengthen memory (Mellinger & Hanson, 2019).

Third, anticipation or prediction helps interpreters stay ahead of the speaker. Beginners can practice predicting the next words or the main idea of a sentence. This skill improves with repeated exposure to patterns in speech and common ways ideas are expressed (Gile, 2009).

Fourth, learners should learn to divide speech into smaller parts, or segments. This makes it easier to process and remember what was said. Segmentation can be done by clauses, sentences, or main ideas.

Dividing information into chunks prevents overload and helps learners interpret more smoothly (Timarová, Ungoed-Thomas, & Salaets, 2014).

Fifth, reformulation or paraphrasing is important. Beginners often struggle if they try to repeat exactly what the speaker said. Being able to restate ideas in other words in the target language helps maintain fluency and makes interpreting easier (Setton & Dawrant, 2016).

Finally, beginners must learn to manage stress. Interpreting in real time can be stressful. Exercises in controlled practice, breathing, and gradual exposure to interpreting tasks help learners stay calm and focused.

A clear training process helps beginners develop these skills without feeling overwhelmed. The first stage focuses on micro-skills rather than full interpreting. Learners practice shadowing, repeating, and summarizing short passages. These exercises develop listening, memory, and speaking coordination while keeping tasks simple.

The second stage introduces controlled interpreting tasks. Learners interpret short, simple speeches at a slower pace with guidance from a teacher. The focus is on accuracy and understanding, not speed. Teachers can pause the speech, give feedback, and guide learners in strategies such as segmentation and paraphrasing. This stage helps learners connect listening, analyzing, and speaking in real time.

The third stage introduces guided simulations of real interpreting conditions. Learners practice interpreting longer speeches with moderate complexity, working with terminology, maintaining flow, and receiving feedback from peers and instructors. Reflection and discussion help learners identify strengths and areas for improvement. This staged approach gradually builds confidence, fluency, and readiness for more complex tasks (Pöchhacker, 2016; Mellinger & Hanson, 2019).

Effective teaching for beginners combines several approaches. Scaffolding is important, meaning tasks are made gradually harder while learners get support. Task-based learning is also effective, as learners practice meaningful activities that resemble real interpreting situations. Teachers should encourage reflection and discussion, helping learners understand what works and what needs improvement. Cognitive apprenticeship, where teachers demonstrate interpreting strategies and guide learners, is particularly useful (Setton & Dawrant, 2016).

Using multimodal tools such as recordings, speech playback, and digital memory exercises can further help learners develop listening, memory, and processing speed. These tools allow learners to repeat practice, adjust speech speed, and monitor their progress, making training more effective and engaging.

Preparing beginners for simultaneous interpreting requires patience, structured training, and a focus on foundational skills. Unlike advanced interpreters, beginners cannot start with full speeches; doing so would overwhelm their cognitive and linguistic capacities. Step-by-step training allows learners to gradually connect listening, analyzing, and speaking.

Teachers play a central role in guiding practice, providing feedback, and helping learners reflect on their performance. Emotional support and stress management are also essential, as

anxiety can interfere with memory and attention. By developing core skills in listening, memory, anticipation, segmentation, and paraphrasing, learners build a strong base for later advanced interpreting.

A gradual and supportive approach also encourages learners to develop confidence, independence, and awareness of strategies, all of which are essential for professional interpreting. This holistic approach combines cognitive, linguistic, and psychological preparation, ensuring that beginners can progress safely and effectively.

Training novice learners for simultaneous interpreting is a complex but manageable process when approached systematically. Core skills such as listening, memory, anticipation, segmentation, and paraphrasing should be developed first. A step-by-step training process that moves from micro-skills to controlled practice and finally to guided simulation helps learners build confidence and competence. Effective teaching combines scaffolding, task-based learning, reflection, and instructor modeling. Emotional readiness and stress management are equally important. Overall, a gradual, structured, and supportive approach provides the foundation for successful simultaneous interpreting in future professional contexts.

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