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## TRAINING CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS IN UZBEKISTAN: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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### Annotation

Uzbekistan's educational institutions are facing significant challenges in training conference interpreters. The persistence of this situation can be attributed to capacity constraints in trainer availability and to ongoing work on clarifying the broader framework for interpreter training.

**Key words** *Command, consecutive, simultaneous, booths, trainer, specialized, hamper, size, fully-fledged, piece good.*

The current landscape in Uzbekistan has attracted international attention due to recent developments in politics, culture, science, and society. Uzbekistan's leader's official visits to France and several other European nations, as well as his meetings with the leader of United States are steps that have placed the country firmly in the spotlight. The recent UNESCO summit, hosted by Samarkand, has reinforced this visibility. New ideas being implemented in tourism and in the field of economic

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development are bringing more and more guest visitors to this country. The voice of Uzbekistan is getting louder. The ideas concerning vital problems of the world are being discussed at diverse national and international forums turning this country into a much stronger player in CA and the world.

It's only natural that the changes mentioned above also increase the number of all kinds of international conferences discussing various problems of our country and issues of global nature. Thus, it becomes apparent that the country requires an adequate number of conference interpreters who should be able to translate all the meetings, congresses, forums, and the like.

However, the reality is that Uzbekistan continues to experience a significant shortage of well-trained conference interpreters. Moreover, educational institutions designed to teach interpreters are still having problems coping with this task: at present demand for fully-fledged interpreters certainly exceeds supply. In many cases, conference interpreting is performed by people who do not have the professional training and experience to do the job. It is not uncommon when the translation of meetings is performed by students of different universities. It's evident that the students involved should possess a solid command of foreign languages; however, their grasp of professional interpreting methods doesn't meet requirements. As a rule, they have a vague idea of the right ways of translation, working styles under duress, and, of course, available principles of note-taking. As a result, low-quality interpreting not only decreases the level of various conferences but, to a certain extent, blurs the image of the educational and professional profile of this country.

Addressing this situation requires understanding its root causes. What factors prevent educational institutions from fully meeting the rising demand for conference

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interpreters? A few years ago, the obstacles preventing the training of conference interpreters mainly revolved around the unavailability of modern equipment and insufficient educational resources. Nowadays these issues do not seem to be the case. At the same time, I don't think that the situation has drastically changed for the better. A well-prepared interpreter trained at a specialized educational institution in this country is still a rare bird in the booths of Tashkent conference halls.

Several factors hinder the necessary changes. Firstly, governmental leaders overseeing higher education may not fully grasp the complexity of training competent conference interpreters. At the same time, such training requires meticulous attention and personal experience in interpretation, prerequisites that some educators may lack. Not all of them conceive that a conference interpreter is not a mass product, rather a well-trained interpreter is a "piece good" (Pöchhacker, 2004). Moreover, the distinction between teaching a foreign language and training interpreters must be recognized. Effective training goes beyond linguistic proficiency, emphasizing skills like note-taking, reformulating ideas, and adapting to various speech styles. Training interpreters is not teaching a foreign language. Talented students selected for this purpose should already have a good command of both foreign and native languages. I'd like to specially point out here that proficiency in using students' native languages matters a lot for this job too. According to Gile (2009) the main efforts of the instructor should be directed to train a would-be interpreter to catch the main idea of the speaker, reformulate it, and deliver it to the listeners. While working in this mode an interpreter should, whenever possible, use short sentences. (Wydick, 2005). At the same time, the interpreter is to maintain the style of the orator's speech paying special attention to the cultural differences (Moser-Mercer, 1994).

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A training instructor must spend a lot of time and energy preparing for the training. Of utmost importance in this case is the trainer's personal experience of interpreting in the booth. It is a *conditio sine qua non!* Some teachers of English tried to do the job without having that experience. As far as I know, the outcomes have been unimpressive.

Much effort of the instructor is used to train students to take notes while performing in consecutive mode. According Gillies (2013) to those who think that taking notes depends on the ability to quickly jot down what is being said by a speaker are mistaken. The main thing connected with this function is to analyze what is being delivered by an orator and commit to the interpreter's writing pad not words *per se* but pertinent signs, symbols, and contracted words. These components should reflect the ideas delivered by the speakers (Rozan, 1956). Using the so-called "interpreting ladder" based on SVO structure helps the interpreter to read back his/her notes, turning them into natural sentences. Furthermore, the instructor must be able to take a wide range of questions coming from students. Many of the questions can be answered mostly based on the trainer's personal experience.

However, there are cases of another order. The reluctance of experienced interpreters to transition into training roles complicates the issue. Teaching interpretation demands dedication and expertise, with remuneration often failing to match the challenges involved. Some specialists prefer teaching foreign languages to training interpreters. The reason for this case is clear: teaching a foreign language, while using available textbooks, is much less involved than training interpreters. At the same time, the salary for both jobs at higher educational institutions in this country does not differ much. Thus, the issue of a conference interpreter trainer payment can also be considered as the next reason explaining the present situation. Furthermore, professional interpreters are not eager to take the job of a trainer. First of all, not

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every interpreter has the talent of an instructor; secondly, interpreting itself is more profitable than training others.

One of the Tashkent universities decided to solve the problem of conference interpreters' training by contracting experienced overseas instructors. The training was conducted at a high level but did not yield the expected results. This outcome needs a more detailed explanation. In the first place, the trainers were limited in time. A one-week training for beginners in the field of conference interpreting is too short a time. The methods of teaching applied during the training were very interesting but rather unusual for the trainees. Their level did not allow them to grasp all the excellent ideas introduced by the trainers. In some cases, the trainees felt discouraged by the tasks offered to them in the course of that training. And yet, it was not the main problem for the poor result. I think one of the main reasons for such results lies in the way of teaching foreign languages in this country.

While speaking is widely regarded as an essential aspect of foreign-language instruction, its practical implementation in classrooms sometimes falls short of the intended focus. Numerous excellent books focus on developing speaking skills. Libraries host a big number of scientific articles dedicated to teaching this aspect, while the internet brims with various websites and podcasts offering valuable insights for optimizing learning. However, the majority of specialized universities still struggle to achieve notable results in teaching speaking skills. At the same time, speaking ability—grounded in both conversational and public speech—is considered one of the interpreter's essential tools. It is understood that an interpreter must be able to express his or her ideas freely in foreign languages. But how can one train a student whose speaking ability requires serious improvement?

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I'll take this chance to say that the current methodologies employed in teaching foreign languages at our universities require serious reorientation and a heightened focus on speaking. This applies not only to would-be interpreters but also to all learners of foreign languages. I would like to mention in passing that the majority of schools and lyceums graduates of our country enter universities having pretty limited speaking ability. Schools and lyceums are usually not able to teach their students to speak in an acceptable manner. One of the ways to address this problem could be to turn to intensive teaching methods such as the Suggestological Method of Georgy Lozanov (1978), the Parallel Texts Learning method of Heinrich Schliemann (1985), and the Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) developed by D. Hymes (1972) and others. These methods could be applied when teaching lyceum and school students, as well as weaker students at the university level.

In this context, the experience of the UWED Training Center for Conference Interpreters is especially illustrative. Over its ten years of successful operation, the Center has found that even highly motivated learners often struggle to express their thoughts freely, a challenge clearly revealed through specially designed diagnostic tests. Once the Center's staff recognized this, they focused their efforts on developing students' speaking ability. This sustained commitment was crucial to achieving our goals, supported by the students' exceptionally high level of motivation, particularly in speaking. Role-plays, discussions, debates, competitions, and even light real-time disputes were all conducted in English, creating a dynamic and immersive environment. The training program integrated everything that appealed to young people, helping them develop a genuine interest in communication. A special emphasis was placed on nurturing a natural love for speaking English.

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To support this goal and to enhance interpersonal communication skills, the Center set up three special interest clubs and three musical bands providing additional creative opportunities for authentic language use. It regularly organized engaging social activities that encouraged students to communicate in English. These initiatives created an active English-speaking environment and served as a foundation for more targeted training practices. Moreover, the Center looked for effective ways to improve their phonetics, prosody, and vocabulary, as well as to expand their background and field-specific knowledge. Dedicated time was also allocated to explaining the rules of interpreting etiquette. The Center regularly organized annual scientific student conferences and celebrations of International Translation Day, which grew into major events attracting numerous participants from many Tashkent universities. We also considered it essential to strengthen our students' resilience and help them overcome stage fright in order to prevent mental blocks during interpreting.

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge that achieving substantial progress in the training of conference interpreters may remain challenging unless the leadership of our educational institutions gives due consideration to the issues outlined in this report. While English language instructors play an essential role in language education, the absence of trainers with firsthand experience in conference interpreting may limit the practical outcomes of such training initiatives.

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