"I UNDERSTOOD ALL THE WORDS, BUT I MISSED THE POINT": A GOAL-TO-DETAIL/DETAIL-TO-GOAL STRATEGY FOR TEXT ANALYSIS

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Introduction

Several years ago, I attended an event that was interpreted from spoken English to American Sign Language. Throughout the evening, I glanced at the interpreter; since I could hear the spoken message, I neither closely watched nor monitored the interpreter's performance. I did note, however, that the the interpreter seemed to be presenting an accurate representation of what was being said by the speaker. At the end of the evening, I asked a friend (and fellow interpreter educator) whether she had enjoyed the presentation. To my surprise, she said that she had experienced difficulty in following the interpreter. When I asked for details, she replied, "I understood all the words, but I missed the point."

This description stayed with me, and formed a link with some valuable feedback that I remembered from my early interpreting days: that the difference between an effective and ineffective interpreting performance often seemed to lie in the use of appropriate pauses, connections and inflections, as well as in the specific grouping of information for presentation. In other words, though two interpreters may use similar lexical and grammatical choices, the more effective interpreter presents the information within a logical framework that promotes message comprehension.

As an interpreter educator, I used these thoughts as a new yardstick to measure students' interpreting performances. Sure enough, in both sign-to-voice and voice-to-sign interpretation, I often heard and saw "accuracy" in content, but in a presentation that seemed a jumble of run-on words and signs. The individual phrase seemed to lack any relationship with previously interpreted information and seemed disconnected to the messages that followed. The key seemed to lie not so much with what was presented (although lexical and syntactic accuracy was essential), but in how it was presented: the effective interpreter managed the entire information flow within a logical system of organization. Without the logical framework, I (the "audience") often "missed the point."

Problem Statement

Using this new perspective, I began to evaluate students' performances differently. I focused on the following:

- Students sometimes seemed to present "accurate" content, but in a form that sounded or looked like a string of disconnected words and signs. In sign-to-voice, the students were guilty of "word salad" interpreting: a run of words that almost made sense, but not quite. In voice-to-sign, it was hard to determine when one idea or sentence ended and when another began. As "audience," I had to work as much at interpreting the interpretation as the students had to with the original message.
- Interpretation lacked the logical grouping of information and the expressed inter-relationships between pieces of information that are so vital to accurate information flow in both languages (and which are essential for comprehension by the consumer). Pauses and inflections seemed more a reflection of students' ability to "keep up" than any reasonable message analysis and the subsequent management of information flow.

• Students seemed unwilling to "let go" of the source language (SL), resulting in what Seleskovitch (1978) describes as linguistic contamination, or linguistic interference. In sign-to-voice interpreting, they continued to voice sign glosses. In voice-to-sign interpreting, their interpretation covered the continuum from ASL through PSE.

• Students continued to battle to find a comfortable décalage based on information management. Like many beginners, they didn't wait long enough to receive sufficient SL input in order to create a complete message in the target language (TL). In fact, they seemed unable to identify consistently what "sufficient input" might be. Rather, they continued to remain too close to the speaker, and expressed anxiety about "falling too far behind." This habit invariably caused them to commit to an interpretation that was based upon too little information, thus requiring an on-line correction. They combined the analysis and production tasks, based on time rather than message analysis. Without a logical rationale for décalage, they "processed" and "produced" simultaneously, but incorrectly.

• Students demonstrated little ability to tap into their existing knowledge of subject content, participant relationships or discourse norms. In the most predictable of interactions, they demonstrated no confidence in assessing what consumers were likely to discuss. One example occurred in a sign-to-voice exercise. A student interpreted a segment in which the deaf speaker described walking into a large public facility in search of the personnel department. The student said, "I walked into the lobby and saw a woman sitting at a desk that had a sign that read...I missed the fingerspelling." With some reflection on her own experience and a sense of message prediction, the interpreter could have logically anticipated that the sign on the desk read "information" or "receptionist." For this student, these choices did not occur or even exist at that moment.

• While students were able to use clozure skills in communication in their native language, they did not trust their abilities to do so while interpreting. Missed pieces of information were completely lost; no amount of contextual information or discourse logic seemed to add to the retrieval or determination of this information. The "linguistic, experiential and situational clues" (CIT 1986) which guided their daily communication seemed to vanish when they faced processing in a second language.

• Students demonstrated no ability to monitor their own performance. If stopped during an exercise for the purpose of message analysis, they were unable either to summarize the previously interpreted information or to anticipate content that the speaker might next present. That meant they were unable to use previous information either for evaluation of accuracy or as as a guide to the management of incoming material.

• These difficulties seemed to arise from the fact that their interpretation lacked any contextual framework based upon access to previous knowledge, retention of the processed message, and anticipation of forthcoming input. Any given interpretation lacked connection to the previously interpreted messages: tense, pronominalization, agent-action and agent-object relationships were incongruous with previous material. The interrelationships within the message were not apparent.

Isham (1986) states that "when we become aware of the message as a whole, we can hope to interpret the wholeness of the message." Somehow, the student interpreters missed "the whole"; they often were so pre-occupied with single words, phrases or concepts, that they ignored the context in which these components occurred. Lacking any system for processing the components into a whole, they distorted the "wholeness" of the message.

Instructional Intent

As a teacher, I understand the value of teaching students something that they already know. Often, it is not new information that makes the greatest difference, but the application of existing knowledge to new situations that creates broader learning. In the process of acquiring interpreting skills, students seem able to use their knowledge of communication interaction within their native language, but are unable to use this ability when interpreting. My overall teaching goal is to teach students skills in discourse analysis, but within a framework in which they can manage the flow of SL information in a reasonable, logical and coherent manner. I want them to manipulate the information flow mentally by working with conceptually manageable pieces; this guides them toward a TL production which expresses the true intent of the speaker.

I set out to find a management system that would work in opposition to students' tendency to process information through a word-by-word search for equivalents. As Isham (1986) asks, "If not words, then equivalents of what?" While I did work with students on identifying "chunks" of information, this still falls short of total message comprehension and management. If the definitions of words are derived not so much from their primary meaning as by their context (Seleskovitch 1978), then "context" must be defined on many levels. The challenge becomes: "What are

the pieces and how do they fit together?" I sought a system of SL management that would maintain an emphasis on the largest possible context for message analysis, and that would preserve the value of the message as a whole.

Philosophical Background

Seleskovitch (1978) says, "Interpreters are... no different from musicians or actors who transform the writings of a composer or a poet while nevertheless meticulously preserving the message; the greater their interpreting talent, the more comprehensible the message becomes" (p. 8). If interpretation is a performance profession, that gave me a reason to look to other performance fields.

Musicians and actors are given a text with which to work. They do not alter the text, but are required to interpret it in a way that is true to its original intent and in a manner that is clearly understood by the audience. Like interpreters, they may or may not be able to rehearse the text to be performed, and their professions require that they be able to perform material without prior, in-depth analysis. These artists must all develop a system for managing information that enables them to interpret words, phrases, and the message as a whole.

An actor who reads a poem for the first time doesn't concentrate on single words; it is evident that the meaning of a poem comes not from just the words, but from the relationships that the words have with each other, and from the ways in which the words work together to yield the discovery of an idea. As the poem is read, new information is received not only as "new," but also as another opportunity to assimilate information contained in each preceding line, and to move the poem forward to the next level of understanding. Further, the reader or actor does not stop with an analysis of each individual line. Rather, the analysis of the poem continues, in search of the greater revelation: that which is contained within the words and phrases is the reason for which the poem was written and is the message that the poet intends to share with the audience. True, each word in the text is valuable in its own right, but more importantly, they function as vehicles toward an understanding of significant revelation. The reader/actor understands that comprehension of the poem's greater significance influences the reading of each word.

Similarly, the musician cannot afford to base lyrical interpretation on the individual word. Like the reader or actor, the singer looks past the word to the meaning of the phrase, and sings it as it relates to the meaning of the song itself. The singer has the same responsibility to a faithful interpretation: if the audience understands all of the words sung, but gains no insight into the message, they question the singer's presentation of the intent.

Let us look now at theater. Constantin Stanislavski was a Russian director whose contributions toward the analysis of scripts and the process of performance preparation have influenced the theater and its students all over the world. The study of his script analysis techniques greatly influenced the development of my teaching strategy, so a summary of his methods deserves attention.

Stanislavski's (1936) belief was that, given the sheer volume of words that comprise a play, the actor must develop a system by which to analyze each script. He recognized that while information comes to the actors through strings of individual words, the actor must establish a process by which the words, when combined, create a larger whole. He proposed that the actor who learned and practiced a logical system of text analysis would retain a valuable framework for approaching future scripts.

Under this method, script analysis always moves from an understanding of the play as a greater whole to an understanding of the play's smallest details. Stanislavski believed that an actor should not approach a script through a word-by-word analysis, but through an essential understanding of the play's greatest point. In his own words, the director describes the basic principle of his script analysis: "The technique of a division [of a play] is comparatively simple. You ask yourself: 'What is the core of the play — the thing without which it cannot exist?' " (p. 109). This is the actor's first task: to read the play for its deepest meaning, for the playwright's intended message.

The next level of analysis divides the play into its main points. Without yet going into details, the actor looks for divisions that have meaning in themselves, but which are defined by their support of the play's message. Further analysis produces sub-divistons, smaller breakdowns of the main point, with a sustained relationship to the play as a whole. Final analysis brings the actor to the level of the script's details: the fine analysis of the play which now makes sense in light of the greater framework for understanding. Once the most detailed analysis is completed, the process is practiced in reverse: "The largest piece is reduced to medium size, then to small, then to

fine, only to reverse the process eventually and reassemble the whole" (p. 108).

Once the actor understands the process of analyzing a script from the whole to the detail, a new script can be analyzed. The actor now can read the details of the whole script with the "new" knowledge that they do, indeed, form a whole. As information is revealed through the details of the text, the search begins for the ways in which this information leads to the play's greater meaning. As more information is acquired, the actor's understanding of the message becomes clearer, and it is against this new understanding that the reader measures comprehension of previous information. The actor assimilates new information based upon further clarification of the script's message; this understanding helps to predict and to evaluate comprehension of the rest of the play.

The significance of the Stanislavski approach is revealed thus:

> "...An actor must proceed not by a multitude of details, but by those important units which, like signals, mark his channel and keep him in the right creative line...Strung along through the play, they take the place of buoys to mark the channel. This channel points the true course of creativeness and makes it possible to avoid the shallows and reefs.
>
> "Unfortunately many actors dispense with this channel. They are incapable of dissecting a play and analysing it. Therefore they find themselves forced to handle a multitude of superficial, unrelated details, so many that they become confused and lose all sense of the larger whole.
>
> "...No matter how the actor divides the play for the purpose of manipulating its components, the division is always temporary. The part and the play must not remain in fragments. A broken statue, or a slashed canvas, is not a work of art, no matter how beautiful its parts may be." (pp. 107 - 109)

The Goal-to-Detail/Detail-to-Goal Strategy

This strategy is based in part on Stanislavski's recommendations for script analysis. Like his method, the purpose of this analysis strategy is to counteract the tendency to analyze a message on a word-by-word basis. It operates to guide the interpreter to an understanding of the message as a whole: to search for the greatest meaning in a text, to be aware of its components, and to present its details in light of the greater whole.

The strategy involves two stages: analysis from goal-to-detail and from detail-to-goal. The first stage (goal-to-detail) teaches the method for approaching a text, and involves repeated listening to ot looking at SL input in the search for different levels of meaning. The second, detail-to-goal stage is designed to bring the students back to real-time interpreting and real-time analysis. It involves listening to/watching segments of the input, interpreting the segments, predicting future direction of the discourse, and participating in an on-going analysis of the message.

It is not easy to understand, let alone anticipate, another person's message. This is because we lack the full background, prior experience, and intentions of the speaker. There is always some amount of background information that is required to understand a speaker's intentions fully . This background knowledge includes who the speaker is, the relationships between the speaker and the addressee(s), the information that they share about each other's lives, and their experiences with the world around them (Isham 1986, p. 153).

Many conversations, however, are predictable; given enough time and incoming information about the message itself, an understanding of the situational context can be achieved. Seleskovitch defines analysis for the purpose of understanding as the association of incoming information with pre-existing knowledge; "knowledge" she defines as all things known "before," even if "before" means the very moment before (Seleskovitch 1978). As each SL segment is understood, it must be linked not only with pre-existing knowledge, but also analyzed in light of the on-going message and the relationship of the discourse participants. As Isham explains, "A cycle is formed. Understanding a little of how these people see the world and understand each other helps us to understand their discourse. The more we understand their discourse, the more we can understand their relationship and the way they view the world" (Isham, p. 153).

Lacking complete information about speaker and addressee backgrounds or any shared cultural context, the interpreter's prior experience becomes vitally important. The task of accessing our prior knowledge can be defined as "using (or tapping into) long and short term memory...for understanding of the input (CIT 1986). As more of the message is revealed through the discourse, the interpreter shifts to anticipation and prediction to great advantage. These have been defined as, "the act[s] of using prior information and the message itself to assist in directing the interpretation onto a logical path" (CIT 1986).

For example, imagine a text describing the experience of being stopped by a police officer for speeding. The interpreter first looks at the participants and makes some prediction about their shared cultural context and discourse norms. The speaker may be describing the incident to a parent at a family gathering or to a close friend in an intimate situation; this will likely affect the content that is shared and the manner in which it is described. This first step in accessing prior knowledge about participant relationships allows the interpreter to make some helpful inferences about the direction that the conversation may take.

The interpreter may also tap into prior experience and make some preliminary assumptions about the conversational content. The interpreter remembers the feelings that occur when a driver sees a flashing light from behind, the procedure that normally ensues when the driver pulls over, the possible conversational norms for a dialogue between a police officer and a speeding motorist, and the operational options that result following a speeding violation.

The use of prior knowledge and message prediction do not direct the speaker's conversation, nor do they predict the speaker's content with complete accuracy. Rather, they form an initial framework within which the interpreter can operate. As new information is received, the interpreter must tap into other forms of prior knowledge and alter the direction of message anticipation. (For example, the speaker might disclose that the officer turned out to be a favorite uncle; this would require a shift.)

As with the use of prior knowledge and anticipation/prediction, clozure is an important part of the interpretation task: "The use of linguistic, experiential and situational clues to determine intent" (CIT 1986). Thus, clozure is not "guesswork"; it is the use of a reality-based framework within which to identify a missing piece of information and to analyze known content within a specific context in order to retrieve the missing information. Student interpreters are hesitant to use clozure skills, a hesitancy which is not altogether inappropriate. All interpreters should be cautioned against guesswork. But when interpreters realize the logical flow of information within a contextual framework, clozure will be based upon previous knowledge, situational clues and linguistic indications.

The use of these important skills helps lead the interpreter to an understanding of the gestalt, "... a sense of the whole message, the entire interaction, etc." (CIT 1986). What is primary to this complete understanding, and the use of these interpreter strategies, is that they be thoroughly worked out and solidly built upon a basis of fact. We are not seeking the "guess-talt"; we are striving to understand the message and its components through a system that is logical, coherent and real.

Once they have a respect for reality-based decision-making, students can be guided in their appropriate and vital application. The creative line that guides full message analysis must start in the past, move through the present moment, and lead the interpreter into the future. As Stanislavski says, "If you speak any lines or do anything mechanically, without fully realizing who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going, and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without imagination" (p. 67). In the following text analysis strategy, the use of prior knowledge, anticipation/prediction and clozure impacts the interpreter's management of the text as a whole and of the details which comprise the text.

All text analysis strategies work best when applied to coherent communications. Occasionally, of course, interpreters encounter discourse that is rambling, confusing or even absurd. Messages may be vague, and message components may work together illogically. It is important to remind students that their interpretations can be no clearer nor more logical than the originals, and that message analysis must be performed on every discourse, no matter what conclusions the interpreter reaches about the message clarity.

Definitions

Stanislavski defines the divisions of a script in terms that are helpful to his specific audience. The fields of poetry, music, public speaking, debate and teaching all use similar, and yet different terms to describe the divisions of texts encountered. For the purpose of this teaching strategy, I ask the students learn to analyze texts by identifying four basic components: goal, objectives, units, and details. Further breakdowns are possible, and sometimes necessary, but these four components are the focus of the approach.

The goal: When one chooses to communicate with another person, one has a goal in mind: the reason for speaking in the first place. Speakers have goals in mind before they choose words to express themselves. When we speak, we concentrate on the meaning of what we intend to say rather than on the choice of words we use to say it (Seleskovitch 1978). The goal is the core of

communication; in a coherent conversation, everything within the communication moves toward the goal. The goal is our purpose for speaking, and the point without which the communication makes no sense.

Except in the most formal presentations, the goal is seldom stated. Rather, it is an abstraction, or a broad intent: to inform, convince, enlighten, inspire, educate, entertain, or challenge. It is the sum of the elements of a speech and the ultimate purpose behind the words.

Despite its existence and importance, the goal is sometimes obscured by the very words which the speaker chooses for its expression. However, with enough information, acquired either before the interpretation begins or through the process of learning that occurs during the interpretation, the speaker's intent, or goal, can be surmised. It is to the interpreter's advantage to search for the common theme that draws the pieces of the communication together, for if the purpose is not known, the meaning of the entire message will be lost (Seleskovitch, p.. 29).

Interpreters have a range of access to the information that will help them form an understanding of the speaker's goal. The interpreter may know only that an assignment is to interpret a meeting of social service providers. Or, the interpreter may know the purpose for which the meeting was called. With luck, the interpreter will have an agenda for the meeting or a copy of the main speaker's address.

The pre-session can be extremely important in the process of goal analysis, for it is during this meeting with clients that the interpreter can ask directly: What is the purpose of the meeting? What do you hope to accomplish today? What do you want the audience to gain? What is today's goal?

Again, as more and more information is revealed through the communication, the interpreter can confirm or change the understanding of the speaker's goal. Since human beings alter their communications depending upon a variety of environmental influences, the speaker's goal may change in the course of the communication.

Whether an understanding of a speaker's goal is confirmed, changes with incoming information, or shifts in accordance with the speaker's shift in purpose, the interpreter must strive to keep the speaker's intent in mind. It is against the goal that the interpreter's comprehension of input is measured and against this goal, the interpreter makes reality-based predictions about information to come.

Finally, an understanding of the goal influences the production phase of interpreting: vocabulary and phrase choices, syntax, register, affect. Isham, who refers to the goal of a discourse as the "function," states, "Any interpreter who works at understanding the function behind the words of the speaker has a great advantage," for "when interpreters make their purpose the same as the speaker's, then choices in delivery will naturally be shaped by that common goal" (p. 156).

Figure 1 helps to clarify the relationship between incoming information in the SL and the existence of the goal in both the SL and TL messages. The goal is shown in parentheses because, while it is identified, it is not overtly expressed.

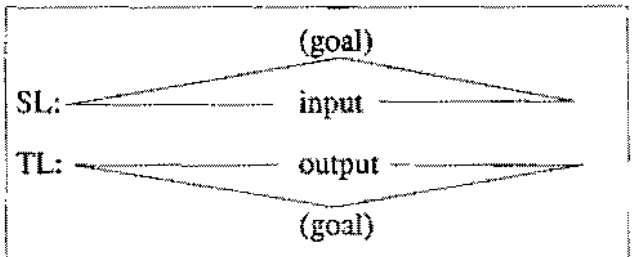

Figure 1: Goals and input

Examples:

1) Large texts, despite the volume of words contained within, usually have at their core an ultimate purpose to be communicated.

In The Wizard of Oz, the character of Dorothy convinces the audience that no matter how far we search in pursuit of our dreams, they reside first within ourselves. ("There's no place like home.")

In Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, three ghosts inspire readers to honor the spirit of Christmas throughout the year.

2) Familiar utterances contain their own goals, even though we may never have analyzed the texts for that purpose.

The pledge of Allegiance is written to affirm loyalty to a valued state.

Hamlet's soliloquy, "To be or not to be..," evaluates the difficult choice between life and death.

3) Speakers in a communication can share common goals.

Two teachers, using different words, can both speak in support of hiring additional staff.

Two friends may use distinctive conversational styles, but share the common goal of planning an event.

4) A shared interaction can contain individual goals for each participant.

At the doctor's office, the physician may hope to educate the patient about an illness, while the patient hopes to learn the steps toward recovery.

In a heated conversation between parent and child, the child may speak to convince the parent of innocence, while the parent's goal may be to describe the severity of the punishment.

I require only that student identify the main purpose of a text in their own words. For purposes of this strategy, it is the demonstration of understanding that is important, not the form in which the students express their comprehension. So, if the speaker is describing an old-fashioned wedding, acceptable student responses might include: "To explain what happens in an old-fashioned wedding" or "To talk about an old-fashioned wedding" or "To help the listener understand the traditions of an old-fashioned wedding."

The objectives: The objectives of a communication function like the divisions of an outline: they group and divide information into sub-sections of significance. The objectives are the individual and important points to be made that represent the full substance of the text. These objectives may be likened to guiding lights that mark the way through the channel of the text. Each objective has a meaning in itself, but is defined by its support of the discourse goal. They tie the text together, forming a coherent bond between the smaller pieces of information. Individually, each objective must make sense in light of the goal and, collectively, they must lead us logically toward the goal.

Like the goal, the objectives are seldom overtly stated. Instead, they guide the interpreter toward grouping and presentation of significant information. The interpreter is constantly searching for these greater divisions in a text, asking, "How do these pieces of information that I am receiving fit together? Is the incoming information moving toward an identifiable objective? Have I accurately defined the current objective based upon the information that I have received? Is my speaker heading toward a new objective or continuing to address the previous one? Does the current information relate to an objective expressed previously in this communication?"

The interpreter uses the objective to analyze the interrelationships between the pieces of the message. It is light of the objectives that the smaller pieces of information come together in a meaningful way, yielding a system for managing SL input and a framework for the presentation of TL output. It is through an understanding of the objectives that the interpreter measures the accuracy and completeness of previously interpreted segments and is able to predict reasonably the flow of incoming information. The objectives can be added to the diagram as in Figure 2:

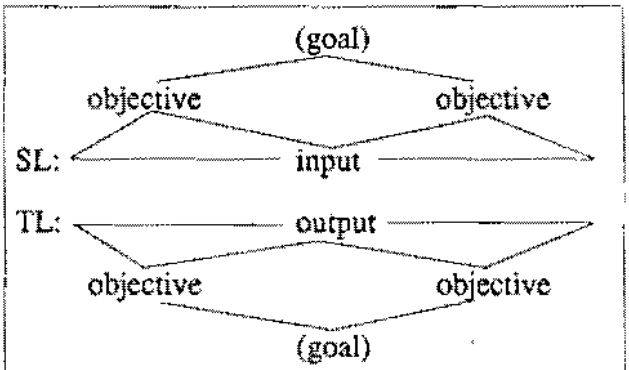

Figure 2: Goals, objectives and input

Examples:

1) In The Wizard of Oz, some of the objectives can be described as follows:

Dorothy decides that life would be better somewhere else;
she and her dog run away from home;
worried, she tries to return home;
Dorothy and her dog take an unusual trip and arrive in a strange land;
Dorothy decides to take a trip to Oz in order to find a way home;
Dorothy meets some interesting characters who help her identify her values;
she discovers that getting home requires perseverance, hard work and courage;
Dorothy accomplishes the necessary requirements to returning home;
regretful at leaving her new friends, Dorothy leaves;
Dorothy arrives home;
Dorothy describes how she developed a new appreciation of home.

2) In the Pledge of Allegiance, the objectives can be expressed this way:

Citizens promise duty and loyalty to the American flag;
the flag represents an undivided, spiritual republic;
the republic is committed to justice and freedom for all of its people.

3) At the doctor's office, the objectives might be:

The patient describes symptoms;
the doctor asks medical questions;
the patient more fully describes the possible illness by answering questions;
the doctor makes a diagnosis;
the doctor prescribes a course of treatment;
the patient expresses gratitude;
they agree on a date for follow-up.

In some communications, it is necessary to make another division of the text. When this is necessary, I identify that level as "sub-objectives." For example, in Wizard of Oz, one could further divide the objective, "Dorothy meets some interesting characters who help her identify her values," into the following sub-objectives:

Dorothy meets a scarecrow;
he describes the value of intelligence;
the two decide to travel to Oz together in search of their goals;
Dorothy meets a tin man;
the tin man explains the importance of love;
the tin man decides to join the expedition;
the three meet a lion who discusses the worth of courage;
the group becomes four, and they all continue the quest.

Although the sub-objectives are sometimes important, it is necessary to caution students against too many sub-divisions. When looking for major grouping of information, students sometimes tend to identify the details of a speech in an attempt to demonstrate the depth of their comprehension. The benefit of this strategy, however, functions only if students are able to differentiate the ways in which the pieces of information work together. Therefore, a clear understanding of the major divisions is essential.

As with goal statements, I do not require students to describe the objectives in formal or set terms. I am primarily concerned with their understanding of the divisions of the text, not in the style with which they describe them. So, the objectives of our presentation about an old-fashioned wedding could be:

"the engagement" or "how they got engaged" or "the way people got engaged back then";
"the planning" or "what they had to do to get ready" or "everything that they had to plan";
"the wedding" or "describing the ceremony" or "the things that happened at the wedding";
"the reception" or "the part after the wedding" or "what they all did at the party";
"the ending" or "how they closed down the party" or "the end of the celebration."

The Units

The units of a speech divide the whole into pieces small enough to handle. The units are the most important component of the discourse because they reflect the actual working analysis; the units dissect the message into interpretable parts. It is at this level that the most active analysis takes place, for message comprehension and for the determination of the information that needs to be relayed into the target language. It is at the unit level that the interpreter consciously discards the details (the words) and retains the ideas and concepts to be interpreted.

Units have to do with concepts, not with words. An individual unit is a new idea, concept or piece of information. Units may be expressed in a discourse in the form of a new:

-fact
-idea
-thought
-opinion
-action
-event
-time
-place
-person.

Units are what Isham calls "propositions." He reminds the interpreter that a single sentence can contain several propositions (or units of information). The interpreter must not be restricted to interpreting messages one sentence at a time, but by the messages contained in each sentence (Isham 1986). It is at the unit level that active "chunking" of small pieces of information occurs: the understanding of the units leads the interpreter toward the search for equivalents in the TL. And it is at this level that the interpreter develops a real sense of the ways in which the smaller pieces of information form a relationship to each other (and hence, to the whole). The relationship of the units to the whole can be thought of as in Figure 3.

Isham notes that some propositions are not overtly stated, but are implied by other propositions. They exist because of the ways in which languages imply meaning, and they function differently in each language. An example of an implied unit in ASL might come from this signed sentence:

TEACHER INDEX LECTURE++

ME PATIENT WATCH (accompanied by expression of polite, forced tolerance)

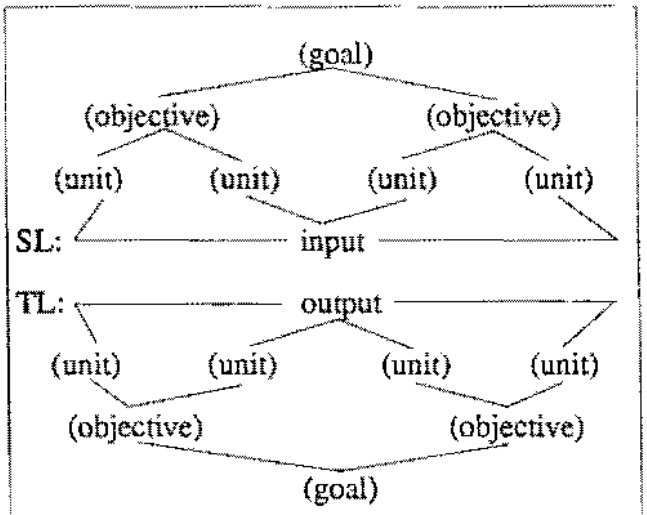

Figure 3: Goal, objectives, and units

The hidden unit of this example might be, depending upon previous information, context and participants, that the teacher, once again, is giving an overly long lecture. Or, depending upon context, the hidden unit might be that the student was bored with the lesson or didn't like the teacher's style.

An example of an implied unit in English might come from this spoken message: "He looked like he needed some help getting into the car." Again, based upon context and participants, the hidden unit might be that the observation that this person seemed sick, weak, or had stayed too long at the party.

The definition of units is integral to self-evaluation. The interpreter must perform some self-questioning about the management of units: Have I understood each of the units presented so far? Did I miss a unit of information, or do I need to think again of an implied unit? Does this unit make sense in light of what the speaker has said before? How does this unit relate to the previous units? Does this unit conclude or begin an objective? Does the flow of units make sense to me? Based upon the flow of units thus far, can I predict the next unit?

Given our example of the old-fashioned wedding, and focusing on the objective, "the engagement," some of the units might be:

The man traditionally asks the father of the bride;
the father must talk with the mother;
the parents' conversation is formal, ritualistic;
the father officially gives permission;
the happy man immediately celebrates with the bride-to-be.

The Details

For the purpose of this strategy, the details are defined as the vocabulary and phrase choices that a speaker chooses in order to share the information contained in the unit, and the manner in which they are expressed. Since the importance of words and phrases lies only in the meaning which they convey for interpretation (Seleskovitch 1978), they function only as the input for message comprehension and for the identification of that which must be expressed equivalently in the TL.

It is important for interpreters to understand that SL details are only the vehicles for message comprehension and interpretation. They provide the information necessary to build the units, and from which to understand the objectives of goals of the speech. once they have served their purpose, they must be discarded immediately. Any carry-over of the SL details into the TL interpretation causes language contamination (Seleskovitch 1978). Instead, the SL details become TL details based upon the ways in which they function in relationship to the units, the objectives and the goal. (An example of linguistic contamination might be that of a Spanish-to-English interpreter who retains and repeats Spanish words when translating into English: "So I walked into my *casa* where I got a glass of *agua* for *mi hermana.*") The details expressed in the TL must be TL details, and they must be as clear, accurate, and grammatically correct as when they first appeared in the SL.

Once the interpreter has practiced self-evaluation in terms of the goal, objectives, and particularly the units, the process of monitoring one's own production in terms of details becomes easier. Interpreters can ask themselves: "Did I produce a linguistically acceptable sentence in which the details were well-represented? Was my production of the details complete? Was my production accurate? Did it carry the information supplied in the unit? Does my production on the detail level make sense in light of previous details? the objective? the overall goal?"

An example of the English details that might be used to express the units of information describing "the engagement" objective of the wedding might be as follows:

"The young man always approaches the father first, according to tradition. The father, however, always brings in the young girl's mother, and makes quite an affair of discussing the impending engagement. After a rather ritualistic conversation of questions and answers, the father grants permission for his daughter to

marry. The young man immediately rushes off to celebrate his good fortune with his intended."

At this point, the diagram is complete, and is drawn here to show that while the details must be equivalent, so must the units of information, the objectives that the meet, and the overall goal of the communication, as in Figure 4.

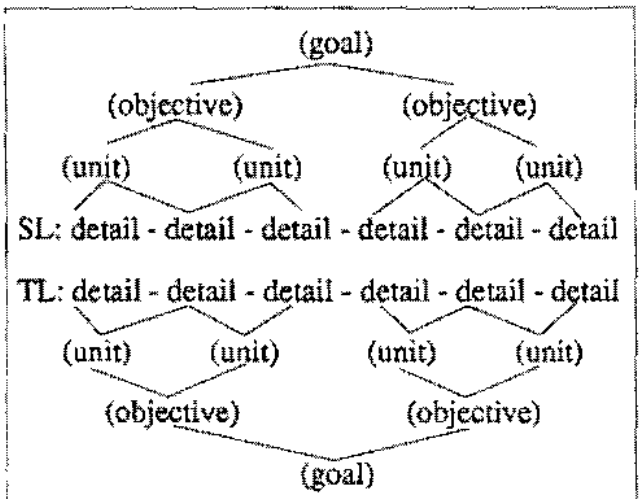

Figure 4: Goal through details

The Practice: Goal to Detail

The first stage of applying this teaching strategy is to give students practice in searching for the components of a speech, and it involves repeated viewing and listening to source input. With each exposure, students concentrate on one component only; while students may want to describe other levels of understanding, it is important that they be able to identify and describe only the components desired.

Steps are listed sequentially, but this does not necessarily mean that students will accomplish all steps in one lesson. Rather, instructors may wish to concentrate on one component over a period of time. This decision will be based upon students' skill levels and the ease with which they master the approach.

Goal-to-detail steps

Preparation

1. Students get the topic of the SL presentation
2. Students identify possible vocabulary, direction of the discourse, purpose of the presentation.

Identification of the Goal

3. Students watch/listen to the entire communication
4. Students identify only the goal of the communication.
5. Instructor and students discuss the accuracy and clarity of student responses.
6. Students may choose to view/hear the presentation a second time for clarification.

Identification of Objectives

7. Students view/listen to the SL input again.
8. Students outline the major objectives of the presentation.
9. Instructor and students discuss the identification of the objectives.
10. Students may need or want to view/hear the presentation again for clarification.

Identification of the Units

11. Students view/listen to the presentation again.
12. This time, individual students identify units of information (assuming the instructor is working with a group). The student responsible for this stage of analysis stops the tape or indicates when it should stop.
13. Depending upon the instructor's purposes, and the skill levels of the students, the identification of unit may be in two sub-steps:
    a) Students may identify only when a unit of information has been presented.
    b) Students may summarize the information contained in the identified unit.
14. Instructor and students discuss the identification and summary of units of information. Students' responses at this level of analysis will vary and differences in analysis should be considered worthwhile. Just as there is no "right and only" way to interpret a given message, there is no "right and only" way to identify units. If a student can justify the description of units, then the response is accepted as appropriate. For example, students may hear the English sentence, "I'm not going to the meeting." One student may identify this utterance as a single unit. Another student may identify this utterance as two separate units. The student may explain, "One unit is to describe the meeting itself. The second unit is to explain that I'm not going." Both answers are potentially correct; instructors should evaluate student responses based on two criteria: Is the student managing information in a reasonable, logical manner? Will this identification of units lead the student to an appropriate interpretation?

Identification of Details

15. Students view/listen to the communication for a final time.
16. Students describe the details contained in the units. This can be done in two ways:
    a) Students merely describe the details without interpretation. For example, students may respond: "First you need to explain

that the meeting is the regular meeting of local service providers. Then you need to say that you're not going."

b) Students may voice or sign the details in an acceptable TL production.

When working with students on the unit and detail levels, I will often allow some definition of "details" that are actually vital pieces of information that help to form a correct unit. For example, when students fail to perceive or remember adjectives, nouns, pronouns, I allow the "gap" to appear in their unit description, but ask that it be identified at the detail level. While this information is essential to the description of the unit, it is somewhat comforting to students to know that a response like "The little girl gave her coat to someone...either her mother or her father" is still a fair description of a unit. I will then reply: "You missed a detail; watch/listen carefully for that the next time." This allowance gives students a feeling of confidence in the information that they did perceive, and it guides them in retrieving missed information by attending carefully to a particular detail or in asking for specific information from a speaker. It also counteracts the tendency that students have to focus on the missed piece ("I missed the fingerspelling/adjective/pronoun, etc.; therefore, I'm lost.").

The Practice: Detail-to-Goal

This phase of the discourse analysis strategy is designed to bring students closer to real-time interpreting. It involves the management and interpretation of a discourse by units of information and the periodic identification of the objectives and goal of the message. Periodic evaluation of the interpreting process and the interpretation itself can be accomplished during this practice as well.

This phase can be approached in two ways. The first is a reversal of the Goal-to-Detail phase, with the primary focus on the analysis and identification of discourse components. The second is based upon the consecutive interpretation of the message with periodic and/or final analysis for the purpose of identifying the objectives and goal.

Detail-to-goal steps # 1

Preparation

1. Students get the topic of the SL presentation
2. Students identify possible vocabulary, direction of the discourse, purpose of the presentation.

Identification of the units and details

3. If working as a group, one student views or listens to the SL input.
4. The student stops the tape at the end of each unit.
5. The student then must:
   a) identify the completion of a unit, and
   b) summarize the information contained in the unit, including as many SL details as possible.
6. During this process, students will also need to identify implied units, and to describe the implied information that would be interpreted.
7. Students predict information that might be contained in the next unit.
8. The student views/listens to another unit, evaluates the accuracy of the predictions, and continues summarizing.
9. Depending upon group dynamics, other students may assist or discuss the working student's analysis and presentation.

Identification of the objectives

10. Periodically, the instructor stops the process for identification of the objectives. The instructor may ask:
    Have the units revealed so far yielded enough information for the identification of an objective?
    What is the objective of this portion of the discourse?
    How does this objective relate to previous objectives?
    Based on the information you have received so far, what do you predict the next objective will be?
11. Depending on group dynamics and the instructor's purpose, other students may participate in the discussion.

Identification of the goal

12. At a logical point in the analysis, the instructor stops the process to summarize the objectives and to predict or identify the goal.
13. The instructor guides the students toward identification of the goal. The instructor may ask:
    Have the units and objectives revealed so far supplied enough information for a description of the goal?
    What is the goal of the communication?
14. Other students may assist or discuss the working student's analysis.

Discussion of the process

15. At the end of the analysis, the instructor and students can discuss the process: accuracy of unit, objective and goal identification, and accuracy of the predictions that occurred throughout the process.

Detail-to-Goal Steps # 2

Preparation

1. Students get the topic of the SL presentation.
2. Students identify the possible vocabulary, direction of the discourse, purpose of the presentation.

Consecutive interpretation of the units

3. If working as a group, one student views or listens to the SL input.
4. The student stops the tape at the end of each unit.
5. The student consecutively interprets the unit, including the details and implied units.
6. Students predict information that might be contained in the next units.
7. The student views/listens to another unit, evaluates the accuracy of predictions, and continues the process of consecutive interpretation.
8. Students may assist or discuss the working student's analysis and interpretation. The instructor may guide the discussion by asking:
   Was the interpretation complete?
   Was the interpretation accurate, containing the essential information and details?
   Was the interpretation grammatically acceptable?
   Has the interpreter found TL equivalents?
   Are the details and units congruent? Do they make sense?
   Does the flow of information reflect the information contained in the SL?
   Does the flow of information make sense?
   Do the details and units make sense as a whole?

Identification of the objectives

9. Periodically, the instructor stops the process to identify the objectives. The instructor may also ask:
   Does the flow of information lead the audience to an understanding of the objectives as clearly as they are expressed in the original message?
   Does the interpretation guide the audience toward an understanding of the speaker's intent?
10. Students may participate in the discussion and analysis.

Identification of the goal

11. At a logical point in the analysis, the instructor stops the process to summarize the objectives and to predict/identify the goal. The instructor may ask:
    Does the flow of information lead the audience toward an understanding of the speaker's goal as it is revealed in the original message?
    Does the interpretation help the audience to understand the message as a whole?
12. Students may participate in the discussion.

Discussion of the process

13. At the end of the analysis, the instructor and students can discuss the process: accuracy and completeness of the interpretation, identification of the objectives and goal, predictions made, flow of information, and the revelation of the message as a whole.

Students can practice this strategy with live speakers as well, and are encouraged to discuss the speaker's goal prior to the interpretation. While interpreters do not always have the advantage of prior knowledge for each interpreting assignment, this strategy encourages to use the pre-session, along with its other benefits, for the purpose of sharing the speaker's intent in each communication.

Conclusions

I have enjoyed several benefits from this teaching strategy, and would like to share them here:

- The strategy seems to coincide with the ways in which the mind searches for meaning, and specifically with the ways in which the mind works to organize meaning.
- It allows the instructor a framework and rationale for teaching the skills of décalage, accessing prior knowledge, clozure and anticipation/prediction. It also allows the students a framework for the comprehension and application of these interpreting tasks.
- It gives students a framework in which to search for meaning, and hence equivalents. They are no longer trying to get everything at once. Rather, they are able to manage the component that they are seeking at any given time.
- It gives students a system for managing information that is missed. The strategy works in opposition to "getting lost and not knowing where to begin again." Students seem to be able to "lose" a unit (or units), retrieve and identify the specific piece of information missed. If they are not able to stop the speaker, they know that they can start again when they identify a new unit. When working with a live speaker who is in a position to stop and work with the interpreter, they are able to ask for a repetition or clarification of the exact piece of missing information.
- It gives interpreters a monitor for their own output. Students who have practiced this approach constantly ask themselves: Did that interpretation make sense? Does it fit in light of what I interpreted before? Where have we been? Where do I think the speaker is going?

- It changes the quality of output. Students gain a logical reason for appropriate use of space, indexing, pauses, and inflections.
- Students describe an immediate increase in comfort. During the first phase, they know that they have several opportunities for correct responses. After working with the strategy, they report a heightened sense of control and a decreased sense of panic and pressure. They sense that they know what they are looking for and have a system for the retrieval of information that they missed.
- It allows all students to participate on some level. With the diversity of students that instructors see in the classroom, this strategy allows teachers to vary their levels of expectation for each student, and allows each student to experience some level of success. Some students will be able to identify units with accuracy. Other students' skill levels may be such that they cannot manage an interpretation or summary of unit information, but they can participate in the discussion of objectives and goals. Students may all be able to function at some level of analysis and can contribute to the group's understanding and learning.

In the search for new ways of teaching students to manage information flow in interpretation, both I and the students I teach have benefitted from this strategy. Like a scientist, I await its replacement by another, newer strategy. In the meantime, I hope that other interpreter educators find it helpful in guiding their students toward message analysis, a management of the information flow, and an interpretation of the SL message that maintains its integrity from the smallest details to the largest whole.

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