

## GRAMMATICAL DIFFICULTIES OF CONSECUTIVE AND SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING

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*Nowadays consecutive and simultaneous interpreting is in the focus of translation studies with the rapid development of international relations of Ukraine. The article highlights the problems of grammatical difficulties of interpreting. The author focuses upon difficulties in rendering English articles, difficulties in rendering tense and aspect forms of the English verb, difficulties in rendering forms expressing unreality, difficulties in rendering evaluative components of utterances, difficulties in rendering affirmative and negative constructions; considers word-order and functional sentence perspective of messages.*

*The most challenging problems appear to be the use and rendering articles, tense and aspect forms and evaluative components of messages. Practical observations and works of modern writers on the use of articles testify to the fact that the definite article in Modern English is sometimes omitted and is often used where there is a tendency for its communicational purpose of indicating definiteness. The same tendency is observed with the indefinite article which may be omitted for the sake of minimisation of communicative efforts through reducing redundancy of messages. Interpreters should pay special attention to rendering the perfect forms of the English verb, while the "future time" is mostly expressed by the forms of the Present Indefinite and the Present Continuous Tenses. Evaluative components of messages in interpreting may be omitted or not depending upon where the evaluation is located – in the attribute or in the antecedent of the message. Word-order in English is fixed, while in Ukrainian it is mostly free and the rheme may be placed in any place of the utterance. Thus, in interpreting from Ukrainian into English the word-order often has to be changed. All of these issues, if resolved successfully, greatly contribute to creating high quality, adequate and equivalent interpretation product.*

**Key words:** *grammatical aspects of interpreting, consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, evaluative component, discourse.*

**Максімов С. Є. Граматичні труднощі послідовного та синхронного перекладу.** *Реальність сьогодення та швидкий розвиток міжнародних зв'язків України ставить послідовний та синхронний переклад в центр уваги сучасного перекладознавства. У статті досліджуються граматичні труднощі послідовного та синхронного перекладу, з якими досить часто стикаються усні перекладачі. Автор розглядає труднощі відтворення в перекладі англійських артиклів, перекладу видо-часових форм англійського дієслова, способи перекладу форм вираження нереальності дії, а також труднощі трансформації порядку слів та функціональної перспективи висловлювання.*

*З'ясовано, що найбільш суттєвими граматичними викликами для усних перекладачів є вживання артиклів, видо-часових форм дієслова та оцінних компонентів висловлювання. Практичні спостереження та наукові праці сучасних дослідників стосовно вживання артиклів свідчать про те, що означений артикль в сучасній англійській мові інколи опускається і вживається здебільшого на позначення комунікативної функції означеності. Те саме стосується неозначеного артикля, який часто опускається задля мінімізації комунікативних зусиль та зменшення надмірності висловлювання.*

*Зазначено, що усні перекладачі також мають особливо уважно ставитися до перекладу перфектних видо-часових форм дієслова та форм вираження «майбутнього часу», оскільки ця категорія в сучасній англійській мові здебільшого виражається формами простого або тривалого теперішнього часу. Оцінний компонент може зберігатися або опускатися в перекладі залежно від його розташування – в означенні або в означуваному слові.*

*Акцентовано на тому, що порядок слів в англійській мові є фіксованим, а в українській – вільним, тому рема в українській мові може бути розташована в будь-якому місці висловлювання. Така різниця в синтаксичній будові мов змушує усних перекладачів часто змінювати порядок слів у висловлюванні. Використання оптимальних перекладацьких стратегій для розв'язання цих проблем значно сприяють створенню високоякісного, адекватного та еквівалентного перекладу.*

**Ключові слова:** *граматичні аспекти усного перекладу, послідовний та синхронний переклад, оцінний компонент, дискурс.*

**Defining the problem and argumentation of the topicality of its consideration.** The article deals with grammatical challenges that occur in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. **This problem is important** nowadays as the inability of interpreters to overcome grammatical difficulties in comprehend-

ing and rendering oral discourse messages may lead to serious mistakes in translation. Interpreting plays a significant role both at the national and international levels as nowadays Ukraine has become an equal partner in its relationships with the world community of nations.

**Recent research and publications on the problem.** In Ukrainian translation studies there seems to be no profound publications on this problem. However, there are authors in other countries, who, at least partially, touch upon it. Thus, Zh. S. Sarmanova [6] suggests a general overview of some grammatical difficulties of simultaneous interpreting, M. A. Apollova [2] deals mostly with teaching specific features of English grammar to students and Marianne Celce-Marcia [8] focuses on understanding the Past Perfect Tense constructions in a particular discourse. Some grammatical difficulties of interpreting from English into Russian were analyzed by G. V. Chernov [7], though he focuses mostly on lexical and semantic aspects of interpreting. The importance of discourse in understanding grammar patterns is the subject of two profound publications by B. Hatim, I. Mason [10], B. Hatim, J. Munday [11], who view discourse as the "clue" to perception and understanding oral messages. R. Hughes and M. McCarthy [12] proceeded from analysis of sentences to discourse grammar as an essential component of teaching Modern English.

**The purpose and the objectives of this article** are to outline basic grammatical difficulties of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting oral discourse messages from English into Ukrainian and vice versa. In doing so the author would like to share with the international community of interpreters some of his experience in the sphere of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting gained throughout more than 20 years of professional work in this field.

### 1. Grammatical difficulties in understanding oral texts

Grammatical forms and syntactic constructions cannot be isolated from the lexical items they consist of. Therefore, in real life most translation/interpretation transformations (such as addition, omission, transposition, replacement, antonymic translation, compensation, compression, expansion, etc.) are complex techniques and include both lexical and grammatical components [1]. In practice interpreting begins only after the interpreter has understood meanings of the words (so that they make sense) and perceived ("unpacked") grammatical structures of the source language message. Researchers in the field of written translation and consecutive interpretation believe that grammatical aspects are less challenging for interpretation comparing with the lexical ones due to the natural redundancy of grammar, especially if the languages involved belong to the Indo-European family [5]. However in simultaneous interpreting certain problems may be caused by the difference in the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) syntactic structures, first of all, in the word-order, which in Ukrainian and Russian is often inverted so that focus is made on the rheme of the utterance, whilst the Standard English declarative sentences have a fixed order of words. Interpreters, especially beginners, may also have problems with "hearing" and, therefore, rendering English articles, the Perfect tense forms of the verb and forms expressing unreality (oblique moods), affirmative and negative constructions. Although grammatical factors cause fewer problems than the lexical ones, still interpreters have to be aware of certain potential threats listed below.

**2. Difficulties in rendering English articles.** Practice shows that articles (both the definite and the indefinite) are often omitted by the speakers of English. Thus, Paul Rastall writes that nowadays "there is a tendency for the definite article to be used in English only for its communicational purpose of indicating definiteness, i. e. that the referents named by a given noun are specific or known ones. That tendency conflicts with those cases in which the definite article is redundant. One result of that conflict is that redundant articles are increasingly omitted. Changes in the occurrence of the definite article are part of the "synchronic dynamics" of English and a normal part of the tendency towards the minimisation of communicative effort through reducing redundancy" [15, 37] for example: **Stephen Sackur, the BBC presenter:** <...> *My guest today was till 2002 a senior British diplomat at \*United Nations. He has decided to ignore those official requests for silence. Why?* Normally the definite article "the" should be used before the name of the international organisation.

The same tendency is observed with the indefinite article. Examples of such omissions are: a) *If somebody is successful that is reason enough for me to listen to their advice;* b) *A student of mine appeared with bottle of medicine.* Normally the indefinite article "a" should be used before "reason" in the first sentence and before "bottle" in the second [9]. In such cases the omitted articles require no rendering in interpreting.

However, communicational purposes of indicating definiteness require the use of the so-called lexically charged articles, which are usually marked by the intonation, e. g.: **Stephen Sackur, the BBC presenter:** *We gonna talk about (↑) the system at some length but I want to start considering Iraq and what you've written about Iraq.* In such case the article requires rendering into Ukrainian, otherwise the translation would be incomplete: *Ми поговоримо про цю систему (або: про систему Британської дипломатії) трохи пізніше, а зараз я хочу звернутися до Іраку та до того, що ви написали про Ірак.*

Other instances of mandatory rendering English lexically charged articles in written translation were described in detail by I. V. Korunets [4]. The same rules apply to oral interpretation and usually result either in addition of certain words or in rendering English articles by Ukrainian pronouns, adjectives, etc., e. g.: *The Johnsons – подружжя Джонсонів; The problem is in the focus of our attention – ця проблема знаходиться у центрі нашої уваги; He is the fellow I'm looking for – це саме той хлопець, якого я шукаю; He did not go out in the morning – Він не вийшов на вулицю наступного (if the context tells so) ранку; He didn't say a word – Він не сказав жодного слова; It was only for a moment – Це тривало тільки одну мить; There is a woman waiting for you – Там якась жінка чекає на вас.*

In certain cases the definite article may indicate that the object is a unique, or a well-known one, which becomes clear from the context. Thus, if in Birmingham, England, someone says *I am a student of the University*, it should be understood that the person is a student of *the University of Birmingham* located in Edgbaston but not of the other two less distinguished universities in this city.

The indefinite article, which indicates the rheme of the utterance often, requires changes in the word-order, so that the rhematic noun is placed at the end of the utterance, e. g.: *A girl entered the room* – *До кімнати увійшла дівчина.*

### 3. Difficulties in rendering tense and aspect forms of the verb

Rendering of the tense and aspect forms of the verb presents no serious problems because tense forms are usually “backed up” by adverbs, pronouns and other deictic markers of time and place, which ensure high level of temporal redundancy in oral discourse. Thus, even ungrammatical utterances *Yesterday I \*come home and I \*see that my wife \*is not in* (recorded by the author of this article in Birmingham, England), or *Financial activities of tobacco control \*has not been discussed internationally* (recorded by the author at the international conference) are easily interpreted in the given contexts. However, interpreters should be always on alert when the speaker uses the Perfect group of the English tenses. Thus, the Past Perfect often requires lexical addition (expansion), e. g.: *His wife had been beautiful* – *Його дружина колись (ог коли була молодю) була красунею.*

There are also multiple ways of expressing future time in modern English and some authors even claim that English “has no future tense, because it has no future tense inflections” [14]. Thus, the most common ways of expressing future turn to be: 1. The Present Indefinite Tense (e. g.: *We leave tonight for Texas*); 2. The Present Continuous Tense (e. g.: *You are publishing a book in just a few weeks’ time called “The Independent Diplomat” and you call it a “personal account of the descent from illusion to disillusionment”*); 3. Verbs *shall, will* or the reduced form *’ll* with the base forms of the verb which are treated rather as modal verbs implying a deliberate predetermined action [13; 18] (implying Ukrainian *неодмінно, обов’язково, напевно*, etc.) or used in the official (e. g. legal) discourse with the meaning of obligation; 4. The form *to be* with the Infinitive (e. g.: *Our flight is to leave at 11:00 a.m.*); 5. Semiauxiliaries such as *to be going to* or *to be about to* with the base form of the verb (e. g.: *We are going to leave your parents some money*).

In all these cases interpreters either use the relevant Ukrainian options for rendering *shall, will, ’ll* in the official discourse (e. g.: the Simple Present which in Ukrainian may acquire the modal meaning of obligation: *сторони здійснюють, зобов’язуються здійснювати*, etc.) or use expansion by adding some relevant Ukrainian markers of the future (e. g.: *будуть здійснювати; здійснюватимуть; маємо, збираємося щось зробити; неодмінно; обов’язково*, etc.).

Practical observations show that typical mistakes of interpreters in rendering the Ukrainian tense and aspect forms of the verb into English result from the following:

1. Failure to use the Present Perfect Tense in utterances like: *Я живу в Києві вже шість років* – *I have lived (not \*lived, \*live, \*am living) in Kyiv for six years*;

2. The use of the Future Indefinite Tense in English in the adverbial clauses of condition and time after *if, when, till, until, before, after*, etc., e. g.: *Якщо ви цього не зробите, то наслідки буде важко передбачити* –

*If you don’t do (not \*will not do) that, it will be difficult to predict the consequences.*

3. Inability to apply the rules of the sequence of tenses, e. g.: *Вони сказали, що приймають участь у роботі семінару* – *They said that they would participate (not \*will participate) in the workshop.*

### 4. Difficulties in rendering forms expressing unreality

Forms expressing unreality, which are traditionally called the “Subjunctive Mood” or “Oblique Moods”, indicate that the action is considered to be unreal, unlikely, problematic, hypothetical, desirable, recommended, etc. While finding options for these verb-forms interpreters have to observe the following recommendations:

a) Make yourself sure that the speaker has really used the Subjunctive (Conditional) Mood form and not the clause of a real condition, i. e. distinguish between *If it does not rain, we will go to the beach* (*Якщо не буде дощу, то ми підемо на пляж*) and *If it did not rain, we would go to the beach* (*Якщо б не було дощу, ми би пішли на пляж*).

There is a debate nowadays whether *was* can be used in clauses of unreal condition and after *wish* instead of *were* as even the native speakers of English often use *was* where it should be *were* according to the rules of traditional English grammar. Leaving this debate behind, the author of this article supports the view of the writers on traditional English grammar, which requires the use of *were* in the mentioned instances, treating *was* as ungrammatical or spoken variant. Thus, Cathrine Traffs writes: “Use *were* if the state of being you are describing is in no way the current reality. This is true whenever a hypothetical situation is expressed, for example: *Would you invite me over if I were more polite at the dinner table?*; *If it were possible to solve the puzzle, I would have done it.* Another sure sign that you should use the subjunctive is when the word *wish* is used. A wish is the desire or hope for something that cannot or probably will not happen, e. g.: *I wish I were the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature; He wishes his grammar were better <...>*. These phrases are never correct: *I wish I was; I wish it was; he wishes he was; she wishes she was*” [17]. Therefore, even though languages are changing, interpreters should be guided by the correct grammar as they may always learn and use “broken English” in private conversations (outside the conference room) throughout their professional career;

b) Remember that forms of the *be, speak, go*, etc. type after predicates expressing order, proposal, request, arrangement, recommendation are quite common nowadays both in American and in British English, e. g.: *It is necessary that he speak at the conference* – *Йому необхідно виступити на конференції* (an alternative variant is *should speak*); *It is important that these reforms be strengthened* – *Необхідно закріпити ці реформи*;

c) Always be on alert if the speaker uses contracted (shortened) forms of the mood auxiliaries, especially with the perfect forms of the verb which refer an action to the past – failure to perceive these forms may cause serious errors in interpreting messages, e. g.:

If *I'd been* (for *had been*) present in *Strasbourg last month, I'd have spoken* (for *would have spoken*) to Lord Judd – Якщо б я був у Страсбурзі минулого місяця, то я би мав розмову з лордом Джаддом;

d) Always be ready to render pat phrases with the Subjunctive Mood of the type: *Oh, якби завжди було так!* – *Oh, if only it were so forever!*; *Нехай буде так!* – *Let it be!*; *Хай живе мир!* – *Long live peace!*; *God forbid!* – *Борони Боже!*, *хай Бог милує!*; *God damn it!* – *Ом бісова душа!*

### 5. Difficulties of rendering evaluative components in simultaneous interpreting

Semantic structure of oral messages normally contains the following components, which ensure that the messages acquire certain sense in the act communication:

■ **the deictic component:** orientation of the message with regard to the "person", "space" and "time", e. g.: *I warn you that it is probably cold outside*;

■ **the modal component:** treating the proposition by the speaker as possible, impossible, desired, mandatory, unnecessary, likely, unlikely, doubtful, real, unreal etc., e. g.: *I warn you that it may be cold outside*;

■ **the evaluative component** (оцінний компонент): positive or negative evaluation of the elements of the proposition by the speaker (or absence of such evaluation – "zero evaluation"), e. g.: *I warn you that it is cold* (negative evaluation) *outside, so, since you are unwell* (negative evaluation), *you'd rather wear your warm* (positive evaluation) *sweater*;

■ **the pragmatic component:** indicator of the aim of pronouncing the utterance (communicative intention) as it is planned by the speaker [16], e. g.: *I warn* (the act of warning) *you that it is cold outside*.

However, if the deictic and the modal components present no major difficulties for interpreting, it is the evaluative component that may be a challenge for simultaneous interpreters due to the deficit of time.

Evaluative components may play different roles in the semantic structure of utterances. If they are parts of the theme they may often be redundant and omitted (compressed) in interpreting [3; 7], e. g. *The significant advances in science and technology open up great opportunities for the rapid development of human and material resources of Ukraine* – <...> *Досягнення у галузі науки та техніки забезпечують нам сьогодні можливість швидко розвивати людські та матеріальні ресурси України*. Omission of the evaluative adjective *істотні* in interpreting does not damage the sense of the utterance and its communicative effect. However, if the evaluative component is placed in the rheme of the utterance, it becomes a part of the "informational focus" and its omission may result in distortions in interpreting, e. g.: *We have always attached considerable importance to the development of self-governance* – *Ми завжди приділяли значну увагу розвитку самоврядування*. Omission of the evaluative adjectives *значну, велику* would result in a certain loss of the sense – evaluation, in this particular case.

In terms of semantic structure evaluative phrases may be classified into:

1. Phrases in which the evaluative component is included in the **attribute** and the **antecedent**

(антецедент, означуване слово) either contains weak evaluation or no evaluation at all:

Table 1

### Types of evaluative components (type 1)

<b>ATTRIBUTE:</b> evaluation positive	<b>ATTRIBUTE:</b> evaluation negative
<i>meaningful concept</i>	<i>difficult assignment</i>
<i>reliable means</i>	<i>adverse effect</i>
<i>priority measures</i>	<i>tragic results</i>
<i>successful outcome</i>	<i>explosive situation</i>

Phrases in which the evaluative component is included in the **antecedent** and the **attribute** is rather an intensifier of quality the meaning of which is equal to the generic adverb "very":

Table 2

### Types of evaluative components (type 2)

<b>ANTECEDENT:</b> evaluation positive	<b>ANTECEDENT:</b> evaluation negative
<i>positive assurance</i>	<i>significant deterioration</i>
<i>meaningful co-operation</i>	<i>fruitless expenditures</i>
<i>clear guidelines</i>	<i>tremendous waste</i>
<i>durable peace</i>	<i>deep regret</i>

Omission of the evaluative attribute in rendering phrases of the first type will result in considerable losses of meaning; however, the evaluative attribute may be easily omitted (compressed) in interpreting phrases of the second type where evaluation is "embedded" in the antecedent [7].

### 6. Difficulties in rendering affirmative and negative constructions

Interpreters sometimes have problems with distinguishing between affirmative and negative messages, which occur due to certain phonological interference (interrelation of similar sounds, failure to "hear" the **no/not** particles), poor SL signal, or excessive concentration of attention on other parts of the message. The best safeguard in such situations is the communicative context of the message; however, in consecutive interpreting there is always an option to apologise and ask the speaker to repeat what has been said which is seldom possible in simultaneous interpreting. A real-life example (recorded by the author of this article at the international conference) is given below: *Нам абсолютно [?] імпонує допомога з боку міжнародних організацій* where it is not easy to perceive the message phonologically due to the interference of the **-но** in *абсолютно* which could have been wrongly understood as *не* (*імпонує*). In this case the real sense of the message becomes clear from the overall discourse and the on-going messages: *Нам абсолютно імпонує допомога* <...>.

However, interpreters have to remember that there are no "perfect" speakers (as well as no "perfect" interpreters) and that there is always a threat to mishear or misunderstand the message due to various objective and subjective factors of the real-life communication. Thus, the main focus should be made on the context so that to reduce these risks to a minimum.

### 7. Word-order and functional sentence perspective of messages

Below the focus is made only on those syntactic aspects, which are relevant for oral simultaneous interpreting. The main challenge here is that messages in simultaneous interpreting have to be often perceived before the source language speaker structurally completes them. Most authors argue that simultaneous interpreters use the so-called “split programme” of perceiving and interpreting syntactic structure of the SL messages. In other words, simultaneous interpreters construct “the inner syntactic structure” of messages long before (in terms of seconds) they are completed by the SL speaker using the mechanism of anticipation [7, 185–193]. Interpreters seem “to look into the inner syntactic depth” of utterances and plan their possible structure. However, successful anticipation of syntax without considerable delays and pauses is possible if interpreting is performed between languages with a similar syntactic structure. Syntactic structure of utterances reflects the way in which the speakers of different languages present the theme and the rheme, or, in other words, it reflects the functional sentence perspective of utterances.

Some languages have similar models of functional sentence perspective (FSP) as it was mentioned above, which means that the rheme (the “new information”) tends to be placed **at the end** of utterances by the speakers. These are usually languages with the fixed word-order, like English. However in languages with the free word-order (like Ukrainian, Russian and other Slavonic languages) the rheme may be placed **in any place** of the utterance and may be marked either by putting the rheme in an unusual place (e. g. at the beginning of the utterance), by the use of the Passive Voice constructions (in which the grammatical subject denotes the object of the action, while the grammatical object denotes the doer of the action), or by intonation (putting a special stress on the “most important words”).

Generally speaking “the word-order” is defined as the “arrangement of the components of the sentence in a certain order” [7, 196]. However, in the practice of interpreting the “arrangement of the components of the sentence” mostly refers to identification of the **object** (both direct and indirect) and the **subject**, while the **predicate (verb)** comes next. Compare the following Ukrainian utterances with their relevant translations:

Table 3

Arrangement of the sentence components

<b>Predicate (verb) – subject – attribute – object</b>	<b>Subject – predicate (verb) – object – attribute</b>
<i>Минуло сорок три роки з часу заснування Організації з безпеки та співробітництва у Європі.</i>	<i>Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe has completed 43 years of its existence.</i>
<b>Subject – attribute – objects – adverbial modifier (with attributes) – predicate (verb in the Passive Voice) – object (with attributes)</b>	<b>Subject (with attributes) – predicate (verb) – object (with attributes) – adverbial modifier (with attributes)</b>
<i>Великих успіхів у сприянні залученню іноземних інвестицій за минулі три роки, незважаючи на численні труднощі, було досягнуто нашим профільним комітетом Верховної Ради України.</i>	<i>Our specialised Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has made a significant progress regardless of numerous difficulties in attracting foreign investments to Ukraine.</i>
<b>Adverbial modifier – predicate (verb) – object – attribute – object</b>	<b>Subject – attribute – predicate (verb) – adverbial modifier</b>
<i>Абсолютно необхідно продовжити процес реформування Мінфіну.</i>	<i>Reform of the Ministry of Finance should be continued by all means.</i>

In these examples the word-order of Ukrainian utterances is inverse, which, if interpreted as it is, may result in certain inconveniences for the English TL listeners. Therefore, interpreters often have to change the word-order of Ukrainian utterances in translating them into English.

Syntactic transformations in simultaneous interpreting are closely linked to the anticipation abilities of the interpreter and to the time frame, allowed by the speaker to “unpack” syntactic structure of the utterance. Practice of interpreting shows that there may be two approaches to rendering syntactic structures of the SL messages:

1. Interpreter renders syntactic constructions as they go, i. e. without transformations, which often makes translation awkward and “non-native speaker level” but quick and informative;

2. Interpreter tries to perceive “the peak (rhematic)” components of messages (especially if the contrasted languages differ in their syntactic structure), which often results in pauses, gaps and delays in interpreting. However,

after such pauses (often filled in with the gap-filler “-err”, “-erm” sounds of the interpreter), professional simultaneous interpreters are usually able to produce a chain of transformed and syntactically correct utterances.

Therefore, the following **conclusions** can be made as a result of the analysis performed in the article – grammatical difficulties of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting may be caused by those listed below: 1. Difficulties in rendering English articles; 2. Difficulties in rendering tense and aspect forms of the verb; 3. Difficulties in rendering forms expressing unreality; 4. Difficulties in rendering evaluative components; 5. Difficulties in rendering affirmative and negative constructions; 6. Word-order and functional sentence perspective of messages, which may differ in the source and the target languages.

Further research into the problem may concern other grammatical difficulties, which may come to the interpretation agenda any day, as languages continue to change in the course of their development and interpreting practice is a life-time process, which never ends.

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