



# Toward the development of a metacognitive intercultural communicative competence in the education of students of interpreting: general theoretical/ pragmatic foundations

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**Abstract:** This paper debates on the importance of the link between theory and practice for the further improvement of metacognitive strategies in the undergraduate education of would-be interpreters. A description of the most important and differentiated mental processes taking place during consecutive and simultaneous interpreting is proposed as well. The basic challenges and problems of making this mental process visual and thoroughly comprehensible before the undergraduate students as part of their in-class and professional practice metacognitive learning process are also debated. The article is presented as the first one of a series of three, ranging from the still insufficient treatment of meta-cognition for bilingual interpreting in both its epistemic and declarative knowledge on the one hand, as well as on the procedural knowledge needed for its performance as well, on the other, down to the case study of a didactic experience (2007-2009) carried out with undergraduate students at the program on English-Spanish Consecutive Interpreting and Sight-Translation, University of Matanzas, Cuba.

**Keywords:** metacognitive intercultural competence, bilingual interpreting, theory, didactics and professional practice

## 1. Introduction

Metacognition in the undergraduate training process of future bilingual interpreters plays a role as decisively though silently dramatic as has been the very essence of this professional activity since its regular appearance in official worldwide communicative contexts. Therefore, the adequate insertion of metacognition treatment in the interpreter's undergraduate curricular design has proved to be as paramount as its continuation in postgraduate education.

All in all, the starting point for a reflection on the issues of developing what this paper defines as a *metacognitive intercultural communicative competence* (from now on, herein defined as MICC) continues to be placed around the key question: What is it the interpreter knows: cognitively, meta-cognitively and even epistemically (and that she or he knows how to do so well) when equally knowing how to interpret properly?

Attempting to answer these questions would have an influence on 1) the descriptive explanation and completion of the bilingual interpreting general model with its very specific variants: consecutive and simultaneous, 2) the pragmatic training of students of interpreting to cope with the complexity of requirements for the exercise of the profession, and 3) the definition of the broadest epistemic field needed for deepening into the theory and didactics of interpreting, as well as into the curricular design of the interpreters' training processes.

A review of the classical and most recent general theory and study cases on meta-cognition (Kitchener 1983; Kuhn and Weinstock 2002; diSessa et al. 2003; Hofer, 2004; Mason, Boldin & Ariasi, 2010) presents a course of analysis that points at reinserting the above-mentioned three aspects within the field of meta-cognition, as the broadest and most adequate setting that contextualizes cognition, reflection and self-control during the learning

process. The following quotation is a good example of the above-stated:

... we assumed that epistemic beliefs operate at the metacognitive level. In addition, we did not consider them in isolation from the contextual variables in which they are activated, as most previous research has done. It is mainly scholars interested in science teaching and learning processes (diSessa et al. 2003) who have criticized the decontextualized nature of research about epistemic beliefs. They have posited that identifying beliefs about knowledge and knowing at either a general-domain or a specific-domain level fails to reveal them adequately as they are finer-grained and context sensitive. As cognitive resources, these beliefs can be activated in a certain context and not in others, since different contexts trigger different resources. (Mason, Boldin & Ariasi, 2010).

That is precisely the reason why, in the present article, the scope and objectives of analysis are contextualized around exploring a general theoretical background, though only as immediately linked to the pragmatic setting of metacognition and particularly connected with the didactic needs of educating and training interpreters according to the demands of their future professional performance: What is needed and how to proceed in teaching interpreters-to-be at an undergraduate level? What is already known and what new proposals could be advanced in this field?

The present paper is then the first in a series of three attempting to cover this topic. The second article in the series would refer to an in-place exploration of a problem-oriented training professional context and its needed pragmatic operationalization for undergraduate university students of bilingual interpreting. The third one, in turn, would be a debate about the results of a training and self-control experiment carried out by the author with the population of students of English-Spanish/ Spanish-English interpreting at the University of Matanzas, Cuba, during the application of the central proposal of his doctoral research, during the 2007-2008; 2008-2009 academic years.

In order to approach a possibly precise answer to the above question, the first aspect to be cleared once and again, is the very general definition of bilingual interpreting in itself, be it either simultaneous (in any of its varieties) or consecutive.

In this connection, a review of the work done by numerous scholars on the theory, teaching and practice of professional bilingual interpreting as well as on metacognition during the last thirty years or so (Viaggio, 2005; Seletskovitch & Lederer, 2002; Hermosilla, 1995), suggests that the balance is inclined to assume professional bilingual interpreting as an intercultural operation on knowledge with the participation of at least two languages and discourse practices than as a merely inter-linguistic activity. In other words, bilingual interpreting is a high-level problem oriented task that integrates various spheres of knowledge.

Even more pragmatically, but with equally considerable awareness of its problem-oriented nature, the definition advanced by Chuang-Peng insists on the fact that:

Clearly, giving a successful interpreting performance requires more than linguistic competence alone. According to AIIC's 'Advice to Students Wishing to Become Conference Interpreters', excellent language skills and a broad knowledge base are prerequisites for anyone intending to train as a conference interpreter. Besides linguistic performance, both organisations acknowledge the significance of knowledge

(general and subject matter), communication skills, communication with audience, tact and diplomacy) and personality (concentration, persistence and pressure-resistance) of the candidate when recruiting new members. (Chuang Peng, 2010)

Such precision should equally be accompanied by the already well-known notions that interpreting requires a fully-fledged mastery, not only of the languages directly involved in the process, but of the themes or cognitive fields being interpreted as well, and, last but not least, of the cultural backgrounds (history, lifestyles, traditions and the like), having a tremendous weight in the conformation of set expressions, phraseology and other similar cognitive references of the languages and ethnological settings at interplay. In short, a competent interpreter might thus be defined as a specialized intercultural communication professional, being involved in one of the most important, yet anonymous activities from the point of view of individual social transcendence and recognition, and equally having, however, an extremely wide encyclopedic and strategic knowledge at the service of human and international understanding.

All the above-stated requirements need to be complemented by an integrating pre-requisite: the interpreter (different from his closest partner, the translator, who always has more time for revisions and consultation on style refinement and similar issues) has to master effective on-the-spot strategic decision-making, dealing with the fast solution of intercultural communicative problems. That is so, if one is to really cope with the three pressing features of on-the-spot professional rendering: discourse orality, immediacy and evanescence, (and a lot of psychological pressure coming onto the interpreter, possibly from a waiting and increasingly anxious audience) thus respecting, at the same time, the two golden rules of intercultural mediated communication: fidelity (first to intended meaning and sense, then to factual grammatical and discourse forms), and equivalence (first to discourse messages and meaningful chunks of text being assumed as a unit, then to syntactic units separately).

In this way, the interpreter needs to move through three basic stages in the factual manifestation of the professional activity: *comprehension* of the intended meaning and discourse in the source language and cultural polysystem (Even-Zohar, 1990), *reformulation* (in fact, an invisible mental process, extremely difficult to make visual before students in class, at least in the undergraduate teaching-learning process) and *re-expression*, or the always somewhat synthesized, (for time and memory saving purposes) re-utterance of the core information in the target language and cultural polysystem, aimed at being satisfactorily understood by the audiences the interpreter addresses.

On the basis of the so-far explained problem-oriented nature of bilingual interpreting per se, once and again, a number of possible questions arise, such as: what, then, should be the contents to be taught and mastered in the education and training of young interpreters-to-be through a university undergraduate curricular process? Should it be the foreign language system; that is, merely the mastery of the foreign languages, to interpret from? Or should it be the recorded finished models of already interpreted discourse, as compared or collated against their also recorded corresponding originals, so that future interpreters can learn and copy the already achieved mastery of their most successful predecessors and contemporaries?

No matter how helpful the study of finished models may be- and, undoubtedly, they are useful so as to instill certain communicative values and professional distinction- the key answer to the above question is one that

comprises a well-balanced and proactive curriculum, aimed at harmoniously developing intercultural communicative competence (Hymes,1972; Hermosilla,1995; Rodríguez, et.al, 2009), precisely through a clear-cut concept of how to treat the four basic components of that competence from an intercultural point of view; namely: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic or discourse competence and strategic competence. All in all, too, the understanding of communicative competence as applied to the always challenging performance of the bilingual interpreter, places such a competence in a broader context of constant self-regulation and self-control.

Due to this reason, it would be more appropriate to say that the super-objective of the educational and training process of bilingual interpreters-to be is the gradual development of MICC- a complex, integrating, psychological, socio-linguo-cognitive and communicative construction as well as a mode of action that can only be developed first of all in-class focusing on the attempted "visualization" of the interpreter's mental process during the phases of comprehension, reformulation and re-expression of the message to be rendered. That, plus the permanent adding up of cultural (even if propedeutic) encyclopedic information from as many fields as possible.

Once these considerations have been made, it is paramount to have a clear understanding of each of the concepts involved in the definition of MICC.

The first controversial concept is that posed by the adjective *intercultural*. The controversy here may arise from a reductive perception, according to which single understanding, attention might be given to a reality that is, in essence, two-fold, or even, many-fold depending on the point of view from which it is assumed. On the one hand, the competence to be developed calls for an intercultural nature, since bilingual interpreting is precisely the interplay of two basic cultural (linguistic, ethnological, idiosyncratic, conceptual) worlds: that of the speaker uttering the original discourse, located in one extreme of the channel, and that of the audience, placed at the opposite extreme of the same communication channel.

However, it would be impossible to deny that: 1) the original speaker does not only mark speech by the cultural traits of the social setting this person has as a communal background, but also by individual and existential experiences that could be considered as part of a personal culture; 2) exactly the same condition might be sustained in reference to the audience receiving the final product of the mediated communication, only with the exception that in the case of the audience, this trait might well be multiplied by a plurality of individual cultural experiences; and 3) no matter how objective and impartial the interpreter is called to behave and perform, similarly her or his own personal and cultural subjectivity is also inevitably at interplay during the development of the interpreting process.

The definition of intercultural is, thus, also connected with the interpreting activity being understood as a verbal (discourse) operation on knowledge- that is, on culture, from both the diverse and coinciding points of view of the trio *original speaker-interpreter as intercultural mediator-and receiving audience or final interlocutor*. Culture-based speech can be uttered and accessed from two main different perspectives, a fact that adds even more complexity to the overall metacognitive setup the interpreter needs to build up and activate; namely: either by 1) basing speech on a specialized (socially consensus-based or not) cognitive topic, in which culture or cognition is directly referenced by its specific subjects- that is, speech deals with (or directly talks about) specific cultural or cognitive topic as such; or otherwise, by 2) indirectly or figuratively quoting cultural passages (i.e. previous knowledge that presumably the interlocutor is supposed to somehow master in advance), by indirectly associating its second-hand meanings and

communicative intentionality, to other topic being the real center of the uttered speech (in fact, a more idiosyncratic use of cultural references as such).

The second concept to be clarified here is the very qualification of *metacognitive* for the type of competence to be developed by interpreters. Anderson (1995) had already advanced an early and generally accepted definition of metacognition; namely, (and paraphrasing this author's understanding of the concept), metacognition is the competence to *know, reflect upon and self-regulate and control our own cognition process, as individuals during the development of the various kinds of human activity*. According to this idea, metacognition is seminal as a tool for the interpreting process, as well as for the interpreter as an individualized professional, due to the much reduced and almost inexistent possibility of cooperative work in the most critical and central phase of performance during this kind of professional work.

Therefore, the type of training an interpreter is supposed to receive in order to develop an adequate level of metacognitive intercultural competence should first of all highlight the need to make visual, before the trainee, a self-reflective and self-controlling mental process that occurs in the interpreter's mind, sometimes in a matter of seconds and minutes. It is equally vital to teach interpreters-to-be (both theoretically and, as soon as possible, practically) that their performance often takes place under the pressure of hostile environmental conditions, such as constant interruptions on the part of outsiders, physical distance from the speaker together with possible lack of technical voice amplification resulting sometimes in a poor listening and uttering channel, crowd immersion, and occasional overlapping coming from the work of other foreign language interpreters stationed nearby, either while doing in-booth simultaneous interpreting or while working any variant of the consecutive type in an open and socially more inclusive rendering process.

The first among the metacognitive requirements in the training of young interpreters is to make them know how to perform an active and intelligent listening process, since the interpreter not only listens to understand, but also to retain in her or his mind, and then, later, to re-express it in the target language to which she/ he is rendering. This is necessarily linked to another very important aspect on their performance: the metacognitive use of memory and its various types. Baddeley's work on this field (Baddeley 1975, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009) has progressively advanced a more integral and complex view than the traditional and simplifying perspective on the matter (namely: short-term, mainly linked to booth-assisted simultaneous interpreting; and mid as well as long-term memory, mostly associated with the various forms of consecutive interpreting). Baddeley's model of working memory has been used as a foundation for analyzing the implication of memory in the bilingual interpreting process. Therefore, memory fulfills many other complex functions, like: processing information, problem-solving, applying strategies, control of attention, coordination tasks and the like. However, despite the validity of these considerations, there would be no contradictions in assuming all the complexity of working memory as contextually applied to the basic response patterns while interpreting: immediate and almost parallel short-term response pattern in the case of simultaneous interpreting, mediate or time-chunked mid-term and long-term response pattern in the general case of consecutive interpreting.

Consequently, for the purposes of the present paper, the pragmatic and didactic classification of short, mid and long term-memory will continue to be critically and comprehensively referred to, in terms of timely response patterns, simultaneously assuming that all other complex memory processes

are also present in each of them with diverse degrees of urgency and mobilization according to time requirements, which precisely reveals the mounting complexity of the bilingual interpreting process. The specific contextualization of each of these demands in every one of the interpreting working variants or modalities would then follow in the present discussion.

## **2. The general scope of MICC in consecutive interpreting**

Studies on memory functioning and retention ( Mizuno, 2005 ) show that short-term memory is generally associated only with the retention of literal discourse chunks; that is with the intention of memorizing as many details as possible from a short piece of utterance. In the area of interpreting, it is the kind of memory only possible to activate when the task to be done is a simultaneous in-booth performance, in which the interpreter step- follows after the main speaker, merely giving her or him only a three-to-four-word advantage. Nevertheless, when involved in consecutive interpreting tasks, based upon the utterance of rather longer chunks and whole pieces of discourse before taking turns between speaker and interpreter, it would be practically impossible or extremely difficult to try to retain all the exact words uttered by a speaker of the source language and then, reformulate and reproduce them in the target language with equally the same word-by-word sentence length.

The same above-quoted studies on short-term memory and others carried out on memory retention in the speaker's own native language (Baddeley, 2003) suggest that literal memorizing of exact utterance, that is, short-term memory, is only capable of retaining an approximate amount of eight to ten exact words in a meaningful row. After that amount is reached, already recorded input either progressively vanishes or is totally erased by the next input chunks to come, thus re-editing the process with a similar memory behavior.

For this reason, consecutive interpreting- mainly the more interactively pragmatic field of the bilateral case - poses one of the main metacognitive challenges in the training of future bilingual interpreters as intercultural communicators through oral-aural discourse emission and understanding. All in all, what is to be done, in order to teach interpreters-to-be how to listen to a piece of uttered speech intelligently, if utterances are so varied and multiple as human communication and life relationships might be? The first element to take into account would be to proceed to have, in advance, an as complete as possible communicative history of the speaker whose address is going to be rendered: what are the favorite topics that speaker commonly refers to? (what is the communicative style the orator follows?). No matter how insufficient or inexact that piece of personal history might be in relation to the coming real speech to be delivered in the new communicative situation, cognitive contextualization helps the interpreter to be on guard, so as to mobilize all necessary previous knowledge in assistance of a sudden critical point in discourse progression.

Previously contextualized knowledge also helps the interpreter to de-verbalize aural-oral message input while listening. It implies opening the listening channel reflective association capacity in a way that a matching between the previous knowledge acquired on the matter as confronted with the new specific input being received may result in a more predictable and exact final rendering. Intelligent listening, as guided by a metacognitive principle, also implies listening not only and not merely to words or phrases in isolation, but to whole ideas, as well as to the structuring of basic speech

acts (Austin & Searle, 1959) in discourse progression: that is, illocutionary act (the speaker's intended purpose), as matched with the locutionary act (what the speaker really utters), and finally taking into account the perlocutionary act (that is, what the speakers expect from the receiving audience, as a response to her/ his uttering).

Deverbalizing source language speech while listening also implies focusing on the core information, on the nucleus being uttered by the speaker, thus neglecting the ornamental flourish of too formal speech; that is, eliminating from the interpreter's mid and long-term-memory every superfluously additive canopy that may hamper retention of the really essential discourse thread. It is an essential part of the metacognitive intercultural communicative competence, and while it is only progressively learned through a lot of practice and training, perhaps the first guidance to approach it more rapidly would be instilling in students the capacity not to overvalue difficult unknown words during the comprehension process, and trying to solve their comprehension by contextualizing referential analysis, by mobilizing previous knowledge and by prompting logic to do its lot, too.

On the other hand, reformulation, or the second main stage in the interpreter's mental process, implies taking the initial textual structuring of the source language discourse to its most essential nucleus or sense-oriented focus. It is a meaningful point in the interpreter's mind, which at the same time, functions as a pivot for furthering immediate re-expression, or the redressing of that same core in the final target language speech to be uttered, thus closing the whole cognitive-cultural-intercultural-linguistic-pragmatic-verbal cycle of interpretation, as a special form of mediated communication.

Lastly, re-expression in itself, as the utterance of an equivalent, but at the same time new piece of discourse, implies, before all, the re-verbalization of the original text with an alternative wording. It would seemingly be arguable if reformulation and re-expression are really two well-defined stages by themselves, or if they are simply two approaches of the same mental-verbal process. As for this author's perspective, nothing is totally or absolutely independent in the bilingual interpreter's performance cycle; however, such a perception does not necessarily mean not recognizing well-defined processes within the whole activity of interpreting- mediated intercultural and interpersonal communication. In this connection, re-expression is autonomous from reformulation, no matter how closely related and separated only by sometimes a mere fact of milliseconds, in the sense that it has to do exactly with the reverse of the first oral-aural input action.

While it cannot be totally separated from the mental reformulating nucleus that generates the *intercultural two-language based communicative hinge*- to call it in an illustrative or graphical way-, it is nevertheless clearly defined that re-expression focuses on the exactness, summarizing capacity and uttered speech-act final effect of the whole interpreting process, as well as on the perlocutionary act desired to be caused on the user or clients of this professional service. Again, meta-cognition is present here in the self reflection and self-control capacity the interpreter needs to separate the inner mental channel content-feeding re-verbalization in the target language from the defocusing or de-concentrating effect produced by simultaneously hearing one's own utterance while being voiced before an always silently pressing audience. And the pragmatic key to be meta-cognitively monitored and mastered here seems to be one that suggests an as rapid as possible utterance, resolutely derived from re-verbalizing the sense or meaningful nucleus or interrelated key ideas already grasped and retained in mid or long-term memory.

Another metacognitive oriented strategic aid traditionally recommended to

assist the interpreter may somewhat be found in note-taking, although it is more possible, proper and relevant for the case of simultaneous, instead of for consecutive interpreting. In every case, personal experience suggests that note-taking in either of the interpreting professional variants, if not mastered and controlled properly, can easily move from being an alleged assistance to a real hindrance during performance. Two decades and a half ago, the University of Havana English-Spanish undergraduate program on consecutive interpreting still prescribed that students should learn a pre-existing list of note-taking symbols almost by heart. The good intention was that these symbols are always necessary so that interpreters do not waste time or lose focus while trying to take notes upon listening to the speaker's utterance. The bad result was that for most students (as for me, among them), the time saved in not having to write, was otherwise lost in an on-the-spot, not always fruitful effort, trying to remember the exact or even the approximate symbols for, say "developing countries", "debt cancelling" or "war escalation", while, contradictorily, the students did find themselves capable of representing these concepts with their own personal note-taking symbols or word shortenings.

The reason for this was that symbols were not created by the interpreters themselves, as it should be and later amended, as part of their own in-class personalized metacognitive and strategic training, but they were naively and good-naturedly provided in advance, being someone else's own personal creation, no matter how synthetic and graphical. Note-taking, like bilingual interpreting, is (has to be) extremely personal and individually generated.

To conclude this section of analysis, all the above-stated takes the particular and even more complex nature of being double-sided when bilateral consecutive interpreting is the real focus of attention. Going back to the intercultural nature of interpreting as the real basic essence of the process and its most extended cognitively referential and communicative contextualization, bilateral interpreting possesses a real exhausting intercultural switching pattern on the trainee. In this case, the interpreter is to be trained to alternatively change not only from-and-to languages in use but also from cultural discourse organization and conceptual structuring, many times, not merely in form or code, but also in the way cognitive contents are philosophically approached.

As generally bilateral interpreting is rendered when covering interviews or press conferences, in which a permanent two-way channel interaction takes places, the additional problem lying at the bottom of the whole process is that two basic types of grammatical sentences would alternatively prevail, in either or in both discourse patterns at work: interrogative for the questioning interviewer (with all the long discourse precludes with which journalists frequently introduce their questioning, which, in turn, may present a sudden difficulty to re-accommodate in the target language interrogative structure, due to length, loss of question matter focus, or the like), and the affirmative/negative pattern on the other hand, coming from the answering interviewee (though most probably with also a high degree of problem situations at the discourse level to be observed and solved by the interpreter while rendering).

### **3. The general scope of MICC in simultaneous interpreting**

Simultaneous interpreting tends to be considered among the most difficult and stressing modalities of professional bilingual interpreting, except for experienced professionals (mainly UN-based interpreters) with a long and well-established pedigree in the field, who are often taken as model samples



for studies by scholars in the field. The fact that almost a mechanical short-term memory and a fast, immediate target language output and rendering is required, without the possibility of close personal interaction or rapport with the speaker, gives this variant a degree of difficulty which proves to be more peculiar and demanding than consecutive interpreting, at least for undergraduate students and beginning interpreters. The generally more formal, official and compromising international contexts in which simultaneous interpreting is predominantly performed, as well as the bulk of long and uninterrupted interpreting periods falling on interpreters as individuals, contribute to the task's difficulty. This might seem a justification to assert that simultaneous interpreting is more of an inter-linguistic than intercultural nature- i.e. performance is predominantly related to following the lined-up syntax of the original utterance than to creatively and cognitively reflecting upon possibly better, alternative or more synthesized target language versions. The most accepted conclusion is that the simultaneous interpreter does not have time to think more critically, creatively and metacognitively; therefore, she/ he is merely called to act, perform on the spot as best as possible.

The above is true, as far as a critical point in discourse progression suddenly appears- be it a neologism, infrequent culture-based phraseology or indirect allusions to universally recognized textual references, such as may be the case, for instance, of quotations from the Bible. When this is the case, then a fast mobilization of terminology and phraseology plus other culture-based references from the arsenal of the speaker's active or "passive" memory needs to be retrieved at once.

Besides, critical points may be stressed by peculiar pronunciation on the part of the speaker: an orator on the podium of perhaps, an international conference, at a considerable physical distance from the interpreter's booth, and well-involved in addressing the audience with that part of the truth she/he is entitled to address and objectively or passionately defend. The speaker addresses the audience in one of the official working languages, which, if coincidental with the speaker's mother tongue, may well be marked by all the idiosyncratic and culture-based traits already referred to. But if speaking a language other than the mother tongue, factors such as pronunciation, regional variants or even any probable degree of language impairment, may cause additional difficulties to accurate reception and understanding in the interpreter's listening process, thus calling for an additional focusing in a fast search for that speaker's pronunciation invariants on which to ground the rest of the interpreting.

Therefore, metacognitive strategic aids in booth-based simultaneous interpreting may well come from a variety of demands and are never limited to linguistic aspects. Even cognition, in this case, rests more emphatically on the immediate pragmatic clues of communication provided by the physical context in which the whole process takes place: conference location, identity of assisting members, real-life tone of conflicts to be discussed, paralinguistic and para-communicative events taking place inside or outside the conference room are all key elements that have a vital influence on the quality of the immediate, on-the-spot comprehension-reformulation- re-expression chain from source into target languages.

Even the architectural design of the conference room itself may help or hinder the overall development of simultaneous rendering. That is related, for instance, to the fact that interpreters' booths should be ideally placed on a higher back position of the hall, as compared to the delegates' seats, thus witnessing the whole events to be developed from a rearguard location and, at the same time, facing the presidium of the event. From this location the

interpreters can have a full panoramic view of all the conference hall, including podium, presidency, delegates, as well as of its exits and accesses, lateral and central aisles, and to the movements and signals made by room officials and aids. If this overall view location is not sufficiently guaranteed, a situation might occur in which part of the speech or additional comments advanced by a speaker from the podium may occasionally and indirectly refer to a sudden happening related to someone coming in or out of the hall, or to someone saying or gesturing something from her or his seat, that is of interest or influences the whole audience, and which the interpreter is then in a clear disadvantage to identify, focus, understand and render, with all subsequent implications for mediated intercultural communication. In this connection, Braun states that “conference interpreters who are not in the same location as the speakers experience more fatigue and stress and have a number of physiological and psychological complaints.” (Braun, 2007).

Fortunately, today not all contextual conditions in a conference hall are of a challenging nature for the simultaneous interpreter’s work. In this connection, even more helpful than note-taking, is the visual help provided by power-point screened presentations, aided by summarizing charts, abundant written technicalities and jargon, accompanied by highlighted outlines announcing what the speaker’s course of utterance will be, and serving the interpreter as a reference upon which to help rest the mind, without letting their guard down, since presentations are sometimes suddenly cut off or abruptly changed.

On the other hand, the case of sight-translation on-the-spot, the reading-based variant of simultaneous interpreting, also deserves a specifically contextualized degree of metacognitive analysis and training. Sight-translation is sometimes considered as a sort of third entity, half-way between translation and interpreting, since its input is written and its output oral. It is also more recently assumed that sight-translation is not so widely extended in practice as it once was, though still prevailing in briefings and certain press conferences that include final declarations and other similar documents to be rapidly distributed and shared.

Metacognitively speaking, the teaching-learning challenge for this sight-translation is not merely to ask students to speak clearly and linguistically accurately in the target language as they read the written message from the source language, based on the assumption that this kind of interpreting is easier and less exhausting. Instead, it has to do with making them realize the relationship between the two critical channels they need to encompass for so doing. The first one is the visual channel: a necessarily more rapid parabolic visual scanning is required in advance over the written lines as the interpreter reads silently from the source language; while the second one is the relatively independent functioning of target language equivalent oral speech - suggested at a slower pace as compared to eyesight more rapidly advanced scanning.

Between both simultaneous but, again, never interfering channels, however, a balance should be established at a metacognitive level in relation to eyesight, mental processing and voice de-phasing, relating and alternatively handling. On the one hand, a certain main input capacity for fast source language reading visualization needs to be rapidly developed so as to cope with the demands of progressive information entry. While this takes place, the reformulation and re-expression processes are rapidly and parallel-enhanced in the interpreter’s mind.

They occur independently of, though partially colliding with, another output and mind-voice channel process that allows for the progressive utterance of the target language version, while the interpreter’s voice itself plays the role of interference on his own visual-mental concentration channel

for continually receiving new information while reading. This in turn, calls for an additional metacognitive mechanism in the form of a certain sound buffer in order for the interpreter to try to self-ameliorate or separate his own voice interference over his likewise own continued visual perception and mind processing of new progressively entering textual information.

As it can easily be seen from this overall analysis, practically every area of professional performance in bilingual intercultural communication in the form of interpreting calls for the most varied and interrelated set of self-reflecting, self-controlling and self-regulating strategies on the part of its practitioners. Therefore, the basic mastery of such requirements is only possible when metacognition is integrally assumed as the pivot curricular invariant upon which to build the whole higher-education graded process for fully-fledged training future bilingual interpreters. *Maestros* García Landa and Viaggio (Viaggio, 1996), though, wisely advice us all that, enthusiasm coming from even a well-designed metacognitive training should necessarily be modest while teaching interpreting at the pre-graduate level, since a fully-fledged development of MICC is only materialized through a lifetime of professional experience and, preferentially aided by the well-systematized support of postgraduate education on this very specialized field of intellectual knowledge and performance.

#### **4. Conclusions**

As has been stated in this analysis above, metacognition places such an important role in the training and overall education of future bilingual interpreters as in the postgraduate training of professional practitioners, that its treatment – starting with the handling of working memories until the visualization of the three mental processes the interpreter goes through- calls for a more systematized, contextualized and intense curricular design in schools of interpreting than it is mostly given so far, as reveals the reviewed literature, in comparison to the teaching-learning of other more formal technical procedures and techniques.

The discourse-based, sociolinguistic and intercultural nature of interpreting and its diversity and complex peculiarities, mark metacognition treatment in the professional training process with an even more special pragmatic and emphatic nature to be satisfied and well-planned as part of curricular design and training process development. Therefore, the development of a MICC is imperative in the education of future bilingual interpreters for all the variants and professional modalities of this specialized communicative activity, be it consecutive or simultaneous interpreting.

Developing such a competence first of all calls for an early on-the-spot contextualization of the trainee within the specific settings of the professional activity as such. This is necessary so as to have the trainee personally experience and weigh by her or himself the full dimension of the problem-oriented nature of the whole interpreting process in every new situation. And then, from here, to start intellectually and mentally internalizing a well-structured and actively self-built system of meta-cognitive actions and operations, under the guidance of instructors more prone to teaching students how to learn to self-monitor, self-reflect, and self-control their own individual performance, than to let them know and impersonally repeat already built up procedures that once proved useful for others in totally different communicative situations.

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