

Preparatory Interpreting Exercises Within the Distance Interpreting Teaching in Combination with the Russian Language

Andrej Zahorák

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia
azahorak@ukf.sk

Abstract

The present paper focuses on a selected area of interpreting didactics – preparatory interpreting exercises and their implementation in the distance teaching process of interpreting from the Russian language within the Russian Language and Culture study programme at the master's degree (in combination) at the Department of Translation Studies at the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. These exercises may be used as a model for educational activities and interpreting training in the online space (and not only) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Methodologically following the work of Slovak and foreign experts (Hodáková 2020, Alekseyeva 2001, Kalina 2000, Kupcova 2013 and others), we present a model of teaching and training activities aimed at the development and consolidation of receptive and productive skills in the Russian and Slovak language pair. The proposed model has proven itself in the educational process of interpreting from the Russian language at the master's degree of translation studies at FA CPU in Nitra and our findings are supplemented by the feedback from participants in the form of a questionnaire reflecting effectiveness of preparatory exercises including pros and cons in distance teaching from the students' point of view.

1. Introduction

The university teaching process of interpreting has been enriched with new approaches and knowledge in the field of interpreting didactics, successfully developing at the national level (Djovčoš and Perez 2021, Djovčoš and Šveda 2018, Fedorko 2012 and 2013, Melicherčíková 2012, Štubňa 2015 and others) as well as at the international level (Alekseyeva 2001, Gile 2009, Kalina 2000, Kautz 2000, Kupcova 2013) in recent decades. In this paper, we focus on selected aspects of interpreting didactics with an emphasis on preparatory (interpreting) exercises in the Russian and Slovak language pair, which form an integral part of the teaching process of interpreting within this language combination not only at the Department of Translation Studies of FA CPU in Nitra but also at the international scale, reflecting other language combinations, or working languages in which interpreting is taught (Alekseyeva 2001, Gile 2009, Shepel 2013 and others). The aim of preparatory exercises is to develop receptive and productive skills including their combination – cognitive and analytical processing of the text and its coherent reproduction, which

ultimately contribute to the development of interpreting competence. The presented model of exercises was practiced during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to December 2021 as part of the distance university education of future interpreters within the Russian Language and Culture study programme (in combination) at the master's degree at the Department of Translation Studies of FA CPU in Nitra. This model of exercises is designed with respect to the methodological and technical specifics of interpreting teaching process and preparatory interpreting exercises during the COVID-19 pandemic to get as close as possible to full-time, in person education and to ensure comprehensive development of cognitive, language, and translation skills of translation studies students.

2. Preparatory exercises as a part of interpreting didactics

According to several domestic and foreign authors (Fedorko 2012, Alekseyeva 2001, Kupsch-Losereit 2000), a processual approach to interpreting and teaching should prevail within the interpreting didactics. The main idea of this approach is its focus on acquisition and development of cognitive strategies necessary to cope with interpreting itself, which is a really demanding cognitive activity. According to Fedorko (2013), one of the main goals of university education and training of future interpreters should be the automation of partial translation processes, interpreting strategies and techniques, as well as the deepening of cognitive predispositions. Based on the work of domestic and foreign theorists specializing in the theory and didactics of interpreting (Alekseyeva 2001, Čeňková 2001, Hodáková 2020, Mügllová 2009; 2018) and on empirical experience with the teaching of interpreting as well, we assume that one of the appropriate means to develop and consolidate the cognitive, language and translation skills of future interpreters are preparatory exercises, and therefore it seems really appropriate to include them in the interpreting teaching at an early stage.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on higher education since March 2020 – following its transformation into a distance form of education (Perez and Hodáková, 2021), several effective alternatives to develop receptive, productive skills and interpreting strategies were needed to maintain quality of distance form of teaching. The research focused on interpreting teaching in the online space (Melicherčíková 2021, Skaaden 2016) shows that optimally set distance teaching can be comparable to full-time education, although teachers and students have to face specific negative factors such as insufficient social contact or tireless search for available options and means for the effective technical ensuring of the educational process.

Knowing that preparatory interpreting exercises reflecting the specifics of teaching in the virtual space receive only a little attention in interpreting didactics, we think that the presented model, proven in the interpreting teaching from the Russian language during the COVID-19

pandemic, can contribute to the more effective education of future interpreters in the virtual space.

The presented paper focuses on the model of interpreting exercises in the online space within the Russian and Slovak language pair and our methodology is based on the work of theorists and didactics experts of the Russian provenance (see Alekseyeva 2001, Chuzhakin and Spirina 2007, Kupcova 2013, Shtanov 2011). These authors suggest that the teaching process of interpreting (from or into the Russian language) should include mainly exercises aimed at developing operational memory, the so-called "switching" from one language to the other, expanding vocabulary, shadowing, exercises aimed at developing of interpreting strategies (abstracting the main idea, generalization, condensation, anticipation, etc.) or activities focusing on mastering the principles of note-taking. We used several of these exercises in a modified form, reflecting the specifics of the language combination (Russian and Slovak language) in full-time form of education and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in distance learning as well, which most European countries have undergone as part of university education since March 2020. As we already mentioned, it was necessary to look for the most optimal teaching strategies and procedures (both the technical and didactic side of the matter), which would fully replace the full-time form of teaching.

We believe that the choice of preparatory exercises, including their didactic justification, teacher's clear instructions, and technically thought-out implementation play an even more important role in distance form of education than in full-time form. In our opinion, a role of teacher being "only" facilitator did not appear to be sufficiently effective and motivating in the beginning of transition to the online space.

Within the German scientific context, concerning the subject area of interpreting didactics and the development of interpreting skills and strategies, S. Kalina (2000) does not primarily work with the term preparatory interpreting exercises but uses the so-called partial objectives (however, largely corresponding to specific preparatory exercises regarding their content and form). The author includes semantic analysis of the source text, the ability of anticipation, reconstruction of the text using keywords, or transfer competence, in other words, uses partial goals viable both in full-time and distance forms of education.

The set of exercises and training activities presented in the mentioned model (see The model of preparatory interpreting exercises in the distance form of education of future interpreters) may be divided into three blocks. These are exercises aimed at: 1. vocabulary development (exercises "Two minutes" or "False friends" can be included here); 2. verbal fluency and creativity (tongue-twisters, "Describe the term"); 3. memory and attention ("Remember as much as possible!", attention distribution, shadowing, etc.). However, we should emphasize the fact that several of the presented exercises develop these skills in a non-isolated or complex form, and therefore, often it is not possible to classify them strictly in a specific block. S. Hodáková (2020, 7), who deals with the didactic aspects of interpreting, perceives these partial skills as a

certain extension leading to more complex activities. At the same time, the author recommends starting with warm-up activities focused on memory, verbal fluency, or vocabulary and then continuing with more complex activities, such as working with text, specific forms of interpreting, and self-reflective techniques.

The results of our previous research focused on the effectiveness of preparatory interpreting exercises in teaching the basics of interpreting from the Russian language in university education (for more see Zahorák 2021) show that 70% of chosen students has improved the ability to listen and read actively, the ability of verbal fluency in a foreign language, the ability to select the main idea of the text, or text segment with optimal usage of generalization, condensation, or compression. The ability to concentrate and use of short-term memory were improved as well. All of these abilities were developed thanks to the regular training of receptive and productive skills (including their combination) through the selected preparatory exercises in the initial stage. This fact only confirms the legitimacy of implementing preparatory exercises in the teaching process of future interpreters, even within the distance form of education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. The model of preparatory interpreting exercises in distance education of future interpreters

This model of preparatory interpreting exercises aimed at developing partial interpreting skills was used in distance learning at the master's degree of the Russian Language and Culture study programme (in combination) focused on future translators' and interpreters' training at the Department of Translation Studies of FA CPU in Nitra. During the winter and summer semesters of the academic years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, four students of the first year (currently the second year of the master's degree) have been participating and working with these exercises within the compulsory Interpreting courses 1, 2, 3. The defined time range for the seminar was 90 minutes per week. As the teaching process has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, these preparatory exercises, including the interpreting courses themselves, were carried out exclusively in the form of distance learning.

For technical security, we were working primarily with Meet and Discord platform, which enables real-world simulation of interpreting booths, including audio and video content sharing. This platform seems to be suitable for practicing simultaneous interpreting or preparatory exercises requiring attention distribution and individual concentration, as it allows students to be divided into booths and then communicate (listen to the interpreter, give feedback) only with the selected booth. And so, both platforms are suitable for working with our preparatory exercises.

Concerning the transition of teaching to the distance form, in some cases a technical modification of the exercises was necessary. For example, in full-time teaching, the teacher would use paper cards (with

the term that should be described by students) and this type of activity in online space was replaced by a technical modification involving sending a private message to a specific student so that other students could not see the term to be described and so on.

Based on our empirical experience of teaching, we positively evaluate the fact that most exercises could be carried out effectively in the online space. Our opinion was confirmed by the results of a questionnaire aimed at the evaluation of work with preparatory interpreting exercises (see The preparatory interpreting exercises in the distance form of teaching from the students' point of view). An absence of real personal contact and occasional technical problems in some cases negatively influenced more detailed feedback from the teacher and students as well. The research on teaching of future translators and interpreters in Slovakia during the COVID-19 pandemic also draws attention to similar problematic aspects (see Melicherčíková 2021, Hodáková and Perez 2021).

Our model of exercises and activities reflecting the Russian and Slovak language pair is aimed at developing partial skills, focusing on the development of vocabulary, verbal fluency and creativity training, memory and attention training (see Zahorák and Hodáková 2021). For each exercise, we provide a brief description of its focus, goal, and instructions, including practical examples (texts) usable in the language pair. Some of the exercises can be used similarly in other working languages. The presented set of exercises can serve as a didactic tool for teachers, as further modification is possible concerning the discourse, the topic, the purpose of use, and already mentioned working languages.

Tongue twisters

The goal of the exercise is to train clear articulation, correct pronunciation, verbal fluency, and memory. The teacher shares numbered tongue twisters on the screen and assigns these numbers to students (in full-time form, each student would receive a card with two tongue twisters in the Slovak and Russian language pair). The task is to read these tongue twisters as fast as possible at least three times in a row and clearly articulate. On top of that, the Russian tongue twisters must be pronounced with correct accent. The preparation time is limited - about 1 minute.

Examples of tongue twisters:

1. *Išiel pštros s pštrošicou a pštrošičatami Pštrosou ulicou na pštroší bál.*

СТОИТ ВОЗ ОВСА, ВОЗЛЕ ВОЗА - ОВЦА.¹

2. *Keď nenaolejujem linoleum, naolejujem lampu. Keď nenaolejujem lampu, naolejujem linoleum.*

¹ In Slovak: Stojí voz ovosu, vedľa voza stojí ovca.

Белый снег, белый мел, белый заяц тоже бел. А вот белка не бела - белой даже не была².

3. V našej peci myši pištia, v našej peci psík spí.

Все бобры добры для своих бобрят.³

4. Železo, železo, oželezilo si sa? Koleso, koleso, okolesilo si sa?

Тридцать три корабля лавировали, лавировали, да не вылавировали.⁴

Visual memory training - "Remember as much as possible!"

The exercise is focused on visual and verbal memory training, developing associations, and vocabulary. The teacher shares a visual template on the screen (at the initial stage, these may be simple visual images, but their complexity may increase gradually with the greater number of details). The students have two minutes to look at the visual template and remember as much as possible. After the time limit, the teacher asks questions (possible examples of questions for Image No. 1: How many labels were in the picture? 2. What was written on them? 3. How many figures were on the playground? 4. What sports activities were shown in the visual template? 5. Name the drawings with water). The teacher discusses possible techniques of memorization (for example, forming of associations, using generalization, i.e. summarizing lexical units under general terms, etc.). The students work primarily with the Slovak language, but the Russian language may be used as well (the teacher asks questions in Russian, the students answer them in a foreign language).

² In Slovak: Sneh je biely, krieda je biela, biely zajac je tiež biely. Ale veverička nie je biela, bielou ani nebola.

³ In Slovak: Všetky boby sú dobré na svoje bobričatá.

⁴ In Slovak: Tridsaťtri lodí kľučkovalo, kľučkovalo, až nevykľučkovalo.



Figure 1.

Other variation of the exercise: The teacher shares a table with different words on the screen (starting with general vocabulary and during the semester it can be modified, covering the topic of interpreted text). The students have two minutes to memorize as many words as possible. After the time limit, they may have following tasks: write down as many words as you can remember; write down words naming animals, countries; write down words from the second row, from the first column, and so on. After verbal evaluation, students create a story using all of the words from the selected row or column. The exercise is carried out in Russian.

кладбище	развитие	КОТ	школа	картошка
тропа	война	Италия	Венгрия	Россия
интернет	Китай	пармезан	змея	велосипед
Варшава	Испания	борщ	яд	красный
Берлин	друг	река	пустыня	пелмени
горчица	жемчужина	туман	зеленый	флаг

cintorín	rozvoj	kocúr	škola	zemiaky
chodník	vojna	Taliansko	Maďarsko	Rusko
internet	Japonsko	parmezáň	had	bicykel
Varšava	Španielsko	boršč	jed	červená
Berlín	priateľ	rieka	púšť	pelmene
horčica	perla	hmla	zelená	vlajka

Table 1.

Shadowing

The aim of the exercise is short-term memorization training, the use of various memorization techniques (visualization, associations) and attention training. The teacher reads the text in the Russian language divided into separate sentences, and the students have to repeat them. The first sentence is repeated by the first student and the teacher adds the second one – the next student repeats the first and the second sentence, and gradually all participants take turns. In this type of exercise, it is necessary to choose texts with different types of association relations (lexical, syntactic repetitions). Instructions to the exercise should emphasize the necessity to visualize the text and even scientific research proves (Štubňa, 2015) that students are able to remember any information with visual perception better.

Example of such text:

*Один оригинальный официоз,
два диких дикобраза,
три трепетных тарантула,
четыре чумазных чародея чесали череп чудака,
пять пухленьких пигалиц приятно пели, плотно пообедав,
шесть шустрых шакалов швырялись шелковыми широкополыми
шляпами,
семь смуглых сирот смотрели серые снимки,
восемь воробьев варили вишневое варенье,
девять дюжих дурней дразнили деревянного дракона,
домогаясь:
дядя, дай дыньки!⁵*

Source: Alekseyeva 2001, 53.

Reproduction of the text

This exercise is good for training short-term memory, attention, for improving the ability to visualize the text, the ability to abstract the main idea, and the ability to develop language competence as well. The exercise can be carried out in simulated booths in the Discord platform. At the beginning, a short text in the Russian language is read by the teacher. The students must reproduce the basic supporting information (context,

⁵ In Slovak: Jedna originálna oficialita, dva divoké dikobrazy, tri chvejúce sa tarantuly, štyria špinaví čarodejníci škriabali lebku čudáka, päť bacuľatých krpátých žien po sýtom obede pekne spievalo, šesť vrtkých šakalov hádzalo hodvábnymi širokými klobúkmi, sedem tmavých sirôt si prezeralo sivé fotografie, osem vrabcov varilo čerešňový džem, deväť statných bláznov dráždilo dreveného draka, domáhajúc sa: ujo, daj melón!

names, titles, numbers, etc.) after hearing the text, or to answer additional questions. These texts are reflecting current cultural, social, and political events, or the teacher may choose general texts covering topics to be interpreted. Finally, students may compare their answers and discuss similarities or possible differences in their answers.

“Describe the term”

The exercise focuses on developing verbal fluency, flexibility, language competence, and speaking skills. The teacher uses the platform to send a private message to each student with a lexeme to be described without using the root of the word (in full-time form, the teacher works with vocabulary cards prepared in advance). The other students should guess the described lexeme. Then each of them takes his / her turn. The teacher may choose simpler terms (lexemes) at the beginning of the semester but gradually chooses more demanding and abstract vocabulary. The whole exercise is carried out in Russian.

Examples: *Теракт (The terrorist attack), Родословная (The genealogical tree), Праздник (The holiday), родной язык (Mother tongue), Белые ночи (White Nights), Настроение (Mood), Налогообложение (Taxation, Tax liability).*

“Two minutes”

The objective of this exercise is the enhancement of vocabulary, including the fluency of speech in a foreign language. The students have two minutes to discuss a selected topic, sent by the teacher in a private message. These topics can reflect focus (theme) of the interpreted speeches and may serve as a “warming-up” before the actual interpreting performance. The teacher and students provide their feedback and evaluate the fluency of speech, language competence, including speaking skills, content capturing, possible diversion from the topic, and so on.

Possible themes: *Дистанционное обучение – вызов времени? (The distance learning - a challenge of the times?); Межкультурная коммуникация (Intercultural communication); Защита персональных данных в интернете (Protection of personal data on the Internet); Зеленые технологии (Green technologies), Окружающая среда и ее влияние на здоровье человека (The environment and its impact on human health).*

False friends

This exercise is primarily focused on verbal and visual memory training, and vocabulary expansion. The interlanguage homonymy, also known as treacherous words or false friends, is a phenomenon naming words that are graphically or phonetically identical in different languages

(in our case, Russian and Slovak), but have different meaning, and their direct transfer in translation or interpreting may cause serious misunderstandings. The teacher uploads a file with “false friends” on the screen and the students have to translate or interpret the “false friend” into Russian or Slovak within one minute (the direction of translation is determined by the teacher). The Russian and Slovak interlanguage homonymy is a frequent phenomenon, and this exercise should be done regularly with possible changes in language units.

See possible examples of false friends and their translation counterparts:

život – *жизнь* (life)
Живот – *brucho* (belly)
dôležitý – *важный* (important)
vážny – *серьезный* (serious)
ужасный – *hrozný, strašný* (awful)
úžasný – *потрясающий, великолепный* (amazing)
сливки – *smotana* (cream)
slivky – *сливы* (plums)
стихотворение – *báseň* (poem)
басня – *bájka* (fable)

Anticipation

The aim of the exercise is to train the fluency of speech both in the mother tongue and in a foreign language, to develop vocabulary, to get acquainted with speech phrases within various types of discourse (speeches, reports). At the first stage, students in the simulated booths read aloud the text shared on the screen and try to fill in (anticipate) the missing words and phrases (in bold). At the same time, this text must be correct regarding content and grammar. The teacher verbally evaluates their anticipatory solutions. After that, the students shall translate this text into Slovak (Russian) while sight interpreting.

Example of such text:

С 21 сентября Россия возобновила авиасообщение с четырьмя **странами**. Означает ли это открытие и туристических направлений, объяснил в интервью радио Sputnik председатель правления Всероссийского объединения туристов Роман Бобылев.

Россия возобновляет с 21 сентября регулярное авиасообщение с Испанией, Ираком, Кенией и Словакией, передает РИА Новости. **Рейсы** из Москвы в Мадрид, Барселону и Братиславу будут выполняться по четыре раза в неделю. В Багдад и Найроби самолеты из российской столицы будут летать дважды в неделю.

Испания пока не принимает туристов из России из-за ограничений, связанных с пандемией коронавирусной инфекции. В интервью радио Sputnik председатель правления Всероссийского объединения туристов Роман Бобылев **отметил**, что возобновление полетов не означает открытия стран для туристов.

"Среди людей, которые полетят по данным направлениям, со временем будут и туристы, но говорить о возобновлении массового туризма **по этим направлениям пока не приходится**. Туроператоры должны сформировать туристический продукт, и тогда уже можно будет говорить о том, что это направление возобновляет свою **деятельность** как туристическое", – сказал Роман Бобылев.⁶

Source: (the text was modified)

<https://www.dailyadvent.com/ru/news/f2e0a97d30ebb7f1b21fbe38e505e1c0>

Attention distribution (listening - reading, listening - writing, listening - clapping)

This exercise focuses on attention training, auditory memory, and automation of activities. Its aim is to split attention into two different activities - listening and reading, listening and writing, listening and clapping. The teacher reads the text in Russian, while students:

a) read another text in written form (in Slovak). Their task is to switch attention so that they can reciprocate information (read and heard) and answer questions concerning both texts.

b) write a text in Russian on a chosen topic, e.g. Мое отношение к литературе (My relationship to literature), Осень (Autumn), Значение иностранных языков (Importance of foreign languages) and so on. The students should switch their attention so that they can reciprocate the text they are listening to and at the same time create a coherent and cohesive

⁶ Od 21. septembra Rusko obnovilo letecké spojenie so štyrmi krajinami. Či to znamená aj otvorenie turistických destinácií, vysvetlil v rozhovore pre rádio Sputnik predseda Celoruského zväzu turistov Roman Bobylev.

Rusko od 21. septembra obnoví pravidelné lety so Španielskom, Irakom, Keňou a Slovenskom, uvádza RIA Novosti. Lety z Moskvy do Madridu, Barcelony a Bratislavy budú prevádzkované štyrikrát do týždňa. Lietadlá z hlavného mesta Ruska budú lietať do Bagdadu a Nairobi dvakrát týždenne.

Španielsko zatiaľ neprijíma turistov z Ruska kvôli obmedzeniam spojenými s pandémiou COVID-19. Predseda Celoruského zväzu turistov Roman Bobylev v rozhovore pre rádio Sputnik poznamenal, že obnovenie letov neznamená otvorenie krajín pre turistov. "Medzi ľuďmi, ktorú budú postupne lietať týmito smermi, budú aj turisti, ale v tomto prípade ešte nemožno hovoriť o obnovení masového cestovného ruchu. [...]"

text in written form. In the end, they answer questions from the text read aloud, but it is important to check the output of parallel activity as well - considering the length and meaningfulness of the written text. This exercise may be modified - the teacher reads the text in Russian, while students write texts on a chosen topic in Slovak, etc.

c) count aloud and an even number comes with a clap.

The mentioned exercise may be modified in the teaching process and should gradually become more challenging thanks to the selection of information-rich texts or the language of this activity.

4. The preparatory interpreting exercises in the distance form of teaching from the students' point of view

To receive the feedback reflecting the teaching of preparatory exercises in the online space, we used an anonymous online questionnaire, distributed via Google Forms to students of the Russian Language and Culture (in combination) study programme at the master's degree at the Department of Translation Studies FA CPU in Nitra. These students attended interpreting seminars and worked with the mentioned preparatory exercises in the Russian language. The questionnaire was filled in by 4 participants, and although this research sample may seem too small, this number represents the whole group of second year students of the master's degree of the Russian Language and Culture study programme (in combination). The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, items using the Likert scale, as well as open-ended questions. The range of questions reflected the evaluation of specific preparatory exercises, their implementation in the teaching process, usefulness from the students' point of view, as well as the overall evaluation of the teaching of preparatory exercises in the online space. The anonymous questionnaire was preceded by a semi-structured interview with students at the end of the winter semester 2021/2022 conducted through Meet platform, and students could comment on the online teaching of preparatory exercises, or evaluate its pros and cons. The evaluation included several categories: a range of topics within the interpreted speeches, recordings, and preparatory exercises; the importance of preparatory exercises in developing individual partial skills – especially in memory training, attention distribution, vocabulary enhancement; the stress relieving at the beginning of the seminar, and preparation for own interpreting performance. One of the negative factors described by the students was the amount of time spent in the online space (but this relates to the entire distance learning), causing concentration problems, and the absence of full social contact with the teacher and other students as well.

The next part of this paper focuses on the evaluation and interpretation of the data obtained from the questionnaire.

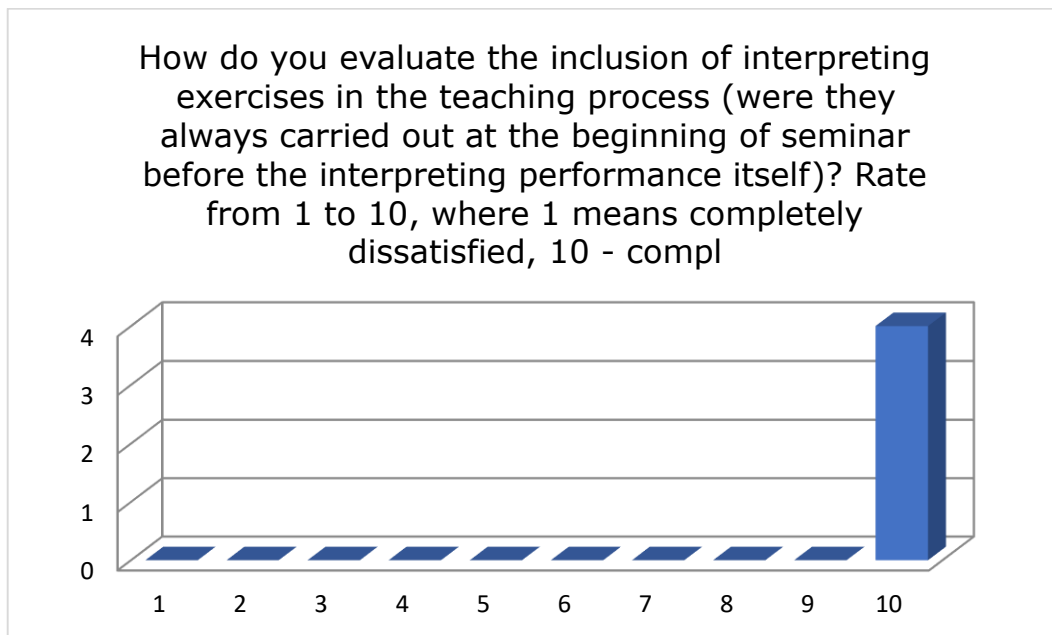


Figure 2.

Based on the evaluation of the data from the questionnaire, we may state that 4 participants (100%, that means all participants) were completely satisfied with the inclusion of preparatory interpreting exercises at the beginning of the seminar, helping them to prepare for the interpreting performance itself. Answering the open-ended question, in which the participants could verbally evaluate these exercises, or explain their evaluation, 3 participants (75%) stated that preparatory exercises are useful before a greater cognitive load during the lesson and positively appreciated conversational warming-up or “memory kick-start”. One of the participants (25%) said that he / she would like to devote even more time to the exercises during the seminar.

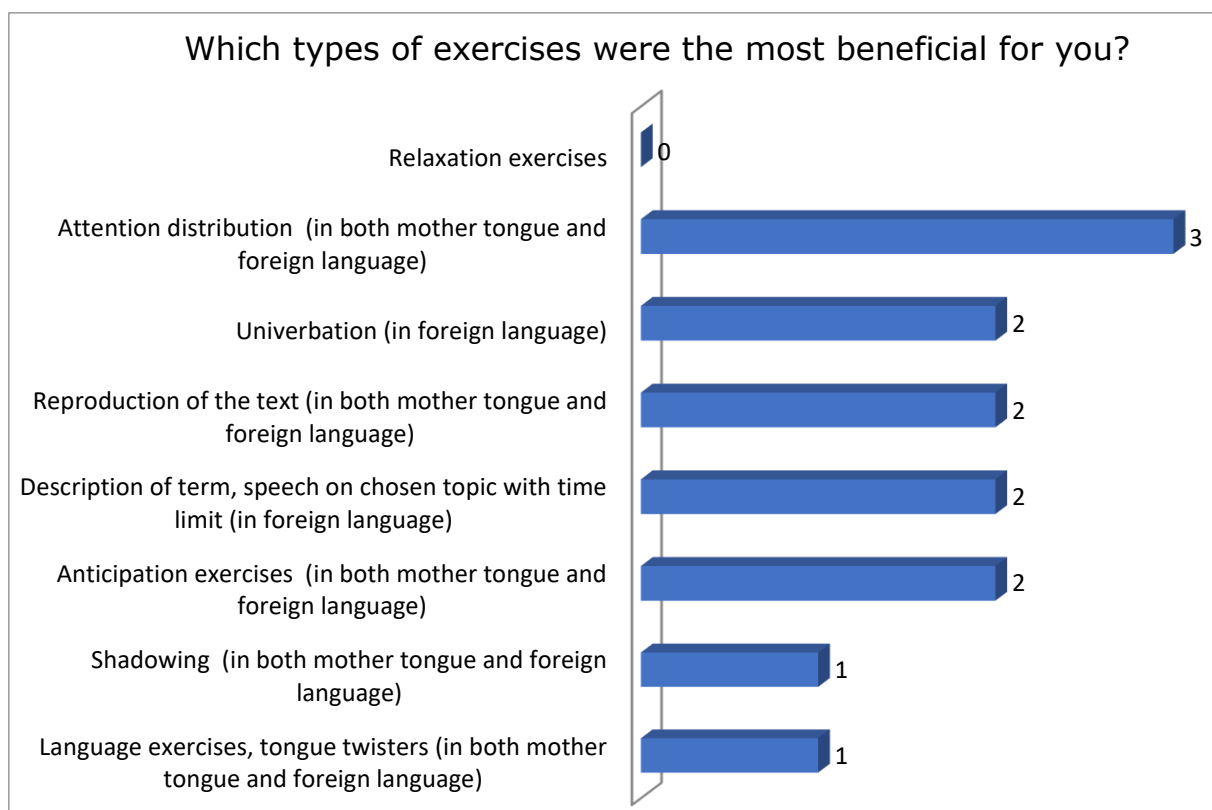


Figure 3.

In the evaluation of the usefulness of individual preparatory exercises from the students' point of view (this question was not limited to one option only), participants considered these exercises to be the most beneficial: attention distribution exercises (listening - reading, listening - writing, listening - clapping) both in their mother tongue and foreign language (75 %), exercises focused on univerbation, reproduction of the text, description of the term and speech on chosen topic with time limit, anticipation (both 50%), followed by shadowing and language exercises, including tongue twisters (both 25%). None of the participants considered relaxation (breathing) exercises to be the most beneficial (0%). In the answer to the open-ended question, participants could explain their choice, and all of them agreed that the splitting of attention is necessary for interpreting, and therefore highly appreciated the inclusion of this type of exercise in various forms. Based on the evaluation of the answers, we may conclude that participants consider exercises aimed at describing the term or speaking on chosen topic to be suitable for practicing and developing the vocabulary in a foreign language and for enhancing of verbal fluency.

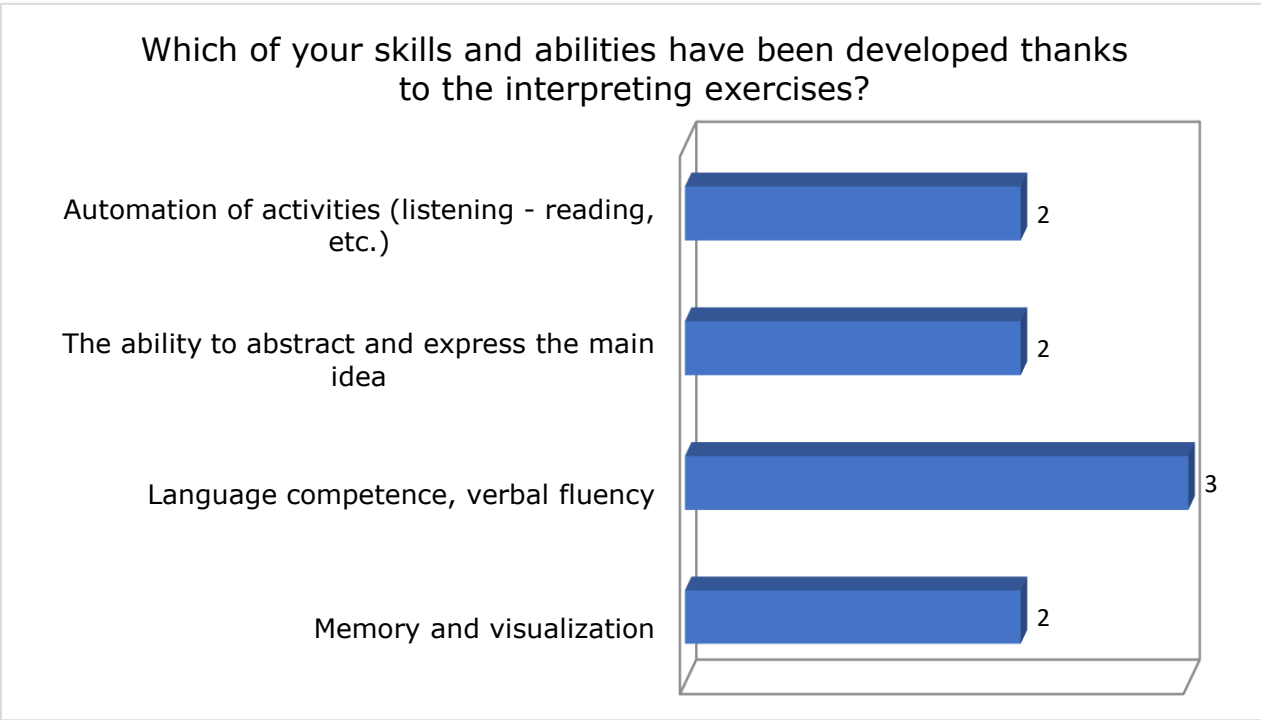


Figure 4.

Participants share the opinion that preparatory exercises help them in developing of language competence and verbal fluency (75%) in particular, then in automation of activities, the ability to abstract the main idea, memory and visualization training (both 50%) as well.

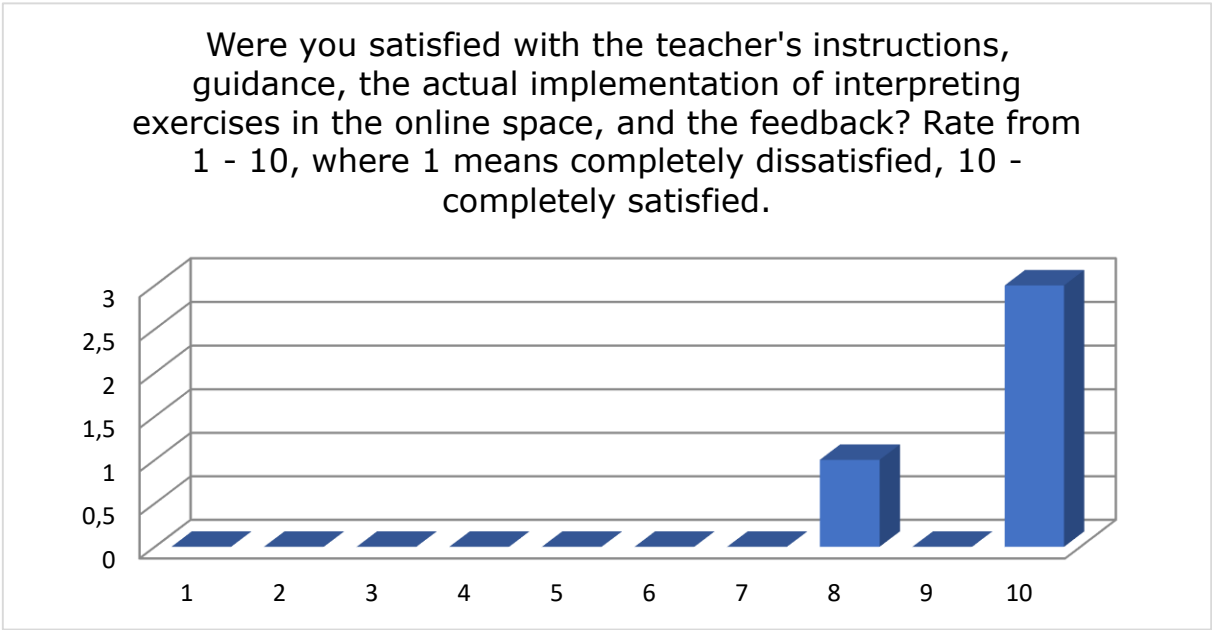


Figure 5.

The answers of 3 participants (75%) stated that they were completely satisfied (10 points) with the overall implementation of preparatory exercises in the online space, including instructions from the teacher, guidance, and feedback. One of the participants (25%) was not completely satisfied (8 out of 10 possible points). The participants had the opportunity to comment on the evaluation of preparatory exercises in the online space and to present their ideas and observations in the answers to open-ended questions. Based on the evaluation of individual answers we may say that participants were satisfied with online teaching except for minor technical problems (an improvisation of the teacher was appreciated), and considered it to be well managed. The participants emphasized the fact that, even though they had to work with the preparatory exercises online, it did not lower the quality or reduce the development of their receptive and productive skills. One of the participants expressed a critical opinion that distance learning lacks an experience typical for interpreting in booths (lower stress factor, absence of mutual support from the other interpreter in booth). But nevertheless, he / she found these preparatory online exercises to be an adequate substitution.

Summary of our questionnaire

The analysis of the results showed that 75% of students were completely satisfied working with preparatory exercises in the online space and they think that the most useful exercises are those aimed at attention distribution (listening - reading, listening - writing, listening - clapping) in a combination of mother tongue and foreign language (75%), anticipatory exercises, description of the term, speech on topic with a time limit, reproduction of the text (both in mother tongue and foreign language) and univertation (both 50%). From the students' point of view, the mentioned exercises help them in developing language competence and verbal fluency (75%), memory and visualization, the ability to abstract the main idea, and automation of activities (50%). They appreciated the fact that all of the mentioned preparatory exercises were optimally workable within the distance teaching (using Meet and Discord platforms) and only certain modifications were needed. The factors determining occasional technical problems and the absence of personal contact may be described as negative aspects.

In fact, participants presented analogical views on the positive (development of partial skills, elimination of the stress factor) and negative sides (more demanding concentration in the online space, an absence of social contact) of distance teaching of preparatory exercises during the semi-structured interview.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have focused on a selected area of interpreting didactics - the preparatory interpreting exercises. Their main goal is to

develop partial receptive and productive skills involved in the shaping of interpreting competence not only in the university education of future interpreters. We have presented our model of teaching and training activities aimed at the development of vocabulary and general overview, verbal fluency and creativity, memory and attention, and this model was proved to be useful in the distance form of interpreting teaching within the Russian and Slovak language pair during the COVID-19 pandemic. The individual exercises are accompanied by their brief focus, description of the activity, or implementation in the distance learning process, including examples of texts, didactic materials, and recommendations.

The paper also includes the feedback on distance teaching of preparatory exercises in the period from March 2020 to December 2021 from the students' point of view within the Russian Language and Culture (in combination) study programme at the master's degree at the Department of Translation Studies FA CPU in Nitra. The analysis of our results showed that 75% of the participants were completely satisfied with the implementation of our preparatory exercises in the online space. This feedback confirms that properly designed online teaching of preparatory interpreting exercises is comparable to full-time (meaning not online) training of partial skills, even though we recognize that social contact has always played an important role in the learning process and remains irreplaceable.

We believe that the presented model should be used primarily by teachers in interpreting teaching in the distance form, but it can be a useful manual for students willing to train individually and to develop interpreting skills in the mentioned language pair.

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