It has often been said that an interpreter needs to have a good memory. This statement, while true to a large extent, is somewhat misleading. It seems to imply, among other things, that an interpreter should be able to recall in great detail what he or she read or experienced several years ago. While that kind of recall would be a great asset for anybody, it is certainly not essential for an interpreter. Interpreters work in the moment, so what they need to remember and recall is what has just been said by other participants in the communicative situation in which they are working that day. In other words, what they need is a good short-term memory.

Types of Memory

Since the 19th century, memory has been classified as either short-term or long-term. This distinction was fully exploited in the 1968 Atkinson-Shiffrin model of memory (also known as the multi-store model), developed by Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin. They proposed that human memory involves a sequence of three stages, outlined below.

Sensory Memory: The sense organs have a limited ability to store information about the world in a fairly unprocessed way for less than a second. The visual system possesses iconic memory for visual stimuli such as shape, size, color, and location (but not meaning), whereas the hearing system has echoic memory for auditory stimuli.

Short-Term Memory: Our short-term memory is where much of our information processing takes place. It is where we try to make sense of what we see or hear and convert that into meaningful information, retrieving items from long-term memory to fill in the gaps as required. Information (ranging from one or two to over seven chunks of information) is retained for between 15 and 30 seconds, which is just long enough for it to be reused.

Long-Term Memory: Our long-term memory provides for the lasting retention of information, from minutes to a lifetime. Long-term memory appears to have an almost limitless capacity to retain information.

Enhancing Short-Term Memory for Accurate Interpreting

By Roda P. Roberts

Good memory has to be developed gradually.
While the Atkinson-Shiffrin model of memory clearly shows the difference between short-term and long-term memory, these researchers also use the term “working memory” to refer to an individual’s short-term store. But are these two terms really synonymous?

The relationship between short-term memory and working memory has been described differently by various theorists. Some researchers feel that the two concepts are distinct. They see working memory as a theoretical framework that refers to structures and processes used for manipulating information temporarily, and short-term memory as the short-term storage of information that does not entail the manipulation or organization of material held in memory. Other researchers do not make the same distinction.

According to Tran Thuy Duong, “short-term memory is a system for temporarily storing and managing information required to carry complex cognitive memory.” While Nelson Cowan believes that working memory includes short-term memory and other processing mechanisms that help make use of short-term memory, he feels that the short-term memory/working memory issue is not so much a debate about substance, but rather a slightly confusing discrepancy in the usage of the two terms. While most theorists today use the concept of working memory to replace or include the older concept of short-term memory, thereby placing more emphasis on the notion of the manipulation of information instead of passive maintenance, the distinction between the two is not clear-cut.

**Short-Term Memory and Interpreting**

The role of short-term memory in interpreting has been discussed by several interpreting researchers. The Atkinson-Shiffrin memory model formed the basis of Danica Seleskovitch’s analysis of consecutive interpreting. Seleskovitch proposed that successful interpreting is based on an understanding of the message in the source language and the restatement of that message in the target language. She felt that interpreters do not simply transfer the words of the original, but rather the sense of a speech in a given communicative situation, taking into account each word’s register and style. Daniel Gile, whose performance models have been adopted here, views interpreting performance as a set of three efforts—the Listening and Analysis Effort, the Production Effort, and the Short-term Memory Effort—each of which takes up part of a limited supply of processing capacity.3

• **Listening and Analysis Effort:** Involves all of the comprehension-oriented activities, from analysis of the acoustic features of incoming sounds, to the recognition of certain sound sequences as words in the source language, to the interpretation of the meaning of words and sentences.

• **Production Effort:** The output part of interpreting, which involves all of the operations extending from the mental representation of the message to be delivered to speech planning and the performance of the speech plan.

• **Short-Term Memory Effort:** Involves operations that occur continuously while interpreting. First, short-term memory operations are required because of the lag between the moment speech sounds are heard and the moment they are analyzed. Moreover, short-term memory also comes into play between the time speech sounds are analyzed and formulated as ideas and the time it takes to produce speech. The Short-term Memory Effort can be intensified due to situational issues or language-specific factors (e.g., the speaker’s accent is difficult to understand, the speech is unclear due to poor logic or the sheer density of the information presented). It is also more difficult to remember information if the source language is syntactically different, with embedded structures, from the target language, causing the interpreter to reformulate speech segments earlier than normal.

These three efforts, along with a Coordination Effort, which is required to coordinate the other three efforts, are found in both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. The essence of the Effort Models implies that rather than an increased capacity (i.e., bigger storage) of the interpreter’s memory, it is the efficient management of information that contributes to the interpreter’s success.

**Consequences of Inadequate Short-Term Memory**

Memory plays a role at every stage of the interpreting process. Proper functioning of short-term memory involves:

• Efficient processing of sounds into recognized words and then into chunks of information, calling upon long-term memory as required to fill in any gaps.

• Effective storage of these information chunks.

• Timely recall of the information.

Inadequate short-term memory inevitably has negative consequences, some of which may not be obvious. The most obvious consequence of poor short-term memory is omission while interpreting, including:

• Omission of a qualifier (saying “powerful” instead of “extremely powerful,” or “a long speech” instead of “a long, boring speech”).

• Omission of a subordinate clause (“the thief was held down by store security”) instead of “the thief, who was caught red-handed, was held down by store security”).
The other obvious consequence of poor short-term memory is what may be termed “approximate interpreting.” For example, the interpreter recalls that the speaker said that X had a powerful impact on Y, but does not remember the degree of intensity meant by the speaker when using “powerful” (somewhat? fairly? very? extremely?). So, the interpreter may opt for “fairly powerful” as a safe bet, when the speaker had actually talked about an extremely powerful impact. The interpreter could also choose a neutral (and somewhat meaningless) linking word (e.g., “and”) because he or she cannot remember if the link between ideas was one of addition, opposition, or consequence! In the worst-case scenarios, poor short-term memory leads the interpreter to total inaccuracy, such as describing a suspect as wearing a “brown jacket” instead of a “blue jacket.”

Less obvious but nevertheless serious consequences can result when memory requirements are greater than memory capacity. For instance, saturation may occur when the source and target languages are syntactically very different from each other, thereby forcing the interpreter to store a large amount of information for long periods before being able to reformulate it. This saturation can lead to the interpreter not having enough memory capacity to complete the task. Moreover, the higher the density of the informational content of the source-language speech, the harder it is for the interpreter to remember all of the chunks of information. This is particularly true in the case of enumerations, which are dense, as they consist of information elements put next to each other without grammatical or other low-density words in between.

To alleviate a number of these memory issues, as well as to retrieve more chunks of information from memory, interpreters can take notes during consecutive or simultaneous interpreting. Names, numbers, and dates must be noted, since they are difficult, if not impossible, to retain in memory, especially when there are several of them grouped together. The same is true, although for different reasons and to a different extent, of all lists and difficult technical terms.

Since understanding is necessary for information to be stored in short-term memory efficiently, anything that is strange or new to the interpreter needs to be noted before it can be analyzed. However, the more notes an interpreter takes, the less his or her focus is on the Listening and Analysis Effort, which is essential for good interpreting. Hence the importance for interpreters to enhance their short-term memory by all possible means.

**General Guidelines for Exercises for Enhancing Short-Term Memory**

As mentioned earlier, proper functioning of short-term memory involves: 1) efficient processing of sounds into recognized words and then into chunks of information, 2) effective storage of these chunks, and 3) timely recall of the chunks of information. While it would be good to work on each of these aspects separately, this is unfortunately not possible, since the only way to verify efficient processing of sounds into words and units of meaning, as well as their effective storage in short-term memory, is through recall in one form or another. So, the exercises proposed in the following sections will involve all of these aspects, although the length of the speech span processed and stored, as well as the timing of recall (how quickly recall takes place), will vary.

Memory exercises should simulate actual interpreting as closely as possible, since the specific goal is to enhance memory for interpreting purposes. However, memory exercises should not involve bilingual transfer, since the latter leads to different problems that may take the focus off memory. The same exercises may be done alternately in both of the interpreter’s languages; in fact, doing so is highly recommended.

Memory in interpreting cannot be considered in a vacuum. It is related to listening to and analyzing a text on the one hand, and to producing it in another language on the other. Memory in interpreting deals with text, which is generally made up of more than a word or a series of unrelated words. Therefore, numbers and words in lists are not good candidates for short-term memory retention exercises. This is even more true for letters, since recall of a group of unrelated letters is not a normal mental activity. For realistic development of short-term memory we need to use short texts, where individual words can be analyzed in context and retained as chunks of information, rather than merely as acoustic units or visuo-spatial units.

The exercises discussed here will not be promoting mnemonic techniques, although at first sight they seem particularly suited for interpreters seeking to improve their memory. Mnemonics are memory techniques for remembering information that is otherwise quite difficult to recall. Mnemonic techniques show you how to code information vividly, using stories, strong mental images, familiar journeys, and so on. The key idea of mnemonics is that by coding information presented through language using vivid mental images, you can reliably code both the information and how it is structured. And because the images are vivid, they are easy to recall when you need them.

These techniques would no doubt work well if you were trying to memorize a list of counties for an exam, but if you heard this list in a speech you were interpreting you would certainly not have the time to think of suitable images or concoct a relevant story while you continued to listen to and analyze the next segment, or to reproduce a previous segment in the target language.

**Suggested Exercises**

All of the exercises suggested here can be used by a single interpreter, by a group of interpreters...
working together, or by an instructor teaching an interpreting course.

**Exercise 1: Shadowing**

Shadowing involves repeating what a speaker says, word for word, in the same language. It generally involves staying a word or two behind the speaker as one repeats what has been said. This lag can be increased slowly as the one doing the shadowing becomes more comfortable with the exercise. Shadowing is an exercise that is usually practiced in preparation for simultaneous interpreting, since it teaches the interpreter to listen and speak at the same time. For example:

**Speaker:** The suspect was handcuffed and placed in the police car.

**Interpreter:** [Lag] The suspect [Lag] was handcuffed [Lag] and placed in the police car.

Shadowing is also a good exercise for memory development, since it forces the interpreter to store and recall small groups of sounds, words, and chunks of information in a relatively short period of time. However, this exercise is complicated by the fact that the speaker continues to speak while the interpreter is recalling a previous segment. Since this forces the interpreter to listen and speak at the same time, which increases the level of difficulty of the exercise, he or she may not derive full benefit from this exercise for memory development purposes—at least not at the start of memory training. This is where shadowing with a twist comes into play (see Exercise 2).

**Material for Exercise:** Any type of text would be suitable. The initial texts should not be more than about 100 words, although they can get progressively longer. Here is a sample text:

*The morning of October 17 we were on routine patrol in town. At 1:15 a.m. we were dispatched to the Polecat Bar to investigate an assault call. When we arrived at the bar approximately five minutes later, an ambulance was parked in front. We proceeded directly into the establishment and observed activity behind the bar in the kitchen. When we entered the kitchen, we observed a female subject lying on the floor. The two ambulance attendants said the woman had suffered a knife wound, but was still alive. We instructed them to get her to the hospital right away.*

**Preparation:** If you are practicing on your own, you will need to prerecord the selected texts using a normal rate of speech. However, if you are pressed for time, you could practice shadowing using short spans of speech (preferably news items) heard on the radio or television. If you are working with a group, you could have one person read out the selected text while another shadows it.

**Exercise 2: Shadowing with a Twist**

Shadowing with a twist, like conventional shadowing, involves repeating exactly what a speaker says in the same language. However, in shadowing with a twist, this repetition is done after a short pause following the speaker’s utterance, which makes the shadowing more like consecutive interpreting. This adjustment to conventional shadowing eliminates the difficulties related to listening and speaking at the same time and allows the interpreter to focus specifically on memory. For example:

**Speaker:** The suspect [Pause] was handcuffed [Pause] and placed in the police car.

**Interpreter:** [Lag] The suspect [Lag] was handcuffed [Lag] and placed in the police car.

Additional twists can be added to shadowing by making the repeated utterance span longer and longer until it reaches a full sentence.

**Material for Exercise:** The same as for Exercise 1.

**Preparation:** You will first need to divide the selected texts into short speaking segments. Next, you must prerecord the texts using a normal rate of speech, but pausing between the speech segments.

**Exercise 3: Freer Shadowing with a Twist**

This exercise should be done once the interpreter has practiced shadowing with a twist and can repeat longer utterances without a problem. This is where the interpreter should test not only acoustic memory (memory of sounds), but also his or her memory of meaning. In this exercise the interpreter does not just repeat blindly what has been said, but, where possible, says the same thing using other words. For example:

**Speaker:** The suspect was handcuffed [Pause] and placed in the police car.

**Interpreter:** [Lag] Handcuffs were put on the suspect [Lag] and he was placed in the police car.

Or even:

**Interpreter:** [Lag] Handcuffs were put on the suspect [Lag] and placed in the police car.
This type of slightly freer rendering or paraphrasing of the original is often frowned upon in court interpreter training, where it is considered a dangerous first step toward “free translation,” which is a no-no in the legal environment. However, this practice is harmless enough as one element of a memory exercise.

**Material and Preparation:** The same as for Exercise 2.

**Exercise 4: Attentive Listening for Key Elements**

Careful listening is an important element of memory recall. If you have not listened attentively to something, it is impossible to recall it later. First and foremost, attentive listening involves identifying the key points of an utterance. For example, you should be able to listen to a short narrative or descriptive text (about 100 words) and answer the key questions “Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?” (or as many of these questions as applicable). For example:

*It was about eight o’clock. I was watching TV, CNN. Then I went to the kitchen to get a drink of water. At that time the four men came in from the back door, which was open to let in some fresh air. They had something covering their faces. Like ski masks—balaclavas. They came right into the kitchen. Then, one of them said that they wanted money and jewelry. And at once they told me to turn around and not look at them and then to lie down on the floor, so I did, because I knew that I didn’t have any choice.*

After listening to this text, you should be able to identify the following key points:

- **Who?** Speaker + four robbers
- **What?** Home invasion
- **Where?** In speaker’s home
- **When?** Around eight p.m.
- **Why?** Robbery
- **How?** Robbers using balaclavas, asking speaker to lie on the floor and not look at them

While not all of these questions would necessarily be pertinent in every case, the ability to answer most of them would indicate attentive listening for key points.

**Material for Exercise:** Any narrative text or descriptive text would be suitable. If you are a court interpreter, you can extract a suitable narrative from the opening address of a trial or from witness testimony. The initial texts should not be more than about 100 words, although they can get progressively longer.

**Preparation:** If you are practicing on your own, you will need to prerecord the selected texts using a normal rate of speech. If you are working with a group, you could have one person read out the selected text while another identifies the key elements.

**Exercise 5: Progressive Expansion of Recall**

Good memory has to be developed gradually. One cannot move from forgetting about half of what one hears to remembering it all. The following exercise has been created bearing this in mind. It is based on a 50-60-word speech utterance and involves recalling first the main ideas and then, during a second or even third pass, recalling progressively more details. Here is a sample text:

*My husband, Peter Thomas, was killed by a young man driving a stolen car. He had phoned me at noon to tell me he was going to the bank during his lunch hour; and five minutes later he was crossing the street when he was struck down. He was killed instantly. I was devastated when I heard the news.*

First, the interpreter must listen to the text once and identify the main ideas, such as:

1) My husband was run over by a car.
2) He was killed instantly.
3) I was devastated.

Next, the interpreter must listen once again to the text and then add more details to the main ideas. For example:

1) My husband was run over by a stolen car as he was crossing the street.
2) He was killed instantly.
3) I was devastated by the news.

Finally, the interpreter should listen one more time and then recall all of the details (including the name of the husband).

Not being expected to recall all of the details from the start allows the interpreter to be more relaxed and to remember more than he or she would if tense. As the interpreter becomes more proficient at recall, the number of times he or she listens to the text can be reduced from three to two. The size of the practice text can also be increased to 70, 80, or even 100 words. The ultimate goal is to be able to reproduce, after listening just once, all of the details found in an utterance that is around 50 words.

**Material for Exercise:** Any narrative text would be suitable. If you are a court interpreter, you can extract a suitable narrative from witness testimony. The initial texts should not be more than about 50 words, although they can get progressively longer.
Preparation: If you are practicing on your own, you will need to prerecord the selected texts using a normal rate of speech. If you are working with a group, you could have one person read out the selected text while another identifies the key elements.

Exercise 6: Visualization

Most people are visual learners, meaning that they remember things they see (images) better than something they are told or see on paper. An example would be picturing the homes you have lived in over your lifetime. You can see the images of the houses or apartments in your head, even though you may not remember the house numbers or streets. Images stay in your head longer than abstract information. For this reason, mnemonics suggest that you use visualization to retain different types of information, thereby artificially creating mental images. For instance, one way to remember the term stratovolcano (a type of volcano) is to visualize a mountain with a straight side (strat = straight) with a series of o’s climbing up it. However, given that this type of image is artificial, it takes time to create. Such visualization is therefore not practical for an interpreter.

However, there are utterances that lend themselves naturally to visualization, and the interpreter should recognize them and use visualization to retain and recall them.

Court interpreters are often required to interpret descriptions of what a witness saw (a place, a suspect, etc.). These descriptions are ideal for the use of visualization for memorization. Let’s use the following example, taken from a pre-trial detention hearing (United States vs. Leopoldo Suarez and Manuel Lopez). The government attorney is questioning a U.S. customs officer about stopping a vessel and searching it. This is what the officer had to say:

The vessel was listing to the starboard side as it went up the river and looked suspicious. The customs patrol brought the vessel back to the customs house and conducted a search. When they opened the hatch, they could smell fresh paint and the paint was still wet, so they opened the area and there were 350 packages of cocaine concealed in a hidden compartment.

The entire scene can be visualized in a sequence of four images:

1. The vessel going up river, tilting to starboard.
2. The customs patrol stopping the vehicle, bringing it back to the customs house.
3. The customs patrol opening the hatch and smelling and seeing fresh paint.
4. The customs patrol searching and finding a hidden compartment containing a large number of packages of cocaine.

This step-by-step visualization would help the interpreter reconstruct the entire scene. The only element that is hard to visualize is the number of packages (350), but even that can be remembered through association (another mnemonic technique). For example, 350 is almost equivalent to a full year.

Visualization exercises can be completed by oral recall or, in some cases, by drawing the images involved. In other words, memory recall does not have to be through words in every case.

Material for Exercise: Any narrative or descriptive text would be suitable.

If you are a court interpreter, you can extract a suitable narrative from the opening address of a trial or a description from witness testimony. The initial texts should not be more than about 50-60 words, although they can get progressively longer.

Preparation: If you are practicing on your own, you will need to prerecord the selected texts using a normal rate of speech. If you are working with a group, you could have one person read out the selected text while another identifies the key elements.

Exercise 7: Segmentation

This exercise is based on the concept that it is easier to retain a number of limited chunks of information than one or two larger dense chunks. Segmentation involves breaking up a larger chunk of information into two or more smaller chunks. For instance, the following sentence can be segmented as indicated:

I was at the local bar when I met a person by the name of Ricardo, whom I now know to be a sergeant in the police department working with the Drug Enforcement Administration.

1. I was at the local bar.
2. There I met somebody called Ricardo.
3. Now I know he is a police sergeant.
4. He is working with the Drug Enforcement Administration.

This exercise can be performed using both written texts and oral.
texts, preferably starting with the former and ending with the latter. The segmentation itself can be done either in writing or orally.

**Material for Exercise:** Any long sentences would be suitable for this exercise, although the denser the information they contain the more challenging they will be. The sentences should contain at least three separable chunks of information. If you are a court interpreter, you can extract suitable sentences from court transcripts (e.g., the opening address of a trial or even witness testimony).

**Preparation:** If you are doing this exercise using written material (i.e., reading the sentences), you will not need to do any further preparation. However, while doing the exercise, you will have to be disciplined enough to read the sentence only once before doing the segmentation. If you are doing this exercise using oral material while practicing on your own, you will need to prerecord the selected sentences using a normal rate of speech. If you are working with a group, you could have one person read out the selected sentence while another segments it.

**Exercise 8: Recognizing Incoherent or Ambiguous Messages**

Speakers are often unclear. They may speak incoherently (i.e., in a disjointed, illogical way). Their speech can also be ambiguous (i.e., using words with an obscure meaning or a double meaning). Incoherent or ambiguous speech is generally hard to remember and recall. This exercise is intended to help you recognize incoherence or ambiguity in speech, which is one way of remembering and recalling it. After listening to a relatively incoherent or ambiguous text you should be able to identify what aspect is incoherent or ambiguous and what makes it so. Here are two examples:

*Flying planes can be dangerous.*

This sentence is ambiguous because “flying planes” can describe either: 1) planes that are in flight, or 2) being a pilot.

**John asked Matt to be quiet. Then he got angry.**

The second sentence is incoherent because the referent “he” is not clear. If “he” refers to John, the sentence is illogical because there is nothing to indicate that Matt turned down his request to be quiet.

Once the incoherence or ambiguity has been recognized, it can be recalled and dealt with at the production stage of interpreting. The way that incoherence and ambiguity are dealt with varies according to the interpreting situation. In a conference setting, for example, the interpreter clarifies the ambiguity in most cases and certainly removes any obvious incoherence. In a courtroom setting, however, the interpreter is bound to reproduce the ambiguity or the incoherence as best he or she can, since those elements may reflect the speaker’s educational background or intentions or character. The purpose of this specific exercise is merely to identify the segment that is ambiguous or incoherent in an attempt to remember it, and not to deal with it in any particular way.

**Material for Exercise:** You will need to find sentences or passages that are ambiguous or incoherent. You should start collecting such material as you come across it.

**Preparation:** If you are doing this exercise using written material (i.e., reading the sentences you have selected), you will not need to do any further preparation. However, in doing the exercise, you will have to be disciplined enough to read the sentence only once before attempting to identify the ambiguity or incoherence. If you are doing this exercise using oral material while practicing on your own, you will need to pre-record the selected sentences using a normal rate of speech. If you are working with a group, you could have one person read out the selected sentence while another identifies the ambiguity or incoherence.

**Exercise 9: Remembering Messages with Which You Disagree or Which You Find Offensive**

Confirmation bias (also called confirmatory bias or my side bias) describes a tendency to favor information that confirms a personal belief or hypothesis. People display this bias when they gather or remember information selectively, or when they interpret it in a biased way. The effect is stronger for emotionally charged issues and for deeply entrenched beliefs. Even if people have sought to interpret evidence in a neutral manner, they may still remember it selectively to reinforce their expectations. This effect is called “selective recall,” “confirmatory memory,” or “access-biased memory.” In short, it is harder to remember information that is contrary to what we believe.

One way of dealing with such information is to put yourself in the incoherence or ambiguity in speech, which is one way of remembering and recalling it. After listening to a relatively incoherent or ambiguous text you should be able to identify what aspect is incoherent or ambiguous and what makes it so. Here are two examples:

*Flying planes can be dangerous.*

This sentence is ambiguous because “flying planes” can describe either: 1) planes that are in flight, or 2) being a pilot.

**John asked Matt to be quiet. Then he got angry.**

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One way of dealing with such information is to put yourself in the speaker’s place. In other words, take yourself out of the picture and identify with the speaker. In so doing, you are temporarily denying your personal beliefs and prejudices and assuming those of the speaker. To practice this, start by summarizing a controversial text and then move on to freer shadowing with a twist on the same text.

**Material for Exercise:** Any controversial text would be suitable, although what is controversial for one person may not be so for another. The following text on the *hijab* could be considered controversial:

*The burqa is the ultimate visual symbol of female oppression. It is the weapon of radical Muslim men who want to see Sharia law brought worldwide, and would love women to be hidden, unseen, and unheard. It is totally out of place in a civi*
lized country. Precisely because it is impossible to distinguish between the woman who is choosing to wear a burka and the girl who has been forced to cover herself and live behind a veil, I believe it should be banned. The burka is not a religious sign, “it’s a sign of servitude ... we cannot accept that women be prisoners behind a screen, deprived of all identity.”

The initial practice texts should not be more than about 100 words, although they can get progressively longer.

**Preparation:** If practicing on your own, you will need to prerecord the selected texts using a normal rate of speech. If you are working with a group, you could have one person read out the selected text while another does the summarizing or shadowing.

**Exercise 10: Using Notes to Jog Memory**

Interpreters must always be prepared to take notes when interpreting because jotting down “key reminders” aids memory. However, a problem arises when note-taking takes away from attentive listening, because the interpreter is too busy taking notes to analyze what is being said.

There is consensus on the items that cannot be readily remembered without notes, including proper names, numbers, dates, and lists. How much other information requires note-taking seems to vary according to a number of factors: the length of the speech, the density of the information, and, of course, the interpreter’s memory skills.

This exercise is intended to train the interpreter to take notes, starting with only proper names, numbers, dates, and lists, and then progressing to ideas. The goal is for the interpreter to discover how much note-taking he or she requires to be able to reproduce a source message accurately and completely. The sample text here shows how to use this technique:

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**West Virginia** will be one of seven states partnering with the federal government in a subsidized health plan that allows consumers who don't qualify for Medicaid or employer-provided insurance to buy private care on a sliding scale. As part of the Affordable Care Act, the state also will expand Medicaid eligibility. A family of four that now earns more than $8,240 is ineligible, but next year the cutoff will rise to $82,499. About 133,500 more people will qualify, according to recent state estimates.

During the first go-around, the interpreter listens to this dense text and notes down, at most, the seven elements underlined above. After this, the interpreter should try to reproduce the content he or she heard in the same language. After this first attempt, the interpreter listens again to the text to identify what was missed. Then the recording is played again, with the interpreter adding to his or her notes any other elements considered essential. At the end of this second round of note-taking, the interpreter will again reproduce the content of the original in the same language. Finally, the interpreter listens to the original text once more to see how completely and accurately he or she has been able to reproduce the text.

**Material for Exercise:** Any text containing names, numbers, and/or dates would be suitable. The texts should not be more than about 100 words.

**Preparation:** If you are practicing on your own, you will need to prerecord the selected texts using a normal rate of speech. If you are working with a group, you could have one person read out the selected text while another does the note-taking and the subsequent reproduction of the source text.

**Make Your Practice a Routine**

Practicing exercises for memory improvement is similar to doing physical exercise for weight loss from several different viewpoints:

- Both types of exercise need to be done regularly to be effective.
- Both types of exercise can be used not only for improvement in memory or weight, but also for maintenance at a high level.
- Both types of exercise require variety to be most effective. In other words, doing the same exercise every day (and even worse, with the same material) will not be of great value.
- Both types of exercise take some time for their effect to be felt.
- The effect of both types of exercise can be measured to some extent using scales for weight loss exercise and the ear-voice span for memory exercise.
- Both types of exercise require effort on the part of their users.

The effort required on the part of interpreters using memory exercises involves identifying suitable exercises, finding appropriate practice material, and preparing the material for use. While there are some prepared exercises and material avail-
Enhancing Short-Term Memory for Accurate Interpreting Continued

able, they are not all equally effective. Perhaps some of the more innovative exercises that have been proposed here could be done using available recordings. This would save interpreters the time and effort required to find material from scratch and prepare them for use. It would also encourage them to get started right away on a personal program for memory enhancement.

Notes


Upcoming Events

July 31-August 2, 2014
Court Interpreter Services
Arkansas Administrative Office of the Courts
“Legal Interpreting Seminar for Interpreters in the Judiciary”
Little Rock, AR
https://courts.arkansas.gov/event/legal-interpreting-seminar

August 4-6, 2014
International Federation of Translators
2014 World Congress
Berlin, Germany
www.fit2014.org

August 7-9, 2014
Nebraska Association for Translators & Interpreters
15th Annual Regional Conference
“Translation and Interpretation: Making Culturally Competent Global Communication Possible”
Omaha, NE
www.natihq.org

August 24-27, 2014
Translate in the Laurentians
Estérel, Quebec, Canada
translateinthelaurentians.com

September 13-14, 2014
Tennessee Association of Professional Interpreters & Translators
Annual Conference
Nashville, TN
www.tapit.org

September 18-19, 2014
European Commission
Directorate-General for Translation
First Translating Europe Forum
Brussels, Belgium
http://europa.eu/!Yn33fv

Visit the ATA Calendar Online
www.atanet.org/calendar/

for a more comprehensive look at upcoming events.