

Perception of Anticipation Prompts by Trainees in Simultaneous Interpreting

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This article aims to summarize some preliminary findings of research into anticipation prompts influencing the selection of proper sense trajectories by trainee interpreters in simultaneous conference interpreting (SI). The research derives from Chernov's concept of 'message development probability anticipation' perceived as "a multi-level mechanism" (Chernov, 2004:93) which causes simultaneous interpreters to be constantly exposed to various categories of anticipation prompts. These prompts/signals/inferences are either perception-based (recognition of syntagmatic units of various language ranks: lexical, syntactic, prosodic), or extra-linguistic (subjective and situational inferences). Their role is to reduce the number of sense trajectories to a single trajectory that is subsequently verified against the actual (source) production of the speaker. Since anticipation prompts co-occur, it is cognitively very difficult to separate them consciously from each other and identify the key prompt for a particular segment. The experiment was conducted in laboratory conditions with a group of 8 SI trainee interpreters with only a few weeks experience in SI, but having a sound linguistic background. The SI trainees were exposed to source segments with pre-selected anticipation peaks and pairs of possible sense trajectories conveyed in the form of linguistic generalizations. After electing a particular sense trajectory, trainees were to opt for the prompt they considered most relevant in their decision-making. The experiment aimed to test how SI segments of various language ranks and subjectively pre-selected anticipation peaks may influence anticipation success rates in terms of the interaction between the rank/token and prompt categories. The preliminary findings collected were intended to serve as starting grounds for further research into the relevance of anticipation training within the SI training curricula.

Keywords: *probabilistic model of anticipation, anticipated sense trajectories, anticipation prompts, saturation of anticipation prompts, anticipation peak, anticipation success rates, training in simultaneous interpreting*

1. Definition of working concepts

1.1 Anticipation in simultaneous interpreting

The knowledge of anticipation strategies is generally considered an indispensable component of the specialist skills equipment of simultaneous interpreters. Anticipation is perceived as the interpreter's delivery that is accomplished prior to the completion of the source segment (Lederer, 1978:330). Anticipation is a cognitive operation taking place throughout the process of simultaneous interpreting aiding SI interpreters to unveil potential sense trajectories and single out the actual one. In Chernov's psychological probabilistic model, anticipation is treated as the ability to predict the most probable development of a message thanks to the interpreter being exposed to co-occurring signals: " (it is) ... a multi-level mechanism, operating on a hierarchy of levels" (Chernov, 2004:93). As to its cognitive domain, it may be located somewhere on the borderline between conscious and subconscious operations, as the range of probable sense trajectories is emerging as if subconsciously while the final subjective choice is

made consciously (ibid.). The success of the selection process is tested immediately against the actual production of the speaker, which allows SI interpreters to build and extend their individual mental anticipation registries on an ongoing basis.

1.2 *Anticipation prompts, their saturation and overlap*

Both the experiment-driven findings of researchers as well as the experience of practising interpreters endorse the idea of simultaneous multi-rank exposure of SI interpreters to anticipation prompts (Chernov, 2004, Jones 2002, Lederer 1978, Gillies 2013, etc.). This basically means that during the perception process SI interpreters are constantly exposed to co-occurring anticipation prompts (also termed symbols, signals, factors, inferences) of different categories. *Anticipation prompts* are mental hints that guide the potential development of a message in the minds of SI interpreters. They are admitted to fall within two general categories; they are either perception-based/language-motivated/based on syntagmatic units (lexical, syntactic, speech-act, prosodic, context), or extra-linguistic: subjective and situational inferences.

According to Lederer, "...a clear distinction should be made between anticipation based on sense expectation and anticipation based on language prediction" (Lederer, 1978: 331). Lederer thus separates sense units from syntactic units, and sense anticipation from language prediction (ibid). Jones (2002), Chernov (2004), and others, on the other hand, point out that anticipation signals come from different sources: linguistic, situational and contextual, and they tend to overlap. The prompts activate the interpreter's expectations of the probable development of the discourse by opening several sense trajectories whose number is expected to be gradually reduced to a single sense trajectory. The felicity of the final choice is tested immediately against the accomplished source production.

To exemplify the point, we have chosen the following Slovak segment where syntactic prompts are interacting with the supra-segmental context:

*Spolu sme sa počas 25 rokov snažili zlepšovať život v regióne, podporovať iniciatívy v miestnych komunitách, ale aj v neformálnom vzdelávaní a rozvoji občianskej spoločnosti. **Naše grantové programy podporujú firmy z regiónu**, bez ktorých by sme to robiť nemohli: (names of local companies)... a mnohí ďalší stáli pri nás počas tých rokov.*

The English glossing of the segment *Naše grantové programy podporujú firmy z regiónu* may be rendered as follows: 'Our grant/subsidy schemes support firms from the region'. As to its rank characteristics, the segment may be considered as primarily a syntactic/valency language token. The first noun phrase of the Slovak segment *Naše grantové programy* opens two possible sense trajectories in terms of cognitive valency restrictions: 1) Agentive Subject – Action Verb – Beneficiary Object, or 2) Beneficiary Object – Action Verb – Agentive Subject. Basically, the problem consists in correct identification of 'who is supporting whom', i.e. if subsidies are provided to the local companies or the local companies provide resources to subsidy schemes. These two sense trajectories are admissible in this Slovak segment because of the case syncretism, i.e. the Slovak nominative and accusative forms of the masculine and feminine declension paradigms *program* and *firma*, respectively, are identical. Actually, out of 24 Slovak inflectional nominal paradigms only four paradigms formally distinguish between NOM and ACC cases by inflectional flagging (Janigová, 2016:71), which resembles the lack of NOM/ACC contrast in English. However, syntactic implications are different in the two of

the languages in that although both English and Slovak are typologically SVO languages (Dryer, 2013), the Slovak word order is not grammaticalized to such an extent as the English word order (where it would only allow the sense trajectory with SVO chain: 1. Agentive Subject – Action Verb – Beneficiary Object), in Slovak it allows both of the above readings: variant 1) would be read as SVO, and variant 2) would activate the opposite reading of clause components OVS, i.e. Beneficiary Object – Action Verb – Agentive Subject. Variant 2 may be used in order to rhematize the Agentive Subject.

The syntactically-motivated anticipation peak that may be quite intuitively placed after the first noun phrase as a possible Subject/Agent may or may not turn felicitous. The problem is that it may not even be placed safely after the verb or after the second noun phrase, since it is determined neither by the valency of the verb *podporujú*, nor any inflectional indicator that would flag *firmy* as the Subject or Object. What may be generalized as a rule to be stored in the mental anticipation registry of an SK/EN trainee interpreter is that when an inanimate noun (the four major Slovak animate declension paradigms display the required nominative-accusative contrast) stands in the pre-verb position in the Slovak sentence, the anticipation peak tends to come later – after the post-verb element, since the latter may either be interpreted as the Subject or the Object of the segment, and the interpreter would reach out for a supra-segmental prompt to determine the appropriate sense trajectory. In the segment under analysis, the appropriate option seemed to be the variant 2) 'the firms support our grant schemes', which was activated by the supra-segmental context which followed and also preceded the segment as the speaker was thanking the local firms for their financial aid even in the preceding segments.

As was suggested, anticipation prompts of respective categories tend to co-occur and overlap. Their co-occurrence, or redundancy, is, nevertheless, desirable as, according to Chernov: "...the higher the redundancy of the discourse, the higher the probability of correct anticipation of its development..." (Chernov, 2004:93). The redundant anticipation prompts saturate around the *anticipation peak* that may be understood as a point when the interpreter is subjectively confident in having enough information to choose the appropriate sense trajectory. The post-anticipation peak delivery of the interpreter is subsequently tested against the actual production of the speaker, and it may be expressed in terms of delivery success rates.

In fact, the co-occurrence of anticipation prompts and their saturation is what makes the preparation of SI anticipation training segments a tricky task. Although the final choice of the sense trajectory is made consciously, it might be quite difficult to realize and verbalize which category of prompt has actually been crucial in identifying the most probable sense trajectory. In the empirical part of the research it was therefore hypothesized that if the selection of anticipation training segments is motivated by language ranks and tokens, it may facilitate trainees' perception of the operation of concrete anticipation prompts which may then be reflected in delivery success rates.

2 The empirical part

2.1 Description of the experiment

The experiment was conducted in laboratory conditions with a group of 8 SI trainees with a few weeks SI training experience, but having a sound linguistic background. The experimental English audio sample consisted of a set of 51 audio segments junked around the pre-selected anticipation peaks. The selection of anticipation peaks was rank- and token-motivated to

demonstrate the operation of respective categories of anticipation prompts. Respondents were asked to do SI from English into Slovak until the audio segment stopped and then enter the anticipated Slovak sense trajectory in the datasheet by opting for one of the two possible sense trajectories indicated by general linguistic tokens. The linguistic tokens represented various language structures and linguistic phenomena with which students were familiarized during their theoretical linguistic studies. Beside the linguistic navigators, the datasheets also contained transcripts of the source oral segments and multiple-choice lists of anticipation prompts – lexis, syntax, intonation, subjective inference; the situational and contextual inferences were blocked by the laboratory conditions of the experiment, although respondents could have pointed them out if they felt so. Respondents were asked to tick the major prompts and scale them 3-2-1 to show their subjectively perceived relevance for the identification of the intended sense trajectory, however, only the most prominent prompt was examined further in the present research. The experimental oral segments were ranked with 11 categories of linguistic tokens of two ranks, namely lexis and syntax, with prevalence of the latter. Lexical tokens operated on collocational ties and lexical cohesion. Syntactic tokens focused on existential frames, rhematizing pseudo/clefts, complex-compound sentence arrangements, valency-based issues, end-of-sentence versus listing appositive indicators, thematic route of the Subject and implications related to the use of semi-clauses.

The experiment aimed to obtain some preliminary findings on the ability of SI interpreters to identify the relevance of the respective categories of prompts in anticipating the actual sense trajectory, to survey their awareness of the overlap of the prompts of respective types and to elaborate on the interaction between the redundancy of the prompts and the correct discourse development choices. The experiment was intended to test if SI segments pre-selected as to their anticipation peaks and tailored to demonstrate the force of respective prompts may aid in SI training in terms of increasing the delivery success rates and strengthening confidence of SI trainees.

2.2 *Data analysis*

2.2.1 *Delivery success rate*

The results of the experiment generated from datasheets were processed and evaluated in terms of the interplay between the successful choice of the appropriate/admissible sense trajectory (conveyed by the delivery success rate) and the relevance of the anticipation prompts identified by respondents. Each of the respondents worked with 51 segments, 408 segments were analysed in total. In 8 out of 51 segments the anticipation peak was motivated lexically, the rest (43 segments) focused on the syntactic issues listed in 2.1 and in Table 2 below. First, the answers were assessed against the actual sense trajectory by the percent delivery success rate in individual segments/ 8 respondents; segment-individual success rates were indicated next to the correct choice out of the two suggested options of sense trajectories; the correct sense trajectory was bolded out. Second, the average success rate per token was calculated. Finally, the average success rate has been correlated with the linguistic tokens and the prompts identified. A cross-rank (lexical versus syntactic tokens) could not have been done safely due to a disproportion of rank/tokens as indicated above (8 lexical-rank to 43 syntax-rank segments, 2 lexical to 9 syntactic tokens).

Commentary: Within existential frames, respondents fully identified (with 100% certainty) the adjective relative clause (Dušková, 1988:615) postmodifying the postponed cognitive Subject as the appropriate sense trajectory which they preferred to any coordination or listing appositive tokens. The syntactic prompt was perceived as the most relevant, followed by the intonation which was supposed to be relevant in excluding the listing apposition.

4 Rhematizing pseudo/clefts

What I like most about the artworks (50)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|--|----------|------------|
| a) Postmodifying that relative clause | 4 | 50% |
| b) Copular be + Subject Complement (Rheme) | 4 | |

What I like here (49)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|---|----------|--------------|
| a) Postmodifying that relative clause | 1 | |
| b) Copular be + Subject Complement (Rheme) | 7 | 87.5% |

Number of segments: 8

Average success rate per token: 69%

Average relevance of prompts per token: Syntax 5.2 Intonation 2.2 Lexis 0.6

Commentary: The token was to test the rhematizing effect of pseudo/cleft dependent clauses introducing the rheme proper, i.e. functioning as rhematizers (Dušková, 2015:162). The choice was to be made between the Rheme proper and Postmodification of the syntactic item in the pseudo/cleft. The token success rate shows uncertainty of the respondents (69%), while the segment success rates show that the uncertainty was higher when the pseudo/cleft ended up with a noun phrase where Head plus Postmodification was expected in 50% of cases on average. Respondents considered the syntactic prompt as most relevant, however, they failed to work with intonation as an ancillary prompt aiding the recognition of the rhematic anticipated segment. This might open an area for further anticipation refinement in SI training.

5 Complex-compound clause relations: main-clause S/V or coordinated dependent clause

People who have fled their country and now (1)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|---|----------|---------------|
| a) Coordinated postmodifying relative clause | 7 | 75.62% |
| b) Main clause verb with People as subject | 1 | |

People who have fled their country and now live in a completely different environment (3)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|---|----------|---------------|
| a) Coordinated postmodifying relative clause | 2 | |
| b) Main clause verb with People as subject | 6 | 75.9 % |

Number of segments: 8

Average success rate per token: 75.62 %

Average relevance of prompts per token: Syntax 5.1 Intonation 2.2 Lexis 0.7

Commentary: The token success rate coincides with segment success rates indicating that respondents quite sensitively responded to the fluctuation of anticipation peaks of individual segments that were established in various positions relative to the conjunctions, adverbials or clauses. The token success rate and syntactic prompt safely cooccurred, followed by intonation.

6 Complex-compound sentence: contrast of positive-negative message development expectation

We didn't know if the boat would sink, if there was something wrong with it or if we would (6)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|---|----------|--------------|
| a) Coordinated object clause – negative circumstance | 5 | |
| b) Coordinated object clause – positive circumstance /contrast | 3 | 37.5% |

When you go to a foreign country, you start from square one and, overcoming the challenges you encounter one-by-one, (43)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|--|----------|-------------|
| a) Main clause verb – positive result | 8 | 100% |
| b) Main clause verb – negative result | 0 | |

Number of segments: 9

Average success rate per token: 74.1 %

Average relevance of prompts per token: Syntax 3.3 Intonation 3.8 Lexis 0.9

Commentary: Although this token was identified as syntax-motivated, it also involved context-based inferences, since respondents were aware that the general context of the segments were the experiences of refugees sailing in boats from Turkey or Libya to Greece. It should also be admitted that the syntactic prompts here were rather versatile – various combinations of coordinated or subordinated finite and non-finite clauses, accompanied with lexical prompts and intonation. The lesson learnt from this kind of token is that the more complex the syntactic structure used to signal the anticipation peak the higher the overlap of anticipation prompts; the saturation of anticipation prompts need not be safely identified, which is reflected in the fluctuation of segment success rates from 100% to 37.5%.

7 Valency

People who have fled their country and now live (2)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------|--------------|
| a) Object | 1 | |
| b) Adverbial | 7 | 87.5% |

War is destructive. It prevents a country from developing and showcasing (30)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| a) Another coordinated -ing clause | 2 | |
| b) Object noun phrase | 6 | 75% |

Number of segments: 5

Average success rate per token: 79.5 %

Average relevance of prompts per token: Syntax 4.4 Intonation 2.2 Lexis 1.4

Commentary: Valency as the quality of the Verb to determine the number and kinds of its obligatory elaborators (Van Valin, 2001:92) is a very important cognitive syntactic prompt included in the SI trainee's anticipation registry. The perception of valency ties resulted in an almost 80% token success rate. What might be interesting to examine further is what caused deviation of respondents' attention to the valency frames. Considering the small number of segments (5) in this token, it may be suggested only tentatively, based on the present experiment, that such deviation may intensify with a more complicated syntactic arrangement of the whole structure, and it may be reduced by a more precise tailoring of linguistic navigators (Object-Adverbial in segment 2).

8 Listing apposition

Metaphorically speaking, our entire life is a journey with many stops along the way. This is the meaning of travelling as portrayed by the bundles in the work of Kimsooja², which remind me of when we decided to abandon our country and had to pack our things: our clothes, (8)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| a) Listing apposition | 8 | 100% |
| b) Main clause | 0 | |

In Iraq, I really liked being outside with friends. We would find a spot, usually near a lake, and have barbecues, (48)

Anticipated segment:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| a) Coordinated main clause: listing activities | 8 |
| b) Adversary main clause | 0 |

Number of segments: 2

Average success rate per token: 100 %

Average relevance of prompts per token: Syntax 5 Intonation 3 Lexis

Commentary: Listing apposition was delivered by the respondents with 100-% token success rate (although the number of segments was only 2); with a more significant interplay between the syntactic prompts and intonation.

9 FSP Thematic route: Subject

My kids will never forget what we went through either. The three oldest ones often discuss what happened on the boat. Even when we were in Lavrio, whenever we approached the sea (18)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|--|----------|--------------|
| a) Main clause – they/we as Subject | 7 | 87.5% |
| b) Coordinated adverbial clause | 1 | |

Here in Thessaloniki, it was suggested that Khalida takes swimming lessons, but (19)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|--|----------|--------------|
| a) Main clause – she as Subject | 7 | 87.5% |
| b) Main clause – other Subject | 1 | |

She sees the water and (20)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|--|----------|-------------|
| a) Main clause – she as Subject | 8 | 100% |
|--|----------|-------------|

b) Main clause – other Subject 0

Number of segments: 3

Average success rate per token: 91.6 %

Average relevance of prompts per token: Syntax 3.3 Intonation 1.3 Lexis 0.6 Context 2.8

Commentary: The thematic route of Subject showed the third highest success rate per token with an interesting rise of syntactic context as the second most relevant anticipation prompt.

10 End of sentence

The work with the Parthenon struck me as a very good idea for the artist to talk about the years of crisis in Greece. In our country the war has left similar scars (21)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|------|
| a) End of sentence | 8 | 100% |
| b) Another noun phrase | 0 | |

You don't have anyone to tell your problems to. No one understands you. You are alone. There are many refugees who live in solitude (23)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|------|
| a) End of sentence | 8 | 100% |
| b) Coordinated main clause | 0 | |

Number of segments: 2

Average success rate per token: 100 %

Average relevance of prompts per token: Syntax 1.5 Intonation 6 Lexis 0.5

Commentary: Along with the listing apposition, the end of sentence token was the most successful. Respondents safely identified both the syntactic completeness of the structure as well as the message and claimed to be prominently guided by intonation.

11 Semi-clauses – syntactic implications

Semi-clause implies the subsequent syntactic frame

But then again, when you're in a foreign country and you don't know the language, you feel lonely. Language is very important in helping you communicate. Not being able to talk (22)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| a) Copula + subject complement (SVCs chain) | 5 | 72.5% |
| b) Main clause (SV/SVO) | 3 | |

Semi-clause is implied by previous syntactic frame

In Afghanistan, near my house, there was a football field where we all gathered together with our friends (29)

Anticipated segment:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-------|
| a) - ing clause | 5 | 72.5% |
| b) Coordinated relative clause | 3 | |

Number of segments: 2

Average success rate per token: 72.5 %

Average relevance of prompts per token: Syntax 0.5 Intonation 4 Lexis 3.5

Commentary: Interestingly enough, this token was dominated by intonation as the major prompt as it guided safely 5 out of 8 respondents in determining the anticipated structure; nevertheless, irrelevance of the syntactic prompt seems to be somewhat underestimated.

3. Interpretation of results and preliminary findings

Table 2 Summary chart – success rates by tokens and their interplay with respective prompts

Rank	Linguistic tokens	Number of segments	Success rate in % per token	Prompt scaling syntax-intonation-lexis	Major prompt
Lexis	1.Collocations 2.Lexical cohesion	8	80 %	2-2-4	Lexis
Syntax	3. Existential frames	4	93 %	5-2-1	Syntax
	4.Rhematizing pseudo/clefts	8	69 %	5.2-2.2-0.6	Syntax
	5.Complex-compound clause relations	8	75.62 %	5.1-2.2-0.7	Syntax
	6.Complex-compound + contrast	9	74.1 %	3.3-3.8-0.9	Intonation
	7.Valency issues	5	79.5 %	4.4-2.2-1.4	Syntax
	8.Listing apposition	2	100 %	5-3-0	Syntax
	9.Thematic route - Subject	3	91.6 %	3.3-1.3-0.6 + context 2,8	Syntax
	10. End of sentence	2	100 %	1.5-6-0.5	Intonation
	11. Semi-clause	2	72.5 %	0.5-4-3.5	Intonation
		Total number of segments per respondent Total number of segments analysed	8+ 43= 51 51 x 8 = 408		
	The average success rate		83.53%	Average major prompt	Syntax

Prompt scaling column indicates the average opting for a particular prompt by 8 respondents, the sum total should therefore equal 8, except for the thematic route where context was also indicated with a high average relevance.

The results may be interpreted as follows:

- the average success rate is rather high – 83.53%, which means that with 340.8 segments the anticipated trajectory was the correct one, and the trainees may be considered as equipped with some kind of universal mental anticipation registry that allows them, even at an early stage of their SI training, to cope with tailored anticipation tasks;
- the major anticipation prompt for lexical tokens was lexis, for syntactic tokens it was syntax in 6 out of 9 tokens, which supports the expected relevance of careful pre-

selection of anticipation segments by ranks and tokens when training the respective categories of anticipation prompts;

- intonation prevailed with end-of-sentence, complex-compound contrast and semi-clause tokens – 3 out of 9 tokens; it seemed somewhat underestimated by the respondents in the listing apposition token;
- 100% token success rate was achieved with the listing apposition and end-of-sentence tokens (syntax prompt prevailing with the former, intonation with the latter);
- with the thematic route of the Subject – the syntax prompt is followed by the context; with the message development contrast – the context was, most probably, left unnoticed (with the rest of the segments, sentential context was irrelevant);
- the disproportion between the lexically and syntactically motivated tokens disallows true generalizations; they may only be used as starting grounds for further research;
- the lack of proportionality as to the number of segments in respective categories of tokens is another weakness of the experiment that calls for further extension of the tokens and balancing their numbers to reach more relevant results.

4. Conclusions

Considering the minimal SI experience of the respondents, on the one hand, and their sound background in theoretical linguistic, on the other, these preliminary findings indicate that the latter is reflected in the trainees prevailing reliance on the syntactic issues, followed by intonation and lexis. These findings also suggest that the ability to anticipate is a universal cognitive skill that is not pertinent to SI only (the trainee respondents were beginners/intermediate in SI), although it is presumed to be fostered and advanced by SI training. Both the theoretical linguistic background and anticipation training may be mutually complementary in terms of increasing the success rates and strengthening confidence of SI trainees in their practical SI skills. The training anticipation segments, however, need to be carefully pre-selected as to their anticipation peaks in terms of ranks and tokens in order to be used as models aiding trainees in perceiving the operation of particular categories of prompts as well as their cooccurrence and redundancy.

The following should be considered in further research:

- generating a sample with a higher number of segments and more proportionate distribution of segments for each token;
- pre-selecting segments for each token in a more prompt-tailored fashion to be able to navigate the respondents more properly as to what is to be focused on;
- explaining to SI trainees more thoroughly what the context and subjective experience prompt is in order for them to be able to make more informed/justified choices (in the present research, context and subjective experiences had to be almost ignored);
- selecting anticipation peaks in contrastive pairs of linguistic structures in each token which might aid the trainees in identifying the difference more easily; hence it may be expected to facilitate the storing of the concrete contrasts in the trainees individual mental registries of anticipation strategies.

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