



The Relationship between the Simultaneous Interpreters' Speed of Speaking in their Native Language and the Quality of their Simultaneous Interpretation from English into their Native Language

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to investigate whether there is a significant correlation between the simultaneous interpreters' speed of speaking in their native language and the quality of their simultaneous interpretation from English into their native language which is Persian in this research. In making this happen, 30 simultaneous interpreters were chosen as the subjects of this study. To investigate the hypothesis, two different tests were designed: one for evaluating the quality of the simultaneous interpreters' work, and the other for assessing the speed of their speaking in their native language, that is, Persian. The findings of the study have showed that there is a significant relationship between interpreters' speed of speaking and their quality of interpretation, and the positive hypothesis is approved.

Keywords: Interpretation, Simultaneous interpretation, Speed of speaking, Native language

1. Introduction

Humans comprehend and use language so simply and fast that one cannot simply follow the difficulty and the pace of the mental and cognitive processes engaged in these activities. Among the dissimilar language abilities, speaking is an extremely multifaceted task and a multifarious performance with many dissimilar constituents cooperating to create efficient interaction (Kaye, 2008).

Simultaneous interpreters are under a lot of information and time stress that even losing a moment may worsen the condition. According to Paneth (1957), "interpreters insist that they must be allowed to smoke even when the audience is prohibited from it. There are other indications that their nerves are in the kind of state in which any additional strain would prove unbearable" (cited in F. Pochhacker & M. Shlesinger, 2002, p. 30).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Simultaneous interpretation is the result of five interconnected procedures: getting the presenter's expressions in the source language (SL), encoding the heard expressions, comprehending them, decoding the comprehended idea into the target language (TL) (here interpreter's native language), and conveying it into the TL. Apparently, it is one of the most multifaceted human tasks. Taking into consideration the entire investigations that have been performed in this area, it is still hard to know what is precisely occurring when simultaneous interpretation is performed. This is a work that is influenced by a lot of issues, if it is carefully performed as much as possible.

The assessment is hard due to the existence of these recognized and unidentified issues. Simultaneous interpretation engages broadly three chief language skills and procedures, i.e., listening, comprehending, and speaking in high speed, every one of these has been researchers' main question for years.

For the time being, instead of regarding the brain and its associated tasks, many consider simultaneous interpretation (dealing with two languages) as a communally influenced operation characteristically. Generally, none of these mental or social facets could be investigated separately. In interpreting, dissimilar aspects are intertwined with one another so

closely that each effort for untying them will be ineffective. The aspect of time in performing every one of these issues is an additional essential feature of simultaneous interpretation. Given that the context brings sense, tasks of simultaneous interpretation could not be assessed irrespective of the time pressure. This is what precisely differentiates between interpretation and text translation.

The purpose of this research is to study whether there is a significant correlation between the simultaneous interpreters' speed of speaking in their native language and the quality of their simultaneous interpretation from English into their native language, that is, Persian.

1.2 Significance of the Study

According to Pochhacker and Shlesinger (2002, p. 1), "the growing academization of the field coupled with the search for effective ways of teaching it – and the rapidly expanding use of oral translation in its various forms is an evidence for unavoidable need for such researches on Interpreting".

Since the 1950s, diverse investigators have studied the impact of interpreters' dissimilar proficiencies and capabilities on their tasks of interpretation linguistically and psychologically, but it seems that the significance of rapid speaking in native language as a skill has been overlooked.

Along with Gile (2001), "such reflection about interpreting also helps develop more specific ideas, with theories, precise hypotheses, and support from research in other disciplines" (Section 3, para. 6). The results could be used in selecting the persons who are likely to be better simultaneous interpreters. It is academically important to regard the high speed of speaking in native language as one of the skills to be focused on; in view of that, universities could consider this in their curriculum for training interpreters.

1.3 Research Question

Corresponding to what has been mentioned until now as the aim of this study, the following research question is raised:

- *Is there any significant correlation between simultaneous interpreters' speed of speaking in their native language (Persian) and the quality of their simultaneous interpretation from English into Persian?*

1.4 Research Hypothesis

Concerning the mentioned research question, the subsequent positive hypothesis is supposed:

- *There is significant correlation between simultaneous interpreters' speed of speaking in Persian and the quality of their simultaneous interpretation from English into Persian.*

2. Literature review

2.1 Interpretation

According to Zhong (2003), interpreting is expressing in the target language, the precise meaning of what is spoken in the source language either simultaneously or consecutively. In view of that, Pöchhacker (2004) stated that interpreting is a type of translation wherein the first and last version in another language is generated from the one time mentioned speech in a source language.

In line with them, Phelan (2001) declared that interpreters should have good short term memory in order to keep what they heard and so as to contextualize the heard things, they should have good long term memory. Phelan underlines the strong skills of focusing and analyzing. This is what Gile (1992) has focused on as well.

Gile (1992) proposed his famous 'Effort Mode' for interpreting; he asserts that interpreters are conscious of the complexities of interpreting and are able to implement competent strategies and approaches in order to defeat these difficulties. His model is rooted in the concept of processing capacity. It is thought that once interpreting, several mental functions demand much processing capacity.

According to Morris (2000), interpreting has a vital significance and is a necessary fact:

It is no exaggeration to say that without simultaneous interpretation, the 1945-1946 multilingual Nuremberg trial of major figures of the Nazi regime could not have taken place. A form of communication that has become a daily occurrence throughout the world was applied for the first time to a world event. Nuremberg has been criticized as "victors' justice". For the interpreting profession, it was an exemplary - and almost unparalleled - instance of human and technical triumph over the linguistic obstacles that can otherwise impede the implementation of the loftiest sentiments of fairness. (para. 1)

2.2 Interpretation vs. Translation

In Translation Studies and in Translator or Interpreter Training, translation and interpretation have particular definitions wherein each has its own principles. Accordingly, Kade (1968, cited by Schäffner, 2004) suggested the parameter of time for comparing these two fields of study, that is, translation and interpretation. Here, Kade emphasized the source text accessibility. Translators have the source texts in their hands as long as possible. This brings them the freeness of coming back to the source text whenever they want and whenever it is essential so as to make any changes to the target text. On the contrary, interpreters have just one chance for generating the target text, since they receive the source text verbally and merely once; and they have to make the target text right away. As Schäffner (2004) mentioned, interpreters

do not have the opportunity of using various helping utensils and merely have a very restricted chance of revising the target text.

Accordingly, there are also numerous differences between translation and interpreting. Gile (1998/ 2001) has regulated the distinctions between these actions. Consequently, the foremost disparities rooted in the abilities essential to complete the commission. While interpreters require strong oral abilities, written abilities are highly demanded for translation. Time is an influential parameter as well, whereas translators have fairly unbounded time to develop the target text, interpreters must decide instantly. Whereas translators might check with coworkers and dictionaries during translation, interpreters thanks to the time limitations have merely restricted opportunities for consultation; therefore, they must become ready prior to the task.

In view of that, Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997) believed that in interpreting, there is no chance for correction due to the aforesaid grounds, while a text might be translated and re-translated a number of times.

2.3 Modes of Interpreting

Baker (1998) discussed the appearance of some of the particular forms of interpreting, comprising “business interpreting, conference interpreting, court interpreting, community interpreting, and signed language interpreting which are done either in simultaneous or consecutive mode” (p. 40).

Accordingly, Jalon (2000) maintained that the era between the two world wars was an important point in the history for consecutive interpretation; however, simultaneous interpretation was explored from the beginning of 1920s. Jalon also introduces an innovation in interpreting modes, specifically ‘Remote Interpreting’. In this method, the interpreter is not at the position where the speech is conveyed. He is interpreting for the participants by far-distance tools.

This is the situation that decides which mode is more suitable to take on. Typically, consecutive mode is appropriate for the situation in which following the precision is the most appreciated objective. Consecutive interpretation is proper for “regular business meetings, small presentations, court hearings, and depositions” (“Interpretation,” para. 2). However, the simultaneous mode is more proper for big conferences in which time economy is the aim.

2.3 Simultaneous Interpreting

In simultaneous interpretation, the interpreter listens to the presenter and interprets his talking for the addressees in a microphone and the addressees will hear it in their headphones (Baker, 1998). Accordingly, Dukate (2007) stated that simultaneous interpreting is the most commonly employed mode of interpreting in conference situations in which the interpreters sit in the booth and listen via the ‘head-set’ to what happens in the assembly room and concurrently interpret into a microphone “what the delegates are saying in their microphones” (p. 32). The presenters can perceive the interpreters with the aid of their headphones. Along with them, Chincotta and Underwod (1998) have declared that simultaneous interpreters are present at the meetings and receive the source language while concomitantly expressing the translation verbally in target language.

According to Urbancic (2005), simultaneous interpretation has some benefits. The speakers' speeches are conveyed efficiently and without disruption which increases the effectiveness of the speech. It is also good in terms of time economy. The fact that the participants choose to listen to the interpreted text or the original speech is the most beneficial quality of simultaneous interpretation particularly in multilingual gatherings.

Gile (1992) offering his prominent Effort Model, has argued that simultaneous interpreting comprises L + M + P. L means listening; M implies short term memory; and P means production.

In view of that, Christoffels et al. (2003) maintained that it is simultaneous interpretation that involves simultaneous understanding, production, domination, and management of communication in two languages. On account of that, simultaneous interpretation has gotten vast attention from cognitive psychologists and psycholinguists.

According to Phelon (2001), the level of attention necessary for simultaneous interpreting is high, thus, interpreters do not typically interpret for over thirty minutes. There are frequently two interpreters or more in each booth. Once the interpreter is not in fact interpreting he waits in the booth getting ready for the next speech and stays accessible to assist his coworker if needed. Thus, teamwork is a significant feature of simultaneous interpreting.

2.4 Consecutive interpretation

Consecutive interpretation is defined as interpreter's listening to the speaker, taking note, and interpreting the source text to the listeners' language when the speaker has finished (Urbancic, 2005; Dukate, 2007). Thus, consecutive interpretation is a mode wherein the presenter, following two or three sentences will stop for the interpreter's interpreting his/her speech into one more language. In this form, the interpreter takes part in the meeting and sits close to the partakers. Normally, it is employed for tours, informal meetings, guidance through trade show exhibits, business negotiations, receptions, etc (ibid).

Paneth (1957) emphasized that implementing consecutive interpretation is not restricted to the aforesaid circumstances like business or technical meetings, but it could frequently be used by their individual associates; consequently, not only its chief departures, but also the attitudes about it are worthy of research (Cited in Pochhacker and Shlesinger, 2002). An investigation of the methods may aid experts in business, commercial and scientific issues and it is useful for any persons who are able of speaking a foreign language (ibid).

In accordance with Phelon (2001), in consecutive interpreting, an obvious set of abilities engaged in interpreting could be observed. Despite the language knowledge, memory, attention and perception are significant parameters. The

significance of presentation is obvious once the interpreter has to present the speech facing the addressees. Practice at speechifying is positive preparation.

2.5 Speaking

Chastain (1988) considered speaking to be a process. Mostly, in a subconscious level, the speaker utilizing his or her background and linguistic knowledge, make a selection to create an appropriate message. In formal context the speaker may more consciously choose his or her words. "In all cases speakers activate relevant schemata from specific context to convey meaning for a definite purpose with an intended audience in mind." (p. 274)

Turennot et al. (1998) studied the procedure of speaking. In their conceptual of the study, they mention "In normal conversation speakers translate thoughts into words at high speed. To enable this speed, the retrieval of distinct types of linguistic knowledge has to be orchestrated with millisecond precision" (p. 572). Their report animatedly assesses the concurrent foundation of syntactical and phonological knowledge. In proportion to the electro-physiological results, it is a noun syntactical gender which is regained sooner than the phonological traits in saying a noun phrase. The speed at which these two are taken place is high. It just takes 40 milliseconds for the phonological characteristics to be regained following the syntactical ones (ibid).

3. Methodology

3.1 Subjects

The subjects of the study were 30 simultaneous interpreters. All of the subjects were native speakers of Persian with the average age of around thirty five. They were all working as professional simultaneous interpreters having at least two years of professional experience.

3.2 Instrumentation

To investigate the hypothesis, two different tests were designed; one for evaluating the quality of simultaneous interpreters' work, and another for assessing the speed of their speaking in their native language, i.e., Persian.

3.3 Procedure

The researchers offered all the interpreters the same materials for interpreting. It was highlighted that by no means would the text be replayed or stopped.

All the interpretations were simultaneously recorded. Every simultaneous interpreter's interpretation was then transcribed by the researchers to be studied.

Transcribing the interpretations was carefully performed not to even overlook one word. The researchers frequently had to rerun an utterance a number of times for recognizing the words. After the interpretation test, the subjects were tested for their speed of speaking in their native language. It comprised one section which is answering questions. For this test, the simultaneous interpreters were interviewed to answer ready questions in their native language. As was the case with the interpretation test, the answers to this part were also recorded to be studied for their speed of speaking.

4. Data Analysis

For answering the research question and studying the positive hypothesis, the researchers had to study the collected data.

For analyzing the quality of interpretation, a scale was used based on Kurz's (2001) model.

Kurz (2001) described the criteria in this way:

- Fluency of delivery implies performing an energetic discussion with less uncertainty, pauses, and unbalanced abnormal rhythm.
- Logical cohesion relatively matches with the principle of coherence in the text linguistics school of Beaugrand and Dressler (1981). Kurz has further explained that the interpretation should be considered as a text and it should be coherent as a whole. It concerns the way in which the constituents of the surface text, i.e., the authentic words we hear or see are jointly tied in a string. Accordingly, the interpreters should use cohesive ties wherever they feel the need for them in order to hang their rendering together so as to have a logical well-tied interpretation.
- Sense consistency is uniformity of the interpreted sense with the source language meaning. Here, it means that the interpreters should convey the source message into the target language; and, therefore, the conveyed message should be consistent with the source message.
- Completeness of interpretation states that interpreting is commonly illustrated by information completeness. Interpreting aspiring for completeness is not respected in the case that clearness and transparency are sacrificed. Various pieces of information are not similarly significant to the addressees.
- Correct grammatical practice directly connected with the standard grammar rules that are used in the receptor language. Therefore, the interpreters' interpretation should be grammatically correct.
- Correct terminology practice means usage of the technical words.

Here, the score of 5 was considered for each item. Thus, in evaluating the interpretations, there were six items. Each item was given a score out of 5; and, then, the total score was calculated for each interpretation as the interpretation final evaluation score.

Table 1. Chart for Evaluating the Quality of Simultaneous Interpretation (adopted from Kurz's 2001 model)

Criterion
Fluency of delivery
Logical cohesion
Sense consistency
Completeness of interpretation
Correct grammatical practice
Use of correct terminology

The interpreters' speeches in Persian were used for investigating the speed of their speaking in their native language; the scale is wps, i.e., the number of the spoken words per second.

4.1 Calculating the Correlation

Using the interpreters' interpreting results and their speed of speaking, the researchers calculated the correlation between these two to realize whether there is any significant relationship between their speed of speaking in their native language and their quality of interpreting into their native language.

4.2 Calculating the Correlation between the Interpreters' Speed of Speaking in Persian and the Quality of their Interpretation into Persian

The researchers calculated the correlation coefficient between the simultaneous interpreters' speed of speaking in their native language and their quality of interpreting into their native language, i.e., Persian. Previous to that for sure, the interpreters' interpretations were assessed by the researchers.

Table 2. The results of correlation coefficient

		Quality of Interpreters' Interpretation into Persian	Interpreters' Speed of Speaking in Persian
Quality of Interpreters' Interpretation into Persian	Pearson Correlation	1	.69*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
	N	30	30
Interpreters' Speed of Speaking in Persian	Pearson Correlation	.69*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	
	N	30	30

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The estimated correlation coefficient shows that there is a positive relationship between the simultaneous interpreters' speed of speaking in Persian and their quality of interpreting into Persian. The estimated correlation coefficient was 0.69 which can be interpreted as a significant one. This means that interpreters with higher speed of speaking in Persian tend to have better quality of interpreting into Persian. Similarly, interpreters with lower speed of speaking in Persian tend to have correspondingly lower quality of interpreting into Persian. Thus, accordingly, the positive hypothesis of this study is approved.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the researchers came with significant relationship between the simultaneous interpreters' speed of speaking in their native language and their quality of simultaneous interpreting into their native language. That is to say that, one can claim the simultaneous interpreter who speaks his native language faster can perform better while interpreting simultaneously into his native language.

Interpreting Studies, normally in the world and especially, in Iran is still in its early life. Moreover, these studies in interpreting do not answer the main questions of the magnificent entire course of interpreting; they force the interpreters and researchers to consider interpreting more analytically and more cautiously which might consequently influence their performance. Maintaining these studies offers the researchers, instructors and scholars with precious information in providing an essential notion as an instruction in educating and studying simultaneous interpreting.

For educating excellent interpreters, there should be researchers and educators who are prepared with comprehensive information of the necessary capabilities and experience for being a competent interpreter. The results of the research illustrate that the speed of speaking in native language ought to be regarded as a factor in selecting the persons who are likely to be excellent interpreters after education. The outcomes could be employed in planning the curriculum for educating simultaneous interpreters as well; specifically that, there is a need for having some drills for increasing the simultaneous interpreters' speed of speaking in their native language. And finally, the result opens up another avenue to recognizing the entire complex procedure of interpreting.

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