

## APTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Sight translation (henceforth ST), which means translating orally a written text on sight, is a unique form of interpreting because it possesses both the features of translation and interpretation. It has been applied as the first phase of interpreter training, considered the most useful of all exercises for interpreters, and a key subject in the graduate program for translation and interpretation (henceforth T & I) (Weber 27; Snelling 19; Yang 楊承淑 111).

Despite all its importance, ST has been neglected by scholars analyzing the problems of interpretation (Viezzi, *Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis* 109). To further propel the research of this shaded field, the researcher thus decides to observe the ST performances done by groups with different language proficiency and ST training to discover more about ST.

### 1.1 The Definition of Sight Translation

As mentioned earlier, ST possesses both the features of translation and interpretation. It is the simultaneous oral translation of a written text. It shares with written translation the written form of the message to be translated, and with SI the simultaneous nature of the translation process and the oral form in which the translated message is expressed (Viezzi, *Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis*

110-11).

Tang (湯麗明 144) further categorized ST into four types:

1. Simultaneous ST, which means interpreting a written text on sight without preparation,
2. SI with text, which means interpreting a speaker with his/her speech text at hand,
3. Consecutive ST, which means interpreting a written text after some time for processing, and
4. Consecutive interpretation with text, which means interpreting a speaker consecutively (e.g. the speaker speaks for 3 – 5 minutes and then stops for the interpreter to interpret) with the speech text at hand.

The ST performed in this study belongs to the third type —consecutive ST, where the subjects can have time to prepare for the text in advance.

## **1.2 Sight Translation in Conference Interpreting**

Working interpreters sometimes need to translate written messages on sight. For example, when delegates receive a text and want to have it translated orally on the spot, when a non-English speaking defendant is given documents to sign that are written in English, or when the speaker reads from the prepared text, which the interpreter also has at hand, then the interpreter would need to perform ST. (Gile,

*Basic Concepts and Models* 183; Marquez and Marquez 31; Tang 144)

Viezzi (*Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis* 111-12) categorized this particular instance into three distinctions:

- (a) The interpreter is called upon to translate a text on sight – for example a brief greeting – which he is given without forewarning;
- (b) The interpreter is required to translate on sight a text which he has had some time to study and prepare;
- (c) The interpreter in the booth has to translate a speaker who has provided the interpreter with a copy of the speech. Under the circumstances, what the interpreter has to perform is so called SI with text. The speaker may then read the speech at high speed, sometimes in a language of which the speaker is not a master, frequently with poor speech rhythms and on occasion with dreadful accent. In such cases, the interpreter will tend to resort to ST to overcome the difficulties created by the speaker's reading style.

Therefore, it can be argued that ST is not just a warm-up exercise for SI, as is generally claimed (Viezzi, *Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis* 111); it has many important functions not only in T & I teaching but also in conference interpreting. ST deserves more attention than it has now.

### 1.3 Research Background

This research is conducted based on two reasons: first, ST is fundamental to the training of interpreters, and is a very useful exercise—easy to conduct and easy to review, because no speakers and interpretation booths are needed, and there is always the speech text present for discussion on student performances. The two prominent graduate institutes of T & I in Taiwan—the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation (henceforth GITI) of National Taiwan Normal University (henceforth NTNU) and the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation Studies (henceforth GITIS) of Fu Jen University both include ST training since the first year of their interpretation programs. Other renowned T & I institutes around the world such as Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation at Monterey Institute of International Studies, USA, and MA in Interpreting and Translating at the University of Bath include ST in their basic translation course or simply offer an on-site translation course. Therefore, a case study of ST features and seeking improvements for its training should be of great value.

Second, even though ST may be no less important than SI, there are fewer researches on ST than on SI. Take the IRN Bulletin (International Interpretation Research Information Network) for example; of all the 160 books, theses, and articles mentioned in the two issues published in the year 2000, none of them concerns ST

directly. Therefore, an observation of different ST performances should be able to shed some light on this field.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This study aims to clarify the following points:

1. To evaluate the significance of ST training.

Through a case study on ST performances, the researcher wishes to explore the effects of ST training, and how it can help improve the ST performance. In the case study, two groups with similarly high language proficiency but only one of them with ST training sight-translated the same speech text, which should enable us to see the differences ST training made.

2. To understand better the role language proficiency plays in ST training

T & I institutes usually hold stringent screening tests to select students, which indicates that potential interpreters should possess certain qualities such as sufficient language proficiency. In this case study, the third group sight-translating the same text is of subjects with some ST training but not as high language proficiency as the other two groups, which should help us see the influence of language proficiency and thus reaffirm the screening policy of T & I institutes.

3. To discover room for improvement on ST training

After analyzing the research results, the effects of ST training should be revealed. Whether they are satisfactory and what can be done to make ST training more effective in the future are the questions the researcher wishes to seek answers to through this case study.

### **1.5 Research Framework**

This case study involves ST training and language proficiency as variables. Among the 3 groups of subjects, Group A and B are of similarly high language proficiency, but Group A has received ST training while Group B hasn't. Group A and Group C are of different language proficiency, but Group C also has received some ST training. Their different performances can demonstrate the influence of language proficiency and ST training.

The evaluation criteria in the case study are:

1. Fidelity, which is subdivided into miss-interpretation, omissions, and unnatural Chinese,
2. ST chunking, which includes chunk-moving, and chunk-connection,
3. Delivery, which is subdivided into pauses, backtracks, fillers, and time.

The definitions of such terms as miss-interpretation, omissions, and chunk-moving and the detail of the whole structure will be illustrated in Chapter III.

The purpose of the case study is to explore the different performances subjects of different ST training and language proficiency make, so as to find out more about ST and how to better the future ST training.

## 1.6 Thesis Outline

There are totally five chapters in this thesis. The first chapter defines *sight translation*, introduces the research background, and discusses the objectives of this study.

The second chapter deals with the present academic researches on ST and their relations with this study. Important issues concerning ST such as its status in T & I field, its unique features, Gile's effort model on ST, information retention, eye movements, its relations with consecutive interpretation and simultaneous interpretation, error analysis, and delivery, are discussed. At the end of this chapter, the different structures of English and Chinese, which are the source language and target language in this study, are also compared.

The third chapter presents the methodology adopted in this study. The nature and the scope of the study, assumptions such as the subjects' language proficiency and disturbances in the observation, research design, the pilot study, the implementation of the case study, and research limitations are included in this chapter.

The fourth chapter analyzes the research findings in the three dimensions;

namely, fidelity, ST chunking, and delivery. The different performances by the three different groups are compared and discussed. This chapter ends with the suggestions for future improvement on similar researches.

The last chapter wraps up the thesis by making a brief conclusion and provide suggestions for future studies.