CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, research articles concerning general issues on sight translation (henceforth ST) such as the effort model, information retention, eye movements, and training strategies would be reviewed. The focus then would be narrowed down to the training part, discussing arguments like the choice of trainees and texts, the items of training, and the skills that should be acquired, etc.

Now that the research on ST is rather limited, the latter part of the chapter would shift its attention to simultaneous interpretation (henceforth SI) for some comparisons and analogy since ST has been considered a part of SI (Viezzi, *Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis* 111). Although they imply different processes and strategies (Viezzi, *Information Retention* 65), there are still similarities to compare and analogize. Therefore, related articles on SI would be discussed. For instance, error analysis, interferences and delivery are among the eminent issues. There would also be a comparison of sight translation and consecutive interpretation.

2.1 General Issues on Sight Translation

The process of transforming written input into oral output in ST generates different arguments among researchers. For example, the specific difficulties and interferences it encounters, the efforts needed, the standards of evaluation, etc. Its

unique quality of possessing both traits of translation (information reception) and interpretation (message production) not only arouses research interests but also makes ST a special tool in interpreter training programs. The following are the issues on ST worthy of note.

2.1.1 The Importance of Sight Translation

Although conference interpretation is a form of oral communication, albeit highly sophisticated, the pure mode of oral interpreting often is only a small part of conference interpreters' daily work. With the advent of information society, there are more and more scientific, technical, and even diplomatic meetings, in which the interpreters' must deal with papers, statements, and declarations, which have been prepared carefully in writing before the meetings, more than ever before. Thus, the pure form of oral communication is interrupted by a written medium, which would pose difficulties and challenge for the interpreters, and this is when the skills of ST can be applied to assist the interpretation (Weber, *The Importance of Sight Translation* 44-45; Tang 142)

As for the importance of ST in training, Weber (*The Importance of Sight Translation* 44) argued that ST is an essential part in any curriculum designed to teach T & I, and that ST has an important role in preparing future translators for their careers, because it improves their speed when they have to write or dictate their

works.

Besides, as mentioned earlier, ST is required by many T & I institutes around the world such as Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation at National Taiwan Normal University as a basic and mandatory course. According to Her (129-30) the reasons, other than the ones mentioned above, are:

1. helping students become sensitive to those lower-level text components which are critical from a translation-procedural aspect;
2. helping develop speedy information processing to solve translation problems until certain automation is established in the transformation mechanism;
3. forcing students to view translation problems beyond explicit, face value and make decisions immediately upon encountering the texts.
4. optimizing translator performance through active participation in translation.

Since ST skills are so important to not only translators but interpreters, and ST is considered so essential in T & I curriculum, this study thus focuses more on the implications to ST training from this observation.

2.1.2 Gile's Effort Model for Sight Translation

What constitutes the different performances of individuals when doing the sight

translation? Is it because of their language proficiency? Delivery skills? Or is there something more? According to Gile (*Basic Concepts and Models* 183), the efforts needed in sight translation are the reading effort R, the speech production effort P, and the coordination effort C combined (ST = R + P + C). The capacity available for reading, speech production and coordination should respectively exceed the effort required in each of the three areas so that they can handle the ST task without difficulty.

Gile's other two models on interpretation are SI & CI effort models (*Basic Concepts and Models* 169-70, 178-80). The efforts required in SI are listening and analysis effort L, short-term memory effort M, speech production effort P, and coordination effort C (SI = L + M + P + C). For CI the efforts can be divided into two phases —the listening and note-taking phase, and the speech production phase. Phase one is composed of listening and analysis effort L, note-taking effort N, short-term memory effort M, and coordination effort C (Phase I = L + N + M + C). Phase two is composed of remembering effort Rem, note-reading effort NR, and production effort P (Phase II = Rem + NR +P).

It seems that the greatest difference between the two interpretation models and the ST model is the "memory" component, which indicates that one of the functions of ST on the interpretation training process is to take off the memory pressure.

The ST effort model serves as a good simplification of the actually intricate process of ST. Based on the model, the researcher can have a case study to observe some phenomena in ST such as miss-interpretation, omissions and backtracks due to poor reading effort, production effort or coordination effort. Furthermore, the differences generated through ST training can be observed.

2.1.3 Information Retention

SI with text requires ST skills, and, as mentioned in the previous section, to do ST requires many different efforts for different tasks, and their information retention (henceforth IR) simply shows how deep they have processed the message received.

Craik & Lockhart (671) had put forward a theory stating that memory trace can be considered as the by-product of perceptual analysis and that trace persistence can show how deep the stimulus has been analyzed. Gerver (338) also argued that either the multi-tasks impair the interpreter's ability to understand and retain what he hears, or the more complex analysis of the incoming message necessary would help fidelity and recall.

Many scholars have taken IR as a parameter in ST experiments. For instance, Gerver (*Simultaneous Listening*) and Lambert (*Information Processing*) both had used questionnaires, but in different methodologies, to assess IR in different tasks such as SI, CI, shadowing, listening, etc. In both studies, the highest IR rates were observed

after the listening tests. Viezzi (*Information Retention*) also conducted an IR case study containing 4 parts: reading, listening, ST, and SI. The results show that ST has the lowest IR—even lower than SI, which is surprising to researchers, who thought that ST doesn't have to cope with the difficulties from the overlapping of voices as in SI. He then assumed that this is because in ST, the text is always there to fall back on, and therefore the interpreters don't have to process as deep as when doing SI.

Furthermore, he pointed out that when the morphosyntactic differences between source and target languages are greater, the cost in IR would also be greater. The reason being the greater efforts devoted to the transformation of the surface structure as well as the less attention paid to deep structure. Therefore, it is plain to see that two languages with such great morphosyntactic difference as English and Chinese would maintain lower IR than other language combinations such as French to Italian after their ST. Although IR is not a measurement here, the conclusion in Viezzi's IR experimental study (*Information Retention* 68) that the process of ST and SI are by no means parallel should be noted.

2.1.4 Eye Movements

Viezzi (*Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis* 115-17) divided the eye movements into saccadic and fixation pauses during the information reception process in ST. The former takes up 10% of the total reading time, and the information of the

written text is acquired exclusively during fixation pauses accounting for the remaining 90% of the reading time. Besides, the eye movements can be further divided into progressive movements, regressions, and microsaccades. The length of the fixation pause is influenced by factors like the font of words, more difficult texts, etc.

Other researchers discussing eye movements are McConkie (*Eye Movements*), providing two different hypotheses to explain the existence of microsaccades, Adriessen and de Voogd (29-34) claiming that during normal reading, a fixation pause may last from 100 to 500 msec, Reyner and Pollatsek (337), defining three different perceptual spans –total perceptual span, letter identification span, and word identification span, etc. (qtd. in Viezzi 118-19). The eye movements issue provides a better understanding toward the way interpreters receive written message; however, further details might not be necessary here since eye movements will not be observed in this case study.

2.1.5 Sight Translation Training

Can anyone interested in interpretation be trained? Who are the suitable trainees? Almost all graduate institute of T & I set up stringent screening systems to choose students they want. Yang (60-61) mentioned that students with sufficient language proficiency and active, adaptable characteristics are the keys to successful

interpretation training. Otherwise, there might be a significant waste of teaching resources. Besides, Weber (*Training Translators* 6) pointed out the important traits trainees should possess such as intelligence, memory, voice, and language proficiency to become a successful conference interpreter after training. Please note that language proficiency is mentioned by both authors, which indicates its importance in interpretation training. Since ST training is a part of the interpretation program, the requirements for ST trainees should be the same as those for interpretation trainees.

Many T & I institutes introduce ST in the very beginning of their training as it covers quite a few basic objectives of T & I like expanding knowledge, compiling bilingual glossaries and idioms, etc. Besides, it is practiced with written texts and without voice interruptions, which makes it easier to begin with and to discuss or review later. (Yang 110) The Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation, NTNU, has three semesters of ST courses while The Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation Studies, Fu Jen University, even has ST courses throughout its program. Its importance has been obvious.

The skills to be acquired in ST courses are, according to Weber (*Training Translators* 33), public speaking quality, speed, and rendition clarity and conciseness. Yang (112-13) mentioned more specific skills including segmentation, information supplements, consistency in one's role, rhythm control, dealing with complex

sentences, body language, communicative expressions, etc.

As for how to train students in ST courses, Tang (155-57) provided some ideas such as read aloud, summary practice, anticipation, rephrasing, etc. During the training, the instructor should remind students of the time and speed control, the completeness of sentences, the avoidance of backtracking, and the immediate correction of mistakes.

2.2 Sight Translation vs. Simultaneous Interpretation

ST has been an everyday activity for professional interpreters and an exercise for interpreting students but neglected by scholars in the field of T & I studies. (Viezzi, *Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis* 109) Oftentimes, ST is used as an introductory course before SI and thus they are considered very similar in nature. Viezzi claimed that ST is the simultaneous oral translation of a written text. He further considered Massaro's (299) description of an interpreter carrying out SI as equal to an interpreter carrying out ST. The difference between ST and SI, he said, would be the different forms in which the message is presented. However, in his conclusion after the experiment, he claimed that ST and SI may not be considered in absolute terms, but must always be considered with reference to the languages used as source and target languages (Viezzi, *Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis* 133). He also mentioned that ST and SI are different not only in message reception

but in information processing (Viezzi, *Information Retention* 68). Besides, when referring to Gile's effort models of ST and SI, their greatest difference appears to be memory loading. Therefore, when comparing ST with SI, the message reception, the information processing, and the memory factor should all be taken into consideration.

Furthermore, ST is practiced in SI when the interpreter works with a written copy of a speech that s/he is listening to (Weber, *The Importance of Sight Translation* 48). This is generally known as SI with text. Actually, whenever the interpreter deals with papers, statements, and declarations prepared in writing beforehand in the interpreting setting, s/he would need the ST skills for support.

So far, the experimental studies on ST mainly focus on information retention (IR), student errors (in the next section), and eye movements. The case study here would then share a similar objective as that of Maurizio Viezzi's 1989 case study, which is to understand ST better and to observe if ST is an effective exercise in interpretation training. Therefore, the case study would apply some SI theories that can be referred to in ST to make up for the shortage of theories and studies in ST itself. The following are some important aspects.

2.2.1 Error Analysis

Henri C. Barik (121, 127-32) claimed that in SI, the interpreter's version may depart from the original in three general ways: the interpreter may omit some material

uttered by the speaker, add some material to the text, or substitute material, resulting in his saying not quite the same thing as the speaker. If the substitution is at considerable variance with the original version, we may speak of an "error" of translation. Barik (127-33) further divided the errors into 5 categories:

1. mild semantic error, which generates awkward or inaccurate translation of some lexical items. The inaccuracy is restricted to the lexical item or expression, and the gist of what is said is well retained. This type of error is more like translationese (awkward rendition of the target language) of a word or words.
2. gross semantic error, which substantially changes the meaning of what is said, but it only affects the specific item and not the rest of the unit.
3. mild phrasing change, where the wording is a little different but the gist of the message is retained and is generally acceptable in SI.
4. substantial phrasing change, where the change in phrasing is more marked and leads to a difference in meaning, but the gist of what is said is not too distorted.
5. gross phrasing change, which results in considerable difference in meaning. This category basically involves miss-interpretation.

Please note that omissions and additions that do not alter the original meanings

are not considered as errors but independent categories.

However, Janet Altman (26, 28) stated that some people thought Barik's categorization was too restrictive. Her categorization is:

1. omissions, which include the ones that won't distort the original message and the ones that will;
2. additions, which involve the ones that provide two versions of the same word, the ones that provide information, necessary or not, and the ones that confuse the listeners;
3. inaccurate renditions of individual lexical items, including using wrong expressions or replacing a specific term with a general one;
4. inaccurate rendition of longer phrases, which include literal translation without considering the context, problematic combination of sentences, etc.

She admitted that it was not easy to define an error and the important principle was to consider situational and contextual factors.

Although there are different standards of defining errors, the basic concepts about what constitutes errors are similar among scholars. Besides, the types of errors in SI could also happen in ST since they have similar stages of process—perception, extraction of meaning, and the oral expression of the translated message (Viezzi, *Sight*

Translation: An Experimental Analysis 113). Therefore, this case study will refer to the standards mentioned above, as well as the situational and contextual factors, to generate its own categorization of errors, omissions, and unnatural renditions.

In fact, in the ST teaching in Taiwan, there are studies of student errors. For example, Tang (152-54) listed 7 types of student errors in a real situation:

1. superficial interpretation, such as "This is a little bit too far."
   translated into 「**這走得遠了些**。」(This walks a little bit too far.);
2. literal translation (unnatural rendition of the target language) of some set expressions in the target language, such as "breaking the law" translated into 「**打破法律**」 (literally "breaking" the law in Chinese, instead of the more common expression 「**犯法**」.);
3. out of context, such as "…about one in every two Americans is affected by this problem (dyslexia)" translated into 「…**大約有一半的美國人受這問題影響**」 (Here, "this problem" refers to dyslexia, but the rendition of "affected" doesn't go with it in the context.);
4. "dictionary says," such as "…these tests are remarkably accurate." translated into 「…**這些測試顯著地正確**。」(The rendition of "remarkably accurate" here sounds like the definition offered in a dictionary instead of a natural expression that can fit in with the

sentence.);

5. neglecting the emphasis made by conjunctions, such as "Last year a Detroit jury found Boycose's story so convincing that it ordered the department store chain to award her $100,000." translated into 「**去年一個底特律的陪審團認為柏克絲的故事值得相信，並且命令這家連鎖百貨店賠償十萬元**。」(In the target language, "..so..that.." is diluted to "and," which can't show the emphasis of cause and effect that the original conjunction demonstrates.);

6. neglecting the functions of punctuation, such as "These tests are now being used by nearly every type of company—banks, drug stores, as well as retail department stores." translated into 「**這些測試目前幾乎被各類型公司使用，銀行、企業、藥店及零售店等**。」(The dash in the original sentence means "such as" in the target language, but this relation is missing in the rendition.);

7. incomplete or awkward sentences, such as "I think that a person is probably pretty sick who is asking these kinds of questions." translated into 「**我認為一個人一定是病了，他問這類問題**。」(The rendition is problematic because it basically follows the English structure instead of the Chinese one, and the connection of the clauses is not successful.).

Her (115-129) also conducted an ST case study analyzing students' binary errors, which mean opposing wrong answers to right ones, and further classified them into 9 categories:

1. lack of common sense. For example, in the sentence "If Seoul accepts,…it will become only the second Asian member of the 'rich nations' club," "Seoul" is translated into 「**漢城**」, which represents the name of the city, but not the name of the country in the target language. However, based on the context, the term "Seoul" in the sentence should indicate the country "South Korea."
2. compound and phrases. For instance, when "tight-fisted" is translated into 「**神經緊張**」, the reason behind it could be the unfamiliarity with this compound adjective.
3. miss the humor. This happens when the interpreter doesn't get the punch line of a joke or a humorous metaphor, and thus can't offer a proper rendition.
4. wrong assumptions. One example involves the sentences "I have been poor, and I have been rich. Rich is better." The underlined part is translated into 「**現在有錢了**」(I am rich now), which is not what the original is meant to be.

5. syntactical difficulty. In the sentence “No dinner party lasts over 15 minutes before the political events of the day become the main topic of conversation,” the word “before” is translated into 「**因為**」(because) due to the difficulty created by its syntax, not the word itself.

6. unfamiliar usage. This refers to an inappropriate rendition resulting from unfamiliar word, usage or terminology.

7. cultural reference. For example, “yellow pages” could mean a telephone directory in the US. The literally translation 「**黃頁**」therefore indicates a lack of cultural reference.

8. collocation problem. Examples in this category are「**更嚴重的環境品質**」(more serious environmental quality)、「**社會問題的提昇**」(the elevation of social problems), etc.

9. carelessness. The errors made due to carelessness could be various. For example, in “People used to be able to die for free,” the term “free” is translated to 「**自由**」(freedom) , or in “That is nearly a 400 percent increase in the cost of dying,” the phrase “400 percent” is translated into 「**四百倍**」(400 times), etc.

Her case study of ST from English to Chinese serves as a good reference to

this case study for they both cover ST errors and are in the same language direction. However, Her's definitions of errors are based on the reasons behind them, while in this study, errors will be errors whatever reasons there might be so as to simplify the categorization.

From the above description of different categorizations by scholars as well as the results of the pilot study, the researcher has induced the first dimension of evaluation criteria concerning fidelity, which includes miss-interpretation (errors), omissions, and unnatural Chinese (inaccurate renditions, literal translation, etc.). Additions that appear in Altman's article are omitted because of its scarcity in the performances, and omissions that might be considered as ST strategies are also calculated in the first dimension for convenience. These are a generalization of the various categorizations mentioned so that the evaluation criteria here would not be too restrictive and would be more suitable for this study.

2.2.2 Interferences

In Gile's effort model, SI= L (Listening and Analysis) + P (Speech Production) + M (Short Term Memory) + C (Coordination), the interferences could come from any part of the right hand side of the equation. For instance, high density of the speech might create interferences in L and P because the interpreter not only has to process more information but also has to make his/her speech production in the same

pace as the speaker's. Another interference with L is external factors like poor sound quality through the interpreter's earphones, strong accents, incorrect usage, and technical terms, etc. Interferences with M include unknown names, different structures of the source language (henceforth SL) and the target language (henceforth TL). (Gile, *Basic Concepts and Models* 172-74) Also, monitoring the speaker and the interpreter's voices at the same time could create interference with C.

Compared with SI, the interferences in ST could reduce significantly because there is no voice interruption and there is the text to help reduce the memory load. However, the words and linguistic structures of the text ever-present in front of the interpreter could create interference with the transformation from SL to TL, especially when the two languages are structurally very different. Take Chinese and English for example. The former has left-branching structures, which occur in the speech string before the item they qualify or modify, while the latter is just the opposite. (Setton, *A Pragmatic Theory* 132) The different directions in structural development and the presence of the written text aggravate interferences in ST. That is also why Gile does not support introducing ST to the first year trainees (*Basic Concepts and Models* 184). Nevertheless, it seems that more people in this field support the introduction of ST to beginning trainees for there are ST courses in the first year of many T & I curricula, the reason of which has been stated in the first chapter.

In this case study, the interference from the text can be observed through the word-for-word translation and unsuccessful chunk-connections made by the subjects, which indicate that they have trouble breaking away from the original word, phrase, or sentence structure.

2.2.3 Delivery

Although the processes and efforts needed for SI and ST are different, their requirements for delivery, such as completeness, avoidance of backtracking, and time and speed control, are basically the same, except that the speed of the interpreter doing SI might be paced by the speaker. For example, both SI and ST need to properly segment the source language to make the output sound natural. In SI, the segmentation could be done on the text or the speech. Both SI and ST are under time pressure and need to avoid backtracking, fillers, etc. (Yang 110-13; Tang 155)

Pause is also an important phenomenon in delivery. Dèjean Le Fèal (1978) categorizes pauses into two kinds: syntactic pauses and hesitation pauses. The former means a pause between syntactic units, the latter means a pause caused by hesitation in reading. Messina (1998) argues that there may be non-syntactic pauses not necessarily caused by hesitation in reading (qtd. in Ying 36).

Yang (163) calculates pauses that are over two seconds in her interpretation evaluation form under delivery. However, two-second pauses is sometimes a gray

area, especially for slow speakers. Besides, ST does not have such great time pressure as SI has. Therefore, in this case study, a standard of three-second-and-above is adopted to calculate pauses that hinder the flow or the speed of the ST performance.

2.3 Sight Translation vs. Consecutive Interpretation

According to Viezzi (*Sight Translation: An Experimental Analysis* 134-35), the form of sight translation that offers an opportunity to analyze the text in advance can be compared to consecutive interpretation, with the text taking the place of the notes. Of course, there is another difference, which is the auditory input in CI versus the written input in ST. Viezzi also believed that ST could serve as a good teaching instrument to develop the skills required by the second phase of CI, which is the delivery part. In this case study, the ST similar to CI is adopted, that is, subjects can prepare in advance for 5 minutes. This is also how Ottawa University tests their potential students on ST. (qtd. in Tang 145)

2.4 English VS. Chinese Sentence Structure

Since this case study deals with English to Chinese ST, the different sentence structures of the two languages need to be discussed. Liu (**劉宓慶** 6-9) argues that the main difference between the sentence structures of English and Chinese is that

English features hypotaxis while Chinese features parataxis. Hypotaxis means subordination; that is, the arrangement of subordinate clauses, whose grammatical functions could be subject, object, complement, or adverb, in the main clause. Parataxis means coordination; that is, the creation of parallel grammatical structures both in function and form. Therefore, English clauses are usually closely interdependent and well-organized because the English sentence structure relies heavily on syntax, but Chinese sentence structure is comparatively loose and independent because it relies more on context or internal logic.

Liu (12-15) also discusses other differences such as that the main clause of an English sentence is usually in the front while the main part of a Chinese sentence is usually at the back, etc.

He (51-53) listed in his dissertation about English-Chinese machine translation some principal differences in English and Chinese structures.

First, the basic word order of an English sentence is subject verb object (SVO) while the Chinese sentence order maybe SVO or SOV. Second, there are some interesting linguistic phenomena associated with topics in Chinese sentences. For example, a topic may actually be the direct object or indirect object, and many categories such as noun, verb, sentence, etc., may appear in the topic position. Therefore, one English sentence may be represented by many Chinese sentences with

different word orders. Third, since the English sentence is syntactic oriented, and the Chinese sentence is semantic oriented, problems arise when trying to translate between an English subject and a Chinese topic for often there is no way to translate them on a word-by-word basis.

Setton mentions the left-branching structures of Chinese and the right-branching structures of English in the previous section. These differences create obstacles, or interferences in doing ST, but at the same time become good tools for practicing or evaluating chunking skills.

Furthermore, one theory that the researcher applies in dividing meaning units for chunking is illustrated in Phraseology—theory, analysis, and applications edited by A.P. Cowie. The definitions of chunking, meaning units and phraseology can be found in 3.4.5 of the next chapter.

In this case study, the problems caused by different sentence structures can be observed through word-for-word interpretation (unnatural Chinese) or unsuccessful connections as mentioned in 2.2.2 Interferences.

Based on the description above, and the pilot study later, the evaluation criteria in this study concerning ST skills, or the second and the third dimensions of the evaluation criteria, thus include chunking skills and delivery. Chunking skills refer to chunk-moving and chunk-connection (from segmentation, filling-in information,

and dealing with complex sentences mentioned by Yang), and delivery covers the avoidance of backtracks, fillers, pauses, and time control (from rendition clarity and conciseness mentioned by Weber; pauses, backtracks, and fillers mentioned by Yang; time and speed control, the avoidance of backtracking mentioned by Tang).