

YAZILI METİNDEN SÖZLÜ ÇEVİRİ SÜRECİNDE KARŞILAŞILAN SORUNLAR ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA¹

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ÖZ

Bu deneysel araştırmada anadil (Türkçe)'den yabancı dile (İngilizce) yazılı metinden sözlü çeviri yaparken karşılaşılan sorunlar ve bunların sebepleri incelenmiştir. Çalışmada dokuz adet 2.sınıf öğrencisinin çevirileri anlama sadık olma, kaynak iletinin amacı, ifade, sözdizim ve dilbilgisinin doğru kullanımı, belirli bağlama ait art alan bilgisi ve sorun çözme becerileri gözönüne alınarak değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, kaliteli çeviriler üretebilmek için öğrencilerin farkındalık kazanmaları ve bilişsel becerileri içselleştirip, yapıcı motivasyon ve algı kontrolünü sağlamaları çok önem teşkil etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yazılı metinden sözlü çeviri, Çeviride kalite, Bilişsel Süreçler, Sözlü çevirmen eğitimi, Çaba modelleri.*

A STUDY ON THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN SIGHT TRANSLATION

ABSTRACT

This experimental research presents the problems and their underlying reasons in sight translation from one's native language (Turkish) into a foreign language (English). The study analyzes the performances of nine sophomore students, as regards faithfulness to meaning and the purpose of the source message, proper use of expression, grammar and syntax, background knowledge about the specified context and problem solving skills. Results reveal that to produce high-quality translations, students' awareness and internalization of cognitive skills and constructive control of perceptions and motivations is necessarily significant.

Keywords: *Sight translation, Quality in translation, Cognitive processing, Interpreter training, Effort Models.*

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I. Various Aspects of Sight Translation

Sight Translation is a hybrid act performed on the territory between translation and interpreting as it involves the verbal rendering of the written source text in the target language. It has been defined in various ways but generally is considered as a useful exercise practiced in the early stages of the interpreter training program to improve students' oral language skills and techniques and hence prepare them for consecutive and simultaneous interpreting (as cited in Agrifoglio, 2004: 43). Although the interpreter's overall translational product is the same for all sight, consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, for each mode he needs to complete a variety of specific tasks as regards information reception, processing and production. The basic difference between sight translation and interpreting relates to the process of reading and listening since the sight translator translates the text he reads whereas the interpreter performs the same task on the text he hears. This means the sight translator has the text in front of him until he finishes translating, but the interpreter's actual auditory exposure to the oral text lasts until just after the source segments are uttered by the speaker. Although sight translation has been used as a subsidiary tool to prepare students for interpreting, it actually should be deemed as a technique on its own since it differs from both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation due to its particular working conditions that affect the interpreter's use of cognitive resources and strategies and thus raise specific problems and issues of a different nature to those encountered in other types of oral translation (Agrifoglio, 2004: 43-44).

As the cognitive effort required in sight translation should be partially distributed between different types of operations, more problems related to the comprehension of the source text is commonly observed when compared with written translation. The disruptions occurring as a result of these problems have strong influence on cognition. The design of experiments which include the translation of linguistic structures varying in terms of syntactical complexity proves helpful in revealing the change of cognitive effort and the visual interference stemming from the constant presence of the source text before the translator. Sight translation, which involves the "input medium" of written translation and the "output medium" of interpreting, is sometimes conceived as a simpler process requiring less effort when related to other modes of either translation or interpreting. The task of the sight translator is to produce verbal output in a normal reading out-loud tempo while decoding the visual input from a written original text (Shreve; Lacruz, 2010: 63).

As some mental processes involved in sight translation resemble those in simultaneous interpretations, it would not be wrong to state that these forms of language mediation are equally hard in practice. Difficulties specific to sight translation arise not just from processing the meaning of the source text and producing its equivalent in the target language under real-time limitations as in interpretation but also from repeating the same operation for all linguistic

segments visually flowing one after the other before the translator. During sight translation since the sender's message is in written form, it constantly interferes the ongoing translational act and thus some translators find it hard to concentrate on meaning rather than words on the page. Actually, the difference between the process of reading and listening, which emerges the need to deal with texts of different nature, cause the overall complexity; unlike the interpreter who listens to an oral source text, the sight translator reads a written source text for target rendering (Mikkelson, 1995). Efficient delivery of sight translation is critical to ensure the smooth running of communication as

...it is very important that the interpreter speak loudly and enunciate clearly, with proper intonation and voice modulation. Smooth pacing is also essential; sudden starts and stops and long pauses while the interpreter figures out a difficult translation problem are distracting to the listener. Ideally, a sight translation should sound as if the interpreter were merely reading a document written in the target language (Mikkelson, 1995).

Oral and written languages employ a variety of different linguistic mechanisms to communicate the intended message to the receiver. Through writing one can make use of language in many ways and adds significantly to his linguistic repertoire since written texts tend to be more complicated than oral ones in terms of their syntax, vocabulary, style and textual features such as cohesive devices and rhetorical structures involved. But naturally when necessary or depending on the communication conditions such as the setting, purpose or the audience, some linguistic features may serve both for the written and the spoken style (Agrifoglio, 2004:47; Chafe;Danielewicz, 1987:2; Shreve; Lacruz, 2010:64).

II. Written versus Spoken Language Use

According to a project carried out among a group of 20 professors and graduate students to compare the uses of language in conversations, lectures, letters and academic papers, it was revealed that the speakers did not have much time to decide which words or phrases were appropriate for self-expression whereas the writers under no such constraints may even have the opportunity to improve their texts if they were dissatisfied and therefore regardless of its subject matter or aim, written language included a more wide-ranging vocabulary than spoken (Chafe;Danielewicz, 1987:3-4). What passes through people's minds does not always comply with the language they use since it may not be possible to effectively convert the opinions, states and events right away into words and phrases, which calls for cognitive effort to select from knowledge of a large repertoire of lexical options, and hence set up a reasonable communicative atmosphere. To make this cognitive effort, writing has more time and resources than speaking since different processes apply for both acts; it is mostly the writer not the speaker who decides on the time and pace needed

for the selection of the appropriate lexical items to capture the meaning nuances and text production and revision processes concealed from the eventual consumer of the language used. When one speaks within the limited time s/he is not indeed allowed to repetitively improve the quality of what has been previously uttered as this will significantly interrupt the natural communication flow and social interactions and thus the audience may lose confidence in the speaker's ability and knowledge to discuss the subject under question. Consequently, because unlike authors, the speakers encounter greater difficulties in formulating their thoughts and have less opportunity to look over a wide array of potential choices tending to use the first words that come to mind, the vocabulary of spoken language turns out to be pretty limited in nature regardless of the type of speaking, particular context, purpose or subject matter involved. The practice of writing supersedes the processing constraints and communicative conditions in oral speech with its supplementary time and editing possibilities for crafty and elaborate organization of ideas, whereas speaking provides a plainer perspective and expression for listeners. Another important difference that separates speaking from writing is their use of different lingual supplies, i.e. the style of formal texts is not similar to that of conversations, due to specific levels or registers available in language repertoires for various occasions, for instance in Japanese the relative social status of the interlocutors determines the communicator's choice of lexical items (Chafe;Danielewicz, 1987:4-8).

By means of high-rated lexical changes such as use of new words and new senses of old words, spoken language gains its innovative character and attaches priority to freshness while written language maintaining a firm stock of numerous items is likely to remain traditional using formal or archaic expressions. In brief, "spoken language achieves richness through constant change within a limited range of choices; written language achieves it through broadening that range" (Chafe;Danielewicz, 1987:8). Thus, speakers and writers should pay attention to these lexical differences and make their choices accordingly also knowing which items are generally used or sound incongruous, i.e. for example whether they are colloquial, literary or neutral, so as to receive full appreciation from their audiences or readers.

As language does not consist of words only, the questions of in what ways words and phrases are combined to form clauses both in speaking and writing and how, when necessary, language users manage to move back and forth within the boundaries set by the different phases of these processes are essential. Spoken language produces short linguistic spurts called idea or intonation units which generally are single clauses followed by pauses. As for their cognitive basis, they reveal through the use of language which new information is stored in the short term/working memory or what draws the attention of the speaker at that very moment. It must be pointed out that the capacity of focal consciousness is limited as a speaker has the ability to perceive

information that is expressed in only about 6 words and the more the syntax becomes complicated the more the communication is likely to suffer from choppy-sounding speech containing various types of disfluencies such as utterances with false-starts or self-repairs, hesitations including filled pauses and periods of silence, the use of fillers, incomplete sentences and fragments (Chafe;Danielewicz, 1987:10; McTear, 2004:57; Wennerstrom, 2001:253).

Intonation units in spoken language may be said to correspond to punctuation units, i.e. sections of language between punctuation marks, in written language as both writing and speaking have similar features and conventions such as rhythm, stress and pauses assigned to utterances. Although writers do not necessarily have to cope with the constraints of the short-term memory and thus can form punctuation units of any length via linguistic devices such as prepositional phrases, nominalizations and attributive adjectives, spending as much time as they need for planning and editing, like most speakers, they may prefer to keep the punctuation units within certain bounds because of their sensitivity and concern for the reception of their texts by the unknown and unseen audience (Chafe;Danielewicz, 1987:10-12).

Briefly speaking, oral language with its hypotaxic structure often using popular expressions, idioms and neologisms tends to get more involved with the audience who is considered to have a limited short-term memory whereas written language depends on elegantly constructed parataxis that adds to the physical distance between the author and his reader (Agrifoglio, 2004:47).

III. Written Language and Sight Translation Process Versus Interpreting Process

In many cases, Sight Translation turns out to be a more difficult mode of translation compared to interpreting in terms of the perceptual and cognitive aspects of the entire process. The translator has to communicate effectively with the source text lying in front of him until the task is completed. As the written text includes input at all linguistic levels mainly because of the writer's tendency for employing complex language devices and structures, to understand and convey the information content, he is surely to put more effort and energy into his work than an interpreter dealing with a standard oral text devoid of scientific and technical subjects (Shreve; Lacruz, 2010:64). In addition, the source language text constantly interferes with the process since it provides the translator chance and time to go back to the permanently visible lines and make the necessary changes for improving the translations; he has hard time fixing his eyes and attention on the words, phrases and statements following the ones he has just translated as his mind calls him to repair and propose translations better than the previous ones (Agrifoglio, 2004:47).

However, in interpreting as soon as the speaker ends his utterance, the original oral text usually disappears out of hearing and thus is unavailable for reconsideration and only in rare cases, the well-trained and skillful interpreter at

one instant during the production phase, retrieves chunks of relevant information from his long-term memory and adds these to the appropriate parts of the text still being processed without disturbing its coherence, so as not to miss out some significant details needed by the listener. Unlike the sight translator, the interpreter focuses mainly on the semantic content and is less influenced by the differences, clashes and interactions between source and target languages and hence is less exposed to linguistic interference from source language vocabulary and grammatical rules and syntactic systems throughout the reformulation process as the speech sounds are short-lived and instantly vanish from the interpreter's memory (Gile, 2009:181). Even though, reading a text or listening to someone requires more or less the same type of comprehension processes, the substantial differences between the two acts regarding the characteristics of auditory and visual signals, which are considered even more essential than distinct linguistic structures of source and target languages, should be identified for helping the translator and the interpreter take control of the entire translational operation. Due to the nature of listening, one focuses mainly on the meanings or content behind the words and the speaker's overall intended message or central insight, while to the reader the message becomes of secondary importance and as there is no time and pace limit to his access to the written text, he is able to encode and remember individual language units of various lengths. Therefore, contrary to what may be assumed, the availability of the text does not facilitate the translator's task, but serves almost as a barrier to understanding what is essential and dealing effectively with potential translation problems (Shreve; Lacruz, 2010:65). One cannot deny the pressure on the sight translator, racing against time, he attempts to interpret the text he has newly met knowing any misunderstandings or confusion that may arise during the process will stimulate errors and impair translation quality in the wake of deficiencies in cognitive functioning including increase in the frequency of memory problems, insufficient concentration, disorganization of thoughts and difficulties with selecting the right problem-solving strategies that apply for each particular situation. The sight translator in realizing his task should decide to what extent naturalness and fluency of the translated text is important or which phase of the translation process-reading and analysis or production- should be of priority, since his approach will help him plan his use of time, pace of work and proper distribution of cognitive resources. Moreover, if the translator as a reader pays attention to individual words rather than making sense of core meanings, concepts and assertions the words refer to, it is highly probable that the translation process will often be interrupted by the syntactic, grammatical and lexical features specific to the source text, which is expected to be rendered while reading and this imbalance may lead to a significant decline in the translator's performance. Briefly saying, cognitive difficulties in sight translation differ from those of oral interpreting and written translation because of the influence of the source input and the

inevitable obligation to deal with two different texts at the same time which necessitates different processing for each. (Agrifoglio, 2004:48; Shreve; Lacruz, 2010:65-67).

IV. Assessment of Success in Sight Translation

Considering the employment of limited cognitive means for multitasking and efforts interaction involved in sight translation, it is appropriate to adopt *Effort Models* developed by Daniel Gile as a result of his concern to help professionals and students understand the working of interpreting mechanisms, reveal the factors that cause performance flows, find solutions to conflicts and problems and hence develop effective strategies to prevent failures and interruptions. He states that the interpreters' idea of simultaneous interpreting as a difficult task makes the process even more complicated. The psychological handicap is observed even in the performances of the experienced interpreters in different settings and in all modes of interpreting not just in simultaneous interpreting. Most interpreters believe that their efforts prove useless in achieving their aim which they formulate as conveying all the information embedded in the source text using the appropriate facilities of the target language. This performance failure appears in oral material loaded with information or technical languages as well as in clear and easily transferable statements. Gile's models spring from two basic assumptions; the interpreter has limited mental energy which he makes use of during interpretation and the gradual shortage of this energy leads to a significant fall-off in the interpreter's performance. These models distinguish and clarify the different cognitive processes involved in simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting and sight translation and identify four main efforts such as the Listening and Analysis Effort, Memory Effort, Production Effort and Coordination Effort. Listening and Analysis Effort includes all actions, i.e. the subconscious analysis of the incoming signals, word recognitions and grasping the general logic behind each sentence in relation to the whole context and situation, needed to comprehend the speech as fully and accurately as possible. 'Output part' of interpreting, namely the Production Effort is outlined as the series of activities consisting of the mental representation of the meaning and its optimal transfer using target language forms and speech patterns. Memory Effort relates to short-term memory operations. How the information is stored and retrieved varies from one speech to another, so it would not be wrong to say that each interpreting situation is unique on its own and requires an alternative way of storage as to duration and quantity. Ultimately, in order to organize the simultaneous functioning of these three basic efforts, a supplementary cognitive activity called Coordination Effort is necessary (2009: 157-168). Furthermore, since the interpreter has no available technical resources to solve the set of issues that arises at the time of interpreting, he needs additional support from his memory, for instance

recalling information stored in the long-term memory, making inferences based on prior cultural knowledge and background, discovering the meaning of unknown words by making phonetic or semantic associations and the use of logic and imagination (Sampaio, 2007:66). To ensure smooth interpretation “total processing capacity requirements should not exceed the interpreter’s total available processing capacity...processing capacity available for each Effort should be sufficient to complete the task it is engaged in” and the attainment of cognitive balance and consistency between the Efforts will prevent possible losses and deterioration of quality (Gile, 2009: 170).

In Sight Translation, the Listening and Analysis Effort is replaced by the Reading Effort as the translator is asked to read the written source text and translate it orally into the target language. Gile points out that the Production Effort is similar to that of simultaneous interpreting, but short-term memory is not strained and no specific Memory and Coordination Effort as in simultaneous or consecutive is needed because of the nature of the task itself. As a self-paced activity it gives freedom to decide whether to use time and processing capacity more for reading or production. However the lack of influential prosodic features of oral texts such as intonation, hesitations or pauses hinders segmentation into Translation units and understanding especially when it comes to complicated language formulations (Gile, 2009: 180).

Based on her research results, Agrifoglio suggests that sight translation requires as much workings of the short-term memory as those of simultaneous interpreting and hence for the production of high-quality translations comprehension and reformulation processes should coincide and some information may need to be stored for later use as a result of the syntactic differences between the two languages (2004:45). Maurizio Viezzi’s study also reveals the function of memory in sight translation which has not been given enough thought. In this experiment the parameter of information retention used to evaluate the students’ competence in interpreting represents the mental processes triggered to carry out the task set before the translator showing the depth at which the text is processed. According to the results of the experiment, the availability of the written source text prevents the translator from making a deeper and more meaningful processing of information which leads to reduction in retention capacity and less complete translation product (1989:65-67).

Briefly saying, sight translation is a specific form of practice which requires competence and skills in both translation and interpreting, e.g. the ability to concentrate, have efficient memory management, grasp the essence and function of the text, make the right lexical and stylistic choices, adjust to time constraints and audience needs. In order to produce high quality translations, the translator needs to eliminate the incidents of potential irregularities and problems in the translation process. In this frame, the following study was designed to identify the nature of common errors and

failures students make in sight translation and reveal what weaknesses they need to improve.

V. The Experimental Study

This paper presents the findings of a small-scale study concerning the problems encountered in the practice of sight translation. The sample consisted of a homogeneous group of nine sophomore students studying at the Department of Translation and Interpreting at Dokuz Eylül University. The mean age was twenty and there were six females and three males. About half of the students who took part in this experiment previously had professional experience in both written and oral translation. Students were asked to interpret a written text of 107 words, specialized in Turkey's accession to the European Union, from Turkish to English, so their task is to translate from their native tongue into the foreign language. Students were expected to produce a speech in a field with which they were actually familiar since they had already come across similar texts in some of their courses. The text for the experiment is an excerpt taken from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Webpage dated April 17 2007 about Turkey's program for alignment with the EU acquis. The students were given only a few minutes preparation time to skim through the text prior to sight translating. They were also allowed to make notes or marks of any kind, e.g. writing the Turkish equivalents of English terminology, so that they had the opportunity to develop immediate solutions to problems. Participants were subjected to individual testing. Performance and the quality of the final product is evaluated on the basis of the student's "ability to interpret with faithfulness to the meaning and intent of the original, use appropriate language and expression, apply world knowledge and knowledge of subject matter and demonstrate acceptable platform skills and resilience to stress" (Sawyer, 2004:97).

Students' attempts to select the appropriate target lexical items and structures in agreement with the source language were obstructed by the grammatical and syntactic differences between the languages. Parallel to Gile's assumptions (2009:170) they intended to produce elegant reformulations in English, so allocated more processing capacity to the Production Effort and had less capacity left for the Reading and Analysis Effort which was necessary to develop a deeper understanding of the source text. The emergence of unexpectedly complex punctuation units momentarily disrupted their attention and some information was lost in translation. The missing complete analyses led to pauses, repetitions, long instances of silence and the use of filler words. Moreover, the ideal attainment of native-like selections and native-like fluency was further impeded by errors and omissions. Although, sight translation is a self-paced activity, from the way they work on the text, it seems that they cannot help feeling the constraints of rapid production which had considerable impact on the use of the target language.

Example 1

Text A:

Avrupa Birliği'ne katılım, bugüne kadar birçok aday ülke bakımından uzun ve zorlu bir süreci teşkil etmiştir.

Student 1

To this day accession to the EU was a challenging and long process for all of those (...) all of those (...) country who wants to be in EU (...) that wants to be in EU.

Student 2

The participation in the EU has consisted a long and tough process (...) within the aspects of (...) within the scope of many countries (...) many countries so far.

Student 3

Accession to the European Union has been a tough process (...) till this day for many countries (...) for many nominated countries.

Student 4

Until today accession of EU has been a very long and struggling process...

Student 5

The accession to European Union (...) has been a (...) very long and difficult (...) process (...) (...) for many of the (...)

To translate the first example sentence, the students should be familiar with the equivalent terms of “katılım” and “aday”, which are “accession” and “candidate”, respectively, in English. The verbal phrase “teşkil etmek” (to form) may be slightly confusing. Student 1 instead of using the English equivalence, tried to explain the meaning of the term “aday”, which apparently is unacceptable. Likewise, Student 2 used “participation” for “katılım” which may lead to political misunderstandings. Instead of translating simply as “for” she used phrases “within the scope of”, “within the aspects of” for the word “bakımından”, which certainly is puzzling to the listener. Student 3 was unable to distinguish between “nominated” and “candidate”. Students 4 and 5 could not complete their translations and left out some important information.

Example 2

Text B:

10 Ocak 2007 tarihinde, Dışişleri Bakanı ve Başbakan Yardımcısı Sayın Abdullah Gül başkanlığında, Devlet Bakanı ve Başmüzakereci Sayın Ali Babacan'ın da katıldığı, Türk kamu yönetiminin üst düzey yöneticilerinin katılım sağladıkları toplantıda “Müzakere sürecimizde yaşanabilecek gelişmelerden bağımsız olarak ülkemizdeki reform sürecinin o zamana kadar olduğu gibi kararlılıkla sürdürüleceği” kamuoyuna açıklandı.

Student 6

On January 10 2007, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Gül and the State Minister and leading negotiator Ali Babacan attended a meeting and (...) the top administrators of public of Turkey have attended a meeting (...) in the meeting it was explained that reformation in our country Turkey (...) we conducted decisively and independently in the negotiations.

Student 7

On January 10, 2007 Foreign Minister and Vice President Abdullah Gül, and Minister and (...) Ali Babacan, explained that in our negotiation process (...) we will continue with our reforms (...) independent from the possible future developments and we will be (...) expectable.

The second example is a long compound sentence. The students were expected to; first of all, identify the main and subordinate clauses before moving on to its translation. Only a few students used their time efficiently for this preparation. Most students, out of anxiety, focused on words instead of meanings as in written translation, so they inevitably got lost between the lines and failed to convey the overall meaning and express themselves properly in the target language, e.g. use of inappropriate terminology and grammatical flaws “Vice President” instead of “Deputy Prime Minister” for the post “Başbakan Yardımcısı”, “leading negotiator” instead of “chief negotiator” for the office “başmüzakereci”. The phrase “kararlılıkla sürdürmek” was translated as “we will be expectable” (beklenen olmak), which distorted the meaning and did not fit in any way into the context. However, this phrase which should be inserted at the beginning not the end of the sentence, may be translated as “we are determined to continue...” When students were asked to describe the experimental process briefly, they stated that if they had not panicked they would have shown better performance and managed to solve most problems encountered.

VI. CONCLUSION

Observations show that actually there were no significant behavioral differences between the students although some look more attentive and readily responsive. Students tried to communicate all included in the source text regarding the particular use of political language, but their primary goal was to make the perfect lexical choices in the target language. This actually posed an obstacle to the accurate and natural oral production as it encouraged self-repairs and hesitations which degrade the quality and effectiveness of translation. The text is densely loaded with information and contains complex sentences with long utterances and terminology specific to the field requiring more sophisticated reasoning skills. In accordance with Gile’s assessment of the performance problems in interpreting (2009:157), despite their intensive efforts, students’ biased perception of the translation process, their own cognitive

abilities and professional achievement and their own judgment of the effectiveness and accuracy is reflected as errors, omissions or clumsiness both in the production of clear segments and complex structures with embedded clauses. Among the six sub-competencies, bilingual sub-competence, extra-linguistic sub-competence, knowledge about translation, instrumental sub-competence, psycho-physiological components and strategic sub-competence, included in the PACTE model of translation competence, the problems mainly were observed in the psycho-physiological components which require competency in cognitive skills such as memory, perception, attention span and improvement of attitudinal aspects such as motivation, self-efficacy and personal limits. Students were able to control interferences by means of identifying the textual conventions and language registers. They had firm cultural background and were equipped with knowledge about the translation theory and practice (as cited in Ivars, 2008:81-82). Sight Translation equally significant and complex as the other oral modes necessitates the students' conscious development and internalization of specific cognitive abilities and skillful management of individual psychological obstacles to achieve high quality products. The translator's perception of his task and how he positions himself in the translation process as a whole affects his approaches to problem solving.

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