

The Role of Elements of Text Analysis in Consecutive Interpreting Performance: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Received: 19.06.2024 • Accepted: 05.08.2024 • Published: 20.09.2024 • Final Version: 02.12.2024

Abstract: Despite the theoretical importance of text analysis in translation process, there is a paucity of experimental research into the role that the elements of the text can play in enhancing interpreting performance. The present study, adopting a mixed-methods design, aimed to investigate whether knowledge of text elements enhances consecutive interpreting performance. In so doing, a sample of 36 homogeneous undergraduate translation students participated in this study based on convenience sampling, and a pool of six students participated in the qualitative phase of the study based on purposive sampling, following the data saturation method. Following Nord's guidelines for text analysis, the experimental group was exposed to the elements of text during the intervention. A validated assessment rubric was utilized to measure students' interpreting performance, taking the inter-rater reliability of the scores also into consideration. The results of one-way ANOVA confirmed that there was a statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental group; the experimental group outperformed the control group. Having calculated the inter-coder reliability of the responses emerged from the interviews, the number of common factors included six themes, namely unique, new information, message analysis, motivating, general lexis, and semiotics. In the end, some practical implications are offered for interpreting students and teachers.

Keywords: Elements of text analysis, consecutive interpreting, interpreting performance

1. Introduction

The background indicates that embracing the ideas from other disciplines can yield new ways of reflecting on the field of translation because it would provide translation with new validity and models for practice (Tymoczko, 2007). As for interpreting domain of study, Salevsky (1993) was the first figure who used the concept of interpreting studies in a major international publication. In this regard, Holmes (1972) outlined interpreting under the heading of medium-restricted forms of the object of study and categorized these forms as human (versus machine) and oral (versus written) translation. Moreover, Pöchhacker (2022) declared that interpreting studies is regarded as the academic discipline that comprises interpreting as its object of study. According to Pöchhacker (2022), interpreting is linguistically defined as oral translation. Interpreting is commonly classified as simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting (see Gerver, 1976). As for the act of consecutive interpreting, Gile clearly (1997) explains that the interpreter listens to a few minutes of a speaker's speech, makes notes, and then conveys the entire segment in the target language, and following this, the speaker continues for a few minutes, the interpreter delivers the next segment, and so on until the speech is complete. According to Giles' (2009) effort model of consecutive interpreting, there are two main stages to the interpreting process: the first involves listening and taking notes, while the second involves producing a new speech form. For this reason, a central issue in the scope of translation studies refers to the linkage between language skills and interpreting process.

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Indeed, apart from listening skills, an important skill in translation is reading skills (e.g., Bakker, et al., 1998). As Pang (2008) explains, there is a rather undisputed agreement among scholars that reading is an essential skill in the interaction between languages. As Nuttal (1996, p. 2) emphasizes, “reading has been described as the most studied and the least understood process in education”. In spite of the common agreement on the significance of reading, there are numerous interpretations as to what reading is. To some, reading comprehension comprises the recreation of meaning from the texts by means of various techniques (National Reading Panel, 2000; Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001). Therefore, due to the didactic value of text analysis, Beeby (1996) maintains that translators and interpreters need to analyze the texts to convey the message accurately. According to Ross (2000), translation is acknowledged not only as the fifth skill but also as the supreme social skill because it develops comprehension and communication. Translation is recently regarded as an activity that is expanding in the contemporary world. Likewise, Snell-Hornby (1988) defined translation and interpreting studies as sub-disciplines of applied linguistics, and from that time the notion of translation strategy became a main notion in Translation Studies. Leonardi (2007) declares that students should first scrutinize a text to determine its contents before doing the translation.

However, the problem lies in the fact that students majoring in English translation mostly suffer from lack of ability to produce fluent and natural translation while interpreting the texts from English language into another language, and since they are not aware of translation strategies, they think that oral translation is just a matter of selecting equivalences for the upcoming words so that they fall short of creating a good interpretation. This problem may be due to the kind of teaching in their classes which to a large extent focus on listening to the text and interpreting it while the kind of listening itself encompasses the effective analysis of the text which is the door for creating a good oral translation. They do not know how to analyze the text and they are not familiar with the techniques they should follow to conduct the analysis.

The major contribution of the present study to interpreting courses is the salient importance of translation strategies for students who are majoring in translation disciplines that could help them learn how to analyze the text before doing translation, and that can motivate them become autonomous in reading skills and, in turn, create more natural translations. Encouraging students to be autonomous can enhance their translations in order to accept responsibility for their own works (Ross, 2000). Fener and Newby (2000) declare that autonomy solves the understanding problem, especially in reading and translation. Since there is a relative lack of research into the influence of text analysis for interpreting performance, the present study aims to examine the effect of text analysis, as an underrated issue in linguistics, in enhancing consecutive interpreting performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Text Analysis and Translation Practice

The existing literature witnesses the multi-disciplinary approach that translation studies has adopted in conducting relevant research (Munday, 2016). In this regard, Gile (2009) proposed the notion of disciplinary immigrants for researchers in translation studies, employing theories and principles from sociology, cultural studies, linguistics etc. Historically, Rivers (1987) considered text analysis as the most indispensable skill for translators at all levels of language knowledge; however, there are always translators who cannot analyze a message comprehensively (Pang, 2008). The current literature acknowledges that the practitioners and scholars have defined and categorized translation strategies differently (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958; Nida & Taber, 1969; Newmark, 1981; Baker, 1992; House, 1997; Pym, 2009). Faerch & Kasper (1983) investigated the strategies that differed from those examined by the majority of translation theorists, although they were rather similar to the strategies developed by scholars in the fields of second-language acquisition and interlanguage communication. Séguinot (1991) investigated the types of strategies that the translators employed while translating a text. Honig (1991) categorizes strategies into ‘micro-strategies’, ‘rules’ and ‘macro-strategies’ (p. 78). Moreover, Palumbo (2009) remarks that translation strategy is the transfer process that the translators

do on a specific structure or idea present in the source text. Just recently, Malekparvar and Jafarzadeh (2023) worked on the effectiveness of text element on translation performance and found that knowledge of text analysis could improve translation performance. Khashimovich et al. (2022) found that knowledge of text elements positively affects translation of scientific texts. Zaki and Saidu (2023) delved into two different languages and concluded that different languages have different patterns and language structures so that translators should be aware of the elements of text analysis in the original language. Barabino (2020) found that translators should gain mastery over the cultural, textual, and linguistic aspects of the source language and the target language. Plyth and Craham (2023) concluded that features of the translated text database can influence the literary and cultural systems.

2.2 Consecutive Interpreting Performance

Over the last two decades, a considerable amount of research has regained interest in applied translation studies including oral translation (O'Brien, 2011; Hosseini & Modarresi, 2015; Azizi & Modarresi, 2017; Dianati et al, 2022a) Historically, interpreting is defined as a form of translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language (Pöchhacker, 2004). Meanwhile, according to Russell (2005), simultaneous interpretation is referred to the process of interpreting into the target language at the same time as the source language is being delivered while consecutive interpretation is defined as the process of interpreting after the speaker or signer has completed one or more ideas in the source language and pauses while the interpreter transmits that information. Riccardi, et al. (1998) declared that consecutive interpreting was the earliest kind of professional interpreting. Pöchhacker (2004) distinguished between two types of consecutive interpretation including the traditional and the short style. Mehrani Rad et al. (2018) concluded that the kind of translation task is conducive to vocabulary acquisition, highlighting the role of techniques used in form-based with translation tasks. Trisnawati and Netta (2020) concluded that translation strategies are conducive to interpreting performance. Moreover, Woang (2021) found that the most important thing for a translator is the technique chosen can fulfill the purpose of the oral translation. Dianati et al. (2022b) concluded that the technological tools can engage students to employ translation strategies in interpreting courses. As Schleiermacher (2021) pinpointed, the use of translation strategies can help translators to convey the pragmatic aspects of translation more effectively.

The researcher of the current study followed the translation strategies developed by Nord (1991) for text analysis and comprehension, including: (1) content, (2) presupposition, (3) non-verbal elements, (4) lexis, and (5) sentence structure. Nord (1991) stated that the analysis of text help students become better readers who can read and understand by themselves and this would help them understand the texts better and translate them more accurately and naturally. To clarify, content includes reference, conjunctions, and paraphrasing; presuppositions include missing references to other books and papers; non-verbal elements include pictures, charts, and diagrams; lexis includes general meaning and specialized meaning; sentence structure includes simple sentence, complex sentence, dependent and independent clauses and voices (Nord, 1991).

Taken together, the present study focuses on applied translation studies and is based on translation training, tracking the progress of interpreting students. This research is heavily influenced by the statistical methods used in applied translation studies. To further illuminate how text analysis might influence understanding and interpreting a message, the present research additionally draws on Holmes' (1972) applied translation studies, which encourage the incorporation of concepts from fields outside translation such as linguistics, would agree with this underpinning. Thus, the following research questions are posed by the study:

1. Does knowledge of text elements enhance consecutive interpreting performance?
2. How do the students react to the use of text elements in enhancing their consecutive interpreting performance?

3. Methodology

The present study, as a sequential mixed-methods design, used a quantitative paradigm with a component of qualitative approaches (Dornyei, 2007). Quantitative data were collected using correlation approach, while qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews.

3.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 36 university students (females: $n=23$, 63.9%; males: $n=13$, 36.1%; Mean age=21.12 SD=2.54) majoring in English translation from Islamic Azad University of Quchan, selected based on convenience sampling. Students participated in this study were junior students who were engaged in consecutive interpreting course and had already passed their courses of audio-visual interpreting course. However, in the initial phase, the participants' homogeneity was determined by their performance on the Preliminary English Test (PET), including listening skills. The listening part of this test includes four parts ranging from short exchanges to more extended dialogues and monologues. The study included the participation of students whose test scores were either one standard deviation above or below the mean. Since the mean score was 16 with a standard deviation of 3, those participants who scored between 19 and 13 on the test were chosen for the study; therefore, 36 students out of 43 students were selected to participate in the study. In addition, a pool of six students (females: $n=4$, 66.7%; males: $n=2$, 33.3%; Mean age=21.19 SD=2.14) were selected to participate in the qualitative phase of the study based on purposive sampling and following the data saturation method. That is, the relevant data were gathered until no new information was added.

3.2 Instruments

To homogenize the students, PET, developed by Cambridge ESOL, was used that includes three main sections: Reading/Writing, Listening, and Speaking. The listening part consists of 4 parts ranging from short exchanges to more extended dialogues and monologues. The objective of the listening section is to assess candidates' ability to understand dialogues and monologues in informal and neutral settings on various everyday topics. The listening part includes 25 items and lasts 35 minutes. Based on the measurement scales proposed by PET, each item carries one mark, which gives 25 marks.

The pre-test from VOA Dateline News, suitable for intermediate English learners, was the first tool to assess interpreting performance. The post-test from VOA Dateline News was the second tool to assess interpreting performance. The pre-test and post-test had roughly equal degrees of difficulty, and each test lasted around five minutes. The readability levels of the texts as measured by Gunning fog formula for pretest and posttest were 15.21 and 14.69, respectively, which are regarded as good indices for junior college students (Gunning, 1952). The reliability estimates of both pretest and post-test, as calculated by Cronbach's Alpha, were acceptable ($r=.71$ & $.74$, respectively), based on the results obtained from the pilot study.

To measure students' consecutive interpreting performance, Khoramy and Modarresi's (2019) interpretation assessment criteria was used. The rubric, using Rasch measurement (Linacre 2009), yielded an item separation index of 2.77 with an item reliability of .88, and a person separation index of 2.63 with a person reliability of .79, which indicated quite precise measurement. The scoring procedure is between 22 and 88.

To explore the influence of text elements in enhancing their consecutive interpreting performance, four semi-structured interview questions were constructed by the researcher. The contents of the questions centered around the familiarity of the participants with the concepts of text analysis, text elements, and text structure, and their understanding of the texts while interpreting from English language into Persian language. The contents of the items were checked by three translation experts, all of whom are faculty members at Islamic Azad University of Quchan. After receiving their feedback, the researcher revised the questions in terms of their content validity.

3.3 Procedure and Data Analysis

The researcher opted to conduct the study inside the classroom. Initially, she used the homogeneity test at the first meeting to ensure a representative sample. After that, they were divided into two groups with 18 students in each group. The treatment phase lasted for fifteen sessions from January 2024 to May 2024. The classes were held every Wednesday from 15 to 16.30 and 17:00 to 18:30 with the same teacher who was the author of the present study. Since some of the sessions were cancelled because of holidays or so, the teacher held some compensatory sessions. The control group was taught based on the conventional method used in interpretation courses while the experimental group was taught based on Nord (1991) translation strategies. Throughout the treatment sessions, the teacher guided the students in the experimental group through the steps of text analysis for interpreting so that they could study the texts on their own and interpret the message. The teacher worked with the students, using illustration and exemplification, on the five elements entailing content, presupposition, non-verbal elements, lexis, and sentence structure. For example, the teacher required them to take note while listening to focus on the main information or content of the message and explained to them that interpreting is the process of actively doing something while they listen. Moreover, she helped the students to activate their background knowledge or schemata to become prepared for interpreting by checking vocabulary and providing hints for what the topic was. Or, the teacher helped students to pick out manageable clusters of words to retain long sentence by breaking down speech into smaller groups of words. She was there to help the students how to analyze the message and instructed them on using these techniques in their oral translation.

The students were given extensive and detailed instructions on how to carry out the pretest and posttest of interpreting; these instructions were essential before the pre-test, as only some subjects were expected to try such a task previously. Participants listened to high-quality audio samples on a sound recorder and then interpreted them after each pause in front of two raters. Two judges evaluated how well they did when asked to interpret. The researcher could ensure consistency in evaluating the students' performance calculating the inter-rater reliability of the scores provided by the raters so that the students took two tests, one before and one after the intervention.

Following this, the researcher held face-to-face interviews with six students individually for 20-minute interviews during the last two weeks of May 2024. Each of the interviews was a bit different in length so as for the interviewer to make sure that the interviewees' responses provide no more new information. The respondents were free to answer the questions in English or Persian language; however, their responses were transcribed into English language and then analyzed by classifying, that is, by tracing commonalities across them.

As for the first research question of the study, the researcher ran one-way ANCOVA to compare the significant difference between the two groups, while controlling the pre-test scores as the covariance. As for the second research question of the study, the researcher applied specific interview analysis techniques to the qualitative data collected from the open-ended interview questions (Dörnyei, 2007). First, she used thematic categorization to organize and classify the information gathered from our open-ended questions, looking for recurring themes and similarities. Transcription was a method for organizing large amounts of data. Then, she sorted the transcript into categories, removing any unnecessary information. The information was sorted into groups based on several criteria, and these categories were then published in English. Following the guidelines proposed by Garrison et al. (2006), the researcher finally determined the inter-rater agreement and inter-rater reliability for coded transcripts.

4. Results

4.1 Text Elements and Consecutive Interpreting Performance

Regarding the first research question of the study, the researcher performed the ANCOVA formula. Before this, to ensure the inter-reliability of the scores, the correlation coefficient between the scores given by the two raters was calculated for the pretest and posttest scores which were acceptable ($r=0.63$ & 0.71 , respectively). Then, prior to conducting One-way ANCOVA, several assumptions needed to be satisfied. Initially, the general distribution of scores for both the experimental groups was checked. There was no evidence of a curvilinear relationship since the linear nature of the relationship indicated

that there was no breach in the assumption of linearity. Furthermore, there was no violation of the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes since the significant value was .35, which was comfortably above the cut-off point.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for both groups

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control	53.78	8.14	18
Experimental	59.61	8.65	18
Total	56.69	8.79	36

As shown in Table 1, the descriptive statistics for the two groups showed that the control group had a mean score of 53.78 with a standard deviation of 8.14, while the experimental group had a mean score of 59.51 with a standard deviation of 8.65.

Table 2. The ANCOVA test for consecutive interpreting performance

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	423.35	1	423.35	10.28	.00	.23

As shown in Table 2, the results confirmed that there was a significant difference in the students' scores on consecutive interpreting performance in the control group and the experimental group, after adjusting for scores on the pre-test conducted prior to the intervention. Indeed, the significance value was .00 which was less than .05. Upon comparing the mean scores of both groups, it was evident that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of consecutive interpreting performance.

4.2 Content Analysis of the Responses Obtained from the Interviews

Concerning the second research question of the study, the researcher conducted interview sessions with six participants, utilizing theme-based categorization, and following the data saturation method (Dornyei, 2007). The students who were interviewed indicated that they were first surprised to learn that comprehension requires more than simply a good vocabulary and a handy dictionary. They said that they were not already familiar with Nord's (1991) model of text analysis. An example of the response uttered by one of the students is as follows:

I already thought that interpreting the text is a matter of listening to the message, word knowledge, and rendering to the target language, but following the treatment, I learned that a good interpreting is mostly the result of correct comprehension of the message, and text analysis. For instance, I learned how to make use of presupposition and non-verbal elements.

Having elicited the themes emerged from the responses, the researcher had finished coding the data and asking one of her university teachers, who has been among the faculty member at English department, to elicit the themes from the responses. After that, the second researcher coded the replies by eliciting the similarities and came to almost the same conclusions as the first. Following the recommendations made by Campbell et al. (2013), the researcher calculated the inter-rater reliability by divided the number of coding agreements by the number of agreements and disagreements combined. There were 10 themes where at least one researcher used a code, and in six instances, both coders used the same principle so that the inter-coder reliability of the data was 60 percent (6/10) which was satisfactory. Some of the excerpts from which the themes were elicited are reported in the following table.

Table 3. *Some Excerpts Emerged from the Interviews*

Participants	Excerpts	Themes
Interviewee A	It was a different experience since we were not already informed about such a complete analysis of text.	Unique
Interviewee B	I had no familiarity with the text elements and by means of the guidelines proposed by Nord, I know a message structure now.	New information
Interviewee C	I can scrutinize a message now since I learned the five elements.	Message analysis
Interviewee D	I already became tired when I wanted to do an interpreting task but when I learned how to break the sentences down, I am more eager to do it.	Motivating
Interviewee E	I already thought that while doing the interpreting what makes it difficult for me is the specialized words, but after learning the elements of a sentence, I learned that general words are really vast and important in interpreting.	General lexis
Interviewee F	While interpreting we worked on the non-verbal behavior and the environment and signs and pictures around and this was really helpful for an easier and more precise interpreting.	semiotics

As illustrated in Table 3, the themes emerged from the students' responses to the semi-structured interview questions were as follows: unique, new information, message analysis, motivating, general lexis, and semiotics.

4.3 Discussion of the Findings

The results of the present study are informative and interesting. Introducing interpreting students to the aspects of text element improve their interpreting performance. More specifically, students who can make use of the five elements of a message, including content, presupposition, non-verbal factors, lexis, and sentence structure, are more successful in oral translation. Moreover, the results of interviews with the students revealed some common themes such as the novelty of the elements of text analysis.

As for the first objective of the study, the obtained results are consistent with the previous studies such as Chernov (2004) and Kalina (1994) who found that elements such as presupposition and content are significantly related to interpreting performance. The findings are also aligned with those of Mahmoodzadeh and Mousavi Razzavi (2014) who found that translation techniques and strategies improve interpreting performance. As Mellinger and Jiménez (2019) point out, language ability is a significant barrier for students in interpreting courses; however, gaining mastery over linguistic elements can enrich students' performance in interpreting practice. The results of the study are in agreement with the study by Modarresi and Ghoreyshi (2018) who concluded that an excellent translator is knowledgeable in terms of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics and has an extensive vocabulary. Similar to the previous research conducted by Ghasemzadeh and Modarresi (2014), the study confirmed the importance of environmental factors such as non-verbal elements in enhancing translation performance. In the same vein, the results of the study are in line with the study conducted by Chernov (2004) who found that working on interpreting techniques helps enhance listening and interpreting abilities since the ability to anticipate is helpful in listening and interpreting performance. Likewise, Woang (2021) came to the conclusion that students can choose those translation strategies that work best for them while doing interpreting tasks. Similarly, the study conducted by Modarresi and Jalilzadeh (2020) confirmed that listening strategies are positively associated with students' academic achievement. The results of the study are in agreement with the previous study carried out by Trisnawati and Netta (2020) who found that translation strategies can help students enrich their interpreting performance.

Concerning the second objective of the study, the results emerged from the interviews showed that knowledge of text elements increases students' motivation and message understanding which is in line with the previous study conducted by Riccardi, et al. (1998) and Modarresi (2022) who found that

psychological factors are significantly related to interpreting and translation performance. Moreover, the results showed that activating prior knowledge helps students to interpret more effectively which is in agreement with the findings by Chiu and Hew (2018) who found that concentrating on cognitive processing significantly correlates with better understanding of the message and the discussion. Likewise, the study carried out by Modarresi et al. (2021) revealed that knowledge of translation assessment techniques is helpful in translation process. Moreover, the findings are in agreement with the study conducted by Rouhani and Modarresi (2023) who found that knowledge of lexis can help students provide better equivalence while doing the translation-based tasks. In the same vein, Biel and Engberg (2013) accentuated that the integration of research findings and perspectives is needed to obtain a multidimensional view of the translation strategies. The results of the interviews showed that students find translation strategies motivating which is consistent with the findings by Cayirdag (2011) who found that those who are more involved in a situation have more positive emotions and inspirations towards the tasks they do.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The present study sheds light on the definitions and nature of the factors involved in interpreting performance since knowledge of text elements motivates students to become engaged in doing the interpreting tasks (Modarresi, 2019). Indeed, employing such techniques help students become more accountable, which in turn improves their interpreting performance. Since language competence is considered a significant component of interpreting evaluation, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence indicating that students may enhance their listening skills and word repertoire while working on interpreting. Overall, the research concluded that students in interpreting courses are more accustomed to the “listen and repeat” strategy than to other methods that could improve their language competence and interpreting competence such as presupposition, sentence structure, and lexis. Furthermore, because students need concrete plans for improving their interpretive abilities, the researcher came to the conclusion that the interpreting profession, although demanding, can offer facilitative techniques and strategies for interpreting process. For instance, individuals may learn how to handle many jobs at once by acquiring knowledge of non-verbal elements. This method teaches pupils how to listen and understand simultaneously without becoming confused.

With the newly established empirical link between text-element knowledge and improved interpretation ability, there may be valuable implications for oral translation students and teachers. To become better interpreters, students should consider the text as a whole, analyze its components, and work to strengthen their language skills and interpreting techniques. Baker (1992) provided the translation learners with a methodical way to compensate for the breakdowns that arise during translation by using targeted tactics. Students are expected to listen to the segments to develop their interpretation skills and text element factors rather than view the interpreting task as merely a matter of listening and translating. Teachers should also become experts in interpreting to assess their students' progress in the field using standardized, culture-sensitive rubrics (Maitland et al., 2022) and provide the students with techniques and strategies so that they can experiment different approaches with the aim of finding the techniques that work best for them. They are to function as a scaffold and facilitator for students, working with them on textual aspects and other comparable exercises to boost students' interpretive competence and confidence.

Although this study suggests some informative insights, it has a number of limitations too. First, care should be taken in terms of the external generalizability of the findings since the sample is not representative of all BA translation students. Moreover, more longitudinal research with longer duration can investigate the extent to which elements of text analysis can improve interpreting performance. This research looked at the impact of text features on interpreters' efficiency, with an eye on culture-specific evaluation criteria. There is a need for further research to validate the efficacy of text components with an emphasis on listening skills across different regions of the nation to establish the generalizability and external validity of the results of this study. Studies may expand their efforts to consider how language competency affects the correlation between text features and interpreters' abilities. In order to get a completer and more insightful image of interpreting techniques and students' interpreting performance, another study may follow several translating research approaches, such as product-oriented, process-oriented, and applied-oriented methods.

Acknowledgement: I am grateful to the participants who took part in our study.

Conflict of Interest: The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

Sources of Funding: No funds, grants, or other support was received.

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