

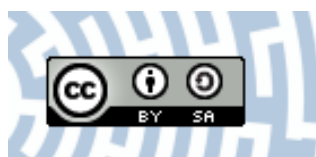


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Title: Where have the connectors gone? : the case of Polish-English simultaneous interpreting

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Chapter Ten

Where have the connectors gone? The case of Polish-English simultaneous interpreting

Andrzej Łyda

In the stage of the Source Language (SL) text comprehension interpreters are particularly vulnerable to conditions in which they are working. As is often the case, such factors as a dense speech, fast delivery and background noise can weaken the monitoring capacity and result in the interpreter's failure to hear and/or comprehend some elements of the original speech including connectives used to strengthen the coherence of the text. The problem of "missing" connectives in the SL was addressed in Łyda (2006, 2008). This article revisits the question of interpreters' strategies used for recognizing and reconstructing such missing elements and extends the study to Polish-English simultaneous interpreting.

Keywords: simultaneous interpreting, connectives, concession, coherence, discourse, text, directionality

1. Introduction

The present study concentrates on the problem of the production of target language (TL) texts in English in the simultaneous mode from partly incomprehensible source language (SL) texts in Polish. As such this study adds to the growing research in psycholinguistic aspects of simultaneous interpreting, and more particularly to the question of how interpreters solve the problem of textual cohesion and coherence.

Cohesion in simultaneous interpreting has been addressed in numerous studies in recent years. Much attention has been given to the problem of shifts in cohesion (Shlesinger 1995; Blum-Kulka 2000). Shlesinger (1995) has demonstrated that that shifts occur in all types of cohesive devices, particularly in the ones not affecting the propositional content. Another repeatedly reached obser-

vation was that simultaneous interpretation involved an increase in the number of conjunctive devices in such language pairs as English-Polish, English-German and English-Hebrew (Gumul 2006; Becher 2011; Shlesinger and Ordan (2012).

What these studies had in common was that they examined the problem of recognizing cohesive links *present* in the SL, that is, accessible to the interpreter. By contrast the present study investigates interpreters' strategies of dealing with a partially incomplete SL text when some individual elements or occasionally portions of SL text escape the interpreter's attention due to a variety of factors (speed of delivery, noise etc.). In other words, this study concentrates then on the problem of recognizing cohesive elements *missing* from the SL text and their reconstruction and representation in the TL. More specifically, the study analyses the effects of omitting connectors of one type, namely concessive connectives.

The problem of missing concessive connectives in the process of interpreting has been studied by Łyda (2006, 2008). Łyda (2006) analysed simultaneous interpreters' strategies in English to Polish interpreting and demonstrated a close link between the ungrammaticality of the SL text and the rate of omission of concessive connectives in the TL output. Similar observations were made in Łyda's (2008) analysis of concessive connectives in English to Polish consecutive interpreting. The study showed that interpreters often resorted to undertranslation by leaving the concessive relation implicit or using underspecified connectives.

The present study revisits the problem of interpreters' strategies used for recognizing and reconstructing such missing concessive connectives in the case of simultaneous interpreting from Polish into English.

2. The relation of concession

In spite of the fact that there have been proposed different theoretical models of the relation of concession and understanding of concession has been undergoing a continuous development paralleling the development of new linguistic theories and the emergence of new fields of linguistic studies, concession is most often understood as a kind of relation of contrast: a contrast of expectations and a contrast to the normal cause-and-effect. From a syntactic point of view, concession is defined as a relation between two clauses: the adverbial concessive clause and the main one combined by a subordinating conjunction of concessive type such as *although*, *though* and *even though* (see, e.g., Molencki 1997: 352).

Apart from the syntactic-semantic approach, concession has been also studied within Rhetorical Structure Theory, in which the identification of the concessive markers is based on a definition of concession as a rhetorical relation between two spans of texts (*nucleus ad satellite*), whatever their size. In this approach the essence of the relation lies in the speaker's acknowledgement of "apparent incompatible" information in the nucleus and satellite situations, which

although regarded as apparently incompatible are actually compatible. Given the fact that connectives are multifunctional and that they exhibit a high degree of underspecification, it is not then the connectives that define the relation between the two spans uniquely. What is crucial for a concessive interpretation is the semantics of the nucleus and the satellite.

The role of connectives in marking both cohesion and coherence cannot be ignored, especially in the case of concession, of which the frequent use of discourse markers to signal the relation is a characteristic feature (Taboada 2004). Nevertheless concession is also marked *asyndetically*. In Barth-Weingarten (2003) it was demonstrated that *asyndetic concessive constructions* (i.e., no overt connective) amount to 16% of all connective constructions in her corpus of English interviews. This observation is of particular significance for the present study, since all markers of concessivity were omitted, transforming the clauses into (potentially) truly *asyndetic constructions*.

From a psycholinguistic point of view the complex nature of concession is reflected in the fact that it is the last conceptual relation to acquire. Wing and Scholnick (1981) claim that the logical implications of concessive connections is fully realised by children at the age of 6–8 and Townsend (1997) has found that even among adult speakers of English the reading time of causal *therefore* sentences was shorter than for concessive *however* sentences. Interesting results were obtained also by de Vega (2005) in an experiment partly resembling the present one. According to de Vega the rate of processing/reading of adversative/concessive sentences was lower than in the case of causal or temporal ones when a connective was replaced with an inadequate one. Considering the specificity of simultaneous interpreting situation and the complexity of the process it could be expected that *asyndetic concessive sentences*, which reduce the cognitive effort of the speaker while increasing the cognitive effort for the hearer, would pose a serious problem to interpreters.

3. Materials and procedure

As in Łyda (2006, 2008) a single text was used for the purposes of the study. The text was interpreted from Polish into English in the simultaneous mode. The text representing the genre of parliamentary speech was not authentic although it consisted of a number of extracts taken from authentic speeches produced in the Polish Sejm. The fragments underwent necessary modifications and were combined into a coherent speech

The text was based on speeches delivered during two sessions of the Sejm held in 2014 and recorded in *Stenographic Reports* (http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/StenoInter7.nsf/0/44807A9B5C8C9399C1257C7800623A53/%24_File/60_c_ksiazka.pdf). Some parts were re-written and converted into concessive constructions,

and the delivery of the text (Text A) took about 15 minutes, that is, at the rate of 140 words per minute.

Text A served as a basis for the production of Text B, in which a number of concessive markers were made unavailable to the interpreters having been jammed with a microphone-speaker reflux sound. Jamming was found preferable to a simple removal of concessive markers to avoid artificial pauses in the SL text.

The recordings were made with a small group of postdiploma students of one of Polish private universities: four female and two male students in May 2014.

The number of concessive markers used in the SL text followed from earlier studies on their frequency. The frequency for a number of languages including Polish and English ranges from 27 to 30 instances per hour (see, e.g., Barth-Weingarten 2003 and Łyda 2007). The decision was taken not to exceed “the natural norm” so that the interpreters should not be suggested the goal of the study. However, they were told that the recording was technically imperfect and on a few occasion they might hear a very short reflux sound. The set of Polish primarily concessive markers included: *jednak(że)* (however), *ale/lecz* (but), *(po)mimo* (despite, in spite of, yet, still), *choć/chociaż* (though, although) in the spans of text shown in the next section.

4. Results and discussion

After collecting the data in the interpreting tests presented in Table 1, a quantitative analysis was performed in terms of several criteria intended to show the interpreters’ choice of strategies in rendering the English sentences. The texts below are arranged according to the strategies chosen by the interpreters.

1. Po pierwsze, przedstawiciele Klubu Poselskiego SLD oraz innych klubów w ramach interpelacji i zapytań w sprawach bieżących również zgłosili tę sprawę. Była o tym mowa na forum Wysokiej Izby. **Jednak** bardzo ważny jest fakt, że w środę Komisja Polityki Społecznej i Rodziny na wniosek klubu Solidarnej Polski miała zajmować się tą sprawą...

First, the representatives of the Parliamentary Club of SLD and of other clubs also raised this issue as a part of interpellations and questions on current issues. This act was mentioned at the forum of this Chamber. However, what is very important is that on Wednesday the Commission on Social Policy and Family at the request of the club of the Solidary Poland was to deal with the matter...

In (1) *jednak* conveys a clear concessive meaning, which is hardly retrievable when the connective is absent. In the absence of the connective the relation between the portions of text originally linked by means of *jednak* can be inter-

puted as elaboration or conjunction, to use RST terminology. It is not surprising then that five out of six interpreters did not provide any conjunction. In only one case the interpreter decided to use *but* marking an apparent incompatibility between the two spans.

2. Funkcjonuje kilka ustaw dotyczących zadośćuczynienia przez państwo osobom pokrzywdzonym i prześladowanym z powodów politycznych. Każda z tych ustaw podejmowana była **jednak** w określonym czasie i rozwiązywała tylko jeden problem.

There are several laws relating to the state compensation to the people persecuted for political reasons. Each of these laws, however, was adopted at a specific time and solved only one problem.

Example (2) presents a similar case. For an interpreter to analyse the relation as concessive would require specialist knowledge on state compensation laws and their weaknesses. Not unsurprisingly, the interpreters adopted a safe solution and refrained from using any connective.

3. Klub Poselski SLD w lipcu ubiegłego roku złożył projekt ustawy w tej sprawie przywracający świadczenia, zgodnie z tym, co orzekł Trybunał Konstytucyjny, **jednak** niestety mimo monitów ten projekt nadal leżakuje w Komisji Polityki Społecznej i Rodziny.

Last year in July the Parliamentary Club of SLD, filed a bill in this case restoring the benefits, according to what was held by the Constitutional Court, but unfortunately, despite reminders the project is still in the Committee on Social Policy and Family.

In (3) the omission of the conjunction *jednak* does not obliterate the concessive interpretation. This is due to the presence of *unfortunately*, which signals the speaker's acknowledgement of "apparent incompatible" information. *Unfortunately* functions as a disjunct and as claimed by Thompson and Zhou (2000) disjuncts can function as cohesive signals of concession. In (2) four interpreters did not use any connective and two decided to link the two clauses by means of *but*.

4. Tą ustawą zwiększamy do 50% możliwość ubiegania się samorządów o refinansowanie wydatków poniesionych na fundusz sołecki. Dla wielu gmin jest to **jednak** zbyt mało, bo wiele gmin ma problemy z bieżącym utrzymaniem oświaty na swoim terenie.

By this act we increase up to 50% the possibility of self-governments' applying for refinancing expenses incurred by sołectwo fund. However for many municipalities this is not enough, because many municipalities have problems with the current support of education in their areas.

Like in (3) the omission of the conjunction *jednak* in (4) does not wipe out a concessive interpretation, mainly thanks to the phrase *zbyt mało*, which forestalls a possible objection, namely, that the refinancing should solve financial problems. Again the decision not to provide a connective was the most common strategy among the interpreters. Only three of them combined the two sentences by means of *but*.

5. Walczyli właśnie o taką Polskę swoich marzeń. **Jednak** polska transformacja, plan Balcerowicza przyniosły nową niesprawiedliwość i nowe dramaty. Najwyższy czas, aby po 25 latach Rzeczpospolita Polska przypomniała sobie także o ofiarach polskiej transformacji.

They fought for the Poland of their dreams. However, the Polish transformation, Balcerowicz's plan brought new injustices and new tragedies. It is high time that after 25 years Poland remembered also about victims of the transformation.

This is a particularly interesting fragment of the SL text because it shows the importance of “lagging” behind the speaker's statement. The deleted *jednak* in the SL text made the relation between the first two sentences unclear. It is only when the third sentence becomes available to the interpreter that the axiological load of the second sentence is clarified and the concessive interpretation between the first two sentences can be weighed as a preferred option. In (5) three interpreters lagged further behind and thanks to the clue given by the third sentence they used concessive connectors: *yet* and *however*.

6. To dobry, lecz niewystarczający krok i **choć** przewidywane w ustawie świadczenia w niewielkim stopniu zapewnią pomoc zarówno opozycjonistom, jak i ich rodzinom, dają nadzieję na poprawę sytuacji.

It is a good but insufficient step, and although benefits assumed in the act provide little help, they will help both opposition members and their families and build up hopes for improvement.

The omission of *choć* in the SL text leads to ungrammaticality and lack of cohesion. However a relatively strong hint is offered by the structure of the two sentences conjoined by *i* (and). Both have a contrastive structure: *good but insufficient* and *provide little help but they will help*. This juxtaposition was not noticed by four interpreters, who got stuck at this portion of the text and produced an incoherent sequence. Only two of them manage to retain the concessive meaning by combining ‘benefits assumed in the act provide little help’ with ‘they will help...’ by means of *but*.

7. **Choć** o ich zasługach na rzecz wolności mówi się dużo i często, to jednak przez prawie 25 lat państwo polskie, które swój byt zawdzięcza ich determinacji, odwadze i sile ducha, nie zapewniło im ani godnych warunków życia i pracy, ani pomocy.

Though much is said about their share in the attainment of freedom, for almost 25 years, the Polish State, which owes its existence to their determination, courage and the strength of spirit, provided them neither with decent living and working conditions nor help.

The omission of the sentence-initial *choć* did not perplex the interpreters due to the presence of *to jednak* (~however), which proved a clue strong enough for the interpreters to retain the concessive meaning by means of *yet*, *however* and clause-final *though*. In two cases the clauses were combined by *and*.

8. A ta ustawa wprowadza nową dyskryminację, dyskryminację zwykłych ludzi, żyjących wtedy w PRL-u, ludzi, którzy nie byli działaczami opozycji, nie mogli, nie chcieli, tacy byli, **choć** często dostali od tego PRL-u po łapach nie mniej niż działacze, ale dzisiaj nie mają na to papieru lub nie chcą swoją przeszłością epatować i brać za nią pieniędzy, tak jak ja.

And this law introduces a new discrimination, discrimination against ordinary people living in the then communist Poland, people who were not activists of the opposition, could not, would not. There were such ones although they often got a rap on the knuckles from the PRL no less painful than activists, but today they do not have any proofs or do not want to dazzle anyone with their past and to take her money, just like me.

The fact that *choć* clause follows a sequence of verb-phrases turns the phrase into another verb phrases when the connective is unavailable to interpreters. This verb phrase forms a logical sequence *nie mogli, nie chcieli, tacy byli, choć często dostali od tego PRL-u po łapach*. Just because the sequence is coherent, the possibility of a concessive interpretation never even crossed the interpreters' minds and none of them provided any connective in the TL text.

9. Otóż **chociaż** wskaźniki makroekonomiczne były całkiem niezłe na tle reszty Europy, zwrócono uwagę na zwiększenie zadłużenia kraju, jak również na wysoki deficyt finansów publicznych, na niską ściągalskość podatków.

Now, although macroeconomic indicators were quite good against the rest of Europe attention was drawn to the increasing debt of the country, as well as a high public finance deficit, the low tax collection rate.

The above fragment proved difficult for most interpreters. This almost prototypical concessive was treated by the interpreters as a sequence of two sentences,

of which the second one developed and qualified the proposition made in the first one. Only one interpreter was able to see a contrast between the propositions, which he marked by means of *but*.

10. Niestety **pomimo** informacji o wskaźnikach, które w większości są zresztą na niższym poziomie, niż zakładano w strategii, trudno dostrzec w obu dokumentach rekomendacje odnośnie do działań, jakie należałoby podjąć, aby przyjęte cele mogły być skutecznie zrealizowane.

Unfortunately, despite the information on the indicators, most of which are at a lower level than envisaged in the strategy, it is difficult to see in both documents recommendations on the measures to be taken so that their targets can be effectively attained.

The missing connective *pomimo* leads to ungrammaticality of the Polish sentence. Three interpreters resorted to a strategy of chunking the complex sentence into two converting the first sentence into an existential one (There was information...; Information was given...). Three other interpreters failed to interpret the first clause after a false start (Unfortunately, the information on the indicators).

11. Pomimo korzystnych zmian na tle innych krajów sytuacja jest ciągle zła.

Despite favourable changes in comparison with other countries, the situation is still bad.

As in the previous extract the Polish sentence is ungrammatical. The strategies employed by the interpreters were also similar and consisted in the conversion of the first clause into an existential sentence (There were...). Again in the case of three interpreters the output was incoherent.

12. Pamięć bohaterskiego oficera szargają dziś ludzie, którzy korzystają z wywalczonych przez niego swobód obywatelskich i brylują na salonach, **mimo że** powinni straszyć w skansenach postkomunizmu, panie pośle Iwiński.

The memory of the heroic officer is tarnished today by people who enjoy the civil liberties gained and hold their court, despite the fact that they should haunt in the open-air museums of post-communism, Mr Iwiński.

The final case of jamming involved the mid-sentential connective *mimo (że)* followed by a full clause. Interestingly, the idea of concession is still retrievable even if the connective is removed. The asyndetic subordination brings about the effect of increasing the hearer's positive regard for the nucleus element equally effectively thanks to the fact that the two clauses express propositions easy to interpret pragmatically. Five translators decided to use asyndetic coordination and only in one case the two clauses were connected by means of *but*.

Finally, *but* concession (13–15) showed itself as the easiest case for the interpreters. The principle reason lies in the fact that the omission of *but* never leads to perplexing ungrammaticality, which does not slow down the comprehension of the propositions. The strategy used by the interpreters consisted in refraining from the use of any connective or combining the nucleus and the satellite by means of *and*.

13. Niemniej jednak z szacunku do młodych ludzi dziękuję za debatę. Przykro mi, że nie toczyła się ona w sposób merytoryczny, **ale** mam nadzieję, że ci młodzi ludzie, którzy nas oglądają, będą mogli to ocenić.

However, out of respect for young people thank you for the debate. I'm sorry the debate was not up to the point, but I hope that those young people, who are watching us, will be able to judge.

14. Liczę także na państwa wsparcie w tej kwestii. Każdy ma prawo do własnego zdania, **ale** dobrze byłoby czasami to własne zdanie umieścić w logice wspólnego działania i narodowej solidarności w obliczu zagrożenia, bo te zagrożenia mogą być większe niż do tej pory.

I count also on your support in this matter. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but sometimes it would be good to put one's own opinion in the logic of joint action and national solidarity in the face of danger, because this danger can be greater than ever.

15. Dziś historia biegnie jakby w drugą stronę, **ale** historia ostatnich dziesięcioleci pokazuje, że odwrócenie biegu jest możliwe. Ten bieg niejedną raz – i to też jest nasze własne, polskie doświadczenie – się odwracał.

Today, the story goes a sort of the other way, but the history of the last decades shows that reversal is possible. This course more than once – and this is also our own, Polish experience – had turned.

The following table presents the interpreters' choice of strategies.

Table 1. Jammed concessive markers in Polish-English simultaneous interpreting

Text no.	Marker jammed	Clause order	Concessive markers used in the TL text	Other means
1	jednak	x jednak y	but (1)	
2		x jednak y	–	
3		x jednak y	but (2)	
4		x jednak y	but (2)	
5		x jednak y	yet (1) however (2)	
6		x choć y	but (2)	
7	choć	choć xy	yet (2); however (1); though (1)	and (2)
8		x choć y	–	

Table 1 continued

9		chociaż xy	but (1)	
10	pomimo	pomimo xy	–	existential <i>there</i>
11		pomimo xy	–	existential <i>there</i>
12		y mimo, że x	but (1)	
13	ale	x ale y		and (3)
14		x ale y		and (3)
15		x ale y		and (3)

5. Conclusions

The results obtained allow for a number of observations:

1. Concessivity is a difficult relation for simultaneous interpreters. The number of unretrieved concessive markers was high. Given fifteen texts times six interpreters, 90 concessive markers could be expected. Instead the interpreters produced only 16 syndetically marked TL texts if traditional concessive markers are taken into account. Thus explicit concessive marking was present in only 17.7% of all cases.
2. Explicit concessive marking was provided by the interpreters only when the omission of the original marker in the SL text did not lead to ungrammaticality or incoherence. Whenever the comprehension of the SL text was low, the interpreters either failed to interpret the text or resorted to omission of any connective. In the latter case they simply delegated the task of establishing a relation between two clauses/sentences to the hearers rather than attempt to misinterpret the SL text or overinterpret it.
3. The same strategy of avoidance or implicit marking can be observed in the cases in which the general knowledge about the context of the SL text or about the subject matter was necessary for the interpreter to analyse the relation between two spans of the SL text as concessive. The results obtained, that is, nine instances of *and* indicate that the interpreters have recourse to semantically less complex relations, such as addition or co-occurrence. Again this strategy allows the interpreter to ease the burden of explicitation and decrease the processing load.
4. The presence of “secondary” markers of concession such as disjuncts was not a factor encouraging the interpreters to provide an explicitly concessive TL text. “To be on the safe side” the interpreters decided only to retain the disjuncts.
5. The same strategy of avoidance of overinterpretation can be noticed even in the cases in which the missing SL connective was “reconstructed” in the TL text. Given a number of functions that concession may fulfil in discourse (e.g., marking contrast, forestalling a possible objection, self-correction, hedging, etc.), the interpreters tended to use an all-embracing *but* rather than more restricted connectives like even *though*, *yet*, *still*, etc.

Comparing the results of the present study with Łyda (2006, 2008) it can be concluded that in the case of the concessive relation the factor of language direction does not play any significant role as the same strategies were used irrespective of the language direction. Generally, the absence of processing instruction provided by a connective is a factor that induces avoidance rather than risk-taking.

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