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难度研究:
视译中英语文本的递归结构

厦门大学

硕士学位论文

难度研究: 视译中英语文本的递归结构

Difficulty Study: English Recursive Structures in Sight Translation

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Abstract

Difficulty study is gaining evermore importance as the results are very helpful to interpreting training, market practices and accreditation tests. Source text factors are major concerns of interpreting difficulty but most studies are related to CI & SI. Relevant studies upon ST are few and seldom target at one single text factor. This study focuses on interpreting difficulty in ST from English to Chinese and examined the relations between interpreting difficulty and recursive structures by adopting indicators of holistic assessment (self-perceived difficulty & sight translation scores), fluency (time-on-task & silent pauses) and fidelity (errors & omissions and corrections). Eight beginners and eight advanced learners of English Interpreting Program in a key university in China were tested with two cohesive and coherent excerpts from David Cameron's resignation speech delivered in 2016. Excerpt 1 has more recursive structures than Excerpt 2.

The results show that 1) Using error & omission, time-on-task, pauses, and corrections and sight translation scores as indicators, this study holds that recursive structures of the English language make the material more difficult to interpret for both beginners and advanced learners in English-Chinese ST; 2) The difficulty level of the same text is different across interpreters of various levels. The results of indicators show that the recursive structures have a stronger impact on beginners than advanced learners. 3) Based on the above two findings this paper also highlights that the impact of various recursive rules on interpreting difficulty level is different. The embedded recursions are most difficult, with subordinated recursions taking the second place and coordinated ones the third. The results of this study are thought to be useful in selecting proper training and test materials for student interpreters across different levels. Also, it may shed light on the design of accreditation tests and market practices.

Key Words difficulty; English recursiveness; sight translation

摘要

难度研究正日益成为口译研究的重点。它对口译培训、市场操作和资格考试都有重大意义。源语文本因素是口译难度研究的重点但多数集中于交传和同传研究中。视译的相关研究不多且很少单独关注某一文本特征。本文重点关注英译汉视译中的口译难度并尝试从主观评价(难度自我评估和视译得分)、流畅度(任务完成时间和无声停顿)、和忠实度(错译漏译和更正)等角度出发探索口译难度和英文文本递归性的关系。本文邀请了中国某著名大学的8名口译初学者和8名高阶学习者参与实验。实验材料选自大卫·卡梅伦2016年辞职演说中语义联系紧密连贯的两个片段。片段1比片段2有更多递归结构。

研究结果显示1)如果选用错译漏译、任务完成时间、无声停顿、更正和视译分数为难度指标,则本文认为英译汉视译中英语语言中的递归结构对口译初学者和高阶学习者均构成难度的增加;2)相同文本对不同水平被试的难度影响是不一样的,口译能力越高,难度影响越低;3)英译汉视译中不同英语递归规则的难度影响有所不同。嵌入递归难度影响最大,从属递归次之,并列递归再次之。本文还有一个发现,即所有口译初学者都认为片段1更难,而高阶学习者中只有一半认为片段1更难。本文的研究结论对于不同水平的口译学习者在选择合适的训练材料时具有一定的指导意义。同时,对于资格考试和市场操作也具有一定的借鉴意义。

关键词 难度 英语递归性 视译

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Interpreting, both practices and studies, is gaining ever more importance worldwide and particularly in China. Large numbers of students are enrolled to interpreting programs from undergraduate education through postgraduate training. In spite of technological advancements that are potentially able to rule out the mind power of interpreters, interpreting training and accreditation still are drawing wide attention from scholars dedicated to teaching interpreting.

For interpreter trainers and accreditation entities, one of the most crucial obstacles is to tell the difficulties of source materials and, if possible, take a quantitative approach to sequence interpreting tasks of different difficulty levels. With the growing student number, expanding market size and escalating accreditation fever, “difficulty” then has become a catchword gaining ever more popularity in translation and interpreting studies recently.

The purpose of difficulty study is to find out “what to measure and how to measure” (Sun, 2012:5). That said targeting the sources of difficulty and generating valid methods to characterize the difficulty level are the major two tasks of difficulty study. Following the two goals, many efforts have been made in this research field. For example, the sources of difficulty are roughly divided into three parts by most researchers devoted to this field, be they source material factor, translation-related factor as well as translator-factor (Sun, 2012; Sun & Shreve, 2014; 孙三军 & 文军, 2015; 陈吉荣, 2015 and so on). Mishra (2013) invented TDI for an estimated result of the material difficulty while Sun (2012) put forward a general model for translation difficulty assessment. Progress also has been made in interpreting difficulty study to examine factors like speech rate (Barranco-Droegge, 2015; Fernández, 2016), lexical difficulty (Viaggio, 1996; Swabey et al, 2016), and syntactic complexity (Dillinger, 1994; Alexieva, 1999; Liu & Chiu, 2009).

Nevertheless, the field of difficulty is far from being fully explored. The tripartite difficulty sources, especially the source material factor, still lack exhaustive observation. More text features should be examined. New indicators should be found. Additionally, most studies are theoretical explorations and their pedagogical inspirations are not highlighted. Moreover, most efforts are made to advanced courses rather than the rudimentary sight translation practices.

1.2 Significance of the Research

This thesis aims at probing into the impact on interpreting difficulty of recursive structures in the English language in sight translation from English to Chinese. The significance of this research is multi-faceted.

First, the study helps better understand text complexity. Recursive structures (or say recursions) in English is considered as a very important factor of text complexity (程琪龙, 1994). Lexical difficulty and syntactic difficulty, the two major factors leading to text difficulty have been commonly observed already. But usually text complexity is represented by the Readability Ease Formula as a whole therefore it doesn't reveal the impact of some specific text feature. Few researches have touched upon recursions in English from the perspective of difficulty study. This thesis, to some extent, reveals the difficulty level caused by recursive structures and the different impact of various recursive rules.

Second, the study helps better design sight translation courses. Sight Translation (ST) is commonly used in conference interpreting and a wide range of community interpreting settings (Li Xiangdong, 2015). It is also taken as a pedagogical exercise to prepare students for learning techniques of consecutive interpreting (CI) and simultaneous interpreting (SI) (Agrifoglio, 2004). So far it has been scheduled into almost all the T/I programs in China as a rudimentary course. And different from CI and SI in which listening comprehension and analysis are required, ST practices are more demanding in terms of reading skills and text analysis techniques with the presence of scripts. Many academic researchers have proved that ST training is

effective in improving CI and SI performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, fidelity, the ability of processing long and complex sentences, and the segmentation and anticipation techniques. This study will be helpful in selecting materials and arranging textbook structure.

Third, T/I companies may adopt the results of this study to roughly judge the text complexity of source materials in charging for economic returns. The results may remind the accreditation bodies of text complexity when drawing up test materials as well.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters.

Chapter one presents a general introduction to the study. It covers the research background of interpreting difficulty and talks of the significance of this study.

Chapter two reports on the previous studies on difficulty and recursion. The first section looks at the definition of difficulty and translation difficulty studies. The second section focuses on interpreting difficulty studies. The third chapter examines the source material factor and the recursive rules in English.

Chapter Three discusses the research design of the study, covering the detailed information of participants, materials, test procedures, indicators, pilot tests and rating. The research questions are also raised in this chapter.

Chapter Four concerns the data collection and a brief discussion over the research results. All the indicators adopted in the study are compared between and within the groups of participants in this chapter.

Chapter Five concludes the study and summarizes the major findings, implications of the study and give suggestions to future studies. The two research questions are also answered in this chapter.

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