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## A Study on the E-C Consecutive Interpreting in Ocean Security Conference Guided by Compression Theory

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### Abstract

This conference interpretation is the interpretation of the discussion on the phenomena taking place in the South China Sea. In this paper, the author uses an authentic corpus from transcripts of a conference on ocean security. There are five levels of compression on conference interpreting. They are syllabic compression, lexical compression, syntactic compression, semantic compression and situational compression. In this paper, in syllabic compression, the author aims to compress the syllables of words and phrases. In lexical compression, the author compresses unnecessary expressions of words and phrases. In syntactic compression, the author compresses sentences and phrases syntactically to make the text structure more concise. In semantic compression, the author compresses repeated expressions. In situational compression, the author compresses unnecessary expressions in the speech.

**Key words:** Compression theory; Conference interpreting; Syllabic compression; Lexical compression; Syntactic compression; Semantic compression; Situational compression

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### INTRODUCTION

Interpreting by its working patterns can be divided into simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting. Simultaneous interpreting refers to interpreters sitting in an interpretation booth and listening to the spoken word through earphones, interpreting the content into another language while listening. Consecutive interpreting refers to ten to fifteen minutes after the speaker has spoken, the interpreter expresses the content in the form of the audience's target language, and the speaking and interpreting alternately goes on.

In the dictionary, compression means "if you compress something such as a piece of writing or a description, you make it shorter." In consecutive interpreting, compression means compressing information in the limited given time to effectively convey the speaker's information. The background for compression is the audience and the speaker have the same background knowledge or context of situation, therefore although some parts of the speech have been compressed, it does not affect the general understanding.

There is a principle in interpreting called the Economy Principle, which believes one should use the least investment to gain the most outcome. According to Chernov (2004), redundancy is a common phenomenon that provides a possibility for compression, and he also believes compression accords with the Economy Principle, which means compression is a labor-saving device under extreme conditions. Chernov then put out the compression theory and describes five different aspects of compression-- syllabic compression, lexical compression, syntactic compression, semantic compression and situational compression.

In this paper we will explore and use the five aspects of the compression theory in the conference transcript of an ocean security project regarding South China Sea.

In this paper, the author raises the question of how we can use the compression strategy to make conference interpreting better.

## 1. COMPRESSION THEORY

This chapter discusses the characters of consecutive interpreting and conference interpreting, the development of Chernov's compression theory and the difference between omission and compression.

### 1.1 Consecutive Interpreting and Conference Consecutive Interpreting

Consecutive interpreting happens when the interpreter sits in the conference room, taking notes as he listens to the speech in the source language. When the speaker finishes or stops to wait for the interpretation, the interpreter accurately and completely re-expresses all the information of the speech in the source language in a clear and natural target language, the same as giving a speech himself. Consecutive interpretation in conference interpretation requires the interpreter to be able to listen to five to ten minutes of continuous speech, and to use good presentation skills to translate the whole content completely and accurately. Conference consecutive interpreting is commonly used in small scale occasions involving only two working languages, such as diplomatic meetings, bilateral negotiations, small-scale consultations, judicial and quasi-judicial procedures, press conferences and short seminars. Conference consecutive interpreting, considered by many to be the most advanced form of conference interpreting, is superior to conference simultaneous interpreting because it requires the completion of the understanding of the source language prior to the formation of the target language stage. Most utterances disappear from memory after a few seconds at most and are replaced by other contents.

### 1.2 Chernov's Compression Theory

In the dictionary, "compression" means making something shorter, which means cutting down the number of words or descriptions. In conference interpreting, compression means compressing information in limited time, conveying the message effectively, which doesn't mean losing or deleting information. Instead, it makes information more compact (Liu, 2016).

Relevance theory holds that the relevance degree of discourse depends on context effect and processing effort, and context effect is proportional to relevance, while processing power is inversely proportional to relevance. The processing effort will be understood as the brain power consumed by the cognitive language environment. The stronger the correlation, the more direct the discourse.

The smaller the brain power consumed by cognition, the smaller the cognitive load brought to the receiver. And vice versa (Lin, 1994). At the same time, the audience has a basic grasp of context and topic, and a high level of knowledge, so the degree of relevance is high, and the consumption required by the translator is relatively low. The premise of compression is that the listener and speaker share common background knowledge or situational context, so that although some parts are reduced or omitted, the overall understanding is not affected.

The economy principle of translation, also known as the principle of saving effort, believes that the maximum effect should be achieved with the minimum input. There are two main forms of language ellipsis: first, the effect remains unchanged and the input is reduced. The second is constant input to improve the effect as much as possible, which mainly refers to the realization of "logical reduction" by means of context and reasoning (Huang & Xu, 2006). Therefore, in the process of labor-intensive conference interpreting, it is necessary to use the economy principle of language to increase output and improve the speed and efficiency of language conversion.

Chernov (2004) holds that redundancy is a universal imagination that provides the possibility for compression, and that compression conforms to the economy principle of language and is a labor-saving device under extreme conditions. So he came up with the strategy of compression, and according to the language unit he describes five different levels of compression - syllabic compression (to reduce the target language to reduce overall syllables' corresponding output), lexical compression (as few words as possible to express the same meaning), syntactic compression (in the target language use less and more concise expressions of the structure), semantic compression (to reduce the repetition of word expression) and situational compression (less used in formal situations, mainly refers to the processing of context). Compression strategy is mainly made to improve the efficiency of interpreters under the constraints of both time and their memory. The core value of compression is to use as more condensed expression as interpreters can to decrease redundancy originating from both language itself and the discourse by speakers, thereby promoting the high-quality conveying of information to audience (Sun, 2019).

### 1.3 The Difference Between Compression and Omission

In the past studies, many scholars regarded omission as a "mistake" made by interpreters or the result of their unconsciousness. In the practical application, we find that omission is also a strategy adopted by those skilled interpreters, which is the result of their intention. In the continuous flow of time, the interpreter has to deal with the continuous flow of information, which in itself is relatively strenuous and challenging work. At the same

time, human energy is limited, and the allocation of working memory and attention of human brain is limited. Therefore, in this case, the interpreter needs to adopt appropriate strategies to integrate and omit the relatively long and clueless information, to achieve the goal of efficiency and speed.

Compared with omission, the development and research history of the word “compression” is relatively short, but compression is the further sublimation and summary of omission, which includes not only the reduction of words or phrases, but also the compression and reconstruction of multiple sentences, with the purpose of making the meaning of sentences more compact and more clearly focused. If omission can accurately convey information without losing information, it is an effective method for compression in simultaneous transmission (Wang, 2010).

In contrast, compression is a more comprehensive system, while omission is just a form of compression strategy. “Compression” includes not only omission, but also the conversion and processing of all information by means of time-saving and labor-saving short expressions (i.e., compression), which is generally intended interpretation. Omission is the deletion of part of redundant information.

It can be seen that in the English language, with changeable sentence patterns and frequent word changes, the compression strategy aiming at clear meaning and compact sentence patterns is quite appropriate and widely used.

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## 2. SYLLABIC COMPRESSION

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Chernov defines syllabic compression as a strategy that “reduces the overall syllable account of the target language discourse as against the corresponding input” (Chernov, 2004, pp.113-114). Chernov found that “the skill of syllabic compression consists in the ability to find a shorter synonym for an idea wherever possible.” (Chernov, 2004, p.114)

### Abbreviation Compression

The purpose of abbreviation compression is to shorten the syllables, i.e. to reduce the syllables of a longer term, so as to correspond to the input syllables and to catch up with the speaker (Wang, 2010, pp.64).

#### Example 1:

And so one of the important things about the subsidy issues is there is a very big meeting at the end of this year to deal with fishing subsidies through the WTO to try to remove some of the fishing subsidies to decrease the capacity in the industry and therefore decrease overcapacity.

Translation: 关于补贴的一个重要问题是, 今年年底将有一个非常大的会议, 讨论通过世界贸易组织来解决渔业补贴问题, 试图通过取消一些渔业补贴以减

少该行业的产能, 从而减少产能过剩。

Interpretation: 关于补贴的一个重要问题是, 今年年底将有一个非常大的会议, 讨论通过世贸组织来解决渔业补贴问题, 试图取消一些渔业补贴, 以减少该行业的产能, 从而减少产能过剩。

Analysis: The short name for “WTO” in Chinese is “世贸组织”, which is the short name for “世界贸易组织”. According to Chernov, it is expected to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse as against the corresponding input. In this case, the reduced overall syllable account of the expression would be “世贸组织”, therefore, in interpreting the sentence, we use the short name “世贸组织” instead of the full name “世界贸易组织”.

#### Example 2:

For instance, one day you might hear the Vietnamese fishing vessel detained by Indonesia's law enforcement in Indonesia's claimed EEZ.

Translation: 例如, 有一天你可能听说越南渔船在印度尼西亚宣称的专属经济区被印尼的执法机关扣押。

Interpretation: 例如, 有一天你听说越南渔船在印尼宣称的专属经济区被印尼的执法机关扣押。

Analysis: The short name for “Indonesia” in Chinese is “印尼”, which is the short name for “印度尼西亚”. According to Chernov, it is expected to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse as against the corresponding input. In this case, the reduced overall syllable account of the expression would be “印尼”, therefore, in interpreting the sentence, we use the short name “印尼” instead of the full name “印度尼西亚”.

#### Example 3:

If you also talk to other countries in the South China Sea, like Vietnamese and Indonesia, you will very - in few occasions they'll use the term Maritime Militia.

Translation: 假如你也和中国南海的其他国家交流, 比如越南和印度尼西亚, 在少数场合下他们会使用海上民兵这个术语。

Interpretation: 如果你和中国南海的其他国家交流, 比如越南和印尼, 在少数场合下他们会使用海上民兵这个术语。

Analysis: The short name for “Indonesia” in Chinese is “印尼”, which is the short name for “印度尼西亚”. According to Chernov, it is expected to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse as against the corresponding input. In this case, the reduced overall syllable account of the expression would be “印尼”, therefore, in interpreting the sentence, we use the short name “印尼” instead of the full name “印度尼西亚”.

### 2.2 Compression of Noun Phrases by a Pronoun

Compression of noun phrase by a pronoun is an effective way of shortening both syllabic and lexical units to match with the delivery speed (Wang, 2010, p.68). The author uses this type of compression to make the interpretation more compact.



Example 4:

But when we put together the four different types of data and talked together with the team at CSIS about what does this all mean, we really can begin to provide a fairly complete picture and the nine vessels that several of us have talked about already become a very – a very fascinating case in point. Those vessels in general don't transmit AIS – automatic identification system – signals that they're required to transmit but they do transmit occasionally.

Translation: 但是当我们把四种不同类型的数据放在一起, 并且和战略与国际研究中心的团队一起讨论它们的意义时, 我们真的可以开始提供一幅非常完整的画面, 那九艘我们几个人讨论过的船已经成为了一个有趣的恰当例子。这些船只一般不传送船舶自动识别系统, 这是它们需要发送但是仅偶尔发送的信号。

Interpretation: 当我们把四种不同类型的数据放在一起并且和战略与国际研究中心的团队一起讨论它们的意义时, 我们可以开始提供一幅完整的画面, 那九艘我们几个人讨论过的船成为了一个有趣的恰当例子。它们一般不传送船舶自动识别系统, 这是它们需要发送但是仅偶尔发送的信号。

Analysis: In the second sentence, “those vessels” refers to “the nine vessels” mentioned in the first sentence, “those vessels” is in place of “the nine vessels”, and the purpose of the syllabic compression is to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse. Therefore, when we interpret them into Chinese, we should not use “这些船只” to represent “those vessels”; instead, we use “它们” to represent “those vessels”.

Example 5:

So that gives us some pinpoints, some locations and times where we can know those vessels are present. Using our satellite analytics, we've correlated AIS with electro-optical satellite imagery so we can find photographs of those vessels from space the same time, the same place, as they're transmitting AIS.

Translation: 所以这给了我们一些定位, 一些位置和这些船只的存在的时间。利用我们的卫星分析技术, 我们已经将船舶自动识别系统与光电卫星图像联系起来, 因此我们就从可以从太空找到当这些船只在同一时间、同一地点发射船舶自动识别系统时的照片。

Interpretation: 这给了我们一些定位, 一些位置和这些船只的存在的时间。利用我们的卫星分析技术, 我们将船舶自动识别系统与光电卫星图像联系起来, 这样我们就从可以从太空找到它们在同一时间、同一地点发射船舶自动识别系统时的照片。

Analysis: In the second sentence, “those vessels” refers to the same vessels described as “those vessels” in the first sentence, and the purpose of the syllabic compression is to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse. Therefore, when we interpret them into Chinese, we should not use “这些船只” to represent “those vessels”; instead, we use “它们” to represent “those vessels”.

Example 6:

So let me ask Phil Stephenson to join us. Phil is a passionate devotee of the oceans.

Translation: 让我请菲尔史蒂芬森加入我们。菲尔是一名海洋的忠实爱好者。

Interpretation: 现在请菲尔史蒂芬森加入我们。他是一名海洋的忠实爱好者。

Analysis: In the first and second sentences, “Phil” is the same person, so there is no need to repeat “Phil” twice when we interpret the sentence. The purpose of the syllabic compression is to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse, which means we need to make the syllables shorter when interpreting. Therefore, when we interpret the second sentence into Chinese, we interpret “Phil” as “他”.

### 2.3 Compression of Noun Phrases by a Noun

Compression of noun phrase by a noun is an efficient way of shortening syllabic units to match with the delivery speed. The author uses this type of compression to make the interpretation more concise.

Example 7:

You know, we're a – historically a defense think tank.

Translation: 你知道的, 从历史上看, 我们是一个国家防御智囊团。

Interpretation: 从历史上看, 我们是一个国防智库。

Analysis: In this sentence we use the noun “国防” in the place of the noun phrase “国家防御” because according to Chernov, in syllabic compression it is expected to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse as against the corresponding input, in which case it is needed to replace “国家防御” with “国防” in order to make the syllables shorter and the interpretation more efficient. Therefore, we interpret “defense” as “国防”.

Example 8:

Who is responsible for security on the high seas?

Translation: 谁为公共海域的安全负责?

Interpretation: 谁为公海的安全负责?

Analysis: In this sentence we use the noun “公海” in the place of the noun phrase “公共海域” because according to Chernov, in syllabic compression it is expected to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse as against the corresponding input, in which case it is needed to replace “公共海域” with “公海” in order to make the syllables shorter and the interpretation more compact. Therefore we interpret “high seas” as “公海”.

Example 9:

Now this is particularly difficult in the South China Sea for a few reasons that I'll talk about.

Translation: 现在, 这在中国南海来说尤其困难, 有几个原因我会说。

Interpretation: 这在南海来说尤其困难, 有几个原因我会说。

Analysis: In this sentence we use the noun “南海” to substitute the noun phrase “中国南海” because according to Chernov, in syllabic compression it is expected to reduce the overall syllable account of the target language discourse as against the corresponding input, in which case it is needed to replace “中国南海” with “南海” in order to make the syllables shorter and the interpretation more compact. Therefore we interpret “South China Sea” as “南海”.

### 3. LEXICAL COMPRESSION

Lexical Compression is defined according to Chernov's definition that “lexical compression is the use of fewer words to express the same idea” (Chernov, 2004, p.115) that does not alter or effect the meaning (Wang, 2010, p.72).

#### 3.1 Compression of Conjunctions

Many conjunctions are tended to be compressed both consciously and unconsciously by the interpreters as a way of compression because they do not impact sense or content at all. On the contrary, it makes delivery concise and clear. In interpreting, it is found that interpreters always focus on content words, rather than conjunctions (Wang, 2010, p.90).

Example 10:

So we're going to show just a brief video sort of highlighting our program and kind of where we're thinking about things.

Translation: 所以我们仅仅要展示一个简短的、能有点突出我们的项目和构思的视频。

Interpretation: 我们要展示一个简短的、能突出我们的项目和构思的视频。

Analysis: The word “so” in the sentence functions as a transitional word, which is a conjunction, and has no actual meaning in the sentence. According to Chernov, lexical compression is the use of fewer words to express the same idea that does not alter or effect the meaning. In this case, compressing the conjunction “so” would not effect the original meaning of the sentence. Therefore, we do not interpret it “so” when interpreting the whole sentence.

Example 11:

But to try to get at the issue, as Whit mentioned, we decided to leverage a handful of technologies that haven't really been part of the normal toolbox for policy wonks here in Washington, or even most South China Sea watchers in the region.

Translation: 但是为了了解问题，正如维特提到的，我们决定利用几项在华盛顿的政策制定者们，甚至是区域内的中国南海观察者们平时并不常用的工具箱里的技术。

Interpretation: 为了了解问题，我们决定利用几项华盛顿的政策制定者们，甚至是区域内的中国南海观察者们平时并不常用的工具箱里的技术。

Analysis: “But” in the sentence puts emphasis on “to try to get at the issue” and functions as a conjunction, however, the word itself is not the focus of the sentence. According to Chernov, lexical compression is the use of fewer words to express the same idea that does not alter or effect the meaning. In this case, compressing the conjunction “but” would not influence the original meaning of the sentence. So we compress it when interpreting.

Example 12:

So to get at this problem, we decided to combine a handful of other options.

Translation: 所以为了处理这个问题，我们决定把其他几个选项结合起来。

Interpretation: 为了处理这个问题，我们决定把其他几个选项结合起来。

Analysis: In this sentence, “so” leads to the whole sentence as a conjunction according to the context. According to Chernov, lexical compression is the use of fewer words to express the same idea that does not alter or effect the meaning. In this case, compressing the conjunction “so” would not change the original meaning of the sentence. Thus, we do not interpret it “so” when interpreting the whole sentence to make the interpretation clearer and more concise.

#### 3.2 Compression of Adverbs

Many adverbs are tended to be compressed both consciously and unconsciously by the interpreters as a way of compression because they do not impact sense or content at all. On the contrary, it makes delivery concise and clear. In interpreting, it is found that interpreters always focus on content words, rather than adverbs (Wang, 2010, p.90).

Example 13:

I really appreciate it. Thank you, again.

Translation: 我真的很感激。再次感谢。

Interpretation: 我是感激的。再次感谢。

Analysis: In this sentence the adverb “really” does not contain actual meaning, and it only puts emphasis on the sentence. According to Chernov, lexical compression is the use of fewer words to express the same idea that does not alter or affect the meaning. In this case, compressing the adverb “really” would not affect the original meaning of the sentence. Therefore, it is compressed when interpreting in order to make the interpretation clearer.

Example 14:

Now, to set the scene, you know, the South China Sea accounts for about 12 percent of global fish catch.

Translation: 现在，首先，你知道的，中国南海占到全球渔获量的12%。

Interpretation: 首先，中国南海占到全球渔获量的12%。

Analysis: In this sentence the adverb “now” does not affect the main message of the sentence, it functions to start the sentence. According to Chernov, lexical

compression is the use of fewer words to express the same idea that does not alter or affect the meaning. In this case, compressing the adverb “now” would not affect the original meaning of the sentence. Thus, it is compressed in interpretation.

Example 15:

What does this many fishing vessels, this many unemployed fishers do in a region that is already grotesquely overfished?

Translation: 这么多的渔船和无可事事的渔民要在已经荒诞地被过度捕鱼区域内做什么呢?

Interpretation: 这么多的渔船和无可事事的渔民要在已经被过度捕鱼的区域内做什么呢?

Analysis: In this sentence the adverb “grotesquely” can be omitted in interpreting without affecting the main idea of the sentence because it is used to put emphasis on the fact that the region is overfished and the adverb does not make a point by itself. According to Chernov, lexical compression is the use of fewer words to express the same idea that does not alter or affect the meaning. In this case, compressing the adverb “grotesquely” would not affect the original meaning of the sentence. Thus it is compressed when interpreting.

## 4. SYNTACTIC COMPRESSION

Chernov (2004, p.115) stated that “syntactic compression” results from the choice of a shorter and simpler construction than that used in the original (Wang, 2010, p.95).

### 4.1 Compression of Simple Sentences into One Sentence

Compression of simple sentences into one sentence shortens the length of the syntactic structure and reduces the total delivery time, which reflects the tendency of economy in language use and language processing in interpreting (Wang, 2010, p.101).

Example 16:

This is a— came out of a conversation I had with Phil Stephenson. We call it the SOS Project.

Translation: 这是一个——这源自于我和菲尔史蒂芬森的一段对话。我们称它为紧急项目。

Interpretation: 我和菲尔史蒂芬森的对话得出了这样一个项目，我们称之为紧急项目。

Analysis: We compress these two sentences into one when interpreting because both sentences are uncomplicated. According to Chernov, syntactic compression results from the choice of a shorter and simpler construction than that used in the original. By compressing the two sentences into one, we make the construction of the sentence a simpler and shorter one, which makes the interpretation easier to understand.

Example 17:

He’s an actual marine biology PhD. And he’s worked for over a decade in positions on both the Hill and in the White House.

Translation: 他是一个真正的海洋生物学博士。并且他在国会和白宫都有超过十年的工作经验。

Interpretation: 他有海洋生物学的博士学位，并且在国会山和白宫有超过十年的工作经验。

Analysis: When we interpret those two sentences, we combine them into one to make the interpretation simpler and more concise. According to Chernov, syntactic compression results from the choice of a shorter and simpler construction than that used in the original. By compressing the two sentences into one, we make the construction of the sentence a shorter one, which makes the interpretation clearer.

Example 18:

The problem is compounded over the last five years by clam digging, harmful fishing practices, and island reclamation. That’s destroyed about 40,000 acres of reef surfaces.

Translation: 问题在过去的五年里由于挖蛤蜊、有害的渔业捕捞和填海造岛而恶化。这毁坏了大约4万英亩的礁石表面。

Interpretation: 在过去的五年里，问题由于挖蛤蜊、有害的渔业捕捞和填海造岛而恶化，这毁坏了大约4万英亩的礁石表面。

Analysis: The two sentences are a simple sentence and a complex sentence, and they can be combined into one to make the structure of the context more compact. According to Chernov, syntactic compression results from the choice of a shorter and simpler construction than that used in the original. By compressing the two sentences into one sentence, the interpretation becomes shorter and easier to comprehend.

### 4.2 Compression of Appositives

An appositive is an emphasis which could also be considered as repetition of the same message or sense. Interpreters compress the appositives to avoid message repetition, as well as to save time and deliver the target language concisely. It also helps to make the original construction shorter (Wang, 2010, p.103).

Example 19:

But our signature investment, our largest investment to date, has been in the Pristine Seas program of National Geographic, which is managed by my friend Dr. Enric Sala, who is here today.

Translation: 但是迄今为止我们的代表性投资，我们最大的投资在国家地理杂志的原始海洋项目中，该项目由我的朋友昂里克萨拉教授主持，他今天也在这里。

Interpretation: 但是迄今为止我们的代表性投资，我们最大的投资在国家地理杂志的原始海洋项目中，该项目由昂里克萨拉教授主持。

Analysis: In this sentence the phrase “my friend” is the appositive of “Dr. Enric Sala”, which refers to the same person. According to Chernov, syntactic compression results from the choice of a shorter and simpler construction than that used in the original. By



compressing the phrase “my friend”, the construction of the sentence is simpler and easier to interpret, therefore, it can be compressed in interpreting.

Example 20:

I’m going to borrow a phrase from my friend Admiral Jon White, who I think is here in the audience, the concept of ocean security.

Translation: 我要向我的朋友海军上将约翰怀特那里借用一个词语, 他今天也在观众里, 也就是海洋安全的概念。

Interpretation: 我要向海军上将约翰怀特那里借用一个词语, 也就是海洋安全的概念。

Analysis: In this sentence the phrase “my friend” is the appositive of “Admiral Jon White”, which refers to the same person. According to Chernov, syntactic compression results from the choice of a shorter and simpler construction than that used in the original. By compressing the phrase “my friend”, the construction of the sentence is simpler and easier to interpret, therefore, it can be compressed in interpreting.

Example 21:

And we at Vulcan hope to be involved in the ongoing work, together with CSIS and others.

Translation: 我们在伏尔甘公司的员工希望与战略与国际研究中心以及其他机构一起参与到正在进行的工作中来。

Interpretation: 我们希望与战略与国际研究中心以及其他机构一起参与到正在进行的工作中来。

Analysis: In this sentence the phrase “at Vulcan” is the appositive of “we”, which refers to the same people in the context. According to Chernov, syntactic compression results from the choice of a shorter and simpler construction than that used in the original. By compressing the phrase “at Vulcan”, the construction of the sentence is simpler, and it is easier for the audience to understand and better for the interpreter to interpret, so it can be compressed in interpreting.

## 5. SEMANTIC COMPRESSION

“Semantic compression reduces the number of iterative semantic components and their configurations in the utterance and in the entire discourse. It usually takes the form of semantic paraphrase...but may also involve the elimination of differential semantic components in moving from specific to generic designations... by the use of hyponyms.” (Chernov,2004, p.115; Wang, 2010, pp.105)

### 5.1 Compression of Common Knowledge

Speakers tend to add unnecessary words, phrases or parenthesis to explain the content when they speak. Interpreters compress these when they interpret if it does not affect conveying speakers’ intentions and messages.

Example 22:

Now we come to really the third pillar of what we’re going to do, which is ocean security.

Translation: 我们现在来第三个我们要做的核心, 也就是海洋安全。

Interpretation: 第三个核心是海洋安全。

Analysis: “Now we come to really” does not have much to do with the core of the sentence. It functions to begin the sentence and it is known by the audience as common knowledge. According to Chernov, semantic compression reduces the number of iterative semantic components and their configurations in the utterance and in the entire discourse. By compressing “Now we come to really”, the number of iterative semantic components is reduced and the interpretation is shorter and simpler.

Example 23:

And thus, SOS was born and very recently last fall, after some working groups and organization, which some of you participated in, thank you for that, we recruited Whit here, Dr. Whit Saumweber, to be the full-time executive director dedicated to this project only here in an office at CSIS.

Translation: 因此, 紧急项目产生了, 而且在最近的去年秋天, 在经过一些你们中的一些人参加过的工作小组和组织后, 感谢你们, 我们招募了维特萨姆韦伯博士在战略与国际研究中心的一间办公室内担任全职的致力于该项目的项目执行主任。

Interpretation: 因此, 紧急项目产生了。而且在最近的去年秋天, 在经过一些你们中的一些人参加过的工作小组和组织后, 我们招募了维特萨姆韦伯博士在战略与国际研究中心的一间办公室内担任全职的致力于该项目的项目执行主任。

Analysis: “Thank you for that” here is a parenthesis, which does not affect the subject of the sentence and is used to express gratitude, and it is common knowledge in the context. According to Chernov, semantic compression reduces the number of iterative semantic components and their configurations in the utterance and in the entire discourse. By compressing “Thank you for that”, the number of iterative semantic components is reduced and the interpretation is shorter and simpler.

Example 24:

I’m going to borrow a phrase from my friend Admiral Jon White, who I think is here in the audience, the concept of ocean security.

Translation: 我要向我的朋友海军上将约翰怀特那里借用一个词语, 我认为他也在现场观众内, 也就是海洋安全的概念。

Interpretation: 我要向海军上将约翰怀特那里借用一个词语, 也就是海洋安全的概念。

Analysis: “Who I think is here in the audience” here is a parenthesis, which has no effect on the sentence, and it is said by the speaker as common knowledge for the audience. According to Chernov, semantic compression reduces the number of iterative semantic components and their configurations in the utterance and in the entire discourse. By compressing “who I think is here in the audience”, the number of iterative semantic components is reduced and the interpretation is more concise.

Example 25:

Now, to set the scene, you know, the South China Sea accounts for about 12 percent of global fish catch.

Translation: 现在, 首先, 你知道的, 中国南海约占到全球渔获量的12%。

Interpretation: 首先, 中国南海占到全球渔获量的12%。

Analysis: “You know” is a parenthesis which has no effect on the subject of the sentence, it is said by the speaker as common knowledge. According to Chernov, semantic compression reduces the number of iterative semantic components and their configurations in the utterance and in the entire discourse. By compressing “you know”, the construction of the sentence is shorter and simpler and the interpretation is easier to be understood by the audience.

## 5.2 Compression of Redundant Components

There are expressions in this corpus that has no concrete sense in the context, and interpreters tend to compress them when interpreting to make the interpretation clear and concise.

Example 26:

This is an important issue for all of us, and all of us are affected – both our financial well-being, health – I think the people say something like 40 percent of the fish you buy in the market is mislabeled, you know, but it’s also one of genuine security.

Translation: 这个问题对我们所有人都很重要, 我们所有人都受到影响, 从经济健康和身体健康来看, 我认为人们说大约40%的在市场上出售的鱼都被错误贴标。你知道的, 这是安全问题之一。

Interpretation: 这个问题对我们所有人都很重要, 从经济健康和身体健康来看, 人们说大约40%的在市场上出售的鱼都被错误贴标。这是安全问题之一。

Analysis: In this sentence, “an important issue for all of us” already indicates everyone is affected, “and all of us are affected” is redundant in the sentence. According to Chernov, semantic compression reduces the number of iterative semantic components and their configurations in the utterance and in the entire discourse. By compressing “and all of us are affected”, the interpretation would no longer appear redundant and would be simple and clear. Therefore, the phrase is compressed by the interpreter in this situation.

Example 27:

And by that, I mean exactly what Dr. Hamre said, which is, where are places where U.S. national security interests intersect with environmental interests around the world?

Translation: 我是指, 正如哈姆雷博士所说, 在全球内美国国家安全利益与环境利益相交的地方都在哪儿呢?

Interpretation: 我是指, 在全球内美国国家安全利益与环境利益相交的地方都在哪儿呢?

Analysis: In this sentence, “what Dr. Hamre said”

shows the content has been mentioned before, and there is no need to repeat it again. According to Chernov, semantic compression reduces the number of iterative semantic components and their configurations in the utterance and in the entire discourse. By compressing “I mean exactly what Dr. Hamre said”, the interpretation would be concise. Therefore, the phrase is compressed in interpreting.

Example 28:

So we centered on that issue and we produced in about a six-month period, in the second half of 2017, this report on IUU, which is still available on the CSIS website.

Translation: 我们集中于这个问题, 在六个月的时间内, 在2017年的下半年, 我们做出了这份有关非法无管理无记录捕鱼报告, 这份报告目前仍在战略与国际研究中心的官网上。

Interpretation: 我们集中于这个问题, 在六个月的时间内, 在2017年的下半年, 我们做出了这份有关非法无管理无记录捕鱼报告。

Analysis: In this sentence, “which is still available on the CSIS website” indicates it has been mentioned that the report is on the website, which makes it unnecessary to repeat the same information. According to Chernov, semantic compression reduces the number of iterative semantic components and their configurations in the utterance and in the entire discourse. By compressing “which is still available on the CSIS website”, there would be no iterative component in the sentence. Thus, “which is still available on the CSIS website” is compressed in interpreting.

## 6. SITUATIONAL COMPRESSION

Shiryaev (1979, p.89) describes situational compression as “elimination of speech chunks bearing information which is compensated for by the extralinguistic situation of communication” (Quoted in Chernov, 2004, p.120) (Wang, 2010, p.130).

### 6.1 Compression of Speakers’ Personal Habits

Some speakers tend to speak certain words or phrases which do not bear any concrete senses in most cases. As a result, the interpreters tend to compress these words and phrases when interpreting for them because they do not convey any concrete meaning in the discourse (Wang, 2010, p.85).

Example 29:

You know, the concept of sustainability is one that we most often hear about when we’re thinking about conservation or development.

Translation: 你知道的, 我们在想到保护或者发展时经常听到可持续性的概念。

Interpretation: 我们在想到保护或者发展时经常听到可持续性的概念。

Analysis: “You know” in the sentence is said by the speaker out of a personal habit. Chernov quotes that situational compression is the elimination of speech



chunks bearing information which is compensated for by the extralinguistic situation of communication. In this case, the phrase “you know” is a speech chunk containing information compensated for by the extralinguistic situation of communication, therefore it can be compressed in interpreting.

Example 30:

So there are much stricter policies over the domestic fishing industry as opposed to the distant water fishing industry, mostly because of the direct impact of unsustainable fishing practices, you know, on China’s food security and the employment of their fishermen.

Translation: 所以, 相对于远洋捕鱼, 国内捕鱼的政策要严格得多, 多是因为不可持续的捕鱼活动对于, 你知道的, 中国的粮食安全和渔民的雇佣的直接影响。

Interpretation: 相对于远洋捕鱼, 国内捕鱼的政策要严格得多, 多是因为不可持续的捕鱼活动对于中国的粮食安全和渔民的雇佣的直接影响。

Analysis: “You know” in the sentence is served as a parenthesis and it has no actual meaning in the context. Chernov quotes that situational compression is the elimination of speech chunks bearing information which is compensated for by the extralinguistic situation of communication. In this sentence, the phrase “you know” is a speech chunk containing unnecessary extra information which does not to be interpreted, therefore it can be compressed in interpreting.

Example 31:

You know, the policies that come through the Ministry of – well, what is now the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, but used to be the Ministry of Agriculture, which houses the Bureau of Fisheries.

Translation: 你知道的, 这些政策来自部门——现在的农业农村部, 也就是过去的农业部, 它包括了渔业局。

Interpretation: 这些政策来自现在的农业农村部, 也就是过去的农业部, 它包括了渔业局。

Analysis: “You know” here is used to start a sentence at the beginning and it serves no actual purpose. Chernov quotes that situational compression is the elimination of speech chunks bearing information which is compensated for by the extralinguistic situation of communication. In this case, the phrase “you know” is a speech chunk that can be compressed without making the meaning of sentence incomplete, thus, it is compressed in interpreting to make the interpretation simpler and clearer.

## 6.2 Compression of Speakers’ Error

Compression of speakers’ error compresses the same expression that has been repeated twice by the speakers or the mistakes spoken by the speakers. Interpreters only interpret the same expression once and interpret the correct information to the audience.

Example 32:

You know, the policies that come through the Ministry

of – well, what is now the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, but used to be the Ministry of Agriculture, which houses the Bureau of Fisheries.

Translation: 你知道的, 这些政策来自部门——现在的农业农村部, 也就是过去的农业部, 它包括了渔业局。

Interpretation: 这些政策来自现在的农业农村部, 也就是过去的农业部, 它包括了渔业局。

Analysis: The speaker spoke the phrase “the Ministry of” by mistake and later he corrected it. Chernov quotes that situational compression is the elimination of speech chunks bearing information which is compensated for by the extralinguistic situation of communication. “The Ministry of” in the context is extra and unnecessary, and it can be confusing for the audience. As a result, interpreter can directly compress the mistake in interpreting.

Example 33:

I’ve looked for it, but I’ve not – I’ve not seen actually what it says specifically about establishing this program.

Translation: 我寻找过, 但是我还没有, 还没有找到它关于具体创建这个项目的內容。

Interpretation: 我寻找过, 但是还没有找到它关于具体创建这个项目的內容。

Analysis: In this sentence, “I’ve not” is a repeated mistake spoken by the speaker, which has no function in the context. Situational compression is the elimination of speech chunks bearing information which is compensated for by the extralinguistic situation of communication. In this sentence, “I’ve not” is redundant and might be confusing to the audience, and it serves no purpose in the context, so interpreter can compress it in interpreting to make the interpretation simpler.

Example 34:

And I want to say, too, that a lot of – a lot of. I think, this report, it brings up a lot of questions in my mind.

Translation: 我也想说, 有许多, 有许多, 我认为, 这份报告, 它在我的脑海里引出来许多问题。

Interpretation: 我想说, 这份报告在我的脑海里引出来许多问题。

Analysis: In this sentence, “a lot of” is a spoken mistake said twice by the speaker and it has no effect on the meaning of the sentence. Situational compression is the elimination of speech chunks bearing information which is compensated for by the extralinguistic situation of communication. In this sentence, “a lot of” is a repeated phrase that has no purpose in the context and it might interrupt the audience’s listening, therefore it is compressed in interpreting.

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## CONCLUSION

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This paper mainly studies the application of the compression theory in consecutive interpreting. Consecutive interpreting is when the interpreter starts interpreting after the speaker has spoken for five to ten minutes, which requires the interpreter to master certain

interpreting skills and have a good memory. The material we use in the paper is the transcript of a conference on ocean security project. There are five methods of compression according to Chernov: syllabic compression, lexical compression, syntactic compression, semantic compression and situational compression.

In this paper, the author has broken down the five methods of the compression strategy and applied theories into interpretation. In syllabic compression, the author uses “abbreviation compression”, “compression of noun phrases by a pronoun” and “compression of noun phrases by a noun”. In lexical compression, the author uses “compression of speakers’ colloquial expressions”, “compression of conjunctions” and “compression of adverbs”. In syntactic compression, the author uses “compression of simple sentences by complex or compound sentences or compression of two or more sentences into one sentence” and “compression of appositives”. In semantic compression, the author uses “compression of iterative semantic components”, “compression of common knowledge” and “compression of redundant components”. In situational compression, the author uses “compression of speakers’ personal habits” and “compression of speakers’ error in speaking or speakers’ explanation”.

In this paper, the author has provided ample examples with analysis for each of them. All the examples are demonstrations of the five methods of the compression theory in the use of consecutive interpretation. This paper can be considered as a pilot study of compression in E-C consecutive interpreting, including Chinese and English consecutive interpreting using authentic consecutive interpreting corpus. Hopefully this research will make contribution in interpreting research in general, especially for the language combination of English and Chinese consecutive interpreting.

As to the question raised in the introduction, the answer can be summarized as such:

a: In order to do well in conference interpreting, it is necessary to compress or omit certain information in the original corpus. By accurately using syllabic compression, lexical compression, syntactic compression, semantic compression and situational compression, one can compress information and make messages as compact as possible.

b: For syllabic compression, it needs to be remembered that the interpretation should always use as few syllables as possible compared to the original context. Syllabic compression is constituted of being able to find shorter synonyms for the original words.

c: For lexical compression, it should be kept in mind that it is achieved by reducing or compressing elements that do not affect the meaning of certain contexts and situations.

d: For syntactic compression, it is used in situations when a more compact and simpler construction is needed compared to the original one.

e: For semantic compression, it compresses iterative semantic components to make the contexts and situations more concise and clearer. It might involve paraphrase and deletion of certain semantic components.

f: For situational compression, it can be considered as the compression of speech chunks containing unnecessary information which do not affect the context.

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