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硕 士 学 位 论 文

Application of Schema to the Process of Simultaneous  
Interpretation

图式在同声传译过程中的应用

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## Synopsis

Schema, originated from cognitive psychology, refers to a mental framework or outline that functions as a kind of vague standard that arises out of the past experience, growing and differentiating throughout childhood, and places new experience in the appropriate context and relation. Schema theory, since firstly proposed in 1932, has passed from psychology, through artificial intelligence, and into language learning. Over the past two decades, quite a number of studies have probed the relations between schema theory and the second language acquisition including listening and reading comprehension, and have generated fruitful findings. Though different in forms, a conclusion is drawn out by these various researches that background knowledge plays a vital part in listening and reading comprehension, language defects can be made up by the ability to activate corresponding schemata.

Inspired by this, the author takes a bold step to apply schema into interpretation, or rather, simultaneous interpretation. This study first gives an overview of schema theory through the definition and features of schema, and two modes of information processing based on schema theory. Then with enlightenment from Daniel Gile's Effort Model, the author steps into three sequential parts of simultaneous interpretation, namely listening comprehension, working memory and production, with detailed introduction to four kinds of schemata involved in the process of simultaneous interpretation. After exploring the role of schemata playing in the different stage of simultaneous interpretation, the author discovers that according to schema theory, when new information is inputting, the background knowledge already stored as various schemata or sub-schemata in one's mind will be activated throughout the whole process of listening comprehension to facilitate the understanding and encoding of the original message, avoid ambiguities and anticipate the upcoming development of utterances in source language; while in the process of memorization, schemata provide reference to retrieve information, assisting recall of the information from the interpreter's permanent memory and contributing to the interpreter's inferential elaboration; finally in the process of production, schemata supports the formulation of

grammatically correct and contextually accurate target language. To sum up, schema plays a positive role in the improvement of listening comprehension, memory and production in simultaneous interpretation. It is also the author's hope that this study could be some help and reference to the current interpretation training programs.

**Keywords:** schema; schema theory; simultaneous interpretation

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## 摘要

“图式”源自于认知心理学，是人脑中关于外部知识的组织形式，是人们从过去经验中提取并作为人们行为的一种模糊指标。图式一直以来在演变积累，并不断扩展纳入新经验，形成合理的语境及关联。自 1932 年“图式”这一概念首次提出以来，图式理论被广泛应用到认知心理学、人工智能学及语言学等领域。尤其是在过去二十多年里，图式理论一直活跃于第二语言习得领域；许多学者相继把目光投向图式理论，试图用它去研究二语的听力和阅读过程，并取得了相当丰硕的成果。尽管这些研究形式不同，得出的结论却几乎一致，即在二语的听力理解和阅读理解中，背景知识均起到促进作用，语言缺陷可以通过激活图式的能力来弥补。

作为一名口译方向的学生，作者受此启发，试图将图式理论运用到之前少有涉及的口译领域，并将同声传译作为本文的口译模式研究对象，探讨不同类型的知识图式在同传过程中的应用。本文先归纳介绍了图式的定义、特点以及基于图式理论上的两种信息处理模式。根据 Gile 的认知负荷模型，把同传过程分为三个步骤：听力理解，工作记忆和表达，详细介绍了同传中四种不同类型的背景知识图式，并分别研究知识图式在各个过程中的作用。通过分析，得出结论：根据图式理论，激活原本储存在大脑中的相关知识，有助于在听力理解阶段促进源信息的接收和理解，并帮助预测下文，在记忆阶段为有效信息的提取提供导向，在表达阶段帮助译者组织符合语法规范且正确传达源语目的的译语。简而言之，图式理论对于同声传译中理解、记忆和表达的提高有着积极的作用。作者也希望此论文能对今后的口译培训提供一些微薄的帮助和参考。

关键词：图式；图式理论；同声传译

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

Interpreting came into being as early as in the primitive age when tribes speaking different languages tried to exchange food and contact with each other. Functioning as a bridge, interpreting activities have played a significant role in promoting mutual communication and overcoming language obstacles. Nowadays, the world is becoming a global village with all international activities taking place every second. All kinds of cross-national organizations have been established and a variety of communications and exchanges among nations and regions are growing. With the inevitable trend of economic globalization and extensive cultural communication, the need for interpreting is in increasing demand. Simultaneous interpreting (SI) in particular has been widely hailed in various conferences due to its unique advantage of occupying no other time than that taken by the original speaker.

Even though SI is no easy job — the speaker keeps talking from the beginning to the end of the speech without being interrupted, the interpreter starts translating the speech just a few words later than the speaker, and keeps translating as long as the speech goes on — a large number of translators have shifted to be full- or part-time freelancers in the rapidly maturing and diversifying conference market; new and more diverse training programs are being offered; language teachers, researchers and interpreters are also showing their great enthusiasm in the study and research of SI.

Up till now, many approaches have been adopted to explore the nature of interpretation. There's a trend of growing amount of researches on interpretation in combination with various theories and disciplines. The most popular fields within interpretation studies now are cognitive studies, behavioral studies, linguistic studies, sociological studies, ethics and history of interpreting, interpreter training, quality assessment and special kinds of interpreting. Acknowledging that interpretation is a highly complicated mental process with heavy cognitive load, which is evidently demonstrated by Gile's effort model, contemporary interdisciplinary interpretation studies draw most heavily

on cognitive science and psychological studies. Driven by development in cognitive research in artificial intelligence, schema theory was introduced into interpretation studies and especially contributed to the sub-branch on cognitive load, memory and anticipation.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

It is known that interpreting as a young profession has given rise to deep interest in the academic world. However, most of the current and previous researches on SI mainly focus on the techniques and the final product of the interpreting, and less attention has been paid to the process of SI, or what really happens in the process. The study of how knowledge is activated and applied in the process of SI is scarce. In the past several decades, schema theory has long been applied to the field of second language acquisition. Quite a few studies have touched upon second language reading comprehension as well as listening comprehension from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, and great results have been achieved. It has also been applied to interpreting studies in recent years with much effort given on empirical studies showing that background knowledge has great impact on interpreting performance, while little progress has been made as how it guides through and affects the whole process of interpreting, let alone simultaneous interpreting.

Holding this in mind, the author decides to venture into the application of schema in the process of SI based on schema theory with a view to understanding what a role the schema plays and what insights it may offer to the improvement of the SI performance. Schema theory will go throughout this paper as the core theoretical basis. The author will also resort to Daniel Gile's Effort Model according to which the three major steps involved in simultaneous interpretation are defined: listening comprehension, working memory and production. The author will then investigate different schemata involved in the process of SI and the role of schemata play in the three stages of SI respectively as well as their integrative impact on interpretation. The application of schemata in interpretation training will also be mentioned. It is the author's hope that this study will be of some help for interpreters to be aware of the importance of different schemata, and consciously use their schematic knowledge in the process of



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