

A Metacognitive Strategy for Developing the Short-Term Memory Skills of Second Year Languages and Simultaneous Translation Students Al Azhar University

¹Al Shaimaa Twakal Abed El Bary, ²Mohammed Hassan Ibrahim

Abstract

This study aimed to develop the short –term memory skills as a main skill in sight translation of second year languages and simultaneous translation students through using a metacognitive strategy. The current study was conducted during the second term of the academic year 2019 -2020 .The present study followed the pre-post, quasi- experimental – control group design. The researcher used two groups: quasi-experimental and control. A number of sixty second year from Languages and Simultaneous Translation students , Al AzharUniversty, Tafahna Al Ashraf ,Girls Branch, Al dakahlia Governorate, Egypt were the participants who were randomly divided equally into two groups. A sight translation skills test was used to measure second year students' level before and after the treatment adopting a strategy based on metacognition. The results of the study showed that the metacognitive regulation strategy was effective in developing the sight translation skill (short-term memory) of second year students.

Keywords: Metacognition, self-regulation, interpretation ,sight translation, short- term memory skills.

I. Introduction

Sight translation is a unique kind of oral interpretation which combines translation and interpretation, as it is a combination of the written aspect (represented by translation) and the oral one (represented by interpretation). Gonzalez, Vasquez and Mikkelson (2012) defined sight translation as the act of the oral translation of written text and a combination of translation and interpreting. Angelelli (1999) affirmed that sight translation should seem as if the interpreter were reading a text in the target language, which includes smooth delivery and natural production avoiding hesitations and irregular pauses.

¹EFL Researcher at Faculty of Education, Zagazig University, Egypt

²Prof. of TEFL, Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Technology of Education, Faculty of Education, Zagazig University, Egypt

Due to the nature of ST which refers to the practice that involves reading a text written in one language represented in source language and orally interpreting the text in another language (target language), Paez (2012) indicated that the sight translation process contains three essential stages represented in:

- visual reception of a written text
- cognitive processing of a message
- Production of the oral speech producing the message into a target language.

Martin(1993)refers that ST sometimes contains complex and long sentences which require greater efforts from the interpreter. The syntactic structure differs from the source and the target language which creates great obstacles for the interpreter to synchronize source language reading and target language production. The interpreter also must avoid transliteration or word for word translation since the visual input might alleviate memory efforts in sight translation; however, it might also make an intrusion in the target language In line with Martin, Agrifoglio (2004) affirmed that ST is a complex and unique technique, which requires cognitive demands on the interpreter who become less rigorous than those of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. Agrifoglio's observations indicated that the continual presence of the source language text in front of the translator seems the main challenge for the sight interpreter which may prevent the ability to synchronize 'oral interpreting' and'silent reading' in addition to 'target language expression' (Nilsen and Monsrud 2015). As a result, the flow of silent and the speed of eye reading will influence the process of sight translation, as sight translator's reading speed will influence the accuracy of the final output.

Furthermore ,Shreve, Lacruz, and Angelone (2010) also considered that visual interference seems to be stronger than audio interference. Corselis (2008) also considers sight translation texts longer than 100 words seem to be a great challenge for interpreters (p. 61).

Martin (2014) affirmed that sight translation has attracted so much attention from researchers and scholars. In this regard, cognitive aspects of sight translation such as control of mind, and monitoring the oral speech are regarded as more important subjects than grammar knowledge or memory working .Paez (2012) made great efforts to describe the mental process of sight translation. He believes that translators should exceed three essential meta-cognitive stages in sight translation. These three stages need high cognitive and mental capacity, such as short-term memory, text scanning, and task coordination (p. 96).

Along with this point ,Pedersen and Dam (2014) conducted a study to determine whether sight translation needs the use of short-term memory during the process of target language production, as reported in the literature, or not. Their study was based on a previous study including sight translation texts from Spanish into Danish.

Translators were interviewed before and after completing the tasks. The results showed that the participants widely needed short-term memory in the process of sight translation.

Lee's study (2012) revealed that student interpreters need to make great efforts to distance themselves from the source language and have to develop general translation skills to avoid literal translation. The study affirmed that the lack of automated reading skills may lead to literal translation, since the interpreter who lacks such skills have to allocate much of his cognitive capacity to decode and understand the source text, addition to the translation process itself. As reading speed will influence the flow and the speed of ST, and accuracy in reading will influence the accuracy of the spoken delivery in the target language.

Along with the previous point ,Weber(1990) reported that reading and oral production must happen at the same time and arise simultaneously in sight translation. As a result, the interpreter needs to process the translation in his mind during reading the source text. The important task of an interpreter is to examine the source text ahead to determine more particular keywords at the same time of outlining the expressions of the target language so that he can produce a strong, reliable and smooth output (Agrifoglio,2004). In doing so, the interpreter should store some segment of information in his short term memory until he “reads enough information from the source text to reproduce it in the target language” (Lee, 2012: 695).

As mentioned above, these demands affect memory working which slow down the sight translation process, especially if the interpreters are not qualified or not trained enough .As a result, unqualified interpreters suffer from serious obstacles, so interpreters need a group of skills that may enhance their performance and develop the working of short –term memory sub-skills as a main skill in developing sight translation skills.

Context of the problem

As illustrated from the previous studies, sight translation sub-skill (short –term memory skills)needs to improve . So, this study was conducted by the researcher to develop short-term memory skills through using the metacognitive strategy.

Metacognition is known as cognition about cognition , or what is called thinking about thinking. According to Flavell (1979:252) ,the aim of metacognition is to achieve cognitive goals through the continuous regulation and active monitoring of cognitive processes.Gagen-Lanning (2015, : 4), stated that metacognitive strategies refer to methods used to help students understand the way they learn.

According to Chamot and O'Malley (1994) metacognitive strategy is divided into three basic strategy groups as follows: Planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Planning strategy helps learners to design, plan and arrange their own learning process, while monitoring allows the learner to check his production or comprehension, and evaluating strategy provides learners with analysis, evaluation and judgment of learning the task.

Purpose of the study:

Basically, the current study aimed at developing the sight translation sub skill (short-term memory skills) of second year students through utilizing the strategy based on metacognitive.

Study problem:

The problem of this study could be stated that a great number of 2nd year Languages and simultaneous translation students lack some sight translation skills and need to improve short-term memory skills through using a strategy based on metacognition.

Questions of the study :

The current study was an attempt to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of utilizing a strategy based on metacognition on developing some sight translation skills of second year Languages and Simultaneous Translation students?

The following sub-questions could be derived from the above main one:

- 1) What are the target sight translation skills appropriate for second year students at Languages and Simultaneous Translation English department?
- 2) To what extent do second year students perform these skills?
- 3) What kinds of metacognitive strategies are needed to develop second year students' sight translation skills?
- 4) What is the framework of an appropriate strategy to develop these skills?
- 5) To what extent does this metacognitive strategy affect sight translation skills?

Significance of the study:

This study can hopefully be useful to :

- Second year students at languages and simultaneous translation English department, Al Azhar University to develop their sight translation short-term memory skills. It may raise their motivation to practice sight translation widely in different topics.

- Instructors of translation as it may provide them with practical procedures and effective activities to develop their methods in teaching sight translation.

Aims of the study:

This study aimed at:

- Developing the sight translation short- term memory skills of second year languages and simultaneous translation students.

Instruments of the study:

To achieve the main goal of the current study the researcher designed a pre-post sight translation short term memoryskills test, to measure the students' level before and after the experiment.

Delimitations of the study :

The present study was delimited to:

- A random chosen sample(60) of second year students , languages and simultaneous translation , English department , Girls branch , Al Azhar University, Dakahlia Governorate.
- Some sight translation Short –term memory skills from English into Arabic / Arabic into English. These skills are (Using the obvious words to remember the meaning of unknown words, adjusting quickly the interpretation when realizing it is incorrect, trying to get back on track when losing concentration.).

Results of the study:

1. The experimental group outperformed the control one in the post-test of sight translation short-term memory skills test.
2. The post administration exceeded the pre one in the mean scores of sight translation short- term memory skills test.
3. The strategy based onmetacognitive has a positive effect on improving the second yearsight translation short- term memory skills.

II. Conclusion:

Based on the results and discussions, it can be concluded that:

- The use of the metacognitive strategy helps the interpretation students overcome some of their problems and increase their achievement on theirsight translation short- term memory skills (Using the obvious words to remember the meaning of unknown words, adjusting quickly the interpretation when realizing it is incorrect, trying to get back on track when losing concentration.).
- Metacognition helped the participants to integrate and develop their previous knowledge to any learning situation.
- Metacognition encouraged participants to make a connection between what they actually see and their prior knowledge.
- The strategy based on metacognition helped the participants to overcome their feeling of shyness.It encouraged them to be positive and cooperative participants .
- Metacognition helped the participants to foster and create a cheerful environment .
- Participants through sessions worked in groups and shared their ideas and information; that helped them to understand the whole text and extract the main idea , summarize and comment on their colleagues' translation .

Suggestions for further research:

In the light of the study findings, results and recommendations the following research areas are suggested:

- Further research is needed to adopt the metacognitive strategies in teaching written translation for other stages.
- Further research is needed to investigate using metacognitive strategies for developing reading skills.
- Further research should be done to identify the effect of metacognitive strategies on developing the affective factors of second year students , such as attitudes, motivation and self-esteem.
- Examining the relation of metacognition strategies (meta-comprehension , self-regulation , meta-memory and schema learning) to other language skills.

References

1. Agrifoglio, M. (2004). Sight translation and interpreting: A comparative analysis of constraints and failures. *Interpreting,International Journal of Research and Practice in Interpreting*, 6(1), 43-67.
2. Angelelli, C. V. (1999). The role of reading in sight translation: Implications for teaching. *The ATA Chronicle(Translation Journal of the American Association of Translators)*, 28(5), 27-30.

3. Chamot, A. U., & O'Malley, J. M. (1994). Language learner and learning strategies. In N. C. Ellis (Ed.), *Implicit and explicit learning of languages* (371-392). London: Academic
4. Corsellis, A. (2008). *Public service interpreting: The first steps*. Springer.
5. Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive–developmental inquiry. *American psychologist*, 34(10), 906-911.
6. Gagen-Lanning, K. (2015). The effects of metacognitive strategy training on ESL learners' self-directed use of TED Talk videos for second language listening.
7. González, R. D., Vásquez, V. F., & Mikkelsen, H. (2012). *Fundamentals of court interpretation :Theory ,policy ,and practice* . Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
8. Lee, J. (2012). What skills do student interpreters need to learn in sight translation training?. *Meta: Journal des traducteurs/Meta: Translators' Journal*, 57(3), 694-714.
9. Martin, A. (1993). Teaching sight translation to future interpreters. *Translation: The Vital Link*, 6-13.
10. Martín, R. M. (2014). A blurred snapshot of advances in translation process research. *MonTI. Monografías de Traducción e Interpretación*, 49-84.
11. Nilsen, A. B., & Monsrud, M. B. (2015). Reading skills for sight translation in public-sector services. *Translation & Interpreting, The*, 7(3), 10.
12. Paez, B. (2012). Performance criteria descriptors for cognitive processing skills used in sight translating. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning*, 4(4), 15-32.
13. Pedersen, E. S., & Dam, H. V. (2014). Short-term memory in the production phase of sight translation. *HERMES-Journal of Language and Communication in Business*, (52), 93-105.
14. Shreve, G. M., Lacruz, I., & Angelone, E. (2010). Cognitive effort, syntactic disruption, and visual interference in a sight translation task. *Translation and cognition*, 63-84.
15. Weber, W. K. (1990). The importance of sight translation in an interpreter training program. *ATA Scholarly Monograph Series*, 4, 44-52.