

STUDENT INTERPRETERS' USE OF EXPLICITATION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING PERFORMANCE

A developmental perspective

Yinghui Li, Dr., Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China
Yanping Dong, Dr., Prof., Zhejiang University, China. ypdong@zju.edu.cn

Abstract

Explicitation is a frequently-used interpreting strategy, but no research has yet adopted a longitudinal approach to explore its development in student interpreters and its contribution to interpreting performance. The present study identified and compared 8 specific means of explicitation employed by 62 student interpreters in a B-to-A (English-to-Chinese) consecutive interpreting (CI) task between two training stages (2nd month and end of an academic year). The results showed that first, as interpreting training proceeded, explicitation was more frequently used at the 2nd stage than at the 1st, with 7 of the 8 specific means of explicitation increasing significantly in frequency. Second, the frequency of explicitation positively correlated with CI performance, with the correlation stronger at the 2nd than at the 1st stage. The frequency of explicitation at the 1st stage significantly predicted CI performance at the 2nd stage.

Introduction

The present study was intended to fill the research gap on student interpreters' development in using explicitation mainly in four ways: by adopting a longitudinal study that followed a large group of student interpreters (N>60), by focusing on the first year of interpreting training, by combining the quantitative and the qualitative approach, and by exploring the contribution of using explicitation to interpreting performance.

In order to reveal how students' specific uses of explicitation relate to their interpreting performance, the current study examined all available literature on explicitation carefully and classified students' specific uses of explicitation in a way to avoid possibilities of overlapping. All literature-documented specific means of explicitation that were commonly used in consecutive interpreting between Chinese and English were streamlined into 12 specific uses of explicitation (e.g., *making paralinguistic information explicit, adding/substituting connectives, filling in ellipses*).

Methods and Materials

Participants. Sixty-two undergraduate students majoring in English in a foreign studies university in China were enrolled, who were all Chinese-English unbalanced bilinguals and who were enrolled in a one-year interpreting training programme (4 translation courses and 4 interpreting courses) during data collection.

Materials and Procedure. An English-to-Chinese CI test was adapted from an eight-minute speech that mainly promotes laptops for children. The pre-test was arranged in the 2nd month of the one-year interpreting training and the post-test at the end (10th month) of the training. After the post-test, the participants took part in retrospection and interview about the two tests;

All specific uses of explicitation were coded on the basis of (1) the working definitions of specific uses of explicitation, (2) interpreting output, and (3) retrospective protocols and interview data.

Results

With both quantitative and qualitative analyses, it was found that first, the student interpreters used explicitation more frequently at Stage 2 than at Stage 1, and among the eight specific means of explicitation employed at the two stages, seven of them showed significant growth in frequency at Stage 2 (see Table 1).

Second, it was found that the students' use of explicitation (especially the specific uses of explicitation that ranked among the top five in frequency) had significant and positive correlations with CI performance at both stages, with correlations closer at Stage 2 than at Stage 1 (see Table 2). The overall use of explicitation and three specific uses of explicitation (*making paralinguistic information explicit, adding/substituting connectives and lexical specification*) at Stage 1 significantly and positively predicted the students' later development in CI performance at Stage 2 (see Table 3).

Discussion

- Based on a survey by the authors in 2019, the explicitation strategy was recommended by interpreting instructors. The results of the current study showed that our interpreting training (esp. strategy training) was effective.
- A developmental pattern was unveiled in student interpreters' use of explicitation: when receiving more interpreting training, students conveyed information more explicitly (in particular by the seven specific means).
- The explicitation strategy plays an important role in CI performance. As an appropriate use (instead of abuse) of this strategy was important, a process-oriented approach is suggested to promote the appropriate use of explicitation and to further improve the efficiency of interpreting strategy training. Besides, instructors may need to monitor their students' use of strategy, giving them encouragement at the beginning and caution at a later stage.

Conclusions

By using a longitudinal approach, the present study mainly scrutinized beginner student interpreters' use of explicitation in a B-to-A CI task and its relationship with interpreting performance.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses indicate the importance of appropriate uses of explicitation in CI and the effectiveness of interpreting strategy training.

The major contribution of the present study lies in the developmental perspective on how student interpreters progress in their use of explicitation. To encourage appropriate uses of explicitation and to achieve higher efficiency in interpreting strategy training, a process-oriented approach is recommended. But more research is needed to depict the developmental trajectory in the relationship between the use of explicitation and interpreting performance along the timeline of interpreting training or experience.

Table 1. Student interpreters' use of explicitation (overall use and specific uses of explicitation) at two stages of interpreting training (pre-test, post-test) and statistical comparisons of each mean between the two stages (N=62).

| Explicitation | Average frequency (with SD) and relative ranking (R) | | | | U | Effect size r^2 |
|---|--|---|---------------|---|-----------|-------------------|
| | pre-test | R | post-test | R | | |
| 1. making paralinguistic information explicit | 3.69 (2.55) | 1 | 6.39 (3.27) | 1 | 127.00*** | .69 |
| 2. adding/substituting connectives | 3.47 (2.92) | 2 | 5.81 (3.33) | 2 | 137.00*** | .66 |
| 3. filling in ellipses | 2.76 (2.18) | 3 | 4.69 (2.70) | 3 | 173.00*** | .59 |
| 4. adding explanation or disambiguating | 2.61 (2.15) | 4 | 3.85 (2.41) | 4 | 299.00*** | .47 |
| 5. lexical specification | 1.39 (1.32) | 5 | 2.90 (1.91) | 5 | 84.00*** | .66 |
| 6. inserting a clause or a summary as a discourse organizer | .97 (.83) | 6 | 1.29 (.82) | 6 | 314.50* | .25 |
| 7. stating information source/type | .53 (.92) | 7 | .63 (.83) | 8 | 172.50 | .09 |
| 8. replacing pronominalized expressions | .37 (.52) | 8 | 1.06 (1.05) | 7 | 36.00*** | .55 |
| 9. substituting nominalized verbs | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | / | / |
| 10. inserting hedges | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | / | / |
| 11. maintaining "to" | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | / | / |
| 12. maintaining "that" | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | / | / |
| overall use | 15.79 (9.59) | / | 26.63 (10.29) | / | 24.50*** | .85 |

Note. ***. $p < .001$; *. $.01 \leq p < .05$; R: ranking of the specific uses of explicitation.
†: The effect size r ranges from -1.00 to 1.00, with .10 being the threshold for a small effect, .30 for a moderate effect, and .50 for a large effect (Cohen 1992).

(Li & Dong, In review)

Table 2. Correlation (r) between student interpreters' interpreting performance and their use of explicitation (overall use and specific uses of explicitation) at two stages, with potential variance from L2 proficiency controlled (N=62)

| Explicitation | Overall Score | | Information | | TL Expressions | |
|---|---------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | pre-test | post-test | pre-test | post-test | pre-test | post-test |
| overall use | .42*** | .67*** | .41*** | .63*** | .40** | .59*** |
| 1. making paralinguistic information explicit | .36** | .60*** | .33* | .55*** | .35** | .51*** |
| 2. adding/substituting connectives | .35** | .36** | .35** | .34** | .33** | .27* |
| 3. filling in ellipses | .32* | .44*** | .29* | .36** | .33* | .56*** |
| 4. adding explanation or disambiguating | .29* | .31* | .32* | .32* | .22 | .27* |
| 5. lexical specification | .42*** | .51*** | .40** | .51*** | .40** | .45*** |
| 6. inserting a clause or a summary as a discourse organizer | .17 | -.10 | .13 | -.11 | .23 | -.11 |
| 7. stating information source/type | .01 | .06 | .00 | .07 | .05 | -.03 |
| 8. replacing pronominalized expressions | -.18 | .25* | -.16 | .23 | -.14 | .25 |

Note. ***. $p < .001$; **. $p < .01$; *. $.01 \leq p < .05$. (Li & Dong, In review)

Table 3. Predictive power of explicitation (overall use and the top-six specific uses of explicitation) on student interpreters' progress in interpreting performance (overall score and the two sub-scores), with both the autoregressive effect of the dependent variable and the potential contribution of L2 proficiency controlled statistically (N=62)

| Independent variable (data collected in the pre-test) | Overall Score | | Information | | TL expressions | | | | |
|---|---------------|------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|------------|---------|------|
| | ΔR^2 | ΔF | $\beta^†$ | ΔR^2 | β | ΔR^2 | ΔF | β | |
| overall use | .04 | 9.16** | .34 | .03 | 7.40** | .23 | .05 | 6.80** | .13 |
| 1. making paralinguistic information explicit | .02 | 4.12* | .83 | .03 | 5.85* | .72 | .01 | .92 | / |
| 2. adding/substituting connectives | .03 | 7.76** | .92 | .03 | 5.25* | .57 | .06 | 7.48** | .41 |
| 3. filling in ellipses | .01 | 2.68 | / | .01 | 1.71 | / | .03 | 3.33* | .39 |
| 4. adding explanation or disambiguating | .01 | 2.36 | / | .01 | 1.55 | / | .02 | 2.93* | .35 |
| 5. lexical specification | .06 | 14.13*** | 2.91 | .04 | 9.16** | 1.80 | .09 | 12.87** | 1.25 |
| 6. inserting a clause or a summary as a discourse organizer | .00 | .16 | / | .00 | .39 | / | .00 | .00 | / |

Note. ***. $p < .001$; **. $p < .01$; *. $.01 \leq p < .05$; †. $.05 \leq p < .10$.
†: The statistic β is not reported here when ΔF was not found significant. (Li & Dong, In review)