50 Years of Research on Anticipation in SI

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Abstract

We acknowledge the two principal methodological approaches to research on strategic anticipation (experimental and corpus-based) and then focus on experimental designs linking strategy use to directionality, as pioneered by Jörg (1995). With the aim of testing Jörg's assumption that simultaneous interpreters working into their B language (i.e., in *retour*) may have an advantage over colleagues working into their A language when it comes to handling syntactic challenges by strategic anticipation, a replication study of SI from German into French was carried out with eight advanced MA students at the universities of Vienna and Louvain. With German-A participants showing more success-ful use of anticipation in their SI performance into French, the hypothesis is largely borne out, even though the directionality-based competitive edge tends to be undermined by language proficiency issues in student interpreter's B-language output.

Introduction

The use of strategies for overcoming challenges arising from syntactic asymmetries between source and target languages in simultaneous interpreting (SI) has been a longstanding concern for researchers as well as educators. The strategy of anticipation, especially in SI from German, has been the object of numerous studies.

In the broader sense, anticipation refers to an interpreter's predictive understanding of the source speech, thanks to semantic redundancy of the message. This was at the heart of Ghelly Chernov's (1978) early model of the SI process.

In a more specific sense, strategic anticipation in SI has been defined as expressing a source-speech element before the corresponding word or phrase is uttered by the speaker. Such prediction is based on knowledge of the language (e.g. collocations) or on contextual or world knowledge.

Anticipation was mentioned in relation to the 'timing' of SI as early as 1957, in Eva Paneth's pioneering MA thesis (Figure 1), and first studied more empirically in the Master's thesis by Nanza Mattern (1974).

Since then, there have been two main methodolo-gical strands: studies based on data from experi-mental settings, and corpus-based studies. The latter have often relied on data from plenary meetings of the European Parliament (e.g. Liontou 2012 and replications in recent MA theses at the University of Vienna).
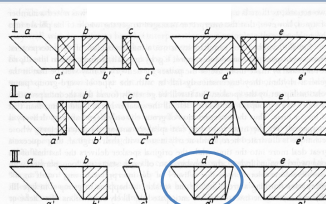

Figure 1. Anticipation in Paneth (1957:17a)

Jörg (1995)

Among the most influential experimental studies of anticipation is the MA thesis by Udo Jörg (1995), on *Verb Anticipation in German–English SI*. Jörg asked 6 professionals and 6 advanced students, half Ger-man-A, half English-A, to interpret a 17.5-minute German speech and scored participants' renderings of 26 anticipation-likely sentences for the use and correctness of anticipation. Aside from finding few differences in terms of level of expertise, Jörg found that anticipation was used in about half of all cases (mean 52%) More interestingly, he found that German-A participants interpreting into their B language had distinctly higher scores for exact anticipation (Table 1).

Table 1. Main results in Jörg (1995)

	English A	German A
Used (% of cases):	53	51
Exact (%):	24	**35**
More generral (%):	25	15
Incorrect (%):	4	1

Methods and Material

Following at least two replications of Jörg's (1995) study in the same language pair (in MA theses at the universities of Graz and Vienna), the study was recently replicated for the first time for German–French SI (Stögerer 2019).

Stögerer asked eight advanced students, half Ger-man-A, half French-A, at the University of Vienna and at the Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium) to interpret a 19-minute German speech, again with 26 sentences likely to require anticipa-tion. Data were transcribed in EXMARaLDA, and participants' renderings scored for the (successful) use of anticipation and broken down by direction-ality (i.e. working into the A language vs in *retour*).

Results

Similar to Jörg's (1995) findings, anticipation was used in roughly half of all cases (mean 47%), German-A participants interpreting into their B language had distinctly higher scores for exact anticipation. However, they also had a much higher share of incorrect anticipation (Table 2).

Table 2. Main results (Stögerer 2019)

	French A	German A
Used (% of cases):	40.4	52.9
Exact (%):	20.2	**26.0**
More generral (%):	11.5	12.5
Incorrect (%):	8.7	14.4

Example 1. Exact anticipation (DE–FR SI into B)

Example 2. Incorrect anticipation (DE–FR SI into B)

Discussion

The replication study by Stögerer (2019) extends the findings of Jörg (1995) and subsequent replica-tions to the language pair German–French. The relationship between the more or less successful use of strategic verb anticipation and directionality is once again borne out. However, the data from (advanced) student participants also show that the advantage due to working from German as one's A language (i.e., in *retour*) – as illustrated in Example 1 – may be offset by insufficient expressive skills in the target language (in this case, students' B language French) – as seen in Example 2.

Conclusions

Our conclusions are drawn on two different levels:
1a) The successful German–French replication of Jörg's (1995) finding of superior anticipation performance when working into the B language further consolidates this pattern of results.
1b) Stögerer's (2019) findings highlight the import-ance of B-language proficiency for reaping the German-A anticipation benefit.
2a) Replication is a crucial methodological tool for developing the state of the art in research on interpreting, especially for experiments on SI.
2b) Replication studies are highly suitable for MA thesis projects, with benefits for students and the field of interpreting studies alike.

References

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