

Summary

Simultaneous interpreting is a very complex cognitive process. Daniel Gile's Effort Model is an attempt to describe in a schematic way the various competing processes that simultaneous interpreting is composed of. The model is based on findings from cognitive psychology, especially those relating to working memory and the limited processing capacity of the human mind. It defines the process of simultaneous interpreting as a combination of three individual, yet coinciding efforts (the Listening and Analysis Effort, the Production Effort, the Memory Effort), which require a certain amount of processing capacity to assure quality interpreting performance. Problem triggers can cause saturation of the interpreter's processing capacity to occur. Saturation manifests itself either by failure sequences or by the deterioration of the interpreter's performance, immediately or at a distance.

The focus of our thesis is on processing capacity saturation due to numbers in simultaneous interpreting, from the point of view of the Effort Model. The first part of our paper is theoretical and deals with the various aspects of the simultaneous interpreting process, especially those relating to processing capacity, saturation and working memory; as well as with questions of well-known problem triggers, interpreting strategies and tactics, the unit of meaning and finally the subject of performance assessment. The second part of our paper is devoted to the findings of our experimental English-Czech study, the goal of which was the empirical testing of a hypothesis.

The hypothesis that we set out to verify was such that the occurrence of numbers, a well-known problem trigger, during simultaneous interpreting can result in the saturation of the interpreter's processing capacity. Saturation was observed as manifested in the deterioration of the interpreter's performance. However, contrary to our expectations, in the experimental segments containing numbers, performance on the average improved with the increasing proportion of numbers interpreted. With regards to individual segments, performance on the average improved in approximately 66% of them with the increasing proportion of numbers interpreted and deteriorated in approximately 33% of them with the increasing proportion of numbers interpreted. Therefore the results of our experiment are ambiguous and the hypothesis was proven right only for certain segments. However, these results could be influenced by the fact that students were used as subjects.

Keywords

simultaneous interpreting, effort model, working memory, processing capacity, saturation, problem triggers, numbers