

Abstract

The present thesis addresses the issue of the impact of two independent variables – speech rate and interpreters’ experience – on the length of time lag in simultaneous interpreting from English to Czech. Time lag, or ear-voice-span (EVS), in simultaneous interpreting is the time difference between the input in source language and the output in target language. The study comprises of two parts. The first, theoretical part summarises the current state of research on the subject. The second, empirical part compares the average EVS in excerpts of sixty simultaneous interpreting renditions uttered by forty-nine subjects divided into two speech rate categories and three experiential categories. The aim is to find out, firstly, whether there are any differences in EVS length based on speech rate, and, secondly, how the interpreters’ level of experience influences their EVS length.

The first main finding is that a higher speech rate leads, on average, to a shorter EVS than an optimal speech rate; this does not, however, apply in the case of professional interpreters – their EVS length is not affected by speech rate. The second main finding is that the interpreters’ level of experience influences EVS length significantly: the more experienced the subjects, the shorter their EVS on average. While evaluating the results of the study, an intuitive premise has been confirmed – that the less experienced the interpreters, the less complete and syntactically coherent their renditions, and also the less effective their filling of speakers’ intra-sentence pauses with interpreting. A higher degree of reduction compared to the original speech was apparent mainly at higher speech rates, which could explain why less experienced interpreters have a shorter EVS at higher speech rates. Additional analysis of professional interpreters’ renditions has been conducted in this study in order to rule out contamination of the results due to the inclusion of speeches by non-native English speakers; the outcome showed that whether the speaker is native or non-native does not influence the interpreters’ EVS length in any significant way.