

Abstract

The dissertation provides a comprehensive analysis of the issue of quality in simultaneous interpreting. The theoretical part explores general questions related to quality in interpreting, namely the inherent difficulties encountered in defining quality, the issue of subjectivity in the assessment of quality, the different perspectives on quality and the issues surrounding the various quality criteria as suggested by different authors. The work focuses on the cognitive processes involved in simultaneous interpreting; concepts of working memory and cognitive load are discussed as well as their connection to the concept of interpreting as a decision-making process and a strategic behaviour. Quality is therefore understood as the capacity to efficiently and effectively manage available cognitive resources and to choose appropriate strategies to solve a particular problem in a specific interpreting situation, while taking into account the overall working conditions and the individual predispositions of the interpreter.

The empirical part includes an analysis of actual interpreting of technical (legal) speeches. The technical nature of the speeches and the resulting linguistic and conceptual difficulties of the input material is considered to be a factor that increases cognitive load. The aim is to observe the individual strategic solutions used by experienced interpreters depending on their different linguistic and knowledge profiles. The experiment was conducted with the participation of seven highly experienced interpreters divided into three groups: (a) Interpreters working from their A language into their B language with knowledge of law; (b) Interpreters working from their A language into their B language without substantial knowledge of law; and (c) Interpreters working from their C language into their A language without substantial knowledge of law. The hypothesis is that interpreters will use different solutions depending on the availability of cognitive resources, which is linked to linguistic and conceptual processing of input information. Three speeches, each with different levels of difficulty were used. In total approximately 40 minutes of input material and 280 minutes of output (interpreted) material were analysed.

The dissertation is intended to be a starting point for further research and a contribution to interpreting theory, its practice and associated training.

Keywords

directionality, cognitive process, cognitive load, decision-making process, legal language, quality, quality assessment, quality criteria, simultaneous interpreting, strategies, working memory