Computerized Note-taking in Consecutive Interpreting:
A Pen-voice Integrated Approach towards Omissions, Additions and Reconstructions in Notes

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Abstract

Although note-taking has received extensive attention from scholars in interpreting studies, most of the discussions focus on the descriptive features of notes and derive from personal experience with no empirical support. Instead of solely focusing on the product of note-taking, i.e. notes, where many contradictory findings about note pattern and its connections with interpreting performance were witnessed, this study proposes and practices an innovative approach to visualize the process of note-taking and review the composition of notes. It is expected to find efficient note-taking strategies for interpreters who always find it hard to apply the proposed principles in their own note-taking due to the high individuality of notes.

By replaying the note-taking process recorded by a *Wacom* smart pen and *FlashBack* (an open screen recorder) in *ELAN* (a free annotation toolkit), the researcher can annotate the starting time, the finishing time and the intended meaning of each note, thus coding notes into computerized data (NT standing for note-taking text). After automatic speech transcription (ASR) and manual correction of the source text (ST) and target text (TT), note-taking transcription can be concatenated with ST, and then then imported into CRITT Translation Process Database (CRITT TPR-DB) for alignment.

One distinctive feature of this dataset is its unparalleled nature. During interpreting, interpreters always filter and process the input information by taking advantage of their personal experience, world knowledge and specialized knowledge. It is therefore very common to find additions, omissions and reconstructions in TT and NT. This explains why during ST-TT alignment, renderings with no correspondence in ST are not aligned. This phenomenon is even more prominent in ST-NT alignment (the alignment of the ST with the notes that were taken during the listening phase) since notes are a by-product of ST understanding and a predecessor of TT production, rather than a shorthand of neither the ST nor the TT.

By observing how unparalleled nature develops, interpreters' note-taking preferences, such as grammatical focus (subjects, verbs, etc.), information selection (proper nouns, numbers, etc.), note quantity and note-taking strategies (ellipse, restricting and high condensation), can be identified and further linked with interpreting performance. In addition, ear-pen span - which refers to the time lag between the source text input and the production of notes - can be a valuable indicator of cognitive load, implying the difficulty of language processing at the given interpreting environment.

Computerization, therefore, carves out a new path for note-taking researchers to dig into both the product and process of note-taking. Linking note choices and note-taking behaviours with ST input and TT production provides researchers a precious opportunity to answer the kernel question in note-taking research: how to reduce processing capacity and time requirements of note-taking while maintain the efficiency of notes" (Gile,1995/2009, p. 178).

References

Gile, Daniel (1995, 2009). *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.