THE IMPACT OF SENTENCE LENGTH ON STUDENT INTERPRETERS’ PERFORMANCES

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Introduction
- Empirical data confirming this correlation is scarce.
- An experiment (part of a PhD project on determinants of interpretability in student interpreters’ exercises) was carried out in order to measure the impact of longer sentences on student interpreters’ performances.

Method
- Measuring interpreting quality (accuracy/acceptability) of the transcribed and manually checked recordings based on:
  - Omissions (lost content words)
  - Filled pauses
  - Long-term errors: unfinished sentences, referencing errors, subject-verb agreement errors
  - Short-term errors: article errors, preposition errors

Data
- Selection of 5 French source speeches (SCIC Speech Repository/SpeechPool) to be re-spoken and interpreted into Dutch
- Quantitative approach: analysis of the 5 speeches regarding sentence length: long ASL in 1, 2, 3 and 5 (range 22.35–26.02 w/s); short ASL in 4 (14.67 w/s)
- Qualitative approach: adaptation of speeches 3 & 5 (splitting long sentences, changing subordinate into coordinate clauses, adding anaphors): 2 simplified speeches were added (speeches 6 & 7)
- 7 students Postgraduate Programme in Conference Interpreting Ghent University interpreted speeches 1, 2 & 4; 4 students interpreted speeches 3 & 5; 3 students interpreted speeches 6 & 7.
- 35 recordings.

Research question
Do long(er) sentences have an impact on student interpreters’ performances in simultaneous?

Results

Conclusions
 Longer sentences are not significantly associated with filled pauses or short-term errors (multivariate general linear regression: resp. p>0.19 and p>0.40)
 Longer sentences are significantly associated with omissions and long-term errors (multivariate general linear regression: resp. p<0.001 and p<0.05)
 None of the aforementioned tendencies can be observed when comparing original and simplified versions of the same speech: limitations of text adaptation?
 Speech 4 (on ‘interpreting’) triggers fewer errors (but not fewer disfluencies): influence of topical knowledge?

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