

# Interpreting Studies and Undergraduate-level English Education: A Quest to Foster the Dynamic Development of Interpretation as an Academic Discipline

(通訳研究と大学の英語教育：  
学問分野としての大学通訳教育における専門職としての通訳技能の育成)

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Interpreting has been used in business and communication since time immemorial and the demand for interpreters to mediate across language and culture boundaries has increased over time. It was only during the twentieth century, however, that interpreting gained wide recognition as a profession (Bowen et al., 1995). Only recently has interpreting been viewed as an academic field. In Japan, the last two decades have seen the establishment of many interpreting programs and courses at universities and graduate schools. Japan now has more than a hundred universities that offer interpreter training or interpreting-related courses in their undergraduate curricula. At present, however, few studies have explicitly recommended interpreter-training models for Japanese university courses, based on the arguments and theoretical constructs of interpreting studies as an academic discipline.

One essential topic covered in this dissertation is the academic discipline of interpreter training, as taught in universities. The collection of papers offers insights into the search for university teaching methodologies and academic studies of interpreting that span multiple approaches to the field, exploring interpreting in all its diversity and complexity. They cover a wealth of types of data, ranging from recorded student interpreting performances, to written interpretations, measured reaction times, assessment methods, and questionnaires. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches, as well as various types of design, have been used to investigate process- and product-oriented issues.

To ensure optimum coherence, the present paper has been divided into four parts. Part 1 explores the methods of assessing interpreting performance explained in Chapter 1. Part 2 covers work that “breaks new ground” and “lays the foundation” for interpreter training by developing activities that prepare new learners for actual interpreting scenarios. Part 2 consists of Chapters 2 and 3. Part 3 covers both consecutive and simultaneous modes of interpreting, addressed in Chapters 4 and 5. These three parts culminate in Chapter 6, Part 4, which presents theoretical findings about “the

interpreting process” by the use of multidirectional reformulations. These chapters are preceded by the Introduction, which discusses the unified theme of university-level interpreting education and contextualizes the individual articles. The present comprehensive studies are ended with the Conclusion, which provides synopsis of the topics and issues raised throughout the chapters and future directions for interpreting studies. In the section that follows, the author will briefly describe the manner in which each theme is addressed.

Chapter 1 explores methods of assessing an interpreter’s performance. One critical issue in the testing and assessment methods used by Japanese universities for English interpreting courses is the lack of any methodology that includes systematic testing and related assessment criteria. Although, during comprehensive examinations, the author generally employs recorded performance tests, this testing method has some flaws. The most serious constraint is that instructors must spend a great deal of time and effort rating the students’ recorded verbal performances. It is particularly arduous when an instructor is assigned to teach several classes, with around 100 students in total. The present chapter proposes a new university testing model as criterion-referenced testing, which replaces the conventional computer-based recorded verbal performance tests. Known as “the performance test of English interpreting in the written form,” its features include an assessment instrument and a scoring rubric (Yamada, 2015). Employing data from 160 sources, derived from 80 students who concurrently took identical interpreting performance tests, in both recorded verbal and written forms, the present study has compared their test results, drawing on several theoretical constructs. The findings demonstrate the superiority of the written form and show how a rating system based on a scoring rubric can help to confirm its legitimacy.

Chapter 2 discusses the implications of shadowing activities. Scholars have fervently debated the question of whether shadowing is merely a monolingual repetition of verbal output or a useful tool for enhancing content-processing capacity (Pöchhacker, 2016). However, few studies have explicitly examined the way in which a shadowing task can contribute to consecutive interpreting, in accordance with effectiveness evaluations based on empirical data. The present chapter identifies the types of incidents that most frequently disrupt shadowing and correlates these with accuracy in source-text interpretation. For this purpose, the present study has drawn on data from 56 participants who took shadowing tests, followed by English-Japanese consecutive interpreting tests, in interpreting courses. It has investigated the variable efficacy of shadowing, demonstrating that shadowing had a positive effect on the group that administered intensive shadowing treatment; some provocative findings were also

obtained (Yamada, 2016). This study elucidates the true nature of shadowing activities.

Chapter 3 focuses on sight translation. Sight translation has been a topic of special interest in interpretation pedagogy, as a variant of written and oral translation. However, few empirical studies have investigated the efficacy of sight translation as a component of comprehension in consecutive interpreting. This chapter examines the effectiveness of intensive sight-translation activities on subsequent consecutive interpreting. Although the data yielded salient information on the efficacy of sight-translation practice, they showed no significant development in consecutive interpreting. Several exploratory analyses were carried out to compare the simultaneous rendition of visual input (sight translation) with the consecutive rendition of aural input (consecutive interpreting). The findings suggest that the two are highly correlated, in terms of products as well as abilities. The present chapter may provide insight into the temporal characteristics of two distinct modalities by presenting lexical, syntactic, and strategic solutions for translation problems.

Chapter 4 explores consecutive interpreting from the perspective of note-taking. Within the field of consecutive interpreting, there is an extensive literature on the subject of note-taking. However, there is still no consensus on the validity of notes taken during consecutive interpreting. For one thing, note-taking can easily divert the interpreter's attention, making it harder to listen and hindering the analysis (Gile, 2009). This chapter first details an empirical study on the effects of consecutive interpreting training activities employed at university to enhance learners' language proficiency. It then investigates the efficacy of note-taking by comparing students' consecutive-interpreting marks with and without notes; this comparison has been carried out for both L2 to L1 and L1 to L2 interpreting. Although the results demonstrate the positive effect of consecutive interpreter training (administered regularly and frequently over the semester) on the students' listening and interpreting abilities, they do not confirm the usefulness of note-taking. To further ascertain the validity of notation, the present study has also analyzed sequentially presented paragraphs in a consecutive interpreting performance with and without the status of notes (Yamada, 2018). This chapter provides insight into developing more refined interpreting tools and training programs at the undergraduate level.

Chapter 5 discusses the potential of simultaneous interpreting activities for new interpreting learners. There is a general consensus that novice interpreters should begin their training with consecutive interpreting (CI) and move on to simultaneous interpreting (SI) after they have considerably mastered CI. However, working memory (WM) capacity plays a central role in developing professional SI skills, and may even

be more important than extended practice (Köpke & Nespoulous, 2006). As there is great variability in the innate cognitive abilities of individuals, some novice interpreters may have the potential to perform SI reasonably well. The present chapter has tested this hypothesis by offering SI training to novice interpreters in a university course, without administering prior CI training during the semester. Midterm and final examinations were conducted to analyze the learners' SI performances. The findings suggest that student interpreters can perform SI quite well, subject to certain conditions, including sufficient preparation time, input rates, and source-text intelligibility. This study explores the pedagogical implications of introducing student interpreters directly to SI training, as well as the curricular arrangements involved.

Chapter 6 uses reformulation activities to explain the interpreting process. To provide a comprehensive account of the interpreting process, this chapter first examines the efficacy of reformulation activities employed in interpreting classes and then analyzes the reformulating products so as to explore the comprehension and the reformulation phases in line with three distinguished hypotheses. They are the meaning-based comprehension (deverbalization) (Seleskovitch, 1978 a,b), and form-based comprehension (Dam, 2002), both of which take precedence over the reformulation phase and target-language (TL) parallel processing, which occur during source-language (SL) comprehension (Dong & Lin, 2013; Macizo & Bajo, 2004, 2006). Based on these hypotheses, the present study discusses a specific language-pair process by investigating multi-directional language combinations: from L1 (Japanese) to L1, L1 to L2 (English), L2 to L2, and L2 to L1 reformulations. The main findings of this study suggest that the process of reformulation varies, depending on the specific language pairs. This may shed light on the salient link between language combinations and the interpreting process (Yamada, 2018).

During the course of this research, five different exercises were applied to participating students over a five-year timeframe. The observations presented in Chapters 1–6 do not necessarily translate directly into rules and standards for professional interpreters. Nonetheless, this research on how untrained student interpreters practice interpretation may help researchers conduct empirical and academic inquiries into interpreting. In particular, the implications of the interpreting process, discussed in Chapter 6, are worth noting. They may help interpreters and researchers understand how comprehension and production are executed during the interpreting process. The author hopes that this research on the nature and components of student interpreting competence will give teachers at university interpreting programs clear guidance on the best training methods to teach this field.

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