

Emphasis on Meaning in the Training of Simultaneous Interpretation: Special Reference to Interpretation between Korean and English

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1. Introduction

With the advent of a new millenium, a wave of globalizatin is moving forward in full swing. In this era of internationalization, crosslingual and crosscultural communication is required more frequently than ever before. In the field of interpretation, interpreters have undergone a lot of difficulties in their performance of simultaneous interpretation, particularly from Korean into English, due to the different sentential configurations of the two languages. They delay their performance, not being able to determine the functional value assigned to the topic and other structural markers in the Korean sentence. Li and Thompson (1976) claim that the basic structure of some languages including Korean manifest

a topic-comment relation rather than a subject-predicate relation.

The purpose of this study is primarily to propose appropriate pedagogical approaches in educating simultaneous interpreters between Korean and English.

1) Since interpretation involves various operations such as decoding, analysis, and encoding that must be done almost at the same time, it is assumed that such tasks would demand highly developed capacities on the part of the interpreter. This paper consequently recommends using a text made up of simple sentences rather than words for the beginning level as an efficient method of facilitating the training of simultaneous interpretation.²⁾³⁾

2. Modes of Interpretation

Interpretation can be largely classified as simultaneous and consecutive modes.

2.1. Simultaneous Interpretation

Barik (1969) defines simultaneous interpretation as the “process of orally converting a message from one language into another as the message is being received.” instantaneous interpretation is distinguished from consecutive interpretation, which is performed after the speaker has made an original delivery, i.e., the interpreter steps in at the end of the speech or after a certain agreed-upon amount of time has elapsed. (Gerver, 1976). In connection with simultaneous interpretation, Degueldre & Lichtenberg (1985) state that, when

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- 1) Korean is viewed as having a basic sentence construction of topic and comment, while English is regarded as having a basic sentence construction of subject and predicate
 - 2) The Yale system is used in the Romanization of Korean. Refer to the abbreviations chart for all the abbreviations used in this paper.
 - 3) Refer to the abbreviations chart for all the abbreviations used in this paper.

the interpreter is in the booth, he/she listens to the message through a headphone while speaking at the same time. Two interpreters normally work as a team in the same booth for a period of about twenty minutes each.

Simultaneous interpretation is not just a mechanical process. It is quite different from written translation. The interpreter performs different operations simultaneously such as expressing the idea of the speaker in another language and listening carefully to the utterance of the speaker before putting it into the target language. Instantaneousness is the major advantage of simultaneous interpretation. However, there can be no literal instantaneousness because the interpreter can not begin his interpretation the moment the speaker makes a speech. As a matter of course, the speaker starts his speech and after a few seconds the interpreter performs to deliver the idea of the speaker's message in another language. Degueldre & Lichtenberg (1985) state that a time lag exists between the original speech and the interpreter's rendition.

2.2. Consecutive Interpretation

Two types are used in consecutive interpretation: Continuous and Discontinuous. In the Continuous mode, the interpreter waits until the speaker has finished the whole speech, and delivers the interpretation. In the Discontinuous mode, the interpreter delivers the interpretation after pauses in the source language speaker's message.

It is generally known that notetaking in interpretation is different from stenography. The interpreter does not have to write down every word uttered by the speaker because meaning is more important than individual words. Since the interpreter cannot

remember everything said in the original speech, his notes must serve to bring back his memory. According to Longley(1977), the interpreter's notes can

be made up of signs and vocabulary items in the source, target, or third language. It would not be desirable for the interpreter to take notes of only content words such as nouns, adjectives, or verbs because function words like prepositions, relatives, and conjunctions also play a crucial part in the process of the interpreter's performance.

3. Sentential Patterns

This section discusses sentential patterns between Korean and English⁴⁾: Definitions will be provided for the six categories of the Korean sentences to demonstrate the structural differences between Korean and English: Single Topic, Adverbial,⁵⁾ Genitive, Moved Argument, Embedded, and Cleft.

3.1 Single Topic Category

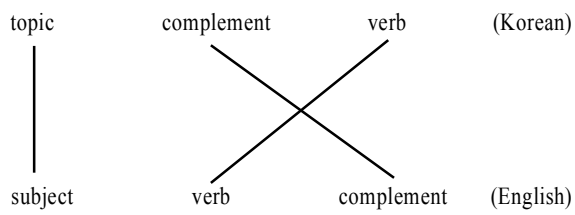
In the Single Topic category, there is little difference between Korean and English other than the position of the verb. The properties of the topic often correspond to those of the subject. Let us examine the differences in the following example:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|
| (1) Kim sensayng-un | cha-lul | sassup-nita. |
| Kim Mr.-TM | car-AM | buy(pt)-Decl |
- ‘Mr.Kim bought a car.’

4) Yom (1993) presents six categories as the basic sentential patterns of Korean, including Single Topic, Adverbial, Genitive, Moved Argument, Embedded Element, and Cleft.

5) This is often called ‘periphrastic’.

FIGURE 1
Structural Configuration of Single Topic Category



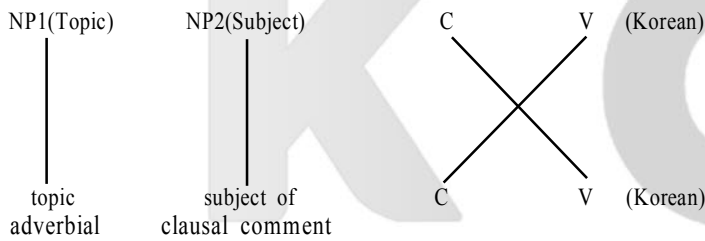
3.2 Adverbial Category

In the Adverbial category, the topic is detached from the rest of the sentence. The topic and the subject both occur and can thus be distinguished easily as is shown in the following example:

- (2) kang-un Hankang-i kil-ta
 river-TM Han river-SM long-Decl

‘As for rivers, the Han river is long.’

FIGURE 2
Structural Configuration of Adverbial Category



3.3 Genitive Category

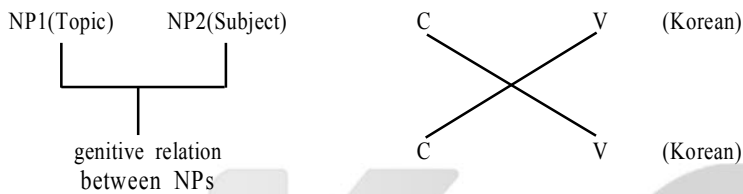
In the Genitive category, the first and the second NP share a conceptual

association. As Yang (1972) suggests, the NPs are divided into the whole NP (i.e., the macro-NP) and a subpart of it (i.e., the micro-NP). The following example is a sentence where the macro-micro relation demonstrates a genitive relationship. There are semantic relations between the NP1 and NP2 as can be seen in the example provided below:

- (3) kusalam-un tongsayng-i Pwusan-eyse
 the man-TM brother-SM Pusan-in
- eysa-lul hakoiss-supnita.
 doctor-AM do -Decl

‘His brother is a doctor in Pusan.’

FIGURE 3
 Structural Configuration of Genitive Category



3.4 Moved Argument

In the Moved Argument category, the complement is topicalized and is moved to the sentence-initial position. A Korean sentence of this category can be transformed into English in the form of either an active voice or a passive voice. Song (1975) states that it can be misleading to regard the utterances of (4-a) and (4-b) as a true paraphrase.

- (4) (a) Waiters and waitresses serve customers.
 (b) Customers are served by waiters and waitresses.

In both utterances the case relations (Fillmore, 1968) remain unaltered, but the focus is changed.

With respect to what can be the topic in Korean, Sohn (1986) suggests that any nominal element can be topicalized in the sentence, but with some semantic constraints. Let us examine the moved position of the topic in the following illustrations:

(5) a. *thongil-un* *on* *kwukmin-i*
 unification-TM whole nation-SM

kancelhi *wenhap-nita*
 anxiously want-Decl

‘Unification is wanted by the whole nation.’

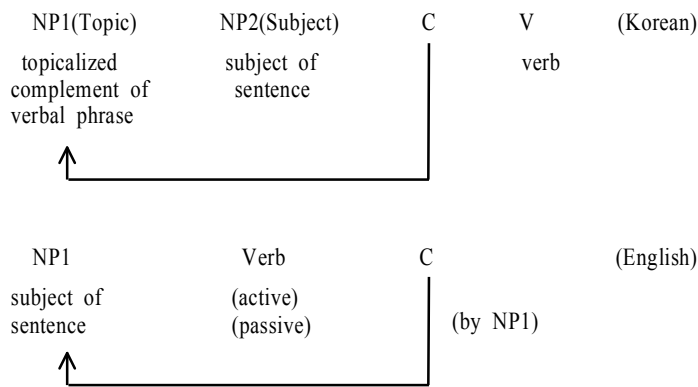
b. *on* *kwukmin-i* *thongil-ul*
 whole nation-TM unification-AM

kancelhi *wenhap-nita*
 anxiously want-Decl

‘The whole nation wants unification anxiously.’

In (5a) the topic ‘*thongil*’ or ‘unification’ performs the function of the patient, whereas in (5b) the topic ‘*kwukmin*’ or ‘nation’ performs the function of the agent. The argument ‘*thongil*’ is topicalized in (5a). Therefore, this category has the following configuration and English counterpart:

FIGURE 4
Structural Configuration of Moved Argument Category



3.5. Embedded Elements

The Embedded category includes relative clauses and other embedded elements, i.e., sentences or sentence-like strings where complementizers are attached.⁶⁾ The following is the word order of clauses embedded between NP1 and the matrix verb in Korean and the word order of its English equivalent:

Korean: NP1 + NP2 + VP2 + VP1 (Korean)

English: NP1 + VP1 + NP2 + VP2 (English)

An example from the category is given below:

6) Although strictly adverbial clauses may be viewed as a sub-category of embedded clauses, they will be excluded from consideration in this section because they normally do not come between the matrix topic and comment, as illustrated in the following example:

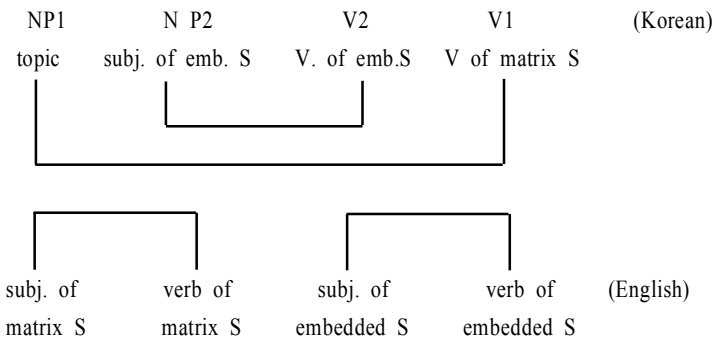
(7) ku-nun pilok acik cemci-man manun
 he-TM though still young-but many
 il-ul haynayss-supnita
 thing-AM do(pt)- Decl
 ‘Though he is still young, he has achieved a lot of things.’

(6) ku salam-un casin-i meciana paksa hakwi-lul
 the man-TM self-SM soon doctoral degree-AM

mikwuk-eyse pasul kesila-ko malhayss-supnita
 US-in get will-Comp say(pt)-Decl

‘He said that he would soon get a doctoral degree in the U.S.’

FIGURE 5
 Structural Configuration of Embedded Category



3.6 Cleft Structure

The Cleft category has the schematic form [it be XP S'] as in the sentence ‘It is John that she really loves’ (Radford, 1988:493). In this case, the constituent ‘John’ is understood to be in the focus position. The clause ‘that she really loves’ is viewed as the topic by the rule of topic movement (cf. Gundel, 1977).

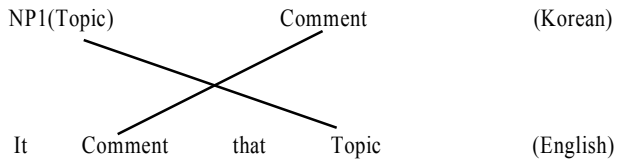
In Korean, however, the topic, a clausal element containing an NP and a VP followed by the complementizer ‘kes’, is placed at the sentence-initial position. This provides a sharp contrast with its English equivalent. Let us examine the following cleft sentence where the topic in Korean is moved to the end of the English equivalent:

(8) nayka kuttay kangcohayss-ten kes-un
 I at that time emphasize(pt)-RCM Comp-TM

 ancen ies-supnita
 safety be(pt)-Decl

‘It was safety that I emphasized at that time.’

FIGURE 6
 Structural Configuration of Cleft Category



4. Basic Exercises of Simultaneous Interpretation

It is necessary to train simultaneous interpreters through a slow and gradual process. There are different types of basic drills to help the students overcome the mental difficulties of listening, understanding, and speaking at the same time. The basic exercises include shadowing, epitomizing, interpretation of lists of words and expressions, and interpretation of a text of simple sentences.

4.1. Shadowing

The instructor asks the students to shadow lists of individual words and compound words in their mother tongue and later in the B language, increasing the time lag from one word to two and three words. To develop intelligent listening, Degueldre & Lichtenberg (1985) suggest that the students be asked to point out the intruder in the lists(i.e. the name of a tree in a list of fruits or

the name of a city in a list of capital cities).

4.2. Epitomizing

The students are requested to summarize a short length of information after listening to the information in both A and B languages. Later, they are asked to summarize information in A language if the information is given in B language and vice versa.

4.3. Interpretation of Words and Expressions

The students are asked to interpret words and idiomatic expressions, trying to avoid literal translation and gradually increasing the time lag. The process of interpretation should not be mechanical but intelligent.

4.4. Number Count

Number count is practiced in order for student interpreters to be able to get used to the booth and microphone and to overcome the stage fright about simultaneous interpretation. While the speech is being made by the speaker, the students count numbers backwards at a steady speed. After the speech, students will be asked about the content of the speech to check if they have understood the main ideas of it. Through this method, students are trained to listen and speak at the same time.

4.5. Speech Composed of Short and Simple Sentences

The students start simultaneous interpretation of a speech that is made up of short and easy sentences. In this drill, the students practice interpreting actual sentences that are easy to process and they can resort to prediction and inference. The contents of the material for the speech in this exercise should be familiar to the students, and interesting. The sentences in this exercise

should consist primarily of single-topic structures (Yom, 1993).

5. Conclusion

This paper has so far discussed the basic drills of simultaneous interpretation between Korean and English: shadowing, epitomizing, interpreting words and expressions, and interpreting a speech of short and simple sentences. This study also discussed a comparison of sentence patterns of both Korean and English, and the major characteristics of the two modes of interpretation: consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. There seem to be different techniques to master in simultaneous interpretation in order for the interpreter to be able to improve his/her performance.

In simultaneous interpretation, unlike consecutive interpretation which requires notetaking as a factor to improve the quality of interpretation, the interpreter waits in varying degrees, depending on the structural configuration of the original, because he/she cannot immediately know what a particular sentential element refers to. From a practical perspective, it can be said that the basic drills including shadowing and epitomizing have their strengths and weaknesses and therefore that such exercises can be dispensed with in the training process, to be replaced by a text containing sentences which provide a sequence of connected meaningful units rather than simply a list of words or expressions. By doing so, students can avoid a mechanical transposition of words and vocabulary drills, which produce an incomprehensible reproduction of the original message. Not all the above-stated drills may be absolutely required, as has been suggested by a lot of experienced interpreter trainers.

In the final analysis, it is proposed that the instructor utilize a text made up of simple sentential structures such as the single-topic structure (which appear the easiest to process) and later a text of complicated structures such as

the embedded structure (which appear the most difficult to process). By following the suggestion, the instructor should be able, as a result, to achieve the training goal more efficiently and effectively.

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Abbreviations

AM	accusative marker
COMP	complementizer
Conj	conjunction
Decl	declarative
NP	noun phrase
VP	verb phrase
pl	plural
pt	past tense
RCM	relative clause marker
SM	subject marker
TM	topic marker
V	verb

[국문초록]

동시통역 교육에서 의미의 중요성 -한영통역을 중심으로-

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본 논문에서는 한국어-영어 동시통역 교육에 대한 효율적인 방법을 제시한다. 순차통역과 동시통역의 특성과 차이점을 고찰해보고 한국어의 화제-평언으로 분석되는 문장구조와 영어의 주어-동사로 분석되는 문장의 형태를 대조해 본다. 한영 동시통역의 기본적인 교육방법으로 단어 및 숙어 따라하기, 단어숙어 통역, 숫자세기, 간단한 문장통역 등을 들 수 있다. 한국어와 영어간의 동시통역, 특히 한국어(출발어)-영어(도착어) 동시통역은 양언어 간의 크게 대조되는 구조적 특성을 고려하여 통역교육이 실시되어야 한다고 판단된다. 초기 교육단계에서 전통적인 어휘따라하기, 숫자세기 등을 시도할 수도 있으나 통역은 번역과 마찬가지로 출발어 텍스트의 단어나 숙어의 직역이 아닌 메시지 내용(meaning)에 대한 신속 및 정확한 전달이 그 목적이므로 간단한 문장내용의 통역이나 요약하기를 초기교육에 도입할 수 있다. 이러한 교육방법은 학생들이 어휘수준의 반복을 벗어나 내용이 있는 이해하기 쉬운 연결문을 보다 흥미를 가지고 분석 및 요약하고 맥락 속에서 의미를 추론할 수 있는 훈련을 할 수 있다는 점에서 여타 방법과 차이가 있다. 이러한 접근방법은 경험 있는 동시통역 교육 전문가들이 보다 효율적인 교수법으로 인정하고 있다.

▶주제어: Simultaneous Interpretation, Meaning, Structural Differences, Interpreter Training