Cognitive performance and disfluency in dialogue interpreting: an eye-tracking study

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Background:
The purpose of the study is an exploratory investigation into disfluency (disruption in the flow of speech) in dialogue interpreting and possible differences in frequency of disfluencies between experienced and inexperienced interpreters. The study is carried out within the project *Invisible process? Opening the black box of the community interpreter* initiated by Elisabet Tiselius, PhD. Disfluency in interpreting as an indication of cognitive effort has been investigated in simultaneous interpreting (Bakti 2009; Bendazzoli et. al. 2011; Cecot 2001; Mead 2005, 2012; Tissi 2000) but it focused essentially on quantitative research alone or on the perception of fluency (cf. Goffman's *inefficient speech planning*).

Method:
Professional interpreters and students of interpreting – a group of seventeen participants (n=17) – took part in semi-scripted interpreted dialogues specifically designed to challenge interpreters' skills. The interpreted encounters were filmed using video cameras. Eye-tracking equipment was used to monitor visual attention of the interpreters. The participants performed assessment tests to evaluate executive function skills like working memory, attention span and ability to switch between different tasks. The video recordings were examined in order to identify different types of disfluencies (e.g. interruption, pause, hesitation). The correlation between the frequency of disfluencies and increased cognitive effort was measured.

Preliminary results:
The poster will report our preliminary results indicating differences in frequency of disfluencies between experienced professional interpreters and student interpreters. Experienced professional interpreters seem to show fewer disfluencies during the interpreted event than student interpreters.

Conclusion:
We hope that the results will give insight into how experience may be a variable in terms of the interpreter's management of disfluencies, and shed light on cognitive aspects of dialogue interpreting.

References:

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