An Overview of Sight Translation: Challenges and Opportunities from a Community Interpreting Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Sight translation is the act of reading a written text in the source language and translating it into an oral form in the target language. It is considered to be a hybrid between interpreting and translation. Sight translation is frequently utilised in the field by practising interpreters in settings such as conferences and community interpreting. Agrifoglio (2004: 43) concluded sight translation was "a complex and unique technique, whose cognitive demands on the interpreter are by no means less than those of simultaneous and consecutive". However, its significance and complexity are generally overlooked and it is still an under-researched area of interpreting and translation studies. While many training institutions have sight translation as part of their curriculum, there are interpreters who are undertrained for sight translation.

Like interpreting and translation, sight translation involves complex linguistic considerations, and if there are considerable morphosyntactic differences between the languages within the language pair (e.g. a European language and an Asian language), a focus on the main message and contextual meaning is essential. Word-for-word translation, which is a less complex translation process of simply replacing words or phrases, is typically not effective in such cases. Interpreters must extract the message and convey it effectively so that the audience grasps the message clearly. The same principles apply to sight translation. As discussed by scholars such as Weber (1990) and Viaggio (1995), practising sight translation can help train interpreters to improve comprehension; distinguish main ideas from secondary ideas; distance themselves from the source language and avoid word-for-word interpretations. Sight translation is also considered to be effective for translation training as it shares some necessary qualities, such as reading comprehension and text analytical skills.

This article provides a general overview of sight translation, including definitions and categories based on previous studies. It also refers to the current

situation and the issues surrounding sight translation in community interpreting. Finally, it discusses the effectiveness of sight translation for interpreting and translation training.

1   Introduction

Interpreters are frequently asked to conduct sight translation as part of interpreting assignments. It is a process of reading, comprehending, and analysing the written source text and translating orally on the spot. Traditionally, sight translation has been viewed in various ways, for example, as a type of simultaneous interpreting (Herbert 1952), a supportive interpreting method (Ersozlu 2005) or as a "secondary and supportive role in interpreting training" (Song 2010: 122).

There are two well-known modes of interpreting. One is Consecutive Interpreting (CI): a speaker pauses for the interpreter to repeat what has been said in the target language before continuing to speak. The other is Simultaneous Interpreting (SI): the interpreter interprets at the same time as the speaker talks. Some scholars define sight translation as the third mode of interpretation amongst "the three basic modes of interpreting" (Biela-Wołońciej 2007: 30). On the contrary, Chen (2015) states that sight translation seems to be rather like "a multi-purpose translation skill than a mode of interpreting" (Chen 2015: 145). Although a precise definition may not yet be determined, it is clear that sight translation is an important and necessary skill for practising interpreters. Nevertheless, it has not drawn much academic attention.

Sight translation is an essential technique, particularly for conferences and community interpreting in legal and medical settings, when clients need to understand what is written in a document. For example, community interpreters often sight translate medical documents such as medical registration forms and treatment plans at hospitals. In legal settings, they are asked to sight translate various documents including court documents, police statements and consent forms for clients.

Even though sight translation is widely used in interpreting assignments, it has historically been an under-researched area, compared with other areas of interpreting and translation studies (Angelelli 1999; Agrifoglio 2004; Song 2010; Lee 2012; Li 2014; Chang 2016 and others). In recent years, research on sight translation has included topics such as cognitive processes, linguistic interference, product analysis, comparisons, eye-movement, pedagogy and more. However, further research is required in the sight translation area, as published findings are still scarce. As there are various aspects of sight translation due to its nature as hybrid between interpreting and translation, much research focuses on specific aspects of sight translation, rather than on a comprehensive analysis of sight translation. There is not yet a clear consensus on basic aspects of sight translation such as definitions, variations or categories (Li 2014).

Different scholars consider there to be a number of variations in sight translation but, in general, it is possible to divide sight translation into two major categories: sight interpretation with text with aural input, primarily used in conference interpreting; and sight translation without aural input, mainly used in community interpreting. This study focuses on sight translation without aural input, which is more commonly used in the field of community interpreting.

Although community interpreting is sometimes underestimated, it requires a high skill level, as community interpreters must carry out all modes of interpreting—consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting (chuchotage) and sight translation—in such important fields as legal and medical interpreting (Hale 2007). Particularly in legal and medical settings, the consequences of mistranslation are great and can significantly affect people's lives. As sight translation is frequently used in legal and medical interpreting (Chen 2015), community interpreters need to possess sight translation skills.

As sight translation is essential for interpreters, many training institutions incorporate it as part of their interpreting training. There are nonetheless some interpreters who are undertrained for sight translation. There are other, professional issues for community interpreters involving sight translation, such as being asked to undertake sight translation without any preparation time or opportunity to examine the text, or being asked to sight translate lengthy, technical documents. The importance of training in, and raising awareness of, sight translation must be emphasised.

One of the most important principles of sight translation is to avoid word-for-word translation (Webber 1990) and to convey the message. The same principle is fundamental to interpreting. Seleskovitch (1978) discussed the de-verbalization processes of interpreting and of separating the meaning from the wording used by a speaker. Since then, a major principle of interpreting has been to convey the essence of the meaning or the message. Word-for-word interpreting is believed to be less effective, particularly when the language pairs involved different morphosyntactic features, such as interpreting between European languages and Asian languages.

The same applies with sight translation. Weber (1990: 50) states that "a word-for-word translation should never be accepted" for sight translation. However, when conducting sight translation, the presence of the source text can interfere (Agrifoglio 2004). Gile (2005: 138) refers to sight translation as presenting the "temptation to translate word-for-word, which goes against the fundamental comprehension-reformulation approach". Weber (1990: 46) also describes the danger of "staying too close to the original text" when sight-translating. Therefore, the first step of sight translation training should be to emphasise the need to overcome the temptation of word-for-word translation, focus on the meaning and the context and convey the message. In order to achieve the de-verbalization which Seleskovitch (1978) described as necessary for interpreting, training in sight translation to avoid word-for-word translation could assist.

Sight translation is also useful for building a foundation to improve interpreting skills (Weber 1990; Viaggio 1995). It has long been associated with interpreter training as it is "a tool used to comprehend the source text quickly and to deal with information in chunks" (Chen 2015: 149). As sight translation requires high reading and textual analysis skills, it also helps to train translators. Sight-translation is important due to its use during assignments and its effectiveness at improving both interpreting and translation skills. Sight translation has been seen as the "poor cousin" (Čeňková 2010: 322) of other interpreting studies, but this paper will argue that it deserves more attention.

2 Definitions and Categories of Sight Translation
2.1 Varieties of Sight Translation

Translation is the act of translating written text from one language into another and interpreting is the act of translating speech orally from one language into another. Although translation and interpreting are different in nature and require some different skills, they are closely connected and complement one another. Sight translation is essentially a link between interpreting and translation, and many scholars have described sight translation as a "hybrid" between translation and interpreting (Mikkelson 1994; Agrifoglio 2004; Dragsted and Hansen 2009; Chen 2015 and others).

According to Chen (2015: 144), "broadly speaking, any rendition of a written message in one language into oral form in another language can be called sight translation". However, partly because sight translation is neither pure translation nor pure interpreting, there are various opinions concerning the definition and categories of sight translation. As a result, there is yet to be an official consensus about a comprehensive and clear definition of sight translation (Li 2014).

A number of researchers such as Gile (2009) and Lambert (2004) distinguish between sight translation and sight interpretation (simultaneous interpretation with text). When they referred to "sight interpretation" or "simultaneous interpretation with text", they meant simultaneous interpreting in a conference setting with a text as a reference or, in other words, conference interpreting. Based on their definition, sight translation can be classified into two main categories depending on whether a speaker (aural input) along with a text or script (visual input) are present. One is sight interpretation with text: oral interpretation of written text along with aural input from the speaker. The other is sight translation (ST): oral translation of written text without aural input (See Table 1).

Gile (2009: 179, 181) modelled simultaneous interpreting with text and sight translation as follows:

—Simultaneous Interpreting with text = Reading Effort + <u>Listening Effort</u> + Memory Effort + Speech Production Effort + Coordination
—Sight Translation = Reading Effort + Memory Effort + Speech Production Effort + Coordination

The only distinguishing factor between the two is whether Listening Effort is present. Therefore, it is possible to say that the aural component distinguishes sight translation from sight interpretation with text. For sight interpretation with text, as aural input overrides the written script, it would be possible to call it part of interpreting.

Table 1: Two main categories of sight translation

Sight Interpretation with Text	Simultaneous interpreting with text (SIT)
* Aural + visual input (script)	e.g. Conference interpreting
* Aural input overrides visual input	Consecutive interpreting with text (CIT)
Sight Translation (ST)	Orally translate the written texts
* No aural input, only visual input (text)	e.g. Community interpreting

2.2 Sight Interpretation with Text
2.2.1 Simultaneous Interpretation with Text (SIT)

At international conferences, simultaneous interpreters are sometimes provided with scripts beforehand. However, there is no guarantee the speakers will speak exactly as is written in the scripts. Therefore, interpreters have to focus on the aural input as well, while reading the scripts. Although written text precedes audio speech, in principle, interpreters should not render an interpretation unless the speaker actually utters the word. The priority is what a speaker says, not what is written in a script.

2.2.2 Consecutive Interpretation with Text (CIT)

Similar to SIT, there are some occasions where interpreters are given speech scripts beforehand and then consecutively interpret for speakers who use scripts. Even though the speakers may base their speech on their scripts, it is rare for speakers to speak precisely in accordance with the script. Therefore, interpreters must focus on listening to the speaker as well as reading the script. If the speaker goes off the script, the interpreter must take notes and consecutively interpret what the speaker said. Again, like SIT, as interpreters must follow what the speaker says, not what is written, interpreters have to deal with both aural and visual inputs at the same time. Therefore, it is reasonable to include CIT in sight interpretation with text.

2.3 Sight Translation (ST)

Unlike sight interpretation with text for conference interpreting, there is usually no speaker for ST, which means there is no aural input for ST. Interpreters pass on the information in the written text to their clients. Therefore, it is essential to convey the main message so that the clients are able to understand the information clearly. Interpreters also have to provide smooth oral output so that clients can easily and comfortably understand the contents of the text. As ST is commonly used in the field of community interpreting (Li 2014), this paper primarily discusses ST from a community interpreting perspective.

3 ST in Community Interpreting

The demand for community interpreting is high, especially in a diverse, multicultural society. Since community interpreters need to be able to provide all modes of interpreting—consecutive, simultaneous (chuchotage) and sight translation—and the consequences of mistranslation or miscommunication are great, high quality and training standards are required (Hale 2007). ST should be considered a necessary skill for community interpreters, as ST is often required in medical and legal settings (Chen 2015).

According to the Sight Translation and Written Translation Guidelines for Healthcare Interpreters (2009) by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) in the US, ST and translation abilities are "certainly an asset in an interpreter" (NCIHC 2009: 6) and it helps interpreters to be "better positioned to meet the needs of those who use the interpreter's services" (NCIHC 2009: 6). The International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA) Guide on Medical Translation also recognises the usefulness of ST as "sight

translation is a useful way to verbally communicate the contents of a document, particularly when time is of the essence" (IMIA 2009: 4). The Guide also states that ST is a "sophisticated skill" and "interpreters should be appropriately trained" for ST (IMIA 2009: 4).

There are many interpreting training institutions which incorporate ST as part of their curriculum, but there are still interpreters who are undertrained for ST which involves demanding cognitive processes (Agrifoglio 2004), including reading comprehension. It takes much time and effort to acquire native-level reading skills in a B language. Nilsen and Monsrud (2015) conducted a reading test for 92 interpreters with 28 different first languages and the results showed that 70% of interpreters in the public sector did not have sufficient reading skills required to conduct ST in Norwegian. Ivars (2008) conducted an experiment to compare the competence of ST and written translation of the interpreting and translation students at the University of Jaume I in Spain to identify problems with ST and written translation. The major cause of problems was the lack of reading comprehension skills in the source language.

Another risk for interpreters using ST in courts and hospitals is that they are often not given time to prepare for ST beforehand, which may result in "a hasty or simplified translation that can be risky in legal or medical settings" (Chen 2015: 146). Many clients are not aware that ST is a demanding task and that "sight translating long documents can consume quite a lot of time, fatigue the interpreter and increase the risk for error" (NCIHC 2009: 6).

The interpreting community and clients are becoming aware of such risks. The NCIHC recommends "strict limits on the length and complexity of documents that interpreters should be asked to sight translate" (NCIHC 2009: 7). The Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals (2017), published by the Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity in Australia, states that ST should be "confined to short, simple documents" and "an interpreter may decline to translate at sight, if the interpreter considers they are not competent to do so or if the task is too onerous or difficult by reason of the length or complexity of the document" (Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity 2017: 81).

Both the interpreting community and clients are becoming more aware of the complexity and difficulty of ST, but it deserves greater recognition. ST is a relevant and important skill for interpreters and it occupies a vital role. ST is also an effective training tool for interpreters and translators. The importance and effectiveness of ST for interpreter and translator training will be discussed in Section 5.

4   Morphosyntactic Features of Different Language Combinations
4.1 Morphosyntactic Features between European Languages

Viezzi (1989) conducted an experiment comparing SI and ST based on information retention with different language groups. He concluded that if the morphosyntactic features between the languages within the language pairs are closer (such as French and Italian), the retention rate for ST is higher. His study shows that morphosyntactic features of languages could play an important role in information retention in ST.

The information retention rate is closely connected with comprehension of the original message (Sannomiya 1982). In other words, when a person understands information better, they will retain that information better. Therefore, it is possible to say that similar morphosyntactic features help to comprehend the text more proficiently. In addition, if the language pair shares similar morphosyntactic features such as French and Italian, ST will be less challenging as the syntax or the order of the sentence structure is similar and it is not necessary to make significant changes to word order when sight-translating.

Machine translation carries out a mechanical process of translation and it has become more common in recent years. There are many kinds of machine translation software, and Google Translate is one of the most frequently used (Aiken and Balan 2011). Aiken and Balan (2011) investigated the translation accuracy of 2550 language-pair combinations provided by Google Translate. The results show that "translations among Western languages are generally best and those among Asian languages are often poor" (Aiken and Balan 2011).

In order to test translation using Google Translate between European language pairs, a text entitled "Homecare Instructions After Surgery" from Health Information Translations was selected as it is a type of text which is often used for ST in hospitals. The instructions are written in both French and English in the same text. A sample sentence from the text is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample sentences in French and English from "Homecare Instructions After Surgery"

French	Si vous avez subi une intervention abdominale ou thoracique, placez un oreiller ou une couverture sur votre incision lorsque vous vous déplacez ou toussez.
English	If you had abdominal or chest surgery, support your incision with a pillow or blanket when moving or coughing.

The instruction in French was Google-translated into English, which is shown below in Table 3. The Google-translation from French to English worked well and the main message was conveyed satisfactorily. This indicates that if the morphosyntactic features are similar, the mechanical process of translation (or sight-translation) might be more straightforward compared with languages with fewer or no common features.

Table 3: Google translation of the French sample text in Table 2 into English

Google Translate French to English	If you have had an abdominal or thoracic procedure, place a pillow or blanket on your incision when you move or cough.

4.2 Morphosyntactic Features between European Languages and Asian Languages

English and Japanese have different morphosyntactic features, and one of the challenges is that word order is often totally different. For example, in English the verb normally comes after the subject, while in Japanese the verb often comes at the end of the sentence.

Interpreting, translation and sight translation should not be a mechanical process of simply replacing words from one language into another. The focus should be upon conveying the meaning and message, especially when the morphosyntactic features of the language pairs are different. In order to show some examples of mechanical translation between English and

Japanese, a medical questionnaire on temporomandibular joint disorder (Japan Society of Oral Health Science) written in Japanese was selected, as it is the type of text that interpreters are often asked to sight-translate in clinics. Twenty-nine Japanese sentences in the text were Google-translated into English on the 12th of January 2019. While 12 out of 29 translations were acceptable, there were a number of mistranslations or awkward expressions by Google Translate (See Appendix). The problematic translations were mainly caused by word for word translations or failure to account for meaning and context in the original text.

One example of word-for-word translation is shown below.

Japanese source text: 頭が 重い (Meaning: Head feels heavy.)

Google Translation: Head heavy
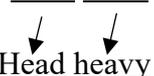
Since Google Translate does not change the word order, the English translation is grammatically incorrect. In the medical questionnaire, they ask patients how they feel in their daily lives. Although the original Japanese text does not include the Japanese equivalent of "feel", it is necessary to add the nuance of "feel" in the translation by taking the meaning and context into account.

In the next example, Google Translate changed the word order, but the translation has not conveyed the original message due to the lack of contextual meaning.

Japanese source text: どこで かんでいいのか わからない ことが ありますか?

Google Translation: Do you have something you do not know where to chew?
(Meaning of the Japanese source text: Do you feel as though you do not know which part of your teeth to use when you chew?
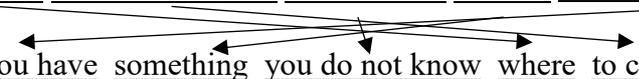
In Japanese, どこで(dokode) is "where" and かんで(kande) is "to chew". Therefore, "where to chew" is a very literal, word-for-word translation. The phrase combining the two words: どこでかんで(dokode kande) could be interpreted in a couple of ways. One is "where you chew" and another is "chew with which part". Judging from the context, the meaning of the original Japanese is "chew with which part" and "which part" in this case means "which part (of the teeth)" as people normally chew with their teeth. As in this example, mechanical translation often does not work between English and Japanese, as the language pair shares few morphosyntactic features and mechanical translation normally does not consider contextual meaning.

5   Importance and Effectiveness of ST for Interpreter and Translator Training

Many scholars have viewed ST as an excellent pedagogical tool for interpreter training (Weber 1990; Viaggio 1995 and others) as some skills involved in ST can be shared with consecutive and simultaneous interpreting skills. According to Weber (1990: 50), skills included in sight translation are:
(1) rapid text analysis;
(2) avoiding a word-for-word interpretation;
(3) rapid conversion of information from one cultural setting (language) to another;

(4) public speaking techniques.

It is also possible to add self-monitoring or self-evaluation (Angelelli 1999; Mikkelson 1994) to the above list, as self-assessment skills are essential to verify the information in the text and monitor if the product (translation) is satisfactory. Many of those skills are the same qualities required for interpreting, although interpreting and ST are not exactly the same (Ersozlu 2005). Hence, ST is often considered to be a useful tool for improving interpreting skills.

ST training is considered useful for translators as well. ST and written translation require different processes, as the products are different. However, like written translation, ST requires a high level of reading ability so that sight-translators can provide smooth delivery of ST without being hindered by an inability to properly comprehend the text.

Dragsted and Hansen (2009) conducted an experiment about the output rate and quality assessment between English and Danish, comparing written translation and ST. The results showed that ST took far less time than written translation, but that there was no significant difference in terms of the quality of the output. If the quality of written translation is not better than ST, it may save time and it may be worth exploring the potential of written translation utilizing the oral modality of ST. This is reflected in the practice of increasing numbers of translators who use voice recognition software to produce the first draft of a translation through ST. As Chen (2015: 149) noted:

> Translators with training in ST and voice recognition software may be more effective than those who have not received this training. ST skills combined with speech technology may help translators to focus more on meaning rather than words, and produce translation more effectively for the faster workflow required in today's market.

Considering all of the potential benefits ST can provide, greater attention should be given to the effectiveness of ST for interpreting and translation, and training institutions should place greater emphasis on ST.

6   Conclusion

This paper provides a general overview of sight translation based on previous studies, covering definitions and categories, relations with community interpreting, outcomes from different morphosyntactic features and effectiveness in interpreting and translation training. One of the aims of this paper is to highlight both the importance and the difficulty of sight translation.

This article focuses on ST in community interpreting. Community interpreters directly contribute to people and people's lives in the community, yet the value and the difficulty of their work is not often fully recognised. Even though ST is one of the skills required by interpreters during assignments, there are some interpreters who are not sufficiently trained for ST. It is important to emphasise the need for ST training. Furthermore, sight translation skills overlap with interpreting and translation skills, and thus sight translation is an effective tool for training interpreters and translators.

There is both a demand and a need for sight translation, and it is a useful and effective technique to help improve interpreting and translation skills. However, there is, as yet, little research and academic attention dedicated to sight translation. This also means that there is much potential yet to be explored. Further research regarding sight translation is recommended in the future.

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顎関節症関連検査 (TMD medical questionnaire) Japan Society of Oral Health Science [online, accessed 28 September 2018] http://www.jddock.net/_userdata/gakukansetsukensa01.pdf.

Appendix

TMD medical questionnaire (Japan Society of Oral Health Science), Google translated on the 12th of January, 2019.

*Google Translations shaded in grey are acceptable translations.

Original Japanese	Google Translation	English meaning
検査用紙	Inspection paper	Medical examination questionnaire
顎関節症関連検査	Temporomandibular joint related examination	Temporomandibular joint disorder examination
医療面接（問診）：健康調査票による自覚所見	Medical interview (interview): subjective finding by health questionnaire	Medical examination by interview: subjective symptoms by health questionnaire
口が開きにくくなったことがありましたか?	Have you ever had a difficulty opening your mouth?	
どこでかんでいいのかわからないことがありますか?	Do you have something you do not know where to chew?	Do you feel like as if you do not know which part of your teeth to use when you chew?
かみ合わせの高さが気になったことがありますか?	Have you ever been concerned about the height of engagement?	Have you ever been concerned about the height of the bite?
歯をかみしめていることがありますか?	Have you ever touched your teeth?	Do you sometimes clench your teeth?
歯ぎしりを自覚したり指摘されたことはあります	Have you noticed or pointed out bruxism?	Have you noticed or has anyone pointed out your

か?		bruxism?
顔に痛いところがありますか?	Do you have a painful face on your face?	Do you have any pains in your face?
顎関節症症例に多く散見される所見	Observations that are commonly found in cases of temporomandibular joint disease	
疲れやすい	Get tired easily	
気力や集中力がない	I have no energy or concentration	
昼間に眠くなる	Become sleepy during the day	
眠りが浅い	Sleepy shallow	The sleep is shallow.
眠れない	can not sleep	
朝、起きにくい	It is hard to get up in the morning.	
手や足が冷える	Hands and feet get cold	
朝起きると顔や体がこわばる	Face and body stiff when getting up in the morning	
しびれや感覚の鈍いところがある	There is a dull place with numbness and feeling	There are parts that feel pins and needles or numbness.
頭が重い	Head heavy	Head feels heavy
目が疲れる	Eyes get tired	
めまいがする	To feel dizzy	
のどがつかえる感じがする	I feel a throat	Feel as if something is stuck in the throat.
胸がつかえる感じがする	I feel like I can use my chest	Chest feels tight.
咳がよくでる	I have a cough well.	Cough a lot
口が乾燥する	Mouth dries	Dry mouth
歯肉（歯ぐき）が痛む	Gums (gums) ache	
舌や歯肉（歯ぐき）にヒリヒリするところがある	Tongue and gingiva (gums) have a tingling point	There are tingling parts on the tongue or the gum.
口内炎ができやすい	Easy to stomatitis	Often have mouth ulcers.

Junko Ichikawa completed a Master of Arts in Japanese Interpreting and Translation (MAJIT) at The University of Queensland (UQ) in Australia, obtaining NAATI Conference Interpreter, Interpreter and Translator certification. After working as an in-house, simultaneous interpreter at Mazda Motor Corporation and Seiyu/Walmart in Japan, she became a freelance interpreter/translator in various fields, such as diplomacy, business, dental, medical and mineral resources. Her past work includes various international conferences such as WHO Regional Meetings, the Australia Japan Coal Conference (AJCC), the L20 Summit held in conjunction with the G20 Summit, the International Summit on the Teaching Profession held in Wellington, NZ and more. Junko has been teaching conference

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