Interpreting between English and Austrian Sign Language
An Empirical Study

Abstract
This exploratory thesis investigates interpreting between English and ÖGS (Österreichische Gebärdensprache, Austrian Sign Language), focusing on three objectives: taking stock of the current situation, identifying the particularities and difficulties of the task and examining the use of interpreting strategies. As a theoretical background, the first chapters discuss sign language interpreting in Austria, aspects of directionality in spoken and sign language interpreting, Gile’s Effort Model of simultaneous interpreting and tactics in simultaneous interpreting.

The empirical section consists of an observation of an authentic interpreting assignment between English and ÖGS, interviews with two English < > ÖGS interpreters and an online survey of members of the Austrian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ÖGSDV). Further, an experimental single-case study was conducted to identify and discuss interpreting strategies used during an interpretation from English into ÖGS.

The results show that interpreting assignments between English and ÖGS are rare; nonetheless, numerous ÖGSDV members have in fact interpreted between English and ÖGS in various settings. Due to complicating factors arising from the additional foreign language as well as the scarcity of assignments and the lack of practice, interpreting between English and ÖGS constitutes a particular challenge. Interpreters strive to meet this challenge by using a variety of coping tactics. The most common tactics used when interpreting from English into ÖGS relate to comprehension difficulties and the high processing capacity requirements for the Listening and Analysis Effort, with preparation and team work being of particular importance. These and further strategies are illustrated and discussed based on extracts from the experimental study.

Key words: sign language interpreting; third language interpreting; Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS); English; directionality; interpreting strategies; Effort Model