EXPLORING TEACHING/LEARNING ACTIVITIES
FOR SIGHT TRANSLATION:
EFFECTIVENESS FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, although many translation and interpretation (T&I) courses have been offered in undergraduate programs among universities in Taiwan, sight translation (ST), the suggested preparatory course for learning interpreting (Ilg & Lambert, 1996) is not commonly offered as a separate course but an included component in other T&I courses. This study was inspired by the relatively few studies in ST, aiming to examine the effectiveness of the activities incorporated in an ST course to guide the students to practice the related skills. The data collection process lasted over three years and covered 81 students. This study investigated two issues: the students' perceptions about the effectiveness of ST activities and the challenges encountered in this learning experience. Data collection tools included a learning survey and interview. The former asked the students to evaluate the effectiveness of the incorporated course activities, and the latter focused on exploring students' learning experiences of ST, especially on the challenges they encountered. The findings indicated that English source language (SL) explanation of texts, pair practice, and teacher feedback/comments were perceived as a great help by the students, leading to their positive evaluation of learning and performing ST. In addition, the students evaluated their ST learning experiences positively for the reasons of being able to respond to translation tasks more quickly, being able to apply the acquired knowledge and learned skills, perceiving ST tasks as challenging and interesting, and enjoying more freedom in performing ST than written translation. Last, the students indicated that the challenges they encountered in ST learning and performance were mainly related to insufficient topical knowledge, unfamiliar expressions/jargon, inadequate vocabulary items, awkward expressions, and incorrect production in the target language. To strengthen students' ability in performing ST, the instruction should emphasize text analysis, extensive reading on various topics, expanding vocabulary repertoire, and feedback provisions.

Key Words: sight translation, guided teaching activity, text analysis, learning activity

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Translation and Interpretation (T&I) courses have gained popularity at many universities and colleges in Taiwan. That English is viewed as an important skill for one's career growth has greatly contributed to this development. Among the increasingly offered courses, introductory translation and basic consecutive interpretation are two common ones. Translation and interpretation differ in the format of rendering a text from one language into another. In the former, both the original and translated texts are presented in written form. In the latter, both the information sources and output formats can be either spoken or signed communication. As these two working modes require different skills and pose varying levels of demands on learners, preparatory courses in which learners are gradually trained to shift from translation to interpretation are frequently incorporated into the curricula at the graduate level. Sight translation (ST) refers to the practice that typically involves reading a text written in one language (source language, SL) and orally interpreting the text in another language (target language, TL). According to Ilg & Lambert (1996), in interpreting training programs, this course is suggested to be taught early for the purpose of preparing students for consecutive interpreting. However, in most Taiwanese universities, the absence of ST in the undergraduate curricula is quite common, leading to the lack of research in this area. This phenomenon was also echoed by Lee (2012) when she pointed out "there has been a dearth of studies on sight translation" (p. 694).

In Taiwan and other countries, much attention has been given to examining either the effectiveness of different teaching approaches, including project-based learning (Yeh, 2011), computer-aided instruction (Liao, 2008; Shih, 2013; Tsai, 2009), web-based instruction (Shih, 2007), communicative approach (Liao, 2009), constructivist approach (Ju, 2011), social-constructive approach (Hu, 2013), and functional approach (Ou, 2014), or the challenges for the learners of translation and interpretation (D. Li, 2002; G. Li, 2000). These T&I studies, though informative, did not focus on ST instruction.

Among the ST studies conducted in Taiwan and other countries (Agrifoglio, 2004; Her, 1997; Ivars, 2008; Lee, 2012; H-C. Lu, H-L. Lu, & Yen, 2003; Yang, 2000), most of the difficulties and challenges students encountered were instructors' analyses and observations from students' works. Only a few studies concluded their findings from students'

perspectives. One special note is that, among the latter, the research was not on English-to-Chinese (E-C) or Chinese-to-English (C-E) ST teaching/learning. Evidently, there is a research gap on students' perceived challenges and difficulties in learning ST of this language combination.

This study aimed at answering two research questions. First, how did the students perceive various teaching/learning activities incorporated in this course in terms of their effectiveness? Asking learners to reflect on the effectiveness of the teaching/learning activities is an angle in line with the view that students need to perceive that classroom tasks are valuable and interesting and believe they have the resources (e.g. strategies and teacher feedback) to complete tasks, as pointed out by Marzano, Pickering, and Arredondo (2011). Second, what challenges or difficulties did the students encounter in learning to perform C-E and E-C ST tasks? The author hopes the findings will provide ST and T&I instructors with more specific, detailed classroom activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers three parts. First, the distinct features and positioning of ST are provided to elaborate the challenges this course posed for learners. Second, the aspects identified as crucial for ST training are introduced to establish the foundation for the learning activities designed in the current study. Last, the concept of learner perceptions and difficulties perceived by ST learners in past studies are reviewed to provide the grounds for examining students' perceptions as an indicator to validate their learning in this study.

Features and Positioning of ST

A rigorous T&I training program, such as the program offered by Middlebury Institute of International Studies (2016), is composed of courses in translation, sight translation (ST), and consecutive/simultaneous interpretation (CI/SI). This section attempts to establish the positioning of ST through highlighting the distinctions among these three disciplines as well as the skills central to them.

The biggest feature differentiating translation, ST, and interpretation lies in how a received message is presented and rendered in another language. The reception and rendition of messages also directly impact the

skills required to perform the tasks successfully. First, translation often emphasizes its written nature. In this practice, a written text is presented in one language, and the processed text (translated text) is presented in another language. Successful rendition of the original texts into the TL requires both reading and writing skills. Naturally, most training places a great emphasis on enhancing students' reading skills and comprehension ability. Moreover, with the time lag between the reception of the original text and the production of the translated text, translators usually do not face much time pressure. Second, ST is described as "the oral rendition of a text written in one language into another language" (National Council on Interpreting in Health Care [NCIHC], 2009, p. 4). Paez (2013) further elaborated the message reception and delivery in ST with a three-stage process. This process is comprised of "visual reception of written text," "cognitive processing of a message," and "the production of speech carrying the message into a target language" (p. 15). Moreover, because ST is often performed on the spot, an interpreter needs to be equipped with effective reading skills and speaking/speech production skills (covering the aspects of speech delivery and speaking pace). More specifically, when an ST task is performed, the pace of the ST rendition should be similar to that of reading a document in the TL, implying smooth delivery without hesitations and pauses (Angelelli, 1999). Also, compared to translation, ST is often an added request placed on an interpreter during an interpreting assignment, resulting in a possible lack of preparation time as well as much pressure for a timely rendition. Last, interpreting is "the oral rendering of spoken or signed communication from one language into another" (NCIHC, 2009, p.3). Successful performance requires excellent listening skills and speaking/speech production skills. Moreover, both CI and SI demand much of an interpreter's working memory and rapid conversion of information from one language to another. With the details provided above, ST and interpreting are clearly more similar in the skills required as well as in the element of time constraint.

In addition to viewing ST as a preparatory course for introducing students to interpretation, many scholars regard ST exercises as a springboard for interpreter trainees to learn to react quickly and improve their oral skills (Curvers, Klein, Riva, & Wuilmart, 1986; Falbo, 1995; Spilka, 1996; Viaggio, 1995). However, a closer examination of these three working formats reveals that the conditions for performing an ST, CI, and SI task are different. It is true that some similarities can be found

in the mental process of task performance for the practitioners and trainees of ST, CI, and SI. However, an element of reading a written text is usually present in ST, whereas an element of listening to a speech is present in a CI and an SI task instead. With this difference, the methods and strategies for training an ST interpreter need to be designed and adjusted accordingly.

Skills Identified as Important for ST Training

Before efforts are made to identify the skills necessary for ST training, the scope of ST should be delineated. ST is often known as the act of orally translating a written text. In addition, ST may be used in different settings. Generally, the working conditions for ST can first be divided into conference interpreting or non-conference interpreting settings. In the former condition, an interpreter may be asked to sight-translate while listening to a live speech, sometimes termed "simultaneous interpreting with text" (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 19). In this case, the interpreter is required to keep up with the speech rate of the speaker. In the latter condition, audio input is usually absent, and the interpreter is asked to process the written text only. In addition, this latter ST working condition can be further separated into rehearsed ST and unrehearsed ST (Lambert, 2004). Rehearsed ST allows the interpreter some time to read the text first and deliver the rendition, whereas unrehearsed ST requires the interpreter to sight-translate the written text immediately after it is received. Since this paper deals with guiding student interpreters to get accustomed to sight-translating written texts, the training format leans towards rehearsed ST in a non-conference setting.

Interpreters performing rehearsed ST in non-conference settings need to be equipped with certain skills. As a result, before a course design is put together, these skills have to be identified. The first group of skills required for ST performance covers "rapid text analysis," "avoiding a word-for-word interpretation," "rapid conversion of information from one cultural setting (language) to another," and "public speaking techniques" (Weber, 1990, p. 50). For an interpreter performing an ST task, reading and TL production take place at the same time, meaning that the interpreter has to read the source text while mentally producing its translation (Weber, 1990). Within the limited time between text reading and rendition production, both text analysis and language conversion must be carried out in a fast manner. Focusing on the

importance of these two factors, Gile (1995) pointed out "in sight translation, the Listening and Analysis Effort becomes a Reading Effort, and the Production Effort remains" (p. 183). In other words, the effort model formula for sight translation could be expressed as "ST = Reading + Production." Yet, even in the rehearsed ST situation where an interpreter is allowed some preparation time to read the text before giving the rendition, the time lag is still short. Consequently, the interpreter needs to be able to identify key words as well as units of translation and mentally plan for the TL expressions (Agrifoglio, 2004).

Learner Perceptions and Students' Challenges from Previous ST Research

According to Schermerhorn, Osborn, Uhl-Bien, and Hunt (2011), perception is defined as "the process by which people select, organize, interpret, retrieve, and respond to information from the world around them" (p. 76). As early as 1992, Marzano stressed, "Without positive attitudes and perceptions, students have little chance of learning proficiently, if at all" (p. 18). Then, in *Dimensions of Learning, Trainer's Manual*, Marzano et al. (2011) have further emphasized the stance that attitudes and perceptions influence everything learners do, too. With the awareness of how dramatically these two factors affect learning, effective teachers "continually monitor the class and use strategies to help themselves and the students establish and maintain positive attitudes and perceptions" (p. 56). These researchers have identified two categories of attitudes and perceptions that exert influences on learning – learners' attitudes and perceptions about the *learning climate* and *classroom tasks*. More specifically, about classroom tasks, teachers should help students to "perceive tasks as valuable and interesting," to "believe they have the ability and resources to complete tasks," and to "understand and be clear about tasks" (p. 67). This view explains why, when designing new courses or implementing new teaching methods, many teachers and researchers have invested their time and effort to explore the effectiveness of their attempts.

Among the previously conducted ST studies, only a few studies dealt with students' perceptions in learning ST. These studies cover the language combinations of Chinese-Spanish (Lu et al., 2003), English-Spanish (Ivars, 2008), and English-Korean (Lee, 2012), highlighting the student-perceived challenges. For instance, Lu et al. (2003) have found that, in their Chinese-Spanish ST class, the students

perceived the lack of vocabulary items, sentence structures, jargon, the lack of related knowledge, the inability to make associations, and the difficulty in handling numbers as the biggest difficulties (pp. 257-259). Furthermore, Ivars' (2008) study showed that student interpreters performing English-Spanish ST regarded the problems related to source text comprehension as their primary cause of translation problems in ST, followed by the difficulty in finding TL equivalents. Furthermore, Lee (2012) found that the student interpreters performing English-Korean ST in her study realized they tended to follow closely the structure and style of the source text, resulting in their production of more literal translations when compared to professional interpreters.

Even with different working language combinations, such as English-Chinese, English-Spanish, or English-Korean, the difficulties perceived by ST learners match the problems identified by researchers in other ST studies. Previously, the difficulties and challenges ST instructors and researchers observed in students' works included the lack of common knowledge, the lack of jargon, information processing issues, and errors in TL production (Agrifoglio, 2004; Her, 1997; Yang, 2000). When the issues perceived by learners and identified by researchers are combined (Agrifoglio, 2004; Her, 1997; Ivars, 2008; Lee, 2012; Lu et al., 2003; Yang, 2000), the issues can be categorized into linguistic, cognitive, and knowledge aspects. Linguistic issues cover SL comprehension, SL-TL conversion, and TL production. To complicate the matter, jargon and complicated sentence structures are often the obstacles for smooth ST performances. Cognitively, the challenge is closely associated with one's ability for multi-tasking. Apart from linguistic and cognitive challenges, the students in past ST studies were also keenly aware of their lack of knowledge in many areas.

THE STUDY

The current study was inspired by the lack of research in ST teaching/learning activities. This section covers the participants, the background of the study, and classroom activity layout.

Participants

The students who participated in this study came from a public university located in northern Taiwan. The department where the study

was carried out offers two major tracks of training: translation/interpretation and English teaching. As a regularly offered course, Sight Translation has been part of the curriculum for at least eight years. For students who choose the T&I track as their focus of study, this course is required. As the course nature emphasizes in-class performance of ST tasks, the class is small in size, usually 28 to 30 students, depending on the enrollment from year to year.

In an attempt to strengthen the findings of this study, the data collection process lasted three years, covering three different ST classes. Consequently, the total number of participants amounted to 81 students. In addition, these participants were English majors, indicating they might be highly motivated in improving their overall English proficiency. Before taking this ST course, all of them had completed one year of written translation. This ST course was offered in the first semester of the third year in their curriculum, functioning as a bridge course between written translation and consecutive oral interpretation.

Background of the Study

This section first provides the details on the designed activities, followed by course background and layout. The skills identified as important for successful performance of ST tasks were taken into consideration for designing the instructional activities in this study. First, as the ability to read and process (analyze) a text quickly is of great importance to students performing ST tasks, guided text analyses in which the instructor led the students to identify translation units and parse sentences were implemented.[1] Indicated by Gile's (1995) effort model for ST (ST = Reading + Production), once the comprehension of a text was reached, the students would be able to invest more effort on TL production. In addition, putting the students in pairs for practice aimed to reduce possible anxiety in TL production and have them provide support

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[1] During the C-E and C-E training sessions, the emphases of the guided text analyses were different only in one element. In the C-E guided activity, the instructor would lead the students through a given text in English and all explanation was provided in English only, for the reason of not letting any Chinese phrases influence the students' TL production. In the E-C guided text analysis, this feature was replaced by instruction on how to "re-write" a given Chinese text for better translatability because some Chinese texts could be so poorly or illogically composed that the text itself hindered TL production.

to each other. The students were instructed to share the TL renditions with their partners for peer feedback before giving their rendition for teacher feedback. That is, the activity of pair practice aimed at encouraging the students to provide input for each other's work and to practice their speaking/speech skills for presenting renditions in front of the entire class. These designed activities, including guided text analysis activity, pair practice, and detailed teacher feedback, echo the suggestions put forth by Lee (2012). It was hoped that these activities would help the students handle an ST task more smoothly and effectively.

This ST course was offered to juniors in the department where this study took place. The course met two hours each week, and the students taking this course had not received any previous ST training. The course goal was to train the students to be able to perform rehearsed ST (they were allowed some preparation time to read the given text before task performance). As this course required students to read a text, process the information, and render the translated version with a short time lag (usually around seven minutes), this learning condition was deemed as more stressful than what the students used to have in their translation training. Consequently, the aforementioned facilitating activities (covering both teaching and learning aspects) were incorporated into this ST course.

In this study, the semester was divided into two parts with different emphases. In the first eight weeks, the students worked with English texts of various topics that covered the arts, astronomy, disease, music, history, and environmental issues. In the second eight weeks, the training focus changed, and the students worked with Chinese texts of various topics. At the end of each eight weeks, the students were evaluated individually (different from their classroom practice format of pair practice). There were two reasons for presenting the students with a variety of topics. First, students were trained to realize that interpreters often needed to work with many different topics, and acquiring knowledge had to become a habit rather than a task they did only during class. Second, students all came into the classroom with different scopes of accumulated knowledge. Providing students with a variety of topics to work on allowed them to demonstrate what they had learned and what they were good at, so frustration did not have to be a factor always accompanying their learning.

Generally, the class progression in the first and second eight weeks was very similar. In each class session, students were given a short text in the length of about 350 words. The instructor then led her students to

read the text, providing explanations for expressions and text analysis cues. Then, after the given text was read and explained, students were put into pairs for taking turns sight-translating the text. As a pair, the students had seven minutes to work together. As the instructional time was two hours each week for ST, there were separate reasons for choosing a 350-word text and allotting seven minutes for pair work. Seleskovitch (1978) indicated, according to the norms provided by the United Nations, "the professional translator typically produces about five words per minute or 300 words per hour" and "the simultaneous interpreter, in contrast, has to respond instantly to the incoming spoken text, typically at a rate some 30 times faster than the translator, i.e. 150 words per minute or 9000 words per hour" (as cited in Baker, 2001, p. 186). As professional translators were described as having the capacity to produce 300 words per hour, the students, working in pairs, could be reasonably expected to process 350 words and present the rendition orally in one class period, about 50 minutes. Furthermore, professional simultaneous interpreters were said to be capable of producing 150 words per minute. As there was not a similar reference existing on ST and the students were not professionals, it was reasonable to adjust the processing rate. In this case, the rate was adjusted to 1/3, equivalent to 50 words per minute. This result explains why the students were given seven minutes to work in pairs to produce the translated text.[2]

The activity of pairing students to work on their translated texts aimed at encouraging them to collaborate and lower their worry of having to produce the TL rendition immediately in class, a factor often cited as the main trigger of learner anxiety. In other words, this pair-work arrangement acted as a support system to reduce the potential stress of having to produce the rendered message on one's own. Next, when the students finished their pair work, the class would resume, and the students would take turns providing their renditions and receiving teacher feedback. Due to the limitations of the language lab facility, the students' renditions were not taped but presented directly in class to the instructor. The students were advised to volunteer their answers, and different renditions were encouraged. In-class renditions were evaluated and commented on based on several criteria, including general accuracy,

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[2] Before this study began, the instructor had implemented this seven-minute practice time in her ST class for at least two years, and most of her students were able to work with this time constraint.

precision on word/expression use, register, and delivery (mannerisms). In this stage, the teacher's role was to provide comments/suggestions and point out the strengths and weaknesses in each student's rendition, albeit different parts of the given text. All students were aware of the importance of class participation. Only those who did not take the initiative to volunteer their answers were called on, for the students also needed to understand the necessity of speaking bravely in public, a working condition for all interpreters. It was hoped that the students might learn to overcome any stage fright through the experience of volunteering their answers in class. After each class session, the students were given take-home assignments and asked to record and submit their renditions to the Digital Learning Center, a platform provided by the university. Each week, the students received feedback, typed comments responding to the students' recorded assignments, from the instructor regarding how to improve their ST quality. This extended practice allowed the students to have extra opportunities to produce smooth oral renditions of the translated messages (another concern cited in past studies for ST learners).

Among the incorporated activities, the guiding activities for text analysis were different in the first and second eight weeks. That is, when the source texts were in different languages, the teaching activities changed accordingly. In the first eight weeks, because the ST direction was from English to Chinese, the teaching activity focused on leading the students to understand the importance of source text comprehension. At the beginning of a class, the instructor distributed a text and read the selection with the students, putting the emphasis on using English to explain the content. The purpose of this activity was to help students understand the message correctly through a quick analysis of the text, so their main task was to convert the received message and produce the TL output. Moreover, this reading activity was to lessen the pressure brought by unfamiliar topics, the lack of vocabulary items, or the lack of related knowledge on the chosen topics.

In the second eight weeks, the students worked on Chinese texts and rendered their translations orally into English. The same principle of choosing course material applied; however, the teaching activity on text analysis had a different focus. With Mandarin Chinese being their mother tongue, the assumption was that the students would not have much comprehension difficulty. Consequently, the instructional focus was first placed on sentence reconstruction for more "translatable"

structures. Meanwhile, another focus was to suggest suitable expressions, covering word choices, phrases, and collocational expressions. When students were provided with a repertoire of vocabulary items, phrases, and sentence structures, they would be able to focus on the conversion of messages between the SL and the TL.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data collection tools in this study include a learning survey and an interview. In the first part, a learning survey was created (see Appendix A) to investigate which learning/teaching activities were perceived as helpful by the students in their ST learning. The reasons for using a survey to gain more understanding about how the students perceived the effectiveness of these course activities was that a survey is very extensively used in other studies related to student perception of a new teaching approach or material. It is suggested that a survey of student perceptions provides teachers with "meaningful feedback about how their practice impacts student learning" through the incorporation of students' voice and experience for improving their learning; more and more studies have indicated "combining student feedback with observations of classroom practice and student academic growth results is a more valid and reliable predictor of a teacher's future effectiveness" (The Colorado Education Initiative, 2014). In this survey, the students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of two teaching activities and four learning activities incorporated in this course on a five-point Likert Scale, with 5 as "Very Helpful" and 1 as "Not Helpful." The activities include text explanation in the SL, English sentence pattern explanation, pair practice, take-home assignments, self-initiated response, and teacher feedback/comments. In the second part, 81 students were individually interviewed in Chinese by the third party, the researcher's teaching assistant. Each student was asked three questions (see Appendix B) about their ST learning experience for the purpose of gaining more details to support or supplement the results gathered from the survey. Since exam performance can be highly subjective on the instructor's part, these two formats were chosen as the data collection tools.

After the interviews were completed, the results were transcribed for further analysis. The results were examined from the angles according to the three interview questions. First, the students were asked to reflect on this ST learning experience to see what factors contributed to their

positive or negative perceptions in this learning process. Second, the students were asked to reflect on the challenges or difficulties they encountered in this course. The goal was to verify and, hopefully, to shed new light on the difficulties/challenges faced by this group of Chinese-English student interpreters in learning to perform ST, for previous ST studies on students' perceptions were not conducted on such a target group. Last, the students were asked how they handled the take-home assignments. The different components of the third guided question were not presented altogether because the second part functioned as extended questions. The purpose was to verify if the students had learned to apply the taught strategies to additional ST tasks. As ST tasks could take one of two directions (C-E or E-C), the students' answers were investigated separately.

With the transcribed results, the researcher and her assistant started the coding process. For the first question, the students' answers could be basically divided into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative. The coding process mainly focused on the students' further elaboration of their answers. For example, for the students who enjoyed doing an ST task, the keywords found in the students' answers included "interesting," "challenging," "a sense of achievement," and "teamwork," to name just a few. Similarly, for those students whose answers were negative, the extracted keywords in their answers included "time constraint," "low confidence in public speaking," and "slow responses." The same process was performed to analyze the responses from the students who expressed a neutral stance in doing ST tasks. In this part, the inter-coder reliability was .92. For the second question, the coding process mainly focused on identifying keywords expressed by the students when they described the difficulties or challenges encountered in their learning of ST. The identified keywords were placed into four categories: linguistic aspect, cognitive aspect, knowledge-related issues, and others. Three of these categories were drawn from previous ST studies and "others" was reserved for possible new findings. The inter-coder reliability for the students' responses to the second question reached .91. For the third question, attention was mainly given to how the students handled take-home assignments, with a focus on whether they applied what they had learned in class to additional assignments. For both E-C and C-E ST tasks, the students' answers to the third question were compared to the steps of text reading, text analysis (with special attention given to identifying translation units and parsing sentences), and TL production.

The aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of the in-class activities, particularly in the aspect of whether the students would apply the learned strategies to take-home assignments.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section of findings is arranged according to the two research questions investigated in this study. The first question examined the effectiveness of the incorporated ST course activities; the second question looked into the challenges and difficulties the students encountered when learning to perform ST tasks. More specifically, the findings on the effectiveness of the activities covered two parts: the survey responses and the interview results. The findings pertinent to the challenges or difficulties the students experienced were drawn from the interviews, mainly from their responses to the first and third questions.

Students' Perceptions of the ST Course Activities

In order to understand which teaching or learning activities were considered the most facilitating in the students' performance of an ST task, six activities were listed in the learning survey. The activities listed in Table 1 can be classified into two categories: teaching activities and learning activities. The teaching activities, covering different emphases of SL comprehension (for E-C ST tasks) and sentence parsing/translation unit identification (for both E-C and C-E tasks), focused on text analysis. Both activities were perceived as highly helpful, with the means of 4.54 and 4.44, respectively. In terms of the learning activities, the students rated instant teacher feedback, pair-practice, take-home assignments, and self-initiated ST responses in class as highly helpful (with the means of 4.52, 4.25, 4.06 and 3.75, respectively).

Table 1

Perceived Effectiveness in Teaching/Learning Activities

Learning and Teaching Activities	*M*	*SD*
Guided reading of SL text for performing E-C ST tasks	4.54	.571
Instant teacher comments to students' ST renditions in class	4.52	.594
Text analysis (sentence parsing & translation unit identification) for C-E ST tasks	4.44	.524
Pair practice in ST classes	4.25	.643
Individual take-home ST recording assignments	4.06	.695
Students' self-initiated ST responses in class	3.75	.681

These responses were informative in two aspects. First, the students' responses to the guided text-analysis activities (guided reading, sentence parsing, translation unit identification, and grammar reminders) ranked the highest among the six activities, an indicator that the students valued language-related instruction the most. Such perceptions also echoed the interview results in which four out of the top five challenges were related to linguistic issues in ST learning (see later section on Students' Perceived Challenges). Second, the students' responses on classroom activities revealed that they greatly valued the instant teacher feedback provided in class. Regarding in-class participation, the students liked to practice with their partners first before rendering their ST answers for teacher comments. Such a learning preference was again confirmed in the interview. The students preferred teamwork because some of them lacked confidence in the accuracy of their renditions, and others were afraid of making mistakes in TL production.

In addition to the survey results, the students' interview responses revealed more on why they perceived the guided activities as highly effective. Question 3 in the interview asked the students how they would handle a take-home assignment, specifically the steps they would typically take to process an ST task. The purpose of this question was to investigate if the students would apply the analytical skills learned from the guided text analyses to extended assignments. For both C-E and E-C assignments, about 91% (74 out of 81) of the students would read the entire text first, determine the translation units, mentally formulate the meaning of the read text, find the equivalent expressions in the TL, and produce the translated text orally. However, in their further explanation,

most of the students expressed, when dealing with take-home assignments, they tended to spend more time analyzing the content. More specifically, they approached E-C and C-E take-home assignments differently. Among the 81 participants, 43 of them mentioned in the interview that they tended to be more careful in analyzing an ST text when the SL was Chinese. In one student's words, "I pay more attention to identifying translation units than before." Other students also stated that sentence-parsing practice helped them reorganize their thoughts in the TL. Nevertheless, when the given texts were in English, the students (53 out of 81) indicated that they tended to spend less time on translation unit identification but more time on organizing their thoughts in the TL. In particular, 33 students pointed out when a sentence involved one or several long adjective clauses or ideas, more attention was needed for rehearsing the produced TL renditions. These responses were informative because they demonstrated that the students have become careful and detailed in text analysis, and some were even able to identify their own weaknesses.

As there were 81 participants in this study, only a few responses, presented using pseudonyms, were extracted to illustrate the students' perceptions on ST course activities.

> *Sandra:*
> *I did not use to have the patience to read the entire text first. When working on a piece of text, I often found myself reading and processing the received message at the same time. The main problem with that approach was I often missed the bigger picture, what the author was really trying to convey. In the ST class, the teacher emphasized the importance of 'formulating a picture of the entire message in our mind.' I found that advice very useful.*

> *Olivia:*
> *I especially remember the archeological text we worked on in class. There was a long sentence with several clauses and time adverbials to express a serial of incidents leading to the discovery of oracle bones. Through the text analysis steps, I was able to clearly understand the whole sequence of events leading to that discovery and know how to organize my rendition. That specific lesson left a strong impression on me and impacted how I did my take-home assignments.*

> *Leo:*
> *I really benefit a lot from the activities that provided us with steps of*

analyzing a given text. When the original text was in English, I learned to pay attention to details, such as tense, plural or singular forms, and the relationship between different parts of a sentence. When the original text was in Chinese, I learned to remind myself of the differences between the two languages. In Chinese, often a sentence does not need a subject, but this is not workable in formulating an English sentence.

Steven:
The steps we practiced to analyze Chinese texts in class have helped me to see Chinese, my native language, from a different angle. To interpret a text in fluent and correct English, I need to have the ability to rearrange the Chinese texts into translatable English units for sentence formulation. Though challenging, I really enjoy this mental exercise.

Although not every student provided detailed answers to elaborate on their gain from the guided teaching activities, a majority of them (91%) were able to apply what they had learned in class to extended ST practice.

Students' perceptions on the effectiveness of the incorporated ST course activities were also supported by their responses to the first interview question. When asked whether they enjoyed learning and doing ST, 61 out of 81 students (75%) gave a positive answer; 12 students expressed a neutral feeling, and eight students gave a negative response. Their responses (positive, neutral, and negative) are further explained in this section. First, for the students enjoying learning and doing ST tasks, their reasons are listed in Table 2, shedding more light on different features of their experience. Some students gave more than one reason to support their answers, explaining why the tallied total was greater than 61. For instance, 20 students expressed that ST strengthened their ability to respond to a received message and translate the message into the TL quickly. Another 11 students enjoyed doing ST because they viewed an ST task as a target for applying their learned skills or acquired knowledge. Furthermore, 10 students liked learning ST because it was challenging, and 9 students regarded ST tasks as interesting. Among them, five students highlighted that learning *should be* challenging in nature. In addition, six students believed they had gained much in this ST learning experience; five students desired learning ST for self-improvement purposes. Other reasons for enjoying learning ST included the development of better understanding in these two working

languages (three students), the gain of a sense of achievement in successful performance of an ST task (three students), the preference for teamwork (two students), and consideration of their future career (two students). Since the existing research on ST is very limited when it comes to the effectiveness of teaching/learning activities from the perspective of the students learning E-C and C-E ST, knowing why the students regarded learning and doing ST an enjoyment provides more support to the effectiveness of the incorporated activities.

Table 2

Reasons for Evaluating ST Learning a Positive Experience

Reasons for Positive Evaluation	Tallies of Responses
Training of quick responses	20
ST as knowledge/skill application	11
ST as challenging	10
ST as interesting	9
Having more freedom than doing translation	9
Much gain in learning ST	6
Desire for self-improvement	5
Development of better understanding between the languages	3
Gaining a sense of achievement from successful ST performance	3
Enjoying teamwork	2
Pertinence to their future career choices	2

For the students who indicated a neutral feeling about learning and doing ST, their responses were mainly related to their stance of considering ST as a skill to be acquired. Among the 12 students, seven of them shared that they liked the class but did not hold any special feelings about in-class ST practices or take-home assignments. These students said they took the course to fulfill the T&I track requirement. Another five students had mixed feelings about learning and doing ST, leading them to mark their stance as neutral. In one student's words,

I have always like translation, and I know learning ST will lead me to the next step of learning interpretation. I don't like to work under time pressure, but I have to overcome this difficulty. I would not say I enjoyed learning or doing ST, but I would perform the tasks given to me.

In addition, eight students (10%) rated this ST learning experience unfavorably. The reasons for their negative responses included the worry of slow responses in ST performance (three students), time constraints (six students), a lack of confidence in public speaking (two students), and the lack of competence in ST performance (four students). For the programs in other universities to consider offering ST as a separate course for T&I training, ST instructors should be aware of the factors that may hinder students' learning of ST for reaching the desired teaching effectiveness.

Students' Perceptions on the Encountered Challenges and Difficulties

Although the majority of students in this study viewed learning and doing ST a positive experience, they still encountered some difficulties and challenges. The students' responses to the second interview questions are compiled in Table 3.

Table 3

Challenges and Difficulties Encountered in ST Learning

Challenges/Difficulties Encountered	Tallies of Responses
Lack of knowledge on certain topics	60
Unfamiliar expressions or jargon	52
Lack of vocabulary items	50
Grammar mistakes (when TL production is in English)	49
Awkward expressions (incorrect sentence patterns in English)	47
Literal translation (word-for-word translation when SL is English)	44
Nuances between word choices in English	40
Uncertainty about TL production	38
Anxiety related to time pressure	30
Delivery speed (unnecessary pauses)	28

The analysis of interview transcripts showed that the students encountered ten issues they regarded as challenges or difficulties. For the top five challenges, a detailed response was selected for elaboration, each presented using a pseudonym. Among the ten issues, a lack of knowledge on certain topics (60 responses) was regarded as the biggest challenge as well as difficulty by the students. A few responses are

extracted from the interview transcripts. For instance, one student recalled the difficulty she encountered when practicing a C-E ST text on computer programming. "Although we grew up using computer applications, I actually don't know much about the programming side of computer applications. That's why I had to rely on the vocabulary items provided by my teacher," said Ellie. According to Gina, "every time I get a new assignment, I always worry about whether I have some background knowledge about the topic. For example, one of the in-class practices was related to astronomy, and I found that text quite difficult." Among the students who reflected on this deficiency, 34 of them admitted that they did not have the habit of gaining in-depth information on a variety of topics and often neglected the necessity of extensive reading.

Next, 52 responses pointed out that the students were concerned about unfamiliar expressions and jargon. Joseph said "we once worked on a piece about science fiction, and I was not sure how to translate that unfamiliar creature, especially its size and features." For both English and Chinese source texts, the students (50 responses) perceived a lack of vocabulary items a major difficulty in both SL comprehension and TL production. Sammy indicated sometimes he faced difficulty understanding the original text and sometimes he found himself not having the equivalent expressions in the TL. Then "the problem compounds itself when I realize I don't understand the vocabulary items in the SL and naturally don't know how to translate them into the TL." In addition, the fear of making grammar-related mistakes (49 responses) was a shared concern for many students. Cheryl stated "the awareness that my rendition will be evaluated and will impact the audience's understanding of the message just heightens my fear. A simple grammar mistake may cause a major problem." Besides grammar, the possible use of incorrect sentence patterns (47 responses) bothered the students as well. "I would worry if the sentence patterns I chose would make my English sound like 'Chinglish,' and I am afraid of making wrong sentences," stated Janice.

What can be concluded from these ten major difficulties that the students encountered is that they need to read extensively in order to cultivate the understanding on a variety of topics and broaden their linguistic repertoire. The former can help students overcome the difficulty brought by unfamiliar topics, while the latter can strengthen students' confidence in dealing with unfamiliar expressions, equip them with more vocabulary items, help them avoid awkward expressions or literal translation, and guide them to notice the nuances among word

choices. Furthermore, more opportunities for practice can help students develop confidence in their TL production, get used to working under time pressure, and sharpen their delivery.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS & SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to examine which specific teaching or learning activities could lead students to perform the given ST tasks more smoothly and effectively. A smooth performance emphasizes students' knowing how to handle a piece of newly-given text, especially in the aspect of information processing. Effectiveness refers to students' time management, TL production, and perceived learning gain. In both aspects, this study has collected positive findings to inform the T&I field of ST instruction and course implementation, especially in the language combination of Chinese and English. First, in the aspect of effectiveness in the incorporated teaching/learning activities, the findings indicated that the two teaching activities were very effective in leading the students to perform text analysis and to render TL production. Furthermore, the students perceived the instructor's instant feedback and pair practice in class as highly effective. The instant comments from the instructor helped the students not only to understand the problems in their renditions but also to improve their TL production. Pair practice allowed the students to work with their peers, a practice platform characterized by a stronger sense of teamwork, less pressure, and more interaction. In addition, in students' own words, they enjoyed learning and doing ST, for this format of interpreting was interesting, challenging, and practical. The ability to perform an ST task within a given time brought some students a sense of gain as well as achievement and allowed them the freedom from stricter translation rules. As the findings from most ST studies conducted in Taiwan were analyses and observations from ST instructors only, this study has added the perspectives of students' perceived effectiveness for the incorporated ST course activities to the current body of literature on ST training. Furthermore, the findings on students' perceived effectiveness of the activities have not only confirmed the elements for more solid ST training as suggested by Lee (2012) but also contributed to more understanding of how C-E and E-C ST instruction can be carried out. To prepare future students for ST training, attention can be given to forming the habit of extensive reading, acquiring topical knowledge, and

developing a rich repertoire of expressions.

One special reminder for ST instructors is the importance of readiness within learners. Even though this course was implemented among juniors, some students still worried about slow responses, time constraints, and their own competence. To ensure the appropriateness of these teaching/learning activities, ST instructors are suggested to incorporate these activities and solicit students' feedback at the same time. Only through students' input can the appropriateness of the activities and the pace of implementation (specifically, the time allowed for students to process a given source text) be adjusted.

A limit of the findings generated from this study lies in the language combination of the ST training. Different combinations of SL and TL may involve varying levels of syntactic differences between the two languages, thus posing different challenges to learners. Consequently, the instruction on text analysis may require slight adjustment. For example, sentence parsing and the identification of translation units may play different roles in other language combinations. In addition, this study did not attempt to measure the students' strengths and weaknesses in their actual performance from one type of text to another. In this study, the selected in-class practices and take-home assignments covered a variety of topics for the purpose of encouraging students' learning interests and exposing them to different topics. Moreover, with other types of ST training, such as "simultaneous interpreting with text," the skill of short-term memory may require more emphasis. To help ST instruction to advance further, future studies may attempt to address how short-term memory can be strengthened or cultivated for student interpreters, as previous studies have indicated that this element plays an important role in ST and interpreting training.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Evaluation of Course Activities

In this part, you are asked to evaluate the teaching and learning activities incorporated in the course of Sight Translation. The goal is to understand how these activities have helped your learning in this course. Your evaluation is presented in a 5-point Likert Scale.

5 means Very Helpful (meaning the activity helps reduce the level of anxiety brought on by sight translation)

4 means Helpful; 3 means Fair; 2 means Not Very Helpful

1 means Not Helpful (meaning the activity does not help reduce the level of anxiety brought on by sight translation at all)

		Very Helpful	Helpful	Fair	Not Very Helpful	Not Helpful
1.	Guided reading of SL text for performing E-C ST tasks	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Students' self-initiated ST responses in class	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Pair practice in ST class	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Instant teacher comments to students' ST renditions in-class	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Individual take-home recording assignments	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Text analysis (sentence parsing & translation unit identification) for C-E ST tasks	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B. Interview Questions

1. Do you enjoy learning and doing sight translation? Why or why not?
2. When performing ST tasks in class and at home, what difficulties or challenges did you encounter?
3. When you were asked to do the take-home ST assignments, how did you handle such tasks? Please describe the C-E and E-C ST tasks separately. For example, what steps did you take? Which activities were especially helpful or facilitating for your performance of these assignments?

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「視譯」課程的教、學活動：檢視學生之學習成效感受

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近幾年，台灣許多大學紛紛開設口筆譯相關課程，然而「視譯」這門被相關學者建議為口譯先修課程的科目（Ilg & Lambert, 1996），卻較少開設，因此，與之相關的教學、課程設計研究也非常少。本研究旨在探討視譯課程之教學活動，包含原文理解、內容分析、時間掌控、組織流暢之譯文等。此研究以台灣北部某一大學應用外語系學生為主體，共涵括 81 位大三學生，探討其一學期之「視譯」學習經驗，研究議題有二：學生對於視譯教學活動成效的感受、學習視譯所面臨的挑戰。前者希望能夠透過學生角度，了解教學活動的成效；後者檢視學生對於此學習經驗的感受，尤其著重於碰到的困難與挑戰。資料收集包含學習問卷及學生個別訪談。分析結果顯示，在六個課程活動中，四個活動被學生評估為非常有助於視譯學習，這些活動分別為：英譯中的原文解釋、中譯英的原文分析及英文句型補充、同學間的兩兩練習、教師即時評語回饋。此外，訪談結果也顯示：學生對於此課程的學習經驗給予正面肯定，他們認為學習視譯可以加快自身的反應速度、有學以致用的機會、帶來挑戰與成就感，相較筆譯，有較多的自由與發揮空間。另外學生反應主要挑戰及困難為：對某些主題缺乏知識、對專業術語及用詞不熟、字彙不足、譯文不流暢或錯譯。結果指出，在視譯課程中，不管翻譯方向是中譯英或英譯中，教學重點都應強調原文分析與解讀、相關背景知識的累積與字彙量的增加，因此在教學時，可強調字彙表的整理及不同主題的閱讀，以累積學生對於許多議題的知識與相關詞彙，課程指導則應著重於文章內容分析及評語回饋提供，方能提升學生之學習成效。

關鍵詞：視譯、視譯課程設計、視譯教學活動