

Monologue vs. Dialogue Verbal Reporting: Research Subjects' Perceptions

Li Defeng Maria Cheng

Abstract

Translation process research has been gaining momentum in recent years. One of the major research methodologies is Think-aloud Protocols (TAPs), with the aim of uncovering the “black box” (the mental activities) of translators. While most TAPs studies on the translation process have had research subjects translate alone and hence verbalise their thinking alone (i.e., monologue verbal reporting), there have also been studies designed in such a way where two research subjects translate together and hence verbalise their thinking together in their discussions (i.e., dialogue verbal reporting). For instance, both House (1988) and Matrat (1992) argued for joint verbal reporting based on their studies. However, others disagreed, pointing out, for example, that “joint translating does not provide access to the solitary translation process” (Jääskeläinen 2000: 78). We therefore would like to join the debate by investigating the perceptions of research subjects: what are their thoughts of the two modes of translating cum verbal reporting. For that purpose, we recently surveyed the research subjects' views in this regard by administering two questionnaires with them in our TAPs experiments, and found that: a) different students had different experiences and opinions about the two modes of translation; b) however, students had more positive experiences with joint translating than individual translating; and c) joint translating may be considered more conducive for participants, especially those from more reserved cultures, for instance some Asian countries, to speak out their thoughts. Based on these findings, implications for future TAPs studies are discussed.