

Interpreting from HKSL into Cantonese: The Challenge of Word Order Difference

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This paper will investigate the word order issue faced by interpreters during simultaneous interpretation from Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL) to Cantonese. Despite the fact that these two languages have the same basic word order, Subject-Verb-Object (SVO), their functional categories, namely modal verbs, auxiliary verbs, and negators are of different order. They appear after the verb phrase of HKSL (Lam, 2009) while the correspondents of Cantonese occupy pre-verbal position (Matthews & Yip, 2011). Such a difference in word order challenges HKSL-Cantonese interpreters when they interpret simultaneously from HKSL to Cantonese. To investigate this issue, a Deaf native-HKSL signer was invited to record three short clips. The first clip was a self-introduction. The second clip was a short presentation of PowerPoint Slides; the third one was a vlog. The source video, with all three clips together, was about 15 minutes long. Eleven native-Cantonese participants interpreted the same source video from HKSL into spoken Cantonese. The data showed that repairs appeared in the language output while non-canonical word orders were also found. The former consisted of false-starts at the sites of modal verbs, auxiliary verbs, and negators; the latter included different Cantonese focus structures. Interpreters adopted focus shift strategies in the target language to move the modal verbs, auxiliary verbs, and negators to other syntactic positions towards the end of the utterance. They included the use of a topic-comment structure, right dislocation and three different markers, namely focus marker *hai6*, coordinator *zau6*, and quantifier adverb *dou1*.