

## **The problems of the interpretations that were performed by Japanese untrained returnee students**

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The present research examined the interpretations performed by Japanese untrained returnee students. Harris & Sherwood (1978) investigated the interpreting abilities of bilingual children and found that bilingual children were able to interpret without learning how to do so. The study concluded that the interpreting abilities were innate to the bilinguals. However, the language combinations that were dealt in the study were only European languages.

The question to be asked is whether the findings are applicable to Japanese returnee students whose language combination is Japanese and English. In order to answer the research question, Japanese returnee students who had been brought up in the bilingual environment in their childhood were asked to join the study. If the participants are able to interpret without training, it is interesting to examine to what degree they are able to. This means, whether returnee students are able to interpret like bilingual children in the previous study.

In the present study, seven untrained returnee students (i.e., three postgraduate students and four undergraduates) were asked to consecutively interpret an English interview into Japanese. The interview consisted of 276 words. Recorded interpretations were transcribed and compared with the interpretations performed by the professional interpreters by using the method applied by Barik (1971) in the study in terms of omission, substitution and addition.

It was found that there were almost no additions, and the gist of the source text was highly accurate. However, there were minor substitutions that were not detected in the professionals. Above all, there were so many fillers such as 'e' 'etto' and 'eetto' and repetitions of the same Japanese words, which had lowered the fluency of the interpretations. The results were different from the findings indicated by the previous study where bilingual children were able to interpret without learning how to do, and there were no such reports on fillers and repetitions. There are several reasons considered for the differences in the results. As Dillinger (1994) suggests, the participants' problem may be a problem of output. The difference may have stemmed from the participants' background of being sequential bilingual (Baker, 2006). According to the participants' background reported in the questionnaire in the present study, the participants first learned English at the time when they moved abroad.

Although the results of the present research are not sufficient to conclude that interpreting abilities are innate to the returnees, it can be suggested that the returnees have a high potential. In the future study, the interpretations would be compared between returnees and non-returnees whose TOEIC scores would be in the same range as those of the participants of the present study.

## Reference

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- Dillinger, M. (1994). Comprehension during interpreting: What do interpreters know that bilinguals don't? In S. Lambert & B. Morser-Mercer (Eds.), *Bridging the gap: Empirical research in simultaneous interpretation* (pp. 155-189). Amsterdam: Benjamins.
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Table 1

*The frequencies of fillers made by the Participants during interpreting*

Code of Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	total
Number of fillers	15	14	25	13	21	17	22	127

Well first of all, the most important thing about Japan is its people. Scenery, you can get anywhere, although admittedly, being able to look at Mt. Fuji every day is a wonderful experience.	
A	えっとまず一、第一に一番重要なのは、景色で、え、ま、富士山が見えるところがま、一番すばらしいです。

*Figure 1*

The interpretation of Unit\_1 that was performed by Participant A