

Source text evaluation: a case study and its theoretical explanation

Holistic evaluation or quantifiable criteria?

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Why source text evaluation?

- ST are a decisive factor in interpreter performance
- Comparability of ST difficulty is indispensable for meaningful assessment
 - If ST is too difficult, assessment is impossible
- Variability in ST evaluation may be relevant for performance assessment

Source text evaluation

A case study

- Corpus:
 - 3 speeches (EN)
 - 12 professional conference interpreters (German A)
 - EN-DE interpretations
 - 3 working conditions
 - Without text (O)
 - With text, but without preparation (T)
 - With text and preparation (TV)

Aim of the case study

- Does availability of speaker's manuscript influence interpreting performance?
 - Semantic deviations
 - Time lag
 - Linguistic variability
 - Length of interpretations
 - Linguistic interference

Experimental setup

	Group A	Group B	Group C
Speech SI	TV	T	O
Speech HI	T	O	TV
Speech SL	O	TV	T

Case study

- Experimental setup requires comparable input speeches
- “objective” comparability of 3 speeches o.k. (Pöchhacker’s text profile)
 - Read-out vs. free
 - Speed of delivery
 - Intonation/rhythm/dynamics
 - Voice quality
 - Articulation/pronunciation

Case study

- Comparison of “objective” evaluation of source texts and “subjective” evaluation by 12 interpreters
 - Questionnaire after interpreting each speech
 - Read-out vs free
 - Overall difficulty of speech
 - Speed
 - Terminology
 - Articulation/accent

Speech HI	Speed	Term.	Accent
A1	3	2	2
A2	4	2	1
A3	3	1	1
A4	4	4	4
B1	4	2	2
B2	4	1	2
B3	3	2	4
B4	4	2	1
C1	2	1	1
C2	4	2	2
C3	4	2	1
C4	3	1	1

Speech SL	Speed	Term.	Accent
A1	3	2	3
A2	4	2	4
A3	4	1	2
A4	4	4	4
B1	4	2	2
B2	3	1	3
B3	3	2	4
B4	3	1	3
C1	2	1	1
C2	3	1	1
C3	2	2	1
C4	3	2	3

Difficulty	Speech SI	Speech HI	Speech SL
A1	1	2	2
A2	2	4	4
A3	1	2	2
A4	2	4	4
B1	2	2	2
B2	2	1	3
B3	1	3	4
B4	1	2	3
C1	1	2	1
C2	2	3	2
C3	2	2	3
C4	1	2	4

Case study - results

- Ranking of speeches/difficulty
 - 1. Speech SI (100%)
 - 2. Speech HI (75%)
 - 3. Speech SL (75%)

Case study - results

- Objective comparability of input text parameters does not assure subjective comparability from interpreters' viewpoint
- subjective evaluation of different input parameters is highly variable

But

- In spite of variability in evaluation of individual parameters, overall evaluation of difficulty is homogeneous

A spontaneous explanation

- Similarities in overall evaluation
 - Professional expertise (expert knowledge > holistic approach)
- Differences in individual parameter evaluation:
 - Different ways of interpreting items
 - Different ways of ranking individual parameters

Further research

Holistic approaches in TS

- Early Translation studies:
 - Hermeneutic approach to texts, oversummativity (e.g. Paepcke, 1986)
 - Prototypology: (Snell-Hornby)
 - Snell-Hornby: "Text als Gestalt" (1992)
- Less holistic approaches in interpreting studies:
 - cognition, information processing, pattern recognition, expertise (e.g. Kurz)

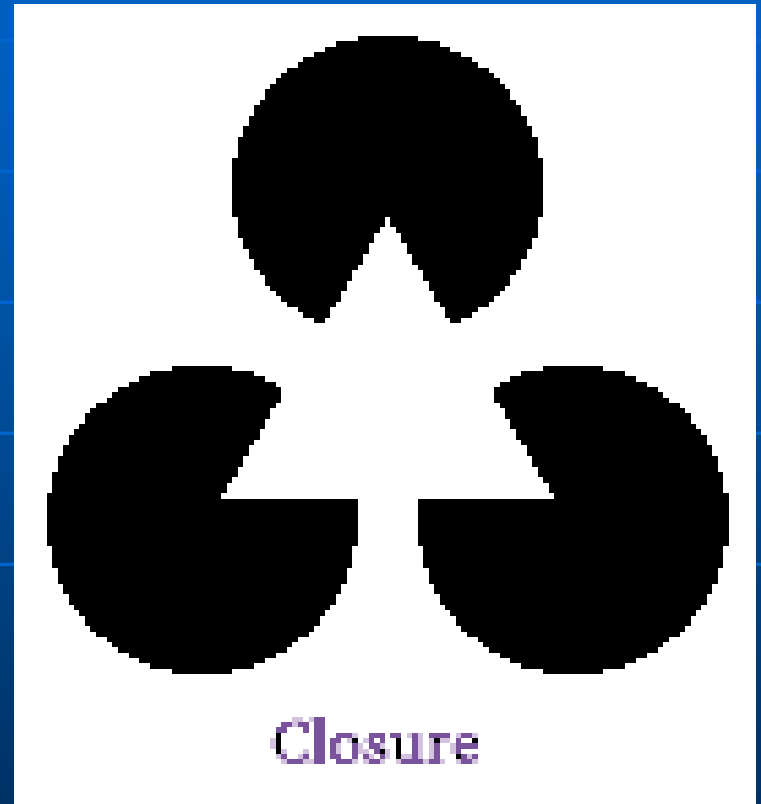
Gestalt Theory

- Holistic theory of perception and information processing:
 - Figure and ground (relevance)
 - Relativity of assessment process (context-bound)



Gestalt Theory

- “The whole is more than and different from the individual parts”
- The human brain tends to organize information in **meaningful sets**, even if parts of the information are missing.



In addition to the basic principles

- Gestaltists (Wertheimer, Kofka, Köhler) discovered and demonstrated that:
 - FIRST we perceive the whole and then the single parts
 - The whole is something like the “intrinsic nature of things”
 - Subjective factors are not considered disturbing factors, they are important for perception

Gestalt principles in EMCI context

- Implicit consensus among EMCI schools already in place
- Prevalent criteria for source texts are:
 - Not read, spontaneous presentation
 - Coherent development of arguments
 - General topic (consensus)
- Speeches are custom made for EMCI exam situations

Conclusions

- Evaluation of individual parameters does not necessarily lead to the same conclusions as overall evaluation
- If this is true for source texts, it may also be relevant for target text evaluation
- Holistic criteria may thus be useful for both choice of ST and assessment of interpretations

Conclusions: Target text assessment

- Assessment of the “target text Gestalt” rather than on the basis of isolated target text parameters
- Isolation of target text parameters highly useful for didactic assessment (e.g. interims)
- Objectivity in holistic assessment assured by
 - composition and size of exam panel and qualifications of panel members
 - competent moderator/mediator

Conclusions

- Holistic peer assessment as commonly practised is justifiable from a scientific point of view
- Assessment on the basis of individual, quantifiable parameters is not necessarily more objective and/or fairer

Thank you for your attention!

