

Do EFs predict simultaneous interpreting task performance?

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Previous research on interpreters' cognitive advantages has focused on Executive Functions (EFs), exploring whether simultaneous interpreters outperform non-interpreters on tasks measuring these skills. However, the impact of EFs on simultaneous interpreting (SI) performance remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining the predictive value of EFs in the SI performance of trainee interpreters. Three sub-components of EFs—updating, shifting, and inhibiting—were assessed using six behavioral tasks. These assessments, along with SI performance evaluations, were conducted at the end of the first year and the beginning of the second year in a Master's program for Conference Interpreting. Analysis results indicate that (1) updating and shifting abilities, measured by the N-back task and the Number-letter task, were significantly correlated with both overall SI performance and a specific sub-criterion, rhetorical skill, whereas inhibiting ability showed no correlation with either overall SI performance or any sub-criteria; (2) only the shifting ability measured by the Number-letter task emerged as a reliable predictor of overall SI performance and performance in rhetorical skill. These findings provide empirical evidence on the influence of EFs in SI performance, contributing to a deeper understanding of the relationship between EFs and SI.

Bio:

Shuangshuang Yang, a PhD student of the Translation and Interpreting Program in the department of Linguistics, in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Human Sciences, at Macquarie University. She is interested in the working mechanism of cognitive abilities in interpreting processes, especially the simultaneous interpreting process.