The project aims to investigate the relationship between cognitive load imposed by the task of simultaneous interpreting and the explicitating behaviour of professional interpreters. The scale of empirical research on explicitation in simultaneous interpreting seems to be relatively modest compared to its scale in written translation. Nevertheless, the studies conducted to date have proved that investigating this phenomenon in this mode of interpreting is an interesting and promising line of research (e.g., Shlesinger 1995; Gumul 2006, 2017, 2021; Gumul & Bartłomiejczyk 2022; Kajzer-Wietrzny 2012; Defrancq et al. 2015; Morselli 2018; Fu & Chen 2019). What makes such research particularly interesting is the heavy cognitive load imposed by the simultaneous interpreting task, which is bound to affect many aspects of the interpreter's performance. Considering the number of studies on explicitation in interpreting and their scope, we hope our study can be an important contribution to this area of research. To the best of our knowledge, no large-scale process-oriented projects on explicitation involving professional interpreters have been conducted so far. We hope that our study could fill this research lacuna by providing a comprehensive analysis focusing on a wide variety of explicitating shifts in the performance of a large sample of participants (30 interpreters) working under conditions of differing cognitive load.

The independent variable in our project is the cognitive load imposed by source-text features. The study aims to investigate how this condition affects the dependent variable of the scope of explicitation performed by professional interpreters. Our research questions are the following: (1) How do different levels of cognitive load affect the explicitating behaviour of professional simultaneous interpreters?; (2) Are there any identifiable recurrent patterns characterising the performance of a given interpreter when it comes to explicitation under conditions of differing cognitive load?; (3) To what extent will the explicitating behaviour of a given interpreter differ from other interpreters working with the same texts?; (4) To what extent are explicitating shifts correlated to cognitive load in the performance of professional interpreters?; (5) To what extent is explicitation caused by cognitive load?; (6) To what extent does explicitation impose additional production cognitive load on interpreters?

In this project, we will adopt a multi-method approach to increase the reliability and validity of the data. We are going to rely on manual product-oriented analysis of the interpreting outputs, retrospective protocols, semi-structured retrospective interviews, and the NASA Task Load Index questionnaire (NASA-TLX). The cognitive load has been operationalised for the purpose of the product analysis as three types of disfluencies: hesitation markers (filled pauses), false starts, and unfilled anomalous pauses exceeding two seconds. In turn, employing the subjective method of measuring cognitive load for the purposes of process analysis entails looking for references to increased cognitive load and resultant cognitive effort in the self-reports of the participants in this study (their retrospective verbal reports and semi-structured retrospective interviews) and their self-rating (responses to a NASA Task Load Index questionnaire – NASA-TLX).

The novelty of the project consists in relating the explicitating behaviour of professional interpreters to the level of cognitive load, the scale of the research, the scope of analysis, and the adopted methodology (multi-method approach). We hope this project will be an important contribution not only to the body of knowledge on the relationship between explicitation and cognitive load, but will also lead to a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying text processing and text production in simultaneous interpreting. We believe the findings can also offer some implications for interpreter training.