FACTORS CAUSING SPEECH COMPRESSION IN THE PROCESS OF SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

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Abstract. This article delves into the intricate process of simultaneous translation, focusing on the factors that contribute to speech compression during real-time interpretation. Simultaneous translators face a myriad of challenges as they strive to convey the essence of spoken language from one tongue to another within strict time constraints. This study examines the impact of time limitations, linguistic disparities, cultural context, cognitive load, and technical constraints on the compression of speech. Understanding these factors is essential for both translators and those seeking their services, as it sheds light on the complexities involved in maintaining accuracy and meaning while compressing speech in the context of simultaneous translation.

INTRODUCTION

When using speech compression, it is critical to take into account the specific nature of conference interpreting and the communicative situation. Having studied several classifications of speech compression factors in conference interpreting[1], we venture to propose the one of our own that rests on two comprehensive aspects: tight timing constraints faced by interpreters in the booth and information redundancy. Despite high expertise of professional interpreters, some information is inevitably lost in the course of interpreting due to extreme working conditions, including acoustic and semantic «disturbances», time pressure, fast delivery. Timing constraints affect interpreters' performance and serve as prerequisites for semantic transformations such as speech compression in order to reduce the original, save time and effort. Speech compression is by no means a constant, it depends largely on the speaker's rate of delivery: the higher the rate, the more interpreters are constrained by language means. The speed of speech-thinking operations has its natural limits for every interpreter. Attempts to push the boundaries may lead to failing concentration, mistakes, and omissions of relevant information.

Therefore, effective use of speech compression helps to avoid possible errors. Even professional conference interpreters tend to speak at a moderate pace, since orientation in the source speech, search for an appropriate translation equivalent, and interpreting per se pose certain challenges. Fast delivery makes it harder to perceive and comprehend the source text let alone produce the target text. Therefore, not only tight timing constraints, but also attempts to facilitate speech process underlie speech compression[2].

[1] Gurin I.V. The problem of speech compression in simultaneous translation. Approaches and methods of research Philological sciences. Questions of theory and practice Tambov: Gramota, 2008. Part. I. – P. 85-88. [in Russian]
[2] Shiryaev A. F. Simultaneous translation: The activity of a simultaneous interpreter and the methodology of teaching simultaneous translation, 1979. – 183 p. [in Russian]

Moreover, speech compression achieved through synonymic replacement or omission of some irrelevant segments helps interpreters «keep a distance» (phase delay) from the speaker or shorten it. According to Vadim V. Sdobnikov, speech compression, when artfully performed under pressure of time, contributes to higher quality of interpreting, its optimization, including in terms of time required to find an interpreting solution.[3] If such a transformation occurs automatically, i.e., an interpreter wastes no time evaluating the optimality of a particular decision, it saves time and effort spent on holding attention on the source text. In view of the advantages of speech compression mentioned above, this mechanism cannot be overstated in terms of time factor.

However, even representatives of different approaches to conference interpreting concur that redundancy is the main factor for speech compression. Redundancy in the source text simplifies comprehension, allows for probabilistic forecasting, rapid semantic processing, and faster reproduction in the target language. Certain linguistic studies show that most languages are redundant, e.g., redundancy levels in Russian and English vary between 70 and 84 % respectively[4]. Redundancy can be observed at all linguistic levels: phonetic (sound combinations typical of a particular language); morphological (multiple agreements in gender, number, case); lexical (pleonasms and tautologies); syntactic (cause and effect conjunctions in a string of logic that serves to describe cause and effect).

In the context of conference interpreting, it is common to speak about semantic redundancy or message redundancy, when the amount of information per symbol or unit diminishes due to general thematic conditionality, while the level of redundancy increases. Note that redundancy in special texts is much higher, since each of them is characterized by a certain set of lexical units and clichés that make it easier for interpreters to navigate through the source text, anticipate and forecast. Three types of redundancy can be singled out in conference interpreting that we consider as factors for speech compression:

1. System-conditioned redundancy arises from discrepancies between the structures of the source language and the target language. The first significant difference between the languages and the translation direction (Russian → English) that we analyze in this paper is syllabic length. Russian words are generally considered to be longer that English ones, which means that compression will occur naturally: the average syllabic length in Russian (7.5 characters) is almost three times bigger than in English[5].

Let's consider case taken from the conference interpreting script of Vladimir Putin's special address at the Davos Agenda 2021 (all grammar, spelling, and wording in both source texts and target texts have been unedited):

[3] Sdobnikov V. V. Compression tools in simultaneous translation from Russian into English. – N. Novgorod: 2016 ,p125-137. [in Russian]
[4] Piotrovskii R. G. Information dimensions of language,R. G. Piotrovskii. – L., «Nauka», 1998. – 116 p. [in Russian]
[5] 1. Boikov V.V. In the distribution of word length in Russian, German and English texts,[Electronic resource]. 10.10.2021 [in Russian]

(1)Действительно, трудно не заметить коренны трансформаций в глобальной экономике, политике социальной жизни и технологиях. Пандеми коронавируса, которую Клаус только что упомянул ставшая серьезным вызовом всему человечеству, лиш подстегнула, ускорила структурные изменения предпосылки для которых уже были достаточно давн сформированы[6]	*It is hard to ignore the fundamental changes in the global economy, politics, social life and technology. The coronavirus pandemic, that you mentioned has become a major challenge to the mankind, has accelerated structural changes, whose preconditions have been already for many years.*[7]

[6] Session of the online forum Davos agenda 2021. [Electronic resource] URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/speeches/64938 (accessed: 10.10.2021) [in Russian]
[7] Special Address by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation at the Davos Agenda 2021. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.weforum.org/events/the-davos-agenda-2021/sessions/special-address-by-vladimir-putinpresident-of-the-russian-federation

The number of characters in the source text (301) exceeds that in the target text (243) by more than 19 %. This becomes possible due to the brevity of English words as compared to Russian ones (changes – трансформации, mankind – человечество, etc.) Another specific aspect of Russian to English interpreting is the grammatical and lexical structure of the English language.

In this respect, opportunities for compression arise for several reasons:– Prevalence of structures with the verb **to be:**

(2)Наша общая ответственность сег ***заключается в том****, чтобы избежать такой перспективы, похожей на мра антиутопию.*	Our common responsibility today **is** to avoid such a future that resembles a grim dystopia.
(3)Реальность такова, что в ***сформировались, заявили о*** *действительно разные центры развитиз своими самобытными моделями, политичес системами, общественными институтами.*	The reality is that **there are** truly different studies of development in the world with their own distinctive models, political systems, social institutions .

– Verbs with the manner seme:

(4)И в этой связи ***подробнее остановлюсь*** *на тех ключевых вызовах, которые, по моему мнению, стоят сейчас перед мировым сообществом.*	And in this regard, I would like **to elaborate** on the key challenges that, in my opinion, are facing the world community today.

Prevalence of personification:

(5)На разных международных форумах постоянно ***звучат призывы*** *к инклюзивному росту, к созданию условий для достижения достойного уровня жизни каждого человека.*	Various international **forums have been** invariably **calling** for inclusive growth, for creating conditions to ensure a decent life for everyone.

Definite and indefinite articles:

(7)Было бы наивно предлагать какие-то универсальные чудодейственные рецепты решения ***обозначенных проблем***	It would be naive to offer some universal magic solutions for **the problems**

Wider use of abbreviations:

(8)Начиная с 1980 года глобальный ВВП	Starting from 1980, the global GDP at **PPP**

*по **паритету покупательной способности** в реальном выражении на душу населения удвоился.*	in real terms per capita has doubled.
(9) *Клаус сейчас упомянул о моем вчерашнем разговоре с Президентом Соединенных Штатов и о продлении **договора об ограничении стратегических наступательных вооружений**.*	Klaus just mentioned my yesterday's phone call, phone talk with the US President and we have agreed about extending **the START agreement**

– Prevalence of elliptical structures:

*(10)Третье. Человек должен быть уверен, что он получит качественную, эффективную медицинскую помощь, **когда это требуется**, что система здравоохранения в любом случае гарантирует ему доступ к современному уровню услуг .*	*Third, a person must be confident that they will receive high-quality and effective medical care **when needed,** that the healthcare system in any event will guarantee them access to most advanced services.*

Wider use of adverbial participial phrases instead of subordinate clauses:

*(11)Безусловно, как я уже сказал, во многом выиграли развивающиеся страны, **которые использовали растущий спрос на свои традиционные и даже новые товары** [8].*	Undoubtedly, as I've already said, developing countries gained much benefit from it **using the growing demand for their traditional and even new products [14]**

2. ***Text-conditioned redundancy*** is always present on the semantic level. Even laconic, professionally verified texts contain redundant information to the extent that allows interpreters to reduce or omit it, i.e., apply speech compression. Such redundancy comes in the forms of repetitions and duplication of some information, exhaustive explanations, digressions from the topic, and summarizations by the speaker.

When interpreters use compression strategies, the meaning of the source message is carried into the target message. The message is not lessened or diminished; rather it is made more compact. How the message is packaged may differ, but the intended meaning remains the same. Napier in her omission taxonomy, labels this phenomenon as conscious strategic omissions. She describes it in this way: "Omissions made consciously by an interpreter, whereby a decision is made to omit information in order to enhance the effectiveness of the interpretation. The interpreter incorporates his or her linguistic and cultural knowledge to

[8] Press conference on the results of the Russian-American negotiations]. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://clck.ru/baQaj (accessed: 10.10.2021)

decide what information from the source language makes sense in the target language, what information is culturally relevant, and what is redundant."

Viewing the interpreter's strategy as an intentional and goal-oriented behavior highlights what are known as communicative strategies.

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