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THE PROBLEM OF ADEQUACY IN THE THEORY OF SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

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Abstract
The present article examines the problem of adequacy in the theory of simultaneous translation. It explores the conceptual differences between adequacy and equivalence, analyzes linguistic and extralinguistic challenges faced by interpreters, and discusses strategies used to achieve adequate translation under time constraints. The study highlights the role of cognitive processes, contextual adaptation, and pragmatic considerations in ensuring communicative effectiveness in simultaneous interpreting.

Keywords: Problem of Adequacy, simultaneous translation, linguistic and extralinguistic challenges.

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Introduction

Simultaneous translation (interpreting) represents one of the most complex forms of bilingual communication. Unlike written translation, it requires the interpreter to process, interpret, and reproduce speech almost instantly. In this context, the notion of *adequacy* becomes central. The problem of adequacy lies in determining how faithfully and effectively the original message is conveyed in the target language while accounting for time pressure, cognitive limitations, and cultural differences.

In translation theory, the terms *equivalence* and *adequacy* are often used interchangeably, yet they denote different concepts.

One of the most significant aspects of adequacy in simultaneous translation is its cognitive-pragmatic nature. Simultaneous interpreting is not merely a process of linguistic substitution; it is a complex mental activity that involves interpreting meaning under severe time constraints. (Anthony Pym; 2014) The interpreter must continuously balance comprehension and production while maintaining coherence and communicative intent.

According to Daniel Gile (Daniel Gile; 2009), the process of simultaneous interpreting can be explained through the Effort Model, which includes listening and analysis, production, memory, and coordination efforts. These efforts compete for limited cognitive resources, which makes it impossible to fully reproduce all elements of the source speech. As a result, adequacy becomes a dynamic compromise rather than a fixed standard.

From a pragmatic perspective, adequacy involves the successful transmission of illocutionary force, which refers to the speaker's intended communicative function. For instance, a persuasive speech must retain its persuasive effect in the target language, even if certain lexical

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or syntactic elements are altered. This highlights that adequacy is closely linked to the preservation of communicative goals rather than formal linguistic equivalence.

Time pressure is one of the defining characteristics of simultaneous translation. The interpreter typically works with a short time lag, often referred to as "ear-voice span," which limits the possibility of reflection and revision. Under such conditions, the interpreter must rely on automatic processing and well-developed linguistic competence.

The need to keep pace with the speaker often leads to the use of simplification strategies. These may include reducing syntactic complexity, omitting redundant information, or generalizing specific details. While such strategies may result in a loss of formal precision, they contribute to maintaining overall communicative adequacy.

Moreover, anticipatory mechanisms play a crucial role in managing time constraints. Interpreters often predict upcoming segments of speech based on contextual cues, grammatical patterns, and world knowledge (Mona Baker & Gabriela Saldanha; 2020). This predictive ability allows them to produce output more fluently and maintain coherence, even when the source message is incomplete.

Adequacy in simultaneous translation should not be evaluated solely at the sentence level. Instead, it must be considered at the level of discourse. A coherent and logically structured target text is essential for successful communication, particularly in formal settings such as conferences or diplomatic meetings.

Discourse markers, thematic progression, and cohesion devices all contribute to the overall adequacy of the interpretation. For example, maintaining logical connectors such as "however," "therefore," and "in addition" helps preserve the structure of the argument. Failure to reproduce these elements may lead to misunderstandings or loss of coherence.

Another important dimension of adequacy is cultural adaptation. Simultaneous interpreters frequently encounter culturally specific references, idioms, and rhetorical devices that may not have direct equivalents in the target language.

In such cases, the interpreter must decide whether to preserve the original form, adapt it, or replace it with a culturally appropriate equivalent. This decision depends on the communicative situation and the audience's background knowledge. Adequacy, therefore, involves not only linguistic accuracy but also cultural relevance.

Intercultural competence is particularly important in international contexts, where misinterpretations can lead to serious misunderstandings. An adequate translation must bridge cultural gaps and ensure that the intended meaning is accessible to the target audience.

The ability to achieve adequacy in simultaneous translation is closely related to the interpreter's professional competence. This includes not only linguistic proficiency but also cognitive flexibility, subject-matter knowledge, and stress management skills.

Training programs for interpreters often focus on developing these competencies through exercises in memory, paraphrasing, and anticipation. Students are taught to prioritize meaning over form and to make strategic decisions under pressure.

Furthermore, technological advancements, such as computer-assisted interpreting tools, are beginning to influence the practice of simultaneous translation. While these tools can support

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interpreters, they do not eliminate the need for human judgment, particularly in achieving pragmatic and communicative adequacy.

The concept of adequacy continues to evolve in translation studies. Contemporary approaches emphasize its dynamic and context-dependent nature. Rather than viewing adequacy as a fixed standard, it is increasingly understood as a flexible criterion that varies depending on communicative goals, audience expectations, and situational constraints.

This shift reflects a broader trend in translation theory, which prioritizes functional and communicative approaches over purely linguistic ones. In the context of simultaneous interpreting, this perspective is particularly relevant, as it acknowledges the realities of real-time communication.

- **Equivalence** refers to the degree of similarity between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) at various linguistic levels (lexical, grammatical, semantic).
- **Adequacy**, on the other hand, focuses on the communicative effectiveness of the translation in a specific context.

In simultaneous interpreting, strict equivalence is often unattainable due to time constraints. Therefore, adequacy becomes the primary goal: the interpreter must convey the intended meaning, tone, and pragmatic effect rather than reproduce the exact linguistic form.

One of the key challenges affecting adequacy is the cognitive load imposed on the interpreter. According to psycholinguistic models, simultaneous interpreting involves several parallel processes:

1. Listening and comprehension
2. Short-term memory retention
3. Speech production
4. Monitoring output

The limited capacity of working memory forces interpreters to prioritize meaning over form. As a result, compression, omission, and generalization become necessary strategies to maintain adequacy.

Achieving adequacy is further complicated by linguistic and cultural differences between languages. These include:

- Syntactic asymmetry (e.g., word order differences)
- Lexical gaps (absence of direct equivalents)
- Idiomatic expressions and realia
- Pragmatic nuances (politeness, irony, emphasis)

For example, idiomatic expressions often require reformulation rather than literal translation to preserve their communicative impact. Similarly, culturally bound references may need adaptation or explanation.

Context plays a crucial role in determining adequacy. This includes:

- Situational context (setting, audience, purpose)
- Cultural context
- Discourse context

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An adequate translation must align with the expectations and background knowledge of the target audience. For instance, technical terminology may be simplified for a general audience or maintained for specialists.

Assessing adequacy in simultaneous translation is inherently subjective. However, several criteria are commonly used:

- Accuracy of conveyed meaning
- Completeness of information
- Fluency and coherence
- Pragmatic appropriateness

Modern approaches emphasize communicative success rather than formal correspondence as the primary evaluation standard.

The problem of adequacy in simultaneous translation reflects the dynamic and complex nature of real-time communication. Due to cognitive, linguistic, and situational constraints, interpreters cannot achieve perfect equivalence. Instead, they aim for adequacy by prioritizing meaning, context, and communicative effect. Understanding this shift from equivalence to adequacy is essential for both theoretical research and practical training in interpreting.

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