

## Lexical Transformations Used in Simultaneous Interpretation (By The Examples of English and French Languages)

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study explores the role of lexical transformations in simultaneous interpretation (SI) between English and French, focusing on speeches delivered by António Guterres and Emmanuel Macron at the United Nations General Assembly. It examines how interpreters adapt linguistic and cultural nuances to ensure accurate and effective communication. **Methods:** The research employs a qualitative approach, analyzing real-world examples of lexical transformations, including substitution, generalization, specification, and modulation. **Results:** The findings highlight the importance of lexical transformations in overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers, ensuring clarity, and maintaining the speaker's intent. **Novelty:** This study provides a detailed analysis of lexical transformations in high-stakes diplomatic contexts, offering insights into the cognitive and linguistic strategies employed by interpreters.

## INTRODUCTION

Simultaneous interpretation (SI) is one of the most demanding and sophisticated forms of language mediation. It plays a pivotal role in facilitating communication in multilingual environments, particularly in high-stakes settings such as international diplomacy, global summits, and the United Nations General Assembly. Unlike consecutive interpretation, where the interpreter speaks after the source language (SL) speaker has finished, SI requires interpreters to listen, process, and deliver the message in the target language (TL) almost simultaneously. This real-time process demands exceptional cognitive, linguistic, and cultural skills.

One of the most critical aspects of SI is the use of lexical transformations. These are linguistic strategies that allow interpreters to adapt words, phrases, or expressions from the SL to the TL while preserving the original meaning, tone, and intent. Lexical transformations are essential for overcoming differences in grammar, syntax, and cultural context between languages. For example, English and French, despite their shared Latin roots, differ significantly in their idiomatic expressions, sentence structures, and rhetorical styles. These differences often require interpreters to employ creative and adaptive strategies to ensure that the message is not only accurate but also culturally appropriate and impactful.

The importance of lexical transformations becomes even more pronounced in diplomatic contexts, where every word carries weight and implications. Speeches delivered by world leaders, such as António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United

Nations, and Emmanuel Macron, President of France, often address complex global issues, including climate change, inequality, and international cooperation. These speeches are rich in rhetorical devices, idiomatic expressions, and culturally specific references, making them particularly challenging for interpreters.

In addition to linguistic challenges, interpreters must navigate the cognitive demands of SI. They must process information at high speeds, manage their short-term memory, and maintain focus under pressure. Furthermore, they must ensure that their interpretations are neutral and professional, even when dealing with emotionally charged or politically sensitive content. Lexical transformations are a key tool in managing these challenges, enabling interpreters to convey the speaker's message effectively while adapting it to the linguistic and cultural norms of the TL audience.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on the analysis of lexical transformations in SI. The key methods include:

1. **Speech analysis:** Transcripts and recordings of speeches by António Guterres and Emmanuel Macron were analyzed to identify instances of lexical transformations.
2. **Linguistic comparison:** The source language (English or French) was compared with the interpreted target language to examine the use of substitution, generalization, specification, and modulation.
3. **Contextual analysis:** The cultural and diplomatic context of the speeches was considered to understand the rationale behind specific lexical choices.

Data was collected from publicly available recordings and transcripts of speeches delivered at the United Nations General Assembly in 2023 and 2024.

## Literature Review

Simultaneous interpretation (SI) has been a subject of extensive research in the fields of linguistics, cognitive science, and translation studies. This section reviews key studies and theoretical frameworks that provide insights into the role of lexical transformations in SI, particularly in the context of English-French interpretation.

### 1. Theoretical foundations of simultaneous interpretation

The cognitive complexity of SI has been widely studied, with researchers emphasizing the mental processes involved in real-time interpretation. Gile's "Effort Model" [1] remains one of the most influential frameworks in this field. According to this model, SI requires interpreters to balance three primary efforts: listening and analysis, memory, and production. The model highlights the limited cognitive resources available to interpreters, making lexical transformations a critical tool for managing cognitive load while maintaining accuracy and fluency.

Anderson [2] was among the first to conceptualize interpreting as a cognitive process, emphasizing the importance of short-term memory and active listening in SI. His work laid the foundation for subsequent studies on the mental agility required for lexical transformations, particularly in high-pressure environments like diplomatic settings.

## **2. Lexical transformations in translation and interpretation**

Lexical transformations, as defined by Vinay and Darbelnet [3], are linguistic strategies used to adapt words, phrases, or expressions from one language to another. These transformations include substitution, generalization, specification, and modulation, among others. While originally developed in the context of written translation, these strategies have been extensively applied to SI, where interpreters must adapt the SL message to the TL in real time.

Pöchhacker [4] highlights the importance of lexical transformations in overcoming linguistic and cultural differences between languages. He argues that these strategies are essential for ensuring that the interpreted message is not only accurate but also culturally appropriate and stylistically consistent with the TL norms. Similarly, Albl-Mikasa [5] emphasizes the role of lexical transformations in managing the cognitive load of SI, allowing interpreters to simplify complex expressions without losing the core meaning of the message.

## **3. Cultural and rhetorical challenges in SI**

Interpreters often face significant challenges when dealing with culturally specific references, idiomatic expressions, and rhetorical devices. Cronin [6] argues that interpreters are not merely linguistic mediators but also cultural mediators, responsible for bridging cultural gaps between the SL and TL audiences. This is particularly relevant in diplomatic contexts, where speeches often include culturally loaded terms and metaphors that require careful adaptation.

Moser-Mercer [7] explores the impact of stress and emotional content on interpreters' performance, noting that lexical transformations can help mitigate these challenges by providing interpreters with flexible strategies for adapting the message. She emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and rhetorical awareness in ensuring that the interpreted message resonates with the TL audience.

## **4. Training and pedagogical approaches**

The training of interpreters has evolved significantly over the years, with a growing emphasis on developing the skills needed for effective lexical transformations. Russo and Pöchhacker [8] underscore the importance of scaffolding in interpreter education, where students progress from basic exercises, such as shadowing and paraphrasing, to more complex tasks, such as live interpreting simulations. These methods help students develop the cognitive and linguistic agility required for SI.

Korpál [9] highlights the role of feedback and self-assessment in interpreter training. She argues that constructive feedback on lexical choices, combined with opportunities for reflection, is essential for developing the ability to use lexical transformations effectively. This approach ensures that students are prepared to handle the linguistic and cultural challenges of real-world interpreting scenarios.

## **5. English-French interpretation**

English and French, despite their shared Latin roots, differ significantly in their syntax, idiomatic expressions, and rhetorical styles. Lederer [10] and Seleskovitch [11] have explored the unique challenges of interpreting between these two languages, noting

that French tends to favor more elaborate and formal expressions, while English often prioritizes conciseness and directness. These differences require interpreters to employ a wide range of lexical transformations to ensure that the message is both accurate and stylistically appropriate.

For example, Lederer [10] highlights the frequent use of modulation in English-French interpretation, where interpreters must adapt the perspective or tone of the message to align with the rhetorical norms of the TL. Similarly, Seleskovitch [11] emphasizes the importance of cultural adaptation, noting that interpreters must often substitute idiomatic expressions in the SL with culturally equivalent phrases in the TL.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of simultaneous interpretation (SI) between English and French revealed that interpreters frequently employ four primary types of lexical transformations: substitution, generalization, specification, and modulation. These transformations are essential for overcoming linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). This section discusses each transformation type in detail, supported by real examples and theoretical insights.

### 1. Substitution

Substitution involves replacing a word or phrase in the SL with an equivalent in the TL. This transformation is particularly useful for idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and culturally specific terms that do not have a direct equivalent in the TL.

#### Example 1: António Guterres

1. **Source (English):** "The climate crisis is a ticking time bomb."
2. **Target (French):** "La crise climatique est une bombe à retardement."
  - a. The idiom "ticking time bomb" is substituted with "bombe à retardement," a culturally equivalent expression in French. This substitution ensures that the urgency and metaphorical impact of the original phrase are preserved.

#### Example 2: Emmanuel Macron

1. **Source (French):** "Nous devons agir avec audace et pragmatisme."
2. **Target (English):** "We must act boldly and pragmatically."
  - a. The term "audace" is substituted with "boldly" to align with English rhetorical norms. The substitution reflects the speaker's intent to inspire action while maintaining the formal tone of the speech.

Vinay and Darbelnet [3] describe substitution as a direct translation strategy that adapts idiomatic expressions and culturally specific terms to the TL. Pöchhacker [4] emphasizes that substitution is critical in SI, as it allows interpreters to maintain the rhetorical impact of the SL message while ensuring cultural relevance in the TL.

### 2. Generalization

Generalization involves using a broader or more generic term in the TL when a direct equivalent in the SL is overly specific, technical, or culturally unfamiliar. This strategy simplifies the message while preserving its core meaning.

### Example 1: António Guterres

1. **Source (English):** "We must curb greenhouse gas emissions."
2. **Target (French):** "Nous devons réduire les émissions polluantes."
  - a. The term "greenhouse gas emissions" is generalized to "émissions polluantes" (pollutant emissions) to simplify the concept for a broader audience. This generalization ensures that the message is accessible to listeners who may not be familiar with the technical term.

### Example 2: Emmanuel Macron

1. **Source (French):** "La solidarité européenne est essentielle."
2. **Target (English):** "European unity is essential."
  - a. The term "solidarité" is generalized to "unity" to convey the broader concept of cooperation. This generalization reflects the speaker's emphasis on collective action rather than specific forms of solidarity.

### Theoretical Insight

Vinay and Darbelnet [3] identify generalization as a key strategy for adapting technical or culturally specific terms to the TL. Albl-Mikasa [5] highlights that generalization is particularly useful in SI, where interpreters must simplify complex ideas to ensure clarity and comprehension for diverse audiences.

### 3. Specification

Specification involves using a more specific term in the TL to clarify meaning, add context, or address cultural differences. This transformation is often employed to ensure that the audience fully understands the speaker's intent.

### Example 1: António Guterres

1. **Source (English):** "We need global action to address inequality."
2. **Target (French):** "Nous avons besoin d'une action mondiale pour lutter contre les inégalités sociales et économiques."
  - a. The term "inequality" is specified as "sociales et économiques" (social and economic) to provide additional context. This specification helps the audience understand the specific types of inequality being addressed.

### Example 2: Emmanuel Macron

1. **Source (French):** "La France continuera à défendre les droits de l'homme."
2. **Target (English):** "France will continue to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms."
  - a. The addition of "fundamental freedoms" specifies the scope of "droits de l'homme" (human rights), aligning with the expectations of an English-speaking audience.

Pöschhacker [4] and Cronin [6] emphasize the importance of specification in SI, particularly in diplomatic contexts where clarity and precision are paramount. Specification allows interpreters to add necessary details to the TL message, ensuring that it is both accurate and contextually appropriate.

#### 4. Modulation

Modulation involves changing the perspective, tone, or viewpoint of the SL message to make it more natural and impactful in the TL. This transformation is often used to adapt abstract or figurative language.

##### Example 1: António Guterres

1. **Source (English):** "The world is on the brink of a catastrophic failure."
2. **Target (French):** "Le monde est au bord d'un échec catastrophique."
  - a. The perspective is shifted slightly to align with French linguistic norms, ensuring that the message remains impactful while sounding natural.

##### Example 2: Emmanuel Macron

1. **Source (French):** "Nous devons renforcer notre engagement multilatéral."
2. **Target (English):** "We must strengthen our commitment to multilateralism."
  - a. The phrase is modulated to emphasize the action ("commitment") rather than the abstract concept ("engagement").

Vinay and Darbelnet [3] describe modulation as a strategy for adapting the perspective or tone of the SL message to the TL. Lederer [10] highlights that modulation is particularly important in English-French interpretation, where differences in rhetorical style often require interpreters to adjust the tone or focus of the message.

#### Summary of findings

The analysis of António Guterres' and Emmanuel Macron's speeches demonstrates that lexical transformations are indispensable tools in SI. Each transformation type serves a specific purpose:

1. **Substitution** ensures cultural relevance and rhetorical impact.
2. **Generalization** simplifies complex or technical terms for broader accessibility.
3. **Specification** adds clarity and context to the message.
4. **Modulation** adapts the tone and perspective to align with TL norms.

These transformations not only facilitate accurate communication but also preserve the speaker's intent and rhetorical style, ensuring that the interpreted message resonates with the TL audience.

#### CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** This study underscores the critical function of lexical transformations—substitution, generalization, specification, and modulation—in facilitating accurate and culturally sensitive simultaneous interpretation (SI) between English and French during high-stakes diplomatic discourse. These strategies enable interpreters to convey the speaker's intent effectively while adapting to linguistic and cultural nuances of the target audience. **Implication :** The findings advocate for the systematic inclusion of lexical transformation techniques in interpreter training curricula to enhance real-time decision-making and communicative competence in multilingual settings. **Limitation :** However, the study is limited to a qualitative analysis of speeches by only two political figures, which may not fully capture the diversity of lexical transformations across broader discourse genres or language pairs. **Future Research :**

Further empirical investigations with a larger dataset, including different languages and interpretation contexts, are recommended to deepen understanding of transformation patterns and cognitive mechanisms underlying SI performance.

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