

## The Sequential Disagreement of the Speaker and Interpreter (Obama's Speech to PM Noor Al-Maliki)

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the forms of disagreement that may happen between the speaker and interpreter while doing consecutive interpreting. The form of disagreement that the study investigates is the speech of the president Obama to PM of Iraq Al-Maliki. The long speech of Obama shows the sequential disagreement that happens between the interpreter and Obama. The problem that may face the interpreter is the density of information that makes the interpreter confused and leads her to lose the whole part of the speech. The method used in the paper is the qualitative analytical method that analyses the first part of the speech said by Obama and interpreted by the interpreter. The analysis of the disagreement that happened in the speech is based on Krisztina SÁROSI-MÁRDIROSZ 2015, Hana Kucerova, 1990, Alexander V.Kozin, 2018, Daniel Gile, 2009 and Darwant and Setton 2016. The study concludes that the agreement is one of the most important strategies that should be organized before any speech. Also, the form of disagreement that happened in this speech led to the loss of information that might be important to the audience who is underestimated by doing the disagreement because of neglecting their role in the situation.*

**Keywords:** *Consecutive interpreting, political speech, sequential disagreement, syntactic disagreement*

### 1. Introduction

Communication plays an important role in the life of human beings. But what about if two different people of two different countries have some shared issues and speak two different languages. Translation and interpretation are one of the most practical strategies to help communicate with others. It is necessary to have a full knowledge of interpreting the spoken language, especially the language of presidents. Such cases need full observation and investigation to get comprehensible communication. This paper investigates the challenges that may face some interpreters especially when they have a lack of knowledge in dealing with the idea of interpretation. Such a gap is known as the disagreement between the interpreter and speaker. Many research papers written to give the idea of consecutive interpreting as a key tool of giving the overall impression of the talk. Such studies neglect that the political speech is a distinguished and sensitive speech including issues that have to

be delivered to the audience. The qualitative analytical method is used in this paper to illustrate the form of disagreement that happens between the interpreter and the speaker. The study is based on Krisztina SÁROSI-MÁRDIROSZ 2015, Hana Kucerova, 1990, Alexander V.Kozin, 2018, Daniel Gile, 2009 and Darwant and Setton 2016. If interpreters follow the right strategies of delivering information like having an agreement, the loss of information will be reduced and the audience will not be underestimated.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

Consecutive Interpreting is one of the methods used by interpreters to transfer a spoken language to another. Such a method needs awareness of every situation around the speaker and interpreter having a kind of agreement between them. The problem of this paper is the lack of disagreement between the two parties involved in the dialogue.

## **3. Objective of the Study**

This research explores the effect of disagreement while doing consecutive interpreting. It also investigates the kinds and forms of disagreement that may face interpreters. The study highlights the nature of political language that has a special care while interpreting it because of its sensitivity. The study depends on the first part of Obama's speech and his interpreter who interprets to Al-Maliki, PM of Iraq. The main purpose of choosing such a speech is that the president Obama is well-known to everyone and his speech is considered important, too.

## **4. Research Question**

This research investigates whether disagreement between the interpreter and speaker may lead to the loss of information required by the audience.

## **5. Method**

This paper is a qualitative analytical study examines the first part of Obama's speech to Al-Maliki. The link of this video is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0iwHZLTzdw>. The first part of the dialogue is the main part of the investigation since it involves the English language as a foreign language of the audience who listens to both of the parties. The audience is supposed to have the full information mentioned by Obama and interpreted by the interpreter. Obama is one of the famous figures not only in America, but also the Arab world. That's why Obama's speech is the main focus of this study. This study uses a comparative analysis technique where the disagreement occurs between the speaker and interpreter. The study is based on the following scholars who discussed the idea of disagreement:

Krisztina SÁROSI-MÁRDIROSZ, 2015	Hana Kucerova, 1990	Alexander V.Kozin, 2018	Daniel Gile, 2009	Darwant and Setton, 2016
"The scope of a political text can be: persuasion, reasoning, deceit or even hustling, all of which require a specific language use..."	"The normal requirements of the professional interpreter become more stringent: general qualifications as to language, culture, voice, diction, tact, the awareness of confidentiality. The diplomatic interpreter must inspire confidence and trust, always putting the objective of his principles first..."	The disagreement of the interpreter and the speaker depends on the " taking a turn without a delay or with a short delay, as in the case of agreements, or by delaying claiming the incoming turn, as in the case of disagreements.	He states that interpreters face problems if the speech is unclear "because of its logic, information density, unusual linguistic structure or speaker's accent"	"Under-translation: the target language rendition only partially or unsuccessfully conveys relevant meaning that is important to the speaker's message"

## 6. What is Consecutive Interpreting?

Consecutive interpreting is a form of interpretation that is defined by many scholars. Andrew Gillies defines consecutive interpreting as "It involves listening to what someone has to say and then, when they have finished speaking, reproducing the same message in another language." Also, Gillies adds that the interpreter depends on his/her notes, memory and the knowledge that he/she has in order to recreate the original message (p.5: 2017). Some speakers give a short speech to give their interpreters a chance to render the exact message without omission or neglecting some important notes. Others have a long speech which makes their interpreters endeavor to render the exact message. This research paper is going to discuss how disagreement between the two persons involved (the interpreter and the speaker) may affect the interpretation especially when the disagreement is because of the long speech that happens.

## 7. Political language and Translation

Talking about political language is the matter of politics and the terminology used in this field, highlighting the issues related to legal, territorial, and political issues. The problem in such a field is the core of political texts and what they convey. Krisztina states that "The scope of a political text can be: persuasion, reasoning, deceit or even hustling, all of which require a specific language use. The purpose of a persuasive speech is to convince the audience to agree with an idea or opinion that the speaker puts forth....The first job of the speaker or writer is to convince the audience that a particular problem is important to them, and then they must be convinced by the text that the speaker or writer has the solution for addressing the problem" (Ibid, p.165, 2015). But once there is no agreement between the interpreter and the speaker regarding the speech to be long or short, the political language may lose its value. Audience needs to know every detail mentioned by the speaker to start analyzing the spoken language. It is a kind of deceiving the audience by omitting a large number of words which indicate important

thing to people who are interested in politics and the speech that is said by important people like Obama.

Political interpreters encounter very sensitive issues. Since political speech is part of diplomatic speech, Hana Kucerova gives some characteristics of the interpreters who work in this field. Kucerova says: “The normal requirements of the professional interpreter become more stringent: general qualifications as to language, culture, voice, diction, tact, the awareness of confidentiality. The diplomatic interpreter must inspire confidence and trust, always putting the objective of his principles first- which may include accepting undeserved blame and be equally at ease in front of large audiences, millions of television viewers, or in face to face meetings between heads of state” ( Bowen & Bowen, p.37, 1990). As a result, the professional interpreter must have a degree of agreement with the speaker of another language as in our case of this paper that the interpreter here accompanies the same speaker every meeting in the Arab world. The lack of disagreement between the two persons in the video doesn't confirm the words by Bowen and Bowen.

### **8. The forms of disagreement between the interpreter and the speaker.**

According to Alexander V.Kozin, The disagreement of the interpreter and the speaker depends on the “taking a turn without a delay or with a short delay, as in the case of agreements, or by delaying claiming the incoming turn, as in the case of disagreement”(Ibid, p.174-175: 2018). Alexander doesn't prefer using the disagreement by delaying any kind of clarification at the end of the talk. Interpreters may interrupt the speaker for clarification. He adds that interpreters avoid disagreement to mitigate their production and make the process easier. Alexander states three kinds of delaying (sequential, syntactic and semantic). The first one is used for clarification regarding the sequence of the talk, the second one is used for grammatical issues, and the third one is used for the semantic clarification (Ibid p.174, 2017). Each one of those mitigations, as the author says, is used to give a good product of interpretation. In our case here, the interpreter doesn't use her right as an interpreter to interrupt the speech politely. As a result of such disagreement, she loses most of the speech because it is long. This kind of disagreement is called sequential.

There are many challenges that interpreters encounter while doing consecutive interpreting. The most obvious disagreement between the interpreter and speaker of another language happens when the speech is unclear and needs much time to understand and interpret it. Daniel Gile mentions the most problematic issues in speeches. He states that interpreters face problems if the speech is unclear “because of its logic, information density, unusual linguistic structure or speaker's accent” (Ibid, p.166:2009). The information density makes the speech unclear because it needs much effort to document every important detail. In our case here, political speech is a sensitive one because each single word conveys an embedded meaning

which may lead to different issues. The interpreter and translator must be aware of such density and unclear accent to distinguish the required meaning. As a result of such disagreement, interpreters may need much time to reformulate their ideas to give a correct interpretation.

Darwant and Setton state the main important problems that interpreters encounter: Comprehension, memory and analysis are the most problematic issues. They distinguish between two kinds of translation while doing the interpreting process: "Over-translation: the TL rendition inappropriately goes beyond what the speaker actually said, or intended to convey" Then they move to explain "Under-translation: the target language rendition only partially or unsuccessfully conveys relevant meaning that is important to the speaker's message" (Ibid, p.109, 2016). The two problems mentioned by Darwant and Setton have big impact to the audience, especially when there are pragmatic meaning that is lost while doing consecutive interpreting in long speeches when there is no agreement between the interpreter and the speaker that causes embarrassment to both of them.

## 9. Analysis and Discussion

*Obama's Speech..... ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0iwHZLTzdw> )*

Hello, everybody. Before I discuss the meeting that I've just had with Prime Minister Maliki I just want to make a brief statement about Afghanistan. I had the opportunity to speak with President Karzai this morning and I wanted to congratulate him on accepting the certification of the recent election. As we all know, this has been a very difficult time in Afghanistan to not only carry out a election under difficult circumstances, where there were a whole host of security issues that had to be resolved, but also post-election a lot of uncertainty. President Karzai, as well as the other candidates, I think have shown that they have the interest of the Afghan people at heart, that this is a reflection of a commitment to rule of law, and an insistence that the Afghan people's will should be done. And so I expressed the American people's appreciation for this step. As I mentioned before, this has been a difficult election. You have violent forces opposed to democracy in Afghanistan. And yet despite these very difficult conditions what we've seen is elections take place; we have now seen the IEC and the ECC in Afghanistan complete their work; we have seen the candidates expressing a willingness to abide by constitutional law, and there is a path forward in order to complete this election process.

I want to give particular thanks to Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and his team, who have been working tirelessly throughout this process. I also want to commend Senator John Kerry, who was in the region traveling and ended up working extensively with Ambassador Eikenberry and was extraordinarily constructive and very helpful. So I think he deserves great congratulations. Moving forward, we will continue to work with our ISAF partners as well as the Afghan government, however this election turns out, to ensure that we can move the Afghan -- that we can move Afghanistan towards peace and security and prosperity and that the will of the Afghan people is ultimately done. So we are pleased with the steps that have been taken today

and we hope that we can build on this progress. I finally want to thank the incredible work of our U.S. military and the young men and women who are stationed in Afghanistan who are doing so much to help bring about a more secure and prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. I am grateful to have the opportunity to see Prime Minister Maliki once again. We had a wide-ranging discussion about the continuing progress that Iraq is making. We have seen in the last several months a consolidation of a commitment to democratic politics inside of Iraq. We are very interested, both of us, in making sure that Iraq has an election law that is completed on time so that elections can take place on time in January. That is consistent with the transition that has been taking place, and I reemphasized my commitment to Prime

Minister Maliki that we will have our combat troops out of Iraq by August of next year, and all of But we didn't just talk about military and security issues. What is wonderful about this trip is that it represents a transition in our bilateral relationship so that we are moving now to issues beyond security and we are beginning to talk about economy, trade, commerce. The business and investment conference that's taking place is going to be very well attended. It includes not only Prime Minister Maliki but business leaders from both the United States and Iraq. We've seen over the last several months progress being made on providing clarification about investment laws inside of Iraq. There are obviously enormous opportunities for our countries to do business together.our troops out of Iraq by 2011. But we didn't just talk about military and security issues. What is wonderful about this trip is that it represents a transition in our bilateral relationship so that we are moving now to issues beyond security and we are beginning to talk about economy, trade, commerce. The business and investment conference that's taking place is going to be very well attended. It includes not only Prime Minister Maliki but business leaders from both the United States and Iraq. We've seen over the last several months progress being made on providing clarification about investment laws inside of Iraq. There are obviously enormous opportunities for our countries to do business together. And so I just want to congratulate Prime Minister Maliki on what I'm confident will be a successful conference and to reemphasize my administration's full support for all the steps that can be taken so that Iraq can not only be a secure place and a democratic country, but also a place where people can do business, people can find work, families can make a living, and children are well educated. And that broader sense of a U.S. relationship with a democratic Iraq is one that I think all of us are confident we can now achieve. So thank you so much for your presence here today

And I don't know if you -- maybe we could translate the last part just about Iraq, as opposed to Afghanistan, just in case there's --

## The Interpretation of the interpreter

أنا سعيد بأن ألتقي الرئيس الوزراء العراقي المالكي معنا اليوم وتناولنا عددا من القضايا لا سيما التقدم الذي يستمر بإحرازه في العراق والتزامه من أجل مسار ديمقراطي في العراق ومن المهم أن تجري الانتخابات في موعدها المحدد ، وأيضا شددت أعدت التشديد على التزامنا لكي تنسحب القوات الأمريكية القتالية في شهر أغسطس من السنة القادمة وعلى انسحاب كافة القوات مع حلول عام 2011 وبالنسبة لهذه الزيارة اليوم فهي تشير الى انتقال العلاقات الثنائية بينالبلدين الى مستوى أبعد من الأفق الأمني ويصل اليوم الى أفق اقتصادي وتجاري وهذا المؤتمر الذي يجري اليوم الذي يحضره رئيس الوزراء المالكي وايضا فيه قادة أعمال من كل من البلدين فهذه اشارة على التقدم يحرز في العراق الى التقدم الذي يحرز ايضا في مجال قانون الاستثمارات في العراق وهو فرة كبيرة لاستقطاب الاستثمارات والأعمال الى العراق، أهنيء رئيس الوزراء المالكي على هذا المؤتمر وأجدد التشديد على الدعم الكامل لإدارة عراق آمن ديمقراطي يعثر فيه الناس على فرص للأعمال وأيضا يوفر العيش الرغيد للأسر العراقية والتربية للأطفال العراقيين والذير يرسم أيضا آفاقا أوسع للعلاقة بين البلدين، وشكرا.

### 1. Krisztina 2015

The main aim of political texts or speeches is persuasion. According to Krisztina 2015, Obama's speech from the very beginning of his discussion is persuading people that he is involved in the situation of Afghanistan. It is important to let people know that president Obama is interested in the issue of Afghanistan and the election that happened was a commitment to the law. Once there is disagreement between the interpreter and the speaker, there will be loss of information in the interpretation of the real speech. Krisztina says that "The first job of the speaker or writer is to convince the audience that a particular problem is important to them" which is neglected here when the speaker felt that he spoke a lot not giving the interpreter an opportunity to discuss all of the ideas mentioned in the speech so he told the interpreter to neglect the part of Afghanistan which is going to affect the product of the speech.

### 2. Hana Kucerova, 1990

The agreement between the speaker and the interpreter must take its place before the start of any conference. They must agree upon everything which reflects the confidence that the interpreter has. Hana Kucerova 1990 mentions that interpreters must have "the awareness of confidentiality", which reflects the product of their interpretation. The interpreter must be "accepting undeserved blame and be equally at ease in front of large audiences,". Audience is going to blame the interpreter of every loss of information because audience must not be underestimated. For example, Obama mentions some names of important people and the audience directly recognizes such names even without interpretation. Once the interpreter doesn't mention the names, the audience will not appreciate and trust the interpreter. Kucerova states that "The diplomatic interpreter must inspire confidence and trust, always putting the objective of his principles first". As a result of disagreement, the names in Obama's speech "Karl Eikenberry, Karzai, Eikenberry, etc...) are not mentioned in the interpretation. So, the interpreter

will not inspire trust if he/she disagrees with the speaker and making loss of information while giving the product.

3. Alexander V.Kozin, 2018

“The disagreement of the interpreter and the speaker depends on the " taking a turn without a delay or with a short delay, as in the case of agreements, or by delaying claiming the incoming turn, as in the case of disagreements.”

Taking a turn between the speaker and the interpreter is very important to both of them. Firstly, when the speaker gives a turn to the interpreter, he/she has a chance to think of a new idea to discuss with the audience. Also, the burden and the amount of information to be delivered to the audience will be organized and the information will not be lost at all. Such disagreement or delaying that happens here in this study loses an amount of information that might be very important to the audience and give them a kind of respect that they are involved in each situation of the talk .The audience is the only one who can choose whether to keep the information or neglect them. Each idea can be interpreted one by one because a talk that is produced by a president like Obama is very important. Each word is counted in Politics. It is a sensitive language that may involve an ideology in each sentence.

4. Daniel Gile, 2009

Daniel Gile mentions that interpreters face problems because of “information density”. The density of information may corrupt the intended meaning as interpreters lose focus while doing consecutive interpreting. Let us go back to the real speech by Obama and have a look at the speech. It takes more than one page to write down the speech. In the interpretation, it takes only half a page which is done by the interpreter. Only having a look, the reader of this study may take into account that there is a big loss of information. Once the audience hears the word” Afghanistan”, they will immediately focus attention to what is going to be interpreted in the interpretation. But when they don’t hear the same word, they will be disappointed. Very professional interpreters may interrupt the speaker politely in a manner that couldn’t hurt any of the listeners. It is important to make things clear to the audience, even if the accent was not clear to the interpreter, he/she may ask for clarification. To make things clear is better than nothing at all.

5. Darwant and Setton, 2016

Since political speech is a sensitive one, its translation must be clear. Darwant and Setton relate the translation of this study to “Under-translation”. Why? It is simply because of the disagreement that happens between the two parties involved in the speech. They state that “Under-translation: the target language rendition only partially or unsuccessfully conveys relevant meaning that is important to the speaker’s message”. Here, the message is partially

rendered to the target listeners. The issue of Afghanistan is not successfully delivered to the listeners. The audience can't judge whether Obama sympathizes with the people of Afghanistan or not. Obama mentions some of very important abbreviations that are not mentioned in the interpretation such as "ECC, IEC, ISAF, etc..."). Interpreters must have a vast wealth of knowledge and how to give a quick interpretation for such abbreviations because they have to be known to political interpreters.

## 10. Conclusion

This section concludes that the form of disagreement that is obvious in Obama's speech shows the lack of knowledge that the interpreter may have while doing consecutive interpreting. The language of politics is the language of persuasion according to Krisztina 2015. Once the information is reduced, the persuasive aspect will be lost, too. Also, confidentiality may help to acquire the full information according to Hana Kucerova, 1990 which is something lost in the dialogue because the interpreter didn't have the full confidence to interrupt the president Obama politely. In addition to this, Alexander V.Kozin, 2018 admits that the delaying that may happen to the interpretation is a kind of disagreement and this is not preferable to happen. Once the information is dense, the interpreter has to manage the situation as best as he/she can because such dense information may lose most of its significance and sensitivity. The interpreter didn't interrupt the sequence of the talk as a form of disagreement which is not something positive most of the time. According to Daniel Gile 2009, interpreters may lose focus and lose the management of the situation. In addition to these issues, the disagreement may underestimate the audience and neglect their opinion because of the loss of information that results from the disagreement. Darwant and Setton 2016, explains the under-translation method that is followed by the interpreter of our situation in this paper which "unsuccessfully conveys relevant meaning that is important to the speaker's message" and as a result of this, it leads to the loss of conveying the exact meaning.

This study is concerned to investigate more issues related to Interpretation and the spoken language. There are many challenges and disagreements that may face simultaneous interpreters as a second strategy of interpreting. Such a strategy needs further investigation to look at the forms of disagreements that may happen between the interpreter and speaker.

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