

INFORMATION OVERLOAD AT MAJOR CONFERENCES AND ITS IMPACT ON SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING

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Abstract: Major international conferences play a crucial role in the exchange of knowledge across linguistic and cultural boundaries. However, the rapid growth of information density, accelerated speech delivery, and the extensive use of multimedia presentations have created conditions of information overload. This phenomenon poses significant challenges for simultaneous interpreters, whose task requires the real-time processing and reformulation of complex information. The present article examines the nature of information overload in major conference settings and analyzes its impact on the quality, accuracy, and sustainability of simultaneous interpreting. The study highlights the cognitive and professional consequences of excessive information flow and emphasizes the importance of structured conference design, adequate preparation, and technological support. By addressing information overload as a systemic issue, this article contributes to a deeper understanding of interpreter performance in high-demand multilingual environments and proposes practical solutions to improve communication effectiveness.

Keywords: information overload; simultaneous interpreting; international conferences; cognitive load; multilingual communication; conference interpreting.

Simultaneous interpreting is an essential component of international conferences, enabling real-time communication among participants who speak different languages. In recent years, conferences have become increasingly complex due to globalization, technological advancement, and the growing specialization of academic and professional fields. While these developments enhance knowledge dissemination, they also generate excessive volumes of information delivered at high speed. The problem

of information overload has become particularly relevant in conference interpreting contexts. Interpreters are required to process dense content, specialized terminology, and multimodal input under strict time constraints. This article addresses the relevance of information overload by examining its theoretical significance and practical implications for simultaneous interpreting. The study aims to demonstrate why information overload represents a critical challenge for interpreters and why it requires attention from researchers, conference organizers, and professional institutions. The concept of information overload has been widely discussed in psychology, communication studies, and cognitive science. Early research by Kahneman (1973) emphasized the limited nature of human attention and mental effort. Later studies in cognitive load theory, particularly those by Sweller (1988), demonstrated how excessive information negatively affects processing efficiency and performance. In the field of interpreting studies, Gile's Effort Models (2009) provide a theoretical framework for understanding the cognitive demands of simultaneous interpreting. According to this model, interpreting involves the simultaneous coordination of listening, production, memory, and coordination efforts. When incoming information exceeds available cognitive resources, performance deterioration becomes inevitable. Further research by Pöchhacker (2016) and Seeber (2011) highlights the relationship between cognitive load and interpreting quality. These studies emphasize that high speech rates, terminological density, and poor acoustic conditions significantly increase cognitive strain. However, despite growing interest in the cognitive aspects of interpreting, information overload at conferences remains an underexplored area, particularly with regard to conference design and institutional responsibility. This study adopts a qualitative analytical approach based on existing academic literature, professional guidelines, and documented conference interpreting practices. The analysis focuses on identifying key sources of information overload at major conferences and examining their impact on interpreter performance. Case examples from scientific, political, and hybrid conferences are used to illustrate typical overload scenarios.

The analysis reveals that information overload at conferences originates from several interconnected factors. High speech rates and densely compressed content significantly reduce interpreters' ability to analyze and accurately reformulate messages. The use of visually overloaded slides and unsynchronized multimedia content further divides interpreters' attention, thereby increasing cognitive load. Terminological complexity was identified as one of the most critical challenges. Interpreters often encounter newly coined or highly specialized terms without sufficient contextual explanation. As a result, they may resort to generalization or omission strategies, which negatively affect terminological precision. The findings also indicate that prolonged exposure to information overload leads to cognitive fatigue, increased stress levels, and reduced concentration. These effects not only compromise interpretation quality but also raise ethical concerns regarding sustainable working conditions. The results suggest that information overload should be considered a systemic issue rather than an individual performance problem.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that information overload at major conferences has a significant impact on simultaneous interpreting. Excessive information flow frequently exceeds cognitive processing capacity, leading to reduced accuracy, decreased fluency, and increased interpreter fatigue. These challenges affect not only interpreters but also the overall effectiveness of multilingual communication. To address this issue, coordinated efforts are required. Conference organizers should provide preparatory materials, regulate speech rates, and ensure high technical standards. Interpreters should be supported through teamwork, adequate preparation time, and professional guidelines that prioritize cognitive sustainability. Recognizing information overload as a critical factor in conference interpreting is essential for maintaining high-quality international communication.

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