Common Mistakes Faced by Indonesian Students in doing Indonesian-English Simultaneous Interpreting

Regina Immaculata
Department of Humaniora, Universitas Indonesia
reginaimmaculata@gmail.com

Abstract

A lot of people seem to be unaware of the difference between interpreter and translator. Different practices lead to different skills. This study aims to find common mistakes that are often made by students in interpreting. The data were obtained from five students who had undergo interpreting classes for one year from 2020 January until December. These five Master degree students attended the interpreting class 32 times with a total study time of 90 hours. The data were taken in an online class, after that this study analyze transcripts, validate errors, and interview students. The study found that the most common mistakes were hestitations and omissions. These mistakes are caused by several factors, namely nervous and time pressure, lack of background knowledge and lack of language proficiency, as well as poor network connection and environmental noise

Keywords: errors; Indonesia to English simultaneous interpreting, problem in simultaneous interpreting

Abstrak

Banyak orang yang belum mengetahui perbedaan penerjemah dan penjurubahasa, padahal pekerjaan yang berbeda memerlukan kemampuan yang berbeda. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan kesalahan umum yang sering dilakukan mahasiswa yang mempelajari penjurubahasaan. Data diperoleh dari lima mahasiswa yang telah mengikuti kelas penjurubahasaan selama satu tahun dari Januari sampai Desember 2020. Lima mahasiswa ini menghadiri kelas jurubahasa sebanyak 32 kali dengan total waktu belajar 90 jam. Penelitian ini menerapkan metode kualitatif dengan menganalisis transkrip, melihat validasi kesalahan, dan mewawancara murid. Studi ini menemukan bahwa kesalahan yang paling umum dilakukan adalah keraguan dan penghapusan. Kesalahan ini disebabkan beberapa faktor yaitu keraguan dan tekanan waktu, kurangnya pengetahuan umum dan kemampuan berbahaasa asing, serta jaringan internet yang buruk dan lingkungan yang bising.

Kata Kunci: kesalahan, interpreter simultan Bahasa Inggris- Bahasa Indonesia, permasalahan dalam interpreter simultan

I. INTRODUCTION

In globalization era, communication technology is very well developed. It connects people from diverse places, languages and cultures. People need someone to help them communicate with people of different languages, this leads to the need of interpreting. A short brief about the differences between interpreting and translating other than oral or

text. Interpreting is a process and translation is a product. In translation, the target text is a result of several attempts while an interpreter gets only one attempt. A translator does not bound by the time, they can use dictionary or google to help them find unknown words. We can keep revising in translation but not in interpreting. Interpreter only has several seconds to think and choose words, hence, finding methods for interpretation is harder (Musacchio in Schäffner, 2004, 39).

According to Pöchhacker (2004) interpreting is transferring messages orally from source language to target language. The interpreter cannot make revisions after they make a mistake. Interpretation happens when someone translate orally what a speaker says into another language. Interpreters are considered invisible in the conversation, they are seen as language-swicthing operators (Red in Angelelli, 2004, 7). However, an interpreter role is not as simple as to connect people. Interpreters are vital to help people exchanging thought and information. Interpreting requires mastering the source and the target languages, deep knowledge of the topic, and the skills to mimic the speaker. Furthermore, everyone would have agreed that interpreters are masters of their own tounge language. They are, for sure, able to understand every topic, idioms, cultural concepts, and etc. For the second language, interpreters need to be at least, understand how to use the grammar and the phonology. To maximize the using of the language, interpreters must always learn. New knowledge keeps emerge everytime, knowledge is dynamic, which is why interpreters have to be update for the latest news. If interpreters happen to encounter a new field of discussion, it would be best if they can receive a simple brief on the topics and do research of their own to anticipate unknown words. As an interpreter, we have to mimic the speaker expression. When the speaker sound happy, sad, or nervous, interpreters must deliver those emotions. Different emotions can lead to different meanings. Interpreters have to convey the speaker thought as close as possible. Therefore, interpreter needs to pay close attention to what the speaker means when he talks.

II. DISCUSSIONS

A. Common Mistakes in student Indonesian to English simultaneous interpretation

Several interpretation researchs had been conducted, one of them is Jungwha (2003) who has done researching on interpretation around five times. Poor interpreting happens when the interpreters have insufficient knowledge and not mastering the language yet. In 2010, Chinch propose ideas which similiar to Junghwa, he stated that lack of backgroung

knowledge and poor preparation can increase nervousness. Students become discourage and tend to pick inadequate words. Sometimes, a student gives wrong responses towards something they already knew. If they are given a second chance, they would correct their mistake. Give them the third chance and they would probably give the right responses. The common mistakes found in simultaneous speech can be categorized into hestitations, additions, omissions, substitutions and errors (Barik, 1998; and Hale, 2004).

B.   Hestitations

Hestitation could happen because the interpreter is in the process planning. In his mind, the interpreter is recording what the speaker said, understanding it, choosing the equivalent words, and formulating sentences. All of that happen in a split of second. These hestitations are manifested in form of repetitions, pauses, fillers and hedges. When a speaker uses fillers and hedges, it shows doubt and it can reduce the strength of a statement. Hedges in speaking refers to ambiguity and indecisiveness. The word such as *well*, *actually*, and *you see* is probably not present, but the interpreter adds them to maintain continuation of a statement. Fillers is actually a meaningless word, and tend to be followed by pauses.

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-18 Bahkan kita melakukan **penyederhanaan**.	G-18 … We have simply, simpling, simplifies the regulation. (We even **simplify** things.)

Before he started, the student took a few seconds to reconstruct what he wanted to say. The bold part confused him so he need to pause and think. The native speaker said *penyederhanaan* which is a noun word. The student was searching how to say *simple* in its suitable form. So he spitted out every possibility which made him did repetitions.

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-8 Maka **pungutan liar**, pungli, dapat dihilangkan.	C-8 All those e … lots of … e... Illegal e...e... illegal fund will be cut down. (… **Illegal fees**, can be eliminated.)

Pungutan liar, which literally means *wild picking*, is the action of requesting payment or an amount of money that is not appropriate or not based on the regulations relating to the payment. This is often equated with extortion. This custom was often practiced by several officials years ago. It is a custom that may not exist in the target language. The student was hestitated wheter to use the word illegal or not. She needed to buy time so she added *all those*, which the original speaker did not said and added *ee…. e…* as fillers.

C.   Additions

Addition happens when an interpreter gives some unrelated informations which the speaker did not say. Interpreters meet this condition if they encounter a word which they actually understand, but cannot find in time. Another possibility is the interpreter does not remember what the source language was.

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-4 Bersama jajaran pemerintah dan para gubernur	D-4 With all government, **institutions**, and governers. (With government officials and governors.)

The original speaker did not mention the word *institution*. This addition happens because the student was looking for *jajaran pemerintah* in target language words. The student decided to replace it with *institutions* when suddenly she got the correct words, *all government*. This little addition does not change the speaker intentions.

D.   Omissions

Omissions refer to a condition where the interpreter purposely eliminated words, sentences or parts of what the speaker says. It usually occurs when the interpreters are under time pressure so they cannot find the right words. Omissions also happens when the interpreter finds that the word is being repeated over and over, or it is not really necessary to interpret that part. Another possibility are, the interpreter does not hear clearly what the speaker says, does not understand what the speaker mean, or the interpreter is not focus anymore. Barik (1971) stated that there are 4 types of omissions, they are comprehension, skip, compound and delay.

a. Skipping omission

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-5 Mempercepat **transformasi** ekonomi.	D-5 Speed up the economics. (Accelerate economic **transformation**.)

The student omits a word from a pharse. It is still acceptable within the context. It does not modify grammatical structure, it just caused a very little loss in meaning. The bold part which is omitted by the student is called skipping omission. This kind of omission usually happen when an interpreter wants to keep up with the speaker pace, because maybe the speaker speed up a little. The student omits the word *transformation* from *economic transformation*. Even without the word *transformation*, this speech still talk about *economic*. The same case applied for the rest of the 11 clusters in the speech. Only one student get them all while the rest did skip omissions and full omissions.

b. Comprehension omission

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-6 Bagi **para pencari kerja serta para pengangguran**.	G-6 For **everyone**. (For **job seekers and unemployed**.)

This type of omission happens when the interpreter did not comprehend some parts of the text. This kind of omission usually eliminate a lot of words and make the speech incoherent. It happens when the interpreter cannot keep up with the speaker. The interpreter is left behind so he need to cut some part of the speech to keep up with the speech. In this case, the student omits *job seekers and unemployed* and replace them with *everyone*. The sentence still refers to finding job for someone. It does not eliminate the real meaning but it did change the speaker's intention. A definite loss in the meaning.

c. Delay omission

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-4 Kepentingan umum, **kepentingan sosial**, pembangunan nasional …	C-4 Peoples interest and…a, for …ee…eg, very reformation, … (Public interests, **social interests,** national development …)

Delay omission usually happens when an interpreter fails to comprehend the speech, so the interpreter unable to convert the speech into target language. Out of five students, only one of them did not omit the bold part. Delay omission made the speech sounds paused for a while. The speaker mentions *public interest* and *social interests* which sound similiar. The student got delayed because she was thingking of the synonym for *public interest.* She wanted to convert *kepentingan sosial* but the delay already cost her a few seconds. So to catch up with the delay, she chose to omit a part of the speech.

d. Compound omission

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-7 Pembentukan koperasi juga dipermudah, jumlahnya hanya 9 orang saja. Koperasi sudah bisa dibentuk.	E-7 Forming a cooperative is also very easier. **They can form it with 9 members**. (The formation of cooperatives is also easier, just need 9 people. The cooperatives can be formed.)

While the other student follows the speech obediently, one of the student cleverly simplfy two sentences into a sentence. The combination was so smooth that the listener might not realize what happen to the speech. This called compound omission. By doing this, it can help interpreter in saving time but it does change the sentence's structure. This kind of omission rarely happen in this speech because the interpreter would have to wait for at least two sentences to do this.

E.   Substitutions and errors

Substitution occurs when the interpreter changes the words used by the speaker. The interpreter may substitute a word or a clause. Some consider this as a minor problem while others thing it is a serious problem. This problem occur because of lack educational background of the target language, poor language proficiency, and it could be worsen by bad pronounciation There are several types of substitutions and errors which categorized as incorrect verb tense, incorrect syntax, incorrect preposition, incorrect construction, semantic error, and phrasing change.

a.   Incorrect verb tense

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-4 Pagi tadi saya **telah memimpin** rapat terbatas secara virtual …	F-4 This morning I **lead** a meeting virtually… (This morning I **had led** a virtual limited meeting…)

The interpreter native tounge does not recognize the concept of tenses, therefore past tenses often not interpret. In the source language, there is no difference between the verb used for past, present, or future tenses. The speaker said *this morning* so he speaks in past tense. All the students did listen the word *this morning* but almost half of them failed to use past tense. They did not realize that they did a mistake. The students needs to pay attention for time markers because some languages does not have tenses system.

b.   Incorrect syntax

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-12 Kemudian apakah perusahan bisa mem-PHK **kapanpun secara sepihak**?	D-12 And will company can fire people howev, **whenever they want**? (Then can the company terminate employee **contract unilaterally anytime**?)

Every country has its own grammar rules. The source language's word order is more flexible and simpler than the target language. The sentence which confused the students

were *sepihak* or *unilaterally*. All of the five students gave different interpretation. In this example, we can see that *kapanpun* was literally translate as *whenever*, because the word *kapan* means *when*. The student incorrectly used *whenever they want* instead of *anytime they want*.

c. Incorrect preposition

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-16 Ini sangat penting untuk menjamin akses masyarakat **terhadap** kepemilikan tanah	C-16 It's important actually to guarantee ppl ownership **onto**, the, over the land (This is very important to ensure community access **over** the land ownership)

Both English and Indonesian have more than 50 prepositions. Obviously, it is hard to match every preposition. The most common preposition used in Indonesia are *di*, *dari*, *ke* which translate into *at*, *from*, *to*. *Terhadap* has a similar meaning to *ke* which means *to* in English. From the example we can see that at first the student incorrectly used the word *onto*, fortunately she realized and corrected herself with *over the land*. If the student did not correct her mistake, the listener would still understand the gist of what the speaker said but it would sound weird.

d. Incorrect construction

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-12 Kemudian apakah perusahan bisa mem-PHK kapanpun secara sepihak?	D-12 And **will company can** fire people howev, whenever they want? (Then can the company terminate employee contract unilaterally anytime?)

This kind of mistake usually happens because interpreters do literal translation and direct transferences from what they heard. The student failed to reconstruct the speech in target language. *PHK* is an abbreviation *Pemutusan Hubungan Kerja* which literally means

Terminate Work Relation. The students did well in this part, they either interpret it as *fire*, *end*, or *cut off* which are still acceptable. Error was made when the student used two modal verbs, *will* and *can*, at the same time. The speaker said *bisa mem-PHK* which has two meanings, *can the company terminate* or *in the future, will the company have the power to terminate*. The student unconciously used 2 modals which result in weird semantic.

e.   Semantic error

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-7 Kita harapkan akan semakin banyak **koperasi-koperasi** di tanah air.	F-7 I hope there will be more **cooperation**. (We hope there will be many more **cooperatives** in this country.)

The interpreter substitutes something the speaker said. This kind of error only affects one part and does not influence other parts. Semantic error can happen because of two reasons. First, the interpreter picks a wrong word because of homonym reason. Second, the interpreter uses false reference possibly from confusion or because it is related with the topic in the speech. From the example we can see that *cooperative* and *cooperation* sound similar. The student mistook *cooperation* as the equivalence of *koperasi*. Cooperation means the act of working together while cooperative means a company owned and managed by the people who work in it. Although they sound similar, they giva a very different meaning. Inaccuracy of a translation may alter the speaker's intention and result in weird translation.

f. Pharsing change

Original speech	Interpreter's renditions and author's translations
A-19 Kita pemerintah membuka dan mengundang masukkan-masukkan dari masyarakat	G-19 We… can hear your recommendation from all the people. (We, the government, open and invite input from the community.)

Pharsing changes are generally acceptable within the context. There is a possibility that it leads to a difference meaning but the overall gist of what the speaker said is not altered. This kind of mistake cause by several factors:

- Error of mistranslation.

- The interpreter is lack of comprehension. To make up with that, the interpreter paraphrases what she heard or anything she could understand.

- Lagging too far behind which prevent the interpreter to fully understand the speech.

- Different meaning due to some omissions.

- Error because the interpreter misunderstands some of the words.

From the example we can see that the student paraphrasing a whole sentence. The student was lagged in this part so he has to catch up with the speaker.

F. The problem causing the mistakes made by student Indonesian to English simultaneous interpretation

First, the audio data was collected from five students, then the data was transcript and analyzed. Third, the students undergo a brief interview. All the data and transcript were used to analyze the common mistakes. There are 127 of total errors encountered by the students.

Mistake	Frequency	Percentage
Hestitations	43	34%
Additions	12	10%
Omissions	40	31%
Substitutions and errors	32	25%
Total	**127**	**100%**

From the table we can see that the most common errors are hestitations and followed by omissions. Students face various challenges in interpreting.

"Poor signal, nervous, too many new terms get me confused." (Student 1) (Translated)

"It was very challenging because I did several things on the same time. Searching for the target language vocabulary and terminology while focused on listening while cutting

messages, taking the point of the message, and conveying it back to the target language." (Student 3) (Translated)

Factors that increase the difficulty of interpreting are nervous and time pressure, lack of background knowledge and lack of language proficiency, and poor network connection and environmental noise.

G.   Nervous and time pressure

Working as an interpreter does require the courage to speak in public. Being an interpreter means being the speaker's alter ego. When the speaker speaks confidently, of course the interpreter must speak confidently too, so that the listener will continue to pay attention to the speaker. Nervousness will make the interpreter less focused and discourage. As the result, the interpreter will speak unclearly, haltingly, or tend to pick inadequate words. There are various factors that can increase nervousness, one of which is time pressure. Interpreters must hear, understand, and compose words in about three seconds.

"It was tense, because honestly I'm not too confident with my target language skills." (Student 3) (Translated)

"I am very nervous. I am really afraid of making mistakes." (Student 5) (Translated)

When interviewed, all the students stated that they were all nervous. Even though they have studied interpreting for a year, it feels like it's not enough and they were nervous every time they do interpreting. But there were also some students who felt challenged when they do interpreting and are satisfied after successfully did the interpreting even though they knew the results might not be that good.

H.   Lack of background knowledge and lack of language proficiency

The tension will increase if the interpreters do not understand the field they interpret. Whether the interpreters managed to get the English vocab equivalent in that narrow time or not, the interpreters still have to convey something to the listeners. If there is no suitable equivalent, interpreters must look for other words that have a similar meaning. All of this happened in just a few seconds. Hence, interpreters must first study the field which going to be discussed because concepts, terminologies, and jargons that are rarely used will be there.

"Personally, I'm not ready for the terms, the English terms for those Indonesian institutions. So when the terms came out, I got confused and unable to concentrate." (Student 2) (Translated)

"I can think of various synonyms and word choices in Indonesian, but not in English. When a difficult Indonesian terminology appeared, I immediately had difficulty in remembering the English equivalent." (Student 4) (Translated)

Terms such as *illegal fees*, *termination*, *ministries* and even *leaves* still confuse the students. They have studied terms of job creation, but unexpected vocabulary still appears. The difficulty increases because they have to find the equivalent terms in English even though they have not master the target language perfectly yet. As Junghwa (2003) stated before, insufficient knowledge will lead to poor interpreting.

I.   Network connection and environmental noise

Not all networks are as good and as fast as in the city. The network connection outside Jakarta is unstable, sometimes good, and sometimes bad. The network is severely affected by weather conditions. If it is raining, the network will lag or freeze.

"I can not hear clearly and it took a long time to access the video while there is time limit." (Student 1) (Translated)

"The network is unstable, the video audio is sometimes lost and sometimes reappears, and I am not really familiar with the material." (Student 5) (Translated)

If the interpretation is done from home or remote interpreting, apart from the network, the environmental conditions around the interpreter will also give a big impact. When the interpreter lives near a busy road, sounds such as vehicles or building construction will be heard. This sound will interfere the interpreter and the listeners. The interpreter's concentration is also disturbed by hearing the speaker's voice and noise at the same time.

III. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, first, it can be concluded that common errors in simultaneous interpreting from Indonesian to English are hetitations, additions, omissions, substitutions and errors. When the interpretation is carried out from Indonesia to English the students were toubled. Their choices of words are limited because their mastery of English are also limited. When they are confused looking for an equivalent word, they would try to buy time by doing hestitation. The hestitations manifest in the form of fillers, pause, or repeating words due to panic. There are also those who because of confusion, choose to take a more extreme action, namely omission. They remove words or pharases that confused them.

Second, from this study, these errors occur because of several factors which are nervous and time pressure, lack of background knowledge and lack of language proficiency, and poor network connection and environmental noise. The best way to counter nervousness and time pressure is practice. By listening to various videos and interpreting them, interpreters can reduce nervousness and increase new vocab knowledge.

Timing is everything in simultaneous interpreting. If the interpreter comes in too fast, the interpreter will have difficulty pronouncing the sentence with good grammar. If the interpreters come in late, the interpreters will be confused because they are left far behind. As the result, there will be many missed sentences. When two people are talking continuously, it is difficult for the interpreter to hear and distinguish who is speaking. Because you have to hear and speak at the same time, he himself will become 'noise'. Interpreters have difficulty conveying emotions to each other. Another difficulty is that the interpreter does not have time to take notes.

Notebooks are very important work tools. Notes can be used for all types of interpretation. Notes are very important to consecutive, they can also help type simultaneous when the speaker mentions names, numbers, and events. In addition to books, the work tool needed is a headphone with a mic. Headphones are mandatory in SI. The headphones used must have a mic to make the equipment feel compact. Headphones must use cables so that the sound is more stable. Earphones and cell phones are used when working in pairs. This way, it can help reducing the poor network connection and noise problem.

To be an interpreter, not only oral skills and techniques are required, interpreters must have encyclopedic knowledge. Interpreters must continue to practice honing their skills. It takes tenacity, persistence, and the will to continue to hone your skills as an interpreter. Interpreters must continue to equip themselves with general knowledge and up-to-date information.

Apart from knowledge, an interpreter must maintain their stamina and health because interpreting requires a high level of focus. Focusing continuously consumes a lot of energy. Hence, it is best to do interpretation in pairs.

Interpreters must be flexible, must understand the situation and the actions taken, must adapt quickly. In informal situations the speaker may use slang vocabulary, abbreviations, and cultural elements that are difficult to interpret. When interpreting, it is best if the

interpreter looks at the response from the listener. The listener's movements will show whether the listener understands what the interpreter is saying.

Lots of preparations are needed before an interpreting. Interpreters should find out who will attend the event, whether the conversation will be recorded or not, who will record the entire conversation. Interpreters must understand the field in discussed because specific concepts, terminologies, and jargons will be discussed. By identifying who will be the speaker can help interpreters prepare for the certain dialects and cultural concepts. Learning who the speaker is will help the interpreter understand the speaker's intention and emotion, whether the speaker is angry, sad, or joking. Interpreters are not mediators, interpreters must be honest in conveying the speaker's emotions. Even if the interpreter becomes the speaker's alter ego, it does not mean that the interpreter must follow the speaker's every move. It is difficult to convey humor or horror because of difference concepts in culture and language. Therefore, instead of interpreting humor that the listener will not understand, it is better to interpret the language asking the listener to laugh.

To reduce mistakes in interpreting, it is best to practice often. A major in university that specializes in interpreting may be a good idea. Students can get intensive interpreting lessons starting from the basics, both theory and practice. It is recommended that a person practice for at least 40 hours before becoming an interpreter. With constant practice, interpreters will master the sight translation, whispering, consecutive, and simultaneous types well. The interpreter must apply the correct type to the speaker's language style. For example, for speakers with normal speed, the interpreter may try to apply whispering, consecutive, and simultaneous. If the speaker is speaking very fast, it is best if the interpreter applies the simultaneous type by taking only the important points. As for now, interpreting is a branch lessons or additional tutoring and this is hardly enough. Interpreting requires lots of practice, a real-life situation.

REFERENCES

Angelelli, C.V. (2004). *Medical Interpreting and Cross-cultural Communication*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Barik, H. (1997). A description of various types of omission, additions, and errors of translation encountered in simultaneous interpretation. *Meta Translations' Journal*, 199-210.

Choi, J.-W. (2003). The Interpretive Theory of Translation and Its Current Applications. *Japan Association for Interpretation Studies*, 1-15.

Hale, S.B. (2004). *The Discourse of Court Interpreting*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Heinz, M. (2013). Impromptu speaking and interpretation studies: A preliminary study. *Journal of International Education Research (JIER)*, *9*(4), 387-396.

Li, S. (2014). A case study of interpretation learning strategies employed by successful interpretation learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *4*(6), 1303-1311.

Obler, L. K. (2012). Conference Interpreting as Extreme Language Use. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 16 (2): 177–182. doi:10.1177/1367006911403199

Pöchhacker, F. (2004). *Introducing Interpreting Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Roy, C.B., Brunson, J.L., & Stone, C.A. (2018). *The Academic Foundations of Interpreting Studies*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Šárka Timarová and Heidi Salaets. (2014). Learning styles, motivation and cognitive flexibility in interpreter training: Self-selection and aptitude. Franz Pöchhacker and Minhua Liu (Eds.). *Aptitude for Interpreting*. John Benjamins Publishing.

Schäffner, C. (2004). *Translation Research and Interpreting Research*. England: Cromwell Press.

Wang, B., & Zou, B. (2018). Exploring language specificity as a variable in Chinese-English interpreting. A corpus-based investigation. In Making Way in Corpus-based Interpreting Studies, 65-82. Springer, Singapore.

Yamada, H. (2019). A Direct Application of Simultaneous Interpreting Training without Prior Consecutive Interpreting Work in a University Course. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *9*(4), 353-363.